4-H Members’ Public Speaking Experience Through County Leadership Activities

Thesis

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By

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ABSTRACT

The youth organization, known as 4-H, strives to serve the young people of today to be capable and dedicated citizens of the future. The 4-H program is one which provides young people ample opportunity to take part in a wide array of activities and gain valuable experiences that will assist them throughout their lives.

Employers all across the nation continuously purport that effective communication skills are of the utmost importance and top priority when it comes to employment. Therefore, the competency of skills and how often those skills are practiced through involvement in the 4-H program has become an increasingly important area of research for 4-H professionals.

The researcher investigated the leadership and communication skill competencies of senior Ohio 4-H members in their last year of eligible 4-H membership. The purpose of the study was to compare skill competency during a 4-H member’s early 4-H career (ages 8-13) to their older years in 4-H (ages 14-19). The mixed-method study utilized a random sample of 4-H members in their last year of 4-H and only involved in the program in the State of Ohio. Data were collected utilizing Akers’ (2000) High School Agricultural Communications Competencies and McCroskey’s (1982) Personal Record of Communication Apprehension-24 surveys (both adapted for use in the study).
The study explored skill competencies of 4-H members as well as investigated members’ level of involvement in county leadership activities and other outside activities. Additionally, 4-H members’ perceptions of the impact of 4-H on them was examined. The study also sought to explore reasons members were motivated to remain in the 4-H program as well as the area of programming individual’s county 4-H educator works with them the most.

The findings from objective 1 indicated an increase in respondents’ skill abilities (and gain in competency) from member’s younger years in 4-H to their older years in 4-H. The second objective revealed numerous responses as to the impact of 4-H on individuals. Themes such as influence in choosing a career path, becoming leaders, confidence and capability of handling situations, and opportunity to take on responsibility were among some of the common responses. The third objective revealed that respondents were more involved in county activities when older, respondents were more involved in 4-H club activities when younger and older, and respondents reported being more involved in 4-H club activities than county leadership activities when older, however, still very involved on the county level.

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that teaching 4-H member’s life skills at a young age and practicing them over a period of time enhances the individuals’ confidence in their abilities as well as helps to better prepare them for college, the workforce, and beyond.
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to:

…my husband, Geoff, for “dealing” with me throughout the entire process of graduate school, being understanding when my writing took away from our time together, and for always being my shoulder to cry on when something didn’t go quite as hoped or planned. I could not have gotten through all of this without you.

…my mother and stepfather, Jim and Judy (Villard) Overocker, for always believing in me. Thanks, Mom, for being my biggest cheerleader. Your words of wisdom and advice have carried me through some of the toughest times of completing my thesis. Thank you for your unconditional love, support, and encouragement. I appreciate that you were always willing to listen to me, and always willing to answer my questions.

…the memory of my grandmother, Gloria Stocksdale, for always being proud of me, supporting me, and being interested in the things I did. Thank you for your endless love and devotion to your granddaughters.

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VITA

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Jerry Seinfeld once said, “According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.”

Public speaking skills needed for career

Although public speaking tends to be one of society’s greatest fears, it is one of the most important skills for people to possess when searching for a job. In a 2008 employer survey done by Columbia College Chicago (2009), researchers found that employers did not feel college graduates exceeded expectations when it came to public speaking and/or presentation skills. In comparison to their 2005 employer survey results, nothing had changed. Employers said, then, they did not feel college graduates were as prepared with communication skills, both written and oral, as they should be. Researchers from the study revealed that communication, public speaking, and presentation skills are a must have for every graduate in order to make it in the “real world” (Columbia College Chicago, 2009).
As evidenced by the previous study, public speaking skills and communication/presentation skills in general are very important for college graduates to learn and obtain for future career success. Of all the robust situations in the world, it is hard to believe that something so simple can create such havoc in one’s life. Individual’s tend to make public speeches everyday and do not even realize it. This is invariably the reason to study such a phenomenon. It has been taught and studied everywhere for thousands of years, and is recognized as one of the most valuable skills out there. “The ability to speak confidently and convincingly in public is an asset to anyone who wants to take an active role in his or her classroom, workplace, or community” (O’Hair et al., 2007, p. 6). No matter one’s career, public speaking is a crucial part of succeeding in a given career since every occupation requires the use of the skill in some way, shape, or form. “The need for effective public speaking will almost certainly touch you sometime in your life” (Lucas, 2007, p. 27).

Jones and Lavallee (2009) did a study on the life skills of British adolescent athletes and found that individual athletes felt communication skills were crucial to their future success. One athlete in the study discussed how communication and listening to people is a matter of respect, and that communication is in everything, including interactions. The individual proceeded to mention that ineffective communication skills will cause a person to struggle and get no where (Jones & Lavallee, 2009). In addition, a coach of an athlete’s group mentioned that not developing the social and communication skills as a young person means those skills may appear “alien” when older.
The fear of public speaking

When a person hears the words ‘public speaking,’ they tend to shy away from the opportunity instead of trying it and learning from the experience. Even though people tend to speak to others everyday through their career, communication and doing it effectively tend to be neglected. This neglect results in a fear of public speaking – a fear so great that people are more afraid of it than dying (Harris, 2009; Grice & Skinner, 1998; O’Hair et al., 2007). The idea of getting up in front of a group of people and making a speech or presentation often scares people in that they fall into a state of “stage fright” (Lucas, 2007; Harris, 2009). As public speaking may be the single most studied skill of any (O’Hair et al., 2007), it remains one of the most important and sought after skills because of its omnipresence in society through conversation, careers, education, and so on. “Public speaking is a vital means of civic engagement. It is a way to express your ideas and to have an impact on issues that matter in a democratic society” (Lucas, 2007, p. 5). In an article about public-speaking jitters, Harris (2009) said that “how you say something is as important as what you say” (para. 18).

The ability to speak in public is essential to an individual’s personal development and one which should provide a sense of empowerment to an individual (Lucas, 2007). “Public speaking offers you an opportunity to make a difference in something you care about very much” (Lucas, 2007, p. 6).

4-H as an outlet to learn life skills

As a crucial and important skill to master, public speaking is an art – an art, which needs practice to develop. Fortunately, there are youth organizations across the world
that aid in the practice and development of skills, such as public speaking. One particular organization that provides young people ample opportunities to develop, practice, and refine public speaking skills is the 4-H program.

The lifelong development of such skills is not only a goal of the Ohio 4-H program, but is also an opportunity for 4-H members to gain the necessary skills needed to be successful in their personal lives as well as in pursuing their future career goals. Life skills are those, which involve communication, interpersonal, and problem solving skills, that are needed for on-the-job success as well as success and active participation as citizens in members’ respective communities (Ferrari, Arnett, & Cochran, 2007). “Youth organizations offer countless opportunities for members to learn and develop leadership life skills that are important in becoming contributable members of society as adults” (Real & Harlin, 2006, p. 39). Boyd, Herring, and Briers (1992) note that a foundation of the 4-H program is giving young people the opportunity to develop life skills that lead them to living a healthy and satisfying life. These leadership and life skills aid in the enhancement of a 4-H member’s growth and development, and provide a young person the opportunity to prosper in their own strengths.

The 4-H program allows young people the opportunity to get involved in older youth opportunities, or leadership activities. These activities stem from being a club officer to serving as a camp counselor to participating as a member of the Junior Fair Board. Leadership activities help cultivate the life skills of 4-H members and assist in the path toward rewarding opportunities. County leadership activities are only a starting
point for young people to get involved and practice their skills so as to perfect them for future success.

As young people get involved in programs, such as the 4-H organization, regardless of how they are enrolled, they are exposed to a wide array of opportunities with many options. With the help of organizations like 4-H, these young people have the chance to make a difference in their communities while augmenting their leadership abilities within multiple capacities. Astroth (1996) found that 4-H helps young people effectively develop life skills, and that being involved in a 4-H Club helps young people develop skills critical to their well-being and success, such as decision-making skills, responsibility, interpersonal skills, a service ethic, and getting along with others. Learning speaking skills and participating in other hands-on types of activities were other things Astroth (1996) noted that come into play throughout the practical development of 4-H members.

**What is 4-H?**

The Ohio 4-H Clubs Advisors Handbook (2006, para. 1) states that “4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills.” Ohio 4-H follows the principles of experiential learning that calls for a learning by doing process. The emphasis on the practical application of knowledge allows young people the opportunity to develop the essential skills needed to provide a sense of motivation and responsibility (Kress, 2005). The Ohio 4-H program strives to provide every youth with 4-H experiences that strengthen a young person’s abilities to master life’s challenges, learn to work independently of others, be dedicated, committed
to oneself and his/her community, and feel accepted and part of the group – the 4-H youth development ideals (Kress, 2005). The 4-H organization exists for the sake of positive youth development through growing and learning from various experiences, and teaching young people to understand who they are, build their self-esteem, and strengthen their self-confidence (Komives et al., 1998). The essence of the 4-H program is “to teach knowledge and life skills which enhance quality of life” (Kress, 2005, slide 4). Furthermore, learning new things and getting actively involved in not only the 4-H program, but also the community, will help enhance a young person’s experience and aid in the lifelong development of skills.

**Skills 4-H teaches**

The motto of 4-H is “to make the best better.” A significant amount of time and practice must come into play through the various programs and events in which 4-H members can be a part of throughout their 4-H career. Skills, such as time management, communicating, making decisions, getting along with others and working in groups (Real and Harlin, 2006), as well as responsibility, organization, team building, working with diversity, teaching, motivation, a positive attitude, taking initiative, and evaluation are just a few of the countless skills 4-H educators have the opportunity to teach and engrain in their 4-H members. “Youth leadership activities should help youth gain skills that help them understand self, interact with others, function effectively in groups, and provide leadership within the community” (Horstmeier & Nall, 2007, p. 141). “The development of life skills allows youth to cope with their environment by making responsible decisions, having a better understanding of their values, and being better able to
communicate and get along with others. The development of such skills through experiential learning is the cornerstone of 4-H youth programming” (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992, para. 2-3).

**Ohio 4-H involvement**

In Ohio in 2008 alone, more than 332,000 young people were involved in over 14,000 different 4-H-related clubs and groups (State Statistical Report, 2008). Of these 332,000 youth, one-quarter of them, which accounts for approximately 84,150 of the young people, were involved in the 4-H program in organized, community clubs. Fifty-nine percent of the young people were involved in the 4-H special interest and school enrichment programs (State Statistical Report, 2008). Keeping young people involved only benefits them in the long run. The Ohio 4-H Clubs Advisors Handbook (2006, para. 1) states that “4-H members, who join at age 8 or 9, or even as Cloverbuds, often stay in 4-H longer.” This means that 4-H members are clearly getting something out of the program, hence their loyal membership.

A study done by Harder et al. (2005) showed the retention rate of 4-H members in Colorado after looking at the trends based on a time span of two years. She and colleagues found that a steady increase around age 11 implied a strong interest in 4-H, and therefore a greater re-enrollment rate.

**Supporter awareness**

In addition to helping young people involved in the 4-H program acquire the necessary life skills to be successful in the real world and helping them realize the impact of their involvement, it is also important that stakeholders and supporters of the program
see the impact 4-H is having on 4-H youth so that they know their time and money are being used wisely. “Funders want to ensure that the programs they support are making a difference in the lives of the young people served” (Fox, Schroeder & Lodl, 2003). As an influencing factor of the impact of 4-H, if supporters are aware of the impact of the program, they may potentially be more likely to provide financial and other means of support more often, and in larger ways. Supporters want to see a return on their investment and know that their support is being used in such a way so as to help educate the young people of tomorrow. Without funding for the 4-H program, there is no possibility of providing a program for young people that teaches them life skills that prepare them for their individual futures and successes.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of involvement in county leadership activities and its affect on the development of life skills, specifically public speaking ability. Involvement is based on active participation in activities specifically requiring a significant amount of public speaking. “Being able to speak well in front of the public is a skill available to everyone. Learning good public speaking skills will benefit you throughout your life” (Villard & Weber, 1997, p. 3). The study looks specifically at the level of involvement in county leadership activities, requiring a significant amount of public speaking, from a community club member’s early 4-H career (ages 8-13) to the end of the member’s eligible 4-H career (ages 14-19). In comparing these two age groups and looking at youth involved during the younger years as well as the older years in the 4-H program will potentially help show the significance
and impact the 4-H program has on young people. This study is important so as to explore what 4-H activities are or are not having an impact on the young people involved, as well as exploring the possibilities of communication life skills gained by young people through their involvement in the 4-H program. By exploring various activities and deciphering which ones have the greatest impact on a 4-H member’s participation, it is hoped that the researcher will be able to decode between some key areas (activities and skills gained) that are aiding and/or hindering in various 4-H program successes. Taking into account other variables and factors such as county 4-H educator’s area of specialization and outside factors such as parental and peer influence, which may affect 4-H members and their participation, this study will compare the level of communication skills based on involvement in leadership activities of 4-H youth, from their early 4-H career to the end of their 4-H career.

**Research objectives**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the level of involvement in county leadership activities and its affect on the development of life skills. Specific objectives of the study include the following:

1. To determine the leadership and communication skill competencies of senior Ohio 4-H members who participated in at least one county 4-H leadership activity.

2. To determine Ohio senior 4-H members’ perceptions of county leadership activities deemed to have the greatest impact in helping develop leadership and communication skills.

3. To explore the level of involvement of Ohio senior 4-H members from their early 4-H
career (ages 8-13) to their older 4-H career (ages 14-19).

**Definition of Terms**

The terms leadership activities, communication skills, older and younger youth opportunities, and life skills are defined as follows. These terms were chosen based on their relevance and importance to the study, and therefore deserve better clarification.

**Leadership Activities**

For the purpose of this study, leadership activities are defined as activities which require one to engage in participation as a leader as well as a follower, and which involve a significant amount of public speaking.

**Communication skills**

In this study, communication skills are defined as public speaking abilities.

**Older youth opportunities**

This study defines older youth opportunities as those activities, which are available for participation to 4-H members 14-19 years of age. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, Junior Fair Board, camp counseling, Junior Leadership Club, CARTEENS Instructor, county 4-H Committee, and so on.

**Younger youth opportunities**

This study defines younger youth opportunities as activities, which members can be involved in from 8-13 years of age. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, community club participation, county public speaking contests, such as demonstrations and health and safety speaking, and county fair show announcing.
Life skills

Skills, such as communication, interpersonal, and problem solving skills that are needed for on-the-job success as well as success and active participation as citizens in members’ respective communities (Ferrari, Arnett, & Cochran, 2007). Kiran, Seshadri, and Thomas (2007) define life skills “as competencies in adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (p. 23).

Limitations of the study

The limitations for this study begin with the sample selection because it will only measure and report the responses of Ohio senior 4-H members in their last year of 4-H (age 18 on January 1 of the current year) who will compare their former 4-H experiences to their present 4-H experiences. The possibility stands that a senior member may not have been involved in 4-H prior to involvement in older youth opportunities. This study and sample are not generalizable to other samples outside of Ohio 4-H. The study will ask subjects to reflect on their past 4-H experiences to determine the impact of the program. Also, the study will ask subjects to discuss the activity they feel has had the most impact on them and why, including any specific characteristics that they feel made a difference for them. The study will not include younger 4-H members’ ages 8-13 years. As with all social science research this study will be limited to the correct recollection provided by the subjects (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2006).

Finally, this study is limited because it is an online survey. Various technicalities may have existed such as subjects did not receive the e-mail asking them to participate in
the study, the e-mail was not read because of many other e-mails, the subject received an e-mail and was not age eligible to participate in the study (too old – a 4-H alum), the subject felt he/she did not have the time to fill it out, the subject felt his/her responses would not be kept confidential, and the subject disregarded and deleted the e-mail thinking it was spam mail. Also, a limitation of the study was the timing factor. Because young people, age 18 and 19, were targeted as subjects and were asked to fill out the survey in the middle of the summer, it was possible that the survey may not have been completed because of family functions, vacations, camps, and other summer activities. The sample of subjects may not have been on or around the computer as regularly given that it was summer time when asked to complete the survey.

**Importance of the study**

“…if adolescents are to prosper across life it is important to know which life skills are important to young people” (Jones & Lavallee, 2009, p. 159). Knowing and understanding which 4-H activities are truly having an impact on young people’s communication and life skills will help educators so as to understand what is working in the 4-H program and what is not. Being cognizant of this will help 4-H educators and adult volunteers better know how to cater to, and meet the needs of, the young people involved. Also, discovering whether or not senior 4-H members were involved at a young age may shed light on how active participants they are as older members. “4-H is a viable avenue for Cooperative Extension in developing young people to become capable, competent adults. Cooperative Extension staff and volunteers should continue
to promote and support participation in 4-H Clubs as a means to develop life skills” (Fox, Schroeder, & Lodl, 2003, para. 22).
CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

This chapter explains the influencing factors that contribute to a 4-H member’s involvement and participation: the effect of involvement, including opportunities through volunteerism; and the advantage of strong communication skills and how that affects a young person, specifically a 4-H member, in their preparation and readiness for the workforce. This chapter continues with the rewards and benefits of involvement in the 4-H program. In addition, this chapter discusses the concept of communication apprehension as it relates to public speaking. This chapter also explains the components and application of the experiential learning theory as the guiding theory and theoretical framework for this study. The literature review finishes with aspects of service learning as a means of revealing a perspective of the effect of involvement and the process of new knowledge.

