

**THE TRANSFER OF TRAINING AND SKILLS BY TEXAS STATE 4-H  
COUNCIL MEMBERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

A Dissertation

by

JACKLYN ANTOINETTE BRUCE

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2003

Major Subject: Agricultural Education

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May 2003

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## ABSTRACT

The Transfer of Training and Skills by Texas State  
4-H Council Members: A Qualitative Study. (May 2003)

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This study examined the elements that affect the transfer of training and skills by Texas State 4-H Council members. It described the patterns of motivation and learning styles of former State 4-H Council members, as well as the demonstration of leadership life skills. This study also described the leadership experiences of former State 4-H Council members after their council year concluded.

The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to identify former members of the Texas State 4-H Council who were willing to discuss their experiences. A snowball sampling technique was used in which the members of the first group identified the remainder of the sample. There were fifteen individuals interviewed.

Traditional qualitative research methodologies were used to collect and triangulate data. These methods included interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The researcher used documented methods of dependability (dependability audit and reflexive journaling), transferability (thick description,

purposive sample, and reflexive journaling), confirmability (confirmability audit and the reflexive journal), and credibility (persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling) to establish trustworthiness.

The major findings of the study were as follows: 1) State 4-H Council members tended to be extrinsically motivated individuals that followed self-determining patterns of motivational needs, including the need for a sense of competence, inter-relatedness, and autonomy; 2) Eight of the State 4-H Council members demonstrated a mix of social learning theory and experiential learning theory during the years of preparation prior to attaining their State 4-H Council positions; 3) State 4-H Council members demonstrated a command of the seven leadership life skill categories; and 4) The transfer of skills and knowledge by State 4-H Council members was affected both positively and negatively by the elements of training transfer.

Recommendations include implementation of a needs assessment to determine training content and greater experiential training opportunities. The addition of personality types, gender and sensitivity training, and positive conflict resolution should be added to training agendas. State 4-H Council members should be afforded greater decision-making power, beyond that of deciding themes for state events.

## **DEDICATION**

### **TO DANNY...**

Thank you for being my best friend, my partner, and my number one fan. Without you none of this would have been possible...

I love you so much!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path.

Proverbs 3:5&6

First and foremost, my greatest thanks to God for the strength and courage to embark on this journey and the incredible blessings that He has, and continues to bestow upon me. Through Him, truly, all things are possible...

Next, a tremendous thank you to my mom and dad. Thank you for always providing understanding ears, the loudest voices of encouragement, never-ending support and always open arms of love. All that I am stems from the two of you, thank you for being the examples that you are.

A HUGE thank you to my graduate committee! I could not have wished for a better team! Thanks to Dr. Alice Wolf, my graduate council representative, for being a wonderful support during this very confusing process of doctoral studies. Your steadiness and genuine smiles throughout this time were much appreciated. Thanks, next, to Dr. John Hoyle for providing unending support to me, and much needed good humor to this project. Even when I didn't think I would finish, or when I thought my work wasn't good enough, you always found a way to make me smile and believe in myself again. You are the greatest! Next, a big thank you to Dr. Chris Townsend. Thank you for blazing the trail of leadership studies, helping people understand how important is it to our youth programs, and allowing the rest of us to follow. You are an inspiration to all of us who have tagged along behind. To Dr. Kim Dooley, thank you for being you!

Thank you for being so gracious and giving of your time and energy, not just to this project, but also in helping me successfully navigate this doctoral experience. You have provided me with the best possible professional and personal example. I only hope one day to be half of the woman that you are. And finally, to my committee chair Dr. Barry Boyd, I offer endless hugs and “thank yous”! Without you at the helm of this ship, I don’t know that getting into the harbor would have been quite so smooth. Thank you for your boundless patience with my constant questions, your endless encouragement through good times and not so good times, and your enthusiasm in helping me undertake a project that we both believed in!

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Last but not least...to my best friend, my partner, my husband Danny. Thank you for being so willing to sacrifice so much to help me to follow a dream. Thank you for forgiving the long days and nights of reading and researching and typing while the laundry, dishes, house keeping and more importantly YOU were neglected. Thank you for listening to the good and the bad. Thank you for the advice and the ideas. Thank you for your love and your support. Thank you.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Context of the Study

Many experiences have been a part of my desire to explore the leadership skills of State 4-H Council members. As a 4-H member, I looked up to the state officers as role models. I attended camps and conferences they had planned and implemented. As I grew older, I learned what skills, the amount of time, and the hard work it took to become a state officer. As a state officer in Colorado, I experienced heavy demands on my time, balancing my duties as a state 4-H officer while being a full time high school senior. However, I also learned the toll that a hectic schedule, dozens of personal appearances, and consistent demands took on a young person. During my professional career as a 4-H Youth Development Extension Agent, working with various levels of council officers, I began to see the nuances of officer position from yet another view, that of the advisor. I learned valuable lessons in guiding and mentoring these young people. I saw the challenges from a different angle, and learned valuable life lessons from the youth that I advised. Finally, a graduate career that includes the study of leadership theory completes the picture. Having the theoretical background to

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This dissertation follows the style and format of the *Journal of Agricultural Education*.

understand the ways leadership is taught and facilitated, continues to inspire me to make a difference in the lives of the youth that, in turn, make such a difference to other youth, adults, and ultimately the world.

### Background

The 4-H program, as we know it today, began around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the passing of the Morrill Act (1862). The Morrill Act created the land grant university system, dedicated to the improvement of agricultural and mechanical arts. To enhance the land grant system, Congress passed the Smith Lever Act (1914) creating the Cooperative Extension system. Extension, created what would become the 4-H program as well (Smith Lever Act 1914).

4-H is the Cooperative Extension System's dynamic, non-formal, educational program for young people (National 4-H Council, 2003). Youth, volunteer leaders, state land grant universities, state and local governments, 4-H foundations, and the Cooperative State Resource Educational and Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, join in cooperation to facilitate this program. The main thrust of the program is to assist youth in developing knowledge, skills, and abilities that will enable them to become positive, productive members of tomorrow's society. 4-H impacts youth of all races, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds who live in rural, suburban, and urban communities. Today, with over 6.8 million members nation-wide and more than 610,595 leader volunteers, the 4-H has expanded its curriculum beyond

traditional agriculture to include over 110 programs areas including: community service, communications, arts, consumer and family sciences, environmental education, earth sciences, and leadership (National 4-H Council, 2003). The organization has thrived through the changes of a fast growing world, and as we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 4-H has spread internationally through the international 4-H youth exchange.

What is the Texas State 4-H Council? The council is a body of young people elected to fill the highest positions young people can attain in the 4-H organization. The total number of council members fluctuates depending on the year. Generally, the council numbers approximately 34 members. Years that State 4-H Congress is in session, the council may have more members (Il, personal communication, July 17, 2002). The council members prepare to be the leaders of the state, guiding, and being role models for younger members and peers alike. Being a State 4-H Council member is often seen as the pinnacle of a young person's 4-H career. Traditionally, State 4-H Council members are older 4-H members, 14 years of age and older, and usually are juniors and seniors in high school. Council members plan retreats, conferences, and camps for the 4-H members that they represent. They are also the most visible of all 4-H members, being responsible for industry contacts and public appearances representing the larger organization. Young people covet State 4-H Council positions. The individuals that fill State 4-H Council positions receive opportunities that are not available to other 4-H members, in the form of travel, networking and training.

### Statement of the Problem

Several issues need to be attended to in order to address the question of 4-H members and their transfer of leadership skills. The 4-H program itself must be examined. Leadership and leadership life skills will need to be addressed, as well how education professionals educate youth in the areas of leadership. Finally, the transfer of training or skills must be studied in order to gain perspective on the needs that people have when transferring skills. However, it is not enough to look at each of these areas as separate units; we must synthesize what we know in order to serve the nobler purpose of discovering new knowledge within the larger picture.

### Theoretical Framework

The “Learning by Doing” philosophy is one of the main reasons 4-H is recognized and respected in the field of informal youth education. 4-H members and leaders have traditionally been encouraged to engage in their learning experiences (Woffinden & Packham, 2001).

The definition of leadership life skill development includes the development of skills necessary to perform leadership functions in real life (Seevers & Dormody, 1995). This is a testimony to the commitment of the programs, and their leaders and advisors, to preparing their members for life after 4-H. Seevers and Dormody (1995) discovered that the activity that youth ranked



as contributing the most to their leadership skill development was holding an elected office.

Training can obviously provide a variety of benefits for both the organization providing the training and for those individuals that are being trained. The parent organization that provides the training will benefit through improved employee performance and increased productivity. Trainees benefit through both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards associated with new skill development and improved performance. Elangovan and Karakowsky defined transfer of training as the generalization of the skills acquired during the training phase to the work environment and the maintenance of these acquired skills over time (1999). Further, they defined the positive transfer of training as the extent to which trainees apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in the training context to the job. They also identified key trainee and environmental factors that influence the effectiveness of the transfer of training.

According to Elangovan and Karakowsky, (1999) trainee factors that effect the transfer of skills can be divided into two categories, motivation and ability. Noe (1986) defined motivation to transfer skills as the trainees' desire to use the knowledge and skills mastered in the training and development program on the job. This is further divided into five critical elements:

- ❖ Perceived relevance of training
- ❖ Choice in attending training
- ❖ Outcome expectancies
- ❖ Self efficacy
- ❖ Job involvement

Noe's other category of motivation factors, ability related factors, are those factors that affect the ability of the trainee to transfer training. Those factors can be broken into two main elements:

- ❖ Knowledge acquisition
- ❖ Situation identification

Environmental factors refer to various aspects in the employees' work environment, which either facilitates or impedes effective transfer of training. Elangovan and Karakowsky (1999) advocates that there are two categories of environmental factors to transference of skills: job related and organization related factors.

Job related factors are those that pertain to a specific job and its setting. They vary from situation to situation and major elements can be described as:

- ❖ Job requirements
- ❖ Norms and group pressure

Organizational factors in contrast to the more specific job related factors, apply to the whole organization and are also broken down into two elements:

- ❖ Reward systems
- ❖ Organizational culture

These two important pieces of information are well known, yet little is known about how these young people achieve the most important offices in the state. Are they learning leadership life skills, and are they transferring the skills to their lives after they leave the 4-H program? How do 4-H members begin the journey that will eventually lead to a State 4-H Council position? How do 4-H

members learn the skills necessary to be successful in their respective offices? Do 4-H members who hold those elected positions continue as leaders after their eligibility is over? Do they still assume leadership roles, run meetings, make speeches, and stay involved in organizations in some way? Why or why not? Does 4-H provide the right kinds of skills to transfer to life beyond the program? Do they teach youth how to transfer those skills that they do learn? How can we improve what we are doing now to continually better serve our youth leaders? These are some of the questions this study addresses.

### Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to discover how 4-H members embarked on the path to becoming a State 4-H Council member, and what preparations they made along the way. This study investigated the skills 4-H members learned once they were in office. Finally, this study examined what happens to the skills Texas State 4-H Council members learned during their officer terms after they leave the program.

### Research Questions

- ❖ What role does motivation play throughout the Texas State 4-H Council experience?
- ❖ What path do young people follow to gain State 4-H Council positions? Is it similar or different to their peers also on the council?

- ❖ What leadership skills do State 4-H Council members learn during their terms in office?
- ❖ What paths do the young people who have been State 4-H Council members follow after their term is completed?
- ❖ What happens to the leadership skills that youth attain during their term as an officer, after that term is over? Do State 4-H Council members transfer those skills to other areas?
- ❖ How can we improve what we are doing within leadership education to encourage our youth to continue to assume leadership positions, positively transferring the skills that they have learned to life outside of 4-H?

#### Delimitations

Geographically, this study targeted the state of Texas' 4-H State Council. Within this group, the collection of data was delimited to 14 former council members and 1 former council advisor. Data collection was conducted from July 17, 2002 through December 2, 2002.

#### Limitations

This study was limited to former Texas State 4-H Council member in Texas. Consequently, some factors contributing to the motivation, learning styles, leadership life skills, and transfer of training elements, may be unique to only this group; therefore, these factors may not be generalized to other 4-H Councils, or 4-

H members, around the country. In addition, because a purposive sampling technique was used, unanticipated respondent bias may have resulted.

### Assumptions

It is assumed that the factors advocated by the former council members interviewed were representative of the individuals within the State 4-H Council program in Texas and that all personal examples, anecdotes, etc. were truthfully and factually recounted to the researcher.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

As this study began to unfold, it became clear that many different theories make up the experiences that encompass the preparation for and the year of travel, speeches, workshops, and conferences that make up a Texas State 4-H Council position. These young people take a journey as they prepare for and take on their council year. Undertaking this research, uncovering and reading the literature to better understand the Texas State 4-H Council and the experiences surrounding it, has been a journey. First, Cooperative Extension espouses that the 4-H program develops leadership and leadership life skills among its members (National 4-H Council, 2003). Specifically, research cites “holding an office” as one of the capstone leadership development experiences (Seevers & Dormody, 1995). Because of that, examining leadership, leadership education and development, and leadership life skills was important to this study to understand the basic groundwork, terminologies, and theories that underscore leadership. Once into the study, I observed several theories emerge that contributed to the State 4-H Council experience. In studying the theories of social learning and experiential learning, a picture began to take shape. That picture illustrated how those two theories work together as 4-H members prepare themselves to become state officers, and synthesize their 4-H experiences to better prepare them to be State 4-H Council members. In examining theories of motivation, the picture of why

young people begin the journey to become State 4-H Council members became more clear. I studied the essential elements of the transfer of training to understand how the young people used their previous years of training in preparation for becoming State 4-H Council members. I also needed an understanding of how they synthesized their council training and if they transferred that training to real world experiences. Finally, one of the most noted elements of the study was the element of teams. In studying the elements of teams and team dynamics, I gained a better understanding of what effect those elements had on the State 4-H Council experience and the transfer of training throughout an individual's 4-H career.

### Leadership

Like love, leadership is something everyone knows exists, but no one can precisely define (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Bennis and Nanus, eloquently put into words one of the hardest concepts for society to grasp. What is a leader? Do leaders receive training or are individuals born to be leaders? James MacGregor Burns (1978) says that leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth. He believed that there were at least 130 definitions of the word, even at the time. Du Brin (1995) noted that approximately 30,000 research articles, periodical articles, and books were written on the topic of leadership in the 20<sup>th</sup> century alone. As large as leadership seems to be, as many definitions as there are, can education come up with an agreed

upon set of skills or elements that make up leadership? For purposes of this study, we will adopt the definition adopted by Peter Northouse in *Leadership Theory and Practice*. “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2001, p.3). Having a clear definition of leadership, however, is not enough. To continue trying to understand the context of the study, it is important to understand how leadership development and education occurs, and how individuals come to learn and understand the concepts involved in the theories of leadership.

#### Leadership Development and Education

Kouzes and Posner (1987) note that leadership is an observable, learnable set of practices. If we accept this statement, we can define leadership as practice. We accept that we can teach it, as well. In the contemporary context, the subject of leadership requires learners to become adept at shaping and fulfilling not only their own aims, but those of their followers as well (Kaagan, 1998). Instrumental to leadership development is a wide range of aptitudes and capabilities, all of which affect a person’s interactions with co-workers, constituents or customers—personal qualities, moral commitments and management skills. The social setting of an organization, where leaders and followers attempt to work together to attain common goals, experiences the most direct effects of leadership development (Terry, 1993).



The last few years have seen an increasing interest in leadership development and education. First, the rapid change in business, technology, global communications, and in human values dictates the interest in leadership education. The world is changing fast. As change occurs, the world will demand leaders. Second, our society has lost confidence in the ability of science and technology to solve problems. Many times, instead of being the solution, individuals see science and technology as the cause of the problems. Finally, Cacioppe (1998) demonstrated that there is a need for leadership in organizations.

There are four dimensions to leadership education (Kaagan, 1998). Together they represent a useful way of fitting many complexities into a manageable frame by which to plan and evaluate leadership development programs. Those four dimensions include:

- *Who* should do leadership development?
- *When*, or within what period should it be done?
- *Where* should leadership development occur, or on whose turf should experience be organized?
- *How* should it unfold, or what materials and methods should be used to teach leadership?

First, *who* should be teaching leadership? Four decades ago, the answer would have been that university professors should teach leadership. In the last decade, however, consultants have become an established and significant part of teaching leadership because they can respond faster and more directly than can their academic counterparts. Next, *when* should leadership education occur? The

question continually arises whether or not teaching of leadership should occur in short bursts or over long periods. Kaagan (1998) believes that this is the first of the questions that leadership educators cannot separate from the rest. Time and timing are critical to the content and methodology when planning a program.

Kaagan (1998) also says that with more time, there can be greater impact if the learning challenges are the right ones and they are in the proper order.

