THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ON TEXAS 4-H MEMBERS' SENSE OF COMMUNITY

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of community engagement, youth leadership development, and personal characteristics on a 4-Her's sense of community. The population for this study were youth enrolled in the Texas 4-H Youth Development program for the 2015-2016 academic year. Data were collected using an online questionnaire. Analysis of the data was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23. The results of the regression model determined that the leadership life skill construct of contributor to the community and grade level were significant predictors of sense of community. Based on demographics of the data collected and analyzed, it is recommended that extension educators in Texas should consider recruiting at-risk and minority youth to participate in the program.

DEDICATION

For my paternal grandparents Glenn Senit Perdue, a World War II Veteran and soldier in Patton's Army (1917-1999) and Mary Marjorie Perdue—who both had eighth grade educations, but valued the power of knowledge and learning. They taught me how to garden, put others before myself, and to always remember where I am from.

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To my Uncle Roger —a retired agricultural sciences teacher and assistant superintendent of adult and technical education.

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"In the middle of Huntington, West Virginia there is a river. Next to this river there is a steel mill and next to this steel mill there is a school…and once every year throughout the town, throughout the school, time stands still" (We Are Marshall, 2007). I look back at the years I spent at Marshall University fondly and will not allow my time there to be diminished, as it provided the foundation for my future. However, it was the time I spent at West Virginia University that led me to my true passion and gave me the tools I needed to pursue a doctorate. I had no idea the impact my undergraduate studies would have on my future academic career. These experiences, both negative and positive, influenced my teaching philosophy and I will be always grateful.

"Oh, the hills, beautiful hills, How I love those West Virginia hills. If o'er sea o'er land I roam, Still I'll think of happy home, And my friends among the West Virginia Hills" (King & Engle, West Virginia State Song). Montani Semper Liberi.

NOMENCLATURE

CES	Cooperative Extension Service
Y-AP	Youth-Adult Partnership

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service is to improve "the lives of people, businesses, and communities across Texas and beyond through high-quality, relevant education" (Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 2011, p. 1). 4-H is a youth development program within the Cooperative Extension System that seeks to "prepare youth to meet the challenges of childhood, adolescence and adulthood, through a coordinated, long-term, progressive series of educational experiences that enhance life skills and develop social, emotional, physical and cognitive competencies" (Texas 4-H, 2015, paragraph 1). A review of the history of the Cooperative Extension System, the history of 4-H, statement of the problem, research objectives, and the significance of the study are presented in this chapter.

History of the Cooperative Extension System

After the American Revolution, agricultural societies began to form across the country. The first agricultural society, the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture, was formed in 1785 by Benjamin Franklin (Seevers, Graham, Gamon, & Conklin, 1997). These agricultural societies were formed to improve agricultural practices by disseminating knowledge through journals and educational programs directly to farmers (Seevers, Graham, Gamon, & Conklin, 1997).

By the nineteenth century the United States economy was predominately driven by the manufacturing and agricultural industries. A new agricultural revolution began as technology advanced and animal-power was replaced by machines (Hurt, 2002). Many

states at this time had created agricultural colleges, but they lacked quality teachers and curriculum. These colleges also lacked financial support (Seevers et al., 1997). The demand for formal agricultural education programs led to the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862.

The Morrill Act of 1862 established the land-grant university system. The act provided grants of land to each state; the land was then sold to fund and establish colleges that focus in the education of agriculture and mechanics. President Abraham Lincoln, upon signing the Morrill Act, said, "The land grant university system is being built on behalf of the people, who have invested in these public universities their hopes, their support, and their confidence" (Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2015, paragraph 1).

The Hatch Act of 1887 established agricultural experiment stations in each state that are linked to the land-grant colleges. The experiment stations were meant to give farmers additional scientific research through bulletins and literature. However, farmers rarely used this information to improve their agricultural practices (Hurt, 2002).

When slavery was abolished after the Civil War and the land-grant system was established, many states used the funding for the education of white students only. The Morrill Act of 1890 established that states must ensure equitable distribution to different races. Colleges were given two options: 1) the colleges must open their facilities to all races or 2) provide a separate facility for them to attend classes and receive an education (Seevers et. al, 1997).

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 established the Cooperative Extension System (CES) and provided additional funding to the colleges established under the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The CES mission is to disseminate knowledge and enhanced agricultural techniques directly to the farmer to improve his or her quality of life (Boleman & Dodd, Volunteer Administration in the 21st century: Preparing the leadership advisory board for success: advocacy, 2007).

History of 4-H

The first agricultural boys and girls clubs were organized in Ohio by Albert B. Graham and O.J. Kern in Illinois (Hurt, 2002). These clubs are now known as 4-H. 4-H is a youth development program under the umbrella of the CES land-grant system. Through the CES, 4-H is able reach youth in all of the 3,007 counties of the United States (4-H, 2015). 4-H clubs can be found in both rural and urban communities.

Statement of the Problem

A recent study by Tufts University and the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development (Lerner, Lerner, & Colleagues, 2013) found that 4-Hers are four times more likely to actively contribute to their community, two times more likely to be civically active, and five times more likely than their peers to graduate from college.

Employers are looking for college graduates who have completed community based field projects that give students experience working with others and the ability to solve problems important in their community (Hart Research Associates, 2013). Employers also "strongly endorse educational practices that involve students in active, effortful, work-practices that involve such things as collaborative problem-solving,

research, senior projects, community engagement, and internships" (Hart Research Associates, 2013, p. 12).

Research in the field of Extension has already presented the need for program developers to better understand the role of youth community development (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007). When youth are civically engaged and feel a strong sense of community, they help increase the social capital and well-being within their communities. This can impact individual, organizational, and societal change within a community. Youth participating in programs like 4-H are gaining necessary skills and developing their competencies, leadership skills, communication skills, and decision-making skills that prepare them for the workforce or higher education after graduation from high school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of community engagement, youth leadership development, and personal characteristics on a 4-Her's sense of community.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. Describe participant demographics; specifically: (a) grade level, (b) gender, (c) ethnicity, (d) years of membership in 4-H, and (e) grade point average.
2. Describe participants' post-secondary educational and career aspirations.
3. Describe parent's level of educational attainment and the parental influence of participant's educational aspirations.

4. Describe participants' perception of their community; specifically: (a) where they currently live, (b) where they prefer to live, (c) their level of community engagement, and (d) their perception of their community as a place to live.
5. Determine participants' sense of community.
6. Determine participants' leadership life skills in three constructs; specifically: (a) contributor to community, (b) personal leadership development, and (c) effective team skills.
7. Determine if significant differences exist between leadership life skills and interpersonal community engagement on personal demographics; specifically: (a) gender, (b) grade level, (c) race, and (d) years in 4-H.
8. Examine the relationship between personal characteristics, leadership life skills, and sense of community.
9. Determine the influence of community engagement, leadership life skills, and personal characteristics on sense of community based on the model of Interposal Community Engagement described by Corrigan (2004).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based upon McMillan and Chavis' theory of sense of community. Sense of Community is defined by McMillan and Chavis as the "feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9).

A community can refer to either territorial communities such as neighborhoods or relational communities such as professional organizations or churches (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The theory of sense of community has its roots in the field of community psychology and was introduced by McMillan and Chavis. However, the term sense of community, for many years before the theory was developed, was used to describe "patterns of relationships and the quality of life in urban neighborhoods" (Doolittle & MacDonald, 1978, p. 1).

Social scientists in the field of psychology study sense of community in terms of the communication between members of a neighborhood in a society and how the feelings members experience in regard to safety and preference of location form attachments to their community.

Early studies of sense of community have five themes in common: values and beliefs of a community, length of residency, interest in being active in the community, feeling important and valuable, and the level of community attachment (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The theory of sense of community includes four essential components: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In a revision of the theory, McMillan renamed the four components: spirit (membership), trust (influence), trade (integration and fulfillment of needs), and art (shared emotional connection) (McMillan, 1996). McMillan left academia after the definition and theory was published. Chavis continued publishing research in regard to sense of community and established the validity and reliability of the Sense of Community Index developed by McMillan and Chavis (1996).

Therefore, the original components will be used in this review of the literature of sense of community as seen in figure one.

Membership

Membership is the sense of belonging one feels toward their community and has set boundaries, meaning, you belong or you do not belong (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). By setting boundaries within a community, members are essentially developing barriers of inclusion and exclusion (or social distance) of its members. These boundaries influence the emotional safety of a communities members by creating a common symbol system, a sense of belonging and identification, and personal investment in a community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). An example of a common symbol system can include rites of passage, a landmark, or a logo within a community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

A sense of belonging and identification is the feeling and belief one has that they "fit" into a group, and have been accepted by the community, and have the willingness to sacrifice for the betterment of the community or group within the community they identify with (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The personal investment of a member develops their emotional connection and attachment to a community by strengthening their feeling of membership.

Influence

In the theory of sense of community, influence is bidirectional, meaning, influence can either be the ability to influence what a group does or the ability to influence its members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

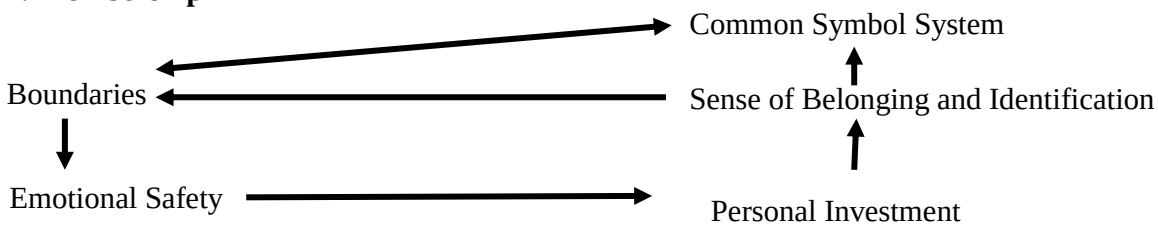
Integration and Fulfillment of Needs

The integrations and fulfillment of needs refers to the "degree that communities successfully facilitate person-environment fit (meeting of needs) among members, members will be able to develop sense of community" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 15).

Shared Emotional Connection

Shared emotional connection is the ability to identify with or be part of a shared history of the community. This includes the quality of interactions between people and how often people interact with each other. The more people interact with each other and the higher the quality of the interaction leads to a greater feeling of sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

I. Membership



II. Influence

A. Member openness to influence by community members ⟷ power of member to influence the community.

B. Member need for consensual validation X community's need for conformity = community's power to influence members (community norms).

III. Integration and Fulfillment of Needs

A. To the degree that communities successfully facilitate person-environment fit (meeting of needs) among members, members will be able to develop sense of community.

IV. Shared Emotional Connection

A. Formula 1: Shared emotional connection = contact + high-quality interaction.

B. Formula 2: High-quality interaction = (events with successful closure-ambiguity) X (event valence X sharedness of the event) + amount of honor given to members – amount of humiliation.

Figure 1. Elements of Sense of Community and their hypothesized relationships. Adapted from "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory" by. D. McMillan and D. Chavis, 1986, *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14, p. 15. Used with permission. (D. McMillan, personal communication, May 13, 2016).

Significance of the Study

Brennan, Barnett, and Baugh (2007) determined that Extension programming like 4-H "plays a vital role in engaging youth through interactions with the local community" (p.1). Research has also shown that youth that are actively involved in community engagment are more likely to have better academic performance and go to college (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Community support of youth is just as critical as the support youth receive in school and at home. Primary support opportunities within a community include those opportunities that are open to all and promote positive youth development. "Primary supports enrich young people's lives and supplement the support they receive from their families and schools" (Hobbs, 1999).

The findings of this study may have significance and implications for the Engaging Youth, Serving Community program within the Leadership and Personal Development Programs in 4-H. One of the objectives of the Engaging Youth, Serving Community program is "to improve the ability of youth and adults to collaborate with diverse community members to identify local issues and develop strategies for addressing them" (National 4-H Council, 2015, paragraph six). The overall outcome of this program is to ensure that both youth and adults develop a more positive attitude toward the role and involvement of youth in communities (National 4-H Council, 2015). As a result of this study, leadership educators and those who work with youth may gain a better understanding of the role community youth programs play in a participant's youth leadership development and their educational and career aspirations.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to current 4-H members in the state of Texas and results may not be generalized to other states or similar youth development programs.

Definition of the Terms

CES: Cooperative Extension System

4-H: a nationwide youth development program under the umbrella of the CES.

Sense of Community: the sense of belonging one feels toward a community or group (interpersonal community engagement)

Community Engagement: the level of involvement youth participates in their community via volunteerism, community programs, and extracurricular activities.

Youth Leadership Development: the development of leadership and life skills that enhance a youth's communication and decision-making skills.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Post-Secondary Educational and Career Expectations of Youth

A considerable amount of research has been conducted concentrating on the educational and career aspirations of 4-H alumni. Few studies have been conducted to determine the post-secondary educational and career expectations of current 4-H members. Many factors such as the socioeconomic status of a youth's family, the education level of their parents, and their self-confidence play a role in a young person's educational and career aspirations decisions.

Russell and Blume (1960) wrote of the importance of career exploration short courses in 4-H. In their study, 87% of respondents stated the short courses stimulated interest in a variety of possible careers and allowed 4-H members to better plan for the future (Russell & Blume, 1960). Career exploration was listed as one of the many educational advantages of 4-H that is "broadened by community leaders from different occupations" (Tyler, 1961, p. 117).

Career development "involves establishing and refining a worker identity through exploring, committing to, and reconsidering career alternatives across the life span" (Porfeli & Lee, 2011, p. 11). Career development and exploration is meant to "facilitate vocational identity development, which is basically helping youth understand who they are finding what careers in the world could fit into their self-images" (Porfeli & Lee, 2011, p. 17).

McCracken, Barrick, & Beard (1984) determined the relationship of vocational agriculture students' occupational and educational plans to the farm background of the students. They found a majority of students planned on obtaining some form of higher education beyond high school and a student's occupational goals were correlated to the place in which they lived--farm or non-farm (McCracken, Barrick, & Beard, 1984).

Participation in 4-H and other similar youth development programs impacts an adolescent's life skills development as well as their career and educational aspirations. Rockewell, Stohler, and Rudman (1984) surveyed former 4-H alumni 10 to 20 years after leaving the program and determined their experiences participating in 4-H influenced their choice of career and decision to pursue an advanced education. Matulis, Hedges, Barrick, and Smith (1988) surveyed 4-H alumni in three different categories related to career development: 1) self-awareness, 2) career awareness, exploration, and selection, and 3) work competency development. The results concluded that alumni felt 4-H allowed them the opportunity to discover their own interests and abilities in regard to their own self-awareness and impacted their choice of career through exploration. Results of this survey also determined that being in 4-H impacted their work competency development by building attributes such as responsibility, following directions, and cooperation (Matulis, Hedges, Barrick, & Smith, 1988).

