



---

## A Descriptive View of the 4-H Club Experience Through the Lens of 4-H Youth

**Lisa A. Guion**

Agricultural & Extension Education  
North Carolina State University  
Raleigh, NC  
[Lisa\\_Guion@ncsu.edu](mailto:Lisa_Guion@ncsu.edu)

**Blanca E. Rivera**

Department of Education  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, FL



## A Descriptive View of the 4-H Club Experience Through the Lens of 4-H Youth

Lisa A. Guion  
North Carolina State University

Blanca E. Rivera  
University of Florida

**Abstract:** 4-H like other youth development programs should be generally marked by the presence of three features of optimal youth programming:

1. youth participation and leadership,
2. positive adult-youth relationships, and
3. skill building activities (Lerner, 2004).

This paper reviews a study which examined the extent to which 4-H youth felt they had "opportunities" to engage in different learning experiences, and provide leadership to those experiences within their clubs. The study also examined the youth's perceptions about whether their experience in the 4-H Club helped them spend more time with their parents, have a positive relationship with another adult and do things independently.

An examination of whether there is a difference in life skill development in 4-H based on certain key demographic variables is also discussed.

The results of this study are shared as well as implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

### Introduction

4-H Youth Development (4-H) is the national youth-serving organization of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). 4-H like other youth development programs should be generally marked by the presence of three features of optimal youth programming:

1. youth participation and leadership,

2. positive adult-youth relationships, and
3. skill building activities (Lerner, 2004).

In this paper, the results of a cross-sectional descriptive evaluation study of a 4-H Youth Development club program based on those three key features are shared.

Using experiential, research-based curricula, 4-H offers many opportunities for youth to be active participants in learning. "All 4-H curricula and projects, regardless of the differences in content area, provide youth with experiences that foster the development of skills and encourage them to become contributing, caring members of their communities" (Mincemoyer, & Perkins, 2001). 4-H also uses a variety of different delivery modes to reach youth (e.g. community club, camps, after school, school enrichment, etc.). While curricula, activities and delivery modes certainly will and must vary in content and structure, the bottom line is clear that youth need to have opportunities to participate in multiple types of activities that interest them (Theokas, Lerner, Phelps, & Lerner, 2006). Therefore, this study examined the extent to which 4-H youth felt that they have "opportunities" to engage in different learning experiences, and provide leadership to those experiences within their clubs. The study also explored those learning experiences 4-H'ers felt they engaged in most frequently.

In keeping with the Lerner framework, in addition to positive relationships with their parents, youth need positive, supportive, mentoring relationships with other caring adults (Perkins, & Butterfield, 1999; Bogenschneider, & Olsen, 1998). The literature is clear that the most positive youth-adult relationship experiences are those with supportive adults willing to share power with youth and give youth opportunities to lead (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002; Jones, 2006; Perkins, Borden, & Villarruel, 2001). This study examined the youth's perceptions about whether their experience in the 4-H Club helped them spend more time with their parents, have a positive relationship with another adult and do things independently. In addition, this study explored whether 4-H youth felt they received positive feedback from the club leader and helped make decisions in their club.

Building critical life skills is an integral part of positive youth development. The development of life skills through experiential learning continues to be the cornerstone of 4-H youth programming. Numerous studies have shown that it is important to include learning experiences that build and/or enhance life skills into 4-H and other youth development programs (Peterson et al., 2000; Seevers, & Dormody, 2000). Further studies have shown that participation in 4-H does contribute to life skill development (Astroth, & Haynes, 2002; Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992).

Using a Life Skills Improvement Scale that had been tested and validated as reliable (Guion, & Rivera, 2006), this study examined whether 4-H youth felt they have increased nineteen key life skills that prevailed in the literature. In an examination of the current literature there were very few studies that looked descriptively to assess whether there is a difference in life skill development in 4-H based on certain key demographic variables. Also, to date, no studies were found that examined whether there is a relationship between the learning experiences and the life skills that 4-H youth develop.

In essence, this study provides a more descriptive examination of the 4-H club experience by assessing the extent to which 4-H youth perceived their club experience as containing the three key features for youth development:

- 1) youth participation and leadership,
- 2) positive adult-youth relationships, and
- 3) skill building activities.

