

Conceptual Framework

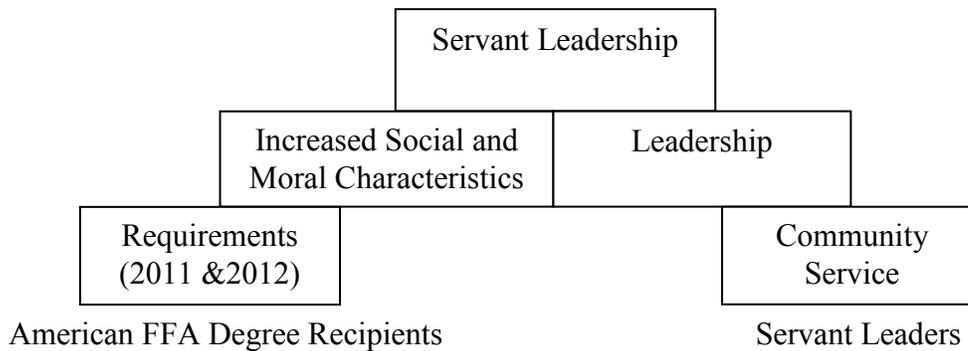


Figure 3. Community service as a foundation for servant leadership.

“Servant leaders combine, as the term implicates, leading and serving” (Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1244). The basic characteristic of a servant leader are service, selflessness, and positive intentions (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). “For individuals, servant leadership offers a means to personal growth- spiritually, professionally, emotionally, and intellectually” (Spears, 2004, p. 10). The FFA program, and more specifically the FFA Degree Program, follows the concept of servant leadership, by allowing members to be innovative leaders of service activities; to originate and develop ideas, inspire others, have a long-term view of a goal, ask questions, and challenge current situations. For FFA members who complete these Degrees, “serving and leading become almost exchangeable; being a servant allows them to lead and being a leader implies they serve” (Dierendock, 2011, p. 1231).

“The highest level of human endeavor is to serve others. Some achieve that at a very high level and others may not, but ultimately FFA goals help people serve others” (Miner, 2003, p. 44). Agriculture education and FFA have utilized the American FFA

Degree as an excellent external reward system for FFA members who complete the requirements of the application. The American FFA Degree application has the potential to create the best representation of a servant leader, by promoting moral characteristics, increasing leadership development, and showing the most care for the common good of others.

By connecting instruction in the classroom to personal experiences in community service activities, motivation to learn and participate appears to be stronger and more persistent (Elliot & Knight, 2005). The researcher believed that those who received the American FFA Degree, with its new community service requirement, would have the highest sense of servant leadership. This means they would have high servant leadership characteristics, as defined by Spears (2005), high leadership effectiveness, and a selflessness Fundamental Moral Orientation (McCuddy, 2008).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Introduction

In order to explore American FFA Degree recipients' sense of servant leadership in agriculture education and the FFA, Spears' (2005) ten characteristics of a servant leader, leadership effectiveness, and the participants' Fundamental Moral Orientations (McCuddy, 2008) were assessed. A quantitative, descriptive study, among 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA recipients' sense of servant leadership and the types of community service hours recorded on their American FFA Degree was conducted. A five part questionnaire was distributed to three panels of participants, using Qualtrics. Descriptive statistics were used to compare recipients' servant leadership composite scores, leadership effectiveness scores, and Fundamental Moral Orientation scores. The researcher believed that the 2011 and 2012 respondents would have high scores on Spears' ten characteristics of effective servant leaders, greater servant leadership composite scores, higher leadership effectiveness scores, and more frequently portray a selfless FMO.

Research Design and Instrumentation

In order to evaluate servant leadership and completed community service hours existed, a descriptive study of Texas recipients of the American FFA Degree was conducted. This study was used to determine if servant leadership was reflected by the

community service hours recorded by the 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients, from Texas.

A five part questionnaire was modified by the researcher from McCuddy and Cavin's "Survey of Personal Leadership Characteristics and Contexts." The instrument was used to describe personal attitudes toward characteristics of a servant leader. Participants were initially required to complete an online consent. They were required to read the information provided and agree before continuing to the questionnaire. Once in the instrument, the participants first identified the FFA chapter they belonged to in high school. The second section required participants to evaluate themselves on ten servant leadership characteristics: active listening, empathy, healing, self-awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth, and building community (Spears, 2005). These characteristics were developed by Spears based on Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership. Participants ranked themselves on each characteristic according to an eight-point scale, identifying a degree of the characteristic that most accurately described them (McCuddy & Cavin, 2008). Different endpoint labels were used to provide participants with examples of varying responses for each question.

Self-evaluation of leadership effectiveness was the third section of the instrument. This section was adopted from McCuddy and Cavin's questionnaire (2008). "The participants were asked to indicate, on a six-point scale, how others who were familiar with them in leadership roles would rate their leadership effectiveness" (McCuddy & Cavin, 2008, p. 111). This scale ranged from "ineffective" to "entirely

effective,” with one being ineffective and six being entirely effective. Bass, Cascio, and O’Connor’s (1974) method was the basis for this six-point scale, which is used for approximating an interval level of measurement.

A participant’s Fundamental Moral Orientations (selfish, self-full, and selfless) was the fourth section of the instrument. An operational definition of each Fundamental Moral Orientation was provided, and participants ranked themselves on two eight-point scales, once for their personal life and once for work life. Selfishness was placed on the very left, number one, self-fullness in the center, and selflessness on the very right, number eight.

In the fifth section, participants completed three demographic questions: age, gender, and ethnicity. The number of community service hours, a list of activities and the types of community service activities were also collected. The participants listed the year, activity name, and number of hours for each community service activity. Participants had several options for completing this section. The information needed could be found on page 12, section VII of their American Degree application. Participants could look at their American FFA Degree application and manually complete the blank provided, or they could scan, or take a picture of page 12 using their camera or phone, and upload it to complete this section.