Interspersing periods of instruction with periods of practice, stage-setting activities of just plain fun may be the best use of available time. Third, *where* should leadership education occur? Again, Kaagan (1998) believes that educators can only answer the question of place after answering the questions of content and methodology. Those who teach leadership should seek to fit place to purpose.

Finally, *what* and *how* should we conduct leadership education? The central concerns for those designing and doing leadership development are objectives, content, and methodology. These three are the wellsprings of the program. They determine the quality of the experiences that the participants have. Ultimately, the impact on participants, in terms of what they do in the workplace, stems from these. If the *what* and *how* are solid, they can actually overcome deficiencies in the *where* and *when*, and even the *who*. However, the reverse is not the case.

Undergraduate agricultural degree programs in land grant colleges throughout the United States identify leadership development as an important objective of their programs (Love & Yoder, 1989). The 4-H program, a precursor to many youth going into colleges of agriculture, is no different. Leadership

development has been, and continues to be, a major goal of most youth programs (Seevers & Dormody, 1995). Obviously, educators on two levels (secondary and higher education) believe that we, as educators, can teach leadership skills.

Research has shown that both sets of educators believe that the 4-H program does teach those skills. However, Cooperative Extension and 4-H take leadership development one step further by advocating that a specific skill set is learned within the larger context of leadership. To fully grasp the context of the study, an individual will need an understanding of what the term leadership life skills entails.

#### Leadership Life Skills Development

In 1992, it was estimated that 25% of our nation's youth engaged in high-risk activities- heavy alcohol, tobacco, or drug use, delinquency, and poor school performance or non-attendance (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992). An additional 25% were considered to be at a moderate risk level. Hoopfer (1981) believes that the number of youth exhibiting these kinds of behaviors points to a lack of skills necessary for adulthood- skills in working with others, understanding self, communicating, making decisions, and leadership. Boyd, et al., (1992) believed that these are the skills required by adults for everyday living and have been deemed leadership-life skills. These skills allow youth to better cope with their environment by making responsible decisions, having a better understanding of their own values, and being able to better communicate and get along with others.

The development of this set of skills is the cornerstone of 4-H youth development programming.

Miller (1976) conceptualized leadership life skills developed in the 4-H program into seven categories: decision making, relationships, learning, management, understanding self, group processes, and communications. Luft (1986) organized the leadership life skills into four conceptual domains of general leadership, speaking skills, group leadership skills and work related skills. Seevers, Dormody, and Clason (1995) adopted Miller's conceptualization for purposes of their life skills assessment and expanded the definition into the development of the life skills necessary to perform leadership functions in real life. For purposes of this research, I will also use the seven categories of the life skills conceptualized by Miller and the broader definition from Seevers, Dormody, and Clason.

There exists the perception that participating in a variety of activities enables members of the 4-H program to develop positive life skills. Seevers and Dormody (1995) found that a majority of 4-H members participated in many different leadership activities. Participation in 4-H leadership life skills activities was the greatest at the club level. However, researchers also found high participation in activities at the county/district level. This suggests that more 4-H members may be participating in a broader range of leadership development activities at a higher level of leadership. In an assessment of activities where 4-H members ranked the activities they believed allowed them the best opportunity to

acquire leadership life skills, four activities tied for the number one spot. Holding an office was the first of those four activities. Cantrell, Heinsohn, and Doebler (1989) found that perceived life skill development was positively related to general participation and leadership roles at the three succeeding levels of 4-H programming. At the “beyond county” level, 68% of 4-H members surveyed said they participated generally in activities and 17% said they were taking on leadership roles. In the same study, the authors found that leadership life skill development dramatically increased when 4-H members experienced leadership roles beyond the club level, positively affecting development in nine of the ten clusters surveyed (value development, interpersonal skills, citizenship development, communication skills, career development, agricultural skills, and home economics skills). Home economics skills were the only cluster identified as not having positive development.

Having an understanding of leadership, leadership education, and leadership life skills enables us to take the next step of the journey and begin to understand the motivation behind wanting to become a state officer.

### Theories of Motivation

What is student/learner motivation? This naturally has to do with a student’s desire to be a part of the learning process. However, it also concerns the reasons or goals that underlie their involvement or noninvolvement in activities. Although students may be equally motivated to undertake a task, the sources of

their motivation may differ (Lumsden, 1994). Students, who are intrinsically motivated, undertake an activity for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes. An extrinsically motivated student performs in order to obtain some reward or avoid some punishment external to the activity itself (Lepper, 1988).

According to Brophy (1986), motivation to learn is a competence acquired through general experience, but stimulated most directly through modeling, communication of expectations, and direct instruction or socialization by significant others (specifically parents and teachers). Several factors then will come together to shape a students' motivation to learn. A learner's home environment shapes the initial compilation of attitudes they develop towards learning. Once children start school, they begin to formulate their ideas and beliefs about related successes and failures. The sources where learners attribute their successes and failures have important implications for how well they approach and cope with learning situations. The beliefs that teachers have about teaching and learning, and the nature of expectations they hold for students, also exerts a powerful influence. Goals, policies, and procedures also interact with the learning environment and practices to affirm or alter students' beliefs and attitudes. Finally, developmental changes comprise the final strand of the motivational web.

Few educators would argue with the premise that student motivation is of key importance to learning or participating in activities. Motivation is of

particular importance to those who work closely with students. Although it is difficult to prescribe a one-size-fits-all approach to motivating students, research suggests that some general patterns hold true for a wide range of students (Anderman & Midgley, 1998). Three of those patterns are particularly important to this study.

The attribution theory holds that students' perceptions of their educational experiences generally influence their motivation more than the actual, objective reality of those experiences. For example, if there is a history of success in one particular area, research shows that it could lead a student to persist in that area. The converse is also true. If a student is experiencing failure, it is particularly difficult to sustain motivation. However, students who attribute their failure to factors out of their control are unlikely to hope for any improvement. In contrast, if students attribute their failure to a lack of skills, they are more likely to persist in the endeavor (Anderman & Midgley, 1998).

Goal theory focuses on two separate and distinct types of goals: task goals and ability goals. A task goal orientation suggests a belief that the purpose of achieving is personal improvement and understanding. Learners with this type of goal strategy focus on their own progress in mastering skills and knowledge and they define success on those terms. An ability goal orientation focuses on the learner appearing competent, often in comparison to others, and defining success accordingly (Anderman & Midgley, 1998).

Self-determination theory describes students as having three categories of needs: needing a sense of competence, of relatedness to others, and of autonomy. Competence involves understanding how to, and believing one can, achieve various outcomes. Relatedness involves developing satisfactory connections to others in one's social group. Autonomy involves initiating and regulating one's own actions. For young adolescents, with their increased cognitive ability and developing sense of identity, a sense of autonomy may be important. Students at this stage say that they want to be included in decision-making processes and to have some sense of control over their activities (Anderman & Midgley, 1998).

Motivation is not only key in the learning environment, but in the instructional design of learning materials as well. Developing life-long learners who are intrinsically motivated, display intellectual curiosity, find learning enjoyable, and continue to seek knowledge after their formal instruction has ended has always been a major goal of educators. Recent research focuses on the identification of effective techniques for enhancing instructional design (Small, 1997). Learning motivation researchers are applying some of the same theories and concepts of motivation found to be effective in industry to the development of motivational models that enhance the learning and development environment. The most important piece of motivational theory applied in this context is the expectancy-value theory.

In the expectancy-value theory, effort is the major measurable motivational outcome. For "effort" to occur, an individual must possess the two



necessary prerequisites: (1) the person must value the task and (2) the person must believe he or she can succeed at the task. Therefore, in an instructional situation, the teacher or advisor must present the learning task in a way that is engaging and meaningful to the student, and in a way that promotes positive expectations for the successful achievement of learning objectives. Small (1997), outlined the ARCS model of motivational design that identifies four essential elements, each made of three components, for motivational instruction: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction.

Attention is comprised of perceptual arousal (providing novelty, surprise, incongruity or uncertainty), inquiry arousal (stimulating curiosity by posing questions or problems to solve), and variability (incorporating a range of methods and media to meet students varying needs). Relevance is goal orientation (presenting the objectives and useful purpose of the instruction and specific methods for successful achievement), motive matching (match objectives to students needs and motives), and familiarity (presenting content in ways that are understandable and that are related to learners' experiences and values). Confidence includes learning requirements (informing students of learning and performance requirements and assessment criteria), success opportunities (providing challenging and meaningful opportunities for successful learning), and personal responsibility (linking learning success to student's personal efforts and abilities). Finally, satisfaction encompasses intrinsic reinforcement (encouraging and supporting intrinsic enjoyment of the learning experience), extrinsic rewards

(providing positive reinforcement and motivational feedback), and equity (maintain consistent standards and consequences for success) (Small, 1997).

It is not enough to understand what may motivate an individual to become a state officer. The next step of the journey is to understand how an individual synthesizes the information used to get them to the officer position, and the information available to them once in office.

### Social Learning Theory

Except for elementary reflexes, people are not equipped with inborn repertoires of behavior. They must learn them. Individuals can acquire new response patterns either through direct experience or observation (Bandura, 1977). Behavior is not a singular event or even pattern. Behavior is a function of varying and intertwining events that occur. Because of this unique make-up, it is necessary to look at patterns of learning, how people learn, rather than attempting to define whether a behavior is innate or learned.

The most basic mode of learning is one that is rooted in experiences and the actions thus produced. Through this process of behavior and differential reinforcement, or response consequences, individuals make decisions between successful or rewarded behaviors and behaviors that produce no consequences, or negative consequences (Bandura, 1977). This process serves several functions. First, the response consequences impart information. In the course of learning, people not only perform responses, but also notice the effects that they produce.

In this way, people learn which responses are appropriate in which settings. This information continues to build on previous experiences and serves as a guide for future action. Second, they serve as motivators through their incentive value. Anticipatory capabilities, or the abilities humans have to be able to anticipate consequences, enable humans to motivate themselves by prospective consequences, what they believe will be the outcomes of their behaviors. Past experiences will create expectations for behavior. In this case, certain actions will bring valued consequences while others will bring undesirable consequences. In this way, people anticipate foreseeable outcomes and can convert future consequences into current motivators for behavior. Third, concern has been raised with the response consequence method and strengthening automatic responses. While there has been a great deal of research in this particular area of generating automatic responses through consequence, it is generally believed that continued reinforcement of behaviors serves as a motivator, or as a way of regulating behaviors already learned (Bandura, 1977).

Learning would be hazardous if people were to rely solely on the effects of their own actions. It is fortunate then, that humans learn most of their behaviors through observing others and forming ideas of how new behaviors are performed. Later on, this information is recalled as a guide for action (Bandura, 1977). Modeling influences produce learning principally through their informative functions. Figure 1, demonstrates the four component processes that Bandura believes govern learning: attention, retention, motor reproduction, and

motivation. Any one of these components will be a determinant of adoption of behavior; therefore individuals' responses and adoptions will differ greatly (Bandura, 1977).

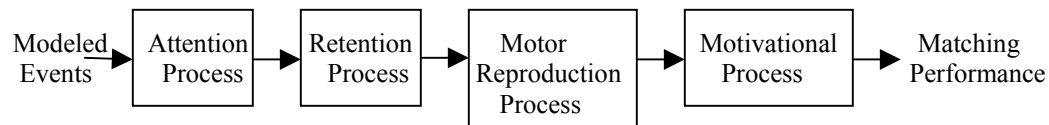


Figure 1. Bandura's Model of Social Learning. (Bandura, 1977).

Attentional processes determine what is selectively observed in the profusion of modeling influences to which a person is exposed and what is taken away from those exposures. A number of factors including observers' characteristics, features of the modeled activities, and the structural arrangement of human interactions, regulate the amount and types of observational experiences. Associational patterns are of clear importance. The people, with whom an individual regularly associates, delimit the types of behaviors repeatedly observed and, hence, learned most thoroughly. Within any social group, there will be those individuals who are likely to command greater attention than others. Modeled conduct varies in effectiveness. The value of behavior displayed by different models is therefore highly influential in determining which models individuals will observe and which models individuals will discard. The way in which the observation occurs is important. The most important example of this

modeling is television. Televised media has the ability to hold the attention of a greater group of individuals for a longer period. Finally, the nature of the behavior itself, its salience and complexity, will partially determine the rate of observational learning (Bandura, 1977).

People cannot be influenced by their observations of behavior if they cannot remember it. The retention process is a key piece to learning. Retention can be in images or verbal patterns. When an individual experiences long-term sensory stimulation, experiences turn into images that the individual can retrieve for reference. Verbal coding occurs more often than does image coding. Details of a specific route, for example, turn from an image to a verbal code of right and left turns. A great deal of information can be easily stored in this way. The final component of the retention process, then, is rehearsal. When individuals mentally or physically rehearse modeled behavior, they are less likely to forget them. First learning, then rehearsing the behavior in their mind, and then enacting the behavior physically, achieves the highest level of observational learning (Bandura, 1977).

The third component of modeling involves turning symbolic representations into appropriate actions. Behavioral enactment separates into cognitive organizations of responses as an individual organizes behavior patterns in their mind, the monitoring of those responses, and modification of behavior based on feedback (Bandura, 1977). First, responses are selected and organized at the cognitive level. Learners who possess secondary skills can easily apply these

skills to new knowledge and produce new patterns. If some of these secondary skills do not exist, the new patterns will be faulty. As learners demonstrate new patterns, they are rarely done accurately the first time. The learner cannot fully observe their own patterns, so they must rely on feedback from onlookers. Finally, individuals further refine behavior through self-corrections based on feedback from performances (Bandura, 1977).

Finally, social learning theory distinguishes between knowledge acquisition and knowledge performance because people do not enact everything that they learn. Individuals are more likely to adopt modeled behaviors if the consequence of the behaviors is positive or is something they value. In other words, behaviors that are considered positive or rewarding by an individual will more likely be adopted than those that are perceived to be negative, unrewarding, or have punishing effects (Bandura, 1977).

When dissecting this picture of the Texas State 4-H Council, social learning theory does not stand alone in terms of how people glean and synthesize information. In the case of this study, it worked in conjunction with experiential learning theory in a unique combination. One begins where the other leaves off. They combine to create a series of observations, experience, and reflections that enable the 4-H members to one day assume State 4-H Council positions.

## Experiential Learning Theory

Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning theory emphasizes the key role that experience plays in the learning process. Experiential learning offers a perspective on learning that integrates experience, perception, cognition, and behavior. Kolb (1984) describes the three most popular models whose commonalities make up the operational definition of experiential learning, the models of Lewin, Dewey, and Piaget. The researcher will also use that definition for purposes of this study.

The Lewinian model of experiential learning, is the most commonly used in higher education. In this model, a current experience is followed by collecting data on that experience (reflection). After reflection, a learner makes decisions on the reflections and then uses those decisions in subsequent experiences (Kolb, 1984). Learning is demonstrated by a four-stage cycle in this case, as shown in Figure 2. The emphasis placed on concrete experience to validate and test abstract concepts, and the feedback processes that provides the basis for goal-direction action, are the two aspects of the Lewinian model that set it apart from others like it.

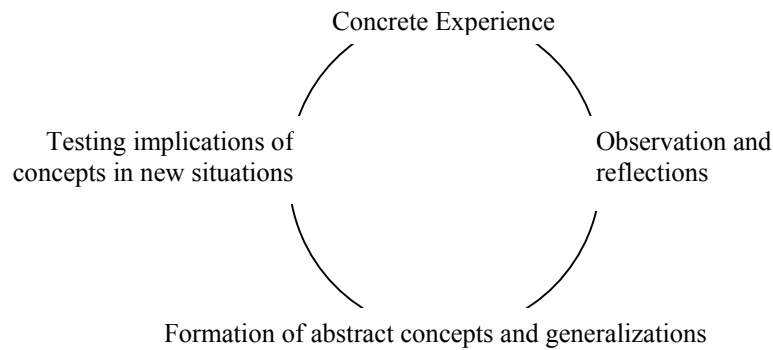


Figure 2. Lewinian Model of Experiential Learning. (Kolb, 1984).

John Dewey's model is similar to the Lewinian model except that Dewey places more emphasis on the developmental nature of learning by describing how learning transforms the impulses, feelings, and desires of concrete experiences into higher order purposeful action (Kolb, 1984). Instead of just one cycle of experience, the Dewey model, (Figure 3), is an interlocking series of circles that continually show the interactions of impulse, observation, knowledge, and judgment to eventually end in an individuals' behavioral purpose (Kolb, 1984).





world through inductive powers happen at this level. Because of this furtherance of independence, the individual becomes less accommodative and more assimilative in their processes (Kolb, 1984). Finally, the fourth stage comes with the move from symbolic processes based on concrete operations to the symbolic processes of representational logic, as shown in Figure 4. An individual will return to a more active orientation modified by the development of reflective and abstract power developed earlier. An individual develops possible implications of theories and proceeds to experimentally test which one is true. At this point, the style is convergent, in contrast to the individual in the previous stage (Kolb, 1984).