In addition to evaluating whether these key features are present, this study also examined the relationship between certain club experiences and life skill development. While not specific to 4-H, other studies have documented significant differences in participation in after-school activities (i.e. types of activities, number of activities, etc.) based on key demographic variables (Bouffard, Wimer, Caronongan, Little, & Dearing, 2006). Therefore, this study provides insight as to whether perceived life skill development also varied for 4-H youth who differ based on gender, race and age.

## Methods

### Participants

Participants of the study were 126 youth members of 4-H Clubs in Florida, of which 36% (n=45) were male and 64% (n=79) female. The average age was 13.8 years, ranging from 7 to 18 years old. Participants have been members of 4-H an average of 4.7 years ranging from 2 months to 12 years. More than half (66%, n=83) of the youth in this study described themselves as Caucasian/White, 22% as African-American (n=28), 7% as Hispanic/Latino (n=9), and 5% described themselves as Other (n=6). Participants and their parents signed informed consent forms and no compensation was provided for participation in the study.

### Instrument

Astroth and Haynes (2002) assert that 4-H clubs are intentionally designed to include the eight critical elements necessary for positive youth development:

- Positive relationships with caring adults;\*
- Opportunities for self-determination;\*
- An accepting and inclusive environment;\*
- Opportunities to contribute through community service;\*
- A safe environment for learning and growing;
- Opportunities to develop skills and mastery;\*
- Engagement in learning\*; and
- Opportunities to be an active participant in life- now and in the future."

The evaluation instrument consisted of three sections. The first section asked questions related to six of those critical elements (\* indicates those elements included in the instrument). For example, study participants were asked how often they were given a *chance* to do service projects in their community, make decisions in their club, etc. They were also asked how often they had *actually* helped decide which projects to do in their club for example.

The second section of the evaluation instrument was the Life Skills Improvement Scale that includes the 19 indicators of life skills development. Each indicator used a five point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The items included in the instrument were determined by conducting two strategic steps. First, the researcher surveyed the literature that conceptualized 4-H life skills. For example, life skills from the Targeting Life

Skills model (Hendricks, 1998) were identified. Ultimately, life skills from the Texas 4-H evaluation instrument, which is based on the Hendrix model, were adapted for use in the Life Skills Improvement Scale. The Texas model was adapted because “the youth development skills section is a set of statements that are relevant to all project experiences and to youth of all ages and backgrounds.” (Howard, et al., 2001, p. 2).

Second, nine Extension 4-H Agents from different districts in the state of Florida were asked to select the life skills that their 4-H program targets. They were also encouraged to add to or refine the list of life skills. Those items that had the greatest level of consensus were chosen for inclusion in the Life Skills Improvement Scale. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for the Life Skills Improvement Scale was .88 above the typical conservative target of at least .80 (Guion, & Rivera, 2006). The scale was also found to be face valid and had a very high content validity index of 3.8 out of possible 4 (Guion, & Rivera, 2006). The last section of the evaluation instrument contained key demographic questions.

A copy of the evaluation instrument is provided as an Appendix.

### Implementation

Using a cross-sectional survey design, the instrument was administered at the beginning of a regular 4-H club meeting. Each 4-H Agent participating in the study was provided with consent forms that were signed by the parents, as well as detailed instructions and a script in order to make administration of the instrument more consistent across sites. They were also provided postage paid envelopes to return the survey.

## Findings and Implications for Practice and/or Further Research

### Opportunity to Engage In Different Learning Experiences that Foster Youth Participation and Leadership

Participants “frequently” engaged in different learning experiences that are integral to youth development. Opportunities for having fun was the most frequent (M=4.41, SD=.72) followed by opportunities to “feel like part of a group” (M=4.39, SD=.85). Only “sometimes” they had the opportunity to “be a leader” (M=3.44, SD=1.35) or “speak before a group” (M=3.56, SD=1.28) (See Table 1).

**Table 1**

Means and standard deviations of opportunities given to club members

How often were you given the CHANCE TO...	M	SD	N
have fun	4.41	.72	126
make new friends	3.89	1.07	126
feel like part of a group	4.39	.85	125
make decisions	3.91	1.06	126
speak before a group	3.56	1.28	124
be a leader	3.44	1.35	124
do service projects	3.95	1.06	126
learn record-keeping	3.73	1.15	126
Use parliamentary procedure at club meetings	3.75	1.24	124

Scale: 1) Never 2) Rarely 3) Sometimes 4) Frequently 5) Always

Giving youth the opportunity to develop leadership skills by providing him/her with opportunities to “be a leader” and “speak before a group” are important. These results suggest that club leaders need to find out from the youth what leadership roles they would like to have, then coach and support them in carrying out those roles.