Content and face validity were determined by two panels of experts in the field. Face validity was deemed acceptable by five faculty members at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Content validity was determined by three faculty members at Texas A&M University. McCuddy and Cavin (2008), determined the reliability of the

instrument by creating a servant leadership composite score. A servant leadership composite score was created by averaging each individual's responses on the ten servant leadership characteristic questions; therefore, composite scores ranged from one to eight. "Higher scores signify a stronger overall servant leadership orientation" (McCuddy & Cavin, 2008). Cronbach's coefficient alpha was measured at .75 for the servant leadership composite score. A pilot test was conducted after amending the original instrument by changing the values to even point scales and changing the demographic questions. The pilot test used a convenience sample, consisting of 27 Texas A&M agriculture science students in AGSC 301, and three departmental student workers. SPSS was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, and yielded a Cronbach's coefficient of .81.

Sample

Given the nature of this quantitative study, a simple random sample was performed using the random sampling function in Microsoft Excel. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) random sampling procedure for the 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients was used to determine the number of participants needed. With a 95% confidence level and a 5% confidence interval, a total of 303 American Degree recipients were required for the study. Initially 108 participants from 2010, 100 from 2011, and 95 from 2012 were selected. However, missing or incorrect contact information from the year 2010 reduced the usable sample. A total of 294 American Degree recipients, 100 participants from 2010, 100 participants from 2011, and 94 participants from 2012, were asked to complete the questionnaire and provide the

number of recorded community service hours on page 12, section VII of the American FFA Degree Application. A sampling frame was developed from the 2010, 2011, and 2012 American Degree Certification Forms and used to select the sample of participants. These certification forms also contained email addresses, which were used to contact the selected participants. The list was shared by Dr. Kirk Edney, at Texas A&M University, who has been the chairman of the Texas FFA degree and awards committee for the past four years. At the conclusion of this study, there was a total response rate of 34.69%.

Data Collection and Analysis

An online questionnaire was provided using Qualtrics to a sample of 294 Texas FFA members who received their American FFA Degrees in the years 2010, 2011, and 2012. Three panels were created, one for each year's American FFA Degree recipients, entitled 2010, 2011, and 2012. The questionnaires were sent out following Dillman's (2000) tailored design method. Five emails were created, and pre-set distribution dates and times were established to send the emails out systematically over a three-week period. A pre-notice email was sent to the American FFA Degree recipients notifying them about the online survey. Two days after the pre-notice email, an initial request email with information about the research, a link to the survey, and a suggested completion time was sent. A thank you email, or for some a reminder email, was sent to nonrespondents one week after the initial request. This again contained information pertaining to the research, a link to the survey, and a preferred completion time. Another reminder email was sent five days later, and a final reminder was sent five days after that

to encourage the remaining nonrespondents. Dillman (2000) states that at least four contacts are appropriate when using email surveys.

Throughout the data collection process, incorrect email addresses were corrected with the help of parents and agricultural science teachers, and emails were resent to the participants. Missing information on question 17, the activity and number of hours recorded on page 12, section VII of the American FFA Degree application, was obtained for 13 participants from available American FFA Degree applications and a list of 2012 American FFA Degree recipient community service hours and activities provided by Rosalie Hunsinger, event manager of the National FFA Organization.

To further increase response rate, a letter was created to remind the final non-respondents to take the questionnaire. After exporting the individualized URL links from Qualtrics, simplified URLs were generated for the 201 non-respondents, to create an easier way to go to the questionnaire. Twenty-seven days after the final reminder email was sent, these letters were sent through United States Postal Service to the permanent US Postal addresses of the final non-respondents. These were addressed to the parents of the American FFA Degree recipients, because most addresses were home addresses. Because most American FFA Degree recipients are high school graduates, the researcher believed that it would be more appropriate to contact the parents of the American FFA Degree recipients since it was highly likely the American Degree recipient did not live at home. The parents were asked to remind their child to follow the link provided and fill out the application or email the researcher for the link to the Qualtrics questionnaire. Facebook messaging was also utilized to contact individuals the researcher could find on

Facebook. Twenty additional respondents completed the questionnaire following these extraordinary follow up procedures.

Data collection was terminated 11 days after the letters were mailed.

Nonresponse error was handled by comparing early to late respondents, as recommended by Lindner, Murphy, and Briers (2001). The early respondents were those who completed the questionnaire in response to email reminders, and the late respondents were those who completed the questionnaire after Facebook messaging and the US Postal letters were sent. Data was analyzed using t-tests, which showed no differences between early and late respondents; so all data were pooled for analysis.

Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. There were 114 questionnaires completed in Qualtrics, but after eliminating respondents aged 24 or older, and one respondent who had missing information, 102 participants had complete and usable data, yielding a response rate of 34.69%. Data were analyzed for all participants to describe demographics and overall sense of servant leadership. Sense of servant leadership was determined by assessing the ten characteristics of a servant leader (Spears, 2005), servant leadership composite scores, leadership effectiveness scores, and the awareness of Fundamental Moral Orientations (McCuddy, 2008).

A composite score was created by averaging the ten characteristics of a servant leader for each individual. McCuddy and Cavin (2008) posit this composite score will effectively evaluate the servant leadership characteristics as a single score. The respondents were then separated into four different panels: 2010, 2011, 2012, and unknown. The unknown category contained participants who could not be identified as a

2010, 2011, or 2012 American FFA Degree recipient due to missing information.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data to evaluate the servant leadership characteristics, the servant leadership composite score, leadership effectiveness, and Fundamental Moral Orientations. Demographic variables were also analyzed. These included gender, age, ethnicity, and domicile.

Finally, the types of community service were categorized and evaluated, along with the number of hours and the descriptions of the community service activities reported by the respondents. The types of activities listed on the American FFA Degree applications, from Texas were categorized by individuals familiar with community service. The groups used were based on a study by Owings (1995), who studied community service performed by high school students.

