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Perceptions of County Extension 4-H Agents/ Educators Regarding Essential Elements and Delivery Modes of Positive Youth Development and Their Collective Impact on Character

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PERCEPTIONS OF COUNTY EXTENSION 4-H AGENTS/EDUCATORS
REGARDING ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS AND DELIVERY MODES OF POSITIVE
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND THEIR COLLECTIVE IMPACT ON CHARACTER

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
Kellye Shofner Rembert
August 2009

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate the perceptions of county 4-H agents/educators regarding the level of emphasis placed on the eight elements (caring adult, safe environment, mastery, service, self-determination, inclusiveness, futuristic view, and engagement) in each of the four delivery modes (clubs, special interest, school enrichment, and camping). Participants were also asked to give their perceptions of the character in action of the youth participating in the county 4-H program. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was used to collect data regarding agent/educator perceptions. Participants responded to a web-based survey and provided 4-H youth demographic information from ES237 Federal enrollment reports. Three research questions were examined. Descriptive statistics indicated that 4-H agents/educators perceived an overall moderate emphases of the eight elements in club activities. Agents/educators perceived an overall moderate level of emphasis on the elements with respect to special interest, school enrichment, and camping. County 4-H agents/educators were somewhat confident concerning the character in action of the youth participating in county 4-H programs. Pearson's correlation indicated moderately positive and significant relationships between total character in action of youth and 4-H club and special interest activities. For 4-H school enrichment and camp activities, results showed significant, yet low positive relationships with character development. The findings from this study supported earlier research regarding the impact of 4-H youth development. More research is needed in terms of integrating the perspectives of youth, parents, and alumni with those of the county extension professionals designing and developing 4-H programs.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all of the devoted 4-H youth development professionals who inspired this research. And, to Peaches – my writing companion.

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To thank everyone would be meaningless. To thank no one would be safe (Rembert, 2009).

Dr. Frankie Keels Williams...thank you. You are my rock. Your timeless efforts to make sure that this was my best work will never go unappreciated. Your comforting smile never hurt, either! Thank James for me, too, please. Dr. Fran Wolak...thank you. You have been a source of renewal throughout this degree...throughout my career. I cherish the confidence you've shown in me. Thank Pam for me, too, please. Dr. Larry Grimes...thank you. I will always think of you when I see a cartridge in a bare tree...bless your heart. Thank Mrs. Grimes for me, too, please. Dr. James Satterfield...thank you. I would never pick you last on the playground because you were born and went to work. Thank your wife and precious children for me, too, please.

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I, now, acknowledge the potential of my future. I have come this far and refuse to dismiss where I must go.

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Character and life skill development are central to the mission of the 4-H program (Boyd et al., 1992; Rodriguez, et al., 1999; Astroth & Haynes, 2002). Through a synthesis of 28 studies and reports, Mulroy and Kraimer-Rickaby (2006) analyzed how 4-H participation initiated and prolonged the development of a number of individuals' abilities. The studies found that 4-H Alumni and current 4-H members perceived the following as critical life skills and catalysts for positive character development: (a) communication, (b) getting along with others/interpersonal communication, (c) management, and (d) working with or leading groups and understanding self. The 4-H alumni and members reported having acquired these attributes through their 4-H experiences.

Moreover, approximately six million youth participate in 4-H programs across the United States each year (*National 4-H Enrollment Statistics*, 2008). The contemporary experiences of 4-H youth development include projects and activities in the areas of science and technology, healthy lifestyles, leadership, and community service. Active 4-H members participate in clubs, camps, special interest programs, and school enrichment. These delivery modes are designed to foster positive youth development (Walker & Dunham, 1994) and are based upon eight essential elements of the 4-H experience identified by the Critical Elements work group (Peterson et al., 2001). These elements include (a) a caring adult, (b) a safe environment, (c) mastery, (d) service, (e) self-determination, (f) inclusiveness, (g) opportunities to consider one's active participation in

the future, and (h) engagement (Gambone et al., 2002; Kress, 2005). The eight essential elements and four delivery modes of the 4-H experience help to clarify the meaning of 4-H by providing definable terms and categories for agents, educators, and other stakeholders (Kress, 2005; Walker & Dunham, 1994).