Talbert and Balschweid (2006) sought to describe the career aspirations of FFA members in both rural and urban environments. Of the respondents for this study, more than half were also current or former 4-H members and one-third of the respondents indicated they would pursue a career in agriculture and natural resources. The study also

concluded 87% of respondents wanted to pursue some form of higher education and preferred careers in science related fields.

In 2008, Adedokun and Balschweid investigated community factors that predict rural agricultural science students' choice of career. They found among a variety of factors that membership in 4-H, participation in FFA, and the "opportunity to achieve dream career in the rural community and participation in volunteer activities within the community" (Adedokun & Balschweid, 2008, p. 7) impact rural students' choice of career. Williams, Thompson, Taylor, and Sanders (2010) found an adolescent's participation and experiences in 4-H greatly impacted their career aspirations; however, members should be exposed at a younger age to be more beneficial in understanding their "interests and values" (p. 10).

Youth face many barriers and motivators when making decisions about their educational and career aspirations after high-school. Researchers at Dordt College and Iowa State University conducted a study to determine the aspirations of rural youth by identifying barriers to and support for achieving their goals in relation to their educational and career aspirations (Bajema, Miller, & Williams, 2002). Almost 96% of the students who participated in the study indicated they aspire to continue their education after high school. A majority of students intend to study business, health, and education (2002). Findings from this study also indicated students from both towns and cities have an interest in studying agriculture, but need access to more information regarding careers in the "broad field of food, agriculture, and natural resources, occurring more frequently off-the-farm than on-the-farm" (Bajema, et al., 2002, p. 69).

Rural youth tend to have lower educational aspirations than non-rural youth (Gibbs, 1995; Haller & Virkler, 1993). Many factors such as, but not limited to, delinquency, religiosity, political values, and socioeconomic status play a role in the disparity between rural and non-rural youth. Rural communities usually have a narrowly specialized economy and a higher "proportion of the industries in rural communities are agricultural or are concerned with refining raw materials. Thus, rural students may tend to aspire disproportionately to the agricultural service and manual occupations that are associated with those industries" (Haller & Virkler, 1993, p. 171).

Cobb, McIntire, & Pratt (1989) found rural youth value their jobs more than their success in school, place lower value in making money, value friendships more, and are less confident in their ability to complete college. Ferry (2006) identified factors of career choices and the academic aspirations of rural Pennsylvania youth in five themes: 1) interdependence of family, school, and community culture, 2) different social and economic contextual factors, 3) ideal job, 4) barriers, and 5) out migration.

Youth learn about various careers through socialization with family, school, and communities as a whole. These interactions are critical to young person's career and educational aspirations. The "economic and social circumstances of the broader community" also influence their career goals and post-secondary educational aspirations (Ferry, 2006, p. 2). Ferry (2006) also identified the lack financial support and confidence in completing a college degree as barriers to educational attainment. Gibbs (1995) found rural college graduates are more likely to attend rural colleges, are half as

likely to graduate from a four-year institution, and tend to be more attached to their communities.

Byars (1996) discussed the importance of a young person's understanding of the term "work." "While career and education is essential to help teens prepare for the inevitable world of work, it must involve more than workplace skill development. Career education must inform youth of the challenges of adult life" (Byars, 1996, p. 3).

4-H provides students the chance to explore career opportunities; however, college readiness is just as important. Rural youth face more barriers to educational and career attainment. The Ohio State University Extension Service created the College Readiness for Rural Youth initiative to "support academic success and transitions to college for rural youth" in Northwest Ohio (Hedrick, et al., 2013). Over 3,000 students participated in the College Readiness for Rural Youth Program and students ranged in age from seventh grade to seniors in high school (Hedrick et al., 2013). The program was implemented in partnership with local post-secondary institutions and served as the educational "foundation needed to allow for students to envision college opportunity as an attainable goal" (Hedrick, Light, & Dick, 2013, p. 4).

In recent years, the Washington State University Extension Service, the University of Missouri Extension Service, and the Michigan State University Extension service have begun to track the post-secondary college enrollment and declared majors of 4-H alumni in their respective programs. Between the years of 2010 and 2014, more than 2,500 Michigan 4-H alumni applied to Michigan State University (Ratkos, 2014). Of those that applied, 68.4% were admitted and 40% enrolled in classes. Almost 62% of

the alumni enrolled declared a major in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) field.

The University of Missouri Extension/4-H Center for Youth Development and Lincoln University Cooperative Extension developed the 4-H Youth Futures College Within Reach Program that "promotes college as an attainable goal for high school youth who are not typically encouraged to attend college" (University of Missouri Extension/4-H Center for Youth Development, 2014, p. 1). Between the years 2002 and 2014, 550 youth participated in the Youth Futures program. As of 2014, 130 of the participants were still in high school, 128 graduated from college, and 121 were currently enrolled in college, 55 entered the work force, 38 dropped out of the program, 38 later dropped out of college, and 10 entered the military (University of Missouri Extension/4-H Center for Youth Development, 2014).

Community Development and Community Leadership

Community and youth development are two central components of the Cooperative Extension Service. "Extension plays a vital role in engaging youth through interactions with the local community, particularly in the implementation of 4-H programs" (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007). Community engagement allows youth the opportunity to fully experience the four components of sense of community in both territorial and relational communities.

Community Engagement and Community Attachment

Research has shown that 4-Hers feel a greater sense of belonging, social connection, and greater levels of participation in community activities than their non 4-H

counterparts (Adedokun & Balschweid, 2009). The eight 4-H essential elements list the components needed for positive youth development within 4-H programs. The concept of belonging includes the three essential elements of: (a) a positive relationship with a caring adult, (b) an inclusive environment, and (c) a safe emotional and physical environment (Martz, Nicemoyer, & McNeely, 2009).

Youth Adult-Partnerships. Based upon a review of definitions of youth-adult partnerships (hereafter Y-AP) by Camino (2000), Zeldin, Christens, and Powers (2013) described an effective Y-AP as a relationship that "emphasizes mutality and respect among youth and adults, with a goal-oriented focus on shared leading and learning" (p. 385). The researchers offered a working definition of Y-AP as:

> the practice of: (a) multiple youth and multiple adults deliberating and acting together, (b) in a collective [democratic] fashion (c) over a sustained period of time, (d) through shared work, (e) intended to promote social justice, strengthen an orgizations and/or affirmatively address a community issue. (Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013, p. 388)

Youth Participation in Youth Development Programs and Community

To successfully engage youth in their communites, it is vital for community leaders and stakeholders to recognize the barriers and supports youth face in order to participate in youth development programs like 4-H. Many of the barriers at-risk youth face include not having their parents in the same home and limited opportunities for extracurricular activities (Lamm, Harder, Lamm, Rose, & Rask, 2005). By recognizing the barriers and stressors youth face, extension educators can "promote youth leadership

skills or include peer mentoring and youth-adult partnerships" in 4-H programming (Phillips, Randall, Peterson, Wilmoth, & Pickering, 2013, p. 8). According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, at-risk youth are those who are affected by multiple risk factors categorized as: households withouth english speakers, large family, low parental education, residential mobility, single-parent household, teen mother, non-employeed parents (Robbins, Stagman, & Smith, 2016) .

Hobbs (1999) outline specific steps 4-H agents can use to increase participation of high-risk youth. Agents should: 1) make school counselors, social workers, and other youth development programs aware of the opportunities available through the 4-H program; 2) be willing to work with case managers and learn how to support the participation of high-risk youth; 3) use leadership skills to let the wider community realize the importance of youth organizations as a community support system; and 4) increase efforts to work with other community based organizations by providing assistance in training staff or developing program curriculum (Hobbs, 1999).

High-risk youth face many barriers to participation in community based programs. The lack of participation of high-risk youth in 4-H may not be due to lack of motivation, but to barriers of participation such as cost of participation and transportation. One often overlooked barrier is the decision by youth not to participate. Some refuse to "follow through with plans because when the time came to go, they lacked the self-confidence needed to take the steps to initiate participation" (Hobbs, 1999, p. 4).

Mentoring has also been seen as a successful approach to involving at-risk youth to improve their academic success. The Utah State University Extension Service established the Utah Youth and Families with Promise or YFP mentoring program to involve at-risk youth in 4-H (Riggs, Lee, Marshall, Serfustini, & Bunnell, 2006). The goals of the YFP mentoring program are to "improve academic performance, enhance social competencies, strengthen family bonds, increase development assets, and decrease juvenile delinquency" (Utah State University Extension, 2015, paragraph six). Riggs, Lee, Marshall, Serfustini, and Bunnell (2006) found that combining mentoring with 4-H is an "effective way to help at-risk youth strengthen the protective factors of academic achievement, social competence, family bonds, and community attachment" (p. 5).

Community also plays a large role in adolescents' interactions with adults and mentors within their territorial and relational communities—and how youth define these communities is important. For younger adolescents between the ages of 10 to 14, their community often includes: family, extended family, friends or neighbors in their territorial community (for example: others who live in the same apartment complex), classmates and peers, teammates, and teachers (van Linden & Ferman, 1998). Older adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 expand their view of community to include friends from other schools, coworkers and bosses, police or firefighters, and elected community officials (van Linden & Ferman, 1998).

Influence of Youth Participation as Adults

There have been many studies examining the influence of community development and leadership of 4-H alumni as adults. In a 2010 study, researchers

examined the relationship between participation in 4-H and the leadership roles of community leaders in rural Montana (Flynn, Frick, & Steele, 2010). The findings found that 4-H alumni were more likely to hold leadership positions in agriculture groups and "learning from others," "self education," and "college" were major factors community leaders determined as contributing to their success (Flynn, Frick, & Steele, 2010, p. 9). 4-H alumni determined the second most important factor contributing to their success was participation in 4-H (Flynn, Frick, & Steele). Researchers have determined that 4-H alumni are more likely to volunteer in mulitple community organizations and use the life skills learned in 4-H as adults (Boleman, Merten, & Hall, 2008; Merten, Locke, Williams, Carter, & Lehman, 2014)

Life Skills and Positive Youth Leadership Development

In the past few decades the popularity of leadership studies has boomed and institutions of higher education across the country now offer undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, minors, and certificates in leadership. It is generally accepted that leadership skills can be learned and developed throughout a person's lifespan (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013). In other words, leaders are made, not born.

What exactly is leadership? Researchers have not been able to identify an inclusively accepted definition of leadership. Stogdill (1974) noted that there are as many definitions of leadership as there are people who study it. Early research on leadership pertained to "who a leader is" and focused on the innate traits or qualities that a leader may or may not possess.

For the purpose of this study, leaders will be defined as "individuals (both adults and adolescents) who think for themselves, communicate their thoughts and feelings to others, and help others understand and act on their own beliefs; they influence others in an ethical and socially responsible way" (van Linden & Ferman, 1998, p. 17). This definition allows for the assumption that "leadership is a set of skills and attitudes that can be learned and practiced, and that all adolescents can develop these skills and attitudes" (van Linden & Ferman, 1998, pp. 17-18).

Since its inception over 100 years ago, 4-H has focused on life skills development in youth in one form or another. 4-H was born out of a need to disseminate knowledge of technological advances through youth with the hope that young people in rural areas would teach farmers in their communities about new agricultural technologies through the process of "learning by doing." Today, 4-H envisions a "world in which youth and adults learn, grow and work together as catalysts for positive change" to "empower youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults" as specified in the 4-H mission and vision statements (National 4-H , 2015).

Life skills is defined by Himsl (1971) as "problem solving behaviors appropriately and responsibly used in the management of personal affairs" (p. 26). Miller (as cited in Seevers, Dormody, & Clason, 1995) defined leadership life skills as the "development of life skills necessary to perform leadership functions in real life" (p. 28).

Youth leadership development is a process that takes place throughout a person's lifespan and all young people can be leaders, albeit with guidance and support through interactions with people, community, and learning experiences (van Linden & Ferman, 1998). The National 4-H Council defined a high quality positive youth development program as an integration of a positive and sustained relationship with an adult, life skills building, and youth participation in leadership and service activities (Symphonic Strategies, 2011). It is vital for a young person to have an authentic relationship with a caring adult. This gives adolescents the opportunity to build skills and competencies while developing leadership skills. Adults must give youth the opportunity to lead and engage them in the process to build their confidence and make connections to the world around them (Gillen, Johnson, & Sinykin, 2006).

In its National Strategic Plan (The National Strategic Directions Team, 2001), 4-H created four goals to empower youth; 4-H will:

- create a culture in which youth are equal partners in decision-making and governance,
- give youth the opportunity to be full partners and contributors in developing, delivering, and evaluating our educational experiences,
- allow youth the opportunity to develop an ethic of philanthropy and civic engagement, and
- lead 4-H in new and creative technological directions.

Now, more than ever, in an increasingly global society, 4-H must develop programs for a broader audience outside the traditional agriculture programs, while

staying true to its foundation. Almost half of 4-H participants live in urban and suburban environments while 38% live in rural areas (Lerner, Lerner, & Colleagues, 2013).

Through experiential learning and hands on exercises, 4-H members build life and leadership skills (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992). Many studies have evaluated the leadership development and life skills of 4-H members and alumni and have determined there is a positive relationship between participation in youth development programs like 4-H and FFA and the development of a young person's life skills (Boyd, et al., 1992; Dormody & Seevers, 1994; Seevers & Dormody, 1994).

Ladewig and Thomas (1987) determined the impact of youth development and life skills of 4-H alumni. They found 4-H alumni were more likely to be involved in their community and hold leadership positions in organizations compared to nonparticipants in youth development programs (Ladewig & Thomas, 1987). Additional studies of 4-H alumni support findings the studies previously mentioned and have determined that participation in 4-H has a life-long impact on participants (Merten, Locke, Williams, Carter, & Lehman, 2014; Radhakrishna & Sinasky, 2005).

Seevers, Dormody, and Clason (1995) developed the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale or YLLSDS. The scale consists of 30 indicators within seven domains that include communication skills, decision-making skills, skills in getting along with others, learning skills, management skills, skills in understanding yourself, and skills in working with groups (Seevers, Dormody, & Clason, 1995). In a later study Seevers and Dormody (1995) determined life skills leadership activities, ethnicity, and gender were significant predictors of life skills and leadership development.