Influencing factors of participation

Many factors can influence a 4-H member’s participation, including the activities in which the members become involved and the depth of the 4-H member’s involvement. One main factor involved in determining what 4-H activities have the greatest impact on
4-H members may be the area of specialization of the county 4-H educator (Bruce, Webster, & Sinasky, 2006). This influence may play a significant role in the most impactful 4-H activities available to young people through the 4-H program.

In past years, the Cooperative Extension Service has indicated a need for county educator’s areas of specialization and developed guidelines as to what these specializations should include (University of Wisconsin-Extension, 1997). Hutchins (1992) did a study that evaluated the clustering system of 4-H agents’ areas of specialization. He found that there were some benefits to clustering. “Agents said they do a more thorough job of preparation for programs because they’re now delivering them in a number of counties. The larger audiences, the multiple presentations, and the sense of commitment to their fellow agents has prompted them to be better prepared” (para. 15). The 4-H educator’s area of emphasis is brought out in his/her programming efforts and may make a difference in what 4-H members are learning, what skills 4-H members are gaining, and what 4-H members are getting, overall, out of their 4-H experience. County 4-H educators are able to provide a pool of specialized knowledge to address the needs of individual programs based on their individual knowledge and areas of expertise (Hutchins, 1990).

Bruce, Webster, and Sinasky (2006) said that a primary focus of Extension was 4-H youth development where county 4-H educators had the opportunity to make activities and programs available to youth to prepare them for the future. They noted that one way 4-H educators could meet the needs of the 4-H members was by working to facilitate, coordinate, and lead the volunteers who work with youth. In addition, the researchers
noted that the educators needed to properly meet the needs of everyone involved within the program, including its members, volunteers, parents, and others. By properly meeting the needs of, specifically the 4-H members, county 4-H educators have the opportunity to make or break members’ 4-H experiences. “Youth development professionals have an important role to play as they assist youth to develop life skills and navigate the journey to successful employment and success in life” (Cochran & Ferrari, 2008, p. 3).

“Community programs have the potential to provide opportunities for youth to acquire personal and social assets and have important experiences that may be missing or are in short supply in the other settings of their lives” (Eccles & Appleton Gootman, 2002, p. 306). Like other youth organizations, the 4-H program is about developing leaders of individual communities, throughout the state, and across the country. Sandmann and Vandenberg (1995) noted that “communities committed to being leaderful are not leaderless” (para. 16). Assistance from youth development professionals in organizations, such as 4-H, enables the ability to prioritize efforts in preparing young people for the future. These professionals make it possible for young people to learn and perfect skills, practice leadership skills through various 4-H experiences and activities, and become respectable citizens of their communities (Kress, 2005).

However, besides accounting for possible influence of a county 4-H educator, there is limited research measuring the impact of these experiences through 4-H on the development of young people, and therefore limited evidence on program outcomes (Eccles & Appleton Gootman, 2002; Radhakrishna & Doamekpor, 2009).
Similar to the 4-H program, the FFA organization provides multiple opportunities to learn and practice leadership skills while refining other learned skills. The FFA is an additional organization, which gives members the opportunity to experience things through practical application based on what is being learned, in a more formal setting, so as to help better prepare young people for future successes in college and/or the workforce (Talbert & Balschweid, 2004; Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997). An influential person in the FFA, like the county 4-H educator in the 4-H program, is the FFA advisor, also known as the vocational agriculture teacher. “The FFA advisor is the one who motivates, inspires, and teaches leadership skills to FFA members. It would be logical to assume that FFA advisors who have more leadership training and experience would do a better job of developing leadership skills in FFA members” (Vaughn & Moore, 2000, p. 379). Therefore, as with the FFA advisor, the county 4-H educator may be a factor in developing the skills of the young people they serve, which may in turn have an impact on involvement, motivation to get involved, and length of involvement (Ricketts & Rudd, 2004).

The effect of involvement

How activities affect individuals may make a difference in the continuation of their involvement with different older youth opportunities, and thus impact their gaining of important life skills.

There may be reasons as to why some 4-H members stay in the 4-H program as long as they do. A study by Ferrari and Turner (2006) discussed reasons why fifth grade students remained in a 4-H Afterschool program at Adventure Central in Dayton, Ohio (a
partnership between The Ohio State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development and Five Rivers Metro Parks). The results showed that participants remained in the program for more than one year due to caring adults; a friendly, safe environment; program opportunities; fun; making new friends; and learning life skills. Life skills were known as the “anchors” of reasons for retention (Ferrari & Turner, 2006).

Providing programs and opportunities for youth, especially at a young age, allows them the possibility of having a positive influence over young people. Fox, Schroeder, and Lodl (2003) noted that because people tend to change so quickly at a young age such programs provide excellent opportunity to impact their personal growth and development. Hanley et al. (2007) did a study to analyze the life skills of preschool aged children. One of the goals of the research was “to determine the short-term efficacy of a program designed to simultaneously teach essential social skills and minimize the problem behavior of a group of preschool children” (Hanley et al., 2007, p. 280). A class-wide teaching program was used in which researchers tested 16 preschoolers on over 200 different skills, as noted by observers. Children learned to ask “May I have the –, please” or say please and thank you when wanting something. These were based on the skill being probed at throughout the various parts of the teaching program. Overall, researchers were satisfied with the life skill development of preschoolers as well as the teaching program and results (Hanley et al., 2007, p. 292). The study “describes a comprehensive, but preliminary, approach for teaching skills thought to be both functionally equivalent to most preschoolers’ problem behaviors and important for early school success” (Hanley et al., 2007, p. 295).
A report of Ohio state 4-H data (2008) from the Blue Ribbon Youth Enrollment Program showed that of the senior 4-H members in community clubs enrolled in their last year of 4-H, 298 4-H members were in their eighth year of 4-H membership. There were 385 4-H members involved in their ninth year, and 932 4-H members were involved for 10 years by the end of their eligible career in the Ohio 4-H program. These numbers display the fact that many Ohio 4-H members remain in 4-H for multiple years.

An additional effect and impact of being involved in the 4-H program is helping to decide a career path. In a study of former 4-H members from Nebraska, Rockwell et al. (1984) found that a large number of 4-H alumni felt that the 4-H program had something to do with their career choice. Also, the study reported that the longer 4-H alumni were involved in the 4-H program, the more swayed they were in their decision as to what to major in at college and which college or university they would attend (Rockwell et al., 1984). Mostly positive responses about different 4-H activities and events were mentioned, such as ones that involved 4-H judging or public speaking. Additionally, Radhakrishna and Doamekpor (2009) did a study on leadership, communication skills, and responsibilities of 4-H alumni in retrospect of their 4-H experiences. They reported that alumni were involved in both 4-H and other youth organizations, but found 4-H to be most helpful in preparation of life skills. They found that alumni believed they learned many day-to-day skills (also known as life skills), values and responsibilities (Radhakrishna & Doamekpor, 2009). “They view 4-H as the most helpful organization/program in teaching leadership and communications skills and in teaching challenges and responsibilities” (para. 21).
Volunteerism through the 4-H program

One of the things stressed in the 4-H program is giving back to your community through community service. A way in which 4-H members can give back is by volunteering their time, which in turn provides them with opportunities to help people and assume leadership positions. Young people may stay involved in the 4-H program for multiple years as a result of their prior involvement experiences through volunteerism, which may have begun at a young age. Shannon and Robertson (2007) did a study on young people ages 8-12 that looked at their experience as volunteers. They found that “volunteering was an opportunity to connect with community and to experience personal development” (para. 21). With that being said, they found “several youth were engaged in volunteer tasks that saw them take on leadership roles such as being ‘counselors in training’ or providing leadership to activities or events being organized for younger club members” (para. 23).

Beginning volunteerism and leadership activities at a young age helps people to understand and realize the importance and impact of their involvement through the 4-H program. When people have the opportunity to be involved and make a difference when they are young, they are better able to see the value of their contribution, hence the continuation of their involvement and volunteerism as they get older (Safrit & Auck, 2003).

In addition to the value gained and learned from volunteering, it is necessary to know what particular attribute of a certain activity and/or volunteering makes it worthwhile and most effective for 4-H members. This is important so as to be fully aware
of what is working in programming and what is unsuccessful and ineffective for Ohio 4-H members. Of all the young people studied, the authors found that 28 percent of the young people said they volunteered because they wanted to help people (Shannon and Robertson, 2007). A statistic, such as this, shows the affect volunteerism has on young people and the type of citizens being developed through the 4-H organization. Shannon and Robertson (2007, para. 55) noted “there is evidence that younger youth can experience personal development through volunteering.” Personal development through volunteerism helps young people acquire new skills to prepare them for the future (Groff, 1992).

Febbraro’s (2001) study, which involved the results of a national survey of Ontario, Canada youth, showed how volunteerism affected youth’s opportunity for prosperity. Her findings indicated that youth felt volunteering helped them attain job-related skills and experience, which helped them transition easily into the workforce (Febbraro, 2001). She also found that young people reported having an enhanced opportunity for job placement because of their involvement with volunteerism. Young people also stated that volunteerism helped them gain interpersonal skills and develop communication skills, including public speaking, writing, conducting meetings, and public relations (Febbraro, 2001). The youth discussed their development of organizational and managerial skills through volunteering as well.

**Advantage of strong communication skills**

Many different skills are included in the realm of communication skills. “The communication skills essential in the workplace include basic oral and writing skills, and
the ability to communicate in work groups and teams, with persons of diverse background, and when engaged in problem solving and conflict management” (Morreale et al., n.d., p. 4).

Persons prepared for the workforce, with specifically strong oral communication skills, are what make a strong candidate for employment. “The ability to communicate is valuable for obtaining employment and maintaining successful job performance” (Morreale et al., n.d., p. 4). “Skill in public speaking tops the list of skills that are sought after by many organizations” (O’Hair et al., 2007, p. 7). Furthermore, skills in oral communication are what employers look for and rank as a top priority when looking to hire college graduates (O’Hair et al., 2007; Lucas, 2007; Grice & Skinner, 1998; NACE, 2003; AACU, 2007; Zarefsky, 1999; Arnett, 2003; Bowers & Metcalf, 2008). Applying the skill of public speaking to any endeavor in one’s life helps to “enhance your value as an employee and as a citizen” (Zarefsky, 1999, p. 5). He noted the fact that public speaking skills rank high on the list of qualities employers are searching for because people rely on others who can effectively communicate the ever-changing information of the economy. “Employers consistently rank the ability to communicate above technical knowledge when deciding whom to hire and whom to promote” (Lucas, 2007, p. 5). Being able to communicate effectively means interacting with others in order to build rapport with listeners so as to feel that each other share common grounds (Zarefsky, 1999).

Stevens (2005) found that colleges and universities are not regularly assessing the skills being taught that are needed to satisfy employers. She noted that employment
counselors are however, well aware of the demand for strong communication skills. She noted that in order to have a successful career one must have an impeccable set of communication skills in the coming century. “Effective speaking skills enhance your chances of first securing employment and then advancing in your career” (Grice & Skinner, 1998, p. 5). Researchers have discussed the fact that colleges and universities need to acknowledge the skills that employers are stressing to help prepare students for the workforce (Stevens, 2005; AACU, 2007).

Kiran, Seshadri, and Thomas (2007) did a study that looked at life skills in education using experiential methodologies. They found that “there was unanimous opinion in the group that life skills should be an integral part of the core curriculum in education. There was a new understanding that experiential methodologies were extremely powerful agents of learning and were indeed applicable in classroom environments” (pp. 26-27).

It is imperative that these skills are taught at a young age so that they may be practiced and reinforced throughout growth and development. As found in the study by Jones and Lavallee (2009) on the life skills of British adolescent athletes, social skills, also known in the study as communication skills, were noted to be most important to young people. Therefore, this evidence shows the need for young people to be taught these skills at a young age because of their long-term importance.

Being taught communication skills through a youth organization, such as 4-H, is evidenced not only by the young people learning, but also their parents. Boleman, Cummings, and Briers (2004) did a study on the perceptions of parents in response to the
life skills gained by 4-H members enrolled in a beef project. One of the life skills they found parents recognize their kids are learning are public speaking skills among others. Other communication-type skills parents felt were useful in enhancing their kids’ future were accepting responsibility, setting goals, and self-motivation (Boleman, Cummings, & Briers, 2004).

Workforce preparation: Getting young people ready for the “real world”

Workforce preparation is a key topic currently being researched. The goal of workforce preparation, as defined by Kazis and Kopp (1997), is:

“to provide adequate preparation and qualifications for sustained labor market participation and lifelong learning so that all young people can move toward economic self-sufficiency and positive engagement as family members and citizens… It sees work preparation—particularly in today’s changing economy—as an incremental, multidimensional, developmental process of building competence, confidence, and connections. Being prepared for work and a career requires development, over time, of a repertoire of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and experiences that an individual can draw upon to make the most of a range of opportunities in the labor market—and life. And that repertoire cannot be fully developed in an environment that is lacking in rich opportunities for employment, quality learning, and engagement in a vital community life. To a great extent, healthy development into adulthood and preparation for work are synonymous” (p. 4).

Cochran and Ferrari (2008) share a similar definition of workforce preparation, which is “to introduce young people to the world of work and to develop the workforce skills necessary for success through active participation in learning experiences” (p. 3).

One important reason for preparing young people for the workforce is the high demand for people with, specifically, effective oral communication skills. Young people should focus on developing public speaking skills because they “may someday help you get a job” (Beebe & Beebe, 2006, p. 3). Unfortunately, “the concern about youth work
readiness comes not only from the business community – those on the receiving end of employees entering the workforce – but of those who work directly with youth to prepare them for a successful future” (Ferrari, Arnett, & Cochran, 2007, p. 3). Business leaders are concerned with young people entering the workforce in today’s society because these young people tend to be unprepared and lack the necessary skills to perform and be successful (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2003).

Cochran and Ferrari (2008) agree that employers everywhere are concerned that youth lack the skills that will bring them success in their future, and youth are coming into the workplace unqualified for the job. Other researchers, such as Eccles and Appleton Gootman (2002) and the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2003), agree that many young people are ill-prepared with an inadequate skill set, specifically including the ability to communicate effectively. Unfortunately, there is great disconnect between what has been learned and should have been learned while young people were seeking their education, and employers report that entrants are not well prepared for the workforce (Cochran & Ferrari, 2008). However, having a strong set of communication skills can set one job candidate apart from others (NACE, 2003).

The importance of leadership skills in the labor market

It is important to teach young people entering the labor market the necessary leadership skills, which include oral communication skills, so as to understand what it takes to make it in the business world. “Nearly every job requires some public-speaking skills” (Beebe & Beebe, 2006, p. 245). By obtaining opportunities for public speaking
and leadership skills early on, young people are better able to learn how to communicate and work together with others, and accomplish goals (Rinehart & Kleon, 1996).

Teaching young people now about the importance of leadership skills will make them more aware of the effort it takes to acquire the positions they seek for their future. “The need for people with leadership skills will increase in the coming decades. As baby boomers retire, they will take with them leadership skills that have benefitted the workforce” (Morgan & Rudd, 2006, p. 33).

Ricketts and Rudd (2002) reported that educators are faced with the challenge of providing opportunities for young people that allow them more prospects “in leadership and personal development for career and societal success” (p. 7). Research shows that employers seek people who demonstrate leadership ability and capability (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002). “As career and technical education programs are considered, much of the leadership development in our students is a result of participation in youth organizations” (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002, p. 9). They purport that “the task at hand is to prepare youth with the kinds of skills and personal qualities that career and technical education professionals believe is important, but that seemingly is only offered to the few students who are active in our youth organizations” (p. 9).

However, some researchers say that leadership is what is lacking in various youth educational programming efforts. Because the concept of leadership is hard to understand educators tend to leave it out and, therefore, young people are never taught about leadership and how to go about developing the essential life skills needed for future success. These leadership-related skills include communication skills and interpersonal
skills, also referred to as “soft skills” (Bowers & Metcalf, 2008). Research has found that leadership and leadership-related skills are generally acknowledged by employers and recruiters as weighing highly in value when it comes to employment (Bowers & Metcalf, 2008). “The multidisciplinary nature of leadership adds to its contextual richness and reinforces the metaphor of leadership as an art form” (Komives et al., 1998, p. 34). Therefore, as complex as the concept of leadership is, it encompasses a wide array of ideas, thoughts, and processes, and is valued as important in the business world.

In addition to its complexity others have noted the little attention paid toward the concept of leadership in the past. The authors of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation publication, *Leadership Reconsidered: Engaging Higher Education in Social Change*, stated that “the concept of leadership and the educational goals of leadership development have been given very little attention by most of our institutions of higher learning” (Astin & Astin, 2000, p. 3). However, studies involving youth leadership are becoming much more widely published.

**Rewards and benefits**

As previously discussed, a solid foundation in communication skills, specifically oral communication skills, is something employers are looking for when searching for a potential candidate. Therefore, it is important that these skills are taught at a young age, and reinforced throughout growth and development. Numerous activities and opportunities are available to 4-H youth (of all ages) that allow for skill development, and result in many rewards and benefits. Silliman (2008) did a study on a 4-H activity known as “Congress” that looked at how 4-H member’s experiences at that event helped those
members in their leadership practices. Silliman (2008, p. 4) said 4-H members discussed their “prior experiences at Congress as instrumental in increasing learning and involvement in youth leadership and community activities.” These opportunities provided 4-H members the prospect of gaining life skills starting at a young age. Personal testimony from above is evidence that the 4-H program and activities within it are making a difference in the lives of the young people involved.

