

**DETERMINING THE QUALITY OF YOUTH-ADULT RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN
EXTENSION YOUTH PROGRAMS**

A Record of Study

by

CHARLA BADING

Submitted to the office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

December 2011

Major Subject: Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications

Determining the Quality of Youth-Adult Relationships within Extension Youth
Programs

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Barry L. Boyd
Committee Members,	David Lawver
	Chris Boleman
Head of Department,	Jon Ulmer

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ABSTRACT

Determining the Quality of Youth-Adult Relationships within Extension Youth Programs. (December 2011)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Barry L. Boyd

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of youth and adults engaged in youth-adult relationships involved in the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Youth Board. The objectives of the study were to: (1) examine youth perceptions of their involvement on the Youth Board; (2) examine adult perceptions of their involvement on the Youth Board; and (3) evaluate youth-adult interaction on the Youth Board.

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and analyses of variance (ANOVA). *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scales* were completed by 127 participants (75 youth and 52 adults) serving on the Youth Boards in Texas. The rating scale measured three constructs: youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction.

T-tests were used to analyze differences between youth and adult participants. Gender differences were also analyzed. The test indicated no significant difference between youth and adult participants, but youth were more

positive on the youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction constructs. Females were more positive on all three constructs even though there was also no significant difference in perceptions.

An independent samples t-test was computed to determine if there were significant differences between Anglo and non-Anglo participants' perceptions of youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction. Most participants were Anglo; however, non-Anglo ethnic groups including Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native American were also represented. Tests show all participants had positive perceptions toward youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction. Non-Anglo participants had a positive perception of youth involvement, but Anglo participants had a higher mean score on adult involvement and youth-adult interaction.

An independent sample t-test was used to determine significant differences based on residence in perceptions of the three constructs between participants. Population less than 10,000 was defined as a town fewer than 10,000 populations and farm. Population greater than 10,000 is defined as town/city of 10,000-50,000 population and its suburbs, suburb of city more than 50,000 populations, or central city more than 50,000 population. No significant differences were found between population less than 10,000 and population greater than 10,000 participants but population less than 10,000 participants had a higher perception of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction than population greater than 10,000 participants.

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I thank my parents, Charles and Lill, for giving me the drive to never stop learning. They have set the example that anything I want to do in life I can. No goal is unobtainable if you really want it is what I have always been taught. My sisters, Merlina and Maela, and their husbands, Steve and Scott, have been very supportive of me throughout this process. When I was ready to quit, they were the inspiration behind me to keep working towards the final goal. My nephews, Phillip and James, have continuously supported me and I will do the same for them throughout their lives and education.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent focus in the youth development field is on youth-adult partnerships but recognizing the importance of such partnerships in regards to society has been some difficult. Reviewing the literature reveals the challenges faced versus the strategies to increase youth-adult partnerships. Research by Zeldin, Petrokubin, and MacNeil (2008), establishes a set of practices to create successful partnerships. Contained in these practice are theories such as, developing a sense of ownership and letting others know about this vision. Historically, organizations, like 4-H, have focused on an environment designed to foster empowerment of youth through leadership development. 4-H is set up for youth and adults to share the decision making process that develop leadership skills in youth. The challenge is for adults to ensure youth are more than just participants, but truly part of the decision making process. For all participants to feel true empowerment, individuals must feel that responsibilities have meaning, self-determination is allowed, tasks are completed, and that the project or program makes an impact on each individual involved (Spreitzer, 1995).

Another fundamental characteristic noted by researchers for youth-adult relationships to be successful is the quality of the interaction between youth and adults (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). The process of youth-adult

This record of study follows the style of the *Journal of Leadership Education*.

relationship can enable youth participation by providing action-based learning experiences that involve decision-making at the community level (Israel & Ilvento, 1995). There is a growing recognition that young people need positive opportunities for youth development, both in schools and in their communities. According to Pittman (2002), young people that are not only fully prepared, but also fully engaged in youth-adult partnerships are more immersed in the advancement of their communities.

Statement of Problem

The questions being asked by adults involved in youth programming are, “What needs to happen to create an environment that promotes positive development of young people while engaging adults in the process?” and “Can youth and adults form partnerships that function effectively, thus leading to community change?” (Perkins, Borden, & Villarruel, 2001, p. 39).

To develop important life skills, youth need to be provided with structured out-of-school experiences. (Perkins & Borden, 2003). Vital to youth development is having caring adults willing to work with youth. Engaged adults can experience youth as viable assets and share in the youth’s eagerness to make a difference. It is recognized that youth need numerous opportunities for positive development, both in school and in the community. *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, a recent book sponsored by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, states:

Adolescents who spend time in communities rich in

developmental opportunities experience less risk and show evidence of higher rates of positive development.

Diverse program opportunities in communities are more likely to support youth development in greater numbers. (Eccles & Gootman, 2002, p. 11).

Research by Camino (2000) reports that preconceived negative stereotypes can hinder the growth of relationships between youth and adults which causes a lack of cohesion among youth and adults due to resistance to share the power. A negative experience for adults can deter the progress of communities, by discouraging their willingness to work with youth in pursuing a common goal, such as community empowerment. Young people may also become reluctant to serve where they do not feel welcomed or where they do not have an equal voice.

Pittman (2002) states that, young people not only need to be fully prepared, but also fully engaged so they can be full partners with adults to improve communities. Youth-adult interaction can serve as a strategy that provides young people with the guidance they need to enhance personal skills. The potential for positive community change when youth and adults engage as partners on community initiatives is tremendous; however, additional research is required to assess whether youth-adult partnerships are truly effective in making an impact on community youth development programming.

This study looks at the quality of youth-adult relationships within Extension youth programs. There is limited research that assesses how society views youth

voice and youth taking on leadership roles while interacting with adults in establishing positive youth-adult relationships. This study utilizes the *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale*, (Appendix D) developed by Jones (2004), to assess the perceptions and experiences of youth and adult participants working together in Extension youth programs. The instrument asks participants to evaluate their own experiences and acknowledge areas that need strengthening.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions and experiences of youth and adults engaged in youth-adult relationships within Extension programs.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- (1) Describe the demographic characteristics of members on the youth board.
- (2) Assess perceptions of youth and adults toward their involvement with one another as Youth Board members.
- (3) Assess perceptions of youth and adult towards their interaction with one another on the Youth Board.

Extension put into place a new committee in each county called a Youth Board. All counties are required to have a Youth Board. The Youth Board, made up of eight to ten people, is a Program Area Committee that meets face-to-face at least twice annually. Membership on the Board should be a majority of youth with some adult membership, should be diverse in its representation of county demographics and of other youth serving entities in the county (Boleman & Burkham, 2006).

The function of the Youth Board is to help the County Extension Agent determine what programs need to be implemented in the county each year, review annually educational impacts and outreach to new youth audiences and project areas, and help decide how task forces/coalitions can address priority issues (Boleman & Burkham, 2006).

For many years, youth programs have been driven by the social problems young people experience. These programs are designed to “keep kids out of trouble” by exposing them to positive activities and relationships (Boleman & Burkham, 2006). Adult who consider themselves experts developed and conducted these programs with little to no input from youth themselves.

Over the last two decades, more organizations have recognized the benefit of youth-adult partnerships. The relationship between youth and adult and the setting in which programs are developed have proven to be key ingredients for a successful program. (Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, 2003).

When youth and adults work together, research shows:

- the youth programs will have a stronger impact;
- youth develop communication and problem solving skills; and
- youth become more responsible when developing programs that impact others (Boleman & Burkham, 2006).

Thus, youth being with county Extension agents and adult volunteers in developing, implementing, evaluating and interpreting educational programs for

youth is important. The County Youth Board supports the 4-H and youth development program just as the Program Area Committees support the other base programs in Extension (Boleman & Burkham, 2006).

Significance of Study

A youth-adult partnership, or the process of youth and adults working together with mutual respect, is a theme of significant importance to those with an interest in positive youth development (Zeldin, McDaiel, Topitzes & Calvert, 2000). These partnerships offer many valuable outcomes for youth programming. This study was to determine the quality of involvement and interaction youth and adults have as members of Extension Youth Board. As a result of this quantitative examination of youth-adult partnerships in Extension youth programming, Extension professionals may be more informed as to strategies that could be developed and implemented to enhance the development of youth and adults to create more positive relationships. In addition, this study may provide Extension professionals insight into the steps that need to be taken to provide a more positive experience for youth and adults. By focusing on youth-adult partnerships, a common principle and core element in 4-H, the researcher hopes to help others working in youth development find a way for adult and youth to find a balance between values of respect and equality, on the one hand, and the realities of age and experiential differences on the other.

THE POWER OF YOUTH VOICE

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Youth Service...Youth Leadership...Youth Voice...Youth

Involvement...Youth/ Adult Partnership, are all terms used in youth development to discuss the role youth play in decision-making (Zeldin, McDaiel, Topitzes & Calvert, 2000). Youth voice refers to the ideas, opinions, involvement, and initiatives of people considered to be “young” (Zeldin, McDaiel, Topitzes & Calvert, 2000). It is the engagement of young people as leaders and decision-makers in programs and organizations. In the context of service-learning, youth voice refers to the input young people provide in developing and implementing plans to guide service-learning efforts (Justinianno, Scherer, Johnson, Lewis, Swanson, & Felix, 2001).

Often youth voice has been missing because adults are unaware of what the term means. It is important to remember that youth voice does not mean youth have total control but that youth have an equal voice when in a partnership with adults. Youth voice should include working together, respecting one another and take into effect everyone’s ideas (Justinianno, Scherer, Johnson, Lewis, Swanson, & Felix, 2001).

Why is Youth Voice Important?

When youth and adult are engaged as partners in the decision-making process, both groups benefit in youth development. Researchers have found when youth are given a voice when developing programs that pertain to them, that high-

quality program are the result. One of the reasons these programs are successful is because that they honor youth voice. They do so by providing students opportunities to plan their experiences with adult assistance. Effective programs also contain organized experiences that students can reflect and learn from. After reviewing several studies on service-learning, Billing (2000) observed that outcomes related to youth voice are increased when youth are given responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating own their learning. In other words, youth voice is an essential part of high-quality programs and helps to increase positive results.

Youth voice is supported in research in the youth development field. A study at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Innovation Center for Community, states that including youth in the decision-making process will have a positive effects on adults (Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, Calvert, 2000).