Another popular model of youth leadership life skills development was developed by Hendricks (1998) is the Targeting Life Skills Model or TLS. The model consists of 35 life skills divided into the four categories and four H's of 4-H: head, heart, hands, and health. The skills are then further divided into eight subcategories consisting of caring, relating, managing, thinking, being, living, working, and giving (Iowa State University Extension, 2015).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was developed by the researcher based on the review of literature. As youth become more engaged in their community, they develop leadership life skills that build upon their personal leadership development. As youth develop their leadership skills and become more confident in their abilities, they are more likely to be more actively involved in their community. The relationships they build with peers and leaders within their community influence their post-secondary career and educational aspirations. Overall, personal characteristics such as the youth's socioeconomic status, whether they live in an urban or rural community, the educational attainment level of their parents, and exposure to a wider environment also influence how engaged a youth is in the community which effects their career and educational aspirations. An adolescent's sense of community may also affect their level of community engagement and post-secondary career and educational aspirations. Figure 2 displays the conceptual framework for this study.

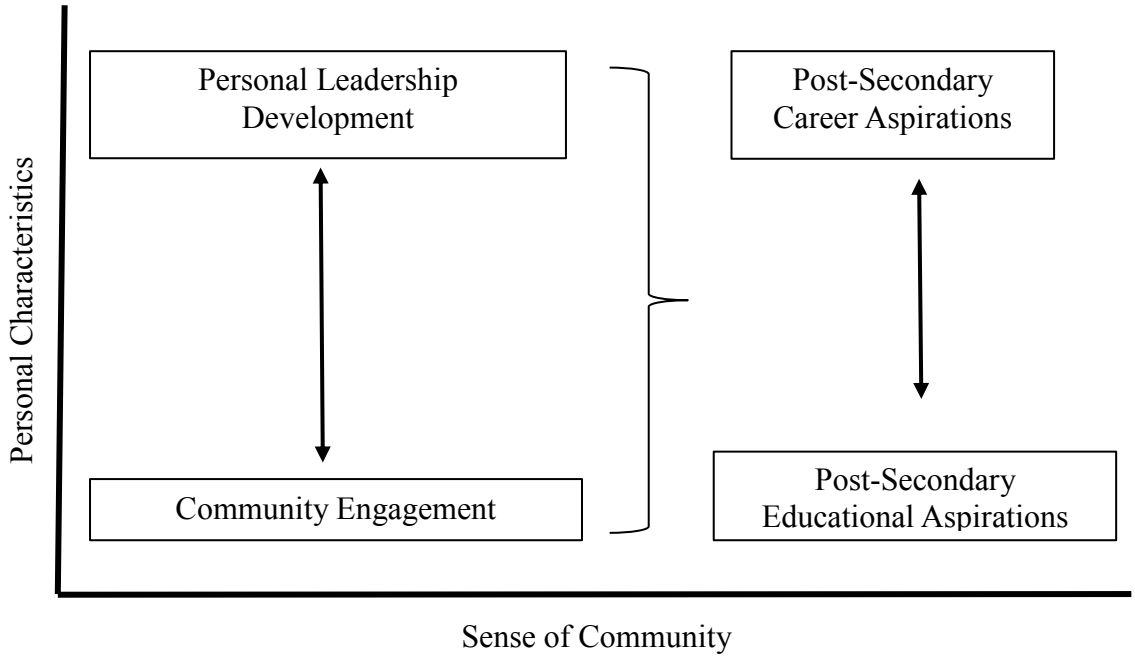


Figure 2**.** Conceptual framework for the influence of community engagement and youth leadership life skills development on sense of community.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of community engagement, youth leadership development, career and educational aspirations, and other personal characteristics on a 4-Her's sense of community.

Research Objectives

1. Describe participant demographics; specifically: (a) grade level, (b) gender, (c) ethnicity, (d) years of membership in 4-H, and (e) grade point average.
2. Describe participants' post-secondary educational and career aspirations.
3. Describe parent's level of educational attainment and the parental influence of participant's educational aspirations.
4. Describe participants' perception of their community; specifically: (a) where they currently live, (b) where they prefer to live, (c) their level of community engagement, and (d) their perception of their community as a place to live.
5. Determine participants' sense of community.
6. Determine participants' leadership life skills in three constructs; specifically: (a) contributor to community, (b) personal leadership development, and (c) effective team skills.
7. Determine if significant differences exist between leadership life skills and interpersonal community engagement on personal demographics; specifically: (a) gender, (b) grade level, (c) race, and (d) years in 4-H.

8. Examine the relationship between personal characteristics, leadership life skills, and sense of community.
9. Determine the influence of community engagement, leadership life skills, and personal characteristics on sense of community based up on the model of Interposal Community Engagement describe by Corrigan (2004).

Target Population

Survey research methodology was used to conduct this study. The target population for this study included members of the Texas 4-H & Youth Development Program and who met the following criteria:

- Enrolled for the 2015-2016 year through the Texas 4-H Enrollment System
- Were between the ages of 12 and 18 and
- Had an email address.

According to the Texas 4-H enrollment system, 18,462 members were enrolled in grades seven through twelve (T. Lepley, personal communication, November 2015). Cochran's (1977) formula for continuous data was used to calculate sample size. The required sample size for a population of 18,462 is 119. This sample size does not exceed 5% of the population, therefore, Cochran's (1977) correction formula was not used to calculate the final sample size.

Stratified random sampling was used to select participants. Equal numbers of participants per strata (in this case grade level) were selected. This sampling technique is

used when the researcher wants to look at the differences among strata (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorenson, 2010)

Instrumentation

The Tailored Design Method for developing and distributing an electronic questionnaire was employed for this study (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). An online questionnaire was administered and used to collect data using Qualtrics. The research instruments to be used in this study have been previously developed.

Sense of Community

This portion of the survey measured participants' sense of community. The Interpersonal Community Engagement Scale (hereafter ICE) was developed by Corrigan (2004). The scale measured participants' "level of communication and involvement to better gauge the connection one feels to his or her neighborhood, and to empirically measure if strong community relationships have an effect on a youth's behaviors and educational attitudes" (Corrigan, 2004, p. 36-37). This section of the instrument consists of twelve statements based on a seven-point Likert scale, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *moderately disagree*, 3 = *disagree*, 4 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 5 = *agree*, 6 = *moderately agree*, and 7 = *strongly agree*. The scale was interpreted as follows: s*trongly disagree* = 1.00 – 1.49, *moderately disagree* = 1.50 – 2.49, *disagree* = 2.50 – 3.49, *neither agree nor disagree* = 3.50 – 4.49, *agree* = 4.50 – 5.49, *moderately agree* = 5.50 – 6.49, and *strongly agree* = 6.50 – 7.00.

Career and Educational Aspirations

This section of the survey measured participants' career and educational aspirations and was developed by Adedokun & Balschweid (2008) and consisted of thirteen closed-ended questions about choosing what kind of job and how far a participant plans to go in school (two year degree, four year degree, or graduate degree). This section also included eight statements based on a seven-point likert scale where 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *moderately disagree*, 3 = *disagree*, 4 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 5 = *agree*, 6 = *moderately agree*, and 7 = *strongly agree*. The scale was interpreted as follows: s*trongly disagree* = 1.00 – 1.49, *moderately disagree* = 1.50 – 2.49, *disagree* = 2.50 – 3.49, *neither agree nor disagree* = 3.50 – 4.49, *agree* = 4.50 – 5.49, *moderately agree* = 5.50 – 6.49, and *strongly agree* = 6.50 – 7.00.

Four statements measured parental involvement in a participant's educational and career aspiration decisions. The last four statements measure what level of agreement or disagreement the participants feel they can achieve their educational or career goals in their current community.

Leadership Life Skills

This section of the survey measures a youths' perceived life skills gained from participation in Texas 4-H within five subscales. This portion of the survey was developed by Stafford (2001) and consisted of 33 statements based on a seven-point Likert scale where 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *moderately disagree*, 3 = *disagree*, 4 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 5 = *agree*, 6 = *moderately agree*, and 7 = *strongly agree*. Stafford developed the questions using the Leadership Skills Inventory developed by

Townsend and Carter (1983) and Dorman (1997). The subscales for Stafford's study were adapted from the Stratford Public Schools exit outcomes to measure leadership life skills (Locke, 2004; Stafford J. , 2001). The five subscales specifically measured creative problem solver, personal leadership development, being a self-directed learner, contributor to community, and effective team skills.

The subscales, followed by the number of questions include Creative Problem Solver (5), Personal Leadership Development (6), Being A Self-Directed Learner (5), Contributor to Community (8), and Effective Teams Skills (9). Demographics questions were developed based on the literature (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998; Treffinger, 1995).

Each question was based on a six point Likert-type scale, A = Strongly Agree, B = Disagree, C = Slightly Disagree, D = Slightly Agree, E = Agree, F = Strongly Agree. For the purpose of this study, the researcher modifed Locke's (2004) instrument and removed questions pertaining to Being A Self-Directed Learner and Creative Problem Solver. The scale was converted to seven points and the letters were converted to numbers. The overall reliability for Stafford's (2001) instrument which Locke (2004) reported was based on a Cronbach's alpa ($\alpha = .90$). The reliability for each subscale was also calculated and was reported as: Effective Team Skills ($\alpha = .70$), Self-Directed Learner ($\alpha = .72$), Contributor to Community ($\alpha = .85$), Creative Problem Solver ($\alpha = .76$), and Personal Leadership Development ($\alpha = .71$). The scale was interpreted as follows: s*trongly disagree* = 1.00 – 1.49, *moderately disagree* = 1.50 – 2.49, *disagree* =

2.50 – 3.49, *neither agree nor disagree* = 3.50 – 4.49, *agree* = 4.50 – 5.49, *moderately agree* = 5.50 – 6.49, and *strongly agree* = 6.50 – 7.00.

Validity and Reliability

A pilot test was conducted to test for reliability and validity with members of the Texas A&M University Collegiate 4-H Club. On October 26, 2015, the faculty advisor for the Collegiate 4-H Club, Dr. Toby Lepley, sent a notice to its members about participating in the pilot study. A hyperlink to the pilot study was included in the email. Thirty members of the collegiate 4-H club responded to the survey and six responses were removed due to missing data.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for each internal scale (Cronbach, 1951). The reliability of a scale is measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficients. A reliability of .80 is generally acknowledged as an acceptable rate of internal reliability (Bryman, 2012). Table 1 displays the reliability levels of the internal scales.

Table 1
Reliability Levels of Internal Scales

		α Levels	
Internal Scale	Number of Items	Pilot Study	Formal Study
Interpersonal Community Engagement	12	.801	.800
Personal Leadership Development	6	.820	.911
Effective Team Skills	9	.861	.905
Contributor to Community	8	.900	.940
Parental Influence	4	.618	.862
Achieve Dream Job/Career in my Community	4	-.574	.033

Note. Reliability levels ≥ .80 were considered acceptable.

Data Collection

Formal data collection with the finalized instrument began in November 2015 and concluded in March 2016. The survey can be found in appendix C. Data were collected according to Dillman's Tailored Design Method (Dillman,et al., 2014). The surveys were sent out in three rounds to additional randomly selected participants. Round 1A in November 2015 and round 1B in March 2016, round two in January 2016, and round three in March 2016.

Round 1A was initiated in November 2015. An initial recruitment email was sent by Dr. Toby Lepley in November 2016 to 186 participants. Four reminders were sent to increase response rate. Twenty-two surveys were completed. Due to a lack of response, the survey was sent to the originial 186 participants again on March 7, 2016 by the researcher using Qualtrics. Four reminders were sent (March 11, March 14, March 21,

and March 28, 2016) to increase response rate. Data collected from the November collection period was removed and replaced with the data collected from March.

In an effort to meet the recommended minimum required sample, a second round of surveys was sent to a new sample of 300 participants on January 27, 2016. An initial recruitment email for round two was sent on January 27, 2016. Four reminders were sent (February 1, February 5, February 10, and February 15, 2016) to increase response rate.

An initial recruitment email for round three was sent to an additional 300 randomly selected participants on March 1, 2016 to attempt to meet the minimum required sample size for this study (N = 119). Four reminders were sent (March 4, March 9, March 14, and March 18, 2016) to increase response rate.

In total, 793 4-Hers were asked to participate in this study, eight opted out of taking the survey, One hundred seventy eight responses were received and 15 responses were deleted due to incomplete data resulting in a 22.45% return rate and a final sample of (N = 163).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, 23.0). The alpha level for data analysis was set *a priori* at .05. The independent variables for the study were: community engagement, contributor to the community, effective team skills, personal leadership development, grade level, educational aspirations, dream job or career, gender, and grade point average. The dependent variable for the study was interpersonal community engagement. Community engagement refers to the level of

involvement in volunteer and youth activities in their respective communities. Interpersonal community engagement refers to participants sense of community.

Objective One

Participant's personal characteristics were calculated using frequencies and percentages (years in 4-H, gender, race, grade level, grade point average).

Objective Two

Participant's educational and career goals were calculated using frequencies and percentages.

Objective Three

Parental influence and parent's level of educational attainment were calculated using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Objective Four

Participant's community factors were calculated using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations (years in community, where they currently live, where they prefer to live, their perceptions of their community as a place, and their community engagement).

Objective Five

Participants' sense of community was calculated by summating the scores for the twelve items within the Interpersonal Community Engagement Scale. These summated scores were then used to calculate the mean and standard deviation for each item as well as the overall mean and standard deviation.

Objective Six

Participants' leadership life skills were calculated by summating the scores for each construct (effective team skills, contributor to community, and personal leadership development). These summated scores were then used to calculate the mean and standard deviation for each construct as well as the overall mean and standard deviation.

Objective Seven

Analysis of variance and t-tests were used to determine significant differences existed between leadership life skills, personal characteristics, and sense of community. Effect size was determined using Cohen's d to establish the magnitude of an observed effect (Cohen, 1988; 1992; Field, 2013). The noted magnitudes were interpreted by defining small (r = .20), medium (r = .50), and large (r = .80) effect size (Cohen, 1988; Cohen, 1992; Field, 2013).

Objective Eight

The relationships between personal characteristics, leadership life skills, and sense of community were described using the Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients. The magnitude of each relationship was determined by Davis (1971). The noted magnitudes of the relationship between variables are: $.01 \geq r \geq .09$ = Negligible, $.10 \geq r \geq .29$ = Low, $.30 \geq r \geq .49$ = Moderate, $.50 \geq r \geq .69$ = Substantial, $r \geq .70$ = Very Strong (Davis, 1971).