Summary

Examining Spears' (2005) ten characteristics of a servant leader, leadership effectiveness, and the participants' Fundamental Moral Orientations (McCuddy, 2008), allowed the researcher to explore American FFA Degree recipients' sense of servant leadership within agriculture education and the FFA program. The researcher conducted a quantitative study, among 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA recipients' to examine their sense of servant leadership and the type of community service hours recorded on their American FFA Degree. A five part questionnaire was distributed online, using Qualtrics. After determining there were no differences between early and late respondents, descriptive statistics was used to analyze recipients' servant leadership characteristic scores, servant leadership composite scores, leadership effectiveness

scores, and Fundamental Moral Orientation scores. The researcher believed that the 2011 and 2012 respondents would have high scores on Spears' ten characteristics of effective servant leaders, greater servant leadership composite scores, higher leadership effectiveness scores, and a higher tendency to portray a selfless FMO.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of the new community service requirements on the American FFA Degree application and the sense of servant leadership held by the 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients, in Texas. The findings of this study follow the research objectives identified in Chapter I. Descriptive statistics for demographic variables, leadership characteristics and composite scores, leadership effectiveness, and Fundamental Moral Orientation scores are presented and discussed below using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Demographic Data

Demographic data were collected from those who participated in the online Qualtrics survey. Frequencies and percentages are reported for gender, age, ethnicity, and domicile in Table 4.1. The respondents were classified into four categories according to the year in which they received their American FFA Degree, including 2010, 2011, 2012, and unknown. The 2010 ($n = 34$), 2011 ($n = 27$), and 2012 ($n = 33$) panels had roughly the same number of participants complete the questionnaire. Eight participants were classified as unknown. Slightly over half of the respondents were female (60%). The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 23, and the mean age of participants was 20.57. The majority of the participants who completed the questionnaire

were white (95%). Any participant who was not white was classified as “other.”

Domicile, or population density, was determined by categorizing each participant’s chapter according to population density. These could be either rural, less than 2,500 people, suburban, between 2,500 and 50,000 people, or urban, more than 50,000 people, as identified by the U.S. Census Bureau (2011). Most students came from a rural (45%) or suburban community (47%).

Table 4.1

Demographics of American FFA Degree Recipients (N=102)

Demographics	Gender		Age					Ethnicity		Domicile		
	M	F	19	20	21	22	23	White	Other	R	S	U
2010												
<i>f</i>	10	24	0	3	8	20	3	33	1	19	14	1
<i>%</i>	29	71	21.68 (Mean)					97	0	56	41	3
2011												
<i>f</i>	14	13	0	11	14	1	1	26	1	13	10	4
<i>%</i>	52	48	20.70 (Mean)					96	4	48	37	15
2012												
<i>f</i>	12	21	10	21	2	0	0	31	2	11	19	3
<i>%</i>	36	64	19.76 (Mean)					94	6	33	58	9
Total												
<i>f</i>	41	61	11	40	26	21	4	97	5	46	48	8
<i>%</i>	40	60	20.57 (Mean)					95	5	45	47	8

Note. R = rural; S = suburban; U = urban. Frequency and valid percentages for the Unknown panel.

M (63%, *n* = 5); F = 38% (*n* = 3); 19 (*n* = 1); 20 (*n* = 5); 21 (*n* = 2); 22 (*n* = 0); 23 (*n* = 0); Mean Age 20.13; White (88%, *n* = 7); Other (13%, *n* = 1); R (38%, *n* = 3); S (63%, *n* = 5); U (0%, *n* = 0).

Objective 1: Servant Leadership Scores of All Respondents

The first research objective was to compare the sense of servant leadership among all American FFA Degree recipients', in Texas. Descriptive statistics pertaining to servant leadership characteristics, a servant leadership composite score, leadership effectiveness, and personal and work life Fundamental Moral Orientations for all participants are reported in Table 4.2.

Servant leadership characteristics were based on an eight-point scale. For all ten servant leadership characteristics, the mean response ranged from 5.75 to 6.90. All characteristics were rated above average. The two characteristics with the highest mean scores were self-awareness ($M=6.90$) and commitment to growth of people ($M=6.86$). The leadership characteristic with the lowest mean score was persuasion ($M=5.75$).

A servant leadership composite score was created for all respondents, which could range from zero to eight. The mean range of the servant leadership composite scores was from 4.30 to 7.70; however, the mean for all respondents was also above average, with a composite score above four ($M=6.39$).

Leadership effectiveness was based on a six-point scale; ineffective to entirely effective. A mean score was determined, which was slightly above average ($M=4.74$). Overall, the respondents believe others would describe their effectiveness in leading others between very effective and almost completely effective.

Participant's Fundamental Moral Orientation mean scores were calculated, once for personal life, and once for work life. Selfishness, self-fullness, and selflessness identifiers were placed on an eight-point scale. The mean scores for the respondents

reflect a small transition from a self-fullness to a selflessness FMO for both personal ($M=6.01$) and work life ($M=6.08$).

Table 4.2

Servant Leadership Variables for All Respondents (N=102)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Active Listening	6.46	1.13
Empathy	6.67	1.15
Healing	5.82	1.50
Self-Awareness	6.90	.96
Persuasion	5.75	1.46
Conceptualization	6.61	1.44
Foresight	6.33	1.24
Commitment to Growth of People	6.86	1.02
Community Building	6.25	1.20
Stewardship	6.30	1.45
Composite Score	6.39	.58
Leadership Effectiveness	4.74	.74
Fundamental Moral Orientation (FMO)		
Personal Life	6.01	1.21
Work Life	6.08	1.24

Note. Tabular data totals may differ from each servant leadership variable's n due to missing data or non-response to particular items. All servant leadership characteristics, including Active Listening, Empathy, Healing, Self-Awareness, Persuasion, Conceptualization, Foresight, Commitment to Growth of People, Community Building, and Stewardship.

$n = 101$.

Composite Score, Leadership Effectiveness, and Personal and Work Life FMOs.

$n = 102$.

Objective 2: Servant Leadership Scores by Panel

The second research objective was to evaluate differences in servant leadership scores among the 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients. Descriptive statistics for servant leadership characteristics, leadership effectiveness, and personal and work life Fundamental Moral Orientations, for each panel are reported in Table 4.3. All variables were rated above average by all three panels. The mean response for servant leadership composite scores did not vary much between the three panels. The composite score for the 2010 panel was 6.35, 6.41 for the 2011 panel, and 6.43 for the 2012 panel.

Mean scores were created for leadership effectiveness and personal and work life Fundamental Moral Orientations, for each panel. Overall, the 2011 respondents believe others would describe their effectiveness in leading others the highest, with a leadership effectiveness of slightly under almost completely effective ($M=4.89$). However, all panels had a mean leadership effectiveness score between very effective and almost completely effective leadership style.