County 4-H agents/educators are identified as the youth development professionals of the Cooperative Extension Service to coordinate local 4-H volunteers and programs to meet the needs and interests of community youth (Howard, 2001). County 4-H agents/educators are charged with the responsibility of guiding the youth to become capable and productive citizens. The agents/educators determine how the county youth development programs are delivered by utilizing research-based information and resources from their respective land-grant institution. For the first eight decades of the 4-H program, testimonials by youth participants and their parents provided the majority of evidence for the effectiveness and impact of the 4-H program (Howard, 2001). Leaders and scholars recognized during the 1980s that empirical data were critical for a deeper understanding of the perceived effects of 4-H participation (Howard, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

National statistics showed approximately 31% of youth ages 16 to 19 dropped out of school (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center [EPE], 2006). Moreover, reports indicated that nearly one million students in the United States drop out of school every year (Monrad, 2007). Students that drop out of school are more likely to engage in behaviors that have profound negative effects on their lives (Lamm et al., 2005).

Unemployment, crime, and poor health rates are elevated among those individuals who do not finish high school (EPE Research Center, 2006; Reimer & Smink, 2005). In general, studies showed that costs related to significantly low high school completion rates impact all Americans (EPE Research Center, 2006; Monrad, 2007; Reimer & Smink, 2005).

The EPE Research Center (2006) reported, “The cumulative costs to the public from the nation’s dropouts are in the billions, for both lost taxes and spending on social programs” (p. 7). High school dropouts earn approximately \$260,000 less over a lifetime than individuals who complete high school (EPE Research Center, 2006; Monrad, 2007; Reimer & Smink, 2005). Consequently, dropouts contribute about \$60,000 less in income taxes than their peers who did graduate from high school. A total of \$10.8 billion a year in federal welfare, food stamp, and public housing is spent on high school dropouts (EPE Research Center 2006),.

Other evidence of the negative impact of the high school dropout trend were presented by the National Dropout Center (Reimer & Smink, 2005):

1. America’s state prison populations include 75% high school dropouts.
2. Approximately 59% of America’s federal prison inmates did not complete high school.
3. High school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested in their lifetime (p. 8).

The aforementioned examples of the dire state of the dropout situation are accompanied by fiscal responsibilities passed on to American taxpayers. However, should the male high school completion rate increase by just one percent, approximately \$1.4 billion a

year in incarceration costs would be saved (EPE Research Center, 2006; Monrad, 2007; Reimer & Smink, 2005). Finally, those individuals who fail to complete high school experience poorer overall health than their graduated peers. As a result, dropouts are more likely to use publicly assisted medical programs than high school graduates (EPE Research Center, 2006; Monrad, 2007; Reimer & Smink, 2005). These additional costs to the taxpayers could be avoided. “If the ... 18-year-olds who failed to graduate in 2004 had advanced one grade, it would save about \$2.3 billion in publicly financed medical care, aggregated over a lifetime” (EPE Research Center, 2006, p. 7). For the reasons mentioned above, it is clear that there is a crucial need to keep youth motivated to stay in school. Efforts to decrease the dropout epidemic require increased development of positive life and character skills in young people (EPE Research Center, 2006; Lamm et al., 2005; Reimer & Smink, 2005).

Support for students was seen traditionally as a role of teachers through school day instruction and interaction (Devaney et al., 2005). However, the limited amount of time afforded teachers to work with students beyond their core academic subjects poses a gap in social education opportunities (Devaney et al., 2005). Add the increased tendency for parents or guardians to work outside of the home and the likelihood that young people engage in character-building interaction is slight (Huitt, 2004). Community youth development organizations, like 4-H, stand in the gap between academic and social education (Lerner et al., 2002; Lerner et al., 2005). Mulroy and Rickaby (2006) deemed it critical that professionals charged with developing and delivering youth development

programs have a clear acuity of indicators for positive youth development that promote character.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this research study was to investigate the perceptions of 4-H agents/educators regarding the essential elements (a caring adult, a safe environment, mastery, service, self-determination, inclusiveness, opportunities to consider one's active participation in the future, and engagement) and delivery modes (club, special interest, school enrichment, and camping) of 4-H youth development programming and their collective impact on character. More specifically, the researcher sought to determine if relationships existed between perceived levels of emphases on the essential elements in the 4-H delivery modes and character in action of county 4-H youth members.