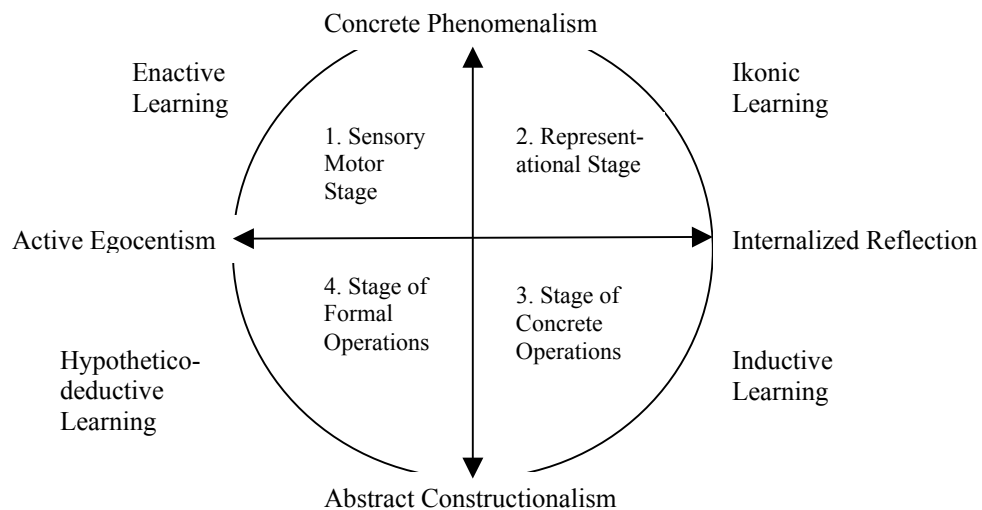


Figure 4. Piaget's Model of Experiential Learning. (Kolb, 1984).

Experiential learning is constructed this way: (1) learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes; (2) learning is a continuous process grounded in experience; (3) the process of learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed models of adaptation to the world; (4) learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world; (5) learning involves transactions between the person and the environment; and (6) learning is the process of creating knowledge (Kolb, 1984).

Does experiential learning work? Cantor (1997) suggests that experiential learning is an essential instructional component for several reasons. Within higher education, faculty members are concerned with optimizing the chances for their students to more easily enter their chosen professions or meet their goals. Next, learners are becoming more complex, demanding more varied methods of learning. Many people document the benefits of experiential learning for career decision-making and for personal development (Cantor, 1997). Miller (2001) suggests that the “shrinking world,” the rapid rate of change and the exponential growth in knowledge, necessitates that all of us must learn in order to survive. True understanding and learning how to learn, then, are essential constructs to the preparation of the educated person. People make sense of things by constructing meanings. As people develop levels of constructed meanings, those meanings become knowledge structures. Since peoples’ knowledge greatly influences all aspects of their lives, prior knowledge influences new learning. Experiential learning can provide solid structures within the mind of the individual.

What does this mean for the 4-H youth development program? Learning by doing is one of the main reasons 4-H is recognized and respected in the field of informal youth education. 4-H members and leaders have traditionally been encouraged to engage in their learning experiences (Woffinden & Packham, 2001).

The journey is not complete, however, with learning the information and being prepared to take on the council position. We must also understand the elements that are essential in individuals transferring the training they receive into their job situations and into life beyond the council.

#### Training and the Transfer of Training or Skills

According to Donovan, Hannigan, and Crowe (2001), if a training program is to be successful, a trainer must implement three steps. First, the identification of needs is necessary so that trainers are aware of what training is required. Second, an analysis of the organization's ability to identify the issues at the heart of the training as well as issues that will affect the ability of the organization to exploit new skills learned in the training is needed to trouble shoot problems before they arise. The third is an evaluation of the training. This evaluation ensures that trainers apply sufficient resources to implement and to integrate the training program

Axtell, Maitlis, and Yearta (1997) discuss essential elements in the evaluation of training in terms of trainee transfer. These elements can be

classified into the following categories: relevance or usefulness of the training to the students' job or task, the principles of learning used, characteristics of the learner (self-efficacy, motivation, job involvement, ability), and managerial support (control or autonomy available on the job, climate).

Training can obviously provide a variety of benefits for both the organization and for the participants. The parent organization providing the training benefits through improved employee performance and increased productivity. Trainees benefit through both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards associated with new skill development and improved performance. Elangovan and Karakowsky (1999) defined transfer of training as the generalization of the skills acquired during the training phase to the work environment and the maintenance of these acquired skills over time. Further, they defined the positive transfer of training as the extent to which trainees apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in the training context to the job. They also identified key trainee and environmental factors that influence the effectiveness of the transfer of training.

Elangovan and Karakowsky's (1999) model divides trainee factors that affect the transfer of skills into two categories: motivation and ability. Noe (1986) defined motivation to transfer skills as the trainees' desire to use the knowledge and skills mastered in the training and development program on the job. This is further divided into five critical elements:

- *Perceived relevance of training* - Does the trainee believe that the training is relevant or important? The more important the training is perceived, the greater the chance that skills will be transferred.
- *Choice in attending training* - Do the trainees have the choice to attend the training? Those offered the choice to attend programs may develop greater appreciation for the information, thus motivation to learn would increase, thereby improving the chances that the trainees transfer the training.
- *Outcome expectancies* - Do the trainees believe that if they learn and use the new skills that it will produce the expected outcomes (better performances, etc.)? The clearer that this link between training and outcomes seems to the trainee, the greater the motivation they will have to transfer the training.
- *Self-efficacy* - Does the trainee believe that they can accomplish the goals of the training? Numerous studies have shown that by enhancing a trainee's self-efficacy, the trainer also increases the odds for a positive transfer of the training.
- *Job involvement* - The degree to which a trainee is involved in their job will affect the transfer of the training.

Noe's (1986) other category of motivation factors, ability related factors, affect the ability of the trainee to transfer training. Those factors can be broken into two main elements:

- *Knowledge acquisition* - Employees who learn and retain the skills and knowledge offered by the training program are better prepared and able to transfer the training than those whose knowledge is low.
- *Situation identification* - The generalizability and application of the training to an actual job is a major player in the transfer; therefore, requiring that a trainee identify or recognize situations where the new skills are relevant and useful.

Environmental factors refer to various aspects in the employees' work environment, which either facilitates or impedes effective transfer of training.

Elangovan and Karakowsky (1999) advocate two categories of environmental factors to transference of skills: job related and organization related factors.

Job related factors are those that pertain to a specific job and its setting.

Those vary from situation to situation; however, major elements are as follows:

- *Job requirements* - The job demands or requirements play a major role in determining the effectiveness of the transfer of training. Someone who has undergone training will transfer skills only if the opportunity arises where it is appropriate to do so, and the trainee then recognizes that situation.
- *Norms and group pressure* - Conformance to standards and pressure will affect the transfer of skills. Even a trainee who has acquired the skills necessary from training may not transfer the training if pressure from his or her group does not allow it.

Organizational factors in contrast to the more specific job related factors, apply to the whole organization, and are broken down into two elements:

- *Reward systems*- If the application of newly acquired skills is noticed and recognized, the trainees will be more inclined to transfer knowledge than if the transfer of skills is overlooked.
- *Organizational culture*- An organizational culture that fosters employee development, favors improvement/progress, and encourages employee initiatives will have a positive impact on the transfer of new skills. However, if the organizational culture is such that development, progress, and initiative are not norms, that will reduce the possibility of transfer of skills.

Finally, team dynamics is the last leg of the journey. Team dynamics affects an individual's entire experience, shaping perspective and influencing the transfer of training and skills.

## Teams and Team Dynamics

Kipp and Kipp (2000) say that dysfunctional teams or groups often unwittingly bar the door to change. They handle the inevitable conflicts badly (or not at all), or conduct themselves according to unwritten rules that limit their effectiveness and waste time. Members beat each other over differences in mindset and style. They tacitly consent not to learn from their collective experiences for the sake of keeping peace or staying safe. Alternately, everyone speaks his or her mind, but no one ever changes it.

Research imparts methods and means to aid in the successful development of teams. Tuckman and Jensen (1977) espouse that teams must go through stages in development in order to maximize their potential and become a successful unit. The second theory is from Kipp and Kipp (2000) who took research and knowledge of teams and developed a checklist to aid in the successful development of a team. In understanding the stages teams pass through in their development, and a few elements that make up a successful team, we can better understand and analyze the Texas State 4-H Council team, and the impact it has on the young people that are members.

Tuckman and Jensen (1977) identified the developmental stages that teams go through. While research has yet to confirm that these stages are universal or sequential in nature, practice has shown that knowing these stages is helpful in understanding what is happening in a team, why it is happening, and what to do next. Tuckman and Jensen's model consists of five stages. However,



team development must be thought of as a continuously changing process, there is nothing to say that while an established team is in stage four, an event could occur to move the team back to stage one or two. Sometimes, teams pass easily from one stage to another. Other times, teams may stall at a phase and have problems moving on to the next step in development. Each stage of development has its own characteristics with distinct forms of leadership and member behavior. Those stages are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Tuckman & Jensen Team Development Stages. (Tuckman & Jensen 1977)

Stage of Development	Team Activities:
Forming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get Acquainted</li> <li>• Test Boundaries</li> <li>• Task Define</li> <li>• Initial Goal Setting</li> <li>• Rules Established</li> </ul>
Storming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differences Emerge</li> <li>• Conflict</li> <li>• Task Related Interactions</li> </ul>
Norming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues Are Conflicted</li> <li>• Spirit of Cooperation</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Group Unity and Culture Established</li> </ul>
Performing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group Self-Management</li> <li>• Autonomy</li> <li>• Team Unity</li> <li>• Problem Solving</li> </ul>
Reforming/Adjourning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating the Project</li> <li>• Evaluating the Process</li> </ul>

Kipp and Kipp (2000) developed a checklist to aid in the successful building of a team. First, authenticity is key to team development. Authenticity is the willingness to speak one's mind clearly and to support others in doing the same. Also key, is the willingness for every team member to bring a "whole person" to work, developing the capacity to be vulnerable with one another. Once teams have developed these two traits, Kipp and Kipp make an additional six-component list that teams can use when examining their overall relative "health" and functionality:

- *Goals* - what constitutes "success" for us in a particular situation and overall?
- *Roles* - what are our expectations and what do we expect of each other?
- *Rules* - what are our agreements on decision-making, work ethic, and follow-through...?
- *Relationships* - how do we handle conflict, ambiguity, rumor, secrecy, trust...?
- *Results* - how do we determine performance day to day; what are our dials?
- *Rewards* - what is in it for us individually and collectively? Are we OK with that?

Team building exercises range from projective tests to hot tubs and folk songs (Kipp & Kipp, 2000). Without a doubt, groups can gain a great deal from team building, if the team building exercises actually intersect with the team's issues and the leader's intent. Otherwise, they end up looking like a parlor game

– entertaining, but unlikely to change anything. Experience suggests that there are four good reasons for teambuilding, each of which calls for a very different strategy:

- New group formation and improved relationships- self disclosure exercises; team challenges; temperament or style profiles
- Problems in group dynamics- conflict management; reflective listening; communication; community building
- Barriers to goal attainment- role definition; decision protocols; systems thinking
- Resolution of goals and game plan- business strategy; management philosophy; team charter development

There are no absolutes where organizational behavior is concerned. However, Kipp and Kipp (2000) have developed a list of ideas that are helpful when thinking about enhancing the effectiveness of any team:

- Teams are not well served by “psychotherapizing” individual members- publicly or one by one. Serial executive coaching is not teambuilding
- Removing bad actors, while sometimes long overdue, seldom alters group dynamics. It just creates a vacancy.
- Time together in and of itself changes nothing. Teams that have been together for years are no more effective than when they started unless they have worked on how they work.
- Nothing gets better without follow-up- behavioral contracts; periodic interventions; process checks and the like
- There is no substitute for emotional maturity.

Leadership development in the 4-H program and the transfer of training has been studied throughout the last five decades. The nature of this study will add to what is known about leadership development in 4-H members and how those members transfer their training.

This review of literature studied the various components of leadership, learning theory, and training transfer. Much is known about each of these theories, but little is known about how they work in conjunction to shape the experiences young people have as members of the Texas State 4-H Council. Because of the nature of the target group and what we know about training transfer and leadership development, the researcher made the decision to use qualitative methods to aid in the discovery of some of those links.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### Research Design

Qualitative research is as much a point of view as it is a set of methods. Knowledge is socially constructed and the foundation on which researchers build qualitative research. Things known are a product of the time and place in which you exist. The qualitative framework also embraces the notion that participants, both interviewer and interviewee, influence and are influenced by data collection and analysis. Credible qualitative inquiry depends on creating categories of meaning firmly based in the social realities of study participants.

#### Data Collection

##### *Sampling Procedures*

Purposive sampling is central to naturalistic inquiry. Erlandson, et al. (1993) say that random or representative sampling is not preferred when doing naturalistic inquiry because the researcher's major concern is not to generalize the findings of the study to broad population or universe, but to maximize discovery of the heterogeneous patterns and problems that occur in the particular context under study. Purposive sampling increases the range of data exposed and maximizes the researcher's ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate account of contextual conditions and cultural norms. The researcher used purposive sampling, a technique that intentionally seeks out participants/data

sources because of certain qualities, to find participants who were willing to discuss their experiences as State 4-H Council members. The names of participants for this study were from personal knowledge; those students in the classes taught by the researcher who identified themselves as former council members. From those individuals in the first, convenient, purposive sample, the researcher employed a snowball sampling method, using the knowledge of the first group to find the second group (Babbie, 2001). In other words, the first group identified the members of the second group.

Another aspect of purposive sampling is sample size. Within naturalistic inquiry, there is no concrete rule for sample size. The key is to look more for quality than quantity, more for information richness than information volume (Erlandson, et al., 1993). Patton (1990) tells us:

In the end, sampling size adequacy, like all aspects of research, is subject to peer review, consensual validation, and judgment. What is crucial is that the sampling procedures and decisions be fully described, explained, and justified so that information users and peer reviewers have the appropriate context for judging the sample.

This study focused on 15 individuals who had participated in the Texas State 4-H Council program.

### *Collection Methods*

The researcher used several qualitative methods within the scope of this study to gather data. Those methods included interviews, participant observation, focus groups, and document analysis.

### *Interviews*

Dexter (1970) describes interviews as conversations with a purpose. Lincoln and Guba (1985) say that interviews allow researchers and respondents to move back and forth in time; to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future. Interviews also help the researcher to understand and put into a larger context the interpersonal, social, and cultural aspects of the environment (Erlandson, et al., 1993).

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews were scheduled and conducted. Participation in these interviews was voluntary. The researcher informed each individual of their rights as human subjects in social science research and each participant signed a consent form acknowledging their voluntary participation. The researcher coded all interviews to retain confidentiality. The codes for this project include the type of data collection method used (I for interview), gender of interviewee (F or M), and the type of geographic area in which they were raised (R for rural, >50K for town over 50,000 people, and <50K for town under 50,000 people).

### *Participant Observations*

Participant observation offers a researcher the rare opportunity to observe the participants in their element, on their “turf”. It gives any researcher the opportunity to see, first hand, the reality of what their subjects experience everyday. In the case of this study, the participant observation occurred as the

researcher conversed with and interviewed each subject one on one. The researcher had the opportunity to see the skills and the learning theories discussed in chapter two, first hand.

### *Document Analysis*

Documentation served as the final form of data collection. Documents are useful for several reasons. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), documents provide a stability of information, contextual relevance, richness of information, natural language of the setting, and are non reactive. The researcher used handbooks, training manuals, and other similar materials for informational purposes, and to grasp the time and place within which the officers work.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the traditional methods described by Lincoln and Guba in *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985). These methods allowed the researcher the opportunity to analyze data throughout the entire research process, not just at the conclusion. The researcher continually refined the research process, coming ever closer to the research goals. More importantly, using these methods brought the researcher nearer to an understanding of the subjects involved in the research and of the research itself. This method allowed for constant improvement and validation.



Lincoln and Guba (1985) adopted the Glaser and Strauss (1967) constant comparative method for use in naturalistic inquiry. Lincoln and Guba believe that by using this method, the researcher is able to develop a construct of the reality in which they are studying. The researcher's use of this method followed that adaptation and is outlined below.

**Unitization of Data** - Interview transcripts were "unitized" and printed onto 4" x 6" index cards. A unit is any piece of information that an individual can clearly understand and that makes sense when it stands alone. The researcher coded all index cards to correspond with the appropriate interview code for audit purposes.