Objective Nine

Multiple regression using stepwise methods were used to determine the influence of community engagement, leadership life skills, and personal characteristics on sense of community.

Limitations

This study was limited to members of the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program. The findings cannot be generalized to other CES 4-H Youth Development Programs or similar programs in other states or territories.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the response rate, a comparison of early and late respondents, and findings by objective.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of community engagement, youth leadership development, career and educational aspirations, and personal characteristics on a 4-Her's sense of community.

Research Objectives

1. Describe participant demographics; specifically: (a) grade level, (b) gender, (c) ethnicity, (d) years of membership in 4-H, and (e) grade point average.
2. Describe participants' post-secondary educational and career aspirations.
3. Describe parent's level of educational attainment and the parental influence of participant's educational aspirations.
4. Describe participants' perceptions of their territorial community in achieving their educational and career aspirations. Describe participants' perception of their community; specifically: (a) where they currently live, (b) where they prefer to live, (c) their level of community engagement, and (d) their perception of their community as a place to live.
5. Determine participants' sense of community.

6. Determine participants' leadership life skills in three constructs; specifically: (a) contributor to community, (b) personal leadership development, and (c) effective team skills.
7. Determine if significant differences exist between leadership life skills and interpersonal community engagement on personal demographics; specifically: (a) gender, (b) grade level, (c) race, and (d) years in 4-H.
8. Examine the relationship between personal characteristics, leadership life skills, and sense of community.
9. Determine the influence of community engagement, leadership life skills, and personal characteristics on sense of community based on the model of Interposal Community Engagement described by Corrigan (2004).

Response Rate

The target population for this study included youth enrolled in Texas 4-H through the Texas 4-H online enrollment system during 2015-2016 academic year in grades seven through 12. According to the Texas 4-H enrollment system, there were 18,462 accessible members enrolled in grades seven through 12 (T. Lepley, personal communication, November 2015).

Stratified random sampling was used to select participants for the study and equal numbers of participants from each grade were randomly selected (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorenson, 2010). Participants received four reminders in an effort to increase response rate. A final response rate of 22.45% (N = 163) was obtained. Eight participants opted

out and 15 responses were removed due to missing data reducing the number of usable responses to 163.

Non-Response Error

Non-response error was controlled by comparing early to late respondents (Lindner, Murphy, & Briers, 2001). Overall, early respondents were defined as the first 50% to respond and late respondents were defined as the second 50% to respond. The primary variables of interest were: community engagement, contributor to the community, effective team skills, personal leadership development, grade level, educational aspirations, dream job or career, gender, and grade point average. The dependent variable for this study was interpersonal community engagement. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare early to late respondents on the primary variables of interest.

As shown in Table 2, no significant differences were found between early and late respondents for participants (a) personal leadership development, t (161) = .30, p > .05; (b) effective team skills t (161) = .09, p > .05; (c) contributor to community t (161) = .25, p > .05; and (d) interpersonal community engagement, t (161) = -1.44, p > .05.

Table 2
Comparison of Early and Late Respondents' Leadership Life Skills, and Interpersonal Community Engagement

Construct	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Personal Leadership Development					
Early	82	35.5	5.71	.30	.76
Late	81	35.23	5.44		
Effective Team Skills					
Early	82	51.61	7.77	.09	.93
Late	81	51.51	7.12		
Contributor to Community					
Early	82	46.24	7.68	.25	.81
Late	81	45.95	7.56		
Interpersonal Community Engagement					
Early	82	51.39	11.14	-1.44	.15
Late	81	53.81	10.33		

Note. Summated Scales

Table 3 shows participants' personal characteristics. No significant differences were found between (a) dream job or career, t (160) = -.69, $p > .05$ or (b) grade level t (161) = 1.75, $p > .05$. A significant difference was found between early and late respondents and their educational aspirations, t (160) = -2.50, $p < .05$. Grades seven through 12 were coded zero to five. The means of m = 3.66 and m = 3.20 refer to participants in tenth grade.

Table 3
Comparison of Early and Late Respondents' Personal Characteristics

Construct	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Dream Job or Career					
Early	81	4.80	3.57	-.69	.49
Late	81	5.21	3.95		
Educational Aspirations					
Early	81	4.11	.78	2.50	.01*
Late	81	4.40	.67		
Gender					
Early	81	1.54	.50	.47	.64
Late	81	1.58	.50		
Grade Level					
Early	82	3.66	1.64	1.75	.08
Late	81	3.20	1.72		

Note. $*p < .05$

Objective One: Personal Characteristics

Personal characteristics of Texas 4-H members in grades seven through 12 are reported in this section.

Grade

Table 4 shows the distribution of participants in grades seven through 12. The highest number of participants reported to be in 9th grade (n = 32) and the fewest number of participants reported to be in 11th grade (n = 22).

Table 4
Distribution of Participants by Grade

Grade	*f*	%
7th	27	16.5
8th	28	17.2
9th	32	19.6
10th	27	16.6
11th	22	13.5
12th	27	16.6
Total	163	100.0

Gender and Race

Table 5 shows the distribution of participants by gender and ethnicity. Approximately 43.3% (n = 71) were male and 55.5% (n = 91) were female. A majority of the participants (*n* = 132, 81.0%) identify as White or Caucasian.

Table 5
Distribution of Participants by Gender and Race

Characteristic	*f*	%
Gender		
Female	91	55.5
Male	71	43.3
No Answer	1	0.6
Race		
White or Caucasian	132	81.0
Latino or Chicano	14	8.6
Black or African-American	5	3.1
Multiracial	5	3.1
Other*	3	1.8
Asian American	2	1.2
Missing or chose not to answer	2	1.2
Total	163	100.0

Note. *Other specified as Scottish, American Indian, and Hispanic.

Years of Membership in 4-H

Table 6 shows the distribution of participants who reported how many years they have been in 4-H. Almost 17% of participants chose not to answer. However, the highest number of participants (n = 17, 10.4%) reported to have been members for five years and the lowest number of participants (n = 1) reported to have been members for 12 years. The overall average of years of membership was 5.35.

Table 6
Years of Membership in 4-H

Years in 4-H	*f*	%
1	15	9.1
2	14	8.6
3	10	6.1
4	15	9.2
5	17	10.4
6	15	9.2
7	13	8.0
8	15	9.2
9	14	8.6
10	7	4.3
11	0	0.0
12	1	0.6
No Answer	27	16.6
Total	163	100.0

Note. Overall Mean = 5.35.

Grade Point Average

Table 7 shows the distribution of responding Texas 4-H member's GPA among six ranges. The highest number of participants (n = 70) reported to have a GPA of between 3.6 and 4.0 and the lowest number or participants (n = 1) reported to have a GPA of less than 2.0. One participant chose not to answer.

Table 7
Distribution of Grade Point Average

GPA	*f*	%
Less than 2.0	1	.6
Between 2.0 and 2.5	3	1.8
Between 2.6 and 3.0	21	12.9
Between 3.1 and 3.5	39	23.9
Between 3.6 and 4.0	70	42.9
Greater than 4.0	28	17.3
No Answer	1	0.6
Total	163	100.0

Objective Two: Post-Secondary Career and Educational Aspirations

Educational Goals

Table 8 reflects the educational aspirations of participants. A majority of participants (*n* = 87, % = 53.4) plan on attending and graduating from a four year post-secondary program. Almost 38% of participants (*n* = 61) plan to attend graduate or professional school. Ten participants (6.1%) plan to graduate from a two year college program.

Table 8
Particpants Educational Aspirations

Educational Aspirations	*f*	%
Graduate from a college/university (four year program)	87	53.4
Attend graduate or professional school	61	37.4
Graduate from a two year college program (Technical school)	10	6.1
Graduate from high school	2	1.2
Obtain education/training through the military	2	1.2
No Answer	1	0.6
None of the above	0	0.0
Total	163	100.0

Career Aspirations

Table 9 describes the career aspirations of participants. A majority of participants (*n* = 57, 35.0%) reported that their dream job or career would be in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) field such as being a doctor, lawyer, scientist, engineer, or pilot.

The next highest category was other (*n* = 39, 23.9%). Other careers specified by participants included: being a zoo keeper, fish and wildlife warden, forensic scientist (coroner), wolf biologist, sound designer, embryologist, actor, writer, veterinarian, veterinarian, welding and taxidermy, a teacher and a homemaker, large animal veterinarian, welder, banker, artist, dietitian, run my family's mechanic shop, something agriculture related, engineer, US Border Patrol/FBI Agent, rancher, professional writer and journalist, a game warden, a game warden and animal scientist, cattle rancher, pediatric nurse/ag teacher, fashion design, veterinarian, RN, teacher or veterinarian, therapist, professional soccer player, gunsmith, occupational therapist, and veterinarian.

Almost 18% of participants (*n* = 29) reported their dream job or career would be a teacher, librarian, nurse, or professor.

Table 9
Participants Career Aspirations

Dream Job/Career	*f*	%
Professional, such as a doctor, lawyer, scientist, engineer, or pilot	57	35.0
Other	39	23.9
Professional 2, such as a teacher, librarian, nurse, professor	29	17.8
Military or Security, such as a police officer, soldier, or fire fighter	10	6.1
Technical, such as a computer specialist or radiologist	10	6.1
Manager, such as an executive director	7	4.3
Farm or Fishery Worker	5	3.1
Mechanic/Factory Worker or Laborer, such as an electrician or plumber	4	2.5
Construction Worker, such as a carpenter or crane operator	1	.6
No Answer	1	0.6
Office Worker, such as a bookkeeper, office clerk, secretary	0	0.0
Homemaker, stay at home Mom or Dad	0	0.0

Objective Three: Parental Influence and Level of Educational Attainment

Tables 10, 11, and 12 describe the education level of participant's parents and the influence of parental involvement in participant's educational aspirations and goals.

A little over 9% of participants' (*n* = 15) mothers have completed high school and 65.0% of participants' (*n* = 106) mothers have completed some college or completed college. 23.9% of participants' (*n* = 39) mothers have gone to graduate or professional school.

Almost 18% of participants' (n = 29) fathers have completed high school and 47.2% of participants' (n = 77) fathers have completed some college or completed college. Twenty-two percent of participants' (n = 35) fathers have gone to graduate or professional school after college.

Responses for parental influence ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" on a seven-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*.) The scale was interpreted as follows: s*trongly disagree* = 1.00 – 1.49, *moderately disagree* = 1.50 – 2.49, *disagree* = 2.50 – 3.49, *neither agree nor disagree* = 3.50 – 4.49, *agree* = 4.50 – 5.49, *moderately agree* = 5.50 – 6.49, and *strongly agree* = 6.50 – 7.00.

Table 12 describes the means and standard deviations for each of the four items regarding parental influence. Participants moderately agreed that their parents are involved in their school (M = 6.17, SD 1.48), talk to their parents about their career and educational goals (M = 6.03, SD = 1.48), would be disappointed if they did not go to college (M = 5.82, SD = 1.66), and make sure they do their homework (M = 6.01, SD = 1.63).

Table 10

Mother's Level of Educational Attainment

Level of Education	*f*	%
Completed college	69	42.3
Graduate or professional school after college	39	23.9
Some college	37	22.7
Completed high school	15	9.2
Don't know	2	1.2
Some high school	1	.6
Completed 8th grade or less	0	0.0

Table 11

Father's Level of Educational Attainment

Level of Education	*f*	%
Some college	48	29.4
Graduate or professional school after college	35	21.5
Completed college	34	20.9
Completed high school	29	17.8
Some high school	10	6.1
Don't know	5	3.1
Completed 8th grade or less	2	1.2

Table 12

Parental Influence

Parental Influence Items	*N*	*M*	*SD*
My parents are involved in my school	163	6.17	1.48
I talk to my parents about my career and educational goals	163	6.03	1.48
My parents make sure that I do my homework	162	6.01	1.63
My parents would be disappointed if I do not go to college	163	5.82	1.66

Note. Overall *M* = 6.00, *SD* = 1.27. Scale: 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Moderately Disagree*, 3 = *Disagree*, 4 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, 5 = *Agree*, 6 = *Moderately Agree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

Objective Four: Perceptions of Territorial Community in Achieving Educational and Career Goals

Table 13 describes Texas 4-Hers perceptions about their physical community in regard to achieving their educational and career goals. Responses for perceptions of territorial community in achieving educational and career goals ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" on a seven-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*). The scale was interpreted as follows: s*trongly disagree* = 1.00 – 1.49, *moderately disagree* = 1.50 – 2.49, *disagree* = 2.50 – 3.49, *neither agree nor disagree* = 3.50 – 4.49, *agree* = 4.50 – 5.49, *moderately agree* = 5.50 – 6.49, and *strongly agree* = 6.50 – 7.00.

Table 13 lists the means and standard deviations for each of the four items regarding perceptions of territorial community in achieving educational and career goals. Participants moderately agreed that their community is a good place to raise a family (M = 5.80, SD = 1.36) and agreed that to achieve their educational goals they must move away (M = 4.88, SD = 1.87). Participants neither agreed nor disagreed that they could achieve their job/career of their dreams in their community (M = 4.32, SD = 1.82) and that they would need to move out of their community to earn a good income (M = 4.28, SD = 1.83).

Table 13
Perceptions of Territorial Community in Achieving Educational and Career Goals

Perceptions of Community	*N*	*M*	*SD*
My community is a good place to raise a family	163	5.80	1.36
To achieve my educational goals, I need to move out of my community	163	4.88	1.87
I can achieve the job/career of my dream in my community	162	4.32	1.82
To earn a good income, I need to move out of my community	163	4.28	1.83

Note. Overall *M* = 4.82, *SD* = .88. Scale: 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Moderately Disagree*, 3 = *Disagree*, 4 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, 5 = *Agree*, 6 = *Moderately Agree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

Description of Territorial Community

Table 14 describes where participants currently live and where they would prefer to live. A majority of participants live in a small city or town (*n* = 57, 35.0%) or in the country, but not on a farm (*n* = 45, 27.6%). Almost 23% of respondents (*n* = 37) reported they live on farm. Participants reported they would prefer to live on a farm (n = 38, 23.3%), in their present community (*n* = 29, 17.8%), or in the country, but not on a farm (*n* = 32, 19.6%). Thirteen percent (*n* = 21) reported they did not know where they prefer to live or are undecided.