Youth-Adult Relationships within Programs

It has been difficult to assess where society stands regarding the recognition and value of youth leadership. One challenge is the limited literature on involving youth voice in programming. Only a few scholars have presented models to try to show how youth skills can be utilized in youth development programming.

Roger Hart's (1992, p. 9) *Ladder of Participation* typology provides a means of assessing where young people stand in relation to adults in the area of project development. The levels that Hart delineates are also potentially useful in identifying where a particular program, organization or community is operating on

a scale ranging from forms of youth non-participation through forms of participation.

Hart outlines three non-participatory levels (Hart, 1992, p. 9):

1. Manipulation. Children participate but have no understanding of the issues and do not understand their actions.
2. Decoration. Children are there to entertain or look good but they have little understanding of the purpose and no say in the organizing.
3. Tokenism. Children are given a voice but they have little choice about the subject or the style of communication and little opportunity to develop opinions.

Hart (1992, p. 11) outlines that for a project to be considered participatory, the following requirements should be met:

- Youth understand the intentions of the project,
- They know who impacted the decisions concerning involvement,
- They have a role with a purpose,
- They volunteer to be part of the project after they know what the project entailed.

(Hart, 1992, p. 11)

The final four levels of participation on Hart's ladder involve different kinds of adult-youth inter-group arrangements.

Hart refers to adult initiated projects involving shared decisions with youth as "true participation" (1992. p. 12). With regard to youth initiated projects

involving shared decisions with adults. Hart comments that "projects like these...are all too rare" and attributes this to "the absence of caring adults attuned to the particular interests of young people" (1992, p. 14).

Whether a particular expression of youth participation is appropriate will be determined in part by the nature of the project and the context. Hart explains that even in cultures where children's participation in certain activities is not voluntary, they may still be fully informed and subscribe to the intentions of the project.

Mitra (2000) developed a pyramid model that shows a hierarchy of three varying forms of youth voice: information, collaboration, and autonomy. Her research focused on junior and senior high school students who have had the opportunity to form ideas about educational change. The information level illustrates the minimal and most common form of involvement, where youth share ideas with adults who interpret the data without youth input (Mitra, 2000). The next level, collaboration, is where youth and adults work together to identify problems, interpret the data and implement an action plan to promote change (Mitra, 2000). The last stage is the level of autonomy where youth independently design and implement plans (Mitra, 2000). This model provides clear evidence that youth voice can be invited and utilized in various forms, thus allowing students to serve as respected contributors in youth-adult partnerships.

Hart's ladder (1992) and Mitra's pyramid (2000) both attempt to explain how youth's skills can be applied to heighten leadership roles. However, the involvement of children is more prevalent in Hart's ladder (1992) with less

emphasis on the importance of adult interaction with youth as mentors or experiential learners. In contrast, Mitra's pyramid (2000) does address youth and adults collaborating together, but focuses on school or classroom groups. Although Mitra's (2000) concepts are adaptable from an environmental context, community organizations are much more varied; therefore, many programs may be erroneously classified if only the three categories were utilized.

Over the last two decades, youth organizations have made a shift in the way they serve youth because they have realized that youth-adult partnerships can play an important role. The role youth play, the relationship between the adults and youth involved, and the settings in which programs take place are key ingredients in a successful program. (Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, 2003).

Research shows that when young people work with adult volunteers:

- youth programs become more successful and have a greater impact on youth's ability to communicate, solve problems, and work effectively with others; and
- youth mature and become more responsible (Boleman & Burkham, 2006, p. 3).

Thus, it is important for young people to be involved with adult in developing, implementing, and evaluating programs for youth. The County Youth Board supports the 4-H and youth development program just as the Program Area Committees support the other base programs in Extension (Boleman & Burkham,

2006).

Youth Perceptions of Adults

Several studies have focused on the influence of youth-adult relationships and the influence on the attitudes of youth. A notable study by Lynch and Cicchetti (1997) addresses youths' awareness of their relationship with adults. The study included a questionnaire that asked 1,226 low-risk elementary and middle school children, ages 7 to 15, in a chosen school district about four different relationship partners: mother, best friend, teacher, and classmates. The relationship with teachers was rated lowest by students of the four relationships (Lynch and Cicchetti, 1997).

Fewer opportunities for youth and adult partnerships are one dilemma that appears to be widening the gap between youth and adults. Traditional program structure where youth are "receivers" and adults are the providers still seem to be the norm (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997). As youth skills grow and develop, they need the opportunity for more decision-making power; thus, traditional program structure tends to preserve the impression that adults are in charge and not interested in youth voice therefore, discouraging youth who want to be contributors in community programs and bond with adults. As a result, negative feelings exist inhibiting successful intergenerational experience for both youth and adults (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997).

Social contact between youth and adults can lead to more positive perceptions and reduced prejudices (Allport, 1954). Caspi (1984) evaluated the

effect of intergroup contact on attitudes, by conducting a study where children attending a traditional preschool were compared to children attending an age integrated school, which included a large number of elderly substitute teachers. The children at the age-integrated school, in direct contact with older adults, held a more favorable attitude towards the elderly than children who attended the preschool without elderly teachers.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions and experiences of youth engaged in youth-adult relationships within Extension programs. The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. Describe the demographic characteristics youth members on the youth board.
2. Assess the perceptions of youth toward their involvement with one another as youth board members.
3. Assess the youths' perceptions regarding how they are treated by adult members of the youth board.

Methodology

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service requires that each county create an advisory committee called a Youth Board. The Youth Board, made up of eight to ten people is a Program Area Committee that meets face-to-face at least twice annually. Membership on the Board consists of a majority of youth with some adult membership, and should be diverse in its representation of county demographics

as well as of other youth serving entities in the county (Boleman & Burkham, 2006).

One of the functions of the Youth Board is to help County Extension Agents determine what programs need to be implemented in the county year to year. This Board is also responsible for reviewing yearly educational impacts and helping to decide how task forces/coalitions can address priority issues. Additionally, the group plans outreach to new youth audiences and looks at new projects for implementation in the county 4-H program (Boleman & Burkham, 2006). All active Youth Boards in Texas AgriLife Extension will serve as the population for this study.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of all county Youth Boards in the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. A cluster, purposeful sample was chosen for this study. The Texas AgriLife Extension Service is divided into four regions. Each of the four regions consists of 3 districts with approximately 20 counties in each district. The regions have four 4-H Regional Program Directors who were asked by the researcher to identify nine counties within their region that qualified for the study. Only those counties who met the following criteria were selected:

1. County is fully staffed, and has had no vacancies within the previous year.
2. County has a Youth Board in place.

Once the counties were selected, the county Extension agent(s) in each county was contacted and informed of their selection. Out of the 36 counties (estimated

180 participants based on recommendations that the Youth Board consists of eight to ten members with half of those being youth) asked to participate, the researcher received surveys back from 31 counties (75 youth surveys).

Instrumentation

The *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale* (Appendix D), developed by Ken Jones, University of Kentucky, (Jones, 2004) was used to assess youth perception of their involvement as pertaining to participation on a Texas AgriLife Extension Service Youth Board. This instrument was developed to identify characteristics and attitudes of individuals participating in adult and youth partnerships. A 10-point, interval scale was utilized to assess the given constructs set by the instrument. Bipolar statements were used to measure the perceptions of each participant's experience.

Jones (2004) established the initial reliability of the instrument reporting a Cronbach Coefficient Alpha of .94. The Cronbach Coefficient Alpha reliability coefficient for each scale was: Youth Involvement (.87) and Adult Involvement (.82). The Cronbach Coefficient Alpha reliability test showed on the adult involvement scale, removing question 2 improved the reliability from .72 to .82. The Cronbach Coefficient Alpha reliability coefficient for the Youth-Adult interaction scale was .87.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher mailed each participant an consent form (Appendix B), a parental assent form (Appendix A), and the survey instrument (Appendix D). If

parents approved of their child's participation, they signed a copy of the consent form and return it along with the completed survey to the researcher. In addition to obtaining parental consent, all youth participants were required to indicate their willingness to participate by signing an assent form stating their voluntary participating in this study and that they understood the purpose of the study.

The *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale* (Appendix D) was the instrument used for this study (Jones, 2004; Jones & Perkins, 2005). Relationship quality was rated on a 10-point scale. The scale intervals were 1 to 2 (*very poor*); 3 to 4 (*poor*); 5 to 6 (*fair*); 7 to 8 (*good*); 9 to 10 (*excellent*). The 38-item rating scale included bipolar statements (i.e., positive and negative) to measure participants' perceptions of their experiences. Negative statements were reverse coded for analysis. The construct adult involvement utilized items that measured adults' support through their commitment to nurturing youth voice and decision making and dedication to the project.

No significant differences or response error was found between early responders and late responders at the $p < .05$. The original response date to complete the survey and return it to the researcher was September 15, 2011. Eighty-seven surveys were received by the early deadline. Nine surveys were received after the early deadline.

Findings

Objective one was to describe the demographic characteristics of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Youth Board youth members which are presented in

Table 1. Approximately 65% of the participants were female. Due to the limited number of responses in the 12 and under category, this group was combined with the 13-14 age group to make the 14 and under group. The 17-18 year old group had the most responses to the survey with the groups 14 and under and 15-16 being very close in percent survey responses. Ninety percent were Anglo; however, non-Anglo ethnic groups including Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native American were also represented. Fifty-nine percent of the participants lived in population less than 10,000 areas, defined as town with fewer than 10,000 populations and rural non-farm or farm (rural area where agricultural products are sold). The other 16% represented either: Town/City 10,000-50,000 population and its suburbs, Suburb of city more than 50,000 populations, or Central city more than 50,000 populations. Because of the small number of responses Town/City, Suburb and Central City were combined to represent the populations greater than 10,000 category.

Table 1

Demographics characteristics of Youth Board youth participants. N=75

	Number	Percent
Gender		
Female	51	68.0
Male	24	32.0
Age		

Table 1 Continued

14 and under	17	22.7
15-16	21	28.0
17-18	37	49.3
Ethnicity		
Anglo	68	90.7
Non-Anglo	7	9.3
Resident		
Population < 10,000	59	78.7
Population > 10,000	16	21.3

Objective two looks at the perceptions of youth toward their involvement with one another as youth board members. Table 2 gives the mean score for each of the questions related to youth perception of their own involvement. The lowest mean score (6.61) is for the question related to “youth rely on themselves to make key decisions. The bipolar statement related to this question is, “youth make few decisions for themselves, often relying on the decisions of adults.” The question “youth have an equal vote in the decision-making process” has the highest mean score of 8.53. The overall mean score for youth serving on the Youth Board for the youth perception of their own involvement indicator questions is 7.91, which indicates they felt good about their involvement on the Board.