**Categorization of Units** - During this stage, the researcher sorted the data cards into categories or themes using the Glaser and Strauss (1967) constant comparative method. This method allowed the researcher to compare units of data with other units before putting them into similar categories based on semantics or other rules established for inclusion in those categories. Eventually, categories or themes emerged from constant contact with the data. The researcher used Post-It Notes to signify the "title" of the categories as they shifted and changed. As the name of the method implies, these categories shifted and changed accordingly.

**Merging Categories** - This is the phase where stronger categories emerged and become more articulate. There was less movement between categories and there were fewer shifts in themes.

Defining the Construction - Here, the researcher reduced the remaining categories into the salient themes that became the final construct. Some of the categories were discarded completely or dissolved into other remaining categories during this phase.

Journaling - This process occurred throughout the research as the researcher kept a methodological journal, chronicling the decisions and situations with the research process itself. The researcher kept a second, reflexive journal as well. This allowed the researcher to keep in constant contact with the changes and growth of the primary research instrument- the researcher herself.

#### Reporting Mode

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that a significant study report should include “thick description” of the context and process observed, discussions of salencies identified at the site, outcomes or lessons learned, and a thorough description of the final, research methods as they unfolded. This description includes a discussion of the validity or trustworthiness criteria employed.

The researcher reported the information, findings, and conclusions in a format to provide an interpretation of the “stories” of the youth that lead the 4-H program and a representation of what the former state officers believed were their experiences as officers, and the transfer of their skills. The study was an evaluative tool. The researcher provided the strengths and weaknesses of the

leadership component of the state officer program and offered suggestions on the improvement of the training these young people receive.

### Ensuring Trustworthiness- Quality Criteria

A researcher should plan steps for ensuring that they conduct quality research from the outset of the study. Establishing trustworthiness enables the researcher to claim methodological soundness. However, it is not enough that the qualitative researcher use techniques grounded in the traditional quantitative paradigm, it is essential for the researcher to go beyond the traditional and use those criteria that stem from naturalistic inquiry itself (Erlandson, et al., 1993).

#### *Credibility*

Qualitative researchers use the term credibility in establishing the truth-value in a naturalistic study. Methods for establishing credibility include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling. In this study, the researcher established credibility through persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling.

A researcher using persistent observation actively seeks out sources of data identified by the researcher's own emergent design. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), persistent observation provides a study with depth. Persistent observation helps a researcher sort out the relevancies from the irrelevancies and

determine when the atypical case is important. In the case of this study, persistent observation occurred throughout the interview processes. The researcher gave full attention to the interview, and followed up on areas where opinion and thoughts may have diverged from the majority.

Triangulation leads to credibility by using different or multiple sources of data, methods, investigators, or theories. In this case, the researcher used different sources of data (15 alumni of the program from different periods of time, and an advisor of the program) and methods (observations, interviews, and documents used in the training of state officers). The researcher used all of these data sources and methods in attempting to achieve a high degree of convergence. The convergence attained in this manner never resulted in data reduction but in an expansion of meaning through overlapping, compatible constructions emanating from differing vantage points (Erlandson, et al., 1993).

Peer debriefing lends credibility to a study because it allows a peer of the researcher, who is a professional outside of the research context, but has some idea of the study, to review the findings of the researcher. Findings reviewed in a peer debriefing may include initial hypothesis, emerging themes or categories, and the researcher's own ideas and conceptualizations of what is going on in the study. The peer debriefer engages the researcher almost in a devil's advocate manner, asking questions, testing theories, and providing alternate explanations for the phenomenon occurring. The sessions also allow the researcher to vent any frustrations that may cloud the research and analysis of data. The debriefing

session includes a discussion of the emerging research design, and a written memo of themes is prepared for the debriefer's review. Also, at the end of the peer debrief a written reflexive paper is prepared for the audit trail. In this study, the peer debriefers were members of the researcher's graduate committee. Throughout the research process, the researcher met with the debriefers to check progress of the research, and discuss themes and hypothesis. At each of these sessions, a memo was prepared to update the debriefer(s) on the research as well as categories that had emerged. At the final peer debrief, ways and methods of reporting the data were discussed in an effort to "tease out" the most effective way to report the findings of this study.

Member checking, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is the most important step in establishing credibility. Member checking is conducted formally and informally throughout the research process. Five of the most common ways to conduct member checking are: 1) at the end of an interview by summarizing the data and allowing the respondent to immediately correct errors of fact or challenge interpretations; 2) in interviews by verifying interpretations and data gathered at previous interviews; 3) in informal conversations with members of the organization; 4) by furnishing copies of various parts of the inquiry reports to various stake holding groups and asking for a written or oral commentary on the contents; and 5) prior to submission of the final review, copies of the entire report should be furnished to a review panel of respondents and other persons in the setting to be studied. In this case, member checking was done in

four of the five ways. At the end of each interview, the researcher summarized the findings in order for respondents to immediately review and comment on the interpretation of facts. Interview protocols changed as needed to include the follow-up of material, enabling the researcher to member check data in the first interviews with subsequent interviews. The researcher held informal conversations with members of the organization that allowed the researcher to member check the data. Finally, upon completion of transcriptions of the interviews, the researcher furnished each respondent with a copy for scrutiny and maintenance of editing control. Because of the small sample size and the level of familiarity between some of the interviewees, the researcher omitted the panel of review to maintain confidentiality.

Finally, the reflexive journal provides not only for credibility, but also for transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. The reflexive journal entries should contain information about the researcher, including reasons for methodological decisions, schedule and logistics, and insights into the research itself. How often the researcher should write in the reflexive journal varies depending on to whom the researcher listens; anywhere from daily to monthly can be sufficient. The journal then becomes a part of the audit trail. In the case of this study, journal entries were written from two to three times weekly to twice a month, depending on the schedule of the research. In other words, when things were hectic and interviews were happening two to three times per week, the researcher journaled two to three times per week. As the schedule of

the research wound down into the writing stage, the journal entries became less frequent.

### *Transferability*

To establish the applicability of the research, qualitative researchers use the word transferability. Methods to establish transferability include thick description, purposive sample, and reflexive journaling. In this study, the researcher used all three of the aforementioned methods to establish transferability.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the description used in reporting must specify everything that the reader may need to know in order to understand the findings of the study. To make sure the researcher has all of the necessary tools to write thick description, they must use all of the senses when collecting data. When reading a description, the reader should be able to get a feel for what it is like to be in the surroundings described. While the criteria for what goes into thick description is still undefined, Lincoln and Guba (1985) say that to offset the problem of what to put into the description, a researcher should use the widest array of information for inclusion in the description through purposive sampling.

In the case of this study, the researcher used thick description in the reporting of respondent's thoughts and ideas relative to the research questions. This gives voice to each of the individuals interviewed, as well as provides the reader insight into the organization as a whole.

Purposive sampling as previously discussed, is the method of sampling that allows a researcher to include the widest range of information. Divergent views are not suppressed, but included to give the description the richest context. By using purposive samples, the researcher fills in the gaps in information and focuses on insights to the point of redundancy in information. Purposive sampling was used for this study to select individuals who were members of the Texas State 4-H Council, and who were willing to discuss their experiences. From the first purposive sample, others were identified who had both similar and divergent views.

### *Dependability*

When establishing the consistency of the research, qualitative researchers use the word dependability. A researcher establishes dependability in a qualitative research study through the dependability audit and reflexive journaling. In this study, the researcher used both methods to establish dependability.

The audit trail leads to dependability and confirmability by allowing an auditor to determine the trustworthiness of the study (Erlanson, et al., 1993). It is for this reason that the researcher keeps adequate records throughout the research process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) give six areas where notes should be kept for purposes of an audit. Those six categories are: 1) raw data (interview guides, notes, documents), 2) data reduction and analysis products (3x5 cards, peer



debriefing notes), 3) data reconstruction and synthesis products (grounded theory and data analysis sheets, reports), 4) process notes (journals), 5) materials relating to intentions and dispositions (inquiry proposal, journal, peer debriefing notes), and 6) information relative to any instrument development.

In the case of this study, all six of the categories of information were relevant. The researcher holds this information in a locked filing cabinet in her home. Section one contains the interview protocol, notes, and 4-H training documents. Section two consists of all of the 4x6-unitized cards and notes from each peer debriefing session including thoughts and future directions. Section three includes all peer debriefing memos and notes from data categorizing sessions. Section four contains journal entries. Section five contains the researcher's graduate research proposal, more journal entries, and peer debriefing notes. Section six consists all of the research and journal articles pertaining to the research proposal and interview protocol.

### *Confirmability*

Qualitative researchers use the word confirmability when describing ways to establish the component of neutrality. Methods to establish confirmability include the confirmability audit and the reflexive journal. The researchers used both methods in this study to establish confirmability.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

#### Context

What is the Texas State 4-H Council? The council is a body of young people elected to fill the highest positions that members can hold at the state level in the 4-H organization. The council's numbers vary depending on the year. If it is a State 4-H Congress year, more young people participate on the Council. At any given time, there are approximately 34 youth (11, personal communication, July 17, 2002). Their job is to be the leaders of the state, guiding, and being role models for younger members and peers alike. To arrive at the State 4-H Council they all follow a path. While the beginning of the path may be different because they take different projects and participate in different kinds of 4-H activities, the final steps are very similar. First, delegates (other than the delegates at large who are 4-H members elected specifically to ensure ethnic minority representation on the council) are almost exclusively the president and first vice president of their respective districts (districts consist of 20-24 counties). They have the similar experiences of attending camps and conferences, and similar levels of involvement in the 4-H program throughout their previous years, but specifically their last few. Finally, delegates have an early understanding and recognition of the State 4-H Council officers. In the last few years, they become especially perceptive to the "ins and outs" of the job.

Delegates to council receive many hours of training throughout their careers, as well as during the year that they are officers. The researcher based this study on Seevers and Dormody's (1995) study that espoused being a state officer was one of the best ways to develop leadership life skills. My curiosity about what happens to those skills when these young people leave their posts was also a motivating factor. This research began as a study on the transfer of training. As the study unfolded, the researcher realized that there was more to this State 4-H Council phenomenon than simply the training or the transfer of training. This was a story that needed to include components of overall perception, motivation, learning styles, and team dynamics. We needed to examine how each of these components influences the young people on the council, their perceptions and recollections of the experience, and how these issues influence their final transfer of training. The following report will discuss the similarities and differences in the experiences of the 4-H Council members, specifically in reference to the six research questions. Quotes and excerpts from each of the interviews further illustrate concepts. Those research questions, again, are:

- ❖ What role does motivation play throughout the Texas State 4-H Council experience?
- ❖ What path do young people follow to gain State 4-H Council positions? Is it similar to or different from their peers on the council? What role do learning theories play in the scenario?
- ❖ What leadership skills do state officers gain during their terms in office?

- ❖ What paths do the young people who have been state officers follow after their term is completed?
- ❖ What happens to the leadership skills that youth attain during their term as an officer, after that term is over? Do the council members transfer the skills they learn?
- ❖ How can we improve what we are doing within leadership education to encourage our youth to continue to assume leadership positions, positively transferring the skills that they have learned to life outside of 4-H?

#### Research Question One

*What role does motivation play throughout the Texas State 4-H Council experience?*

“I remember like it was yesterday being that little kid and looking up and seeing that green jacket. It meant so much to me and I wanted it so badly.” (I1.F.R.5)

Motivation plays a key role in any learning experience, and the Texas State 4-H Council is no different. Motivation affects the underlying factors in participating or not participating in activities, the extent of an individual’s learning, and the transfer of skills learned in one forum to another. This research found several key examples of the basic principles and theories of motivation and motivation patterns at work. It also discovered how those patterns of motivation affected the preparation of these youth who become State 4-H Council members, and their activities after leaving 4-H.

Extrinsically motivated individuals perform in order to receive some kind of award or avoid punishment. Data collected in this study showed that several of the Texas State 4-H Council members interviewed demonstrated behaviors indicating they were extrinsically motivated, particularly by rewards. Council members mentioned that advisors used watches, briefcases, and notebooks as motivators for positive performance. Twelve of the fifteen members interviewed specifically mentioned being motivated by their desire to wear the green jacket that symbolizes membership on the State 4-H Council and the prestige that comes with that membership (I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I8, I9, I10, I12, I13, I14, I15). “I had worked nine years for this chance. If you are an active 4-H member you look forward to that opportunity and the chance to wear the green jacket” (I8.F.<50K.5). “You know as a kid, you always see the green jackets and you want to be one of those people” (I4.F.>50K.1). Also mentioned by several of the members was the desire to join the Council in order to reap the benefits associated with being a council member not afforded to other 4-H members. These benefits included the opportunities to attend training, networking opportunities, and scholarships (I1, I2, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I10, I13, I14). “Honestly, I think that it was seeing the end result in my mind. I could see that it {State 4-H Council} was going to get me out of {hometown} and take me to college” (I2.F.R.4).

Intrinsically motivated individuals undertake an activity for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides and the feelings of accomplishment it evokes. This study found that the number of intrinsically motivated individuals to be much

lower among this particular group. Intrinsically motivated council members talked about spreading a message, getting members more involved in the 4-H program, and finding new members with whom to share the 4-H experience (I1, I3, I5, I8, I9). “I thrived in picking up the wall flowers. I wanted to get those people involved and feeling good about themselves and 4-H. That is really what I wanted to do with my green jacket” (I9.F.10K.2). “...but I was still excited to be part of the group and go out and give people my message, and make a difference” (I3.F.R.2).

Several factors motivate a student to learn. A learner’s home environment, sources, or areas where learners attribute success and failure, beliefs of teachers/mentors, goals and procedures of an organization, and developmental changes all shape a student’s motivation to learn. This study discovered several members of the Texas State 4-H Council that were interviewed had experienced these factors and saw the connection between these factors and their levels of motivation.

A learner’s home environment often encompasses the parents. Ten of the individuals interviewed described their parents contributing to their motivation and well being (I1, I2, I3, I4, I7, I8, I9, I10, I13, I14). “My mom was a huge motivator too. She really was with me all of the time and went everywhere with me ... and so she kept me up a lot too” (I2.F.R.4). The sources where learners attribute success and failure were the second factors that influence a student's motivation to learn. While the areas where council members attribute success

differ between individuals, all mentioned areas where they achieved success while in the performance of their council duties (I1-I15). A mentor's belief about teaching and learning is another component that aids in students' motivation to learn. The nature of the expectations that mentors hold for students had an affect on student motivation levels. Council members differed in their perception of the council advisors' expectations. Six of the fifteen council members interviewed felt that the council advisors made their expectations clear (I1, I2, I4, I9, I10, I11). "I wasn't confident in necessarily everything, but I knew what the expectations were of all of us" (I11.F.R.1). Seven council members felt like the expectations of the advisors were unclear (I3, I5, I6, I7, I8, I13, I14). "They {advisors} don't give you very much direction, I mean they give you some, and they help you when you ask, but it {our purpose} still seemed to me a little bit out there" (I3.F.R.2).

While there is no tried and true method of motivating all students using one model, several models or patterns can be effective in motivating a variety of students in different settings. There are three major patterns of motivation under which individuals fall. The Texas State 4-H Council members interviewed all discussed their individual motivations to become a part of the group, as well as what motivated them throughout their terms. In doing so, they shared patterns of motivation that worked for them and their individual preferences. This research showed that members of the Texas 4-H Council demonstrated dominance in all three of the motivation theory patterns (attribution, goal, and self-determination).

The attribution theory holds that the students' perception of their educational experiences influences their motivation more than the actual objective reality of those experiences (Anderman & Midgley, 1998). In other words, when students experience success, they will be motivated to continue in their endeavors. Conversely, if they experience failure, they will be less likely to stay motivated. "I knew that I could do the work, and I could communicate effectively and speak well and so I felt like I didn't have to work very hard at the training part, and I could just be everyone's steadiness. I got better at that the whole year because of who I worked with" (I2.F.R.3). This research revealed that only four of the council members experienced what they perceived as continued success that helped them stay motivated throughout their term (I2, I4, I10, I11).

Goal theory separates goals into two categories: task goals that focus on the belief that achieving is personal improvement, and ability goals that focus on the learner appearing competent, in comparison to others (Anderman & Midgley, 1998). This research found only a four council members that followed this pattern of motivation (I1, I6, I8, I9). "We didn't want people to think of us as the ones who got in trouble or were slackers or whatever. I think that we also wanted to look good when we were in front of everybody" (I1.F.R.2)

Self-determination theory describes students as having three categories of needs: the need for a sense of competence, the need for relatedness to others, and the need for autonomy (Anderman & Midgley, 1998). Based on their responses,



most council members demonstrated a proclivity for the self-determination theory of motivation.