### Learning Experiences Related to Positive Youth-Adult Relationships

Participants frequently “received positive feedback” (M=4.15, SD=1.01); spent time with their parents because of 4-H (4.03, SD=1.07), and “felt successful” (M=4.04, SD=.97). “Been a leader” (M=3.30, SD=1.38) and “spoken before a group” (M=3.35, SD=1.40) were the least frequent experiences they felt that they engaged in with their 4-H club. (See Table 2).

**Table 2**  
Mean and standard deviations

How often have you ACTUALLY.....	M	SD	N
spoken before a community group	3.35	1.40	125
felt successful	4.04	.97	125
been a leader	3.30	1.38	120
help decide which project to do in your club	3.66	1.18	122
learned a new skill	3.67	1.23	121
received positive feedback from the club leader	4.15	1.01	121
felt that the club leader respected your input/ideas	4.01	.95	125
spent time with your parents because of 4-H	4.03	1.07	124

Scale: 1) Never 2) Rarely 3) Sometimes 4) Frequently 5) Always

Some results related to positive adult-youth relationships are encouraging. The club leaders are providing positive feedback and help youth feel successful, respected and heard. Youth are also spending more time with their parents because of 4-H. However, learning by doing also has been the fundamental principle of 4-H since its inception (Woloshuk, Brown, & Wagaman, 1999). Therefore, more strategies must be employed to provide all youth in the club with opportunities to actually assume more leadership roles, beyond just the club officers, and speaking before community groups. Club leaders should also make sure youth get the opportunity to help decide which projects the club will do (self-determination). These all contribute to positive youth development.

### Experience in the 4-H Club

Almost all participants (93%) indicated that their experience in the club helped them to “get along well with others in a group.” More than eighty percent of participants indicated that their experience in the club helped them to “do things independently,” “expect good things from themselves,” “have a positive relationship with an adult,” and “accept other’s views.” (See Table 3).

**Table 3**  
Experience in the 4-H club

My experience in the 4-H club helped me to	No		Yes		Not Sure	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
have a positive relationship with an adult	6	4.8	102	81.6	16	12.8
do things on my own (independently)	2	1.6	110	88.8	12	9.6
accept other's views	4	3.2	100	80.0	21	16.8
get along well with others in a group	4	3.2	116	92.8	5	4.0
expect good things from myself	1	.8	111	88.8	13	10.3

N=125

### Improvement in Life Skills

Participants indicated an increase in the following skills as a result of 4-H club activities and projects: serving the community or volunteering (M=3.17, SD=.87), setting goals (M=3.14, SD=.78), making decisions (M=3.10, SD=.75), leading a healthier lifestyle (M=3.02, SD=.78), and feeding and caring for animal/pet (M=3.01, SD=.90). Mean scores for the other 14 life skill indicators ranged from 2.43 to 2.99. These mean scores are relatively low given the emphasis on life skill development within 4-H Youth Development. Further study is needed to fully examine these implications. (See Table 4).

**Table 4**  
Means and standard deviation of ability developed by club members in several skills

As a result of 4-H, I improved my ability to...	M	SD	N
keep accurate records	2.85	.78	125
plan/organized	2.99	.79	126
set goals	3.14	.78	126
solve problems	2.91	.80	126
make decisions	3.10	.75	126
serve my community or volunteer	3.17	.87	125
lead a group	2.76	.91	126
get ready for a job	2.90	.85	122
plan my career	2.84	.86	122
speak publicly	2.93	.87	126
write more clearly	2.85	.80	125
resolve conflicts	2.81	.80	124
Sew	2.48	.91	124
Cook	2.63	.83	124
groom an animal/pet	2.87	.94	122
feed and care for animal/pet	3.01	.90	122
lead a healthier lifestyle	3.02	.78	125
use a computer or other technology	2.93	.88	122
learn photography or other media	2.71	.86	120