Table 2

Scale item means and scale mean score for youth participants on county Youth Boards. N=75

Question	Mean
1. Youth take lots of initiative in working on projects.	7.88
2. Youth are busy with several tasks	7.67
3. Youth arrive to meetings /events on time.	7.88
4. Youth are given major responsibilities for specific tasks or assignments.	7.57
5. Youth rely on themselves to make key decisions.	6.61
6. Youth have full access to information that is needed to make decisions.	8.56
7. Youth always have the opportunity to discuss their concerns about group decisions.	8.48
8. Youth frequently share ideas that matter to them	8.28
9. Youth have an equal vote in the decision-making process.	8.53
10. Youth help one another in developing new skills.	8.48
11. Youth are fully committed to their duties.	7.33
12. Youth are very excited about their involvement with this project.	8.11
13. Youth are very concerned with community change.	7.40
Overall Mean	7.91

Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). Table presents positive aspect of each question.

A t-test was used to determine significant differences in perceptions of youth involvement between gender, ethnicity and residence. As shown in Table 3, both female and male participants had positive perceptions of the level of youth involvement; however, males were more positive than females on their ratings of youth involvement (mean of 8.03 and 7.84, respectively). Even though there was no significant difference between white and non-Anglo participants or population < 10,000 and population > 10,000, the table also shows that both Anglo members and those that reside in population < 10,000 areas are more positive when ranking youth involvement.

Table 3

Youth Board youth member's perception by gender, ethnicity and resident of their own involvement. N=75

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>*p</i>
Gender						
Female	51	7.84	1.16	0.67	73	.50
Male	24	8.03	0.99			
Ethnicity						
Anglo	68	7.92	1.12	0.31	73	.75
Non-Anglo	7	7.78	1.01			
Resident						
Population < 10,000	59	7.93	1.10	0.47	73	.63

Table 3 Continued

Population > 10,000	16	7.78	1.15
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*Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). The scale has 13 questions to assess youth involvement. *p < .05.*

An ANOVA was also employed to test for differences existing between youth participants perception of their own involvement based on age. As shown in Table 4, the one-way ANOVA indicated no significant differences in perception between youth participants by age.

Table 4

Youth Board youth member's perception of their own involvement by age.
N=75

	n	M	SD	F	*p
Age					
14 and under	17	7.94	1.16	0.13	.87
15-16	21	7.99	1.05		
17-18	37	7.95	1.13		

*Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). The scale has 13 questions to assess youth involvement. *p < .05.*

Objective 3 looks at youths' perceptions regarding how they were treated by adult members of the youth board. Table 5 gives the mean score for each of the

questions related to youth perception of how adults let them be involved. Question two which states, “adults always listen to the suggestions of youth/never listen to the suggestions of youth” has the lowest mean score (6.28). This question also impacted the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha reliability test on the adult involvement scale. By removing question two the reliability improved from .72 to .82. The highest mean score (8.85) indicates adults are very concerned with community change. The overall mean score of youth members of the Youth Board for the youth perception of how adults let them be involved indicator questions is 7.82 indicating youth feel like the adult members of the Youth Board allow them to be actively involved at members of the board.

Table 5

Youth Board youth only members adult involvement indicators questions mean and overall mean. N=75

Question	Mean
1. Adults display a willingness to accept and nurture youth leadership.	8.08
2. Adults display a tendency to want to guide youth.	6.28
3. Adults always listen to the suggestions of youth.	7.77
4. Adults never totally take over everything when working on project activities.	7.24
5. Adults learn new skills from one another.	7.80

Table 5 Continued

6. Adults always take the ideas of youth seriously.	7.67
7. Adults encourage youth to come up with their own ideas.	8.49
8. Adults are very excited about being involved with the project.	8.16
9. Adults are very concerned with community change.	8.85
<u>Overall Mean</u>	<u>7.82</u>

Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). Table represents positive aspect of questions.

A t-test was used to determine if significant differences existed in youth perceptions of how involved adults let them be on the board based on gender, ethnicity and residence. As shown in Table 6, both female and male participants had positive feelings in regards to how involved adults allow them to be as members of the youth board; however, females were more positive than males on their ratings of youth involvement (mean of 8.03 and 7.95, respectively). However, the differences were not statistically different at the .05 level. The table also shows that both Anglo members and those that reside in population < 10,000 areas are more positive than non-Anglo and population > 10,000 when ranking how involved adult let youth be involved, yet the means are not statistically different.

Table 6

Youth member's perception by gender, ethnicity and residence of how involved adults let them be. N=75

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>*p</i>
Gender						
Female	51	8.03	1.22	0.26	73	.79
Male	24	7.95	1.23			
Ethnicity						
Anglo	68	8.01	1.23	0.18	73	.85
Non-Anglo	7	7.92	1.11			
Resident						
Population < 10,000	59	8.05	1.19	0.60	73	.54
Population > 10,000	16	7.84	1.32			

Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). The scale has 9 questions to assess adult involvement.

**p < .05.*

An ANOVA was also employed to test for differences youth perceptions by age group, on how involved they feel adults on the Youth Board allow them to be in decision making. As shown in Table 7, the one-way ANOVA indicated no significant differences between youth participants' perceptions by age.

Table 7

Youth member's perception of how involved adults allow them to be with the Youth Board by age. N=75

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>*p</i>
Age					
14 and under	17	7.87	0.96	.15	.85
15-16	21	8.01	1.37		
17-18	37	8.06	1.25		

*Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). *p < .05.*

Conclusions

The *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale* (Appendix D) contained items that measured youth's perception of their involvement as well as their perceptions regarding how involved adults allow them to be. The overall mean score of the youth members of the Youth Board for the perception of their own involvement indicator questions is 7.90. This score indicates that youth demonstrated high levels of youth voice and decision making, responsibility, and commitment to the project. The overall mean score for their perception of how adults let them be involved is 7.81. This indicates that adult show support through their commitment to nurture youth voice and decision making and dedication to the project.

Even though the overall mean scores for youth involvement (7.90) and adult involvement (7.81) lead the researcher to conclude that the youth members feel good about their involvement on the Youth Board, there is nothing in this study

that tells why they feel or don't feel excellent (scoring a 9-10) about their involvement. Further studies need to be conducted to determine what actually makes youth feel excellent about youth involvement and adult involvement. The findings described here were limited by the sample size and population and cannot be generalized to the larger population.

Although the findings in this study lead the researcher to conclude that youth serving on Youth Boards are having a positive experience, there are things Extension should keep in mind as they continue to involve youth in leadership positions.

- Youth should be involved in the program development process from the beginning. Don't ask youth to get involved after the adults have made all of the decisions. Respect young people as equal partners in decision making by making sure they are given significance tasks in planning, implementing and evaluating programs.
- Avoid tokenism by incorporating youth into all relevant Extension committees and task forces. Don't appoint two youth to a committee with a large number of adults and expect a true youth-adult partnership.
- Share ideas with youth, but don't make all of the decisions for them. Youth will develop stronger leadership skills if given opportunities to succeed as well as to fail, thus teaching them to see and accept the consequences of their decisions.

- Adults and youth should keep in mind that active participation in program development should involve everyone.

ARE ADULTS WILLING PARTNERS WITH YOUTH IN EXTENSION YOUTH PROGRAMMING?

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

In the United States, adults tend to perceive adolescence as a time of storm and stress characterized by risky behavior, peer conformity and conflict (Farkas, 1997). When asked what phrase first comes to mind about youth, adults across the United States used negative adjectives such as “rude,” “irresponsible” and “wild” (Farkas, 1997). Low expectations of youth reduce the likelihood that they will be included in settings of community decision-making which supports healthy development. A study done of 102 Wisconsin adults showed they only trust young people “some” (Zeldin, Camino, Calvert and Ivey, 2002). The study also showed that adults supported young people performing community service roles more strongly than community leadership and formal representation roles (Zeldin, Camino, Calvert and Ivey, 2002).

The youth development field encourages adults to view youth as having something meaningful to contribute, such as creativity, or knowledge. All too often, however, adults view youth as not having the knowledge or skills to make decisions or be contributing partners (Bell, 2011, p.1). These negative perceptions are sometimes referred to as adultism, defined as “behaviors and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without their agreement” (Bell, 2011, p. 1). This limits adults’ ability

to see young people in meaningful roles and interferes with an organization's attempts to implement youth leadership programs.

Adultism may lead adults to make decisions on programs or activities for youth without their input. The risk in this is, adults may choosing a direction that youth are not interested in or does not meet their needs, which can lead to the disinterest of youth (Bell, 2011). Furthermore, by not involving youth, adults miss the creative input youth can offer when involved in making decisions.

Adults tend to lead because they have a vision and a sense of what they think youth need. Youth leadership requires adults to share power with youth which can be scary for adults, but is vital for youth to develop true skills (Bell, 2011).

Adults that work with youth in settings that provide a good fit are positively impacted both personally and professionally. In a study conducted by Zeldin (2000), in settings across the county, adults were surprised at how much their views on youth changed when working with them in an organized setting like a committee or board. Adults witnessed the excitement and motivation of youth. As a result, adults began to view youth as important to the organization functioning and improving. Also, adults reported more confidence when making decisions on youth programs, as a result of working in partnership with youth in decision-making roles. Impacts on organizations included: youth participation became more embedded within organizations, organizations developed knowledge about the

importance of youth participation, and organizations changed to value inclusivity (Zeldin, 2000, p. 4).

Adults, who work with youth as members of boards, or committees, have the opportunity to witness their competence and begin to see their importance to the organization. Adults who work directly with young people on a project experience the greatest impact and consistently have report how impressed they are with the cognitive and social competence of their youth partners (Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes & Calvert, 2000). Adults who serve with youth in a partnership capacity also feel less isolated, which leads adults to feel more effective as they work with youth.

Adults that engage youth in leadership development contribute to their development as productive members of society. Involvement is empowering for everyone, especially youth (Hancock, 1994). Youth involvement in the decision-making process of a community organization can reenergize not only the teen but the community organization (Hancock, 1994).