Having a sense of competence means that an individual understands how to and believes they can achieve their desired outcome. Two-thirds of the council members expressed feelings of competence and the need for competence (I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I10, I11, I12). “You know most people had been involved for a long time in 4-H and so at this level you already had to have the skills they {trainers} were teaching you” (I5.M. >50K.1). “I went through lots of preparation to get that role as well. I was ready for that year in a lot of ways” (I7.M.<50K.1).

Relatedness to others involves developing satisfactory connections to others in your social group. All of the individuals interviewed expressed a desire for positive relatedness with their group and experiencing positive relations with their peers on the council (I1-I15). “{I walked away with} friendships that will last a lifetime. A lot of the people I was on council with are good friends, and have gotten to be better friends over the years (I8.F.<50K.6).

Finally, one defines autonomy as initiating and regulating one’s own actions. This could be making one’s own decisions or desiring to have an impact on others. Almost one-half of the members talked about needing a feeling of autonomy throughout their council year (I3, I4, I6, I7, I8, I10, I11). “Texas has a great 4-H system, but it’s foolproof because kids are never given a chance to {make decisions} fail and learn because the adults are doing all of the work”

(I7.M.>50K.1). “They {advisors} did a lot of the organizational stuff that students could have done but didn’t. It was like all of the details were done by her {advisor} and if given the chance I think we could have done some of that stuff”  
 (I4.F.>50K.4).

### Research Question Two

*What path do young people follow to gain State 4-H Council positions? Is it similar or different to their peers also on the council? What role do learning theories play in the scenario?*

How an individual learns is almost as important as what they learn to instructional designers, teachers, and mentors. Once these individuals discover how best their students learn, they can better tailor programs and lessons to fit their clientele. The idea is that when teachers match their teaching style to their learners' particular style of learning, learners will learn and retain more.

Modeling, reflection, attention, retention, and consequences are all components of various learning theories. Social learning theory and experiential learning are foundations of learning and teaching methodologies (Bandura, 1977). Experiential learning is the backbone of the 4-H program’s motto, “Learning by Doing”. It suggests that learning is a process of experience and reflection. Social learning theory has its foundations in society; human beings cannot learn behaviors entirely on their own, so they rely on the behavior and experiences of others to aid in the formulation of opinions and behaviors of their own (Kolb, 1984). While the two theories have different focuses and often work separately, they can also work in conjunction. In the case of the members of the Texas 4-H

Council, there are examples of individuals utilizing each of the traditional learning theories separately, as well as several individuals using a mix of the two.

Social learning theory is a type of learning based on modeling, attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation that lead to matching performances. The idea is that by watching others behave and reap the consequences of their behavior, individuals can make behavioral choices without going through the entire process of the behavior and consequence themselves. Using examples provided by siblings, close friends and others, members of the Texas 4-H Council planned their journey to the State 4-H Council. “I grew up in 4-H. My {sibling} was on 4-H Council too, and I had a great experience with {them} going through council kind of seeing how it was” (I7.M.<50K). “I watched them {other individuals on the council} to see what they had done to get there, because I wanted to wear the green jacket” (I9.F.>50K.1). More than half of the council members used a social learning technique to help prepare them to be on the council, closely watching and learning from their predecessors (I2, I4, I7, I8, I9, I10, I13, I14).

Experiential learning theory is based on the idea that learning is best conceived as a continuous process grounded in experience. The process of learning requires resolution of conflicts, and adaptation to the world through transactions between a person and their environment (Kolb, 1984). Essentially, proponents of experiential learning believe that learning is the process of creating knowledge. In this case, all Texas 4-H Council members had prior experience in

being officers. They were able to use those experiences in their quest to become state officers (I1-I15). This is where the melding of the two types of learning theories occurs.

Social learning theory lacks a reflection component. Experiential learning theory lacks a modeling component. In the case of the Texas 4-H Council members interviewed for this study, there were many examples of both theories working together to help them learn what they needed to know for their time on State Council. Eight of the fifteen members had an overlap and used components of both learning models. For example, one of the members interviewed discussed observing their sibling go through the process of becoming a State 4-H Council member, then internalizing and reflecting on what worked positively and negatively for them, and using those decisions and reflections to aid in their journey to State 4-H Council (I7). Another council member discussed watching the behavior of their fellow district members throughout the year and internalizing the consequences of those members' actions during election times. This person talked about the importance of taking the consequences of others to heart and reflecting on what that meant for this individual's own quest for a State 4-H Council position (I9). A third member talked about taking this combination of experiential learning and social learning theory one step further and passing along what they had learned to younger family members. This particular council member had an older family member become a state officer. This individual used the positive and negative experiences of their older sibling in making their own

decisions. This council member reflected on the experiences of the older family member to guide them in their quest to become a State 4-H Council member. Once this person attained a position, they thought about a younger sibling coming up in the 4-H ranks. Using the older sibling's experiences, as well as their own, this person passed along to the next sibling, the keys to becoming a state officer (I3).

### Research Question Three

*What leadership skills do state officers gain during their terms in office?*

Seevers and Dormody (1995) defined life skills as those skills needed to perform leadership functions in real life. Based on Miller's (1976) research, one can conceptualize these skills into seven categories: decision making, relationships, learning, management, understanding self, group processes, and communications. Their research also found that one of the most effective ways of gaining valuable leadership life skills was by being a 4-H officer at some level. Using Seevers and Dormody's *Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Model*, this researcher was able to identify some of the skills that the Texas State 4-H officers gained throughout their term. Specific operational definitions for each of the categories for purposes of this study were created using the words of the State 4-H Council members. This was done in order to construct a more realistic conceptualization of the skills, as the State 4-H Council members perceived them.

The first of the seven categories of leadership life skills is decision making. Several of the council members interviewed for this study demonstrated

an ability to make decisions based on situations or methods they learned while on State 4-H Council. Ten council members talked about their experiences of learning to make decisions based on the time requirement of being on State 4-H Council (I1, I2, I3, I7, I8, I9, I10, I11, I13, I14). These individuals talked about learning what priorities were and making decisions based on the priorities they had chosen. “I don’t think that I missed out on anything because of 4-H either. I made it a point to manage my time around 4-H and that was how I wanted it” (I7.M.<50K.4). “I had to plan my life around state council. I planned my life around state council. Everything came second to that” (I8.F.<50K.6). Nine council members expressed a desire to take on the State 4-H Council role because they wanted the opportunity to make decisions that would make a difference in the lives and the 4-H experiences of their peers (I1, I2, I3, I6, I7, I8, I9, I13, I14). One State 4-H Council member in particular discussed a long-standing desire to join State 4-H Council to make some changes that would have far reaching effects for their district leadership (I7). Another council member talked about wanting to make decisions that would have a positive affect on the 4-H members at home in the counties within their district (I6). “I wish that they would have let us lead the state instead of calling us leaders and the only thing we did was decide on themes. We never got to build our own schedules or make our own choices. I think that they {advisors} believe that kids, if given the opportunity to lead, will screw things up, and so they don’t ever let us do anything. They do everything for us, make all our decisions for us” (I6.F.<50K.4).

The second of the seven categories of leadership life skills is relationships. Eleven of the council members discussed their experiences in getting to know and working with a large group of peers, they did not know well at the outset (I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I8, I9, I10, I13, I14). “Definitely when working with people I would {use what I learned on council}. You know that there are 28 other people on council and so you need those people skills... so you learn how to get along” (I5.M.<50K.1). Greater than their desire to work well with one another was their desire for a close-knit group of friends. “I know that I walked away with a really core group of friends. And even if they are not ‘friends’ it’s a strong network of people” (I4.F.>50K.5). “I think the other thing was that I walked away with a lot of friendships. And maybe not just friendships in like people I talk to all the time, but connection. To know that wherever you go you might be able to find people that you have something in common with, like a common bond” (I1.F.R.6). All of the council members interviewed discussed the friendships that grew out of their council experiences with great fondness, placing it at the top of the list of things that they walked away with from the experience (I1-I15).

The third of the seven categories of leadership life skills are learning. Learning in this case moves away from how people learn to the skill of learning and whether or not it happened. Several council members discussed things they learned throughout their council year. Whether it was a skill or something new about themselves or the world around them, many council members walked away with something new. Five of the council members felt like the greatest lesson

learned was a new skill (I1, I6, I7, I9, I11). “{I feel like I walked away with} huge leadership skills. I think that the most important thing that I learned was that a good leader is not always the one that is in charge, or they don’t always have to be in charge” (I1.F.R.6).

Tied closely to the third skill category, is the fourth category of understanding of self. Having an understanding of self encompasses knowing your own individual strengths and weaknesses and knowing in what areas of your life learning has occurred. Thirteen council members recognized that their personal growth was the area where their learning occurred (I2, I3, I4, I5, I7, I8, I9, I10, I11, I12, I13, I14, I15). “I think that the greatest skill you get is confidence. You gain a greater sense of confidence in yourself” (I5.M.<50K). “I think that I am much more self confident. I know that I learned to be a lot more open with myself” (I2.F.R.5).

The fifth skill category is management. In the case of the Texas State 4-H Council, management was tied closely to other skill areas and learning methods. Council members demonstrated the ability to manage their own paths to reach the state council goal by learning all they could from their own experiences and the experiences of others. These young people exhibited management skills through decision-making and priorities on their time. Finally, they demonstrated the ability to manage their time as State 4-H Council members successfully as they learned new skills and further developed old ones creating a successful experience for themselves and others.



The sixth leadership life skill is group processes. In the case of the Texas State 4-H Council group process encompasses understanding how a group works and how an individual can positively, or negatively, influence a group. Each of the individuals interviewed discussed their own experiences with the group and their understanding of the group processes of the Texas 4-H Council. Eight members of the group perceived that their group worked successfully or had positive group processes (I1, I2, I4, I5, I9, I11, I13, I14). “We did some outstanding stuff as a group. We knew we had to work together and so we really did it and we helped each other out too” (I13.M.>50K.5). Five members of the group perceived that their group did not work well together or had ineffective group processes (I3, I6, I7, I8, I10). “There was never any team. Everyone kind of came up with their own stuff and did their own thing. We never sort of collapsed that to meld into a team” (I6.F.<50K.2). Seven of the State 4-H Council members discussed the cliquishness of the group as a whole or the lack of team unity (I3, I4, I6, I7, I8, I9, I10). “I also think that we were cliquish as a group and so that makes me wonder if they {minority delegates or delegates-at-large} got the same experiences that I got” (I4.F.>50K). “Socially we got along fine I guess. It was so cliquish, and that was one of our goals- not to be cliquish, but it was. It always is. You know as soon as you walk in everybody has their game face on. People are just fake. Everyone wants to get elected” (I8.F.<50K.2). “We were cliquish. There were about four girls, then three or

four guys depending and we were a group, and then there was the rest of the group. I mean I hate saying that. But it's true, we were really cliquish" (I3.F.R.3)

The last of the leadership life skill categories is communications. On the Texas State 4-H Council, communication is key between individual members, members and advisors, and between the council and the people they meet and work with outside the 4-H program. Several council members talked about learning how to communicate differently, depending on which of the three audiences they were addressing. Eight council members talked about learning to communicate with their peer groups (I1, I2, I4, I5, I9, I11, I13, I14). "We communicated really well together. And we wanted to work hard {at communicating} and we did that together and really supported each other" (I2.F.R.3). Eleven of the council members discussed learning to communicate with their advisors (I1, I2, I3, I4, I6, I7, I8, I9, I12, I13, I14). "We would propose things and they would always get shot down, and because of that we learned that if we wanted something we would go to the advisors in a small group and more often than not, we would get what we wanted that way. Things got done faster that way. So if we wanted something done, we would send one or two or even up to four or five to go to the advisors and they would say yes" (I6.F.<50K.5). Ten talked about learning how to properly communicate with the people at their different speaking engagements (I1, I2, I3, I4, I8, I9, I10, I11, I12, I13). "I always wrote them {thank you notes}, but now I learned the best way to write them. I got a thank you letter for helping at something as a state officer, and it

really meant something to me and so I thought that if getting that meant something to me, then I should write really good ones because they might mean something to someone else” (I1.F.R.3).

#### Research Question Four

*What paths do the young people who have been state officers follow after their term is completed?*

What happens to the young people who were once state officers after their terms are over and life goes on? Do they continue to be involved in other organizations? Do they continue to lead or do they sit back and allow others to take the lead? The answer to this question was paramount to prove or disprove our working hypothesis on what happens to the skills these young people learn during their tenure as officers.

All of the council members interviewed attended college somewhere. While a few attended junior colleges, most went to a traditional four-year institution. Of those individuals interviewed, most chose to enter an agricultural related major. Others entered the liberal arts or business fields. Several council members interviewed either were pursuing advanced degrees or had attained at least one advanced degree, either a master or a doctorate, at the time of the interview.

All of the council members interviewed talked about becoming involved in organizations as they ended their 4-H and high school careers and entered

college (I1-I15). The types of organizations differed, however, between members. Only two of the members described being involved in their respective university's collegiate 4-H Club (I1, I5). Ten members mentioned being involved in agricultural related organizations like "Block and Bridle," clubs related to their major (i.e. Animal Science Club, etc.), college council, or various judging teams (I2, I3, I4, I6, I8, I10, I11, I13, I14, I15). Seven members talked about branching out into university-wide activities like student government, Greek life, cultural affairs, or the fine and performing arts (I2, I4, I5, I7, I8, I13, I14).

The level of involvement for these former council members was very different. Six discussed becoming active again by not only joining organizations, but also becoming officers or leaders in those other organizations (I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8). "Now that I am here, and I finally feel like I am in a niche here, I am getting involved in things like {Greek organization}, {AgriScience affiliated organization}, I am a teaching assistant, and as always, I am pretty social" (I7.M.<50K.6). Once their 4-H careers were over, other members of council discussed having the opposite experience with student organizations. Five of these members wanted a greater sense of anonymity and the desire to be followers and not leaders (I1, I2, I9, I14, I15). "I think that year kind of did something to me, and so I never did anything for more than one year- I always wanted to be trying new things instead of getting stuck in any one thing" (I2.F.R.6-7).

After understanding that some degree of learning occurred with these individuals during their council year, and an idea of their patterns of involvement

in organizations after their council year was over, the next step was to discover what happens to the skills that they learned as council member. Do council members use what they learned during that year, now that they are no longer wearing their green blazers?

#### Research Question Five

*What happens to the leadership skills that youth attain during their term as an officer, after that term is over? Do individuals transfer their skills to other experiences?*

Transfer of training is the generalization of the skills acquired during the training phase to the work environment and the maintenance of those skills over time. Further, it is the extent to which trainees apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in the training to the context of the job (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999). For transfer of training and skills to occur, several elements must be present. One can classify these elements into categories of the relevance and usefulness of training to the job or task, the principles of learning used, characteristics of the learner (i.e. motivation and ability), and managerial support (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999).

Perceived relevance of training occurs if the trainee believes that the training is relevant or important to them. The more important the trainees perceive the training to be, the greater the chance that they will transfer the skills. The council members interviewed had differing perceptions of the relevance of

their training. Some of the council members perceived that the training they received as state officers was very relevant (I1, I2, I5, I9, I11, I13, I14). “I definitely saw the relevance in the training. I saw how she {a former state president} acted, and then I experienced the training and I saw how it all fit together” (I2.F.R.2). “Everything about council was so new to me. I really didn’t realize what was ahead of me. I think that it {training} was all relevant. I probably just didn’t realize it. And like I said it wasn’t in depth training, it was more the crash course” (I11.F.R.1). “Everything they told us, you could tell we’d use it at some point. There was nothing that didn’t come in handy at some point” (I13.M.R.2).

Others did not see the relevance in their training, and instead felt time would have been better spent on other activities (I3, I4, I6, I7, I10, I15). “Looking back I think we need less of the kind of stuff that they gave us- like public speaking and that kind of stuff and more just together times. We didn’t ever really get the chance to know each other” (I3.F.R.2). “I just don’t think that having us prepare the memento ‘schpeel’ was enough and that certainly isn’t public speaking” (I4.F.>50K.3). “Honestly, I felt like I’d been trained off my ass. You’ve been put through the ringer by that point. And so we don’t really have training” (I7.M.<50K.2).

Choice in attending the training is a second element in a trainee deciding to transfer the skills. In the case of the Texas State 4-H Council, there is a consensus that there is only one major training session, the training at the State

4-H Council workshop in Trinidad. There is a unanimous sentiment among the individuals interviewed that the training sessions at Trinidad are mandatory events. In fact, if an individual cannot attend this training in its entirety, it is the belief that the individual will have to forfeit their spot on the council (I1-I15).

Outcome expectancies, or the trainees' belief that if they learn and use the new skills, it will produce the expected or intended outcome, is the third element of positive transfer of training. Several council members talked about their ability to see how the training materials and skills taught would be useful in their "real life settings" as they went out to do their jobs (I1, I2, I5, I9, I11, I13, I14). "I definitely felt like I would use it {the training materials}. I mean you're always going to have to know the stuff that we learned there" (I1.F.R.2). Other council members talked about the applicability of their training to the activities they participated in throughout their council years. One council member discussed using the materials in workshops and camps that they helped put on in their home county and neighboring counties (I5).