Maass et al. (2006) did a study on the development of life skills based on the perceptions of Oklahoma 4-H alumni (4-H members between 1969 and 1998) who were identified as high-achieving members when involved. The study compared 4-H to other youth organizations. The researchers found that of the 36 life skills measured in the study that in 4-H, public speaking was ranked among the top 5 as most influenced by participation in the 4-H program. In comparison to other youth organizations, public speaking ranked 33rd as most influential (Maass et al., 2006). According to the t-test done in the study, public speaking ranked second as the greatest attribute to 4-H for members. Additionally, public speaking was identified by respondents as the life skill most highly influenced by 4-H (Maass et al., 2006).

In addition, researchers suggest future studies to get at the heart of the impact of the 4-H program. Seevers and Dormody (1994, p. 68) recommended further research be conducted to determine why specific 4-H activities were determined as the most effective in developing leadership life skills.

**Results of the 4-H program**

A study of 1,500 teenagers in the state of Pennsylvania displayed the impact of
the 4-H program. “The results indicate that 4-H experiences beyond the local club contribute significantly to the development of teens' life skills” (Cantrell, Heinsohn, & Doebler, 1989, para. 2). They looked at 55 skills that they grouped into 10 clusters. Cantrell, Heinsohn, and Doebler (1989) found that “teens' general participation in 4-H Club activities showed a positive and statistically significant relationship to their life skill development in the areas of leadership, personal development, and citizenship. Teens reporting leadership roles at the club level had higher interpersonal skill levels than those 4-Hers who didn't hold such positions” (Cantrell, Heinsohn, & Doebler, 1989, para. 7). Study results also showed that being involved in leadership activities in the county, state, and even national level have an effect on and enhance life skill development (Cantrell, Heinsohn, & Doebler, 1989). As the researchers noted, it was important that 4-H activities and events were provided so as to allow 4-H members the opportunity to hold leadership positions, thus the opportunities aided in life skill development (Ward, 1996). “Building teen leadership experiences into 4-H activities and events not only provides youth with valuable life skill development opportunities, but also stretches Extension's staff resources” (Cantrell, Heinsohn, & Doebler, 1989, para. 13). The impact study showed the effects, influence, and advantage that young people have by being involved in the 4-H program, which increased even more with leadership roles within various 4-H leadership activities.

**Communication apprehension: Hindrance to involvement?**

As previously discussed, people tend to deal with one of their greatest fears, public speaking, on a daily basis (Harris, 2009; Grice & Skinner, 1998; O’Hair et al.,
This fear can result in what is known to be communication apprehension, which was defined by McCroskey (1978) as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated (oral) communication with another person or persons” (p. 192). In dealing with public speaking, or oral communication, it is important to consider communication apprehension and how it plays a part in a 4-H member’s involvement in county leadership activities since many young people are afraid to stand up in front of a group of people and give a speech and/or lead an activity (Feingold, 1983).

Communication apprehension of teachers was looked at by Roby (2009). He noted that teachers in their profession must be able to effectively communicate with a wide range of people. The study discussed several ways in which to uncover the concept of communication apprehension, including videotaping students during a public speaking course at a large Midwestern university for feedback on how to improve future speeches as well as interpersonal communication with others. As discussed before it was noted that learning the skill and being comfortable with public speaking is a necessity in a 4-H member’s future endeavors as they move on to new chapters of their lives, such as college and entering the workforce. In his study Roby (2009) noted that “speaking fluently and without anxiety to parents, administrators, educators, community members, and students is a leadership quality and skill worth pursuing” (p. 610). The study surveyed 107 elementary, middle/junior high, and secondary education teachers to look at communication apprehension in sub-groups, such as communication in groups, communication in/at meetings, communication in dyadic situations, and communicating through public speaking. Roby (2009) found study results showed that, overall, study
participants had relatively low communication apprehension in all sub-groups as compared to national norms. The study was meant to help teachers who were graduate students in teacher leadership focus on ways to reduce their communication apprehension in various communication venues. This study is evidence that learning the life skill of public speaking at a young age will be helpful and beneficial to a young person in their future career in terms of poise and self-confidence.

**Experiential Learning Theory**

The main theory guiding this research study is the experiential learning theory. “Experiential learning theory (ELT) draws on the work of prominent 20th century scholars who gave experience a central role in their theories of human learning and development—notably John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, William James, Carl Jung, Paulo Freire, Carl Rogers, and others—to develop a holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multi-linear model of adult development” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 2). More recently, Kolb and Kolb (1984, 2005) have expanded the theory in experimenting with the idea of transforming an individual’s experience in order to create knowledge. The theory deals with applying learned skills to real life experiences. Kolb and Kolb (2005) define experiential learning theory in regards to how a person learns shapes their personal development. “The theory is built on six propositions:

1) Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes;

2) All learning is relearning;

3) Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world;
4) Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world – not just the result of cognition, but involves the integrated functioning of the total person;
5) Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment; and
6) Learning is the process of creating knowledge” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194).

Experiential learning is centered on creating knowledge that involves the tension of creativity of the four learning modes – concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, reflective observation, and active experimentation (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). It is applying one’s skills learned in a classroom or some other means of instruction to real life experiences and, as a result, gaining new knowledge and new ideas. Experiential learning is made up of two ways of gaining experience – concrete experience and abstract conceptualization (Blackwell et al., 2007). Experiential learning is also made up of two ways of transforming experience – through reflective observation and active experimentation (Blackwell et al., 2007). Concrete experiences are immediate and the foundation of beginning observation and reflection. These reflections are gathered into “abstract concepts from which new implications for action can be drawn” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194).

Kolb’s experiential learning cycle is shown in reference to the model in Knowles et al. (2005, p. 198). This model “is a continuous cycle of thinking, acting, and reflecting” (Webster, Bruce, & Hoover, 2006, p. 27):
Another way of looking at Kolb’s experiential learning cycle is:

Concrete experience is the first step in Kolb’s theory of experiential learning. “Learners need to experience the concept to be mastered” (Vaughn and Moore, 2000, p. 380). The second step of the model is critical reflection or critical observation, which involves the individual looking back on their past experiences, thinking about them and
reflecting on them so as to compare those experiences to concrete experiences. The third step of the theory is abstract conceptualization, which is determining the best way to teach someone else the concept that has been mastered. The fourth and final step in Kolb’s experiential learning theory is active experimentation. This step is where the learner, in this case the 4-H member, takes what he/she has learned and tests his/her knowledge and skills. Here, 4-H members apply what they have learned from the county 4-H educator and put the new knowledge to practice in a real life situation.

Blackwell et al. noted in a study on leadership development that “through this [experiential] learning cycle, students have learned not only how to approach, solve and report on a problem, but also have learned leadership skills and competencies which those students will continue to practice in both a professional setting as well as in a civic setting” (2007, p. 41). Experiential learning provides the opportunity for young people to process what they are thinking and what they have learned, and apply it to their everyday lives and situations.

In continuation of the experiential learning theory and what it entails, Boyd (2001) provides “several key processing steps beyond simply doing the activity or experience. These steps include: 1) experiencing the activity; 2) sharing the experience; 3) processing the experience; 4) generalizing from the experience; and 5) applying what was learned to another situation” (para. 3). Experiential learning is learning something by actually practicing and testing what has been learned. Simply put, it is a “learn by doing” process. This involves more than just creating the experience alone. “The
learning comes from the thoughts and ideas created as a result of the experience” (Boyd, 2001, para. 4).

An example of experiential learning at work involves communication skills and their key role in the education of pharmacy students taught by faculty members. Beardsley (2001) did a study that surveyed faculty who were teaching communication skills in United States pharmacy schools and colleges. Two of the objects of the study were to determine the different ways in which communication skills are taught, and acknowledge ways in which communication skills are deficient among pharmacy schools and colleges. Beardsley (2001) found that faculty taught communication skills using various formats, specifically through required courses as well as elective courses, and provided study on communication skills through experiential learning components. Using lecture and small group discussion were most popular. Almost all the schools who responded used some type of role playing and videotaping to aid in skill development (Beardsley, 2001). Also, he found that actual people were sometimes used to allow students the opportunity to practice in a simulated situation. In addition, case studies and reflective diaries were used. “These learning experiences attempt to simulate communication in actual practice and to make the material more relevant to students” (Beardsley, 2001, p. 308).

Boyd (2001) says that “experiential learning takes place when a person is involved in an activity, looks back at it critically, determines what was useful or important to remember, and uses this information to perform another activity” (para. 3).
A study done by Vaughn and Moore (2000) on predictors of FFA program quality was also based on the experiential learning theory. The authors state that “based upon Kolb’s model, as the level of leadership experiences and leadership training of the teacher increases, the likelihood of having a high quality FFA program should also increase. This should result in enhanced leadership skills on the part of the students” (p. 381). Therefore, prior knowledge and leadership experience on the part of the teacher or instructor not only enhances the teacher/instructor’s experience and growth, but also enhances the skills of the student’s in order to assist in their individual growth and development. “Setting goals, solving problems, and making wise decisions are not just skills for leaders, but are necessary skills for leading a successful life. Combining experiential learning with the opportunity to put those skills into action appears to be an effective method for teaching leadership skills” (Boyd, 2001, para. 17).

**Service learning through the 4-H program**

A concept that goes hand-in-hand with experiential learning is service learning, where the importance of the activity is highlighted by both the learner and the person(s) receiving the service (Webster, Bruce, & Hoover, 2006, p. 27). The service activities are based on the needs of the community and the young people involved (Webster, Bruce, & Hoover, 2006). Service learning experiences help young people connect with the community through the linking of theory and service. Connecting with community issues helps young people develop the social and practical skills needed to be competent members of society (Webster, Bruce, & Hoover, 2006).
Service-learning projects present teens with opportunities to practice, refine, and reflect on leadership skills in order to gain a better perspective of themselves (Boyd, 2001). Boyd also notes that teens can learn skills, such as brainstorming, decision-making, setting goals and working with others, and practice them in order to be able to fully implement large-scale service projects. Engaging in service learning activities has shown that young people gain social skills and gain personal growth (Webster, Bruce, & Hoover, 2006). Through the 4-H program, 4-H members have the opportunity to participate and become involved in many community activities. These opportunities allow these young people to reach out to the community while learning about themselves and others in the process. “Citizenship and contribution are important because of the benefits provided for both the youth and the communities in which they live” (Roebuck, Brockman, & Tepper, 2009, para. 3).

Gaining life skills can come from the multiple opportunities through the 4-H program, such as service learning. “Youth leaders who are involved in service learning experiences are able to gain valuable leadership skills such as how to work in diverse teams and groups, public speaking, expression of ideas, critical thinking, and understanding the process of being a vested member in the decision making process. Their leadership in a service learning program not only impacts their individual development, but also connects them to the organization and the community” (Webster, Bruce, & Hoover, 2006, p. 29).
Processing new knowledge

Lobley and Peronto (2007, para. 4-6) developed an experiential learning program for 4-H members that allowed them “the opportunity to process what they were learning in the classroom and the opportunity to self-correct and learn from the experiences.” This was all done to develop workforce preparation skills for the future employment of young people. In addition, 28 of the 31 young people involved in the study were offered jobs immediately upon their certification from the program. The course “moved youth away from a dry textbook-focused tractor safety course into a learning environment that combined a variety of hands-on activities with practical individualized driving instruction on both tractors and mechanical harvesters” (para. 4-6). The youth were allowed the opportunity to take what was being taught in the classroom and use it to learn from practical application (Lobley & Peronto, 2007; Zarefsky, 1999). This opportunity allowed 4-H members the chance to put knowledge to practice to better prepare them for the experience of participating in the “real world” workforce and have a better understanding of and feel for true work experience. Therefore, the more prepared 4-H members are in applying learned life skills to real work experience, the better off they will be in college and in preparation for the business work force. “The emphasis on experiential learning offers students the opportunity to develop the technical skills needed for a selected occupation, as well as the chance to gain leadership skills required to function in the workplace” (Blackwell et al., 2007, p. 40). “Assuming responsibility and accountability for developing youth leadership life skills today, assures the promise for effective leadership tomorrow” (Seavers, Dormody, & Clason, 1995, p. 28).
Summary

Many studies have provided this chapter’s background on the influencing factors, effects, and benefits of involvement in the 4-H program. Studies have shown that by being involved in a youth organization, such as 4-H, at a young age enhances the opportunity to practice and grow in leadership and communication skill development. In addition, studies have discussed the importance of obtaining a solid set of communication skills, specifically public speaking, so as to be successful in the workforce and become respectable citizens of the community. Also, the researcher explained the theoretical framework for this study that was centered on the experiential learning theory. Research reported that this learn-by-doing process gave young people the opportunity to practice and apply the skills they have learned by being involved in the 4-H program. As a youth organization, 4-H provides a means of preparation for the workforce allowing young people to prosper in their skills and perfect them by the time they reach college age and beyond. These skills, in time, will help young people be successful in their future careers, and be productive and active citizens within their respective communities. As the research stated, many young people enter the workforce unprepared with an inadequate skill set. Having learned these skills early on and practicing them may have set them apart from other candidates when entering the business world.

This study is very important for two reasons. First, it is important to know the activities and/or skills that are important to young people. It is important to know and understand the perception young people have of what they feel they need to be successful in the future – need in terms of practicing skills in various contexts to learn to cope with
and handle different situations. Second, it is important to discover the involvement of the young people involved during their younger years of participation, which may shed light on how active their participation may be when they are older.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Much of the research discussed in the literature review presented in Chapter 2 focused on the impact of the 4-H program, which included discussion on influencing factors of 4-H program involvement and the effect of involvement, as well as the rewards and benefits of being involved in 4-H. The effect of involvement and rewards and benefits showed that young people involved in 4-H, especially for multiple years, are potentially better prepared for the workforce than those not involved in the 4-H program. This is because of the opportunity to acquire, learn, and practice numerous skills, especially communication skills that are of particular importance when searching for a job, according to employers.

This chapter describes the research methodology and basic research design used in the study. The following objectives to guide this study were outlined in Chapter 1.

1. To determine the leadership and communication skill competencies of senior Ohio 4-H members who participated in at least one county 4-H leadership activity.

2. To determine Ohio senior 4-H members’ perceptions of county leadership activities deemed to have the greatest impact in helping develop leadership and
communication skills.

3. To explore the level of involvement of Ohio senior 4-H members from their early 4-H career (ages 8-13) to their older 4-H career (ages 14-19).

Addressed in this chapter is subject selection along with a description and discussion of the survey instrument used. The following section will discuss how data was collected. The final section of this chapter will discuss data analysis.

Research Design

Over the last 107 years the 4-H program has been in existence – since the year, 1902 – there has not been much research done on the impact of county leadership activities on 4-H members based on 4-H members’ level of involvement. Therefore, this mixed-method study was exploratory and descriptive in nature, and was designed to investigate the level of involvement of 4-H members – a comparison of members’ early 4-H career (ages 8-13) to the end of their eligible career (ages 14-19) – in county leadership activities that involved a significant amount of public speaking. The study was designed to specifically look at communication skills to determine the possible impact of the 4-H program on 4-H members’ future success. The county leadership activity involvement survey was approved for human subjects by The Institutional Review Board at The Ohio State University (Protocol Number 2009E0519) (Appendix A).

A particular life skill, oral communication, was looked at to assess whether or not 4-H activities and opportunities involving a significant amount of public speaking, are aiding in the preparation of 4-H members for the workforce and beyond. The design
included a random sample of Ohio 4-H members who were in their last year of eligible 4-H membership (aged 18 or 19) and included on the 2008 enrollment list, provided by the Ohio State 4-H Office.

**Subject Selection**

The population of this research was Ohio 4-H members in their last year of 4-H ($N = 1,278$). Ohio 4-H members were chosen as subjects for this study because Ohio is where the 4-H program began. Over 107 years ago the first 4-H club meeting was conducted by A. B. Graham in the basement of the Clark County Courthouse in Springfield, OH (Ohio State University Extension, 2004). Since that time, Ohio 4-H has prospered into a large youth development organization preparing more than 81,800 young people involved in 4-H community clubs (State Statistical Report, 2008, p. 4) with life skills. The researcher chose to use senior 4-H members (age 18 on January 1) in their last year of 4-H as subjects for the study since senior members are likely to have been involved in 4-H for more than one year and are taking what they have learned in the program with them into their future, whether that be to college, the workforce, or so on. This information will be valuable for employers and businesses to know the caliber of young people coming into the so-called “real world.”

Four-H membership begins when an eligible individual is enrolled in a club or group that is under the direction of a trained adult and within the scope of The Ohio State University Extension (Ohio 4-H Family Guide, 2009, p. 3). Traditional membership age, after the 4-H Cloverbud program, begins when a child is at least age eight and enrolled in third grade as of January 1 of the current year. Ohio 4-H membership ends December 31
of the year in which an individual reaches 19 years of age. A membership roster of all Ohio 4-H members in their last year of 4-H was obtained from the Ohio State 4-H Office’s statistical reports of the Ohio 4-H Blue Ribbon Youth Enrollment Program from 2008. Subjects were randomly selected from the roster including every ninth electronic mail address. Each was asked to answer questions via an online questionnaire, based specifically on opportunities, involvement, and skills acquired and learned in the 4-H program. A sample size calculator was used to determine the number of subjects needed for the study. At a confidence level of 95 percent, a confidence interval of 5, and a population of $N = 1,278$, a sample size of $n = 296$ Ohio senior 4-H members in their last year of 4-H was supposed to be used. However, the sample size ended up smaller because of returned e-mails stating reasons found in the limitations in Chapter 1. Therefore, the targeted sample from the original population used in the study was $n = 171$.