Adult Perceptions of Youth

Most of the existing research focuses on youth and their opinions of adults. Although adults' attitudes toward youth is equally important, it has not been looked at as comprehensively to determine what obstacles stand in the way of improving youth-adult partnerships. For example, Walker and Grossman (1999) who looked at positive youth outcomes occurring as a result of quality youth development programs, including intergenerational programs, indicated that youth are surveyed as program participants as a source for data collection more often than adults. Due

to the lack of research in the youth development and adult education area, few studies have addressed adults' understanding of youth. Additional studies need to be conducted to truly understand how youth and adults view each other and how to eliminate any perceptual barriers that might be preventing stronger relationships between the two groups.

Studies show that adults are unaware of major trends in youth development (Gillian & Bales, 2001; Guzman, Moore, & O'Hare, 2003; Rennekamp, 1993). Adult stereotypes of youth inhibit youth potential at the community level by handicapping the youth's ability to identify with adults causing youth to doubt their own abilities (Glassner, 1999; Guzman, Moore, & O'Hare, 2003; Kaplan, 1997; Klindera, 2001; Males, 1999; Zeldin & Topitzes, 2002). Furthermore, the experiences adults have when they were young are crucial in understanding youth-adult relationships (Galbo, 1983). Youth-adult relationships are challenged because working with youth may cause adults' memories from their own youth experiences to resurface (Atwater, 1983; Gilliam & Bales, 2001).

The Search Institute in 2002 surveyed 1,425 American adults on actions considered most important to youth. Forty-eight percent of the adults indicated from the list of nineteen actions, that youth should have the chance to make their communities better. However, only thirteen percent of the adults reported that this chance even exists. Nearly half of the adults thought that youth should be asked for their opinions when making decisions that directly impact them. Yet, only twenty-five percent of the adults confessed to ever seeking youth opinions. In another

Search Institute (2002) survey of 2,000 adults and youth, forty-six percent of the adults indicated the importance of seeking out youth opinions. Forty-one percent of the youth surveyed felt it was important to give youth the opportunity to make a difference in their communities.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used by Gilliam and Bales (2001) to develop a strategic frame analysis of public opinion towards America's view of teens. The approach used to discern the deeply-held views of the world and assumptions Americans have about youth in society is common in communications research. Gilliam and Bales (2001) found that adults believe teens are "different" than they were in the past and that teens have rejected traditional American values. When six focus groups of parents were given news stories about teenagers, adults consistently focused instead on the negative trends and ignored the positive data. However, adults did describe youth in positive terms when referring to activities such as group sports, performing arts, and volunteer/community service (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). Furthermore, research on television newscasts found that only one of every twelve stories on local newscasts and one of every twenty-five stories on national networks dealt with youth (Gilliam & Bales, 2001).

These studies provide strong evidence that adult perceptions of youth are often negative. Adults can be mentors that guide youth into becoming effective leaders or allow their negative attitudes toward youth to be a hindrance when working with youth.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions and experiences of adults engaged in youth-adult relationships within Extension programs. The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. Describe the demographic characteristics of adult Youth Board members.
2. Examine the perception of adult towards youth involvement on the Youth Board.
3. Examine the perceptions of adults toward their involvement with one another as Youth Board members.

Methodology

The Youth Board is the Texas AgriLife Extension Service advisory committee for the 4-H program. This committee, made up of eight to ten people is a Program Area Committee required to meet face-to-face twice annually. The membership consists of a majority of youth with some adult membership and should be diverse in its representation of county demographics (Boleman & Burkham, 2006).

The primary function of the Youth Board is to help County Extension Agents determine what programs need to be implemented in the county annually. This Board also reviews yearly educational impacts and helps decide how to address priority issues such as bullying, health issue for teens or youth leadership opportunities. Additionally, the Youth Board plans outreach to new youth audiences and looks at new projects for implementation in the county 4-H program

(Boleman & Burkham, 2006). The population for this study was the Youth Boards in Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of all adult members of the Youth Boards in the Texas AgriLife Extension service. A cluster, purposive sample was chosen for this study. The Texas AgriLife Extension Service consists of four regions; each of the regions consists of three districts of approximately 20 counties in each district. At the time of this study, each region had four 4-H Regional Program Directors. The researcher asked each 4-H Regional Program Director to identify three counties from each of their three districts for a total of nine counties within their region that qualified for the study. Only those counties who were fully staffed, and had no vacancies within the previous year and had an active Youth Board in place met the criteria for this study.

The county Extension agent(s) in each of the nominated counties was informed of their selection. Out of the 36 (estimated 180 participants based on recommendations that the Youth Board consists of eight to ten members with half of those being adults) counties asked to participate, the researcher received surveys back from 31 counties (52 adult surveys).

Instrumentation

The *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale*, (Appendix D) developed by Ken Jones, University of Kentucky, (Jones, 2004) was used to assess adult perceptions pertaining to participation on a Texas AgriLife Extension Service Youth

Board. This instrument was developed to identify characteristics and attitudes of individuals participating in adult and youth partnerships. A 10-point interval scale was utilized to evaluate constructs assessed by the instrument. Bipolar statements were used to measure the perceptions of each participant's experience. Adults and youth completed the same forms.

Jones (2004) established the initial reliability of the instrument reporting a Cronbach Coefficient alpha of .94. The researcher ran a Cronbach Coefficient alpha reliability coefficient for each scale: youth involvement scale (.87), adult involvement scale (.82), and youth-adult interaction scale (.87). The Cronbach Coefficient Alpha reliability test on the adult involvement scale was .72, but by removing question 2 the reliability was improved to .82.

Data Collection and Analysis

Each participant was mailed a consent form (Appendix C) and the survey instrument (Appendix D). Relationship quality was rated on a 10-point scale. The scale intervals were 1 to 2 (*very poor*); 3 to 4 (*poor*); 5 to 6 (*fair*); 7 to 8 (*good*); 9 to 10 (*excellent*). The rating scale used bipolar statements (i.e., positive and negative) to measure participants' perceptions of their experiences. Negative statements were reverse coded for analysis. The instrument contained items that measured adults' view on youth involvement and adult views on their own involvement on the Youth Board. The construct adult involvement utilized items that measured adults' support through their commitment to nurturing youth voice, decision making, and dedication to the project.

The original response date to complete the survey and return it to the researcher was September 15, 2011. Forty surveys were received by the early deadline. Twelve surveys were received after the early deadline. Early and late responders were compared and no significant differences were found.

Findings

Objective one describes to the demographic characteristics of adults serving on the Youth Board. The demographic characteristics of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Youth Board adult members are presented in Table 8.

Approximately 85% of the participants were female. Individuals completing the survey were asked to self selected their demographic characteristics. There were no responses in the 19-25 age group. All participants were 26 years of age or older. Ninety percent of the participants were Anglo; however, Black and Hispanic were also represented. Eighty-six percent of the participants lived in population < 10,000 areas, defined as town with fewer than 10,000 populations and rural non-farm or farm (rural area where agricultural products are sold). The other 13% represented either: Town/City of 10,000-50,000 population and its suburbs, Suburb of city of more than 50,000 populations, or Central city of more than 50,000 populations. Due to the limited number of responses representing Town/City, Suburb and Central City these categories were added together to make-up the population > 10,000 category.

Table 8

Demographic characteristics of adult Youth Board members. N=52

	Number	Percent
Gender		
Female	45	86.5
Male	7	13.5
Age		
26 and over	52	100.0
Ethnicity		
Anglo	47	90.4
Non-Anglo	5	9.6
Resident		
Population < 10,000	45	86.5
Population > 10,000	7	13.5

Objective two assesses adults' perceptions related to youth involvement on the county Youth Board. Table 9 gives the mean score for each of the questions related to the adult's perception of youth involvement.

Table 9

Scale item means and scale mean score for adult's perception of youth involvement. N=52

Question	Mean
1. Youth take lots of initiative in working on projects.	7.35
2. Youth are busy with several tasks	7.73
3. Youth arrive to meetings /events on time.	7.65
4. Youth are given major responsibilities for specific tasks or assignments.	7.49
5. Youth rely on themselves to make key decisions.	7.16
6. Youth have full access to information that is needed to make decisions.	7.92
7. Youth always have the opportunity to discuss their concerns about group decisions.	8.18
8. Youth frequently share ideas that matter to them.	8.27
9. Youth have an equal vote in the decision-making process.	8.47
10. Youth help one another in developing new skills.	8.24
11. Youth are fully committed to their duties.	7.63
12. Youth are very excited about their involvement with this project.	8.22
13. Youth are very concerned with community change.	7.08
Overall Mean	7.79

Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). Table presents positive aspect of each question.

In Table 9, the lowest mean score (7.16) is for the question related to “youth rely on themselves to make key decisions. The question “youth have an equal vote in the decision-making process” has the highest mean score of 8.47. The overall mean score for adult’s perception of youth involvement is 7.79, which indicates adults feel good about youth involvement on the Board.

An independent samples t-test was used to determine significant differences in adult perceptions of youth involvement on the board based on gender, ethnicity and residence. As shown in Table 10, both female and male participants had positive feelings in regards to how involved youth are on the Youth Board; however, males were more positive than females on their ratings of youth involvement (mean of 8.02 and 7.76, respectively).

Table 10

Youth Board adult member’s perception by gender, ethnicity and residence of youth involvement. N=52

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>*p</i>
Gender						
Female	45	7.76	1.33	0.48	49	.63
Male	7	8.02	1.26			
Ethnicity						

Table 10 Continued

Anglo	47	7.74	1.37	0.82	49	.41
Non-Anglo	5	8.26	0.35			
Resident						
Population < 10,000	45	7.77	1.36	0.34	49	.73
Population > 10,000	7	7.97	1.02			

Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). * $p < .05$.

The difference between males and females were not statistically significant. The table also shows that both non-Anglo members and those that reside population > 10,000 areas are more positive when assessing how involved adults perceive youth to be, but no significant difference existed between Anglo and non-Anglo. No significant difference existed between population < 10,000 and population > 10,000 residents as well.