The highest personal life FMO mean was in the 2012 panel, as respondents reported the highest transition between self-fullness to selflessness FMO ($M=6.24$). The highest work life FMO mean was in the 2011 panel, as respondents reported the same transition between a self-fullness and a selflessness FMO, as seen in the 2012 personal life FMO ($M=6.23$). While both of these FMO questions deal with self-interest versus doing things for the common good, the results show these variables were not highly correlated.

Table 4.3

Servant Leadership Variables of 2010, 2011, and 2012 Recipients (N=102)

Variable	2010 ^a		2011 ^b		2012 ^c	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Composite Score	6.35	.59	6.41	.56	6.43	.58
Leadership Effectiveness	4.62	.74	4.89	.89	4.76	.61
Fundamental Moral Orientation (FMO)						
Personal Life	5.82	1.53	6.00	1.07	6.24	.97
Work Life	6.18	1.31	6.23	1.14	5.91	1.13

Tabular data totals may differ from each year's *n* due to missing data or non-response to particular items.

^a*n*=34; ^b*n*=27; ^c*n*=33.

Objective 3: Demographic Differences

The third research objective was to evaluate if demographic factors had an influence on servant leadership. Gender, age, ethnicity, and domicile were used to evaluate differences in servant leadership variables. Descriptive statistics for servant leadership composite scores, leadership effectiveness, and personal and work life Fundamental Moral Orientations, based on the four demographic constructs, are reported in Table 4.4.

Males were slightly higher than females on the servant leadership composite score and personal life FMO. Twenty-three year olds rated the composite score and both FMOs marginally higher than all other ages, but the 22 year olds had a substantial difference between all other ages in leadership effectiveness. White participants recorded

slightly higher scores for leadership effectiveness and both FMOs. Rural, suburban, and urban respondents had very close scores for all three variables, but the rural participants had a slightly higher composite score, leadership effectiveness score, and personal life FMO.

Table 4.4

Servant Leadership Based on Gender, Age, Ethnicity, and Domicile (N=102)

Variable	Composite Score		Lead Eff.		FMOs			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Personal</i>		<i>Work</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender								
Male	6.45	.53	4.68	.79	6.07	1.03	5.95	1.36
Female	6.35	.61	4.80	.73	5.97	1.32	6.17	1.15
Age								
19 ^a	6.13	.54	4.73	.47	6.45	.69	5.91	.94
20	6.44	.58	4.83	.75	6.13	1.09	6.10	1.34
21	6.49	.46	4.88	.82	5.88	1.03	6.24	1.05
22	6.26	.65	6.26	.65	5.48	1.63	5.86	1.65
23 ^b	6.68	.87	5.00	1.41	7.25	.50	6.50	1.73
Ethnicity								
White	5.72	1.28	4.76	.73	6.04	1.19	6.11	1.21
Other ^c	6.43	.51	4.60	1.14	5.40	1.52	5.40	1.67
Domicile								
Rural	6.43	.54	4.78	.73	6.09	1.03	6.11	1.22
Suburban	6.41	.61	4.73	.79	5.96	1.43	6.02	1.33
Urban ^d	6.06	.60	4.75	.71	5.88	.64	6.25	.89

Note. Tabular data totals are low for some demographic *n*'s due to missing data or non-response to particular items.

^a*n*=11; ^b*n*=4; ^c*n*=5; ^d*n*=8.

Objective 4: Types of Community Service

The fourth research objective was to assess the types of activities identified as community service. Only 22 respondents answered this question with usable data; 12 respondents from the 2012 panel, four from the 2011 panel, and six from the 2010 panel. The number of respondents related to the number of hours of community service listed for the 2011 and 2012 respondents is shown in Figure 4. Only two participants from the 2012 panel recorded less than 74 hours ($n=50$, $n=54$), the respondent with the highest amount reported over 200 hours ($n=384$). In the 2011 panel, no respondents had less than 75 hours and three respondents had over 150 hours.

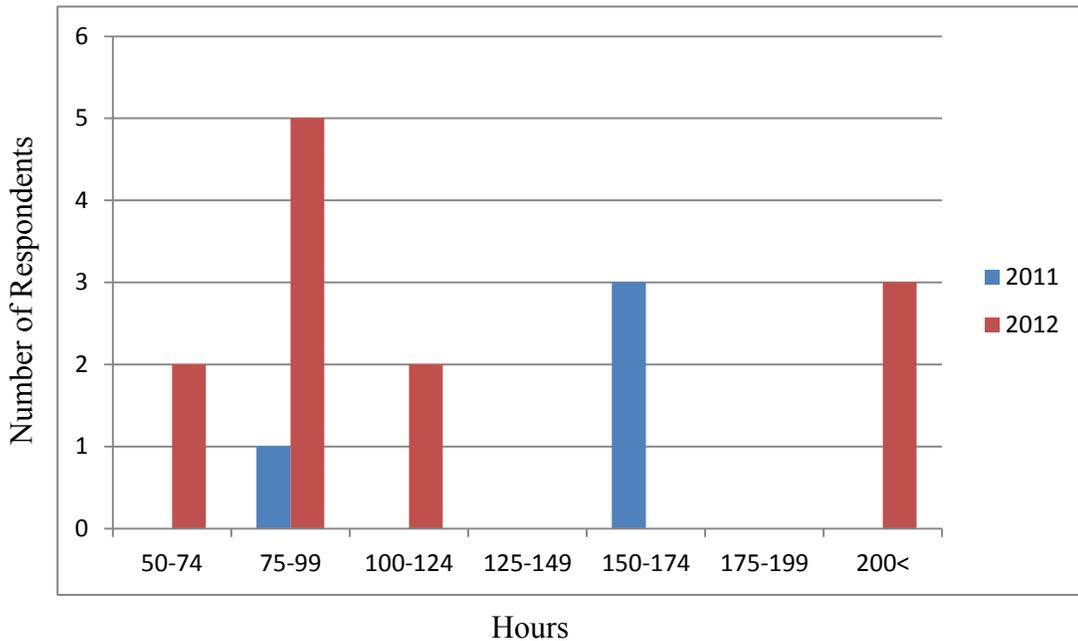


Figure 4. Number of community service hours listed by 2011 and 2012 recipients.

The 2010 American FFA Degree recipients were assessed according to the number of activities listed, instead of the number of hours recorded. Figure 5 shows the number of activities listed for the 2010, 2011, and 2012 respondents. While the hours cannot be determined, the number of different activities is compared for each of the panels.