Table 14
Description of Community

Community Descriptor	*f*	%
Where do you currently live		
On a farm	37	22.7
In the country, not on a farm	45	27.6
In a small city or town (under 50,000 people)	57	35.0
In a medium-sized city (50,000-100,000 people)	15	9.2
In a large city (more than 100,000 people)	9	5.5
Where would you prefer to live		
My present community	29	17.8
On a farm	38	23.3
In the country, not on a farm	32	19.6
In a small town (under 50,000 people)	16	9.8
In a medium-sized city (50,000-100,000 people)	17	10.4
In a large city (more than 100,000 people)	9	5.5
I don't know where I prefer to live or I'm undecided	21	12.9
Chose not to answer	1	0.6

Table 15 describes respondent's participation in community activities and how often they volunteer. Eighty-six percent (n = 140) of respondents participate in community activities at least once a week or once a month while 73.3% (n = 126) participate in volunteer activities in their community about once a week or once a month.

Table 15
Participation in Community Activities and Volunteerism

Community Activities and Volunteerism	*f*	%
To what extent do you participate in community activities?		
About once a week	78	47.9
About once a month	62	38.0
About once in six months	12	7.4
About once a year	6	3.7
Never	4	2.5
To what extent do you participate in volunteer activities in your community?		
About once a week	35	21.5
About once a month	91	55.8
About once in six months	22	13.5
About once a year	10	6.1
Never	4	2.5

Table 16 describes how often a respondent attends religious services and youth group activities such as bible classes and choir. A majority of participants (37.4%, *n* = 61) attend religious services at least once a week and 25.2% (*n* = 41) attend services two to three times a week whereas 33.2% of respondents attend youth group activities once a week or never. Forty-five percent (*n* = 74) attend youth group activities once a week or two to three times a week. One respondent reported to attend youth group activities daily.

Table 16
Attendance of Religious Services and Youth Group Activities

Religious Services and Activities	*f*	%
How often do you attend religious services?		
Never	7	4.2
Less than once a month	24	14.7
Once a month	12	7.4
2-3 times a month	15	9.2
Once a week	61	37.4
2-3 times a week	41	25.2
Daily	0	0.0
How often do you attend youth group activities such as youth groups, bible classes, or choir?		
Never	27	16.6
Less than once a month	27	16.6
Once a month	13	8.0
2-3 times a month	19	11.7
Once a week	48	29.4
2-3 times a week	26	16.0
Daily	1	.6

Objective Five: Sense of Community

Table 17 describes participants' overall sense of community and attachment. The scale was interpreted as follows: s*trongly disagree* = 1.00 – 1.49, *moderately disagree* = 1.50 – 2.49, *disagree* = 2.50 – 3.49, *neither agree nor disagree* = 3.50 – 4.49, *agree* = 4.50 – 5.49, *moderately agree* = 5.50 – 6.49, and *strongly agree* = 6.50 – 7.00.

Overall, participants neither agreed nor disagreed that they had a strong sense of community attachment (*M* = 4.39, *SD* = 0.90). Participants agreed that they feel a strong connection to the community where they live (*M* = 5.17, *SD* = 1.56), feel their relationships with their neighbors are valuable (*M* = 4.90, *SD* = 1.48), have many places and friends to go for help (*M* = 4.87, *SD* = 1.56), have many friendships with adults in

their neighborhood (*M* = 4.78, *SD* = 1.60), think adults in their community serve as role models (*M* = 4.75, *SD* = 1.52), relationships with their neighbors helped them become a better person (*M* = 4.63, *SD* = 1.48), and know their neighbors on a personal basis (*M* = 4.57, *SD* = 1.81).

Participants neither agreed nor disagreed that they personally know most of the residents in their community (*M* = 4.47, *SD* = 1.67), communicate with their neighbors at least once a week (*M* = 4.30, *SD* = 1.69), do not know their neighbors well (*M* = 3.65, *SD* = 1.74), and spend quality time with their neighbors at least once a week (*M* = 3.64, *SD* = 1.61), Participants disagreed that they do not feel a strong connection to their community where they live (*M* = 2.98, *SD* = 1.70).

Table 17
Descriptive Statistics for Interpersonal Community Engagement

Items	*N*	*M*	*SD*
I feel a strong connection to the community where I live.	163	5.17	1.56
I feel my relationships with my neighbors are very valuable.	163	4.90	1.48
I have many places and friends to go to for help in my neighborhood.	163	4.87	1.56
I have many friendships with adults in my neighborhood.	163	4.78	1.60
The adults in my neighborhood serve as role models.	162	4.75	1.52
My relationships with my neighbors have helped me to be a better person.	163	4.63	1.48
I know my neighbors very well on a personal basis.	162	4.57	1.81
Considering the residents in my community, I personally know most of them.	163	4.47	1.67
I communicate with my neighbors at least once a week.	162	4.30	1.69
I do not know many neighbors well.	162	3.65	1.74
I spend quality time with my neighbors at least once a week.	163	3.64	1.61
I do not feel a strong sense of connection to the community where I live.	163	2.98	1.70

Note. Overall M = 4.39, *SD* = .90. *Scale*: 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Moderately Disagree*, 3 = *Disagree*, 4 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, 5 = *Agree*, 6 = *Moderately Agree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

Objective Six: Leadership Life Skills

Table 18 reports the descriptive statistics for the construct of Contributor Community within the leadership life skills development scale. Response for contributor to community ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" on a seven-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*).

The overall mean for this scale is 5.78 (*SD* = .95). Participants moderately agreed that having a chance to serve makes them a stronger part of the community (*M* = 5.91, *SD* = 1.07), helping others influenced the way they live their life (*M* = 5.86, *SD* = 1.05), they feel they can make a difference (*M* = 5.82, *SD* = 1.16), will continue to volunteer

after high school (*M* = 5.80, *SD* = 1.12), community service makes them think about real life in new ways (*M* = 5.77, *SD* = 1.16), leaders should be required to serve his or her community (*M* = 5.75, *SD* = 1.14), serving others' helps them better understand their community (*M* = 5.73, *SD* = 1.07), and felt a responsibility to serve their community (*M* = 5.56, *SD* = 1.24).

Table 18
Descriptive Statistics for Contributor to Community

Items	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Having a chance to serve makes me a stronger part of my community.	162	5.91	1.07
Helping others has influenced the way I live my life.	163	5.86	1.05
I can make a difference in my community.	163	5.82	1.16
I will continue to volunteer after high school.	162	5.80	1.12
Community service makes me think about real life in new ways.	163	5.77	1.16
A leader should be required to serve his/her community.	162	5.75	1.14
Serving others helps me better understand my community.	163	5.73	1.07
I feel a responsibility to serve my community.	163	5.56	1.24

Note. Overall M = 5.78, *SD* = .95. *Scale*: 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Moderately Disagree*, 3 = *Disagree*, 4 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, 5 = *Agree*, 6 = *Moderately Agree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

Table 19 describes the descriptive statistics for personal leadership development. Participants moderately agreed that serving other helps them grow as a leader (*M* = 6.02, *SD* = 1.06), helping others increases their awareness of others need (*M* = 5.98, *SD* = 1.05), they learn from others (*M* = 5.96, *SD* = 1.09), are positive about their abilities (*M* = 5.88, *SD* = 1.13), can be a leader when they serve other's needs (*M* = 5.86, *SD* = 1.11),

and feel comfortable acting as a leader when helping others (*M* = 5.71, *SD* = 1.22). The overall mean for personal leadership development is 5.75 (*SD* = .82).

Table 19
Descriptive Statistics for Personal Leadership Development

Items	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Serving others helps me grow as a leader.	162	6.02	1.06
Helping others increases my awareness of other's needs.	163	5.98	1.05
I learn from others.	163	5.96	1.09
I am positive about my abilities.	163	5.88	1.13
I can be a leader when I serve other's needs.	163	5.86	1.11
I feel comfortable acting as a leader when helping others.	163	5.71	1.22

Note. Overall M = 5.75, *SD* = .82. *Scale*: 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Moderately Disagree*, 3 = *Disagree*, 4 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, 5 = *Agree*, 6 = *Moderately Agree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

Table 20 displays the descriptive statistics for effective team skills. The overall mean for this scale was 5.77 with a standard deviation of .95. Participants moderately agreed that they can follow directions (*M* = 6.07, *SD* = 0.98), cooperate with others (*M* = 5.99, *SD* = 1.01), encourage others (*M* = 5.95, *SD* = 1.00), get along with others who are different from me (*M* = 5.87, *SD* = 1.02), accept people as they are (*M* = 5.82, *SD* = 1.05), get ideas across to others (*M* = 5.75, *SD* = 1.03), and lead a discussion (*M* = 5.63, *SD* = 1.23). Participants agreed that they can keep written records (*M* = 5.40, *SD* = 1.24) and trust other people (*M* = 5.25, *SD* = 1.18).

Table 20
Descriptive Statistics for Effective Team Skills

Items	*N*	*M*	*SD*
I can follow directions.	163	6.07	0.98
I cooperate with others.	163	5.99	1.01
I encourage others.	161	5.95	1.00
I can get along with others who are different from me.	163	5.87	1.02
I accept other people as they are.	162	5.82	1.05
I can get my ideas across to others.	162	5.75	1.03
I can lead a discussion.	163	5.63	1.23
I can keep written records.	163	5.40	1.24
I trust other people.	162	5.25	1.18

Note. Overall M = 5.75, *SD* = .82. *Scale*: 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Moderately Disagree*, 3 = *Disagree*, 4 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, 5 = *Agree*, 6 = *Moderately Agree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

Objective Seven: Significant Differences

The purpose of objective seven was to determine if significant differences exist between leadership life skills, interpersonal community engagement, and demographics. Specifically gender, race, grade level, length of residency, and years in 4-H. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated between each leadership life skill by grade and years in 4-H to determine if significant differences existed. An ANOVA was also calculated for interpersonal community engagement and grade level years in 4-H. Independent samples t-tests were calculated to determine if there were differences between leadership life skills and interpersonal community engagement on gender and race.

No significant differences were found between gender and interpersonal community engagement as seen in Table 21. Both males and females neither agreed nor

disagreed that they felt a strong connection to the community where they live (see table 17).

Table 21
Independent Samples t-tests for Gender and Interpersonal Community Engagement

Gender	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Male	71	52.76	10.54	.072	.943
Female	91	52.64	10.96		

Note. *M* = Summated interpersonal community engagement scores. *M* = 52. 60, *SD* = 10.78.

Table 22 displays the t-tests for gender and leadership life skills. A significant difference was found between all three leadership constructs and gender. On average, females had more confidence in their personal leadership development (*M* = 36.36, *SD* = 5.22) than males (*M* = 34.13, *SD* = .55). This difference, 2.24, was significant, *t* (160) = 2.58, *p* = .01 and accounted for a medium effect size (η^2 = .38).

Females had a higher contribution to their community (*M* = 47.33, *SD* = .77) than males (*M* = 44.59, *SD* = .92). This difference, 2.74, was significant *t* (160) = 2.30, *p* = .023 and represented a medium effect size (η^2 = .35).

On average, females had better effective team skills (*M* = 53.02, *SD* = .77) than males (*M* = 49.76, *SD* = .86). The difference, -3.26, was significant *t* (160) = 2.83, *p* = .005 and represented a medium effect size (η^2 = .45).

Table 22
Independent Samples t-tests for Gender and Leadership Life Skills Constructs

Construct	Gender	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Personal Leadership Development	Male	71	34.13	5.80	2.58	.011*
	Female	91	36.36	5.22		
Effective Team Skills	Male	71	49.76	7.25	2.83	.005*
	Female	91	53.02	7.30		
Contributor to the Community	Male	71	44.59	7.78	2.30	.023*
	Female	91	47.33	7.30		

Note. *$p < .05$. *M* = Summated leadership life skills scores. Youth Leadership Life Skills: *M* = 35.37, *SD* = 5.56. Effective Team Skills: *M* = 51.56, *SD* = 7.42. Contributor to the Community: *M* = 46.10, *SD* = 7.60.

No significant differences were found between race and leadership life skills (Table 23).

Table 23
Independent Samples t-tests for Race and Leadership Life Skills Contructs

Construct	Race	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Personal Leadership Development	White	132	35.23	5.56	.566	.572
	Non-white	30	35.87	5.69		
Effective Team Skills	White	132	51.64	7.29	.490	.625
	Non-white	30	50.90	8.05		
Contributor to the Community	White	132	45.89	7.58	.566	.572
	Non-white	30	46.77	7.83		

Note. *M* = Summated leadership life skills scores. Youth Leadership Life Skills: *M* = 35.37, *SD* = 5.56. Effective Team Skills: *M* = 51.56, *SD* = 7.42. Contributor to the Community: *M* = 46.10, *SD* = 7.60.

However, as seen in Table 24, a significant difference was found between race and interpersonal community engagement t (160) = 2.00, p = .048 representing a medium effect size (η^2 = -.39).

Table 24
Independent Samples t-tests for Race and Interpersonal Community Engagement

Race	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
White	132	53.30	10.56	2.00	.048*
Non-white	30	49.00	11.05		

Note. *p < .05. *M* = Summated interpersonal community engagement scores. *M* = 52.60, *SD* = 10.78.

No significant differences were found between grade level and leadership life skills as in table 25. Personal leadership development was not shown to be significant by grade level, F (5, 157) = 1.172, $p > .05$ and represented a small effect size ($\eta^2 = .19$). No significant differences were found between effective team skills and grade level F (5, 157) = .639, $p > .05$ and represented a small effect size ($\eta^2 = .14$). No significant differences were found between contributor to community and grade level F (5, 157) = .800, $p > .05$ and represented a small effect size ($\eta^2 = .16$).

Table 25
Analysis of Variance for Grade Level and Leadership Life Skills Constructs

Construct	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Personal Leadership Development					
7th	27	34.30	6.00	1.172	.326
8th	28	34.82	6.27		
9th	32	35.53	5.23		
10th	27	34.30	5.54		
11th	22	37.27	4.53		
12th	27	36.37	5.45		
Effective Team Skills					
7th	27	51.22	8.39	.639	.670
8th	28	50.68	7.20		
9th	32	51.94	7.30		
10th	27	50.07	7.50		
11th	22	53.36	5.93		
12th	27	52.37	8.04		
Contributor to Community					
7th	27	45.07	4.63	.800	.551
8th	28	44.61	8.27		
9th	32	47.28	7.05		
10th	27	45.11	7.60		
11th	22	47.50	7.63		
12th	27	47.11	7.60		

Note. *M* = Summated leadership life skills scores. Youth Leadership Life Skills: *M* = 35.37, *SD* = 5.56. Effective Team Skills: *M* = 51.56, *SD* = 7.42. Contributor to the Community: *M* = 46.10, *SD* = 7.60.