Self-efficacy, or an individual's belief that they can accomplish the goals of the training, is the next element of training transfer. Even though some of the council members did not see the relevance in their training, they still unanimously believed that they had the skills necessary to do their job as council officers. They also unanimously believed that they could use those skills with success (I1-I15). "At the same time though, it's like we've been trained our whole lives for this. We came to Trinidad ready to take on those roles" (I3.F.R.1). "I don't know

that I learned or improved on anything during that time, honestly. I felt like I knew and had the skills that I needed to do the job” (I6.F.<50K.1).

Job involvement and job demands are two elements of transfer of training that are very similar. In the case of this study, these elements are so similar, the researcher will discuss these elements together. Job involvement describes an individual’s level of involvement in his or her job. Job demands play a major role in transfer because someone will only transfer skills if the opportunity arises for them to do so. The perception of job involvement and job demands varies a great deal within this group of council members. One interviewee discussed participating in up to 25 activities per month, during their year on the Texas State 4-H Council. This individual believed, because of the information given to them in training, that every time the phone rang and they were invited to another event, the individual should consider the event mandatory (I2). “Everything I went to was mandatory. At least that is how I felt you know? You get called and people want you to be there and come to things, even if it is just to look pretty. So, everything I got called for was mandatory for me. I guess I just felt like anytime that I got to go and wear the jacket and share my message was a mandatory event” (I2.F.R.4). Other interviewees felt like only the events that were state sponsored events where council members play prominent roles were mandatory. In that case, the training events held for the council and state conferences, approximately four events throughout the year, were mandatory and participation in other invited events was by choice (I1, I3, I4, I5, I8, I9, I10, I11, I13, I14). “The last two



events were mandatory, the training in Trinidad and again in January. Other than that, it was all voluntary. I mean if you were called you could kind of pick and choose if you said yes or not” (I3.F.R.5). Other interviewees felt like only the first training was mandatory, as that was the only event that all of the council attended (I6, I7, I15). “The way that I saw it was that the only thing that was 100% mandatory was Trinidad. Nothing seemed 100% mandatory after that. People backed out of things all the time and lots of times, being a state officer took the backseat to other things like sports or whatever” (I6.F.<50K.3).

Knowledge acquisition is an important element in the transfer of training because students who learn and retain skills are more equipped to transfer those skills to other areas. As mentioned above, all of the council members interviewed acknowledged that during their year on council they acquired new knowledge and skills (I1-I15).

Situation identification, or the generalizability and application of the training to an actual job or situation, is the next element in the transfer of training. In other words, those individuals who can see where skills from the training are applicable to other areas are more likely to transfer those skills to the new situation. In this research of the Texas State 4-H Council, the entire group discussed being able to identify situations where their training might be applicable (I1-I15). “I mean you’re always going to use etiquette. Eventually you’re going to be looking for jobs or doing whatever in classes and so knowing how to present yourself is always going to be something you have to know (I1.F.R.2).

Norms and group pressure is the next transfer of training element. Norms surround the conformance to standards and pressures that will affect the transfer of skills. In other words, even if someone has learned and retained skills, transfer will not happen if pressures from his or her group do not allow the transfer. In the case of the Texas 4-H Council, members are encouraged to take things away from the training environment for use in other areas. More than one-half of the individuals interviewed talked about peers and advisors encouraging them to seek opportunities to use their skills outside of the state officer arena (I1, I2, I4, I7, I9, I11, I12, I14).

If people outside of the council notice and reward the students' new skills, students are more likely to want to transfer the skills to other areas. This idea of a reward system for learning and using new skills is the next transfer of training element. While there were both extrinsically and intrinsically motivated individuals in this group of interviewees, they discussed only two rewards for using their training. Three quarters of the Council members mentioned that the honor of wearing the green jacket was reward enough (I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I8, I9, I10, I12, I13, I14, I15). Others mentioned the watches and briefcases given to those individuals who did things "the most" such as those who wrote the most thank you notes (I4, I6, I9, I10, I11).

Organizational culture is the final element in the transfer of training and skills. An organizational culture that fosters employee development, favors improvement, and encourages employee initiatives will have a positive impact on

the transfer of new skills. In the case of the Texas 4-H Council, seven members talked about being stifled and their creativity discouraged by the advisors (I3, I4, I6, I7, I8, I9, I10). “I wish that they would have let us lead the state instead of calling us leaders and the only thing that we did was decide on themes. We never built our own schedules or made our own choices. We’re figureheads and not leaders” (I6.F.<50K.4). Eight members of the council felt that the organizational culture was very positive (I1, I2, I5, I11, I12, I13, I14, I15). “Our advisors were great! I think that something that was real important was that they realized that we were still kids, but at the same time, we really were somebody important too. And so that is how they treated us” (I1.F.R.3).

#### Research Question Six

*How can we improve what we are doing within leadership education to encourage our youth to continue to assume leadership positions, positively transferring the skills that they have learned to life outside of 4-H?*

Many people who join an organization like 4-H have the desire to stay involved in different ways. Several of the council members discussed a desire to make the State 4-H Council experience better for those individuals that come after them.

A few of the interviewees talked about making changes to the training program in Trinidad. One of the council members talked about needing more time to get to know one another and less time spent on material. “Looking back I think we need less of the kind of stuff that they gave us- like public speaking and

that kind of stuff and more just get together times. We didn't really ever get the chance to get to know someone and know if they were the right person to be the president {of the State Council} or whatever" (I3.F.R.1-2). Other council members agreed with the idea that training should be more about team bonding and less about attempting to teach skills (I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I9, I10, I11, I13, I14). A second individual agreed with the idea that one week was not long enough to know whether someone would be a good leader for the group, but went a step further to add that training should be more experiential in nature.

“And that is one way that I think training fails because you vote after only knowing these people a week and that is not long enough to know whether or not they are going to be a good leader. I don't think that training should be centered around Trinidad. I think that you should do things throughout the year that are more experiential in nature. And I say this because at Trinidad, those kids aren't thinking about training, they're thinking about elections. That is what is important to them that week- those elections and either getting elected or getting their friend elected” (I4.F.>50K.1-2).

Other council members agreed with the statement that the training in Trinidad was not about training, but more about elections (I2, I3, I4, I6, I7, I8, I10, I11, I12).

Another council member talked about stressing the importance of diversity and working toward the goals that Extension sets for them. “As far as diversity goes, it has always been a goal to diversify and if that is a goal then they need to implement some things and work toward it” (I8.F.<50K.8).

A few of the council members discussed strengthening the relationship between the advisors and the council members (I6, I7, I8). One of the council

members discussed strengthening communications between the members and advisors through language. “I would tell them that they {advisors} should rethink the words they use and think twice about what they say and how they will effect that child, in the present and the future. Sometimes I think they {advisors} forget how much of a difference they make” (I8.F.<50K.8).

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this study was to explore how 4-H members embark on the path to becoming a State 4-H Council member, their motivations and learning styles. This study explored what preparations State 4-H Council members made along the way to ensure them a place on the council. It investigated the skills 4-H members learned once they were in office, and finally, what happens to the skills Texas State 4-H Council members learned during their terms after leaving the program.

To achieve the purpose of the study, the research posed six specific research questions:

- ❖ What role does motivation play throughout the Texas State 4-H Council experience?
- ❖ What path do young people follow to gain State 4-H Council positions? Is it similar or different to their peers, also on the council? What role do learning theories play in the scenario?
- ❖ What leadership skills do state officers learn during their terms in office?
- ❖ What paths do the young people who have been state officers follow after their term is completed?

- ❖ What happens to the leadership skills that youth attain during their term as an officer, after that term is over? Do youth transfer the skills to other areas?
- ❖ How can we improve what we are doing within leadership education to encourage our youth to continue to assume leadership positions, positively transferring the skills that they have learned to life outside of 4-H?

#### Summary of Review of Literature

Leadership is a concept that some find it hard to define. Burns said that leadership is one of the most observed phenomenons on earth. For purposes of this study, we will adopt the definition adopted by Peter Northouse in *Leadership Theory and Practice*. “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2001, p.3). Having a clear definition of leadership, however, is not enough. It is important to understand how leadership development and education occurs, and how individuals come to learn and understand the concepts involved in the theories of leadership.

Kouzes and Posner (1987) note that leadership is an observable, learnable set of practices. If we accept this statement, we can define leadership as practice. We accept that we can teach it, as well. In the contemporary context, the subject of leadership requires learners to become adept at shaping and fulfilling not only

their own aims, but those of their followers as well (Kaagan, 1998). Instrumental to leadership development is a wide range of aptitudes and capabilities, personal qualities, moral commitments, and management skills all of which affect a person's interactions with co-workers, constituents, or customers. The social setting of an organization, where leaders and followers attempt to work together to attain common goals, most directly feels the effects of leadership development (Terry, 1993). Leadership development has been, and continues to be, a major goal of most youth programs (Seevers & Dormody, 1995).

Obviously, educators on two levels (secondary and higher education) believe that someone can teach leadership skills. Research has shown that both sets of educators believe that the 4-H program does teach those skills. Cooperative Extension and 4-H take leadership development one step further by advocating that a specific skill set is learned within the larger context of leadership.

Miller (1976) conceptualized leadership life skills developed in the 4-H program as seven categories: decision making, relationships, learning, management, understanding self, group processes, and communications. Seevers, Dormody, and Clason (1995) adopted Miller's conceptualization for purposes of their life skill assessment and expanded the definition into the development of the life skills necessary to perform leadership functions in real life. For purposes of this research, the researcher used the seven categories of life skills conceptualized by Miller and the broader definition from Seevers, Dormody, and Clason. In an



assessment of activities where 4-H members ranked the activities they believed allowed them the best opportunity to acquire leadership life skills, four activities tied for the number one spot. Holding an office was the first of those four activities (Seevers & Dormody, 1995).

Motivation is another key component of leadership. Motivation has to do with a student's desire to be a part of the learning process. It also concerns the reasons or goals that underlie their involvement or noninvolvement in activities. Although students may be equally motivated to undertake a task, the sources of their motivation may differ (Lumsden, 1994). Students, who are intrinsically motivated, undertake an activity for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes. An extrinsically motivated student performs in order to obtain some reward or avoid some punishment external to the activity itself (Lepper, 1988). Several factors shape a students' motivation to learn. A learner's home environment shapes the initial compilation of attitudes they develop towards learning. The sources where learners attribute their successes and failures have implications for how well they approach and cope with learning situations. Teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and the nature of expectations they hold for students also exert a powerful influence. Goals, policies, and procedures also interact with the learning environment and practices to affirm or alter students' beliefs and attitudes. Finally, developmental changes comprise the final strand of the motivational web.

Attribution theory holds that students' perceptions of their educational experiences generally influence their motivation more than the actual, objective reality of those experiences (Anderman & Midgley, 1998). Goal theory focuses on two separate and distinct types of goals: task goals and ability goals. A task goal orientation suggests a belief that the purpose of achieving is personal improvement and understanding. An ability goal orientation focuses on the learner appearing competent, often in comparison to others, and defining success accordingly (Anderman & Midgley, 1998). Self-determination theory describes students as having three categories of needs: needing a sense of competence, of relatedness to others, and of autonomy. Competence involves understanding how to, and believing one can, achieve various outcomes. Relatedness involves developing satisfactory connections to others in one's social group. Autonomy involves initiating and regulating one's own actions. For young adolescents, with their increased cognitive ability and developing sense of identity, a sense of autonomy may be important. Students at this stage say that they want to be included in decision-making processes and to have some sense of control over their activities (Anderman & Midgley, 1998).

Learning would be hazardous if people were to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to learn behaviors. It is fortunate then, that humans learn most of their behaviors observationally through modeling: observing others and forming ideas of how new behaviors are performed and later on this information is recalled as a guide for action (Bandura, 1977). Modeling produces learning

principally through its informative functions. In this way, four component processes govern learning: attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation. Any one of the previous components will be a determinant of adoption of behavior and thus, individuals' responses and adoptions will differ greatly.

Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning theory emphasizes the key role that experience plays in the learning process. Experiential learning offers a perspective on learning that integrates experience, perception, cognition, and behavior. Kolb (1984) describes the three most popular models whose commonalities make up the operational definition of experiential learning, the models of Lewin, Dewey, and Piaget. This study also used this definition.

Transfer of training and skills learned is of paramount importance to training programs. Axtell, Maitlis, and Yearta (1997) discuss essential elements in the evaluation of training in terms of trainee transfer. These elements can be classified into the following categories: relevance or usefulness of the training to the students' job or task, the principles of learning used, characteristics of the learner (self-efficacy, motivation, job involvement, ability), and managerial support (control or autonomy available on the job, climate). Elangovan and Karakowsky (1999) defined transfer of training as the generalization of the skills acquired during the training phase to the work environment and the maintenance

of these acquired skills over time. Further, they defined the positive transfer of training as the extent to which trainees apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in the training context to the job. They also identified key trainee and environmental factors that influence the effectiveness of the transfer of training, as well as dividing trainee factors that affect the transfer of skills two categories: motivation and ability.

A team's atmosphere exerts great influence on an individual's perception of an experience. Kipp and Kipp (2000) say that dysfunctional teams or groups often unwittingly bar the door to change. They handle the inevitable conflicts badly (or not at all), conduct themselves according to unwritten rules that limit their effectiveness and waste time. Alternately, everyone speaks his or her mind, but no one ever changes it (Kipp & Kipp, 2000). Research imparts methods and means to aid in the successful development of teams. Tuckman and Jensen (1977) espouse that teams must go through stages in development in order to maximize their potential and become a successful unit. Kipp and Kipp (2000) took research and knowledge of teams and developed a checklist to aid in successful team development. In understanding the stages teams pass through in their development, and a few elements that make up a successful team, we can better understand and analyze the Texas State 4-H Council team, and the impact it has on the young people that are members.

### Summary of Methodology

Qualitative research is as much a point of view as it is a set of methods.

Qualitative research builds its foundation on the principle that knowledge is a socially constructed phenomenon. The things you know are a product of the time and place in which you exist. The qualitative framework also embraces the notion that participants, both interviewer and interviewee, influence and are influenced by data collection and analysis. Credible qualitative inquiry depends on creating categories of meaning firmly based in the social realities of study participants.

Purposive sampling is central to naturalistic inquiry. The researcher used purposive sampling to find participants who were willing to discuss their experiences as State 4-H Council members. The initial participants for this study were from personal knowledge; those students in the classes taught by the researcher who identified themselves as former officers. From those individuals in the first, convenient, purposive sample, the research employed a snowball sampling method using the first group to find the members of the second group (Babbie, 2001). In other words, the first group identified the members of the second group. Within naturalistic inquiry, there is no concrete rule for sample size. The key is to look more for quality than quantity, more for information richness than information volume (Erlandson, et. al., 1993). This study focused on 15 individuals who had participated in the Texas State 4-H Council program over a fourteen-year period.

The researcher used several qualitative methods, within the scope of this study, to gather data. Those methods included interviews, participant observation, focus groups, and document analysis.

Dexter (1970) describes interviews as conversations with a purpose. Lincoln and Guba (1985) say that interviews allow researchers and respondents to move back and forth in time; to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future. Interviews also help the researcher to understand and put into a larger context the interpersonal, social, and cultural aspects of the environment (Erlandson, et. al., 1993). Semi-structured and unstructured interviews were scheduled and conducted. Participation in these interviews was voluntary. The researcher informed each individual of their rights as human subjects in social science research and each research participant signed a consent form acknowledging their voluntary participation. The researcher coded all interviews to retain confidentiality.

Participant observation offers a researcher the rare opportunity to observe the participants in their element, on their “turf”. It gives any researcher the opportunity to see, first hand, the reality of what the subjects experience everyday. In the case of this study, participant observation occurred as the researcher conversed with and interviewed each subject one on one. The researcher had the opportunity to see the skills and the learning theories discussed in chapter two, first hand.

Documentation served as the final form of data collection. Documents are useful for several reasons. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), documents provide a stability of information, contextual relevance, richness of information, natural language of the setting, and are non reactive. The researcher used handbooks, training manuals, and other similar materials for informational purposes, and to grasp the time and place within which the officers work.

Data analysis followed the traditional methods described by Lincoln and Guba in *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985). Using these methods allowed the researcher the opportunity to analyze data throughout the entire research process, not just at the conclusion. This method also allowed the researcher to continually refine the research process, coming ever closer to the research goals and bringing the researcher nearer to an understanding of the subjects involved in the research and of the research itself. This method allowed for constant improvement and validation.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) adopted the Glaser and Strauss (1967) constant comparative method for use in naturalistic inquiry. The researcher's use of this method followed that adaptation and is outlined as follows: unitization of data, categorization of units, merging categories, defining the construction, and journaling. The information, findings, and conclusions are reported in a format to provide an interpretation of the "stories" of the youth that lead the 4-H program, a representation of what the former state officers believe were their experiences as officers, and the transfer of their skills.