A thorough understanding of the eight essential elements of the 4-H experience may enable county 4-H agents/educators to establish a community of youth who exhibit character and are adept at (a) thinking, planning, and reasoning; (b) being kind and sympathetic; (c) being useful, helpful, and skillful; and (d) resisting disease, enjoying life, and being efficient (Kress, 2006). The four delivery modes of the 4-H experience provide a venue to implement the essential elements.

Research Questions

This study investigated the relationships between 4-H agents/educators' perceptions of each of eight essential elements of positive youth development for each of

4-H delivery modes and character. The overarching research question for the study was as follows: How do 4-H agents/educators perceive elements and delivery modes of positive youth development programming and character? The following specific research questions guided the study of county 4-H agents/educators in the United States.

1. To what extent do 4-H county agents/educators perceive as the levels of emphases placed on each of the eight essential elements of the 4-H experience for each of the four delivery modes of 4-H programming?
2. How do 4-H county agents/educators perceive character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of the youth in their county 4-H programs?
3. Do relationships exist between 4-H county agents'/educators' perceptions of the emphases on each of the eight essential elements by each type of delivery mode of the 4-H experience and perceptions of character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of 4-H youth members?

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions for terms and/or classifications used in the study.

The dimension of *acceptance of diversity and attachment to community* measures the degree of caring relationships among youth and the level to which they accept diversity in their peers (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006).

A *caring adult* is an individual, over the age of 21, who is actively involved as an advisor, coach, guide, or mentor and assists in setting boundaries and expectations for young people (Kress, 2005).

Character refers to a set of qualities, or values, that determine our thoughts, actions, reactions and feelings (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

Engagement means being greatly interested and committed to an area of study or project. This includes the development of interpersonal relationships and connections for greater understanding (Kress, 2005).

A *4-H agent/educator* is a paid employee of the Cooperative Extension Service of the Land-Grant University with responsibility for 4-H club and volunteer management, and youth development programming and training in one or more counties (Seevers et al., 1997).

A *4-H camp* is a delivery mode for an Extension-planned educational experience. Overnight camping includes being away from home at least one night (resident, primitive, or travel camping) and is not restricted to members of organized 4-H clubs. Day camping consists of multiple-day programs, with youth returning home each evening (Garst & Bruce, 2003).

A *4-H club* is a delivery mode of an organized group of at least five youth from three different families who meet regularly with adult volunteers or staff for a long-term, progressive series of educational experiences (United States Department of Agriculture, 2008).

A *4-H member* is any youth age 8 (not to exceed age 21) engaged in 4-H club and/or project work (United States Department of Agriculture, 2008).

The *4-H school enrichment* delivery mode includes 4-H program experiences conducted in the classroom as a supplement to school curricula. It involves direct teaching by extension staff or trained volunteers, including teachers (Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service, 2009).

In the *4-H special interest* delivery mode, youth participate in specific learning experiences that involve direct teaching by extension staff or trained volunteers not part of the school curriculum and not restricted to 4-H club members (Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service, 2009).

Youth with a *futuristic view* have the ability to positively see themselves in the future and are able to shape life choices to facilitate the transition into active participation in future events (Kress, 2005).

Inclusiveness characterizes an environment in which a sense of belonging, encouragement and positive feedback for members of that environment (Kress, 2005).

Mastery is the building of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and then demonstrating the competent use of the knowledge and skills in the manner of a proficient practitioner (Kress, 2005).

References to *personal and collective responsibility* include those associated with how students challenge themselves and others to live to their fullest potential according to the standards of a caring community (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006).

Pro-social attitudes incorporate the concepts of empathy, caring, civility, forgiveness, respect, justice/fairness, honesty, tolerance, self-discipline, perseverance, moral courage, and responsibility (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006; Smith et al., 1999).