Table 26 displays the analysis of variance for grade level and interpersonal community engagement. No significant differences were found F (5, 157) = 1.736, $p >$ .05 and represented a small effect size (η^2 = .23).

Table 26
Analysis of Variance for Grade Level and Interpersonal Community Engagement

	n	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
7th	27	53.74	9.00	1.736	.130
8th	28	51.82	12.02		
9th	32	53.34	10.61		
10th	27	54.81	11.02		
11th	22	54.59	10.72		
12th	27	47.52	10.34		

Note. *M* = Summated interpersonal community engagement scores. *M* = 52.60, *SD* = 10.78.

As seen in table 27, no significant differences were found between years in 4-H and leadership life skills. Personal leadership development was not shown to be significant by years in 4-H F (3, 132) = 1.19, $p > .05$ and represented a small effect size ($\eta^2 = .16$). No significant differences were found between effective team skills and years in 4-H F (3, 132) = .997, $p > .05$ and represented a small effect size ($\eta^2 = .15$). No significant differences were found between contributor to community and years in 4-H F (3, 132) = .724, $p > .05$ and represented a medium effect size of ($\eta^2 = .40$).

Table 27
Analysis of Variance for Years in 4-H and Leadership Life Skills Constructs

Construct	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Personal Leadership Development					
1-3 years	39	34.31	5.77	1.199	.313
3-6 years	47	35.75	5.53		
7-9 years	42	36.52	4.96		
10-12 years	8	34.63	6.52		
Effective Team Skills					
1-3 years	39	50.05	7.57	.997	.396
3-6 years	47	52.45	7.27		
7-9 years	42	52.50	7.12		
10-12 years	8	50.88	9.06		
Contributor to Community					
1-3 years	39	45.46	7.39	.724	.539
3-6 years	47	45.53	7.88		
7-9 years	42	47.24	7.22		
10-12 years	8	43.63	8.14		

Note. *M* = Summated leadership life skills scores. Youth Leadership Life Skills: *M* = 35.37, *SD* = 5.56. Effective Team Skills: *M* = 51.56, *SD* = 7.42. Contributor to the Community: *M* = 46.10, *SD* = 7.60.

As seen in table 28, no significant differences were found between years in 4-H and interpersonal community engagement where F (3, 132) = .489, $p > .05$ and represented a small effect size of ($\eta^2 = .41$).

Table 28
Analysis of Variance for Years in 4-H and Interpersonal Community Engagement

	n	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
1-3 years	39	52.82	9.00	.489	.690
3-6 years	47	54.38	11.62		
7-9 years	42	51.67	11.36		
10-12 years	8	52.75	7.25		

Note. M = Summated interpersonal community engagement scores. *M* = 52.60, *SD* = 10.78.

Objective Eight: Pearson Coefficient

The Pearson's product-moment correlations between each variable can be found in Table 29. The magnitude of each relationship was determined by Davis (1971). The noted magnitudes of the relationship between variables are: $.01 \geq r \geq .09$ = Negligible, $.10 \geq r \geq .29$ = Low, $.30 \geq r \geq .49$ = Moderate, $.50 \geq r \geq .69$ = Substantial, $r \geq .70$ = Very Strong (Davis, 1971).

Table 29
Pearson Correlation Coefficients

	Contributor to Community	Effective Team Skills	Personal Leadership Development	Grade Level	Gender	Educational Aspirations	Dream Job or Career
Interpersonal Community Engagement	.30**	.29**	.26**	-.10	-.01	.10	-.07

Note. * Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Dream job or career has a negligible correlation with effective team skills (r = -.09), interpersonal community engagement (r = -.07), and grade level (r = -.09). Dream job or career has low, but significant correlations with contributor to community (r = -.17*). Personal leadership development (r = -.15), gender (r = -.14), and educational aspirations (r = -.24) each have a low correlation with dream job or career.

Educational aspirations has a negligible correlation with grade level (r = .09) and low correlations with interpersonal community engagement (r = .10) and gender (r = .21). Educational aspirations has moderate correlations with contributor to the community (r = .38), effective team skills (r = .44), and personal leadership development (r = .44).

Gender has a low, but significant correlations with contributor to the community (r = .18*), effective team skills (r = .22*), and personal leadership development (r = .20*). There is a negligible correlation between gender and interpersonal community engagement (r = -.01) and grade level (r = -.01).

Grade level has a negligible correlation with effective teams skills (r = .07) and low correlations with contributor to community (r = .10), personal leadership development (r = .14), and interpersonal community engagement (r = -.10).

Interpersonal community engagement has low correlations with effective team skills (r = .29) and personal leadership development (r = .26) and a moderate correlation with contributor to community (r = .30).

Personal leadership development has very strong correlations with contributor to the community (r = .85) and effective team skills (r = .83) while effective team skills has a very strong correlation with contributor to community (r = .83).

Objective Nine: Stepwise Regression

Stepwise linear regression was used to determine the influence of personal characteristics, leadership life skills, and community engagement on sense of community. The dependent variable was interpersonal community engagement and independent variables included contributor to the community, personal leadership development, educational aspirations, dream job, gender, and GPA. The leadership life skills construct of contributor to community and grade level were found to be significant predictors of sense of community. Table 30 displays the regression model.

Table 30
Regression Model

	R	R^2	*B*	*Beta*	*t-value*	*p*
Model 1	.300[a]	.090	.427	.300	3.949	.001
Model 2	.369[b]	.136	-6.308	-.216	-2.907	.004

Note. a. Predictors: (Constant), Contributor to Community
b. Predictors: (Constant), Contributor to Community, Grade Level
c. Dependent Variable: Interpersonal Community Engagement

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of community engagement, youth leadership development, career and educational aspirations, and personal characteristics on a 4-Her's sense of community.

Research Objectives

1. Describe participant demographics; specifically: (a) grade level, (b) gender, (c) ethnicity, (d) years of membership in 4-H, and (e) grade point average.
2. Describe participants' post-secondary educational and career aspirations.
3. Describe parent's level of educational attainment and the parental influence of participant's educational aspirations.
4. Describe participants' perception of their community; specifically: (a) where they currently live, (b) where they prefer to live, (c) their level of community engagement, and (d) their perception of their community as a place to live.
5. Determine participants' sense of community.
6. Determine participants' leadership life skills in three constructs; specifically: (a) contributor to community, (b) personal leadership development, and (c) effective team skills.
7. Determine if significant differences exist between leadership life skills and interpersonal community engagement on personal demographics; specifically: (a) gender, (b) grade level, (c) race, and (d) years in 4-H.

8. Examine the relationship between personal characteristics, leadership life skills, and sense of community.
9. Determine the influence of community engagement, leadership life skills, and personal characteristics on sense of community based up on the model of Interposal Community Engagement describe by Corrigan (2004).

Statement of the Problem

A recent study by Tufts University and the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development (Lerner, Lerner, & Colleagues, 2013) found that 4-H'ers are four times more likely to actively contribute to their community, two times more likely to be civically active, and five times more likely than their peers to graduate college.

Employers are looking for college graduates who have completed community based field projects that give students experience working with others and the ability to solve problems important in their community (Hart Research Associates, 2013). Employers also "strongly endorse educational practices that involve students in active, effortful, work-practices that involve such things as collaborative problem-solving, research, senior projects, community engagement, and internships (Hart Research Associates, 2013, p. 12).

Research in the field of Extension has already presented the need for program developers to better understand the role of youth community development (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007). When youth are civically engaged and feel a strong sense of community, they help increase the social capital and well-being within their communities. This can impact individual, organizational, and societal change within a

community. Youth participating in programs like 4-H are gaining necessary skills and developing their competencies, leadership skills, communication skills, and decision-making skills that prepare them for the workforce or higher education after graduation from high school.

Summary of Methodology

The target population for this study included all members enrolled in the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program in grades seven through 12. Qualtrics was used to collect data using an online questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was pilot tested to determine face validity and reliability. Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficients were calculated for each internal scale. The reliability levels for each scale ranged from $.801 \geq \alpha \leq .900$ for the pilot study and $.800 \geq \alpha \leq .940$ for the formal study. These levels are traditionally considered an acceptable rate of internal reliability (Bryman, 2012).

Participants were contacted via e-mail using Dillman's (2014) tailored design method. Four follow-up emails were sent to increase the response rate. Each email included a link to the online questionnaire by Qualtrics. A link for participants to opt-out of the study was also provided in each email. A final response rate of 22.45% (N = 163) was achieved.

The independent variables for this study were: community engagement, contributor to the community, effective team skills, personal leadership development, grade level, educational aspirations, dream job or career, gender, and grade point

average. The dependent variable for this study was interpersonal community engagement.

Lindner, Murphy, and Briers (2001) suggested comparison of early to late respondents to account for non-response error. A significant difference was found between early and late respondents and educational aspirations. Early and late respondents were found to be statistically similar in regard to the remaining primary variables of interest.

Data was analyzed using version 23 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). There was a total of 163 usable responses. Objectives one and two were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Objectives three through six were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Objective seven was analyzed using analysis of variance and t-tests. Objective eight was analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and objective nine was analyzed using stepwise linear regression.

Summary of Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations by Objective

Objective One: Conclusions

The first objective was to describe participants' demographics and personal characteristics. The demographic and personal characteristics measured were: (a) grade level, (b) gender, (c) ethnicity, (d) years of membership in 4-H, and (e) grade point average (GPA).

The highest number of respondents reported to be in 9^{th} grade (n = 32) and the fewest number of participants reported to be in 11^{th} grade (n = 22). Most of the

respondents were female and accounted for 55.5% (*n* = 91) of the responses. 43.3% (*n* = 71) were male. A majority of the participants identified themselves as White or Caucasian (81.0%, *n* = 132). Latinos accounted for 8.6% (*n* = 14), African-Americans accounted for 3.1% (*n* = 5), Multiracial accounted for 3.1% (*n* = 5), Other accounted for 1.8% (*n* = 3), and Asian American accounted for 1.2% (*n* = 2). Other ethnicities were specified as Scottish, American Indian, and Hispanic.

The overall average years of membership in 4-H was 5.35 years. The highest number of participants (*n* = 17) reported to have been members for five years. 16.6% (*n* = 27) decided not to answer. The minimum number of years of membership was reported to be one and the maximum number of years of membership was reported to be 11 years.

The majority of participants (42.9%, *n* = 70) reported to have a GPA between 3.6 and 4.0. 23.9% (*n* = 39) reported to have a GPA between 3.1 and 3.5 and 12.9% (*n* = 21) reported to have a GPA between 2.6 and 3.0.

Objective One: Implications

Personal characteristics such as gender, grade level, race, and GPA are considered factors that influence a youth's post-secondary career and educational aspirations (Bajema, Miller, & Williams, 2002; Ferry, 2006). Research suggests that 4-Hers are more likely to go to college and pursue a higher education than their non-4-H counterparts (Lerner, Lerner, & Colleagues, 2013).

Research suggests that mentoring programs within 4-H that target at-risk youth and minority populations improve academic performance (Utah State University

Extension, 2015). By addressing barriers for participation, extension can increase the involvement of at-risk youth in 4-H (Hobbs, 1999; Hedrick, Light, & Dick, 2013; Lamm, Harder, Lamm, Rose, & Rask, 2005; Phillips, Randall, Peterson, Wilmoth, & Pickering, 2013).

Objective One: Recommendations

The data collected for this research suggests that 4-H should target at-risk youth and minorities. Minorities face many barriers to attain a higher education. If more emphasis is placed on targeting youth and minority populations, this could help increase the educational attainment of these populations.

Objective Two: Conclusions

Objective two was to describe participants' post-secondary career and educational aspirations. Fifty-three percent (n = 87) plan on attending and graduating from a four-year college or university. Thirty-seven (n = 61) plan to attend graduate or professional school and 6.1% (n = 10) plan to graduate from a two-year program. 2.4% (n = 4) plan to graduate from high school or obtain an education through the military.

Most respondents reported (n = 57, 35.0%) wanting to pursue a career in a STEM related field such as a doctor, lawyer, scientist, engineer, or pilot. Eighteen percent (n = 29) reported they wanted to pursue a career as a teacher, librarian, professor, or nurse. Twelve percent (n = 20) of respondents want to pursue a career as a police officer, soldier, firefighter, computer specialist, or radiologist. Six percent (n = 10) want to be a farm or fishery worker, mechanic, factory worker, or construction worker.

Objective Two: Implications

A small percentage of respondents indicated that they planned to graduate from a two-year program. There has been much emphasis on the resurgence of technical and agricultural education in rural communities. Although the data suggests few participants plan to attend a two-year college, students in rural areas are more likely to attend a two- or four-year program close to their community (Gibbs, 1995). Research suggests that that students who attend and graduate from a two- year program are more likely to pursue a four year degree than if they did not attend a two-year program (Shapiro, Dundar, Ziskin, Chiang, Torres, & Harrell, 2013). For example, 70% of students completing degrees at four-year institutions in Texas in 2014 were previously enrolled at two-year institutions (National Student Clearinghouse, 2015).

Objective Two: Recommendations

While a majority of respondents reported they planned to attend a four-year post-secondary program, emphasis should be placed on developing programs within 4-H that focus on college preparation and career readiness. The researcher recommends that rural 4-H programs emphasize the opportunities to attend two- and four-year schools near 4-Hers current communities.

In recent years, 4-H has expanded its curriculum to emphasize areas within STEM fields. 4-H robotics programs have increased in popularity and brought more attention to STEM fields to young people. However, participation in youth animal livestock programs should also be promoted as a STEM field as participation in 4-H

animal projects frequently leads to subsequent study in the STEM fields (Heck, Carolos, Barnett, & Smith, 2012).

There seems to be little interest in technical fields such as being a construction worker, electrician or plumber. As mentioned earlier, it is recommended that rural 4-H programs emphasize the opportunities to attend a two-year community college or two- or four-year program close to their community.

Objective Three: Conclusions

Objective three was to determine the educational level of participants' parents, parent's involvement in participants educational and career goals, and participants' perceptions of their community in achieving their educational and career goals.