Objective 3 assesses adults' perceptions toward their own involvement with one another as youth board members. Table 11 gives the mean score for each of the questions related to perceptions of adults toward their involvement with one another as Youth Board members. Question four which states, "adults never totally take over everything when working on project activities" versus "adult always take over everything when working on project activities" has the lowest mean score (6.92). The highest mean score (8.50) indicates adults support youth voice by encouraging them to come up with their own ideas. The overall mean score for

adult members on the Youth Board for adult perception is 7.82 which indicated adults feel good with their role on the Youth Board and are committed to nurturing youth voice and decision making and are dedicated to the project.

Table 11

Youth Board adult member's adult involvement indicators questions mean and overall mean. N=52

Question	Mean
1. Adults display a willingness to accept and nurture youth leadership.	7.33
2. Adults display a tendency to want to guide youth.	7.38
3. Adults always listen to the suggestions of youth.	7.52
4. Adults never totally take over everything when working on project activities.	6.92
5. Adults learn new skills from one another.	8.46
6. Adults always take the ideas of youth seriously.	7.87
7. Adults encourage youth to come up with their own ideas.	8.50
8. Adults are very excited about being involved with the project.	7.94
9. Adults are very concerned with community change.	8.44
Overall Mean	7.82

Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). Table presents positive aspect of each question.

An independent samples t-test was used to determine if significant

differences existed in adult perceptions on the bases of gender, ethnicity, and residence. As shown in Table 12, both female and male participants had positive feelings in regards to how involved adults are on the youth board; however, females were more positive than males on their ratings of youth involvement (mean of 7.89 and 7.77, respectively), but the difference was not statistically significant. The table also shows that both Anglo members and those that reside in population < 10,000 areas are more positive when assessing how involved adult let youth be involved. No significant differences were found regarding adults' perceptions between gender, ethnicity and residence for adult involvement.

Table 12

Adult member's perception of adult involvement by gender, ethnicity and residence. N=52

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>*p</i>
Gender						
Female	45	7.89	1.32	0.41	50	.68
Male	7	7.77	0.57			
Ethnicity						
Anglo	47	7.89	1.28	0.23	50	.81
Non-Anglo	5	7.75	0.84			
Resident						
Population < 10,000	45	7.94	1.29	0.93	50	.35

Table 12 Continued

Population > 10,000	7	7.46	0.80
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Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). * $p < .05$.

Conclusions

The *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale* (Appendix D) contained items that measured adult perception of youth involvement and adult perception of their own involvement. The overall mean score for the adult perception of youth involvement was 7.79 which indicated that adults feel youth demonstrated high levels of youth voice and decision making, responsibility, and commitment to the project. The overall mean score for adults' perception of their own involvement on the Youth Board was 7.82, which indicates adults are good at nurturing youth voice and decision making, and are dedicated to working with youth.

Even though the overall mean scores for youth involvement (7.79) and adult involvement (7.82) lead the researcher to conclude that the adult members feel good about their involvement on the Youth Board, there is nothing in this study that tells why they don't feel excellent (scoring a 9-10) about their involvement. Further studies need to be conducted to determine what actually makes adults feel excellent about youth involvement and adult involvement within Extension programs. The findings described here were limited by the sample size and population and cannot be generalized to the larger population.

Although the findings in this study lead the researcher to conclude that

adults serving on Youth Boards are having a positive experience, there are things Extension should keep in mind as they continue having committee, tasks forces and boards with youth and adult representation. Specific, deliberate programs involving both youth and adults are necessary to build youth-adult partnerships. Adults frequently find it difficult to let youth take charge. Even when adults plan for youth to help with program development, adults often don't use their input if it differs from their own. If Extension plans to raise youth leaders who are trained in leadership skills, they must empower youth with positive opportunities that truly involve youth voice. Youth taking on leadership roles and interacting with adults has shown success in establishing positive youth-adult relationships (Jones & Perkins, 2005), which builds a stronger society for all. Program planning that provide youth with opportunities to truly practice and gain skills will be highly beneficial to youth organizations. Youth skills and confidence are enhanced when adults allow youth to truly be involved.

DETERMINING THE QUALITY OF YOUTH-ADULT INTERACTION WITHIN EXTENSION YOUTH PROGRAMS

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

When youth and adult have an equal voice in the decision-making process, a partnership is formed. (Norman, 2001). Therefore, youth-adult partnerships include power sharing for both youth and adults that recognizes and values the strengths that each brings to the Table. Genuine youth-adult partnerships create an educational environment where youth and adults come together in a group setting willing to share authority, accept responsibility, and highlight individual members' abilities and contributions (Panitz, 1996). Working together through this process allows youth and adults to gain an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Youth and adults can form a foundation that builds solidarity for community development and stronger partnerships when they work together.

Specific concepts identified by Camino (2000) related to youth-adult partnerships include: opportunities to exercise decision-making power for youth; roles youth play in building strong communities; and how negative attitudes exhibited by adults affects youth in community programs. Camino found that youth interested in civic opportunities established better relationships with peers and adults. Although some adults' views were negative toward power-sharing with youth, Camino (2000) also found there was an increase in communication and teamwork among the youth. Teaching and learning between adults and youth distinguishes youth-adult partnerships from traditional youth-adult relationships

such as parent-child, teacher-student, and mentoring. This is not to say that youth-adult relationships are not important, but to show the difference between traditional, caring relationships and youth-adult partnerships.

Youth-adult partnerships have been studied qualitatively through the use of case study applications. Scholars, such as Camino (2000) and Larson, Walker, and Pearce (2005), provide ample descriptions of the dynamics that exist within youth-adult partnering, thus providing a basis for the theoretical framework of this study. In addition, the prevalent research on mentoring provides empirical evidence of one way to determine the quality of youth-adult relationships and how researchers can examine the effectiveness of such alliance (Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper, 2002). For example, Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper (2002) reported that successful programs that engage youth and adults tend to be those evaluated and rated by the actual participants.

Additional quantitative and qualitative studies are needed to fully understand what affects youth-adult partnering have on participants and their communities. A major impediment for research on youth-adult partnerships has been the lack of a clearly-defined definition, but progress has been made through recent studies. Jones and Perkins (2004) based upon the limited empirical research, operationally defined youth-adult partnerships as follows:

A fostered relationship between youth and adults where both parties have equal potential in making decisions, utilizing skills, mutual learning, and promoting change through civic engagement,

program planning and/or community development initiatives

(Jones & Perkins, 2004, p. 1).

If a strong relationship is created, and a structure for idea sharing and decision-making is in place, youth and adults can be effective in creating community change. Youth and adults working together effectively have the capacity to set attainable community goals. Youth-adult partnerships can make a difference in local affairs, planning programs and other events that lead to community development initiatives.

A Need for Positive Youth-Adult Relationships

In the United States, there is a broadening degree of separation between adults and youth that often hampers youth participation (Benson, 1997; Irby, Ferber, Pittman, Tolman, & Yohalem, 2001). Youth, more often than not, have misconceptions of adults, while adults seem to have little faith in the abilities of youth (Benson, 1997; Irby, Ferber, Pittman, Tolman, & Yohalem, 2001). This is even more distinct among organizations that utilize adult participation, but not youth in decision making. A study conducted by the Search Institute (2002) reported that only 30% of 217,000 middle and high school students had adults in their lives that were considered as role models. Youth-adult partnerships related to community efforts can serve as an opportunity for developing relationships that form bonds between youth and caring adults. Wunrow and Einspruch (2001) established a youth-adult partnership model based on the youth development approach of social control theory, involving the bond between youth and society. Wunrow and

Einspruch (2001) further acknowledged that youth-adult partnerships are what helps develop, implement, and evaluate issues that impact youth.

In 2000, Camino presented one of the first empirical studies on youth-adult partnerships. Utilizing data from a group of diverse neighborhoods in the United States, Camino analyzed the structure that comprises the constructs of youth-adult partnerships and the circumstances affecting the practice partnerships. Camino's (2000) research consisted of three major premises: (1) strong communities are built on active participation and civic engagement of adult and youth members; (2) youth development is predicated on a larger focus of building healthy communities; and (3) adults can overcome negative attitudes and misinformation about youth if they join with youth to address community concerns. Camino (2000) concluded that a youth-adult partnership is a multi-dimensional design containing principles and values, such as: fostering leadership and decision-making. In addition, Camino (2000) found that a set of values, skills, and competencies should be developed in order for youth and adult participants to be successful. Individuals need on-going training and support to stimulate advantageous attitudes toward power-sharing in community work when using new strategies.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of youth and adult engaged in youth-adult relationships within Extension programs. The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. Describe the demographic characteristics of members on the youth board.
2. Examine the perceptions of youth and adult towards their interaction with one another on the youth board.

Methodology

All counties that make up the Texas AgriLife Extension Service have an advisory committee called a Youth Board. This Program Area Committee, comprised of eight to ten people, meets face-to-face at least twice annually. The Board membership consists primarily of youth with some adult membership. The group should have membership from other youth serving entities and be diverse in its representation of county demographics (Boleman & Burkham, 2006).

This Board primary function is to help County Extension Agents determine what programs need to be implemented in the county annually. This Board also plans ways to reach new youth audiences and new project for implementation in the county 4-H program (Boleman & Burkham, 2006). Youth Boards in Texas AgriLife Extension will serve as the population for this study.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of members of the Youth Boards in the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. A cluster, purposive sample was chosen for this study. Currently the Texas AgriLife Extension Service is divided into twelve districts with three districts making up a region for a total of four regions. Each district consists of approximately 20 counties. When this study was conducted,

each region had a 4-H Regional Program Director who was asked by the researcher to identify nine counties (three from each of their three districts) within their region that qualified for the study. Only counties who were fully staffed for at least a year and had a Youth Board in place met the criteria for the study.

Once the counties were selected, the county Extension agent(s) in each county were notified of their selection. Out of the 36 counties (estimated 360 participants based on recommendations that the Youth Board consists of eight to ten members) asked to participate, the researcher received surveys back from 31 counties (127 youth and adult surveys).

Instrumentation

The *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale*, (Jones, 2004) (Appendix D) was used to identify characteristics and attitudes of individuals participating in adult and youth partnerships, as members of on a Texas AgriLife Extension Service Youth Board. The data collection instrument utilized a 10-point interval scale to assess the level of interaction between youth and adults. Bipolar statements measured the perceptions of each participant's experience. Adults and youth completed identical forms.

Jones (2004) established the initial reliability of the instrument reporting a Cronbach Coefficient Alpha of .94. A Cronbach Coefficient Alpha was computed for the youth-adult interaction scale. The reliability was established as .87.