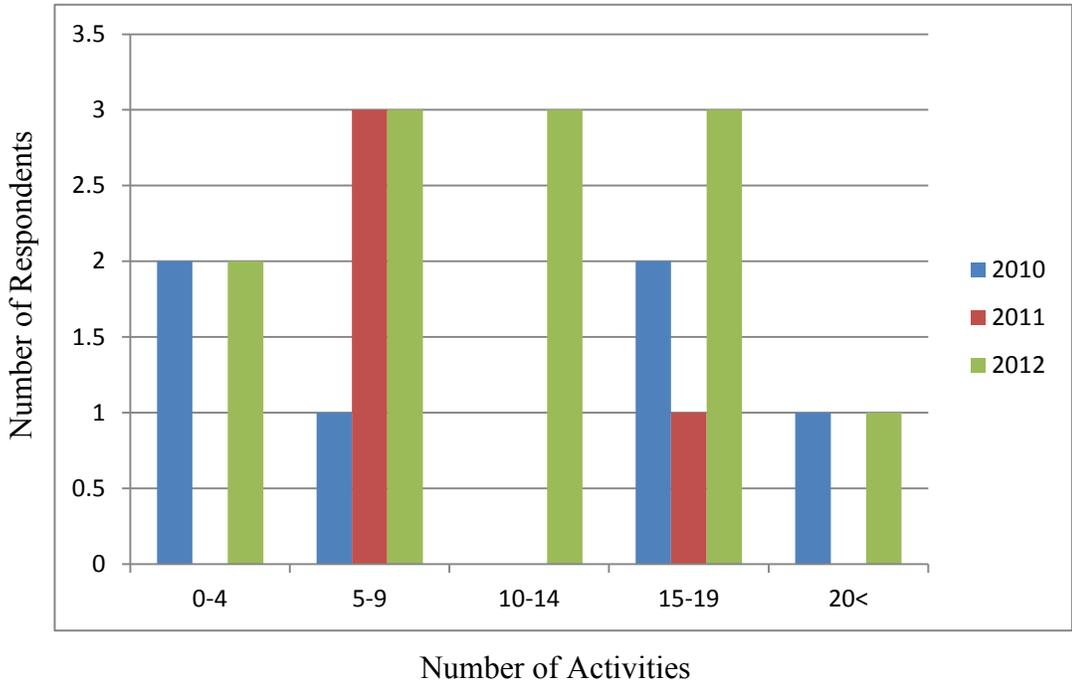


Figure 5. Number of activities listed by 2010, 2011, and 2012 recipients.

The types of activities listed as community service were separated into six groups. These included: church related, youth, community development, healthcare, environment, and service. Most activities were classified as either “youth”, “community

development”, or “service”. The types of community service projects are listed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Types of Community Service (N=22)

Category	Community Service Activity
Church Related	Lectured in church, Singing Christmas carols, Bible school, Worked at church picnic
Youth	Adopt a future farmer, LEADS united, Food for America, Adopt a child, Elementary field day, Worked children’s festival, Boys and Girls club, Farm day, Worked with autistic children, Cops for tots, Big brother club, Baby bottle project, Mentor for commercial steer participants
Community Development	Soup Kitchen, Community roundup, Appreciation meals, Habitat for Humanity, Clean homes, Food drive, Relay for life, Food bank volunteer, Worked Christmas tree sale, LIONS club, Big Event, Hurricane relief, Salvation Army
Healthcare	Nursing home visit, Ronald McDonald volunteer, Blood drive, Make a wish
Environment	Farmhouse rock cleanup, Trash pickup, Beach cleanup, Adopt a highway
Service	Preparing turkeys, Worked souvenir shop, Valentines dance, Deliver poinsettias, Class President, Creating Easter baskets, NHS President, Awards, Student council, Show ring helper, Dance team, Fair volunteer, Hauling animals for others, Baseball field volunteer, Special needs rodeo

Summary

A study of 102 American FFA Degree recipients was conducted to evaluate the relationship of community service requirements on the American FFA Degree

application and the sense of servant leadership of the recipients of the American FFA Degree. The findings of this study, including demographic data, sense of servant leadership for all American FFA Degree participants, differences in servant leadership scores among 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients, demographic differences of servant leadership, and types of community service, were summarized using descriptive statistics.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Based on the results presented in Chapter IV, several conclusions, implications, and recommendations can be made about the sense of servant leadership between 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients. The research objectives will be further discussed and recommendations for further research will be addressed.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship of servant leadership, as measured by Spears' (2005) ten characteristics of an effective servant leader, leadership effectiveness, and McCuddy's (2008) fundamental moral orientations, to the 2010, 2011, and 2012 recipients of the American FFA Degree, in Texas.

The following research objectives were created to carry out the purpose of this study:

1. Compare sense of servant leadership among all American FFA Degree recipients, in Texas.
2. Compare sense of servant leadership between the 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients, in Texas.
3. Explore the influence of demographic differences on sense of servant leadership among the 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients.

4. Assess the types of activities identified as community service, listed on the American FFA Degree applications, from Texas respondents.

Summary of Methods

In order to determine if a relationship existed between servant leadership and completed community service hours, a descriptive study of 113 Texas recipients of the 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA Degree was conducted. A five part questionnaire was modified by the researcher from McCuddy and Cavin's "Survey of Personal Leadership Characteristics and Contexts." The instrument included the participants' FFA chapter name, a self-evaluation of the ten characteristics of a servant leader as described by Spears (2005), a self-evaluation of leadership effectiveness (McCuddy and Cavin, 2008), the participants' Fundamental Moral Orientations: selfish, self-full, and selfless (McCuddy, 2008), and three demographic questions: age, gender, and ethnicity. The number of community service activities and hours and the types of activities were also collected.

Content and face validity were determined by two sets of experts in the field. Face validity was determined by five faculty members at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Content validity was determined acceptable by three faculty members at Texas A&M University. After amending the original instrument by changing the values to even point scales and changing the demographic questions, SPSS determined the internal consistency of a pilot study yielding a Cronbach's coefficient of .81.

A simple random sample was performed using the random sampling function in Microsoft Excel. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) random sampling procedure required a

total of 303 American Degree recipients. However, missing or incorrect contact information from the year 2010 reduced the usable sample to 294 American Degree recipients; 100 participants from 2010, 100 participants from 2011, and 94 participants from 2012.