Most participants' mothers have completed college (42.3%, *n* = 69) or some college (22.7%, *n* = 37) whereas 20.9% (n = 34) of participants' fathers have completed college or some college (29.4%, *n* = 48). Almost a quarter of participants' mothers have gone to graduate or professional school after college (23.9%, *n* = 39) and 21.5% (*n* = 35) of participants fathers. 9.2% (*n* = 15) of participants mothers and 17.8% (*n* = 29) of fathers have completed high school.

Parental influence of educational goals was measured using a seven point scale where 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 7 = *Strongly Agree*. Overall, participants moderately agreed (M = 6.00) that their parents influenced their educational goals. Participants moderately agreed that their parents would be disappointed if they do not go to college (*M* = 5.82, *SD* = 1.66), that they talk to their parents about their career and educational goals (*M* = 6.03, *SD* = 1.48), their parents are involved in their school (*M* = 6.17, *SD* =

1.48), and their parents make sure they do their homework (*M* = 6.01, *SD* = 1.63). The overall mean and standard deviation of the four items measuring parental influence was (M = 6.00, *SD* = 1.27).

Perceptions of territorial community were measured using a seven point scale where 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 7 = *Strongly Agree*. Overall participants moderately agreed that their community influenced their career and educational goals and that their community is a good place to raise a family, (*M* = 5.80, *SD* = 1.36). Participants neither agreed nor disagreed that they can achieve their dream job in their community (*M* = 4.32, *SD* = 1.82). Participants' neither agreed nor disagreed that to earn a good income (*M* = 4.28, *SD* = 1.83), they would need to move out of their present community. Participants slightly agreed that to achieve their educational goals (*M* = 4.88, *SD* = 1.87), they would need to move out of their present community.

Objective Three: Implications

Parental influence and the education level of a child's parents impacts the educational and career aspirations of youth. Research has shown that children of parents who have completed college are more likely to have higher educational aspirations than children with less educated parents and perform well academically (Brown, Copeland, Costello, Erkanli, & Worthman, 2009; Israel, Beaulieu, & Hartless, 2001). Youth who live in rural areas tend to have lower educational aspirations than their non-rural youth counterparts (Gibbs, 1995; Haller & Virkler, 1993). This can be due to the fact that parents in rural areas also tend to have lower educational expectations for their children (Byun, Meece, Irvin, & Hutchins, 2012).

Children whose parents have gone to college are more likely to attend college themselves. Research has shown youth who have strong positive relationships with adults are more successful academically than youth with poor or minimal adult influences. Utah State University Extension Service and West Virginia University Extension Service have introduced youth mentorship programs in both rural and urban environments (Utah State University Extension, 2015; N. Cobb, personal communication, February 2016).

Objective Three: Recommendations

Mentoring programs like the one in Utah can be replicated in Texas to increase the participation of at-risk and minority youth in 4-H. Most respondents in this study had highly educated parents. Therefore, they are more likely to attend college themselves. More emphasis should be placed on targeting at-risk youth and minorities.

Objective Four: Conclusions

The purpose of objective four was to describe participants' perceptions of their community; specifically: (a) where they currently live, (b) where they prefer to live, (c) their level of community engagement, and (d) their perception of their community as a place to live.

Participants moderately agreed that their community is a good place to raise a family (M = 5.80, SD = 1.36). Participants agreed that they would need to move out of their present community to achieve their educational goals (M = 4.88, SD = 1.87). Participants neither agreed nor disagreed that to earn a good income they would need to move out of their present community (M = 4.28, SD = 1.83). Participants neither agreed

nor disagreed that they could achieve the job of their dreams in their community (*M* = 4.32, *SD* = 1.82).

Thirty-five percent (*n* = 57) of respondents live in a small city or town. Twenty-eight percent (*n* = 45) live in the country and not on a farm while 22.7% (*n* = 37) live on a farm. Twenty-three percent (*n* = 38) of respondents would prefer to live on a farm. 19.6% (*n* = 32) would prefer to live in the country and not on a farm while 17.8% (*n* = 29) respondents would prefer to live in their present community.

Participants reported they participate in community activities about once a week and participate in volunteer activities in their community about once a week. Thirty-seven percent (*n* = 61) of participants attend religious services once a week and attend youth group activities once week (29.4%, *n* = 48). A quarter of participants (25.2%, *n* = 41) reported to attend religious services two to three times week and youth group activities two to three times per week (16.0%, *n* = 26).

Objective Four: Implications

Although most respondents participate in community activities, volunteer, and attend religious services or youth group activities quite frequently. Most participants in this study live in a small city or town or in the country, but not on a farm. Participants also indicated they would prefer to live on a farm. As noted in objective three, the location where a youth lives (rural versus urban) influences their educational and career aspirations. Extension plays a vital role in engaging youth in their community (Brennan, et al., 2007). Youth who are more actively involved in their community are also more likely to have increased academic performance and go to college (Eccles & Barber,

1999). One of the goals of 4-H is to improve youth-adult collaborations within communities to identify local issues of importance (National 4-H Council, 2015).

Research has shown that 4-H alumni are more likely to volunteer in their communities as adults and contribute 4-H to their success (Boleman, Merten, & Hall, 2008; Flynn, Frick, & Steele, 2010; Merten, Locke, Williams, Carter, & Lehman, 2014). Lerner, Lerner, & Colleagues (2013) found that 4-Hers are four times more likely to actively contribute to their community than their non-4-H counterparts.

Objective Four: Recommendations

Future research should explore additional aspects of community engagement beyond church activities.

Objective Five: Conclusions

The purpose of objective five was to determine participant's interpersonal community engagement. Participants agreed that they feel a strong connection to the community where they live (M = 5.17, SD = 1.56) and disagree (M = 2.98, SD = 1.70) that they *do not* feel a strong sense of connection to their community. Participants also agreed they feel relationships with their neighbors are very valuable (M = 4.90, SD = 1.48).

Participants also agreed they have many places and friends to go to for help (M = 4.87, SD = 1.56), have many friendships adults (M = 4.78, SD = 1.60), adults in the neighborhood serve as role models (M = 4.75, SD = 1.52), relationships with their neighbors have helped them to be a better person (M = 4.63, SD = 1.48), know their neighbors well on a personal basis (M = 4.57, SD = 1.81). Participants neither agreed nor

disagreed that they know most of their neighbors personally (M = 4.47, SD = 1.67), or communicate with their neighbors at least once a week (M = 4.30, SD = 1.69). Participants neither agreed nor disagreed that they *do not* know their neighbors well (M = 3.65, SD = 1.74) or spend quality time with their neighbors at least once a week (M = 3.64, SD = 1.61).

Objective Five: Implications and Recommendations

Participants agreed they have a strong connection to the community where they live. Overall, however, they neither agreed nor disagreed they have strong relationships with neighbors and adults in their physical neighborhood. Although youth are engaged within their communities through church, youth group, or school, they do not have a strong sense of community. Youth-adult partnerships are vital to the development and success of young people.

Objective Five: Recommendations

Future research should study aspects of life in a community (e.g., participation in youth group, 4-H, sports, clubs, student council, etc.) that make youth feel connected. Future research should also explore the relationships with adults in 4-H member relational communities that may impact sense of community.

Although youth are engaged within their community, this does not seem to impact their community attachment. Why are youth in 4-H more likely to be more active in their community than their non 4-H counterparts? Is this because 4-H members are exposed to more opportunities in their community than their non-4-H counterparts? This

is why it is vital for extension educators to target at-risk youth and minorities in their communities.

Future research should examine the influence of environmental factors and community and civic engagement in leadership development and how community factors influence leadership development instead of how leadership development influences communities.

Objective Six: Conclusions

The purpose of objective six was to determine participants' youth leadership life skills based on three constructs: (a) personal leadership development, (b) effective team skills, and (c) contributor to community.

In regard to their personal leadership development, participants moderately agreed that serving others helps them grow as a leader (M = 6.02, SD = 1.06), increases their awareness of other's needs (M = 5.98, SD = 1.05), and they learn from others (M = 5.96, SD = 1.09). Participants agreed they feel positive about their abilities (M = 5.88, SD = 1.13), can be a leader when they serve others (M = 5.86, SD = 1.11), and feel comfortable acting as a leader when helping others (M = 5.71, SD = 1.22).

Overall, participants moderately agree they have acquired effective team skills (M = 5.77, SD = 0.82), can follow directions (M = 6.07, SD = 0.98), cooperate with others (M = 5.99, SD = 1.01), and encourage others (M = 5.95, SD = 1.00), get along with others who are different (M = 5.87, SD = 1.02), accept other people as they are (M =5.82, SD = 1.05), can get ideas across to others (M = 5.75, SD = 1.03), and can lead a

discussion (*M* = 5.63, *SD* = 1.23). Participants agreed they can keep written records (*M* = 5.40, *SD* = 1.24), and trust other people (*M* = 5.25, *SD* = 1.18).

Participants moderately agree that having a chance to serve their community makes them a stronger part of their community (*M* = 5.91, *SD* = 1.07), helping others has influenced the way they live their life (*M* = 5.86, *SD* = 1.05), can make difference in their community (*M* = 5.82, *SD* = 1.16), will continue to volunteer after high school (*M* = 5.80, *SD* = 1.12), community service makes them think about real life in new ways (*M* = 5.77, *SD* = 1.16), that a leader should be required to serve his/her community (*M* = 5.75, *SD* = 1.14), serving others helps them better understand their community (*M* = 5.73, *SD* = 1.07), and they feel a responsibility to serve their community (*M* = 5.56, *SD* = 1.24). Overall, participants agree they are a contributor to their community (*M* = 5.78, *SD* = 0.95).

Objective Six: Implications

Overall participants reported moderately high leadership life skills. Employers are looking for college graduates that have strong soft skills such as problem-solving, team, leadership, and decision making skills (Crawford, Lang, Fink, Dalton, & Fielitz, 2011; Hart Research Associates, 2013).

Objective Six: Recommendations

Further implications and recommendations for leadership life skills will be discussed in objective seven.

Objective Seven: Conclusions

No significant differences were found in interpersonal community engagement based on gender. However, significant differences were found between gender and leadership life skills. Females reported much higher competencies in all three constructs than males.

No significant differences were found between leadership life skills based on race. However, a significant difference was found between race and interpersonal community engagement. Caucasian participants reported a higher level of sense of community than minority populations.

No significant differences were found between leadership life skills based on grade level or interpersonal community engagement based on grade level.

No significant differences were found between years in 4-H and leadership life skills and years in 4-H and interpersonal community engagement.

Objective Seven: Implications

Significant differences were found between gender and leadership life skills and race and interpersonal community engagement. Females reported higher leadership life skills than males. This is supported by previous research (Haas, Mincemoyer, & Perkins, 2015; Seevers & Dormody, 1994; Seevers & Dormody, 1995).

Objective Seven: Recommendations

It is recommended future research study the influence of sense of community in at-risk and minority youth to determine the differences in perceptions of community and relationships built within their territorial and relational communities exist.

Objective Eight: Conclusions

The Pearson product moment correlation measures both the direction and magnitude of the relationship between two variables (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorenson, 2010). The relationship between personal characteristics, leadership life skills, and sense of community were examined in objective eight using Pearson's product-moment correlation. Statistically significant, but low relationships were found between gender and contributor to community (r = .18), effective team skills (r = .22), and personal leadership development (r = .20). A significant and low negative correlation was also found between dream job or career and contributor to the community (r = - .17).

Objective Eight: Implications

Causation cannot be implied, however, a significant correlation was found between contributor to the community and dream job or career. Research has shown that community engagement and place of residence influences educational and career aspirations (Adedokun & Balschweid, 2008; Haller & Virkler, 1993; Ferry, 2006; Williams, Thompson, Taylor, & Sanders, 2010).

Objective Eight: Recommendations

As mentioned previously, the researcher recommends exploring the influence of community engagement and interpersonal community engagement within relational communities that possible influence educational and career aspirations.

Objective Nine: Conclusions

The purpose of objective nine was to determine the influence of personal characteristics, leadership life skills, and community engagement on sense of

community. The stepwise method was used to determine which independent variables influenced sense of community. The regression model found the leadership life skills construct of contributor to the community and grade level were significant predictors of sense of community.

Objective Nine: Implications

At the time of this study, no research has examined the relationship between youth leadership life skills and sense of community (Hastings, Barrett, Barbuto, Jr., & Bell, 2011). However, research has shown that older adolescents have a significantly lower sense of community. This could be due to the developmental stage and age of the participant (Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler, & Williams, 1996).

Objective Nine: Recommendations

There is little to no research examining the relationship between leadership life skills and sense of community. Future studies should more thoroughly examine the territorial and relational communities of youth and how these communities influence leadership life skills or vice versa.

Summary of Recommendations for Practice

Based on the results of this study, recommendations for practice include:

1. Emphasizing the opportunities for rural youth to attend institutions of higher education close to their community.
2. The sample drawn in this study is representative of the overall population. Of the total population of Texas 4-H members in grades seven through 12 (N = 18,464), roughly 76.25% (n = 14,078) are

white and 23.75% are non-white, non-hispanic. Based on this information, it is recommended that Texas 4-H should target at-risk youth and minority populations.

3. Replicate mentoring programs for youth to build positive youth-adult partnerships with at-risk and minority populations.
4. Adopt mentoring programs (both peer to peer and Y-AP).
5. Encourage more Y-AP with community stakeholders.

Summary of Recommendations for Research

Based on the results of this data, future research should:

1. Study what aspects of relational communities influence adolescents sense of community through both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The results show that youth are engaged in their community, but do not necessarily feel a strong sense of community with adults in their territorial communities. Most participants in this study indicated they lived in a small town, the country and not on a farm, or on a farm. Almost 20% of respondents indicated they would prefer to live in their present community. A majority of participants in this study were Caucasian and children of highly educated parents. 4-H participants are more likely to go to college and be more actively involved in their communities than their non-4-H counterparts.
2. More emphasis should be placed on targeting at-risk and minority youth to participate in 4-H programs.