Data Collection and Analysis

Each participant was mailed a consent form (Appendix B & C), a parental

assent form (Appendix A) and the survey instrument (Appendix D). Parents of youth were required to consent to their child's participation. Both youth and adult participants signed an assent form stating their willingness to participate in this study and that they understand the purpose of the study.

The *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale* (Appendix D) was the instrument used for this study (Jones, 2004; Jones & Perkins, 2005). The score intervals on the youth-adult interaction scale were 1 to 2 (*very poor*); 3 to 4 (*poor*); 5 to 6 (*fair*); 7 to 8 (*good*); 9 to 10 (*excellent*). The rating scale included bipolar statements (i.e., positive and negative) to measure participants' perceptions of their interaction. For analysis purposes, negative statements were reverse coded. The participants were asked to rate the quality of their existing youth-adult interaction with other Youth Board members. A high rating of youth-adult interaction indicated that youth and adults had a strong partnership and that both groups were actively engaged in the project and exercising equal decision making and leadership skills.

No significant differences or response error was found between early responders and late responders. The original response date to complete the survey and return it to the researcher was September 15, 2011. One hundred six surveys were received by the early deadline. Twenty-one surveys were received after the early deadline. Institutional Review Board approval was obtained from Texas A&M University for the involvement of human subjects in this study.

Findings

Objective one relates to the demographic characteristics of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Youth Board members which are presented in Table 13. Approximately 75% of the participants were female. Individuals completing the survey were asked to self select their age group which consisted of 12 and under, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, 19-25 and 26 and over. Due to the limited number of responses in the 12 and under category this group was combined with the 13-14 age group to make the 14 and under group. Also, there were no responses in the 19-25 age group. The 26 and over group had 52 responses as a single group but if you combine all of the youth responses (75) together, they made-up almost 60% of the responses. Most participants were Anglo (90.6%); however, participants represented non-Anglo (9.4%) ethnic groups including Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native American. Eighty-two percent of the participants lived in population < 10,000 areas, defines as town fewer than 10,000 populations and rural non-farm or farm (rural area where agricultural products are sold). The other 18% represented either: Town/City of 10,000-50,000 population and its suburbs, Suburb of city more than 50,000 populations, or Central city more than 50,000 populations. Because of the small number of responses Town/City, Suburb and Central City were added together to represent the population > 10,000 category.

Table 13

Demographic characteristics of Youth Board participants N=127

	Youth	Adults	Total	Total %
Gender				
Female	51	45	96	74.8
Male	24	7	31	24.4
Age				
14 and under	17		17	11.8
15-16	21		21	16.5
17-18	37		37	29.9
26 and over		52	52	41.7
Ethnicity				
Anglo	68	47	115	90.6
Non-Anglo	7	5	12	9.4
Resident				
Population < 10,000	59	45	104	81.9
Population > 10,000	16	7	23	18.1

Objective two assessed perceptions of youth and adults toward their interaction with one another as members of the Youth Board. Table 14 show the mean score for the youth participants and adult participants answers to the youth-adult interaction questions and the overall mean score for the youth-adult

interaction questions. The adult participants had the highest means score (8.11), but the overall mean score was 8.09 which indicates that the youth and adults have a good working relationship on the project and both have the opportunity to engage in decision-making and leadership skills.

An independent sample t-test was used to determine significant differences ($p < .05$) between genders in adult-youth interaction. As shown in Table 15, both female (7.89) and male (7.83) participants had positive perceptions of youth-adult interaction. No significant difference was found between males and females.

Table 14

Mean scores for youth-adult interaction indicators. N=127

Question	Youth Mean	Adult Mean	Overall Mean
1. Youth and adults get along well together.	8.63	8.69	8.65
2. Youth seem comfortable working with adults.	8.01	8.19	8.09
3. Adults seem comfortable working with youth.	8.76	8.83	8.79
4. Adults actively and consistently consult with youth on project activities.	7.92	8.42	8.13
5. Adults provide direction and mentoring for youth.	8.80	8.65	8.74
6. Youth and adults often agree on most decisions.	8.03	7.81	7.94
7. Youth make decisions based on their own experience.	7.65	7.10	7.43

Table 14 Continued

8. Youth and adults work together as partners on project tasks.	7.61	7.88	7.72
9. Youth and adults indicate mutual learning from one another.	8.23	8.31	8.72
10. Youth and adults frequently help one another develop new skills.	7.55	8.02	7.74
11. Adults are very considerate of youth opinions.	8.28	8.63	8.43
12. Youth are very considerate of adult opinions.	8.12	8.08	8.10
13. Youth/adults always engage in respectful conversations.	8.60	8.27	8.46
14. Youth trust adults to handle power responsibly.	8.37	8.37	8.37
15. Adults trust youth to handle power responsibly.	7.81	7.81	7.81
16. There is a high youth to adult ratio (less than 1 adult for every 5 youth).	6.11	6.77	6.38
Overall Mean	8.03	8.11	8.09

Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). Table presents positive aspect of each question.

Table 15

Youth-adult interaction as perceived by female and male participants. N=127

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>*p</i>
Youth-Adult Interaction					
Females	90	7.89	1.15	0.27	.78
Males	30	7.83	0.95		

*Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). *p < .05.*

In addition to the above comparisons, t-tests were computed to determine if there were significant differences ($p < .05$) between youth and adult participants' perceptions. Table 16 displays all participants had positive perceptions on youth-adult interaction. No significant differences ($p < .05$) were found between youth and adult participants.

Table 16

Youth and adult perceptions toward youth-adult interaction. N=127

Perception	Youth N=74		Adult N=53		F	*P
	M	SD	M	SD		
Youth-adult interaction	7.88	1.11	7.87	1.07	0.01	.97

*Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). *p < .05.*

In Table 17, t-tests were computed to determine if there were significant differences ($p < .05$) between Anglo and non-Anglo participants' perceptions of youth-adult interaction. Most participants were Anglo; however, participants represented non-Anglo ethnic groups including Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native American. Non-Anglo participants had a more positive perception of youth-adult interaction (7.78) than Anglo participants on youth-adult interaction (7.88). No significant difference ($p < .05$) was found between white and non-Anglo participants

Table 17

Participants' perceptions toward youth-adult interaction by ethnicity. N=127

Perception	Anglo N=115		Non-Anglo N=12		F	*P
	M	SD	M	SD		
Youth-adult interaction	7.88	1.12	7.78	0.70	1.79	.75

*Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). *p < .05.*

An independent sample t-test was used to determine significant ($p < .05$) differences based on residence in perceptions of youth-adult interaction. Population < 10,000 is defined as town fewer than 10,000 populations and farm (rural area where agricultural products are sold). Population > 10,000 is defined as Town/City of 10,000-50,000 population and its suburbs, Suburb of city more than 50,000 populations, or Central City of more than 50,000 populations. As shown in Table 18, rural participants had a higher perception of youth-adult interaction (7.93) than non-rural participants (7.60). No significant differences ($p < .05$) were found between rural and non-rural participants on youth and adult interaction.

Table 18

Rural and non-rural participants' perceptions toward youth-adult interaction. N=127

Perception	Rural n-104		Non-Rural n-22		F	*P
	M	SD	M	SD		
Youth-adult interaction	7.93	.999	7.60	1.42	2.02	.180

*Note: The scale ranges from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). *p < .05.*

Conclusions

The *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale* (Appendix D) contained items that measured adult and youth interaction. The mean score for the youth participants for youth-adult interaction was 7.84 which indicated youth feel positive levels of youth voice and decision making, responsibility, and commitment when working with adults. The mean score for adult participants for youth-adult interaction was 7.92, which indicates adults are nurturing youth voice and decision-making, and are dedicated to the project. The overall mean score for Youth Board members for the youth-adult interaction questions is 7.88. A high rating of youth-adult interaction indicated that youth and adults are working collectively, both fully participating in the decision making process.

The participants in this study are primarily female and their overall scores indicate they are more positive toward the experience of working with youth on a board. Based on the gender numbers, the researcher would recommend Extension youth programs look at strategies to recruit adult males to be involved with programs that involve youth-adult partnerships. More adult males involved, might increase adolescent males' perceptions of the program. Extension youth programs need to also be sure they are providing opportunities that appeal to males.

Findings in studies such as this can impact youth, adults, and youth development professionals attempting to establish successful youth-adult partnerships. Recommendations from this researcher include training and preparation for participants so they understand what it means to engage youth on

a team involving adults (Scheve, Perkins, & Mincemoyer, & Welsh, 2005). Also, youth and adult perceptions need to be reviewed annually to help develop a structure so the group's strategy and decision-making process is kept in place. This should help a group move toward a mutual respect and learning how to work as a group.

Clearly, more research is needed to further explore the differences between adults and youth within organizations. Although all youth-adult relationships have positive aspects, youth participants grow and develop when given the opportunity to make decisions and serve as leaders. By Extension incorporating youth in the decision making process of program development, youth may start to believe that they are not just token representatives but full partners contributing to their own development. Adults, in turn, can empower youth through their commitment to nurturing youth voice and dedication to youth programming. This study shows a high rating of youth-adult interaction indicated by youth and adults working together, both engaging in the important components of youth programming.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The importance of youth-adult relationships has been the topic of research, articles, and conversations in recent years. Positive youth-adult interaction is an important component in a young person's life (Perkins & Borden, 2003). Professionals in the field of youth development have continued to explore ways to fully involve youth in programming. However, limited empirical evidence exists at this time that explains how youth benefit from serving as a partner with adults on a project. Most of the existing data are results of qualitative procedures used to explore the youth-adult partnering phenomenon (Camino, 2000; Larson, Walker, and Pearce, 2005). This study utilized a quantitative strategy to assess the perceptions of youth and adults towards each other. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of youth and adults in youth-adult partnerships while serving on the Extension Youth Board. The objectives that guided this study were to: (1) examine youth perceptions of their involvement on the Youth Board; (2) examine adult perceptions of their involvement on the Youth Board; and (3) evaluate youth-adult interaction on the Youth Board.

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and analyses of variance (ANOVA). *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scales* were completed by 127 (52 adult and 75 youth) participants serving on the Youth Board. The rating scale measured three constructs: youth involvement, adult involvement,

and youth-adult interaction.

Although this study is unique to the participations examined, these findings have several implications for those involved in youth-adult relationships. In this section, findings for each specific question will be presented.