Qualitative researcher should plan steps for ensuring that they do quality research at the outset of the study and further develop those steps as the study unfolds. Establishing trustworthiness enables the researcher to claim methodological soundness. However, it is not enough that the qualitative researcher use techniques grounded in the traditional quantitative paradigm, it is essential for the researcher to go beyond the traditional and use those criteria that stem from naturalistic inquiry itself (Erlandson, et. al., 1993).

Qualitative researchers use the term credibility in establishing the truth-value in a naturalistic study. Methods in establishing credibility include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling. The researcher established credibility in this study through persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling.

Qualitative researchers use the word transferability to describe establishing the applicability of the research. Methods to establish transferability include thick description, purposive sampling, and reflexive journaling. In this study, the researcher used all three of the aforementioned methods to establish transferability.

Qualitative researchers use the term dependability when describing how to establish the consistency of the research. The dependability audit and reflexive journal establish dependability in a qualitative research study. In this study, the researcher used both methods to establish credibility.



Qualitative researchers will use the word confirmability to establish the component of neutrality in the research. The researcher used the confirmability audit and the reflexive journal to establish confirmability.

#### Summary of Key Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations for Each Research Question

The findings of this research suggest conclusions about the nature of the individuals who attain council positions, their motivations and learning styles. The findings of this research also suggest conclusions about the leadership life skills State 4-H Council members gain while in their positions. This research suggests conclusions about how State 4-H Council members transfer those skills post council tenure and the elements that affect that transfer. Finally, this research suggests conclusions about the effect that their perceptions about the relationships they have with their peers and the council advisors have on their total experiences. The researcher ensures transferability or the applicability of this research to other settings using thick description, use of purposive sampling, and reflexive journaling.

Because of the nature of the research, key findings are presented along with the researcher's conclusions and recommendations by research question.

### *Question One*

The first research question explored the role motivation plays throughout the council experience.

1. All State 4-H Council members interviewed exhibited behaviors indicative of individuals who are extrinsically motivated. State 4-H Council members were specifically motivated by the “green jacket,” symbolizing the prestige of membership to the council and opportunities offered to council members that are not afforded to other 4-H members. Based on this finding, I would conclude that State 4-H Council members tend to be extrinsically motivated individuals.

My recommendation is two fold in this case. First, I recommend that council advisors continue to emphasize the extrinsic rewards afforded to council members when publicizing the State 4-H Council program to potential new members.

However, advisors should also make time for reflection throughout the council year, to help council members make the connection between the extrinsic rewards (the prestige of wearing the jacket, the scholarships, etc.) and the intrinsic gains (being able to further their education, meeting new friends, learning new things).

2. All of the members interviewed described achieving a measure of success while on the council. This would lead the researcher to conclude that State 4-H Council members can positively identify areas where they are successful in carrying out their duties, thus leading to a greater sense of

competence. This sense of competence is important in motivating State 4-H Council members for further achievement.

Following this conclusion, I recommend that council advisors and facilitators assist the State 4-H Council members in finding opportunities to be successful, and in identifying areas where success occurs. Success and a sense of competence will further the State 4-H Council members' motivation for future success based on their patterns of motivation discussed below.

3. Only four council members perceived that they experienced continual success throughout their tenure. This is indicative of the attribution theory where motivation continues when individuals experience success in a particular area. Only four council members believed that it was important to base success and motivation on the comparison to others. This is indicative of the goal setting theory of motivation where motivation occurs when individuals can compare themselves to others and perceive themselves to be more successful than their counter-parts. More than two-thirds of the council exhibited behaviors indicative of a need for competence, inter-relatedness, and autonomy, supporting the self-determination theory of motivation. Based on these findings, I conclude that self-determination theory plays a greater role in motivating State 4-H Council members than does attribution or goal theory.

These conclusions lead me to recommend that the State 4-H Council program become proactive in nature. The program facilitators should continue what they

are doing to give the State 4-H Council members their sense of competence and inter-relatedness. However, they should also extend their efforts in helping members fulfill their needs for autonomy. Examples of these efforts include allowing council members to form original norms for the council or allowing the teens to make decisions they believe are important, and not just deciding on themes for state conferences and activities.

4. Six council members felt the advisors' expectations of council members were made clear, while seven council members felt that the expectations of council members were not made clear to them. Based on these findings, I conclude that the advisors of the State 4-H Council do not clearly communicate their expectations to all members.

This conclusion leads me to recommend that advisors and facilitators of the State 4-H Council program make their expectations of State 4-H Council members clear at the earliest possible time, and continue to reiterate those expectations throughout the year. The researcher suggests that the two groups come together to create a written document containing these recommendations. This document would be given to all State 4-H Council members and advisors, as well as county extension agents in order that it be passed on to future potential State 4-H Council members.

5. Ten of the fifteen individuals described their parents/family as being personal motivators. I would conclude that council members are family oriented individuals who have strong family support systems. This

supports Brophy, who said that parents (family structures) have the first, and most lasting influence over an individual's motivation to learn.

### *Question Two*

The second question sought to identify the learning styles State 4-H Council members used to prepare themselves to attain a council position.

1. All of the council members used past experiences (experiential learning theory) as officers at other levels of 4-H to help them attain their State 4-H Council position.
2. Eight of the council members used a combination of social learning theory and experiential learning theory to help attain the council position. These council members had the unique opportunity to draw on their own experiences, as well as those of the people they observed, to make their own experience richer. Based on these findings, I conclude that using a combination of the two learning theories allows individuals to make more informed decisions while preparing to become council members because they can utilize their own experiences as well as the experiences of others.

My recommendation for practice, based on this conclusion, is two-fold. First, I would encourage the State 4-H Council program to institute a mentoring program between former members and potential members. All potential council members have experience being officers at other levels. With a mentor who has previously served on council, potential council members could reap the benefits

of others' experiences, both positive and negative, utilizing the social learning method. Second, I would encourage the facilitators or advisors of the State 4-H Council program to become aware of the power of social learning theory.

Realizing that young people do model others' behaviors, advisors should provide positive examples for the council members. This will, in turn, encourage State 4-H Council members to demonstrate positive behaviors, serving as role models for future council members.

### *Question Three*

Question three looked at the leadership life skills conceptualized by Miller and how each of the council members demonstrated those leadership life skills.

1. Eleven council members discussed decision-making as being a part of their job as council members. Ten talked about having to learn to make decisions based on the time requirements of being a State 4-H Council member. Nine council members talked about having a desire to make decisions that would have a positive effect on their peer group and younger 4-H members. Based on this finding, I would conclude that while council members made decisions in the past, when they became State 4-H Council members, they honed those skills as they made choices about how to prioritize their time.

2. Eleven council members described a desire to cultivate positive relationships with their peer group. All of the council members explained that the friendships that they formed, were the most important part of their council experience. From these findings, I conclude that State 4-H Council is a unique bonding experience for its members. These friendships and the bonding experience of the council only serve to further the feelings of inter-relatedness that these individuals need as part of their motivational patterns.
3. Five of the council members believed they learned a new skill while serving on the council. Thirteen of the council members felt like their personal growth (becoming more confident, more self aware) was where their greatest learning occurred. Based on these findings, I would conclude that learning and understanding of self occurs while on the State 4-H Council, and further that understanding of self is one of the major components of the State 4-H Council experience.
4. Eight council members had positive perceptions regarding the group processes of their council cohort. They felt like their group communicated well, the group had positive relationships with their advisors, and worked well as a whole. Five council members had negative perceptions of their cohort's group processes. These individuals believed that their groups did not communicate well and that their groups as a whole had poor relationships with their advisors.

5. Eight council members discussed learning how to communicate with their peer group during their council experience. This experience includes being vigilant in writing letters, making phone calls, and keeping the group informed of all pertinent information regarding upcoming events. Eleven council members talked about experiences that taught them how to communicate with the council advisors. This experience includes best decision-making processes and becoming aware of the importance of keeping in touch with the advisors. Ten council members discussed learning how to communicate with those outside of the council. This would include writing sincere thank you notes to corporate donors, judges and speakers at events and county extension personnel who would invite to speak at county functions. Based on these findings, I conclude that council members learn new communication skills because of the council experience.

Based on this group of findings, I would conclude that while being a member of the State 4-H Council, members gain the leadership life skills conceptualized by Miller and further developed by Seevers and Dormody. I would also conclude that throughout their year on State 4-H Council, members have the opportunity to further develop their prowess in these areas. The findings of this research, therefore, support the findings of Seevers and Dormody (1995) that espoused holding an office is one of the four best ways to gain leadership life skills.



However, it is clear that advisors and trainers address some of the areas of leadership life skills more fully than they address others throughout the year. In those cases, my recommendations are as follows:

- ❖ Develop a training method to continue to expand the council members' decision-making abilities. While they are making decisions about their use of time, experiential training in decision-making would help them hone those skills further and could encourage them to make decisions in other areas beyond just choosing the themes of state events. Experiential training activities might include exercises in setting priorities and scheduling since State 4-H Council members must schedule a number of activities within a confined time.
- ❖ Continue current activities and expand the opportunities for the State 4-H Council members to get to know each other and develop as a group as suggested by Tuckman and Jenson (1977). This will strengthen the bond between members and allow them to extend those bonds to other council members. Implement greater opportunities for team building utilizing challenge activities, communication builders, delegation activities, and down times during state, as well as council only events, with scheduled team strengthening activities.
- ❖ In the areas of understanding of self and group processes, I would recommend that council facilitators and advisors implement extensive training in personality types and how to positively work with different

types. This training should include all council members and all council advisors and facilitators. Implementing this type of training would vastly improve the group processes of the council. In addition, it would improve the level of the professional culture surrounding the council, internally.

By improving the professional culture, advisors will set a positive professional example for the State 4-H Council members.

- ❖ Employ new ways of improving communication between members, members and advisors, and members and their external environment. This should include written and oral communication, as well as professional, non-verbal queues that indicate respect, attention, and active listening.

#### *Question Four*

Question four, examined the type of activities in which former council members currently participate, and the level of participation they choose to maintain.

1. All council members participated in activities after completing their 4-H tenure.
2. Two participated in collegiate 4-H clubs, ten participated in college of agriculture related organizations, seven participated in university wide organizations such as student councils, Greek life or the fine and performing arts.

3. Six became officers in their organizations. Five decided to forgo becoming officers and instead, remained “followers” or “members” of their organizations throughout their involvement. Based on this finding, I conclude that one-third of the former State 4-H Council members experience symptoms of activity burn out.

Based on this group of findings, I conclude that the former council members do continue in participation in other activities, thus affording them an opportunity to transfer skills learned while on council if they choose to do so. However, I would recommend that advisors and facilitators of the State 4-H Council closely examine the members’ levels of involvement in order to decrease the opportunity of council member burnout.

#### *Question Five*

Question five, explored the elements necessary for the transfer of training.

1. Seven of the council members felt like the training was relevant. Six of the council members did not see the relevance in their training programs. From these findings, I would conclude that the goals of the training program are ambiguous and the material covered in the program is repetitious for some, or all of the council members. Because the relevance is lost to some members, if skills are learned, their transfer is unlikely.

2. Unanimously, the council believed that the training at Trinidad is mandatory. Because of this perception, there is less likelihood of transfer according to the research.

First, I recommend that each year, the advisors and facilitators of council conduct a needs assessment with the incoming State 4-H Council members. This would enable them to understand the needs of the council members as they decide on training activities. I would recommend that the advisors more closely align the training with the needs of the council members. Advisors should clearly articulate the goals of the training to the State 4-H Council members. They should repeatedly articulate the goals throughout the program to ensure that the members stay aware of them. As councils change each year, council members and advisors should reassess training goals so those goals always align with the needs of the incoming council members.

I further recommend that this be the beginning of council members having a greater number of experiential trainings, instead of a traditional one-time training experience. Council members could select the areas where they felt they needed improvement, or where their interest lie and attend trainings in that manner. If advisors or facilitators felt that a certain number of trainings were still required, they could require a certain number of experiences instead of the one shot, week long situation. Or, based on the needs assessment results, advisors could set up concurrent sessions during the week-long training experience, where the council

members could chose to attend sessions in areas where improvement is needed or desired.

3. Seven council members felt like they could use the training in a “real life” setting. Based on this finding, I would conclude that approximately one-half of the council members have positive outcome expectancies for their training expectancies.

Again, I would recommend that the advisors and facilitators include a needs assessment for training experiences. In this area, the needs assessment would be crucial in creating the perception that the training is relevant and useful to the members. If the council members believe that the areas of training are relevant to them, the likelihood that they will see the applicability to larger situations will be greater. This will only aid in the council members transferring those skills to other areas.

In addition, I would encourage advisors to implement a time of reflection at the end of the council experience. This could be at the last event that everyone attends together. During this time, advisors and council members should come together and help each other to synthesize the experience as a whole, including the training experiences and the events in which each member participates. This will help them make connections between training, the council experience and their “real life” contexts.

4. Unanimously, the council members interviewed believed that they had the ability to successfully do their jobs. Based on this finding I conclude that

the members of the State 4-H Council demonstrate a high degree of self-efficacy, thus furthering their opportunity to transfer the training they receive.

5. One member believed that every time they were asked to represent State 4-H Council at any event, attendance at that event was mandatory. Ten council members felt like only the state 4-H events were mandatory for them to attend. Three interviewees believed that only the training workshop in Trinidad was mandatory. Based on these findings, I conclude that the degree of job involvement varies among council members, and advisors do not clearly communicate their expectations to everyone, even in the area of job requirements. This would discourage the transference of training.

Again, I would recommend that the advisors and facilitators of council members clearly define the expectations at the outset of the experience, and frequently reiterate those expectations throughout the year. I also recommend council advisors capitalize on the desires of the members to have autonomy and make decisions in this area. They could do this by having State 4-H Council members help develop the job expectations.

6. All of the council members interviewed believed that they learned something during their council year. Because of their belief, I conclude that members acquire new knowledge and skills as part of their experience, which aids in the transfer of training.

7. Unanimously, council members believed they could identify situations where they could use their skills during their council year. This finding shows that the council members demonstrate a great ability to identify situations where they could utilize their training. This would further their transfer of training.

State 4-H Council advisors and facilitators continue their efforts in supporting members in identifying situations where they can use their skills.

8. Only eight of the council members felt like they had encouragement to go out and seek opportunities to use their skills. Based on this finding, I would conclude that those members who are encouraged by advisors are more likely to transfer the training than those who lacked the encouragement.

In this case, I would recommend that the advisors and facilitators of the council lead by example and encourage all council members to seek out their own opportunities to use their skills. They could do this by developing a list, with the help of former members, of service organizations and other groups where State 4-H Council members could volunteer to speak, telling those individuals who might not know about the meaning and significance of the 4-H program. This would also help council members encourage each other to use their skills, furthering opportunities to transfer the training.

9. Three-quarters of the council members said that the green jacket that they receive was reward enough for using the skills that they had. Others on

the council mentioned that watches, plaques, and briefcases were used as rewards for using their skills. Because of these findings, I would conclude that an extrinsic reward system is successful in getting the members to use their skills.

I recommend that the council advisors and facilitators continue rewarding the council members for using their skills. Since State 4-H Council members tend to be extrinsically motivated, this will also encourage all members to seek opportunities to use what they have learned in other areas of their lives.

10. Seven council members perceived the organizational culture of the State 4-H Council to be stifling. Eight council members felt that the organizational culture was positive. This group perceived that they made important decisions. Based on these findings I would conclude that the organizational culture of the State 4-H Council is operationally undefined.

This will negatively affect the transfer of training by the council members.

In this case, I would recommend that the council advisors, facilitators, and members undertake training to encourage the development of a positive organizational culture. Positive organizational cultures include an environment that fosters individual development, favors improvement/progress, and encourages members' to take initiatives. This training, then, should include how to identify and work with different personality types, appropriate conflict management, gender and ethnic sensitivity training, and positive group decision-making skills. This training should also help the advisors understand social



learning theory and how the council members use social learning theory to model behaviors.

Each element of training transfer plays an important role in a trainee taking what they have learned and applying it to outside situations. In the case of the State 4-H Council, five elements will further the members' transfer of training. However, five others will not, and will in fact, impede training transfer. I would recommend that advisors take note of the areas where training transfer is impeded, and develop strategies, like those suggested above, to rejuvenate those areas and improve training transfer.

#### *Question Six*

Question six, examined the council members recommendations for improving the council experience. Council members recommended three ways to improve the council experience for future members:

- a. Make the training more experiential in nature

In this case, several council members mentioned a desire for the training situation at Trinidad to be more experiential in nature (I3, I4, I8, I9, I10, I12) and less lecture based.