In a *safe environment* where youth do not fear physical or emotional harm while participating in the 4-H experience whether from the learning environment itself, adults, other participants, or spectators (Kress, 2005).

Youth who exemplify *self-determination* behave in such a way that they have influence over life’s events rather than passively submitting to the will and whims of others (Kress, 2005).

Service is defined as losing “self” by giving of time and effort to others (Kress, 2005).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study includes the variables considered by county 4-H agents/educators in 4-H positive youth development and character. The eight essential elements of the 4-H positive youth development experience and the perceived emphasis in each of the four delivery modes constituted the independent (predictor) variables in this study. Figure 1.1 provides an illustration of the conceptual framework for the study.

Figure 1.1 A Conceptual Framework of the Study

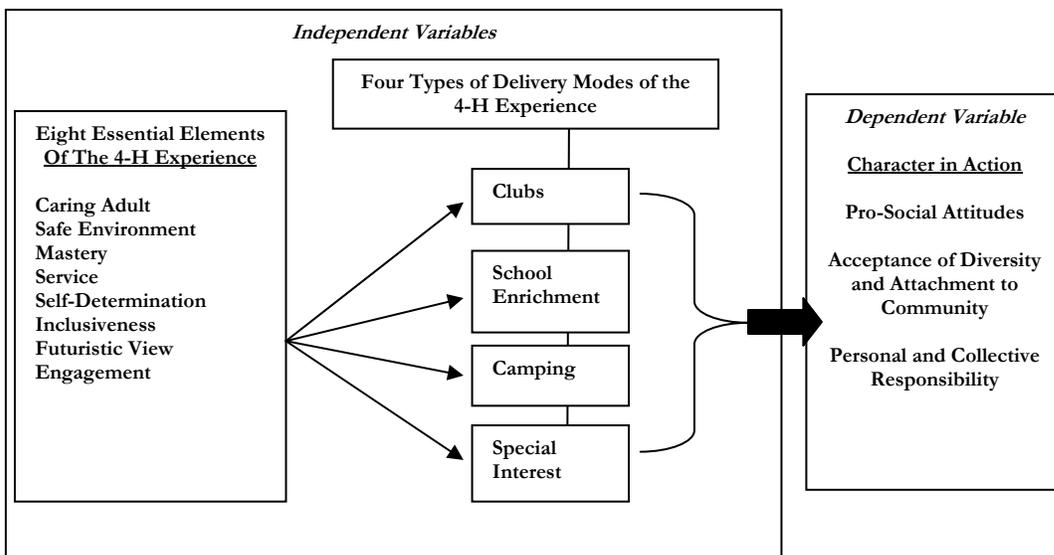


Figure 1 illustrates the existence of the eight essential elements (caring adult, safe environment, mastery, service, self-determination, inclusiveness, futuristic view, and engagement) in each of the four types of delivery modes (clubs, school enrichment, camping, and special interest) of the 4-H experience. The framework suggests the possibility of relationships between these independent variables and three dependent (criterion) variables of character in action: (a) pro-social attitudes; (b) acceptance of diversity and attachment to community; and (c) personal and collective responsibility. Pro-social attitudes indicate the degree to which youth members believe that they apply a breadth of pro-social values (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006; Smith, et al., 1999). Acceptance of diversity and attachment to community refers to youths' tendencies to establish caring relationships with adults and other youth of diverse backgrounds (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006). Finally, personal and collective responsibility reflects the level of immersion at which young people see themselves in their communities (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

This study primarily drew on developmental systems theories (Lerner et al., 2005). In addition, Kress's (2006) content/context of the 4-H experience model, and Sartre's theory of character (Webber, 2006) provided support for theoretical explanations for the study. The essential elements of the 4-H experience matrix developed by Iowa State University (2003) also provided explanations for the study. These theories and models provided a vigorous framework for this study by integrating the concepts of youth

development, 4-H programming and character. The theories focus on positive behaviors as opposed to prevention of negative behaviors.