Describe the demographic characteristics of members on the youth board

Fifty-two adults and seventy-five youth made up the demographic characteristics of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Youth Board members that completed the instrument for this study. Approximately 75% of the participants were female. Individuals completing the survey were asked to self select their age group which consisted of 12 and under, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, 19-25 and 26 and over. Due to the limited number of responses in the 12 and under category this group was combined with the 13-14 age group to make the 14 and under group. Also, there were no responses in the 19-25 age group. The 26 and over group had the most responses as a single group but if you combine all of the youth responses together, they make up almost 60% of the responses. Most participants were Anglo; however, participants represented non-Anglo ethnic groups including Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native American. Eighty-two percent of the participants lived in population < 10,000, defines as town fewer than 10,000 population and rural non-farm or farm (rural area where agricultural products are sold). The other 18% represented either: Town/City of 10,000 - 50,000 population and its suburbs, Suburb of city of more than 50,000 populations, or Central city of more than 50,000 populations. Because of the small number of responses Town/City, Suburb and

Central City were added together to represent the population > 10,000 category.

What are the perceptions of youth toward their involvement with one another as youth board members?

The overall mean score for youth serving on the Youth Board for the youth perception of their own involvement indicator questions is 7.91, which indicates they felt good about their involvement on the Board. The lowest mean score on individual questions is the question related to “youth rely on themselves to make key decisions” (6.61). The bipolar statement related to this question is, “youth make few decisions for themselves, often relying on the decisions of adults.” The question “youth have an equal vote in the decision-making process” has the highest mean score of 8.53.

A t-test was used to determine significant differences in perceptions of youth involvement between gender, ethnicity and residence. Both female and male participants had positive perceptions of the level of youth involvement; however, males were more positive than females on their ratings of youth involvement (mean of 8.03 and 7.84, respectively). Also both Anglo members and those that reside in population < 10,000 areas were more positive when ranking youth involvement, yet no significant difference existed between white and non-Anglo participants. No significant difference existed between population < 10,000 and population > 10,000 residents as well.

An ANOVA was employed to test for differences existing between youth participants perception of their own involvement based on age. The one-way

ANOVA indicated no significant differences between youth participants by age.

What are the youths' perceptions regarding how they are treated by adult members of the youth board?

Youth perceptions regarding how they are treated by adult members of the youth board were positive. The overall mean score for youth only board members for the youth perception of how adults let them be involved indicator questions was 7.82 indicating youth feel like the adult members of the Youth Board allow them to be actively involved at members of the board. Question two which states, "adults always listen to the suggestions of youth/never listen to the suggestions of youth" had the lowest mean score (6.28). This question also impacted the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha reliability test on the adult involvement scale. By removing question two the reliability improved from .72 to .82. The highest mean score (8.85) indicates adults are very concerned with community change.

A t-test was used to determine significant differences in youth perceptions of how involved adults let them be on the board based on gender, ethnicity and residence. Both female and male participants had positive feelings in regards to how involved adults allow them to be as members of the youth board; however, females were more positive than males on their ratings of youth involvement (mean of 8.03 and 7.95, respectively). However, the differences were not statistically different at the .05 level. Also both Anglo members and those that reside in population < 10,000 areas were more positive when ranking how involved adult let youth be involved, yet the means are not statistically different.

An ANOVA was also employed to test for age differences by youth participants based on how involved they feel adults on the youth board allow them to be in decision making. The one-way ANOVA indicated no significant differences between youth participants by age.

What are the perceptions of adult towards youth involvement on the youth board?

The overall mean score for adult's perception of youth involvement is 7.79, which indicates adults feel good about youth involvement on the Board. The lowest mean score (7.16) is for the question related to "youth rely on themselves to make key decisions." The question "youth have an equal vote in the decision-making process" has the highest mean score of 8.47.

An independent samples t-test was used to determine significant differences in adult perceptions of youth involvement on the board based on gender, ethnicity and resident. Both female and male participants had positive feelings in regards to how involved youth are on the Youth Board; however, males were more positive than females on their ratings of youth involvement (mean of 8.02 and 7.76, respectively). Both non-Anglo members and those that reside in populations > 10,000 areas are more positive when assessing how involved adults perceive youth to be, but no significant difference existed between Anglo and non-Anglo. No significant difference existed between population < 10,000 and population > 10,000 residents as well.

What are the perceptions of adults toward their involvement with one another as youth board members?

The overall mean score for adult members on the Youth Board for adult perception is 7.82 which indicated adults feel good with their role on the Youth Board and are committed to nurturing youth voice and decision making and are dedicated to the project. Question four which states, “adults never totally take over everything when working on project activities” versus “adult always take over everything when working on project activities” has the lowest mean score (6.92). The highest mean score (8.50) indicates adults support youth voice by encouraging them to come up with their own ideas. The Cronbach Coefficient Alpha reliability test showed on the adult involvement scale, removing question two improved the reliability from .66 to .81.

An independent samples t-test was used to determine significant differences in adult perceptions on the bases of gender, ethnicity and residence. Both female and male participants had positive feelings in regards to how involved adults are on the youth board; however, females were more positive than males on their ratings of youth involvement (mean of 7.89 and 7.77, respectively). Also both Anglo members and those that reside in populations < 10,000 areas were more positive when assessing how involved adult let youth be involved. No significant difference was found between gender, ethnicity and residence for adult involvement

What are the perceptions of youth and adult towards their interaction with one another on the youth board?

On the youth-adult interaction questions, the mean score for the youth participants was 7.84 and 7.84 for the adult participants. The adult participants had the highest means score but the overall mean score was 7.88 which indicates that the youth and adults work collectively, both engaging in one or more components of the project and fully exercising an equal opportunity to utilize decision making and other leadership skills.

An independent sample t-test was used to determine significant differences between genders in adult-youth interaction. Both female (7.89) and male (7.83) participants had positive perceptions of youth-adult interaction and no significant difference was found between males and females.

In addition t-tests were computed to determine if there were significant differences between youth and adult participants' perceptions. All participants had positive perceptions on youth-adult interaction. Although no significant differences were found, mean scores indicate that youth had a tendency to be more positive when compared to adult participants.

An independent samples t-test was computed to determine if there were significant differences between Anglo and non-Anglo participants' perceptions of youth-adult interaction. Most participants were Anglo; however, participants represented non-Anglo ethnic groups including Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native American. Non-Anglo participants had a more positive perception of youth-adult

interaction (7.78) than Anglo participants on youth-adult interaction (7.88). No significant difference was found between white and non-Anglo participants.

An independent sample t-test was also used to determine significant differences based on resident in perceptions of youth-adult interaction. Population < 10,000 participants had a higher perception of youth-adult interaction (7.93) than population > 10,000 participants (7.60). No significant differences were found between population < 10,000 and population > 10,000 participants on youth and adult interaction.

Recommendations

Youth-service providers need to develop ways to ensure youth have ownership of programs and projects they are directly involved in from program development to evaluation stages. If youth feel a sense of ownership, they are more willing to work in a partnership with adults. Additionally, this will increase youth ownership, the kind of strategy youth need for a sense of mattering, as explained by Eccles and Gootman (2002). They stated that youth need to recognize they are importance and can make a difference; that is, they need to matter. Moreover, by helping others, youth gain a more positive perception towards their experiences and feeling of self worth by helping others (Perkins & Borden, 2003). This provides youth with a sense of “required helpfulness”; that the act of being a contributor enables them to become more empowered and confident in their abilities (Perkins & Borden, 2003). Furthermore, youth development programs need to continue to capitalize on adults who are willing to work as partners with youth. These adults

should be targeted as potential role models, for they bring experience and feelings of personal closeness in working with youth (Dubois & Neville, 1997).

An intentional structure that promotes positive youth-adult interaction needs to be in place for community-based programs to be successful (Jekielek, 2002). Training for adults before their work with youth partners is vital. All adults and youth can benefit from learning ways to strengthen their relationships. For example, Jekielek and colleagues (2002) reported that the more training adults received, the more successful they were at serving as a mentor. Youth organizations need to be sure they are providing youth with caring adults and mentor to ensure the success of the program.

Adults not willing to share power create obstacle for youth to develop to their in full capacity of youth leadership (Camino, 2000; Zeldin, Camino, Calvert, & Ivey, 2002). Although adults need to respect youth voice and decision making, youth still need adult support in developing the skills and competencies. For the community youth development framework to work, adults must value youth and youth must value adults.

Implication for Extension:

- One of the best opportunities for a young person is direct experience with a youth-adult partnership. Unfortunately, young people rarely get to play significant organizational or community decision making roles and as a result, few adults have the opportunity to develop working partnerships with them. Extension can create opportunities and supports for implementing youth involvement and youth adult partnership. The best way

to overcome adults' and youth lack of experience in serving on committees and boards together is to provide those experiences.

- Extension can build stronger supports for young people in significant youth voice by involving them in setting organizational goals related to youth programming and ensuring that the implementation of activities and programs remains consistent with the goals.
- One factor that affects youth involvement is that young people graduate and move on so Extension needs to be sure that there is a plan in place to sustainable youth involvement over time by providing opportunities for new and diverse youth to develop the skills needed to fulfill leadership roles.
- To create a better youth development environment, Extension needs to focus not only on the youth in the program, but on the adults. Adults need training and support to be a good mentor.
- Extension can improve the experience youth have in the program by focusing on skills development and relationship building. Youth need preparation and practice to work with youth and adult team members as a youth-adult partnership. The investment in building quality relationships will be beneficial for both youth and adults.

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APPENDIX A
PARENT ASSENT FORM

PARENTASSENT FORM

Hello, my name is Charla Bading, District 7 4-H Specialist for the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in San Angelo, TX. Currently, I am conducting an in-depth study of youth and adult partnerships in Extension programming.

If you allow your child to participate in this study, they will be asked to complete a rating scale measuring youth and adult participants' perceptions of one another and perceptions of their involvement and interaction with one another. The instrument will take approximately twenty minutes in length to complete. Your child was selected to be a possible participant because they are a member of the 4-H Youth Board in the county you reside.

This study will be confidential. The evaluation team will not use your child's name or other identifying information in any report or document. We will use an ID number to record your responses. The list connecting your child's name to the ID number will be kept in a locked file in my office for two years. There are no risks to you in sharing this information with us.