An online, Qualtrics questionnaire was given to a geographically diverse sample of 294 Texas FFA members who received their American FFA Degrees in the years 2010, 2011, and 2012. Three panels were created for each year's American FFA Degree recipients, entitled 2010, 2011, and 2012. The research was carried out following Dillman's (2000) tailored design method.

To increase response rate, a US Postal letter was created to remind 201 non-respondents to take the questionnaire, and Facebook messaging was also utilized. Twenty additional responders took the questionnaire after Facebook messaging and sending out reminder letter.

Data collection was terminated 11 days after the letters were mailed. Nonresponse issues were handled by comparing the early to late respondents. Early respondents, or those participants who completed the questionnaire in response to email reminders, were compared to late respondents, or those reluctant respondents who completed the questionnaire after Facebook messaging and the US Postal letters were sent, as recommended by Lindner, Murphy, and Briers (2001). T-tests showed no differences between early and late respondents, so all data were pooled for analysis.

Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to determine frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations for the

servant leadership variables. Data were analyzed among all participants for demographic data and overall sense of servant leadership. The respondents were then separated into four different panels: 2010, 2011, 2012, and unknown. Data was analyzed to evaluate the servant leadership composite scores, leadership effectiveness, and Fundamental Moral Orientations among the 2010, 2011, and 2012 panels. Descriptive statistics were also used to analyze demographic variables, including gender, age, ethnicity, and domicile. Finally, the hours and number of community service activities listed were analyzed and the types of community service were categorized into groups according to Owings (1995).

Summary of Findings

While the results of this study are descriptive and cannot be generalized to all American FFA Degree recipients, they do provide information on the community service aspect of the American FFA Degree application and the sense of servant leadership of American FFA Degree recipients. American FFA Degree recipients provided adequate responses to the questionnaire, but it is important to note that these were self-reported responses. The researcher assumed the American FFA Degree recipients responded truthfully and to the best of their ability.

Demographic Data

The demographics in today's public schools are changing; however, this change has not been perfectly reflected in the agricultural education and FFA. FFA has been said to serve a relatively small group of rural to small town, male, white students (Rayfield, Compton, Doerfert, Frazee, & Akers, 2008; Dyer & Breja, 2003). This study

offers two findings that contradict this idea. Overall, there were more females than males who participated in this study. The results include a higher percentage of females in the 2010 and 2012 panel. Were females more likely to meet the requirements and receive the American FFA Degree in the years of 2010 and 2012? Further investigation is needed to determine the answer to this question.

The results also indicate that while many participants were from a rural community ($n = 49$), more participants were from a suburban community ($n = 53$). Also, while school enrollment is larger in urban areas (Sher, 1977), this suggests that more FFA members are receiving American FFA Degrees in suburban and rural areas. While urban communities have a higher overall enrollment rate, fewer students could be enrolled in agriculture education and FFA programs in these communities, as compared to those of suburban and rural areas, resulting in less recipients of the American FFA Degree in urban areas. On the other hand, the number of American FFA Degree recipients from a particular community may depend on the number of active students enrolled in agriculture education and the FFA program, who are willing to meet the requirements of the FFA Degree, which would also decrease the number of recipients of the degree.

It was not surprising to see that the majority of American FFA Degree recipients, in Texas, were white ($n = 97$) and that the age of participants slightly decreased from the year 2010 to 2012.

This study suggests that the number of American FFA Degree recipients has a good diversity in terms of gender and age. However, in order to have an ethnically

diverse pool of American FFA degree recipients, improvements should be made in terms of ethnicity and population density.

Objective 1: Servant Leadership Scores of All Respondents

The concepts and characteristics of servant leadership have been found in the FFA program through commitment and service to the community and its people. This is reflected in the data collected, as it was determined that all American FFA Degree participants, in Texas, had an above average sense of servant leadership on all ten servant leadership characteristics as defined by Spears (2005), a servant leadership composite score, leadership effectiveness, and personal and work life Fundamental Moral Orientations (McCuddy, 2008). Similar to Yates' (1998) study, while the American FFA Degree recipients were initially required to complete community service, the respondents experienced an above average perception of moral characteristics or high servant leadership values. The responses indicated a reasonably strong sense of servant leadership. The servant leadership composite score for these characteristics reinforces this implication. The knowledge and skills learned in agriculture education and the FFA program, coupled with the opportunity to connect their experiences with personal life (Elliot & Knight, 2005), could impact how the recipients responded to the questionnaire, especially regarding their experience with community service activities. It could be implied that the community service requirements positively affected students. Members were able to have a high sense of servant leadership by taking the key attributes they observed, experienced, and learned in community service activities and applying it to their current lives.

According to Powers and Moore (2005), active listening, empathy, healing, and persuasion are interrelated, outward behaviors, actions, and practices of a servant leader. Building community, commitment to the growth of people, foresight, conceptualization, and awareness are correlated, inner characteristics, which lie near the core of the servant leader's being. Stewardship is the grounding influence of servant leadership (Reinke, 2004), and is what binds together all the other servant leadership characteristics. However, McCuddy and Cavin (2008) believe a composite score, using all the characteristics as a single data component, can be appropriately used to give all characteristics a sense of correlation. However, these characteristics may not be a good representation of a single concept of servant leadership. The servant leadership composite score is called into question. It may be better to analyze the characteristics separately, or analyze the characteristics between smaller groups. Further research is needed to determine if this is necessary.

Self-awareness and commitment to the growth of people were the highest scoring servant leadership characteristics. Self-awareness allows individuals to become aware of their own thoughts, beliefs, and values (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002) by participating in new experiences and making behavioral changes to accommodate the changes that occur (Spears, 2005). When FFA members receive the American FFA Degree, they have been out of high school for over a year. Members are continuously forming new opinions and making decisions in their new environments. Commitment to the growth of people is a commitment to the personal and professional growth of every person within a community (Spears, 2005). These respondents have respect for others and believe that

everyone has something to offer beyond their physical contributions (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2007). Commitment to growth deals strongly with relationships between individuals. Relationships allow the individuals to develop consideration for the needs of others. Similar to self-awareness, the American FFA Degree recipients are fully partaking in commitment to growth practices as they are experiencing life after high school, no matter what endeavor they are currently in.