**Instrumentation**

*Successful online surveys*

“For an E-mail survey to be successful, it seems important that multiple contacts be made” (Schaefer & Dillman, 2001, p. 380). Therefore, the researcher proposed to e-mail each participant at least three times to improve the response rate. A return mailing address was provided in the initial and subsequent e-mails for participants who preferred to print their questionnaire and mail it back. Also, participants were given the option to request a mailed copy of the survey (Schaefer & Dillman, 2001). In addition, a prior E-mail notification or request for participation was sent to familiarize participants with the
study and gain their approval for participation. As an incentive to complete the questionnaire, participants were able to voluntarily enter themselves into a drawing for an iPod upon returning a completed questionnaire.

**Instrument background**

The researcher developed survey was used to compare the level of involvement of a 4-H member from his/her early 4-H career to the end of their 4-H career. The level of involvement was based on county leadership activities that involved a significant amount of public speaking. Each subject was asked to complete the same questionnaire. Various skills obtained throughout the duration of the career were looked for, specifically oral communication skills – public speaking – among others. Additional questions were asked about the participant’s 4-H educator and the 4-H member’s perceived area of specialization of the educator, participants’ other outside involvement (sports, school clubs, other community activities), as well as what kept him/her in 4-H.

The instrument was partially based on Akers’ (2000) survey instrument, which looked at Agricultural Communication competencies. The reliability for Akers’ (2000) survey instrument was established using 75 individuals as panel experts in her Delphi study, which was deemed acceptable by various expert researchers for use of the Delphi technique. Also, McCroskey’s (1982) Personal Record of Communication Apprehension-24 survey instrument was used to form questions for the instrument. The reliability of this instrument has been established through repeated use of the PRCA-24 instrument by researchers to make it internally consistent and reliable. The measure has been indicated to be stable across time, according to researchers. Scores on the PRCA-24
range from 24-120. A score below 51 represents low CA, between 51-80 deems average CA, and above 80 represents high CA. The PRCA-24 is “based on over 40,000 college students; data from over 3,000 non-student adults in a national sample provided virtually identical norms, within 0.20 for all scores” (McCroskey, 1982).

The instrument included 135 items (Appendix B) and was divided into eight sections based on 4-H leadership, skills, 4-H involvement, school, church, and community activities, 4-H influences, school information, and personal information. Questions were formatted to include multiple-choice, Likert-type scale, fill-in-the-blank, check-all-that-apply, open-ended, and yes/no type questions.

4-H Leadership

Section 1 of the survey (noted as items 1-5), formatted as fill-in-the-blank, yes/no, and multiple choice questions, was designed to gain a brief perspective of the 4-H member’s participation in leadership activities through being a club officer and other county leadership activities. Subjects were asked to indicate the age they were first involved in the 4-H program; if they were a Cloverbud member; and if they held any club office positions. Lastly, they were asked if they were involved in county leadership activities and if so, how many.

Skills

Section 2 of the survey (noted as items 6-29), formatted as a drop-down menu, was designed to gain a better idea of how confident 4-H member’s are in the skills they are taught through the 4-H program. One of two ways participant’s were asked to rank their level of involvement in comparing their early 4-H career (ages 8-13) to the end of their 4-H career (ages 14-19) was using the following Likert-type scale: does not apply,
strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree. Respondents were asked to click on the answer, which best pertained to them, according to the skill listed, and according to each age range, if applicable (ages 8-13 = early 4-H career; ages 14-19 = end of eligible 4-H career). Questions were developed partially based on a survey in Akers’ (2000) study on High School Agricultural Communications Competencies.

Examples of questions are as follows (see Table 3.1):

Table 3.1.

Possible Responses to Sample Skills Questions (Section 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Younger youth</th>
<th>Older youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ages 8-13</td>
<td>ages 14-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can correctly utilize parliamentary procedure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Not Apply</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Not Apply</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Weakly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I can effectively communicate with adults and others.</td>
<td>Does Not Apply</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Not Apply</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4-H involvement: Section A

Section 3 of the survey (noted as items 30-73), formatted as a drop-down menu, was designed to gain better insight as to the county leadership activities 4-H member’s are involved in. County leadership activities include, but were not limited to: Junior Fair
Board, camp counseling, CARTEENS Instructor, Junior Leadership Club, show announcing, Citizenship Washington Focus, judging team, 4-H Foundation Board, State Teen Council, County/State 4-H Ambassador, and so on.

Subjects were asked to indicate the extent of their participation in the 4-H activity listed, and according to each age range, if applicable (ages 8-13 = early 4-H career; ages 14-19 = end of eligible 4-H career). The second of two ways participant’s were asked to rank their level of involvement based on their age range was using the following Likert-type scale: NOE = not old enough, 0 = does not apply, 1 = not very involved (I only attend meetings), 2 = somewhat involved (I participate in 1-2 activities beyond meetings), 3 = very involved (I participate in as many things as I can). Respondents clicked on the term for which they most agreed pertaining to that particular item. Subjects were also asked questions based on their perceived participation in leadership development activities in 4-H. Examples of questions are as follows (see Table 3.2):
Table 3.2.

**Sample 4-H Involvement Survey Questions (Section 3).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Younger years (8-13)</th>
<th>Older years (14-19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior Fair Board</td>
<td>not old enough</td>
<td>not old enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARTEENS Instructor</td>
<td>not old enough</td>
<td>not old enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show announcer</td>
<td>not old enough</td>
<td>not old enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4-H involvement: Section B**

Section 4 of the survey (noted as items 74-76), formatted as open-ended questions, was designed to allow 4-H member’s the opportunity to discuss their thoughts on the impact of the 4-H program on them individually. Subjects were asked questions based on their perceived participation in leadership development activities in 4-H. They were also asked to answer the question based on their opinion and individual experiences. A sample question is: “Based on your involvement in the 4-H program, please explain how you feel your past experiences in 4-H have had an impact on you.”

**School, church, and community activities**

Section 5 of the survey (noted as items 77-123), formatted as check-all-that-apply,
was designed to determine 4-H member’s involvement in other activities outside of the 4-H program. Subjects were asked to click in the box next to any activity in which they had been involved or were currently involved at the time of the survey. Activities include, but were not limited to: National Honor Society, Drug Free Awareness Group, Spanish Club, Conference Leadership, Concert Band, Jazz/Show Choir, Art Club, Football, Volleyball, Cheerleading, Swimming, Cross Country, Yearbook, Student Council, Academic Challenge, FFA, College activities, and so on.

4-H influences

Section 6 of the survey (noted as items 124-125), formatted as check-all-that-apply, was designed to understand the reason(s) as to why 4-H member’s remained in the 4-H program for multiple years. Subjects were asked to click in the box next to any item under each question in which they felt pertained to them. Examples of questions are as follows (see Table 3.3):
Table 3.3.

4-H Influences Questions (Section 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which area does your 4-H educator work with you most? (Check all that apply)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ public speaking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ camp counseling/4-H camp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ CARTEENS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ safety programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ 4-H projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ Junior Fair Board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ livestock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ state involvement (i.e., teen council, state ambassador, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What motivated you to stay involved in 4-H? (Check all that apply)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ I made lots of friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ project work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ working with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ learning new things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ speaking in front of people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ preparation for college/job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ building my resume</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________ like to lead people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**School information**

Section 7 of the survey (noted as items 126-130), formatted as multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and yes/no type questions, was designed to determine 4-H member’s current school status and their interest and/or participation in going to college, and their major area of study.

**Demographics**

Section 8 of the survey (noted as items 131-135), formatted as multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank, was designed to understand the background of 4-H member’s participating in the study. Respondents were asked to click on an item that pertained to
them or type in an answer in the blank provided. Information in this section included: gender, ethnicity, county, age, and years in 4-H.

**Incentive/Drawing**

Section 9 of the survey was optional for study participants. This section allowed subjects the opportunity to enter their e-mail address to be entered into a drawing for a chance to win an iPod upon completion of the survey. The drawing took place at the conclusion of the research.

**Reliability/Validity of Instrument**

Face validity was established because the survey instrument appeared valid for its intended purpose, and measured what it purported to measure – the skill competencies of 4-H members. Content validity was established by a panel of experts at the Ohio State University who reviewed the survey for its accuracy and reliability of questions. Questions throughout the survey questionnaire were asked in different ways, but with the same concepts and skills in mind. Because the survey instrument was primarily developed based upon other survey instruments whose reliability and validity had previously been established, the current survey questionnaire, too, was valid and reliable. All questions and completion of the survey were kept anonymous (Ary et al., 2006).

**Data Collection**

Data from each of the subjects was collected via an online survey questionnaire using Survey Monkey. No face-to-face interaction took place and no names were used as part of the research. Subjects’ participation was strictly voluntary with no obligations to take part in the study as per the guidelines under the Institutional Review Board (IRB).
The Ohio State University Extension Administrative Cabinet approved the study, including the intent to survey Ohio 4-H members. Because the 4-H members who would be surveyed were at least 18 years of age, no parental permission was needed for 4-H members to participate in the study. The study was documented under exempt status category two, which denotes that research cannot allow for identification of subjects and cannot be damaging to subjects in any way or put subjects at criminal or civil liability risks (Office of Responsible Research Practices, 2006).

4-H Member Procedures

After subjects were randomly selected from the Blue Ribbon Youth Enrollment Program membership list, subjects were contacted via electronic mail with notification of the study and an invitation to participate. The first invitation letter was the first of multiple waves, which gave information about the study (Appendix C). The following information was included in the letter: (a) the researcher’s name and reason for doing the study; (b) the purpose of the study; (c) invitation to participate in the study; (d) time it will take to complete study; and (e) when subjects would be notified for the start of the study. Subjects were informed about additional letters that would obtain information on how to complete the survey, information about the incentive for completion, and their rights as a study subject.

After two weeks, the second invitation letter was sent. The second invitation letter included: (a) the purpose of the study; (b) invitation to participate; (c) participation in the study was strictly voluntary and subjects could remove themselves from participation at any time without penalty; (c) the procedures of participation; (d) how this
research will contribute to the Ohio 4-H program; (e) a link to the online survey; (f) the researcher’s name and contact information; and (g) the incentives for participation (subjects could enter their electronic mail address at the completion of the survey to be entered into a drawing for a chance to win an iPod).

After another week, another wave of invitation letters was sent to subjects reminding them about participation in the study. A final round two weeks later, equaling four waves of electronic mail letters, was sent to subjects asking them to participate in the study.

Of the 171 subjects needed for the sample, 39 responded and filled out the questionnaire for a response rate of 23%. One response was unusable due to age restrictions, therefore leaving 38 respondents used as data. New basic applied research says that researchers cannot expect a large response rate (AAPOR, 2009). In addition, as previously stated in Chapter 1, various limitations may have added to the response rate. It was possible that, because young people, age 18 and 19, were used as subjects and asked to complete the survey during the summer, they did not complete it because of family functions, vacations, camps, and other summer activities. The subject sample may not have accessed electronic mail as often because of the time of year, or since many are in a transition period in their life they may have discontinued use of this e-mail on record for one associated with a college or university. An additional limitation of the survey was that a few items showed up on the survey incorrectly. Those items were thrown out so as to minimize the possibility of error. A final limitation was the possibility of mistakes in the survey online that may have been confusing. When the survey was
deployed, it is possible that any number of questions may have been altered in ways that make the information unusable.

**Data analysis**

The researcher entered the data into an SPSS program (version 17.0) and ran basic descriptive statistics and frequencies.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Results

The purpose of this study was to compare the level of involvement in county leadership activities of senior Ohio 4-H members from their early 4-H career (ages 8-13) to their older 4-H career (ages 14-19). Findings of the study and data analysis are presented as a result of the 135-item survey instrument. This chapter encompasses the presentation of the findings for the study. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were computed for each variable. The findings of the study begin with a profile of the sample, and then are organized according to each of the objectives of the study.

The population for this study was Ohio senior 4-H members in their last year of eligible 4-H membership, with a viable electronic mail address. The initial sample of Ohio senior 4-H members was 334; however, corrections based upon invalid e-mail addresses resulted in a usable sample size of 171 4-H members. A total of 39 responses were received with one which was not usable as per the age restrictions of the study. This accounted for a 23% response rate. This study presents its findings according to the objectives determined in Chapter 1. The objectives were:

- Objective 1: To determine the leadership and communication skill competencies of senior Ohio 4-H members who participated in at least one county 4-H
leadership activity.

- Objective 2: To determine Ohio senior 4-H members’ perceptions of county leadership activities deemed to have the greatest impact in helping develop leadership and communication skills
- Objective 3: To explore the level of involvement of Ohio senior 4-H members from their early 4-H career (ages 8-13) to their older 4-H career (ages 14-19).

**4-H Member Background**

In terms of starting age of participation in the 4-H program, some respondents indicated that they began participating in 4-H activities as early as age three (2.6%, n=1) or four (7.9%, n=3). Others began at eligible 4-H membership age (eight and in the third grade, 18.4%, n=7) or later. Table 4.1 identifies respondents according to age. The highest number of respondents reported they began participating in the 4-H program at age 9.

Table 4.1.

*Starting Age of 4-H Participation of Respondents.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age started (yr.)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More than half of the respondents, 65.8% (n=25), indicated that they were not involved in the 4-H program as a Cloverbud, however, 34.2% (n=13) indicated they were involved in 4-H as a Cloverbud.

A majority of respondents, 86.8% (n=33) reported having been an officer in their 4-H Club. Respondents were asked to list offices held, if applicable. Common responses included: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Healthy & Safety officer, Recreation officer, Historian and News Reporter.

A profile of the 38 responding 4-H members who participated in the study is summarized briefly. Of all respondents, 71.1% (n=27) reported they were enrolled in college, 2.6% (n=1) reported being in the workforce, and 26.3% (n=10) did not respond. More than half of respondents (65.8%, n= 25) indicated that they wanted to go to college. Thirteen subjects did not respond (34.2%). When asked where they attended college, if applicable, respondents reported a variety of colleges. Some of the common responses were: The Ohio State University (21.0%, n=8) and Ohio University (5.3%, n=2). Most reported attending college in the State of Ohio. However, 28.9% (n=11) did not respond. Of those already in college, 10.5% (n=4) reported freshmen rank one, 18.4% (n=7) reported sophomore rank two, 34.2% (n=13) reported junior rank three, and 2.6% (n=1) reported senior rank four status. There were eleven subjects (28.9%) that did not respond and 5.3% (n=2) indicated that none of the responses provided applied to them. One (2.6%) respondent reported attendance in a two-year school and entering the second year. A wide range of majors of those attending college was reported. Several indicated a major area of study in the field of agriculture (15.8%, n=6), a business-related field
(7.9%, n=3), nursing (7.9%, n=3), and other various medical fields, education fields, and communication-related fields. Twenty-four (63.2%) respondents were female, 10.5% (n=4) were male, and 26.3% (n=10) did not respond. More than half of the respondents indicated they were white/Caucasian (71.1%, n=27). One respondent (2.6%) indicated he/she was Native American and 10 subjects did not respond (26.3%). Of total responses received, 2.6% (n=1) of respondents indicated they were 18 years of age, 31.6% (n=12) indicated they were 19 years of age, and 39.5% (n=15) indicated they were 20 years of age. The remaining ten subjects (26.3%) did not respond.

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of years they were involved in the 4-H program. The number of years reported ranged from two to 15. The largest number of respondents were involved in 4-H for 10 (18.4%, n=7) or 11 (18.4%, n=7) years. One to two respondents reported involvement for other years of participation in 4-H as listed. Table 4.2 identifies the number of years respondents reported involvement in the 4-H program.

Table 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in 4-H</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3 describes respondents’ involvement in county 4-H leadership activities. A majority of the respondents, 42.1% \((n=16)\) reported involvement in one to two activities and only 15.8% \((n=6)\) reported involvement in seven or more county 4-H leadership activities (see Table 4.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of activities</th>
<th>(n)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 or more</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 38 respondents in the study, six (15.8%) reported they were only involved from ages 14-19 in older youth opportunities/leadership activities.

**Objective 1: To determine the leadership and communication skill competencies of senior Ohio 4-H members who participated in at least one county 4-H leadership activity.**

Table 4.4 identifies responses of respondents according to their level of agreement (agree and strongly agree) with the identified skills. Respondents were asked to rate each skill using the following Likert-type scale: 0 = does not apply, SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = neutral (neither agree nor disagree), A = agree, SA = strongly agree. The highest number of responses (according to total number of responses for agree and strongly agree) as per the younger years referred to the skill that read “I am motivated to work hard at things.” There were 21 responses (55.3%) given for this skill for respondents’ younger years in the 4-H program. The lowest rated skill reported during
their younger years (5.3%, n=2) was “I feel relaxed when giving a speech.” The frequency was run to compare each skill based on respondents’ early years in 4-H versus their older years in 4-H. Every skill showed an increase in skill gain from respondents’ early years in 4-H through their older years in the program, however, skills with the most difference were (ranked most difference to least):

- I can deliver a formal, oral presentation using gestures and body movement. (n = 7 to 29 people = increase of 57.9%)
- I feel confident taking lead of a group. (n = 9 to 30 people = increase of 55.2%)
- I can deliver a formal, oral presentation using clear enunciation and tone. (n = 9 to 30 people = increase of 55.2%)
- I can discuss the techniques and principles involved in public speaking. (n = 4 to 24 people = increase of 52.6%)
- I can deliver a formal, oral presentation using correct vocabulary. (n = 10 to 30 people = increase of 52.6%)
- I can efficiently organize a group of people. (n = 10 to 30 people = increase of 52.6%) (see Table 4.4)
Table 4.4.