Scale: 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Disagree

### Differences in the Skills Improved based on the Gender of 4-H Club Member

T-tests were conducted to examine the difference by gender. Results showed that the ability to write more clearly increased more in females (M=2.97, SD=.84) than in males (M=2.64, SD=.71) ( $t(122) = 2.22, p < .05$ ). An explanatory study is needed to determine whether this difference was due to the types of projects that girls select compared to those that boys prefer. For example, do girls engage more with activities and projects requiring journaling and/or keeping records? If so, then naturally girls would be developing writing skills more. Gender differences were also found in the ability to sew, where females (M=2.64, SD=.93) scored higher than males (M=2.25, SD=.78) ( $t(120) = 2.37, p < .05$ ). This difference may be the result of there simply being more females involved in club projects related to clothing/sewing. However, it is very encouraging that 17 of the 19 life skills developed did not differ significantly for boys and girls. 4-H has always maintained its gender neutrality. This result supports that claim. (See Table 5).

**Table 5**

Group differences for the skills improved by gender

As a result of 4-H, I improved my ability to... (Likert Scale)	Males			Females			t	DF
	M	SD	n	M	SD	N		
keep accurate records	2.68	.85	45	2.94	.74	78	1.68	121
plan/organize	2.87	.87	45	3.08	.75	79	1.41	122
set goals	3.04	.77	45	3.20	.79	79	1.08	122
solve problems	3.02	.72	45	2.84	.84	79	1.25	122
make decisions	3.13	.73	45	3.08	.76	79	.41	122
serve my community or volunteer	3.11	.81	44	3.19	.91	79	.46	121
lead a group	2.67	.90	45	2.81	.92	79	.84	122
get ready for a job	2.96	.77	45	2.87	.91	75	.55	118
plan my career	2.82	.78	45	2.85	.91	75	.19	118
speak publicly	2.82	.89	45	3.00	.86	79	1.09	122
write more clearly	2.64	.71	45	2.97	.84	78	2.22*	121
solve conflicts	2.84	.81	44	2.79	.81	78	.30	120
sew	2.25	.78	44	2.64	.93	78	2.37*	120
cook	2.60	.75	45	2.69	.85	77	.58	120
groom an animal/pet	2.76	.83	45	2.92	.99	75	.93	118
feed and care for animal/pet	2.89	.83	45	3.01	.95	75	1.04	118
lead a healthier lifestyle	3.02	.69	45	3.01	.83	78	.06	121
use a computer/other technology	2.98	.87	45	2.88	.90	75	.58	118
learn photography or other media	2.76	.86	45	2.70	.76	73	.35	116

\*  $p < .05$  two-tailed

### Differences in Life Skills Improvement based on the Race/Ethnicity of the 4-H Club Member

Because only 7 participants identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino and 5 indicated "other," t-test analyses were conducted only with the group of African-American/Black and Caucasian/White 4-H youth. Results showed that African-American/Black participants scored

significantly higher than Caucasian/White in planning/organizing, setting goals, writing more clearly, solving problems, sewing, cooking, using a computer, and learning photography. (See Table 6).

**Table 6**  
Group differences for the skills improved by group of race/ethnicity

As a result of 4-H, I improved my ability to... (Likert Scale)	African-American			Caucasian/White			T	DF
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N		
keep accurate records	2.96	.71	27	2.77	.82	82	1.10	107
plan/organize	3.28	.66	28	2.89	.82	82	2.32**	108
set goals	3.61	.50	28	3.00	.80	82	3.76*	108
solve problems	2.82	.98	28	2.94	.74	82	.66	108
make decisions	3.21	.74	28	3.01	.75	82	.86	108
serve my community or volunteer	3.39	.92	28	3.04	.87	81	1.84	107
lead a group	2.82	.90	28	2.78	.93	82	.20	108
get ready for a job	3.00	1.04	25	2.93	.82	81	.37	104
plan my career	2.88	.88	25	2.95	.85	81	.36	104
speak publicly	2.86	1.04	28	2.93	.86	82	.51	108
write more clearly	3.25	.70	28	2.72	.78	81	3.21*	107
solve conflicts	3.15	.91	27	2.70	.77	81	2.49**	106
Sew	3.22	.89	27	2.27	.74	81	5.48*	106
Cook	3.15	.77	27	2.52	.73	81	3.84*	106
groom an animal/pet	2.56	1.08	25	2.98	.89	81	1.93	104
feed and care for animal/pet	2.72	1.06	25	3.12	.86	81	1.94	104
lead a healthier lifestyle	3.21	.77	28	2.99	.77	81	1.34	107
use a computer or other technology	3.43	.74	28	2.78	.88	78	3.48*	104
learn photography or other media	3.21	.77	24	2.59	.82	80	3.28*	102