- b. A greater emphasis in diversity including setting and achieving attainable diversity goals

Here, the two delegates at large that were interviewed discussed the lack of inclusiveness that they felt throughout their council experience. They believed

that because they achieved their positions differently than did others, are called something different than are the others, that their experience is different than that of the other council members. The Leader/Member Exchange theory, espoused by Northouse (2001), states that there are some groups who are clearly “in,” receiving treatment that is more preferential in nature, and some groups who are clearly “out,” who receive treatment diametrically opposite to the preferential treatment. This contributes to these members’ feelings of being “different” than the “regular” members of council (I8, I15).

- c. Improving the professional relationship and organizational culture of the council

I conclude that the council members’ recommendations are reasonable, and in line with the previous recommendations made by the researcher.

### Recommendations for Further Research

1. This study should be replicated in other states to ascertain if the motivation, learning styles, leadership life skills, and elements of transfer of training are demonstrated in the same manners.
2. This study should be replicated at other levels of councils to determine if the motivation, learning styles, leadership life skills, and elements of the transfer of training are demonstrated in the same manners.
3. This study should be replicated with FFA State 4-H Councils to establish whether the results will be similar across organizations.
4. This study should be replicated with 4-H members in Texas (and eventually other states) to determine if the motivations, learning styles, leadership life skill results are similar.
5. Further research is also needed in each area of this study (motivation, learning styles, leadership life skills development, and transfer of training) so that more knowledge is gained and we can continue to improve in each of these individual areas.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

### Initial Dissertation Protocol

1. Describe your experiences as a state 4-H officer...
  - Describe the retreat/workshop that you attended
    - ❖ Did you think it was relevant?
    - ❖ Did you think the stuff you learned would work in a real life setting?
    - ❖ Did you feel like you learned/retained?
  - Describe how you felt after the workshops
    - ❖ Did you think you could do what they said you were going to do?
    - ❖ Did you feel prepared?
  - Describe what skills you had prior to training
  - Describe how the team worked together
  - Describe how the team worked with the advisors
  - How many workshops, conferences, activities were mandatory
  - Describe your motivation level and how it changed
  - Describe your time management skills and how they changed
  
2. Reflecting back on your experiences...
  - Describe how you synthesized your training
    - ❖ Did you use what you'd learned?
    - ❖ Were you rewarded if you used what you learned?
  - Describe what skills you felt like you walked away with
    - ❖ What about what you feel like you still lack?
  - Do you feel like you learned more during training or “on the job”
  - Describe your overall motivation level
  - Describe how the team worked together

- Describe how the team worked with the advisors
  - ❖ Were you in any way encouraged to use what you learned?
  
- 1. Once you left 4-H after your term was over what activities did you participate in?
  - In H.S.
  - JuCo
  - College
  - Community
  
- 2. Describe your relationship with 4-H directly after your term was complete
  - Leader?
  - Volunteer?
  - Extension Agent?
  - Support with time or money?
  
- 3. Since that time describe your relationship with 4-H directly after your term was complete
  - Leader?
  - Volunteer?
  - Extension Agent?
  - Support with time or money?

Extras:

- ❖ How many in grad class?
- ❖ What box is checked on the form?
- ❖ What was your position?
- ❖ How many years were you involved?
- ❖ What do you do now?

**APPENDIX B**  
**EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE INTERVIEWEES**

Good Morning,

My name is Jackie Bruce and I am a graduate student in the Department of Ag Education at Texas A&M University. Right now, I am in the beginning stages of my dissertation research that is looking at former Texas State 4-H Council Members and the training that they received. I received your name from a former council member that identified you as a former member of the Texas State 4-H Council. Now I am appealing to you to see if you might be interested in participating in this study.

I would need about 1 hour of your time for an interview. If need be I would be happy to send you the questions in advance, but as I said, the study is about training of state council. We would meet here on campus at A&M (if you happen to be in the area), in a mutually agreed upon location, or via the phone, polycom or TTVN if that would be more convenient because of time and geographic distance) and just chat about your experiences as council member and the training that you receive. ALL conversations are completely confidential as per the rules and regulation of Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board and federal law.

Please email me back if you're interested in participating or if there are other questions that I might be able to answer for you!

Thanks and I look forward to hearing from you!

Jackie Bruce

**APPENDIX C**

**PEER DEBRIEFING**

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**DISSERTATION PEER DEBRIEF MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** DR. KIM DOOLEY AND DR. BARRY BOYD

**FROM:** JACKLYN BRUCE

**SUBJECT:** DISSERTATION RESEARCH - FINDINGS IN THE  
RESEARCH THUS FAR

**DATE:** 4/17/2003

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**Research Update**

To this point seven interviews have been completed with three more scheduled to take place in the next week and a half. The subjects are broken down demographically as follows:

- 5 Female and 2 male
- All between the ages of 22-26
- 3 from rural areas, 1 from a city over 50K and 3 from towns between 10K-50K
- All are white/Caucasian
- 3 have HS grad classes with less than 100, 3 have HS grad classes of 101-499, 1 had HS grad class of >500
- All were ten year members of 4-H
- 2 were on the exec board of the council, 5 were members of the council, 0 were “members-at-large”
- 1 has a graduate degree, 2 have a bachelors degree, 4 are currently seeking a bachelors degree

- Career aspirations encompass things like sales, teaching, working with kids in other ways, law, and agriculture in foreign affairs

### **INTERVIEWS**

Interviews have been conducted either face to face or over the phone. Interview times have varied from 45 minutes in length to 3 hours in length with an average time of about 1 hour and 30 minutes. Time and place of interviews have also varied from morning to early afternoon and in coffee shops, campus buildings and researcher and interview subject offices. No record other than the researcher's field notes have been used, and transcriptions of those interviews are the basis of the following memorandum.

### **SYNTHESIS OF INTERVIEW CONTENT**

Within the 7 interviews that I have completed thus far, I have found the responses of my subjects to fall into one of three categories; similarities, slight differences and diametric differences. In terms of trends, the similarities and slight differences, I believe make up the trends that I will discuss within the memo, but it is the category of responses in the diametric differences category that I believe are points to consider further investigation with the addition of further protocol questions or redirect of subjects to find more information. Where it's relevant I have included direct quotes from some of the interviews.

### **TRENDS**

- Transfer of "Whole" Experience
  - One of the strongest trends that I see among the interviewees is that instead of taking away particular pieces of training, they seem to take away the entire experience, speaking very holistically now. And that the experience in general either consciously or



subconsciously seems to then influence the career paths that each of the subjects has chosen.

- Spokesperson for Texas Agriculture
  - Youth Leadership Development Consultant
  - Working for USDA
  - Working with kids and Ag in some way
  - Working with kids with disabilities
  - Sales/People and Ag
- Lifelong Friendships
  - Another strong trend that I see is that the thing most often taken away from the experience of being a State 4-H Officer (SO) is the connection of friends. Several of the subjects talked in terms of “life long friendship” and “shared connections”.
- Training Wasn’t Training in the Traditional Sense
  - Most of the subjects described training as less training and more of a “brushing up”, “grooming” or “review” of skills previously gained in other arenas
    - “We’d been trained off our ass by this point”
    - “I already had what I needed to do the job”
    - “Some people may have needed the training but most didn’t”
- POSITIVE-NEGATIVE
  - Each interview subject reflects that the experience as a whole was very positive, however most are also quick to point on where the experience was also negative.
- Wanting the GREEN JACKET
  - Most of the interviewees talked about and can remember seeing someone wearing the traditional SO dress (green jacket/blazer) and desiring to one day be in that position.

- Most of the people that identified themselves in this group also talked about preparing themselves to take on this role.
- Role Models
  - Many talked about wanting to be role models for younger members and “make a difference to them and to the 4-H program in general.
- Priorities
  - Many of the group talked about having to formulate and stick to a list of priorities as far as time management was concerned.
    - Some talked about having to make choices of school activities versus 4-H
    - Some talked about the choice made between 4-H and FFA
    - Some talked about getting negative reactions from peers and school personnel because of their extensive involvement with 4-H and absences from class, etc.
- Life is STILL Active After 4-H
  - Most subjects have chosen to remain very active since they left the 4-H program, although WHAT they chose to become active in varies greatly
    - Ag things versus extracurricular activities like MSC, Greek Life, etc.

### **DIFFERENCES**

The following differences are some that I would like to explore further as I continue to research and do interviews. These are topics that came up as diametrically different answers across the board.

- Relevance of training
  - The interviewees came up with very different ideas in terms of how relevant their training at Trinidad and other conferences was.

Some of them felt like it was very relevant, others saw nothing relevant in the active learning and public speaking workshops.

- May be attributed to who presented the training, how open they were to new ideas, how well trained they were at the district level
- Competence of advisors
  - Some of the officers had everything good to say about advisors saying that they worked well together and that they provided the team with a good experience. Others said exactly the opposite, not thinking much of their advisors on a personal or professional level.
    - May be attributed to personality conflicts, who was advising the team as there seems to be little consistency
- Perceived Role of Advisors
  - The answers come all across the board on this as some of them see the advisors needing to be very hands on while others want them to just stay out of business and allow the team to spread their wings.
    - May be attributed to personality conflicts, who was advising the team as there seems to be little consistency
- Relationship with 4-H Program post Officer Term
  - Some of the subject are still actively involved with 4- H doing speeches, training and camps, others have completely cut ties with the program believing that they are neither wanted nor welcome.
    - May be attributed to personality conflicts, who was advising the team as there seems to be little consistency, experiences while on the team

- Activity Post 4-H Terms
  - Some of the subjects decided to become very actively involved in Agricultural activities; i.e. Ag Council, Aggie Reps, ALS, while others decided to become active in other things like the MSC and student activities; still others decided to not become involved activities once they were done with things.
- Team Attitudes
  - Really, this is more about someone's personal assessment of the team in a general sense; i.e. whether they worked well together, whether they ever really became a "team".

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**PEER DEBRIEF MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** DRS. KIM DOOLEY AND BARRY BOYD  
**FROM:** JACKLYN BRUCE  
**SUBJECT:** CATEGORIES AND DEMOGRAPHIES THUS FAR  
**DATE:** 4/17/2003  
**CC:** NONE

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Good Afternoon,

Please accept this as the next in the series of peer debriefing memos for my dissertation research. Just like memo one, I will begin with where we're at in the research process, work through the demographics of the sample, the current categories and strategies, and end with future plans.

**Current Place in the Research**

Thus far, data has been collected from sixteen sources. Using a variety of mediums, (person-to-person interviews, phone interviews, TTVN interviews, focus groups and document analysis) and building on the categories discussed in the last memo, I have developed a pattern of findings. More research is scheduled, and there will be more information on the details of further research later in the memo.

**Demographics of the Current Sample Group**

The current sample group is comprised of fifteen individuals.

❖ **Sample Make-Up**

- 11 are individual interviews
- 1 was an advisor interview for purposes of triangulation
- 3 were members of a focus group

❖ **9 are female; 6 are male**

❖ **Geographic Make-up**

- 5 come from rural communities
- 1 from a town of less than 10K
- 5 from communities of over 10K
- The focus group was made up of 2 rural community members and one from a community over 10K
- The remaining individual is the advisor and his background wasn't asked

❖ **The educational backgrounds are diverse**

- 9 are currently pursuing baccalaureate degrees
- 3 have completed baccalaureate degrees and are working
- 1 has completed a masters degree and is working
- 1 has completed a PhD and is working
- 1 (advisor) is working on a PhD

❖ **Age ranges are as follows:**

- 9 are 18-22
- 5 are 22-27
- 1 (advisor) is 27+

❖ **HS Graduating Class Numbers**

- 6 had classes <100
- 6 had classes between 101-499
- 2 had classes >500

❖ **Ethnicity**

- 1 minority
- 13 white/Caucasian

❖ **Council Positions**

- 3 Exec Members
- 1 Minority delegate

- 10 members
- 1 advisor

❖ **Tenure in the 4-H program**

- 11 were in 4-H as long as possible (beginning as young as possible, staying until age limit)
- 3 were in 4-H 8 years
- 6 were clover kids

❖ **Career Aspirations**

- Range from sales, teaching, law, international ag, missionary work, and extension

### **Synthesis of Interview Content**

After our last peer review, I completed 8 more interviews/subject contacts. After that time, I began a second round of content analysis using data unit note cards.

Preliminarily, 22 categories were formed. Those categories are:

❖ Elections	❖ Team Characterizations
❖ Things that happen at training	❖ Where Skills Have Been Used
❖ Rewards	❖ Advisors
❖ Feelings after Training	❖ Admiration
❖ Self Assessments	❖ Friends/Friendship
❖ Things Learned/Content of training	❖ Positive Things About Council Year
❖ Current Relationship with 4-H	❖ Negative Things About Council Year
❖ Scheduling	❖ Future Plans
❖ Motivation	❖ Opportunities Because of Council
❖ Things/Experiences Missed	❖ Personal Assessments of Training
❖ Green Jackets	❖ Evaluation of Training

Those categories were analyzed further and combined to make the following categories:

❖ Characterizations of Council Year	❖ Assessments and Evaluation of Training
❖ Motivations/Green Jackets/Admiration/Rewards	❖ Advisors/Synthesis
❖ Characterizations of Teams	❖ Self Assessment
❖ Opportunities	❖ Scheduling
❖ Things that go on at Training/Elections	❖ Training Content/Things Taken from Training/Where Skills have Been Used
❖ Friendships	❖ Feeling After Training
❖ Things/Experiences Missed	❖ Relationship with 4-H

Those categories are defined in the following ways:

- ❖ Characterizations of Council Year
  - Both positive and negative comments are included. In this category, subjects have characterized their years and comments range from- “It was the best time of my life” to “We’re more figureheads than leaders”
- ❖ Assessments and Evaluation of Training
  - This category encompasses the subjects’ evaluation of the training- was it good or was it bad. Beyond that this category also holds comments on recommendations for training, how they thought they would use training materials, how they felt about having to do training
- ❖ Motivations/Green Jackets/Admiration/Rewards
  - This was a category I struggled with combining, but I think that it is similar in many ways. This category first has all of the info about the subjects wanting the green jackets really badly and working hard to attain them. I realized that many time they wanted the green jackets because of the admiration and other good things (prestige, etc.) that comes with them, which is why these are combined with the cards that talk about how much the State 4-H



Council people are admired by others. Other cards in this category talk about external motivators beyond the green jacket including parents, friends, siblings, etc.

- ❖ Advisors/Synthesis
  - This category is also mixed with both positive and negative comments. The reason that synthesis is included here is that it seemed that it seemed that the subjects felt like synthesis (or lack of) was the responsibility of the advisors
- ❖ Characterizations of Teams
  - Again a mixed category, with both positive and negative characterizations of the council. Positive range from great working relationships and fun loving groups to cliques and cat fighting
- ❖ Self Assessment
  - Just what it sounds like, these are all the cards that talk about how the subjects felt about themselves, where they come from, how they grew and what they brought to the group
- ❖ Scheduling
  - This category talks about all of the things that they were expected to do in the year they were officers and making and forming priorities
- ❖ Opportunities
  - Things that were unique to them because of their position as well as the acknowledgment that they were given opportunities that others (peer groups) were not
- ❖ Training Content/Things Taken from Training/Where Skills have Been Used
  - Content of training, skills learned in training and the rest of the year, where those skills have been applied throughout the year
- ❖ Things that go on at Training/Elections

- This category contains things like the social functions, the bonding activities (things that aren't content) and elections (functions, people)
- ❖ Feeling After Training
  - Assessment of themselves at the point that training ends including feeling like they were already trained enough when they got their
- ❖ Friendships
  - Really this goes along with what they've walked away with from the year, but it was so strong a response that I made it one category
- ❖ Relationship with 4-H
  - This is whether or not they are still involved, what they do if they are involved, who they are in contact with, etc.
- ❖ Things/Experiences Missed
  - This is when they talk about missed opportunities on council and because of council

**APPENDIX D**  
**AUDIT TRAIL**

**Audit Coded Bibliography**  
In Chronological Order of Interview

1. I1 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed July 17, 2002
2. I2 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed July 24, 2002
3. I3 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed July 25, 2002
4. I4 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed August 7, 2002
5. I5 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed September 13, 2002
6. I6 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed September 17, 2002
7. I7 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed September 18, 2002
8. I8 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed October 1, 2002
9. I9 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed October 3, 2002
10. I10 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed October 8, 2002
11. I11 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed October 9, 2002
12. I12 Former State 4-H Council Advisor, interviewed November 5, 2002
13. I13 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed November 14, 2002
14. I14 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed November 14, 2002
15. I15 Former State 4-H Council Member, interviewed December 2, 2002

**VITA**

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