*Frequency of Agreement With Skills Based on Early Years and Older Years in 4-H.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Younger (SA/A)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Younger (SD/D)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Older (SA/A)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Older (SD/D)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Diff. Of SA/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am motivated to work hard at things.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can balance my time between school, work, and other activities.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work well with people different from me.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the value of working as a team.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I can effectively communicate with adults and others.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can set realistic goals for myself, which are obtainable.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can effectively participate in an interview.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have mostly positive thoughts about working with other people.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can correctly utilize parliamentary procedure.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am calm and relaxed when I have to participate in a group with others.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek opportunities to volunteer in my community.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident I can make the best decision in a tough situation.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cont’d*
Table 4.4.

Frequency of Agreement With Skills Based On Early Years and Older Years in 4-H. -continued-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Younger SA/A</th>
<th>Younger SD/D</th>
<th>Old SA/A</th>
<th>Older SD/D</th>
<th>Diff. Of SA/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident taking on a great deal of responsibility.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can deliver a formal, oral presentation using correct vocabulary.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can efficiently organize a group of people.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek leadership opportunities.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can prepare a 4-6 minute speech written within a 30-minute preparation time.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident in taking the lead of a group.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can deliver a formal, oral presentation using clear enunciation and tone.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can stand in front of a group and teach something.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can deliver a formal, oral presentation using gestures and body movement.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can discuss the techniques and principles involved in public speaking.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no fear of giving a speech.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel relaxed when giving a speech.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale used: 0 = does not apply, SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = neutral (neither agree nor disagree), A = agree, SA = strongly agree. The number of responses (n) and percentages (%) are based on the sum of strongly agree/agree (SA/A) and strongly disagree/disagree (SD/D) for younger and older 4-H years. The increase of skill gain is based on the difference between SA/A of younger & older years in 4-H.
Objective 2: To determine Ohio senior 4-H members’ perceptions of county leadership activities deemed to have the greatest impact in helping develop leadership and communication skills.

To achieve objective two, 4-H members were asked three different questions regarding their perceived impact 4-H had on them as an individual based on their 4-H involvement and experiences. The first open-ended question respondents reported on was their past 4-H experiences where they provided examples of their perceived impact of the 4-H program. Various responses were given including time management skills, learning life lessons, feeling confident and capable of handling situations, becoming leaders, and finding a balance between school, work, and other activities. However, the following themes emerged: college and career path, leadership, public speaking and responsibility, community outreach, and team work.

**College and career path**

- “My past experiences in 4-H have helped me to choose my career path.”
- “Without 4-H, I would not have the knowledge or experience to know that I want to pursue a career in agriculture. It taught me leadership skills and time management skills that would have not been possible.”
- “They were building blocks to the skills and experiences that helped me learn how to successfully make it with the years ahead with college and my career.”
- “I've really grown up through 4-H. It allowed me to learn some of the most important lessons of my life in a safe environment. Now entering the "real world" I'm capable of handling problems and working things out in ways that I never would have learned without 4-H.”
**Leadership**

- “I have become a leader because of my 4-H involvement.”
- “I have been impacted greatly by 4-H and all in a positive way. I credit the 4-H program to my leadership success as well as teaching me many great life lessons.”

**Public speaking and responsibility**

- “My involvement in 4-H has helped me out in public speaking, organizing myself with projects at college, leading groups of my peers and colleagues, etc.”
- “I have become a more responsible person with increased public speaking abilities.”

**Community outreach**

- “4-H was a very good impact on me it made me so that I could get more involved in community outreach activities.”

**Team work**

- “I feel the 4-H has taught me how to work with others in a group. It has taught me how to get along better and communicate with others. It has also taught me responsibility.”
- “It has given me the opportunity to work in a team setting as well as learn many different skills. I have also helped and taught the newer club members with what I have learned. I truly wished I could have been in 4-H longer.”

The second open-ended question asked participants which activity they felt had the most impact on them and why. The emerging themes from this question were: *Junior*
Fair Board, camp counselor and 4-H Camp, 4-H project work, and club officer/meetings.

**Junior Fair Board, camp counselor, and 4-H Camp**

- “My role in Junior Fair Board is where I really fell in love with leading, community service, and working as a group. I learned so many valuable lessons from my experiences as well as the other members and adults of the group.”

- “I feel that being a Junior Fair Board member and a camp counselor has taught me the most. I have learned how to deal with not only children, but also their parents. Thanks to 4-H it has inspired me to become a teacher and to encourage all of my students to take some kind of project in the 4-H whether it be an animal or a Home Ec. project.”

- “Being a camp counselor has taught me so much. I learned responsibility and leadership among many other things.”

- “4-H Camp because I was a leader, a friend, a teammate, and a role model all at the same time. I learned to work with so many different people at camp and with planning before.”

**4-H project work**

- “I think the most impacting on me however was the equine program. I learned not only how to take care of an animal, I learned the financial responsibilities involved as well as the hard work involved in taking care of another living being.”

- “Animals. They force you to take on responsibility not only for yourself, but for the animal. If you do not do what is necessary to care for the animal and complete the project you are not only hurting yourself but the animal.”
Club officer/meetings

- “I think being a secretary for my 4-H club allowed me to learn the most. I learned leadership skills and organizational skills in which I have utilized in college by obtaining leadership positions in my co-ed service fraternity.”
- “I learned the most from just 4-H meetings. I learned how to step up and be a leader. I learned how to be professional and lead activities.”

The third open-ended question about their 4-H involvement referred to respondents’ answer from the second question. It asked respondents to indicate what they felt within their involvement (in terms of skills, knowledge, etc.) had the most impact on them. In other words, what it was about the activity respondents named in question two that they felt was the most beneficial to their personal growth and development. The following themes emerged: taking lead of a group, passion for working with people, communication skills, and responsibility.

Take lead of a group

- “I learned to lead lessons and activities. It made me speak up with when discussing issues with my peers.”
- “I have been able to take the lead in a few very important projects at college when no one else was comfortable stepping in. Because of the skills I learned I was efficient and comfortable in the position.”
- “I was put in real situations and tasks that needed to be fulfilled and it was my job to lead and help with executing the plans. I had to learn quick how to best handle
each task.”

**Passion for working with people**

- “[Camp] Counseling was beneficial to my personal growth because it taught me that I have a passion for working with children.”

**Communication skills**

- “Based on my involvement in the 4-H program I have gained leadership and organization skills by being the secretary in my club. Also, through the many projects I completed, I gained communication skills when talking to judges and when researching my projects. Furthermore, I have gained skills such as sewing civil war dresses, taking great photos, and more. By taking on 4-H projects I know I can challenge myself and I know I can accomplish many things. 4-H is becoming a rare program, but it was a large part of my life. Many of my friends originate from my 4-H club and furthermore most of the best memories I hold are from my 4-H club and the times we spent together at fair. 4-H was most beneficial to give me skills for the rest of my life.”

- “I think my involvement in the Jr. Leadership and being a Jr. Fair Ambassador taught me the speaking skills and interview skills I need for the job world.”

- “This is also a hard question to answer with just one experience. I gained significant skills and knowledge of firearms, group work, and leadership just from attending weekly meetings and learning as I go, becoming a better shooter, and sharing my knowledge with the youth. However, I also learned a lot in preparing
information, and presentation it that will later come in handy in my engineering work field and working with others.”

• “I would have to say that it is because it helped me with my public speaking, and being around a mix of people. The JFB because it also helped with my public speaking, and also with difficult issues that you have to deal with, that not only with adults, but with the child involve in the issue.”

• “I have become a very outgoing person through my experiences of 4-H. I have learned parliamentary procedures and how to run a meeting. I can easily speak in front of a group of 20 or a group of more than 100 where as before I joined I never would have been able to do. I have become a very responsible individual and can set my own goals and achieve them in a timely manor.”

**Responsibility**

• “My horse. Learning from day one how to manage my bills from his care, taking time out of my day to make sure he was well taken care of, knowing what to look for as far as sickness goes, through my horse I literally learned to grow up and take responsibility for both of our well beings.”

**Objective 3: To explore the level of involvement of Ohio senior 4-H members from their early 4-H career (ages 8-13) to their older 4-H career (ages 14-19).**

To achieve objective three, subjects were asked to rate their level of involvement in the numerous county (and some state) 4-H leadership activities provided. Included in the involvement items was an option to specify other activities beyond what was listed. The following scale was used: NOE = not old enough, 0 = does not apply, 1 = not very
involved, 2 = somewhat involved, and 3 = very involved. Respondents indicated the answer which best applied to them according to the activity specified. Each activity is discussed briefly.

**Junior Fair Board**

During their younger years, more than half of respondents indicated that they either were not old enough to participate (34.2%, n=13), it did not apply to them (15.8%, n=6), or they did not respond at all (42.1%, n=16). Of the remaining respondents, 5.3% (n=2) indicated they were not very involved and 2.6% (n=1) indicated they were very involved in Junior Fair Board. During their older years, almost half of respondents indicated they were either not very involved (5.3%, n=2), somewhat involved (15.8%, n=6), or very involved (26.3%, n=10) in Junior Fair Board. Others indicated they were not old enough (28.9%, n=11), it did not apply to them (23.7%, n=9), or they did not respond to the item (28.9%, n=11).

**Junior Leadership Club**

Early in their 4-H career, respondents reported that they were mostly not old enough (18.4%, n=7), felt it did not apply to them during that time (36.8%, n=14), or did not respond to the item at all (39.5%, n=15). Only two respondents (5.3%) reported they were very involved in Junior Leadership during their younger years of 4-H. During their older years, however, 7.9% (n=3) reported they were not very involved, 7.9% (n=3) were somewhat involved and only 5.3% (n=2) were very involved in the club. Eleven subjects did not respond (28.9%) and 50.0% felt it did not apply to them (n=19).
**CARTEENS Instructor**

All respondents, during their early 4-H career, indicated that they were either not old enough to participate (18.4%, n=7), it did not apply to them during that time (39.5%, n=15), or did not respond to the item (42.1%, n=16). During their older years in the program, two respondents (5.3%) reported they were not very involved, one (2.6%) was somewhat involved, and three (7.9%) were very involved. All remaining respondents either did not respond (31.6%, n=12) or felt it did not apply to them (52.6%, n=20).

**Youth Safety Council**

None of the respondents reported involvement in Youth Safety Council when younger. Four (10.5%) indicated they were not old enough, 47.4% (n=18) felt it did not apply, and 42.1% (n=16) did not respond. During their older years of 4-H, however, two (5.3%) respondents indicated they were not very involved, 60.5% (n=23) indicated it did not apply, and 34.2% (n=13) did not respond.

**Camp counselor**

At a young age, more than half of respondents reported that they either were not old enough (31.6%, n=12) to participate, it did not apply to them then (23.7%, n=9), or they did not respond (39.5%, n=15). Two respondents (5.3%) reported they were very involved. During their older years, no respondents reported they were not old enough to participate and eleven (28.9%) did not respond. However, 10 (28.9%) respondents reported they were very involved as camp counselors, one (2.6%) was somewhat involved, and two (5.3%) reported they were not very involved. Fourteen (36.8%) felt the activity did not apply to them.
**Show announcer**

More than half of respondents did not participate as a show announcer during their early years of 4-H: not old enough – 23.7%, n=9; does not apply – 26.3%, n=10; no response – 42.1%, n=16. Two respondents reported being somewhat involved (5.3%) and one (2.6%) reported that they were not very involved. During their older 4-H career, six (15.8%) respondents reported they were very involved, four (10.5%) reported being somewhat involved, and three (7.9%) reported they were not very involved. Twelve (31.6%) felt it did not apply to them and 34.2% (n=13) did not respond.

**4-H Advisory Committee**

Respondents reported that they were either not old enough (23.7%, n=9), it did not apply to them during that time (28.9%, n=11), or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16) when it came to 4-H Advisory Committee. Two (5.3%), however, reported they were not very involved. During their older years, four (10.5%) were not very involved, two (5.3%) were somewhat involved, and five (13.2%) were very involved in the committee. Twelve (31.6%) did not respond and 39.5% (n=15) of respondents felt the activity did not apply to them.

**Horse Advisory Committee**

When they were involved in their early 4-H career, respondents reported they were either not old enough (15.8%, n=6) to participate, it did not apply to them during that time (34.2%, n=13), or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). One respondent reported they were not very involved (2.6%) and two others reported they were very involved (5.3%) at a young age. During their older years, more respondents reported the
activity did not apply to them (47.4%, n=18) and less (34.2%, n=13) did not respond. Two (5.3%) reported they were not very involved, none were somewhat involved, and five (13.2%) were very involved in the committee.

**Livestock Sale Committee**

Early on in their 4-H career, respondents reported that they were either not old enough to participate (26.3%, n=10), it did not apply to them (31.6%, n=12), or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). Later in their career, few respondents indicated that they were either not very involved (2.6%, n=1), somewhat involved (7.9%, n=3), or very involved (7.9%, n=3). Others reported it did not apply to them (50.0%, n=19) or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

**Animal Education Committee**

Like the previous committee, respondents reported no involvement at an early age. Six respondents reported they were not old enough (15.8%), 42.1% (n=16) indicated it did not apply, and 42.1% (n=16) did not respond. During their older career, respondents indicated that they were not very involved (2.6%, n=1), somewhat involved (2.6%, n=1), and very involved (7.9%, n=3). Other respondents indicated it did not apply to them (55.3%, n=21) or did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

**County 4-H Ambassador**

Only one respondent (2.6%) was not very involved as a county ambassador during their early career. Eight others (21.1%) reported they were not old enough to participate, 34.2% (n=13) indicated it did not apply to them, and 42.1% (n=16) did not respond. When older, more respondents indicated the activity did not apply to them.
Four (10.5%) indicated they were not very involved and 5.3% (n=2) were very involved. Twelve (31.6%) did not respond.

**State 4-H Ambassador**

As younger 4-H members respondents indicated that they were either not old enough to participate in the activity (21.1%, n=8), felt it did not apply to them (34.2%, n=13) or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). One respondent, however, reported they were not very involved (2.6%). During their older career respondents indicated a little more involvement in the activity. Two (5.3%) were very involved, one (2.6%) was somewhat involved, and three (7.9%) were not very involved. More than half of respondents felt it did not apply to them (52.6%, n=20) and the remaining respondents did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

**4-H Club**

When younger members half of the respondents reported they were very involved (50.0%, n=19) in their 4-H club. Two others (5.3%) indicated they were somewhat involved. Although involvement in a 4-H Club is a requirement, there were three (7.9%) respondents that felt the activity did not apply to them. Fourteen (36.8%) did not respond. However, during their older years, respondents reported more involvement in their 4-H club. Almost two-thirds of respondents were very involved in their 4-H club (63.2%, n=24) and four more (10.5%) were somewhat involved. The remaining subjects did not respond (26.3%, n=10).

**Judging team**

Respondents indicated that during their early years of 4-H few were involved on
judging teams. One (2.6%) was very involved and four (10.5%) were not very involved. Six (15.8%) reported not being old enough, 28.9% (n=11) respondents reported it did not apply to them, and the last 16 (42.1%) did not respond. During their older years, four respondents (10.5%) reported they were very involved, two (5.3%) reported they were somewhat involved, and three (7.9%) were not very involved. Seventeen (44.7%) felt it did not apply to them and 31.6% (n=12) of subjects did not respond.

**Counselor in training**

When involved in their early career of 4-H, respondents reported that they were either not old enough (21.1%, n=8) to participate or did not respond to the activity (42.1%, n=16). Another 12 (31.6%) felt the activity did not apply to them and two (5.3%) reported being very involved in the activity. During their older years of involvement, respondents indicated more involvement as a counselor in training: Very involved – 10.5%, n=4; somewhat involved – 2.6%, n=1; and not very involved – 2.6%, n=1. Twenty respondents (52.6%) felt the activity did not apply to them and 12 did not respond (31.6%).

**National 4-H Congress**

No respondents reported any involvement with 4-H Congress at a young age because they felt they were not old enough (10.5%, n=4), it did not apply to them (47.4%, n=18) or they just did not respond (42.1%, n=16). During their older 4-H career, one respondent (2.6%) indicated he/she was somewhat involved and one (2.6%) reported not being very involved. All other respondents indicated Congress either did not apply to them (63.2%, n=24) or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).
Citizenship Washington Focus

In their early 4-H career, respondents indicated that they either were not old enough to participate (15.8%, n=6), did not feel it applied to them (42.1%, n=16), or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). When older, three respondents reported they were either not involved (2.6%, n=1), somewhat involved (2.6%, n=1), or very involved (2.6%, n=1). Thirteen subjects did not respond (34.2%) and 57.9% (n=22) felt it did not apply to them.