Although persuasion had a mean score above average, it was the lowest scoring servant leadership characteristic. Persuasion is to rely not only on authority, control, and position, but on conversational collaboration or teamwork (Spears, 2005). As young adults, this could be a hard characteristic to master for some American FFA Degree recipients. Most American FFA Degree recipients are still in their college career or are newly employed, which can be rather stressful (Perry, Hladkyj, Pekrun, & Pelletier, 2001). American FFA Degree recipients are expected to do as they are told from authority figures. They may have acquired more power over their personal life, but a stronger authority directs their school and work life. This is not a bad thing; it just means these respondents can lead to mixed emotions on how they feel toward their sense of persuasion.

By completing a self-evaluation of leadership effectiveness, individual respondents can assess their own leadership style based on their specific situation. McCuddy and Cavin (2008) posit that leadership effectiveness is a consequence of engaging in servant leadership behaviors. The very effective to almost completely effective style of leadership effectiveness by the respondents reflects a positive

consequence of servant leadership behaviors, which means the respondents seek out a better status for a given context.

The moral orientation of servant leadership is an important aspect to consider for American FFA Degree recipients. “Because values play such an important role in our lives, being able to recognize, understand, and articulate one’s own values set becomes critical in sound decision-making” (Dean, 2008). Service must be more than just checking off the box of completed community service hours; “service is the development of an attitude” (Brown, 2010, para. 1). Community service, in terms of servant leadership, must be completed because someone wants to, not because they are forced to. Respondents experienced a transition from a self-full to a selfless image in both personal and work life. Although there is still a sense of self-interest, “it may be argued that some degree of self-interest is necessary for self-preservation and survival, without which one would not be in a position to serve others” (McCuddy & Cavin, 2008). No matter the case, these respondents are still interested in serving others and have a reasonable concern for the common good.

Objective 2: Servant Leadership Scores by Panel

The researcher believed that the 2011 and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients would have higher servant leadership scores based on Spears (2005) ten characteristics of a servant leader, leadership effectiveness and the three Fundamental Moral Orientations (McCuddy, 2008), when compared to the 2010 recipients who were only required to complete three non-FFA activities. When analyzing the results by panel, the 2011 and 2012 panels had slightly higher scores for the servant leadership variables.

Why could this be? While the National FFA Organization only recently implemented the new community service requirement into the American FFA Degree application, it does not mean that FFA members just recently jumped on the community service bandwagon to receive the FFA degree. Service has been fundamental from the beginning of the FFA. It was included in the FFA creed, the FFA mission, motto, and was clearly a foundational belief of the FFA program. Just because community service has only been recently recognized in the FFA program through the American Degree application does not mean that it has not always been an innate quality of the FFA persona; and with that, building social and moral characteristics, similar to those of a servant leader. Overall, the concept of servant leadership succeeded based on the personal values of this study's American FFA Degree recipients.

The only noticeable finding was that two different panels had higher scores for each of the FMOs. It can be concluded that the respondents felt there was not a similar relationship between the actions in personal life and those in work situations.

Objective 3: Demographic Differences

Do demographics have an effect on how people perceive the role and nature of servant leadership? According to this study, all servant leadership variables were above average when analyzed for each of the demographic constructs, including gender, age, ethnicity, and domicile. However, with respect to each of the demographic constructs, some demographic groups within each construct had higher mean scores than others.

As reported in Table 3, 23 year olds scored higher than 22 year olds for both personal and work life FMOs; however, there were few 23 year old respondents.

Differences were also seen in the composite score between the two ethnic groups. The white ethnic group had a reasonably higher score than the “other” ethnic group, but here too the number of respondents from the “other” group is small. There were also a small number of urban respondents. Based on the tendencies of the responses of these small number groups, if there would have been more respondents to increase the low numbers among the 23 year olds, the “other” ethnic group, and the urban domicile, the study may have yielded different results among these demographic constructs. The results of these findings provide a framework for guiding positive agriculture education and FFA program planning when related to demographics.

Objective 4: Types of Community Service

Less than a fourth of the respondents answered the community service question ($n = 22$), but based on the question, this was more than enough respondents to evaluate the types of activities listed as community service. The 2011 and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients were required to complete a minimum of 50 hours of community service in at least three different activities. Each activity must also meet six different qualifications, as determined by the National FFA Organization, to be considered as a true community service activity (National FFA Organization, 2012a). The 2010 recipients were only required to complete three non-FFA activities. After evaluating the responses, and throwing out the responses which contained less than three different types of activities or less than 50 hours of service for the 2011 and 2012 respondents, there were several implications drawn. First, most of the 2011 and 2012 respondents listed more than 50 hours of community service. Only two respondents listed close to 50

hours. Does this mean the community service requirements are too low for American FFA Degree applicants? Further research is needed to investigate this question.

Based on the types of community service activities listed, it was interesting to note that even though the 2010 American FFA Degree recipients were only required to complete non-FFA activities, most of the activities listed were service activities. All activities listed were placed into a specific service subgroup, including church related, youth, community development, healthcare, environment, and service. The “service” group included activities that are types of service to others, but may not meet the qualifications of community service outlined by the National FFA Organization. While the 2010 group did list activities including NHS President, these respondents were also listing activities similar to those being performed by the 2011 and 2012 respondents, including community development, youth, environment programs, and more.

Community service was being performed even before it was a requirement. This gives the researcher reason to believe that community service has constantly played an important role in agriculture education and FFA programs, resulting in an above average sense of servant leadership among the 2010, 2011, and 2012 panels. Similar to the 2011 and 2012 respondents, the 2010 respondents also recorded more than the minimum amount of activities required to receive the degree. The majority of all respondents show an inclination to complete more than the required amount of activities.

Finally, it is important to consider the types of community service completed by the American FFA Degree recipients. “Over the years, FFA has shown the value it places on service to country and community” (National FFA Organization, 2012b, para.

14). The National FFA Organization has made it clear that community service is an important aspect of the FFA program experience. The service activities should engage FFA members in the education process, use classroom concepts in real life situations, enhance their citizenship, and allow them to become contributing citizens to the community (National FFA Organization, 2012a).