\* p<.01 two-tailed. \*\* p<.05 two-tailed

These results suggest that the aforementioned skills were improved more in the group of African-Americans than in the group of Caucasian/White participants. Mean scores were higher for African-Americans for 14 of the 19 life skills, and significantly (statistically) higher for 8 of the 19. An explanatory study would be needed to determine “why” African-American 4-H youth feel they are improving more skills as a result of 4-H club involvement. For example, further study to examine different ethnic groups’ involvement in other youth programs and therefore could not contribute skill development solely to 4-H. Also, a study to assess any difference in pre-existing knowledge or mastery of skills and perceptions of skill improvement may reveal the reasons behind these results.

### **Difference in Life Skills Improvement based on the Age of the 4-H Club Member**

To examine differences by age the group was divided into two groups, younger participants (from 7 to 13 years old) and older participants (from 14 to 19 years old). Results showed that older participants scored significantly higher than younger ones in leading a group, planning their career, and speaking publicly. (See Table 7) These results suggest that the

forementioned skills increased more in the group of older participants than in the younger group. The increase in the types of skills for the older 4-H youth seems logical given the difference in ages and stages of development between the groups. For example, it is feasible that the older youth would be improving skills in planning their career more so than the younger youth. The key implication for this finding is that irrespective of age, 4-H youth in this study are developing key life skills namely setting goals, making decisions, serving their community/volunteering (i.e. skills where M for both age groups > 3.00).

**Table 7**

Group differences for the skills developed by group of age

As a result of 4-H, I improved my ability to... (Likert Scale)	Younger			Older			t	DF
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N		
keep accurate records	2.75	.78	55	2.93	.79	70	1.30	123
plan/organize	2.89	.88	56	3.07	.73	70	1.26	124
set goals	3.07	.85	56	3.20	.71	70	.92	124
solve problems	2.79	.82	56	3.01	.77	70	1.60	124
make decisions	3.05	.80	56	3.14	.71	70	.67	124
serve my community or volunteer	3.07	.93	56	3.25	.81	69	1.12	123
lead a group	2.43	.91	56	3.03	.82	70	3.89*	124
get ready for a job	2.75	.88	53	3.01	.81	69	1.69	120
plan my career	2.57	.84	53	3.04	.81	69	3.16*	120
speak publicly	2.71	.91	56	3.10	.80	70	2.53*	124
write more clearly	2.88	.85	56	2.83	.77	69	.34	123
solve conflicts	2.78	.88	55	2.84	.74	69	.41	122
sew	2.60	1.06	55	2.38	.75	69	1.37	122
cook	2.76	.92	55	2.52	.74	69	1.62	122
groom an animal/pet	2.81	.98	53	2.91	.90	69	.59	120
feed and care for animal/pet	3.07	.94	53	2.96	.88	69	.72	120
lead a healthier lifestyle	3.14	.72	56	2.93	.81	69	1.55	123
use a computer or other technology	3.06	.91	53	2.83	.86	69	1.44	120
learn photography or other media	2.63	.96	51	2.77	.79	69	.88	118

\* p<.05 two-tailed

### Relationships between the activities done by 4-H Club Members and the Life Skills Improvement

Correlation analyses were conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between the learning experiences 4-H youth engage in and the life skills they develop. Results are shown in Table 8. Only those correlations higher or equal to .30 will be mentioned here. Those participants that actually **spoke before a group** more frequently had an increase in their ability to speak publicly ( $r=.50, p<.01$ ), lead a group ( $r=.49, p<.01$ ), and make decisions ( $r=.35, p<.01$ ). Those who **felt successful** more frequently had an increase in their ability to make decisions ( $r=.37, p<.01$ ), solve problems ( $r=.36, p<.01$ ), groom an animal/pet ( $r=.34, p<.01$ ), keep accurate records ( $r=.32, p<.01$ ), lead a group ( $r=.31, p<.01$ ), serve the

community ( $r=.31, p<.01$ ), get ready for a job ( $r=.31, p<.01$ ), and plan their career ( $r=.30, p<.01$ ).