State Teen Council

At a younger age, this activity either did not apply to respondents (39.5%, n=15), they were not old enough (18.4%, n=7), or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). During their older age, few respondents reported being very involved (2.6%, n=1), somewhat involved (2.6%, n=1), or not very involved (2.6%, n=1). Remaining subjects felt it did not apply to them (60.5%, n=23) or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

State Teen Conference

Early on, respondents reported that they were either not old enough to participate (18.4%, n=7), did not feel it applied to them (39.5%, n=15) or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). Later in their 4-H career, respondents reported that they were either not very involved (7.9%, n=3), were somewhat involved (2.6%, n=1), or very involved (2.6%, n=1). More than half of respondents indicated the activity did not apply to them (55.3%, n=21) or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

State Leadership Camp

During their early 4-H career, respondents indicated they were not old enough to participate in the state camp (21.1%, n=8), the camp did not apply to them at that time
(36.8%, n=14) or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). During their older 4-H career, respondents indicated that they were very involved (5.3%, n=2), somewhat involved (2.6%, n=1), not very involved (5.3%, n=2), it did not apply to them (55.3%, n=21), or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

**State Conservation Camp**

At their young age, respondents reported that they were not old enough to attend camp (21.1%, n=8), it did not apply to them (36.8%, n=14), or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). When older, respondents reported they were very involved in camp (5.3%, n=2), somewhat involved (2.6%, n=1), not very involved (2.6%, n=1), it did not apply to them (57.9%, n=22), or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

**Sea Camp**

Eight respondents reported they were not old enough (21.1%) for camp during their earlier years of 4-H. Fourteen (36.8%) felt it did not apply to them and 42.1% (n=16) did not respond. When older, 2.6% (n=1) of respondents were very involved, 5.3% (n=2) were not very involved, 60.5% (n=23) felt it did not apply, and 31.6% (n=12) did not respond.

**4-H Foundation Board**

Respondents indicated that in their early years of 4-H they were not old enough (18.4%, n=7) to participate on the board, 39.5% (n=15) felt it did not apply to them, and 42.1% (n=16) did not respond. When older, respondents indicated slightly more involvement. Two respondents (5.3%) were very involved, two (5.3%) were not very involved, 57.9% (n=22) felt it did not apply to them, and 31.6% (n=12) did not respond.
Community service

When younger, nearly half of respondents indicated they were either very involved (21.1%, n=8) or somewhat involved (21.1%, n=8) in service opportunities. Six (15.8%) felt it did not apply to them and 42.1% (n=16) did not respond. More respondents participated when older. Thirteen (34.2%) were very involved, 21.1% (n=8) were somewhat involved, and 2.6% (n=1) were not very involved. Four (10.5%) felt it did not apply to them and 31.6% (n=12) did not respond.

4-H Club family outings

Almost half of respondents participated in club family outings when younger with 39.5% (n=15) very involved and 7.9% (n=3) somewhat involved. Others felt it did not apply to them (13.2%, n=5) or they did not respond (39.5%, n=15). More than half of respondents either were very involved (39.5%, n=15) or somewhat involved (18.4%, n=7) when older. Of the remaining respondents, 7.9% (n=3) were not very involved, 5.3% (n=2) felt it did not apply, and 28.9% (n=11) did not respond.

4-H Club picnics

Half of respondents reported being very involved (39.5%, n=15) or somewhat involved (10.5%, n=4) in club picnics when younger. Five (13.2%) felt they did not apply to them and 36.8% (n=14) did not respond. During their older years, respondents reported even more involved, whether being very involved (47.4%, n=18), somewhat involved (10.5%, n=4), or not very involved (7.9%, n=3). An additional 7.9% (n=3) did not feel it applied to them and 26.3% (n=10) did not respond.
4-H Club meetings

More than half of respondents were very involved (52.6%, n=20) in club meetings at a young age and 2.6% (n=1) were somewhat involved. Three (7.9%) felt it did not apply to them and 36.8% (n=14) did not respond. When older, more respondents reported being very involved in club meetings (57.9%, n=22), somewhat involved (10.5%, n=4), or not very involved (5.3%, n=2). Ten did not respond (26.3%).

4-H Club officer

When younger, 7.9% (n=3) of respondents reported they were not old enough to hold office, 15.8% (n=6) reported it did not apply to them, and 36.8% (n=14) did not respond. However, 28.9% (n=11) were very involved, 7.9% (n=3) were somewhat involved, and 2.6% (n=1) were not very involved. During their older 4-H years, half of respondents (50.0%, n=19) reported they were very involved as an officer, 5.3% (n=2) were somewhat involved, and 10.5% (n=4) were not very involved. Of those remaining, 7.9% (n=3) felt it did not apply to them and 26.3% (n=10) did not respond.

4-H Pledge contest

During their younger years, respondents reported they were not old enough to participate (2.6%, n=1), were very involved (5.3%, n=2), were not very involved (2.6%, n=1), it did not apply to them (47.4%, n=18) or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). During their older years, respondents reported they were either very involved (5.3%, n=2), not very involved (5.3%, n=2), it did not apply to them (57.9%, n=22) or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).


**County demonstration contest**

When younger, respondents reported they were very involved (10.5%, n=4), somewhat involved (2.6%, n=1), not very involved (2.6%, n=1), not old enough to participate (5.3%, n=2), that the activity did not apply to them (36.8%, n=14), or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). When older, respondents indicated they were either very involved (7.9%, n=3), somewhat involved (10.5%, n=4), not very involved (2.6%, n=1), the activity did not apply (47.4%, n=18), or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

**State demonstration contest**

During their early 4-H career, most respondents reported that the activity either did not apply to them (44.7%, n=17) or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). Few reported that they were either very involved (7.9%, n=3), somewhat involved (2.6%, n=1), or not old enough to participate (2.6%, n=1). During their older 4-H career, more respondents reported that the activity did not apply to them (52.6%, n=20) or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12). Only 5.3% (n=2) were very involved, 2.6% (n=1) were somewhat involved, and 7.9% (n=3) were not very involved.

**County health & safety speaking contest**

During their younger years, four respondents (10.5%) were not very involved in the activity, one (2.6%) was somewhat involved, two (5.3%) reported they were not old enough, 39.5% (n=15) reported it did not apply, and 42.1% (n=16) did not respond. During their older years, 2.6% (n=1) reported they were very involved, 5.3% (n=2) were somewhat involved, 7.9% (n=3) were not very involved, 52.6% (n=20) reported it did not apply to them, and 31.6% (n=12) did not respond.
**District health & safety speaking contest**

Respondents reported that, when younger, they were either not old enough to participate (2.6%, n=1), were not very involved (5.3%, n=2), the activity did not apply to them (50.0%, n=19), or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). When older, they indicated that they were either very involved (2.6%, n=1), somewhat involved (2.6%, n=2), not very involved (5.3%, n=2), the activity did not apply (57.9%, n=22), or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

**State health & safety speaking contest**

When younger, respondents reported that the activity did not apply (52.6%, n=20), they were not very involved (2.6%, n=1), they were not old enough (2.6%, n=1), or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). When older, respondents reported that the activity did not apply (60.5%, n=23), they were not very involved (5.3%, n=2), they were very involved (2.6%, n=1), or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

**4-H Creed speaking contest**

Most respondents either reported the activity did not apply to them when younger (50.0%, n=19) or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). Three (7.9%) indicated they were not old enough. Almost two-thirds reported the activity did not apply (65.8%, n=25) when older, they were not very involved (2.6%, n=1), or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

**What 4-H Means to Me**

Respondents who participated in this speaking contest when younger indicated that they were either very involved (2.6%, n=1), somewhat involved (5.3%, n=2), not
very involved (2.6%, n=1), not old enough (5.3%, n=2), it did not apply (42.1%, n=16),
or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). Three reported they were very involved (7.9%)
when older, 10.5% (n=4) were not very involved, 50.0% (n=19) reported it did not apply,
and 31.6% (n=12) did not respond.

Skill-a-thons

During their younger years in 4-H, respondents reported they were very involved
(26.3%, n=10), somewhat involved (2.6%, n=1), not very involved (7.9%, n=3), it did not
apply to them (23.7%, n=9), and 39.5% (n=15) did not respond. When older, 36.8%
(n=14) were very involved, 2.6% (n=1) were somewhat involved, 7.9% (n=3) were not
very involved, 23.7% (n=9) reported it did not apply, and 28.9% (n=11) did not respond.

Fair Royalty

When younger, many respondents indicated no involvement with no response to
the activity (39.5%, n=15) and 28.9% (n=11) reported the activity did not apply to them.
Nine (23.7%) reported they were not old enough, two (5.3%) reported they were very
involved, and 2.6% (n=1) reported not being very involved. When older, more
respondents indicated they were very involved, 18.4% (n=7), 2.6% (n=1) reported being
somewhat involved, and 10.5% (n=4) were not very involved. Of the remaining
respondents, 42.1% (n=16) reported the activity did not apply to them and 26.3% (n=10)
did not respond.

State Queen contest

Most respondents, when in their younger years of 4-H, reported that the activity
either did not apply to them (42.1%, n=16) or they did not respond (42.1%, n=16). Six
(15.8%) reported they were not old enough to participate. When in their older years of 4-H, respondents indicated very little involvement in the contest. Only 2.6% (n=1) were very involved, 2.6% (n=1) were somewhat involved, and 2.6% (n=1) were not very involved. Of the remaining respondents, 63.2% (n=24) reported it did not apply to them and 28.9% (n=11) did not respond.

**Junior Leadership Conference**

No response (42.1%, n=16) and does not apply (42.1%, n=16) accounted for nearly all of respondents’ indications during their younger years. Six (15.8%, n=6) indicated they were not old enough. During their older years, 5.3% (n=2) indicated they were very involved, 2.6% (n=1) were somewhat involved, 5.3% (n=2) were not very involved, 55.3% (n=21) reported it did not apply, and 31.6% (n=12) did not respond.

**4-H Camp**

When younger, 18.4% (n=7) of respondents were very involved in camp, 5.3% (n=2) were somewhat involved, and 13.2% (n=5) were not very involved. One respondent reported not being old enough (2.6%), 21.1% (n=8) indicated it did not apply to them, and 39.5% (n=15) did not respond. When older, 23.7% (n=9) were very involved, 10.5% (n=4) were somewhat involved, 2.6% (n=1) were not very involved, 34.2% (n=13) reported it did not apply, and 28.9% (n=11) did not respond.

**Food and Fashion Board**

During their early 4-H career, respondents indicated that they either were not old enough (7.9%, n=3) to participate, were very involved (5.3%, n=2), were not very involved (7.9%, n=3), it did not apply to them (42.1%, n=16), or they did not respond
During their older 4-H career, respondents indicated that they were either very involved (5.3%, n=2), not very involved (5.3%, n=2), the activity did not apply to them (63.2%, n=24), or they did not respond (26.3%, n=10).

**Quiz Bowl**

When younger, respondents reported that the activity either did not apply to them (50.0%, n=19), they were somewhat involved (2.6%, n=1), or they did not respond (47.4%, n=18). When older, respondents indicated that the activity either did not apply to them (63.2%, n=24), they were not very involved (2.6%, n=1), they were somewhat involved (2.6%, n=1), or they did not respond (31.6%, n=12).

**Other 4-H activities**

Four respondents (10.5%) gave additional activities in which they were involved that included: Ohio Holstein Queen (2.6%, n=1), county and state winner for 4-H shooting sports (2.6%, n=1), county horse royalty (2.6%, n=1), and other 4-H club committees (2.6%, n=1).

**Top overall activities of involvement**

Of all the possible activities listed for involvement, the following were the top younger activities where respondents reported they were very involved: 4-H Club meetings (52.6%, n=20), 4-H Club (50.0%, n=19), 4-H Club family outings (39.5%, n=15), and 4-H Club picnics (39.5%, n=15). The top activities reported by respondents to be very involved during their older years were: 4-H Club (63.2%, n=24), 4-H Club meetings (57.9%, n=22), and 4-H Club officer (50.0%, n=19).
**Top county activities of involvement**

The top county activities of involvement as reported by respondents were: Skill-a-thon (36.8%, n=14), Junior Fair Board (26.3%, n=10), camp counselor (26.3%, n=10), and 4-H Camp (23.7%, n=9).

**Top state activities of involvement**

The top county activities of involvement as reported by respondents were: State Leadership Camp (5.3%, n=2), State Conservation Camp (5.3%, n=2), 4-H Foundation Board (5.3%, n=2), State demonstration contest (5.3%, n=2), and Junior Leadership Conference (5.3%, n=2).

**Other non-4-H activities**

Section five of the survey asked subjects to indicate other activities they were involved in besides 4-H. Table 4.5 shows each activity and the number of respondents who participated. The highest ranked activity indicated by respondents was National Honor Society (50.0%, n=19). Several respondents also indicated they were involved in their church, college activities, band, and Student Council. However, respondents indicated no participation in seven of the activities listed (see Table 4.5).
Table 4.5.

Respondent Involvement in Activities Outside of 4-H.

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<td>Church youth group, choir, bell choir</td>
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<td>Majorette/Drum Major/Drill Team</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrestling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Club</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chess Club</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacrosse</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Perceived specialization area**

The next section focused on which specialization area subjects felt their county 4-H educator worked with them the most. Table 4.6 identifies the perceived areas of emphasis according to respondents. Of all responses, 57.9% (n=22) of respondents indicated that they perceive their educator to work with them mostly on 4-H projects. Least worked on, according to respondents, was CARTEENS (10.5%, n=4) and state involvement (10.5%, n=4).

Table 4.6.  
*Respondents’ Perceptions of Educator Emphasis Area.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of emphasis</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-H projects</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp counseling/4-H Camp</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Fair Board</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public speaking</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety programs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARTEENS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State involvement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Motivation to stay involved**

The next question asked respondents to indicate their motivation to stay involved in the 4-H program. Multiple reasons for retention were provided and subjects were able
to choose all that applied to them. Table 4.7 identifies the reasons provided and responses of respondents to each one. The reasons respondents reported they stayed in 4-H longer was because they made lots of new friends (63.2%, n=24), learned new things (57.9%, n=22), and lots of opportunities (57.9%, n=22). The least likely reason subjects reported they stayed in 4-H was that they had to because their parents were also involved (2.6%, n=1) and because their friends made them (2.6%, n=1) (see Table 4.7).
Table 4.7.

*Respondents’ Reasons for Program Retention.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for staying in 4-H</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I made lots of friends</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning new things</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of opportunities</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like to help people</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for college/job</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with others</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building my resume</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about myself</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like teaching others new things</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a difference in my community</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project work</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like to challenge myself</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forces me to “step out of my box”</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like to lead people</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking in front of people</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No interest in school activities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents made me</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends made me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents did it so I had to, too</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had to stay in 4-H or get a job</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the study based on each of the three objectives of the study. A profile of respondents was discussed in addition to background information on 4-H participation of respondents. Each objective was discussed in depth and included data as a result of analysis through SPSS. The end of the chapter discussed 4-H members’ perception of what they thought their county 4-H educator worked on the most with them as well as reasons 4-H members stayed motivated to remain involved in the 4-H program.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSION

Overview of study

Chapter 5 summarizes the intent, procedures, findings, conclusions, and implications of this study. In addition, recommendations for further research are given. This study sought to investigate the level of involvement of senior Ohio 4-H members in county 4-H leadership activities that required a significant amount of public speaking from the beginning of a 4-H member’s career (ages 8-13) to the end of their eligible 4-H career (ages 14-19).

The survey instrument was adapted from Akers’ (2000) survey on Agricultural Communication competencies and McCroskey’s (1982) PRCA-24 survey. Additional question items were added to the survey instrument to meet the needs and objectives of the study. The online survey was composed of 135 items, which included both quantitative and qualitative (open-ended) type questions, and was distributed to senior Ohio 4-H members with a valid electronic mail address (n=171) as per the 2008 Blue Ribbon Enrollment program list provided by the Ohio State 4-H Office. Limitations of the study due to the low response rate make this study not generalizable to other samples and populations outside of the group used in this study. Because of the low response rate
extreme precautions were taken in terms of implications, however the data does show insight into the impact of the 4-H program for some youth.

The instrument was made available to 4-H members via a link within an e-mail. The e-mail included a letter to individuals stating the purpose of the study and gave them an overview of the participation process. The questionnaire was converted to an online Web form using Survey Monkey, which is used by businesses and organizations to create professional and customized questionnaires. Three additional waves of follow-up were conducted with non-respondents.

The following objectives guided this study:

- **Objective 1:** To determine the leadership and communication skill competencies of senior Ohio 4-H members who participated in at least one county 4-H leadership activity.
- **Objective 2:** To determine Ohio senior 4-H members’ perceptions of county leadership activities deemed to have the greatest impact in helping develop leadership and communication skills.
- **Objective 3:** To explore the level of involvement of Ohio senior 4-H members from their early 4-H career (ages 8-13) to their older 4-H career (ages 14-19).