3. A response rate of 22.45% was achieved for this study. It is recommended that future replications of this study explore different avenues to collect data at 4-H events like Texas 4-H Roundup or state 4-H judging contests. Youth use social media platforms like twitter and snapchat to communicate with others. Simply put, youth do not use email to communicate with those around them. The initial recruitment notifications could be sent as text messages instead of emails.
4. This study only included current members of the Texas 4-H Youth Development program. Future studies should be expanded to compare 4-H members and non-4-H members sense of community to see what, if any, differences exist.
5. Future studies should also explore the differences between rural and urban youth who participate in the program.
6. The study should be replicated in other states in 4-H and other youth development programs such as Big Brothers-Big Sisters or Key Club.
7. Based on the parental educational attainment of this study, household family makeup should also be explored.
8. Explore the relationship between grade level/age and sense of community.
9. Due to the low response, other avenues such as social media or text messages should be explored to recruit participants in future studies.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD—HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

APPROVAL LETTER

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

DATE: July 13, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: James Lindner
TAMU - College Of Agriculture - Ag Leadership, Education & Communication

FROM: Dr. James Fluckey
Chair
TAMU IRB

SUBJECT: Expedited Approval

Study Number: IRB2015-0276D

Title: The Influence of Community Engagement and Youth Leadership Development on Post-Secondary Educational and Career Aspirations of Texas 4-H Members

Approval Date: 07/13/2016

Continuing Review Due: 06/01/2016

Expiration Date: 07/01/2016

Documents Reviewed and Approved: Only IRB-stamped approved versions of study materials (e.g., consent forms, recruitment materials, and questionnaires) can be distributed to human participants. Please log into iRIS to download the stamped, approved version of all study materials. If you are unable to locate the stamped version in iRIS, please contact the iRIS Support Team at 979.845.4969 or the IRB liaison assigned to your area.

Submission Components			
Study Document			
Title	Version Number	Version Date	Outcome
Revised Instrument	Version 2.0	06/09/2015	Approved
recruitment email	Version 1.0	06/09/2015	Approved
Revised Information Sheet	Version 2.0	06/09/2015	Approved
Revised Recruitment Email	Version 2.0	06/09/2015	Approved
Texas 4-H Member Enrollment Form	Version 1.0	04/23/2015	Approved
Waiver of Consent	Version 1.0	04/23/2015	Approved

Comments: This study has been approved.

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750 Agronomy Road, Suite 2701
1186 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1186
Tel. 979.458.1467 Fax. 979.862.3176
http://rcb.tamu.edu

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT EMAILS

Dear ${m://FirstName}:

The Texas 4-H & Youth Development Program needs your help! We are conducting a research survey to assist the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service in making the 4-H & Youth Development Program even better for you. We would like to know how your 4-H program involvement has impacted your future educational and career aspirations. Your responses will help the Texas 4-H Program make improvements to better support your educational and career aspirations.

You have been randomly selected to participate in this research project because you meet the following criteria:

- Member of the Texas 4-H & Youth Development Program in the current year (2015-2016) and enrolled through the Texas 4-H Enrollment System (4-H CONNECT);
- Are between the ages of 12 and 18; and
- Have a current email address.

Your participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate with no penalty or loss of benefits as a 4-H member. You do not have to answer every question and can submit this survey at any time without penalty or loss of 4-H benefits. Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. Please see the attached information sheet for more information about informed consent to participate. Your input is important to us.

The survey should only take 10-15 minutes to complete.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

To participate in our study please click on the link below:

${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${l://SurveyURL}

Sincerely,

Emily R. Perdue

Graduate Student
Department of Agricultural, Leadership, Education, and Communication
Texas A&M University
eperdue1@exchange.tamu.edu
Phone: (304) 293-2708

Information sheet

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

Dear ${m://FirstName}:

Last week we sent an email asking you to participate in a research survey. If you have already completed the survey, we would like to thank you. We appreciate your help.

If you have not completed the survey, we still need your help. It should only take about 15 minutes to complete.

To participate in our study please click on the link below:
${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${l://SurveyURL}

We are conducting this research survey to assist the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service in making the 4-H & Youth Development Program even better for you. We would like to know how your 4-H program involvement has impacted your future educational and career aspirations. Your responses will help the Texas 4-H Program make improvements to better support your educational and career aspirations.

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· Are between the ages of 12 and 18; and

· Have a current email address.

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Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Emily R. Perdue '16

Graduate Student
Department of Agricultural, Leadership, Education, and Communication
Texas A&M University
eperdue1@exchange.tamu.edu
Voice: (304) 293-2708

and

Toby Lepley, PhD.
Associate Professor, Extension 4-H Youth Development Specialist
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
4180 State Hwy 6 South
College Station, TX 77845
Voice: (979) 845-1212
Email: t-lepley@tamu.edu

Information sheet

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

Dear ${m://FirstName}:

Earlier this month we contacted you asking for your help with a research survey about your career and educational aspirations. We are writing to you again because we still need your help.

To participate in our study please click on the link below:
${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${l://SurveyURL}

We would like to remind you that your participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate with no penalty or loss of benefits as a 4-H member. You do not have to answer every question and can submit this survey at any time without penalty or loss of 4-H benefits. Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. Please see the attached information sheet for more information about informed consent to participate. Your input is important to us.

You have been randomly selected to participate in this research project because you meet the following criteria:

· Member of the Texas 4-H & Youth Development Program in the current year (2015- 2016) and enrolled through the Texas 4-H Enrollment System (4-H CONNECT);

· Are between the ages of 12 and 18; and

· Have a current email address.

We are conducting this research survey to assist the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service in making the 4-H & Youth Development Program even better for you. We would like to know how your 4-H program involvement has impacted your future educational and career aspirations. Your responses will help the Texas 4-H Program make improvements to better support your educational and career aspirations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions and thank you for considering our request during this very busy time of year.

Sincerely,

Emily R. Perdue

Graduate Student
Department of Agricultural, Leadership, Education, and Communication
Texas A&M University
eperdue1@exchange.tamu.edu
Voice: (304) 293-2708

and

Toby Lepley, PhD.
Associate Professor, Extension 4-H Youth Development Specialist
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
4180 State Hwy 6 South
College Station, TX 77845

Voice: (979) 845-1212
Email: t-lepley@tamu.edu

Information sheet

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

Dear ${m://FirstName}:

We are writing to follow up on the message we sent last Monday asking you to participate in the Texas 4-H Survey on Career and Educational Aspirations.

To participate in our study please click on the link below:
${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${l://SurveyURL}

We would like to remind you that your participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate with no penalty or loss of benefits as a 4-H member. You do not have to answer every question and can submit this survey at anytime without penalty or loss of 4-H benefits. Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. Please see the attached information sheet for more information about informed consent to participate. Your input is important to us.

You have been randomly selected to participate in this research project because you meet the following criteria:

· Member of the Texas 4-H & Youth Development Program in the current year (2015- 2016) and enrolled through the Texas 4-H Enrollment System (4-H CONNECT);

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· Have a current email address.

We are conducting this research survey to assist the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service in making the 4-H & Youth Development Program even better for you. We would like to know how your 4-H program involvement has impacted your future educational and career aspirations. Your responses will help the Texas 4-H

Program make improvements to better support your educational and career aspirations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions and thank you for considering our request during this very busy time of year.

Sincerely,

Emily R. Perdue

Graduate Student
Department of Agricultural, Leadership, Education, and Communication
Texas A&M University
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and

Toby Lepley, PhD.
Associate Professor, Extension 4-H Youth Development Specialist
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
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Voice: (979) 845-1212
Email: t-lepley@tamu.edu

Information sheet

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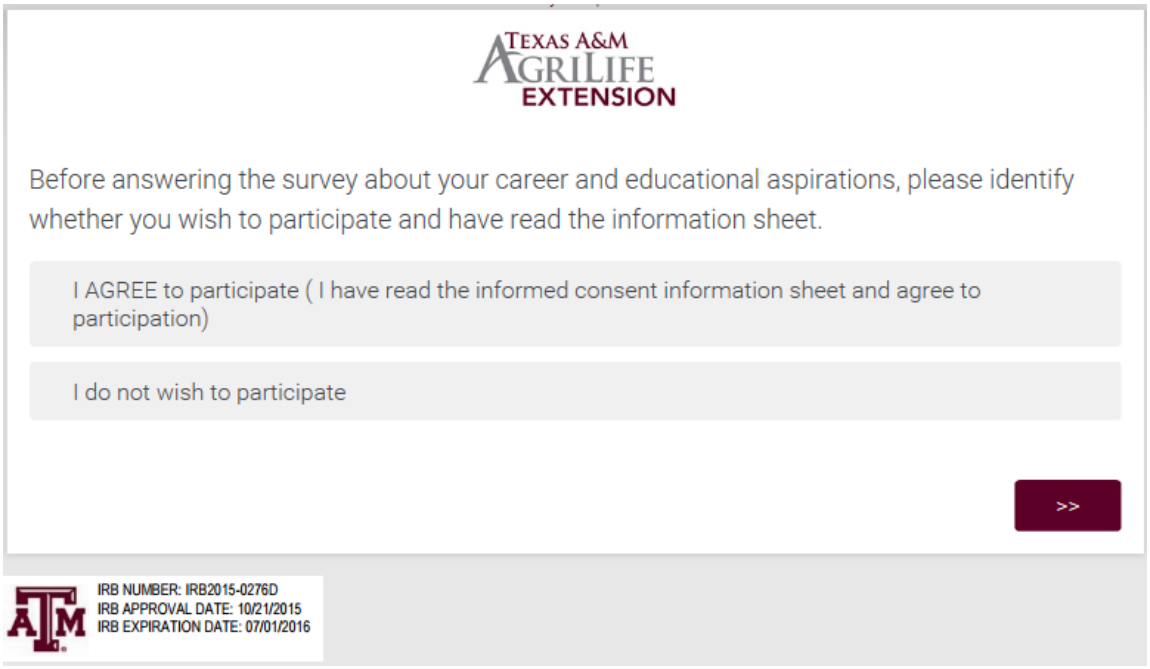
${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT


TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION
Before answering the survey about your career and educational aspirations, please identify whether you wish to participate and have read the information sheet.
I AGREE to participate (I have read the informed consent information sheet and agree to participation)
I do not wish to participate
>>
IRB NUMBER: IRB2015-0276D
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 10/21/2015
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 07/01/2016

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

What is your favorite 4-H project?

>>

IRB NUMBER: IRB2015-XXXD
IRB APPROVAL DATE: XX/XX/2015
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: XX/XX/2016

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

How many years have you been in 4-H?

How do you describe yourself?

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African-American
- Latino or Chicano
- Asian American
- Multiracial
- Other (please specify)

Gender:

- Male
- Female

What is your current grade in school?

- 7th
- 8th
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

What is your overall grade point average?

- Less than 2.0
- Between 2.0 and 2.5
- Between 2.6 and 3.0
- Between 3.1 and 3.5
- Between 3.6 and 4.0
- Great than 4.0

>>

IRB NUMBER: IRB2015-0276D
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 10/21/2015
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 07/01/2016

What is the highest level of education your father completed?

- Completed 8th grade or less
- Some high school
- Completed high school
- Some college
- Completed college
- Graduate or professional school after college
- Don't know

What is the highest level of education your mother completed?

- Completed 8th grade or less
- Some high school
- Completed high school
- Some college
- Completed college
- Graduate or professional school after college
- Don't know

How far do you think you will go in school?

- Graduate from high school
- Obtain education/training through the military
- Graduate from a two year college program (Technical School)
- Graduate from college/university (four year program)
- Attend graduate or professional school after college
- None of the above

To what level do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
My parents would be disappointed if I do not go to college	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I talk to my parents about my career and educational goals	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
My parents make sure that I do my homework	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
My parents are involved in my school	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Which of the following best describes your dream job or career?

- Mechanic/Factory Worker or Laborer, such as an electrician, plumber
- Professional 2, such as a teacher, librarian, nurse, professor
- Office worker, such as a bookkeeper, office clerk, secretary
- Manager, such as an executive director
- Construction worker, such as a carpenter, crane operator
- Homemaker, stay at home Mom/Dad
- Technical, such as a computer specialist, radiologist
- Military or Security, such as a police officer, soldier, fire fighter
- Professional, such as a doctor, lawyer, scientist, engineer, pilot
- Other

- Farm or Fisher Worker

To what level do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
To achieve my educational goals, I need move out of my community	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
To earn a good income, I need to move out of my community	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
My community is a good place to raise a family	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can achieve the job/career of my dream in my community	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

How long have you been living in your community?

- Less than 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- More than 15 years

Which option best describes where you currently live?

- On a farm
- In the country, not on a farm
- In a small city or town (under 50,000 people)
- In a medium-sized city (50,000-100,000 people)
- In a large city (more than 100,000 people)

Where would you prefer to live?

- My present community
- On a farm
- In the country, not on a farm
- In a small city or town (under 50,000 people)
- In a medium-sized city (50,000-100,000 people)
- In a large city (more than 100,000 people)
- I don't know where I prefer to live or I'm undecided

To what extent do you participate in community activities?

- About once a week
- About once a month
- About once in six months
- About once a year
- Never

To what extent do you participate in volunteer activities in your community?

- About once a week
- About once a month
- About once in six months
- About once a year
- Never

How often do you attend religious services?

- Never
- Less than Once a Month
- Once a Month
- 2-3 Times a Month
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- Daily

Many churches, synagogues, and other places of worship have special activities for teenagers such as youth groups, bible classes, or choir. How often do you attend such youth activities?

- Never
- Less than Once a Month
- Once a Month
- 2-3 Times a Month
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- Daily

In considering the following statements, please think about the neighborhood or area in which you currently live. Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Some of these statements are similar to other statements. Do not be concerned about this. Work quickly and record your first impression.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel a strong connection to the community where I live.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
My relationships with my neighbors have helped me to be a better person.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I have many places and friends to go to for help in my neighborhood.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Considering the residents in my community, I personally know most of them.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I feel my relationships with my neighbors are very valuable.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I know my neighbors very well on a personal basis.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I communicate with my neighbors at least once a week.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I do not know many neighbors well.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I spend quality time with my neighbors at least once a week.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I do not feel a strong sense of connection to the community where I live.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
The adults in my neighborhood serve as role models.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I have many friendships with adults in my neighborhood.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

To what level do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
I can lead a discussion.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I feel a responsibility to serve my community.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can be a leader when I serve others needs.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am positive about my abilities.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Helping others increases my awareness of others needs.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can keep written records.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Serving others helps me grow as a leader.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I feel comfortable acting as a leader when helping others.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can follow directions.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I accept other people as they are.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Helping others has influenced the way I live my life.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I trust other people.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Serving others helps me better understand my community.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
A leader should be required to serve his/her community.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can get along with others who are different from me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Community service makes me think about real life in new ways.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I learn from others.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I encourage others.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can make a difference in my community.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I cooperate with others.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Having a chance to serve makes me a stronger part of community.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

I will continue to volunteer after high school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can get my ideas across to others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○