It is important to evaluate the types of service being conducted, in order to maximize the value of community service to the students and meet the expectations of the National FFA Organization. In order to be classified as community service, the activity should have tangible community involvement, allow the FFA members to gain skills and competencies, and the activity should have a positive impact on the individuals receiving the service (National FFA Organization, 2012a).

While most activities listed by respondents clearly met the criteria of community service, some activities might be questionable in terms of how the National FFA Organization defines community service. It is important for members to be specific when listing the service activities on the American FFA Degree application. The National FFA Organization may also need to be more specific on the criteria needed to be considered community service so FFA members are more knowledgeable on what they can and cannot list.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for Practice

This study attempted to explain how servant leadership might lead to improved organizational performance in agriculture education and the FFA program. It is true that

servant leadership requires time to implement and to provide abundant opportunities to involve all members of the learning community (Crippen, 2005). However, by incorporating programs like service-learning into classroom instruction, students are continuously involved in academic service-learning, by enhancing academic learning, engaging in purposeful civic learning, and experiencing relevant and meaningful service in the community.

Service-learning takes community service one step further than just completing the community service activity. It “promotes learning through active participation in service experiences, provides structured time for students to reflect by thinking, discussing, and/or writing about their service experience, provides an opportunity for students to use skills and knowledge in real-life situations, extends learning beyond the classroom and into the community, and fosters a sense of caring for others” (English & Moore, 2010, p. 39).

With similar outcomes, service-learning and community service go hand in hand. Practicing service-learning in the classroom helps institutionalize servant leadership concepts and beliefs (Hoover & Webster, 2004). In this case, students are building servant leadership characteristics, which promote citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, worker engagement, and other leadership attributes (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Service learning also has the potential to engage non-traditional and non-interested students in activities, and invite them in a non-traditional way into the agriculture education and FFA program (DeWitt, 2010).

With the new community service requirements, FFA has created a way for students interested in earning FFA degrees to learn to think reflectively, function at high stages of moral reasoning, and be altruistic decision makers. However, not all students are capable of earning an FFA degree. While some chapters already require community service to participate in certain activities, participation in community service should be a requirement for all students in agriculture education, or at minimum, students who are members of the FFA program.

The types of activities can also be shared on a national level. The National FFA Organization can use American FFA Degree recipient's activities as an example for other members looking for types of service to participate in. If this could be shared on the National FFA Organization website, all members, agricultural science teachers, agricultural science student teachers, parents, and anyone else related to agriculture education and FFA would have an easy access to this information.

Recommendations for Research

Seven recommendations for additional research were developed. The first recommendation involves a limitation to this study, which was the number of participants who responded to the questionnaire. In future research, it would be beneficial to have a larger sample size, with more diverse demographics. It would be interesting to evaluate if the study would have similar results if a larger number of participants responded to the questionnaire.

A qualitative study also needs to be performed to determine relationships between community service and servant leadership among American FFA Degree

recipients. This study would determine if relationships exist not only among servant leadership variables, but also if statistically significant differences can be found among the 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients and within the different demographic constructs.

Next would be to conduct an experimental study with a comparison group of non-American FFA Degree recipients, or even non-FFA members, needs to be explored. This group may allow us to better evaluate the differences in the sense of servant leadership between American FFA Degree recipients and those who did not receive the degree, or who were not in the FFA at all. This would also determine if other individual attributes might be responsible for the results observed. While it has been argued that servant leadership values are created by the combination of natural and learned characteristics, individual characteristics, such as self-determination, moral cognitive development, cognitive complexity, and cultural experiences can also influence a person's sense of servant leadership (Dierendonck, 2011). To further this research, a study also needs to be conducted to determine if individual characteristics affect servant leadership values. Sources of motivation, flexibility or time constraints, current events, openness to experiences, family, religious, childhood, and cultural experiences, and exposure to previous servant leadership concepts are all antecedents for this particular research opportunity.

Differences in types of community service completed by individuals could also affect servant leadership perceptions. According to McLellan and Youniss (2002), "these differences in type represent differences in the experiences that service could have

afforded the adolescent participants.” It would be interesting to see the differences between individuals who participate in different categories of community service, including service activities organized by the FFA, service activities not organized by the FFA, those who do both, one time service events, and repeated service activities.

A deeper look into classroom instruction would also be beneficial. If service learning practices were evaluated in the classroom, researchers could determine if the opportunity to discuss service experiences had an effect on perceptions of service.

Research should also be conducted to assess the effects of required community service in subsequent stages of the FFA degree program; analyzing the servant leadership differences between the Chapter, State, and American FFA Degree recipients, or the degrees that have a community service requirement. This could also be done longitudinally, following the same sample of students for several years to determine if these characteristics last or if they change significantly.

Finally, there has been little to no research conducted to determine the effect of community service by the agriculture education and FFA program on the people receiving the service. An assessment on the effects of community service on those being served would benefit the community by assessing the value of the service provided by the FFA members.

These recommendations for additional research require quantitative research. A qualitative investigation would also be beneficial in understanding the relationships between community service, the servant leader, and the agriculture education and FFA programs.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing literature on the nature, aspects, and implications of servant leadership by exploring the linkages of servant leader behaviors, including: servant leadership characteristics as defined by Spears (2005), leadership effectiveness, and awareness of Fundamental Moral Orientations, to those behaviors of American FFA Degree recipients. This study shows the importance of community service among FFA members, and how this contributes to the increase of moral characteristics, or increased servant leadership values. The results of this study indicate a strong orientation toward servant leadership concepts among all 2010, 2011, and 2012 American FFA Degree recipients. This study suggests that servant leadership has been and remains an important part of agricultural education and the FFA program.

As servant leaders, FFA members are not only taking on the role of service, but also that of a leader. Servant leadership is an important aspect of FFA because members are able to make a positive impact on the community, develop personal leadership styles, learn how to influence others to lead (Stedman et al., 2009), develop altruistic behaviors, and increase the idea to help others for the common good. Although this study was unable to empirically demonstrate that all of the respondents make decisions and take actions in consideration of moral considerations, develop their behavioral capacity to serve others, and lead people effectively (McCuddy & Cavin, 2008), the idea that the knowledge and skills learned in agricultural education and FFA, specifically from the experiences due to the community service requirements of the American FFA Degree, are positively related to servant leadership concepts is amazing!

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