**Discussion**

A total of 39 4-H members responded to the study, however, one was deemed unusable because of age restrictions, for an overall response rate of 23%. Of those that responded with the information, 10.5% (n=4) of respondents were male and 63.2% (n=24) were female. Subjects ranged in age from 18-20 years of age, and were involved in 4-H for as many as 15 years and as little as two years. Of those sampled, the average age subjects started 4-H was about nine years old. Twenty-seven (71.1%) respondents indicated they were enrolled in college and one respondent (2.6%) indicated he/she was
in the workforce. Of the 38 respondents in the study, 28 of them have moved on to either college or the workforce. This means that a fairly high percentage of 4-H members have decided to continue their education and/or practice the skills they have already gained in a different environment and context, which may help them become more individually well-rounded and competent in various skill and knowledge areas. The fact that nearly three quarters of subjects were enrolled in college says that 4-H continues to produce young people that aspire to be high-achievers through being active and hard working citizens no matter where their future leads them and what situations they may encounter. Lobley and Peronto (2007) did a study that took classroom learning to practical application. As a result, 28 of the 31 (about 90%) members enrolled in the course were offered a job upon completion of the program. This shows that what 4-H members have learned throughout their 4-H career and experiences carries on into their next steps into the future, whether that is a position in the workforce or attending college.

Based on the data associated with Objective 1 and the communication skills provided, the majority of respondents displayed a significant increase in skills/knowledge gained for each skill by the time they reached older 4-H age (as defined in this study as 14-19 years of age). Respondents indicated they were more confident in taking lead of a group, delivering presentations using a variety of body movements and vocal cues, standing in front of a group and teaching something, working with other people, taking on responsibility, and making decisions. These findings indicate that the practice of skills over a given amount of time enhances an individual’s confidence in their perception of their own abilities. These findings also show that because of their
involvement in 4-H and length of involvement to practice and reinforce skills, 4-H members are not only more likely to stay in 4-H longer (Ferrari & Turner, 2006), but 4-H members are also better equipped with the skills and abilities to be successful in college, the workforce, and beyond. In addition, having these skills and feeling confident using them may mean a higher success rate in scholarship interviews, job interviews, job promotions, and other areas of accomplishment. It must be noted that this study only looked at 4-H involvement. Involvement in other student organizations related to leadership may have also played into this role. However, participants did indicate communication skills gained as a value of their 4-H experience, so we are confident this experience did have an impact. It is also important to note that some members were not in 4-H in younger years so results may show an increase due to the number of respondents answering the older questions.

Objective 2 described respondents’ perception of the impact of 4-H on them individually. Respondents were asked to provide responses to three open-ended questions based on how they felt the 4-H program has impacted them throughout the length of their involvement. The first question referred to the impact of 4-H members’ past 4-H experiences. Respondents revealed a plethora of responses, which included various themes, such as 4-H helped individual’s choose a career path (as found by Rockwell et al., 1984), 4-H taught individual’s leadership and time management skills, 4-H helped members learn life lessons, 4-H helped members feel confident and capable of handling situations, 4-H helped members become leaders, 4-H enhanced members’ communication skills, 4-H helped members find a balance between work and play, 4-H
gave members the opportunity to take on responsibility (similar to the study done by Boleman, Cummings, and Briers, 2004, on parent’s perceptions of skills gained by 4-H members taking a beef project). Another theme revealed by respondents was that 4-H allowed members to become more involved in community outreach and helping people (similar to findings from Safrit & Auck, 2003; Shannon & Robertson, 2007). Finally, respondents indicated that 4-H helped them with team work and working with diverse groups of people (as found by Morreale et al., n.d.). The fact that 4-H members reported learning all these skills and feeling that they were confident enough to use them in various situations including outside of 4-H, shows that involvement in the 4-H program is making young people more aware of themselves and their abilities, and providing young people with the skill sets that will help them succeed in their future endeavors. Young people are continually put in situations where they have to use their knowledge and skills to make the best possible decisions. Learning these skills and more, especially at a young age, gives young people the foundation to practice the things they have learned in hopes that they will make positive decisions in various situations in the future.

The second question asked respondents to indicate which activity they were involved in that they felt had the most impact on them and why. Various activities and themes arose. Members felt that Junior Fair Board helped them with leading and dealing with people, team work, and community service. Camp counseling, as indicated by respondents, helped them with responsibility and leadership, and working with different kinds of people. From other activities, members reported that they learned responsibility, leadership, and organizational skills. The county leadership activities respondents
indicated as most beneficial to them were activities in which give 4-H members a safe environment to practice and reinforce the skills they learned in an effort to shape them into confident, intelligent, and informed citizens of their respective communities. These activities give 4-H members the opportunity to learn through hands-on activities that help prepare them for the future no matter what lies ahead. Practice and teaching in responsibility (Boleman, Cummings, & Briers, 2004; Radhakrishna & Doamekpor, 2009) and working with different sorts of people (Morreale et al., n.d.) are things young people will encounter in their lives as they make their way into the workforce or college. Dealing with people and communicating with them effectively (Zarefsky, 1999) are critical to success in the “real world.”

The third and final question of objective two wanted respondents to take their activity from question two and discuss what characteristic(s) from that activity was most beneficial to the individual. Various characteristics were indicated by respondents, such as learning to lead people, building confidence, passion for working with people, learning life skills through 4-H projects, challenging self and accomplishing things, speaking and interview skills for the job world, being around a mix of people, and learning to set realistic goals for themselves. Having various activities available to young people that put them in a variety of different contexts helps them learn to master the concept of working with people and doing it effectively and efficiently. As reported by 4-H alumni in a study done by Radhakrishna and Doamekpor (2009), 4-H was most helpful in preparation of their life skills, values, and responsibilities. In addition, a study by Cantrell, Heinsohn, and Doebler (1989) showed that “teens' general participation in 4-H
Club activities showed a positive and statistically significant relationship to their life skill development in the areas of leadership, personal development, and citizenship” (para. 7). These studies mentioned, in addition to this study, have given multiple ideas as to the effectiveness and impact of the 4-H program. These studies showed that 4-H members are being affected by the 4-H program in a positive way.

The third objective sought to explore the level of involvement of 4-H members from their early 4-H career (ages 8-13) to their older 4-H career (ages 14-19). Respondents were provided with a lengthy list of possible activities in which they may have been involved and asked to check all that applied to them. The increase of involvement depended on the activity. Subjects tended to report that they were more involved in activities when older rather than when they were younger. However, some activities provided were ones in which 4-H members could only be involved in their older years of 4-H membership. One particular activity of greater involvement was member’s 4-H club. Respondents tended to be more involved in the activities within their 4-H club (very involved when younger – 50.0%, n=19 and older – 63.2%, n=24) than they reported for various county activities. Respondents tended to be involved as club officers both when younger (28.9%, n=11) and older (50.0%, n=19). Members also reported being very involved in 4-H club family outings (younger – 39.5%, n=15; older – 39.5%, n=15) and 4-H club picnics (younger – 39.5%, n=15; older 47.4%, n=18). Other 4-H club activities that stood out were club meetings, which accounted for 52.6% (n=20) when younger and 57.9% (n=22) when older.

Although respondents tended to be more involved in community club activities,
they also tended to be very involved in county activities, such as skill-a-thons (younger – 26.3%, n=10; older – 36.8%, n=14), community service when older (34.2%, n=13), Junior Fair Board (26.3%, n=10) when older, and camp counseling when older (26.3%, n=10). It was surprising that there was not even more involvement in camp counseling and Junior Fair Board, but that subjects found they were more involved in their individual club programs. It does not seem as though as much practice of communication skills could take place in 4-H clubs, however, club programs vary. It was also surprising that there was not as much involvement in safety education programs since safety education has been a key area of study and concern across the state and the country. None of the respondents reported any involvement in programs such as Youth Safety Council, and very few reported involvement as CARTEENS instructors (7.9%, n=3). CARTEENS was a golden opportunity for members to stand in front of a group and teach about positive decision making, or feel confident taking the lead of a group through various safety exercises. This activity was a prime example of making a presentation to a group of people using body movement and gestures, and variations of tone to maintain audience interest and make a difference in the life of an audience member. As a program taught by teens for teens, one would have thought CARTEENS would be a program/leadership activity that would have generated more interest than shown in this study. The fact that 4-H members, based on this study, tend to be more involved in their club programs than county activities may mean that county leadership activities are not as effective and time worthy as the opportunities and responsibilities 4-H members can acquire from their community club programs. Other factors such as time commitment in other activities or
parental influence may also come into play, as well as club rules which may require more time in community club activities. This is an area in which more research is needed.

Additional discussion involves 4-H members’ motivations to stay involved. The top reasons members remained involved in 4-H were: 1. made lots of friends (63.2%, n=24); 2. learning new things (57.9%, n=22); 3. lots of opportunities (57.9%, n=22); 4. responsibility (52.6%, n=20); 5. like to help people (50.0%, n=19); and 6. preparation for college/job (47.4%, n=18). It is important, first of all, that young people meet a variety of new people so as to learn about working with people different from them who have different ideas and different ways of going about things. Respondents indicated that they enjoy learning new things and like the infinite amount of opportunities 4-H has to offer. This is a plus for the 4-H program because providing opportunities to discover new things about oneself and things in the natural world are important for young people to know and understand for sake of becoming well-rounded, informed people. By providing so many learning opportunities for young people, the 4-H program sets itself apart from other youth organizations. This is because being involved in the 4-H program creates the possibility of high achievement and accomplishment as well as humility and a positive attitude. The 4-H program offers kids so many different things that help prepare them for what is to come and help them make themselves better people, hence the 4-H motto “To Make the Best Better.”

Research was also conducted to explore the interpretation of respondents of what area their county educator specializes in. What respondents felt their educator pushed the most in their county was 4-H projects (57.9%, n=22), camp counseling/4-H camp
(36.8%, n=14), Junior Fair Board (34.2%, n=13), and Livestock (34.2%, n=13). The things respondents indicated educator’s work them the least on was safety programs (13.2%, n=5), CARTEENS (10.5%, n=4), and state involvement (10.5%, n=4). In trying to determine if county 4-H educators had an impact on 4-H members and the activities available to them based on the educator’s area of specialization, it was difficult to determine if there was in fact any impact. This is an area of study that needs further research. However, as stated earlier in regards to safety program involvement, it was surprising to see that safety education is not a top priority in the State of Ohio as per the responses of subjects in the study. Being that vehicular crashes are the number one killer of teenagers, these are surprising statistics. Additionally, public speaking (28.9%, n=11) ranked mediocre in the list, which was also surprising considering the research, as discussed in Chapter 2, which stated that effective communication skills were noted by employers to be a top priority when looking to hire employees and are used on a daily basis in most jobs (O’Hair et al., 2007; Lucas, 2007; Grice & Skinner, 1998; NACE, 2003; AACU, 2007; Stevens, 2005; Jones & Lavallee, 2009; Zarefsky, 1999; Arnett, 2003; Bowers & Metcalf, 2008; Boileman, Cummings, & Briers, 2004; Kazis & Kopp, 1997; Beebe & Beebe, 2006). Because so many reports say that young people should be learning and acquiring strong, effective communication skills now to help them in the future shows the importance of public speaking and the fact that these skills should be taught and practiced even more throughout county 4-H programs across the state. It could also be that respondents were unaware of their educator’s area of specialization, and only selected things they were involved in. More research is needed in this area to
Because the sample for this study was small, and the response rate was even smaller, it is hard to be able to generalize the findings of this study to the population of 4-H members in the State of Ohio in their last year of 4-H because it is not representative of the entire population. Also, it is possible that the 4-H members studied were not as involved in county leadership activities as other members and other outside activities, and therefore makes it hard to generalize to senior 4-H members in Ohio. In addition, the age which was looked at in this study falls where subjects are preparing to move away to college and/or are busy working so even though they are still enrolled as 4-H members in their respective counties, they may not have the time to become as involved. However, these findings do shed light on to the issue and provide directions for further research in this area.

The one thing about this study that was surprising was that respondents showed a significant difference in skills gained from when they were younger to their older age. The significance for each skills shows that 4-H members are gaining skills and confidence by being involved for multiple years that will continue to aid in their personal growth and development as an individual. This study was meant to investigate the possibility of an increase in skills and knowledge gained from 4-H members’ early 4-H career to the end of their eligible 4-H career, and the study appears to have achieved its mission.

This study supports the findings of other studies. For example, Radhakrishna and Doamekpor (2009) noted that participation in 4-H projects and activities contributed to
learning leadership and communication skills. This study found that, through open-ended questions, 4-H members reported learning valuable leadership and communication skills by being involved in 4-H activities. Also, researchers have reported a relationship between 4-H participation and perceived life skill development (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992; Boleman, Cummings, & Briers, 2004). Boleman, Cummings, and Briers (2004) noted that their data suggests that the longer young people are engaged in a 4-H project (and in the case of this study, a 4-H activity), the more likely they are to develop skills that will enhance their growth into adulthood. In support of this study, Cantrell, Heinsohn, and Doebler (1989) found that 4-H activities and events do promote life skill development, especially when leadership roles come into play. They noted that the 4-H activities of the Pennsylvania 4-H program are most effective when it comes to the development of life skills. Also, as Ferrari and Turner (2006) suggested, 4-H youth remain in the 4-H program and activities for a variety of reasons that may include learning new things and remaining engaged in learning as well as fulfilling meaningful roles, such as leadership positions, which aid in effective youth development.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations for further research and practice are provided as a result of examining the sample and variables included in this study.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was meant to focus specifically on 4-H members in their last year of eligible 4-H membership and their involvement in activities which required a significant amount of public speaking. However, this study could have further recognized this
involvement with a larger sample. It is recommended that future research re-survey the same group (4-H members in their last year of eligible membership) and again look specifically at public speaking involvement. In addition, since the study sought to research the level of involvement, it is recommended that the levels be distinguished throughout and compared to obtain information on the impact of 4-H based on how involved 4-H members may actually be.

Research is needed to indicate whether 4-H members who participate in leadership development activities that require a significant amount of public speaking, and other skills, are better equipped with the necessary communication skills to be successful. Since communication skills have been known to be extremely important in the business world and determine success (Morreale et al., n.d.; Zarefsky, 1999; Cochran & Ferrari, 2008; Beebe & Beebe, 2006; Ferrari, Arnett, & Cochran, 2007; Ricketts & Rudd, 2002), it would be relevant to examine if 4-H members are, in fact, better prepared by being in such activities than those involved only in school activities, those involved in 4-H and FFA, those involved in Girl/Boy Scouts, and those involved in other community activities not previously mentioned. If 4-H members are better prepared, it would be relevant to determine if they were involved in public speaking and other communication skill development opportunities as a young 4-H member. In addition, it would be relevant to determine if those opportunities were solely through 4-H or if there were other outside influences in order to decipher the true impact of 4-H.

Another recommendation based on this study is to further examine the activities 4-H members get involved in the most and why that is. It is important to look at this to
determine which activities in the 4-H program are having an effect on 4-H members and which do not seem to make as much difference. Just because, however, 4-H members are involved in certain activities does not necessarily mean that that is the one particular activity that has the greatest impact on 4-H members in terms of future success and workforce preparedness.

As an additional future research topic it would be important to study one specific activity and explore and finally determine what the youth leadership skills are that are being taught, learned, practiced, and reinforced. From the standpoint of an activity which requires a significant amount of public speaking, a potential activity of use to study may include, but is not limited to, camp counseling, Junior Fair Board, CARTEENS, and so on. This particular idea has, as far as the researcher knows, never been studied and looked at in-depth. Like this study, other impact studies have looked at the skills gained by being involved in at least one activity, which if a 4-H member has been in the 4-H program for more than one year, it is likely that he/she has been or is involved in more than one activity. By looking at one specific activity, however, may shed light on that particular activities strengths and weaknesses. It may also give insight as to how county 4-H educators can better relay information to the young people involved and improve the skills they are learning and gaining. This may help in order to find more effective ways to go about programming. Looking at one activity may help county 4-H educators discover new and improved ways of teaching knowledge to the young people and adults they serve so as to make skill development more worthwhile, effective, and efficient.

Another recommendation for future research is to determine if there is a
relationship between the 4-H educator area of specialization and 4-H member involvement to see if certain emphasis areas by the educator are influential in what members become involved in.

It can also be recommended that future research include 4-H members perceptions of what they feel is not effective within their involvement and why. It would be interesting to understand what they do not like in addition to what they do like and feel is worthwhile.

According to the information found from this study, an additional study should be conducted with 4-H members who are 13 years of age reflecting on their 4-H experiences in the traditional 4-H program and then follow up with them again to at the end of their 4-H career (18 or 19 years of age) to see if there is a difference in their perception of the impact 4-H has had on them. This would possibly be more accurate than having 4-H members at the end of their eligible 4-H career look in retrospect at their younger years in 4-H. By the time they are at the end of their career they may have a different mind set about the 4-H program and/or different feelings about what involvement has meant to them. It would be interesting to see the difference in perception over time. More specifically, a study could be conducted that measures the responses of individuals at the beginning of traditional 4-H membership (age 8), at the end of their early 4-H career (age 13), at the beginning of their older career (age 14), and at the end of their eligible 4-H career (age 18 or 19).

Future research could also look at young people who were involved in the 4-H program for 10 or 11 years, and who were in their last year of eligible 4-H membership.


**Recommendations for practice**

An area of recommended practice involves club programming. Since 4-H members used in this study tended to feel they were more involved in their individual club programs, it is recommended that county 4-H educators provide club advisors and other volunteers with the proper training to make sure that necessary skills are being taught and practiced in the club so that 4-H members are not missing out on skills they may learn elsewhere in county 4-H programs. By providing club advisors with literature and resources to help incorporate some of the key skills and knowledge into their club programs, the county 4-H educator is still able to reach 4-H members and help them acquire the skills needed to be successful in their lives.