In addition, if your child chooses to withdraw from the study, your child has the right to tell us not to use any information they have given us. Your child also has the right to receive a copy of the evaluation report if they so choose. If you or your child has questions regarding this study, you may contact Charla Bading, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, District 7 4-H Specialist at 325-653-4576 or c-bading@tamu.edu.

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your child's rights as a research participant, contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to allow your child to participate in this study.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Printed Name of Child: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Permission: _____
Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

APPENDIX B
YOUTH INFORMED CONSENT FORM

YOUTH INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Hello, my name is Charla Bading, District 7 4-H Specialist for the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in San Angelo, TX. Currently, I am conducting an in-depth study of youth and adult partnerships in Extension programming.

I am asking you to participate in this study, because you are currently serving on a Youth Board that involves youth and adults. If you agree to participate, you will complete a rating scale measuring youth and adult participants' perceptions of one another and perceptions of their involvement and interaction with one another. This study will take approximately twenty minutes in length to complete the survey instrument.

This study will be confidential. The evaluation team will not use your name or other identifying information in any report or document. We will use an ID number to record your responses. The list connecting your name to the ID number will be kept in a locked file in my office for two years. The information obtained from the rating scale will only be available to the evaluation team. There are no risks to you in sharing this information with us.

In addition, if you choose to withdraw from the study, you have the right to tell us not to use any information you have given us. You also have the right to receive a copy of the evaluation report if you so choose. If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Charla Bading, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, West Region 4-H Program Director at 325-653-4576 or c-bading@tamu.edu.

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

 This is to certify that I, _____, hereby consent to my voluntary participation in this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of Texas A&M University under the supervision of Dr. Barry Boyd.

I understand the information given to me. This evaluation study and my part in it have been fully explained to me by this letter. I have received answers to any questions that I had about the research/evaluation process. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

I understand that I may decline to answer specific questions or items in the survey.

I understand that any data or answers will be confidential.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation in the evaluation study.

Young Person: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C
ADULT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

ADULT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Hello, my name is Charla Bading, District 7 4-H Specialist for the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in San Angelo, TX. Currently, I am conducting an in-depth study of youth and adult partnerships in Extension programming.

I am asking you to participate in this study, because you are currently serving on a Youth Board that involves youth and adults. If you agree to participate, you will complete a rating scale measuring youth and adult participants' perceptions of one another and perceptions of their involvement and interaction with one another. This study will take approximately twenty minutes in length to complete the survey instrument.

This study will be confidential. The evaluation team will not use your name or other identifying information in any report or document. We will use an ID number to record your responses. The list connecting your name to the ID number will be kept in a locked file in my office for two years. The information obtained from the rating scale will only be available to the evaluation team. There are no risks to you in sharing this information with us.

In addition, if you choose to withdraw from the study, you have the right to tell us not to use any information you have given us. You also have the right to receive a copy of the evaluation report if you so choose. If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Charla Bading, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, West Region 4-H Program Director at 325-653-4576 or c-bading@tamu.edu.

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

 This is to certify that I, _____, hereby consent to my voluntary participation in this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of Texas A&M University under the supervision of Dr. Barry Boyd.

I understand the information given to me. This evaluation study and my part in it have been fully explained to me by this letter. I have received answers to any questions that I had about the research/evaluation process. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

I understand that I may decline to answer specific questions or items in the survey.

I understand that any data or answers will be confidential.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation in the evaluation study.

Person: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D

INVOLVEMENT AND INTERACTIOIN RATING SCALE

Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale

Please complete the following items. You DO NOT have to include your name. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

City/Town _____

State _____

County _____

1. You are (check one):

- A youth participant
- An adult participant

2. How do you describe yourself?

- Asian
- Black/African-American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American
- Anglo
- Other _____

3. What is your Gender (check one)?

- Female
- Male
-

4. What is your age group (check one)?

- 12 and under
- 13-14
- 15-16
- 17-18
- 19-25
- 26 and over

5. Please select one that best describes the area in which you live.

- Farm (rural area where agricultural products are sold)
- Town under 10,000 and rural non-farm
- Town / City 10,000 - 50,000 and its suburbs
- Suburb of city more than 50,000
- Central city more than 50,000

6. Is this your first time participating in a project that involves youth and adults working together (check one)?

- Yes
- No, (If not, what other project(s) have you worked on that involved youth and adults?)

Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale

When completing this part of the survey, think of your current community project and the youth and adults in your group/team. The purpose of this survey is to allow you to rate the levels of youth involvement with other youth, adult involvement with other adults and youth working together with adults. Your responses will help determine what it takes to build quality relationships between youth and adults. Place an "X" on the line (within the middle boxes) that you feel is the most accurate statement. For example, if you feel the statement on the right or left best describes your situation, you would place an "X" in the box closest to that statement. If you believe that both statements are accurate or somewhat accurate, then you would place an "X" at or near the middle. See the example below.

EXAMPLE

Youth & adults have lots of fun.			X																	Youth & adults do not have lots of fun.
----------------------------------	--	--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---

Youth Involvement Indicators																				
Youth take lots of initiative in working on projects.																				Youth take little initiative in working on projects.
Youth are sitting around with nothing to do.																				Youth are busy with several tasks.
Youth arrive to meetings /events on time.																				Youth show up late for meetings/events.
Youth are given little or no responsibilities for specific tasks or assignments.																				Youth are given major responsibilities for specific tasks or assignments.
Youth rely on themselves to make key decisions.																				Youth make few decisions for themselves, often relying on the decisions of adults.
Youth have full access to information that is needed to make decisions.																				Youth have very little access to information that is needed to make decisions.
Youth never have the opportunity to discuss their concerns about group decisions.																				Youth always have the opportunity to discuss their concerns about group decisions.
Youth frequently share ideas that matter to them.																				Youth rarely share ideas about things that matter to them.
Youth do not have an equal vote in the																				Youth have an equal vote in the decision

decision-making process.											making process.
Youth help one another in developing new skills.											Youth do not help one another in developing new skills.
Youth are not fully committed to their duties.											Youth are fully committed to their duties.
Youth are very excited about their involvement with this project.											Youth have little or no interest in being involved with this project.
Youth are not concerned with community change.											Youth are very concerned with community change.
Adult Involvement Indicators											
Adults display a willingness to accept and nurture youth leadership.											Adults display a sense of wanting to control youth.
Adults tend to be followers of youth leadership.											Adults display a tendency to want to guide youth.
Adults always listen to the suggestions of youth.											Adults never listen to the suggestions of youth.
Adults never totally take over everything when working on project activities.											Adults always take over everything when working on project activities.
Adults learn new skills from one another.											Adults do not learn new skills from one another.
Adults never take the ideas of youth seriously.											Adults always take the ideas of youth seriously.
Adults encourage youth to come up with their own ideas.											Adults command youth to follow the directions of adults.
Adults have no interest in being involved w/project.											Adults are very excited about being involved with the project.
Adults are very concerned with											Adults are not very concerned with

community change.											community change.
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Youth-Adult Interaction Indicators											
Youth and adults get along well together.											There is arguing/ tension among youth and adults.
Youth appear uneasy and intimidated by adults.											Youth seem comfortable working with adults.
Adults seem comfortable working with youth.											Adults appear uneasy and afraid of youth.
Adults do not consult with youth on project activities at all.											Adults actively and consistently consult with youth on project activities.
Adults provide direction and mentoring for youth.											Adults provide little or no direction and mentoring for youth.
Youth always go along with the decisions of adults.											Youth never go along with adults and always make their own decisions.
Youth and adults often agree on most decisions.											Youth and adults rarely agree with one another.
Youth rely on the experiences of adults when making decisions.											Youth make decisions based on their own experiences.
Youth and adults work separately on project tasks.											Youth and adults work together as partners on project tasks.
Youth and adults indicate mutual learning from one another.											Youth and adults learn little from one another.
Youth and adults rarely help one another develop new skills.											Youth and adults frequently help one another develop new skills.
Adults are very considerate of youth opinions.											Adults are not at all considerate of youth opinions.
Youth are not at all considerate of adult opinions.											Youth are very considerate of adult opinions.
Youth/adults always											Youth and adults never

engage in respectful conversations.											engage in respectful conversations.
Youth do not trust adults to handle power responsibly.											Youth trust adults to handle power responsibly.
Adults trust youth to handle power responsibly.											Adults do not trust youth to handle power responsibly.
There is a low youth to adult ratio (less than 1 adult for every 5 youth).											There is a high youth to adult ratio (at least 1 adult for every 5 youth).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX E
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

**TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES - OFFICE OF
RESEARCH COMPLIANCE**

1186 TAMU, General Services Complex
979.458.1467
College Station, TX 77843-1186
FAX 979.862.3176
750 Agronomy Road, #3500
<http://researchcompliance.tamu.edu>

Human Subjects Protection Program Institutional Review Board

DATE: 02-Mar-2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: BADING, CHARLA
77843-

FROM: Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

SUBJECT: Initial Review

Protocol

Number: 2011-0023

Title: Determining the Quality of Youth-Adult Relationships within
Extension Youth
Program

Review

Category: Expedited

Approval

Period: 02-Mar-2011 **To** 01-Mar-2012

Approval determination was based on the following Code of Federal Regulations:

45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) - Some or all of the research appearing on the list and found by the reviewer (s) to involve no more than minimal risk.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation or quality assurance methodologies.

(Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b) (3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Provisions:

This research project has been approved for one (1) year. As principal investigator, you assume the following responsibilities

1. **Continuing Review:** The protocol must be renewed each year in order to continue with the research project. A Continuing Review along with required documents must be submitted 30 days before the end of the approval period. Failure to do so may result in processing delays and/or non-renewal.
2. **Completion Report:** Upon completion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a Completion Report must be submitted to the IRB Office.
3. **Adverse Events:** Adverse events must be reported to the IRB Office immediately.

4. **Amendments:** Changes to the protocol must be requested by submitting an Amendment to the IRB Office for review. The Amendment must be approved by the IRB before being implemented.

5. **Informed Consent:** Information must be presented to enable persons to voluntarily decide whether or not to participate in the research project.

This electronic document provides notification of the review results by the Institutional Review Board.

VITA

Name: Charla Bading

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San Angelo, TX 76901

Email Address: c-bading@tamu.edu

Education: B.S. (*Home Economics Education*), The University of Texas at Austin, 1986
M.S. (*Education*), Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 1991
Ed.D. (*Agricultural Education*), Texas A&M University, College Station and Texas Tech University, Lubbock, 2011