Participants that **were a leader** more frequently had an increase in their ability to lead a group ( $r=.70, p<.01$ ), serve the community or volunteer ( $r=.40, p<.01$ ), make decisions ( $r=.34, p<.05$ ), and plan/organize ( $r=.33, p<.01$ ). Those who **helped decide which projects to do** in the club had an increase in their ability to serve their community or volunteer ( $r=.37, p<.01$ ), plan/organize ( $r=.36, p<.01$ ), lead a group ( $r=.36, p<.01$ ), and plan their career ( $r=.33, p<.01$ ).

Those who **learned a new skill** had an increase in their ability to write more clearly ( $r=.44, p<.05$ ), learn photography ( $r=.44, p<.01$ ), cook ( $r=.42, p<.01$ ), sew ( $r=.40, p<.01$ ), solve problems ( $r=.34, p<.01$ ), plan/organize ( $r=.32, p<.01$ ), and plan their career ( $r=.32, p<.01$ ). Participants that **received positive feedback from the club leader** more frequently had an increase in their ability to serve the community or volunteer ( $r=.46, p<.01$ ), make decisions ( $r=.38, p<.01$ ), resolve conflicts ( $r=.36, p<.01$ ), solve problems ( $r=.30, p<.01$ ), and learn photography ( $r=.30, p<.01$ ).

Participants who **spent time with their parents** more frequently because of 4-H, had an increase in their ability to plan/organize ( $r=.30, p<.01$ ), write more clearly ( $r=.37, p<.01$ ), keep accurate records ( $r=.36, p<.01$ ), solve problems ( $r=.33, p<.01$ ), set goals ( $r=.33, p<.01$ ), and speak publicly ( $r=.30, p<.01$ ). Finally, those who **used parliamentary procedures at the club meetings** had an increase in their ability to lead a group ( $r=.40, p<.01$ ), plan/organize ( $r=.42, p<.01$ ), serve the community or volunteer ( $r=.40, p<.01$ ), resolve conflicts ( $r=.37, p<.01$ ), learn photography ( $r=.36, p<.01$ ), set goals ( $r=.35, p<.01$ ), make decisions ( $r=.33, p<.01$ ), and speak publicly ( $r=.30, p<.01$ ).

**Table 8**  
Relationship Between Activities and Skills

	Spoke	Success	Leader	Decided	Learned	Feedback	Parents	Meetings
keep accurate records	.22* (124)	.32** (124)	.26* (120)	.18 (121)	.21* (121)	.17 (120)	.36** (123)	.25** (123)
Plan/organize	.24** (125)	.29** (125)	.33** (120)	.36** (122)	.32** (121)	.29** (121)	.39** (124)	.42** (124)
set goals	.10 (125)	.29** (125)	.29** (120)	.22* (122)	.23* (121)	.27* (121)z	.33** (124)	.35** (124)
solve problems	.27** (125)	.21* (125)	.18 (120)	.16 (122)	.12 (121)	.30** (121)	.33** (124)	.21* (124)
make decision	.35** (125)	.37** (125)	.34** (120)	.20* (122)	.29** (121)	.38** (121)	.26** (124)	.33** (124)
serve my community	.21* (124)	.31** (124)	.40** (119)	.37** (121)	.18 (120)	.46** (120)	.26** (123)	.40** (123)
Lead a group	.49** (125)	.31** (125)	.70** (120)	.36** (122)	.12 (121)	.21* (121)	.13 (124)	.48** (124)
get ready for a job	.15 (121)	.31** (121)	.24** (117)	.22* (118)	.28* (118)	.26** (117)	.26** (120)	.28** (120)
Plan my career	.16 (121)	.30** (121)	.25** (117)	.33** (118)	.32** (118)	.23* (117)	.26** (120)	.23* (120)
speak publicly	.50** (125)	.25** (125)	.22* (120)	.22* (122)	.21* (121)	.24** (121)	.30** (124)	.30** (124)
write more clearly	-.03 (124)	.22* (124)	.16 (119)	.23* (121)	.44* (120)	.23* (120)	.37** (123)	.24** (123)
resolve conflicts	.24** (123)	.36** (123)	.31** (120)	.22* (120)	.34** (120)	.36** (119)	.23* (122)	.37** (122)
Sew	-.08 (123)	.08 (123)	.21* (118)	.23* (120)	.40** (119)	.19* (119)	.10 (122)	.20* (122)
Cook	-.14 (123)	-.01 (123)	-.00 (118)	.06 (120)	.42** (119)	-.08 (119)	.05 (122)	-.01 (122)
groom an animal/pet	-.04 (121)	.34** (121)	.05 (117)	.16 (118)	.12 (118)	.25** (117)	.24** (120)	.05 (120)
Feed & care for animal/pet	-.12 (121)	.29** (121)	-.02 (117)	.06 (118)	.21* (118)	.19* (117)	.26** (120)	.08 (120)
Lead a healthier lifestyle	-.04 (124)	.25** (124)	.15 (119)	.10 (121)	.27** (120)	.26** (120)	.17 (123)	.18 (123)
use a computer or other technology	-.11 (121)	.13 (121)	.16 (116)	.15 (118)	.27** (118)	.22* (117)	.18 (120)	.26** (120)
learn photography or other media	.04 (119)	.36** (119)	.15 (115)	.12 (116)	.44** (117)	.30** (116)	.24** (118)	.36** (118)