Another recommendation for practice resides on the idea of incorporating life skills into education curriculum at local school districts across the state. The life skills that are taught, learned and practiced will help young people succeed much more and further in the future than various other things that may be learned in school. It is recommended that most of life skill development be done through hands-on learning so that students can actually put what they have learned to practice and continue their improvement on a particular skill. Of utmost importance are communication skills. Since “nearly every job requires some public speaking skills” (Beebe & Beebe, 2006, p. 245) it is essential that these are taught as often as possible, whether at school, through youth organizations, at home, at church, and so on. The repeated effort of strengthening one’s oral communication skills is indispensable in the job world.

It is recommended that county 4-H educators periodically evaluate their program
efforts based on the perceptions of their county 4-H members. This would be beneficial to the individual educator in the county to see what impact, if any, they are having on 4-H members involved in the program. This would also help the individual see their program strengths and weaknesses so as to improve and enhance program efforts for those involved. A way in which to do this may be a web-based survey that asks a variety of questions regarding a particular activity, for example Junior Fair Board. Conducting a web-based survey may be convenient for not only the educator, but also 4-H members because many young people tend to utilize e-mail and the Web, especially if the educator did not want to take time away from the formal meeting. However, evaluations could be distributed by hard copy at leadership activity meetings (example: Junior Fair Board meeting), or even at individual community club meetings to reach all 4-H members across the county to gain their interpretation of the effectiveness of their individual county programming. From a different perspective, it is recommended that advisors and volunteers receive evaluations periodically as well to understand what they perceive as being effective in their county 4-H program and what could be improved.

The information provided in this study is also beneficial for 4-H professionals in terms of recruitment. The findings indicated that there is an increase in confidence of skill abilities among respondents, which says that the 4-H program is worthwhile and one which teaches valuable skills to young people that help them in their future. Educators could use this to draw in more young people in their respective communities and further enhance the abilities of young people. By expressing these numbers to young people not currently involved, their parents, and others, may help increase the enrollment numbers
of Ohio 4-H members.

A final recommendation for practice is that the impact of 4-H, based on the numbers and significance between them of skills, could be extremely beneficial for 4-H educators to use when discussing funding from county commissioners. Because these numbers show the impact of 4-H and the caliber of young people as the product, it may be possible to influence the decision of monies toward Extension and the 4-H program based on these numbers.

**Implications**

The information provided by this study reported, briefly, the impact 4-H members feel the 4-H program has had on them. It must be noted that because of the small sample size and even smaller response rate, this study only pertains to the impact of the young people used in this study.

Through this research it was found that the more reinforcement of skills through various county 4-H activities the more confident individuals feel in handling situations and taking on responsibilities in college and/or the workforce. Involvement through the 4-H program was reported by respondents to be helpful with their life beyond the county 4-H program in college projects and involvement. It is possible that if the 4-H program were pushed further among other audiences to reach more youth at a younger age, that 4-H programs could teach more young people the life skills that will help them arrive at a successful future.

Research from this study showed that the longer an individual was involved in 4-H, they developed more skills that are used in the business world (i.e., public speaking
and presentations) that will help them be successful. Additionally, based on involvement of respondents, it can be inferred that they are better able to adapt to various situations. For the business world, this means individuals are more well-rounded and prepared to tackle any situation set forth them. The 4-H program proves to be successful at preparing young people to make the decisions needed to be successful in many areas.

An additional implication is that research from the study gave insight into the activities members were mostly involved in and probed at the specific characteristics, such as skills and knowledge, meant to be learned from these activities. (It must be noted, however, that just because a 4-H member was not involved in a given activity or chose that it did not apply to them, may mean that it was not offered to them in their county.) This information is helpful and important for county 4-H educators to know and understand how their programming efforts are affecting 4-H members and give them an idea as to what they can/should do in an effort to improve their county programming. Seeing research like this helps educators to understand how they can best cater to and meet the needs of their 4-H members and 4-H programs.

Also, in knowing the impact of the 4-H program can be of better assistance to legislators and key people that determine Extension funding each year. By knowing this organization makes a difference in the lives of young people and that this organization is producing the “cream of the crop” young people, then legislators may be more potentially likely to fund the organization.

Many studies are surfacing about the impact of 4-H. By doing an entire study to know and understand how 4-H members interpret their involvement and impact of 4-H
may be a reflection on the satisfactory or unsatisfactory job of the county 4-H educator. It would be interesting to discover the impact of 4-H on individuals and if that has a direct relationship with the job and work done on programs by the county 4-H educator.

The value of measuring the impact of the 4-H program is being able to determine the strengths and weaknesses of program activities and improve them where falling short. Also, the value of 4-H members knowing and understanding the impact of 4-H on them is, that it helps them identify their own strengths and weaknesses of the skills and knowledge they have gained, which helps them feel more confident in their abilities and develops them into a more well-rounded individual.

**Conclusion**

Overall, results from this study indicate that 4-H members become more confident in their skill abilities and knowledge the older they get and the longer they are involved in the 4-H program. With this involvement and the skills and knowledge gained over time, 4-H members are becoming much more well-equipped with what is needed to enter the “real world” and better prepared to enter the workforce and/or college. They are prepared with the communication skills employer’s rate as the top priority for employment (Beebe & Beebe, 2006; Lucas, 2007; O’Hair et al., 2007; Zarefsky, 1999; Arnett, 2003; Grice & Skinner, 1998; NACE, 2003; Bowers & Metcalf, 2008; AACU, 2007) and they are prepared with leadership capabilities that will set them apart from other job candidates (NACE, 2003).
LIST OF REFERENCES


Ricketts, J. C. & Rudd, R. D. (2004). Leadership development factors leading to the


Appendix A: Institutional Review Board letter of approval
June 29, 2009

Protocol Number: 2009F0519
Protocol Title: OHIO SENIOR 4-H MEMBERS INVOLVEMENT AND PUBLIC SPEAKING EXPERIENCES, EMILY RHODES, JENNIFER VILLARD, HUMAN AND COMMUNITY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
Type of Review: Request for Exempt Determination
ORRP Staff Contact: Phone: 614-688-0389
Email: pettey.6@osu.edu

Dear Dr. Rhodes,

The Office of Responsible Research Practices has determined the above referenced protocol exempt from IRB review.

Date of Exempt Determination: 06/29/2009
Qualifying Exemption Category: 2

Please note the following:

- Only OSU employees and students who have completed CITI training and are named on the signature page of the application are approved as OSUInvestigators in conducting this study.
- No procedural changes may be made in exempt research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, instruments, enrollment numbers, etc.).
- Per university requirements, all research-related records (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for a period of at least three years after the research has ended.
- It is the responsibility of the Investigator to promptly report events that may represent unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This determination is issued under The Ohio State University’s ORRP Federalwide Assurance #00006378.

All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website – www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the ORRP staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

Cheri Pettey, MA, Certified IRB Professional
Senior Protocol Analyst—Exempt Research
Appendix B: Survey instrument
**Instructions**

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions based on your involvement and experiences in the 4-H program. Upon completion of the survey you will be entered for a chance to win an iPod. You are contributing to an extremely important project. Some questions may ask for you to circle an answer. Others may ask for a written response. Please answer to the best of your ability. This survey should take approximately 15 minutes, and your answers will remain confidential. Your participation is fully voluntary and you are welcome to stop at any time. Your cooperation and time are greatly appreciated.

***Leadership activities are defined in this study as activities which require one to engage in participation as a leader as well as a follower, and which involves a significant amount of public speaking.***

**4-H Basics**

1. What age did you start 4-H? ______

2. Were you involved in 4-H as a Cloverbud? (circle one) Yes No

3. In your 4-H Club, did you hold any offices? (circle one) Yes No
   If yes, please list which ones.

   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

4. How many 4-H county leadership activities (activities in which required a significant amount of public speaking) were you involved in throughout your older years (ages 14 through your last year of 4-H)?
   a. 1-2 b. 3-4 c. 5-6 d. 7 or more

**Skills**

5. Please compare your skill level in each activity below based on your earlier 4-H experiences (ages 8-13) to your older 4-H experiences (ages 14-19) using the following scale: 0 = does not apply, SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = neutral (neither agree nor disagree), A = agree, SA = strongly agree. Please answer to the best of your ability.

   _____ Please check if you were only in 4-H from ages 14-19.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>I can correctly utilize parliamentary procedure.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I can deliver a formal, oral presentation using clear enunciation and tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I can deliver a formal, oral presentation using gestures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I can deliver a formal, oral presentation using clear vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I can discuss the techniques and principles involved in public speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I can prepare a 4-6 minute speech written within a 30-minute preparation time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I can effectively participate in an interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I feel relaxed when giving a speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I have no fear of giving a speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I feel confident I can make the best decision in a tough situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I can balance my time between school, work, and other activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I can efficiently organize a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I am confident in taking on a great deal of responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I work well with people different from me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I can stand in front of a group and teach something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I am motivated to work hard at things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I have mostly positive thoughts about working with other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I feel confident in taking the lead of a group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I understand the value of working as a team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I seek leadership opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I can set realistic goals for myself, which are obtainable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I am calm and relaxed when I have to participate in a group with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I seek opportunities to volunteer in my community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>I feel I can effectively communicate with adults and others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your Activities

4-H Involvement

6. Please compare your participation in each activity below based on your earlier 4-H experiences (ages 8-13) to your older 4-H experiences (ages 14-18/19) using the following scale: NOE = not old enough, 0 = does not apply, 1 = not very involved (I only attend meetings), 2 = somewhat involved (I participate in 1-2 activities beyond meetings), 3 = very involved (I participate in as many things as I can). Please answer to the best of your ability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Younger years 8-13</th>
<th>Older years 14-18/19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Junior Fair Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Junior Leadership Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>CARTEENS Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Youth Safety Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Camp counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Show announcer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>4-H Advisory Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Horse Advisory Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Livestock Sale Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Animal Education Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>County 4-H Ambassador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>State 4-H Ambassador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>4-H Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Judging team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Counselor In Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>National 4-H Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Citizenship Washington Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>State Teen Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>State Teen Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>State Leadership Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>State Conservation Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Sea Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>4-H Foundation Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>Community service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>4-H Club family outings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>4-H Club picnics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>4-H Club meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>4-H Club Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>4-H Pledge contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOE 0 1 2 3</td>
<td>County demonstration contest (individual or team)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Based on your involvement in the 4-H program, please explain how you feel your past experiences in 4-H have had an impact on you.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

8. Which of your 4-H activities do you feel is the one you learned from the most? Why?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

9. Based on your involvement in the 4-H program, please explain what you feel within your involvement (in terms of skills, knowledge, etc.) has had an impact on you. In other words, what is it about the activity you named above that you feel
was the most beneficial to your personal growth and development?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
______________________________

School, Church and Community Activities

10. What other activities are you currently involved in or were you previously involved in during the time you have been/were involved in 4-H? Please select all that apply.

_____ National Honor Society  _____ Conference Leadership
_____ Spanish Club  _____ Varsity Club
_____ German Club  _____ Religious Club
_____ French Club  _____ Drug Free Awareness Group
_____ Concert Band  _____ Football
_____ Marching Band  _____ Cheerleading
_____ Jazz Band  _____ Basketball
_____ Pep Band  _____ Baseball
_____ Choir  _____ Volleyball
_____ Jazz/Show Choir  _____ Soccer
_____ Drama Club  _____ Lacrosse
_____ School Musicals/plays  _____ Track & Field
_____ Art Club  _____ Cross Country
_____ Yearbook  _____ Hockey
_____ Key Club (affiliate of Kiwanis)  _____ Wrestling
_____ Class Executive Committee  _____ Swimming
_____ Student Council  _____ Softball
_____ DECA  _____ Tennis
_____ Skills USA VICA  _____ Majorette/Drum Major/Drill Team
_____ Vocation Education  _____ Writing Club
_____ Ski Club  _____ Academic Challenge
_____ Church (youth group, choir, bell choir)  _____ FCCLA
_____ Chess Club  _____ School newspaper
_____ College activities
_____ FFA
_____ Other (please list):

4-H Influences
11. Which area does your 4-H educator work with you the most? (Check all that apply)

- public speaking
- CARTEENS
- 4-H projects
- livestock
- Other (please list):  

- camp counseling/4-H camp
- safety programs
- junior fair board
- state involvement (i.e., teen council)

12. What motivated you to stay involved in 4-H? (Check all that apply)

- I made lots of friends
- Responsibility
- Learning new things
- Preparation for college/job
- Like to lead people
- Like to help people
- Forces me to “step out of my box”
- Lots of opportunities
- Parents made me
- Had to stay in 4-H or get a job
- No interest in school activities
- Other (please list):

- Project work
- Working with others
- Speaking in front of people
- Building my resume
- Like teaching others new things
- Make a difference in my community
- Learn about myself
- Like to challenge myself
- Friends made me
- Parents made me
- Parents did it so I had to, too

---

**A Little About You**

**School information**

13. What is your current status? (please circle)

- High school Junior
- High school Senior
- In College
- Workforce
- None of these

14. Do you want to go to college? (circle one) Yes No

If you are already in college, where do you attend?

15. If you are already in college, what year are you in school? (circle one)

- Freshman (1)
- Sophomore (2)
- Junior (3)
- Senior (4)
- None of these

16. If you want to go to college or are already enrolled in college, what will you choose as your major?

---

**Personal information**

129
17. I am (circle one):  Male  Female

18. I am (check one):
   _____ White/Caucasian   _____ African American
   _____ Mexican             _____ Cuban
   _____ Asian                _____ Indian
   _____ Native American      _____ Puerto Rican
   _____ Hispanic            _____ Latino
   _____ Other (please specify):
FLICTED

19. What county are you from?

20. How old are you? _________

21. How many years have you been in 4-H? _________
Appendix C: Invitation letters
To Whom It May Concern:

Hello, my name is Jennifer Villard and I am a graduate student at The Ohio State University working on my degree in Agricultural Communication. As part of my graduate studies program I am working on a research study for my thesis that involves Ohio 4-H members in their last year of 4-H membership. My study will compare the level of communication skills based on involvement in leadership activities of 4-H members, from their early 4-H career to the end of their eligible 4-H career.

I am writing to invite you to participate in this very important study being conducted at Ohio State through the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences this spring and summer. Please consider participating in my study. Your time and effort will be an important asset to me, this study and the university.

An additional letter will be sent in the next two weeks explaining more about the study and how to go about participating in the study. The study will be conducted as an online survey and will take no more than 10-15 minutes.

Again, I ask that you please consider participating in my study. Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Villard
Graduate Student, Agricultural Communication
The Ohio State University
Dear 4-H Member,

Hello, my name is Jennifer Villard. I am conducting a study that focuses on Ohio 4-H members in their last year of 4-H in comparing the level of involvement in leadership activities from their early 4-H career to the end of their eligible 4-H career. I am requesting your participation in this study by filling out a confidential online survey that will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

With the current trends and situations involving Extension, and more specifically the 4-H program, it is important to understand how individuals, such as yourself, are being impacted by the 4-H program. This study will help shed light on the true impact of 4-H on its members, and which 4-H activities make the most difference in preparing 4-H members for the future. If you feel you are not the right person to respond to this, I ask that you please forward it to a person in your organization who is in their last year of Ohio 4-H membership and would like to share their experiences.

I realize your time is precious and that you have many other things going on, but I hope that you will take a few minutes to fill out my survey, and help myself and others learn how we can better prepare 4-H members for the future and how we can better offer you resources needed for your success. Your participation is completely voluntary. Furthermore, you are free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation without prejudice. All answers are confidential to the extent provided by law. There are no known risks associated with this study. There is, however, an opportunity to be entered into a drawing for an iPod upon completion of the survey.

If you have any questions about this research please contact me, the principal investigator, Jennifer Villard at (419) 571-2508 or villard.2@osu.edu or my adviser, Dr. Emily Rhoades at rhoades.100@osu.edu. Questions about your concerns or rights as a research participant can be directed to the Office of Responsible Research Practices, 300 Research Foundation Building, 1960 Kenny Rd., Columbus, OH 43210-1063. IRB #2009E0519.

By clicking on the link below, you acknowledge that you have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions you have raised have been answered to your full satisfaction. You freely and voluntarily acknowledge that you have read and fully understand the consent form. You agree to participate in the procedure, and have received a copy of this information.


Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Villard
The Ohio State University
Dear __________,

A few weeks ago I sent you an email with a link to a questionnaire that asked you to share with me your 4-H involvement including what skills you have gained/learned. To the best of my knowledge, it has not yet been returned.

This study will help us learn about the impact 4-H is having on its members, and how we can go about improving the 4-H program. With the current budget situation in Extension and the potential downsizing of the 4-H program we want to understand how 4-H is making a difference in your life and how the 4-H program can better serve you so that you are confident and prepared for college, the workforce and beyond.

This study is drawing to a close and this is the last contact that will be made with the random sample of Ohio 4-H members who have yet to respond. I am writing again because of my concern that people who have not responded may have different experiences than those who have responded. Hearing from everyone in this small Ohio sample helps assure that our results are as accurate as possible. Please complete it online at:


I want to assure you that your response is voluntary and completely confidential. If you feel you are not the right person to respond to this, I ask that you please forward it to another 4-H member in their last year of 4-H membership.

I appreciate your willingness to consider my request as I conclude this effort to better understand 4-H practices and impacts on 4-H members. Should you have any questions please contact me at (419) 571-2508, or email at villard.2@osu.edu.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Villard
The Ohio State University