Note: Spoken = spoken before a group. Success = felt successful. Leader = been a leader. Decided = helped decide which projects to do in the club. Learned = learned new skills. Feedback = received positive feedback from the club leaders. Parents = spend time with parents because of 4-H. Meetings = used parliamentary procedures at a club meeting.  
\* p<.01. The number of respondents is in parenthesis.

### Further Study

More descriptive studies that look at what specific learning experiences are being provided in 4-H clubs and how these experiences contribute to the critical elements of positive youth development are warranted. This study has demonstrated that we can not only look at outcomes and impacts of programming without spending enough time assessing and understanding the learning experiences and environments that are supposed to produce those outcomes/impacts.

This study focused only on the 4-H Club delivery system. Additional studies with youth who are involved with 4-H through other delivery modes such as 4-H After-school Programming, 4-H Camping Program, or 4-H School Enrichment would be very helpful in examining the different contexts in which 4-H Youth Development is taking place. This type of study is not limited to 4-H youth development. Other youth serving organizations could conduct a similar study.

Additionally, while the sample size was sufficient for statistical analysis, further studies should be conducted with larger sample sizes that have even greater age, gender, and race/ethnic diversity.

Finally, given the nature of descriptive studies, a foundation was laid for more specific research questions that must be answered through explanatory research that can answer the question "why." Descriptive studies like the one presented in this paper can provide the catalyst for further scholarship and refinement of knowledge in the field of 4-H Youth Development.

## Conclusion

4-H youth development has a long, rich history of enhancing the lives of young people across this nation. Descriptive studies like the one presented in this paper provide a glimpse into the 4-H Club which is one of the hallmark 4-H programming delivery systems. These types of studies help us examine what 4-H youth perceive to be key elements of positive youth development that are being reinforced through their club experience. In this study, the key elements of positive youth development that were explored included:

- 1) youth participation and leadership,
- 2) positive adult-youth relationships, and
- 3) skill building activities.

By focusing even more purposefully on designing and implementing learning experiences that reflect positive youth development, 4-H will continue to be a powerful, proven program of excellence in the field of youth development.

## References

Astroth, K.A., & Haynes, G.W. (2002). More than cows and cooking: Newest research shows the impact of 4-H. *Journal of Extension*, 40(4). Available online at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2002august/a6.shtml>

Bogensneider, K., & Olsen, J. (1998). Building resiliency and reducing risks: What youth need from families and communities. (research brief) Madison, WI: Wisconsin Family Impact Seminars.

Bouffard, S.M., Wimer, C., Caronongan, P., Little, P.M.D, & Dearing, E. (2006). Demographic differences in patterns in youth out-of-school time activity participation. *Journal of Youth Development: Bridging Research and Practice*, 1 (2). Available online at: [http://www.nae4ha.org/directory/jyd/jyd\\_article.aspx?id=ac838aeb-7ab2-4ca1-bac0-26ccac9637d6](http://www.nae4ha.org/directory/jyd/jyd_article.aspx?id=ac838aeb-7ab2-4ca1-bac0-26ccac9637d6)

Boyd, B.L., Herring, D.R., & Briers, G.E. (1992). Developing life skills in youth. *Journal of Extension*, 30 (4). Available online at <http://www.joe.org/joe/1992winter/a4.html>

Dziuban, C.D., & Shirkey, E.C. (1974). When is a correlation matrix appropriate for factor analysis? Some decision rules. *Psychological Bulletin*, 81(6), 358-361.

Guion, L.A., & Rivera, B.E. (2006). Development of a measure of youth's perceptions of the benefits of 4-H involvement. *Journal of Youth Development: Bridging Research and Practice*, 1 (2). Available online at [http://www.nae4ha.org/directory/jyd/jyd\\_article.aspx?id=151e1148-af2c-4f1c-b51c-ef5de5649b2b](http://www.nae4ha.org/directory/jyd/jyd_article.aspx?id=151e1148-af2c-4f1c-b51c-ef5de5649b2b)

Hendricks, P. (1998). Targeting life skills model. Iowa State University. Available online at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4H/lifeskills>

Howard, J.W., Boleman, C.T., Alvey, A., Burkhum, A.B., Chilek, K.D., Stone, C.C., et al. (2001). Developing a program evaluation instrument for Texas 4-H: A work in progress. *Journal of Extension*, 39(4). Available online at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2001august/iw4.html>

Jekielek, S.M., More, K.A., Hair, E.C., & Scarupa, H.J. (2002, February). Mentoring: A promising strategy for youth development (research brief). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

Jones, K.R. (2006). Relationships matter: A mixed method evaluation of youth and adults working together as partners. *Journal of Youth Development ~ Bridging Research and Practice*, 1(2). Available online at: [http://www.nae4ha.org/directory/jyd/jyd\\_article.aspx?id=8cf1e185-60d4-4833-bf55-9e5cfffba1](http://www.nae4ha.org/directory/jyd/jyd_article.aspx?id=8cf1e185-60d4-4833-bf55-9e5cfffba1)

Kleinbaum, D.G., Kupper, L.L., & Muller, K.E. (1988). *Applied regression analysis and other multivariable methods* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: PWS-Kent Publ.

Lerner, R.M. (2004). *Liberty: Thriving and civic engagement among American youth*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mincemoyer, C.C., & Perkins, D.F. (2001). Building your youth development toolkit: A community youth development orientation for Pennsylvania 4-H/youth programs. *Journal of Extension*, 39(4). Available online at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2001august/a7.html>

Perkins, D.F., Borden, L.M., & Villarruel, F.A. (2001). Community youth development: A partnership for change. *School Community Journal*, 11, 39-56.

Perkins, D.F., & Butterfield, J.R. (1999). Building an asset-based program in 4-H. *Journal of Extension*, 37 (4). Available online at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1999august/a2.html>

Peterson, B., Gerhard, G., Hunter, K., Marek, L., Phillips, C., & Titcomb A. (2000). National 4-H impact assessment project: Perspectives from a nationwide survey. National 4-H. Available online at: <http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov>

Seevers, B.S., & Dormody, T.J. (2000). 4-H youth participation in leadership development activities: A tri-state study. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 35 (4), 49-54.

Theokas, C., Lerner, J.V., Phelps, E., & Lerner, R.M. (2006). Cacophony and change in youth after school activities: Findings from the 4-H study on positive youth development. *Journal of Youth Development ~ Bridging Research and Practice* 1(1). Available online at: [http://www.nae4ha.org/directory/jyd/jyd\\_article.aspx?id=5adc7e52-3885-4fd4-b981-c6e72b9841d1](http://www.nae4ha.org/directory/jyd/jyd_article.aspx?id=5adc7e52-3885-4fd4-b981-c6e72b9841d1)

Woloshuk, J.M., Brown, G., & Wagaman, G.D. (1999). 4-H projects: Is completion important? *Journal of Extension*, 37(5). Available online at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1999october/4b5.html>

---

© Copyright of Journal of Youth Development ~ Bridging Research and Practice. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without copyright holder's express written permission. Contact Editor at: [patricia.dawson@oregonstate.edu](mailto:patricia.dawson@oregonstate.edu) for details. However, users may print, download or email articles for individual use.

ISSN 2325-4009 (Print); ISSN 2325-4017 (Online)