Developmental systems theory provides for the consideration of positive youth development as a means of reducing problem behaviors and promoting desired outcomes (Lerner et al., 2005). Developmental systems theory embraces an interaction between the individual and the world around them as a means for positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2008). Systems theory considers development over the life-span a product of person-context relations. Embedded in this line of thought is the idea of plasticity (Lerner et al., 2002; Lerner et al., 2008): “The potential that individuals have for systematic change across life” (Lerner et al., 2008, p. 7). This framework supports the principle of positive youth development that promotes the strengths of youth and desired outcomes rather than focusing on the prevention of undesirable behaviors (Lerner et al., 2002; Lerner et al., 2005).

Kress (2006) incorporates the four critical needs of positive youth development as central to the high context experience of 4-H programming. Context refers to the nature of circumstances surrounding an event or experience ultimately determining the meaning of that event. As a result of high context situations, youth should know that they are cared about, feel they are accomplished, recognize that they are influential, and practice selfless assistance to others. The concept of context/content in 4-H youth development integrates three nationally recognized 4-H educational mission areas (science, engineering, and technology; healthy lifestyles; and, citizenship), four critical developmental needs of youth (belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity), and the four major 4-H

delivery modes (clubs, special interest, school enrichment, and camping) (Iowa State University, 2003; Kress, 2006).

An additional theory that supported the study is Sartre's theory of character. His view is that character traits are within an individual's control based upon the projects that one chooses to pursue in life (Webber, 2006). Sartre emphasizes one's ability to resist a pattern of behavior based upon certain character traits. Sartre's theory best speaks to the idea that one's propensity to think, feel, and behave is in response to the activities of one's environment (Webber, 2006).

In addition to the above theories, the essential elements matrix developed by the Iowa State 4-H program team (2003) contributes a comprehensive illustration of positive youth development through four delivery modes of 4-H programming. Although staff and volunteers implement each of the delivery modes with a different approach, all four are designed based upon the set of eight essential elements of the 4-H experience. The eight essential elements include (a) caring adult, (b) safe environment, (c) mastery, (d) service, (e) self-determination, (f) inclusiveness, (g) futuristic view, and (h) engagement. The four delivery modes include clubs, special interest, school enrichment, and camping.

Significance of the Study

County, state, and national policy makers determine the level of fiscal support that 4-H extension programs receive on an annual basis. Parents and community stakeholders depend upon youth development programs that teach youth to be contributing members of society. Young people benefit from the expertise of the youth development

professionals who navigate them through critical decision-making, relationship building, and knowledge building programs and activities. The better equipped 4-H agents/educators are to deliver positive youth development programs, the better the profession is positioned to impact the character of young people.

This study will contribute to the body of research on 4-H youth development by addressing the absence of investigative knowledge concerning the perceptions of county 4-H agents/educators. Results from this study could indicate the level at which 4-H agents/educators consider the 4-H experience as an indicator of character. Findings from this study can be used by leaders and scholars in the field of 4-H youth development to formulate expectations of the 4-H experience and how these experiences may impact character. Policy makers will have access to critical data substantiating continued fiscal support of 4-H Youth Development.

Delimitations

A delimitation of this research is in the nature of its design. The quantitative approach did not allow for qualitative input from 4-H agents/educators as to how or why the eight essential elements and delivery modes of the 4-H experience impact character. In addition, this study was bounded by an exploration of the four major delivery modes of 4-H experience offered at sites throughout the United States. Other modes of delivery may influence character in action of 4-H members. The eight essential elements of the 4-H experience present a pre-defined set of boundaries as prescribed by National 4-H Headquarters.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter includes an introduction to the 4-H Youth Development program and the role that 4-H agents/educators play in the administration of county 4-H programs. This chapter also presents an introduction to the problem of increasing high school dropout rates and the consequences associated with this trend. The purpose of the study, research questions, definitions for terms used in the study, conceptual framework, significance of the study, and delimitations are incorporated in chapter one.

Chapter two focuses on relevant literature and research organized in three sections. The sections cover 4-H and positive youth development, the eight essential elements and four delivery modes of the 4-H experience, and character development. Attention is given to Kress's model of content/context in 4-H and Sartre's theory of character in this chapter.

The third chapter consists of a discussion of the research methodology and design used in this study. The three research questions are included in this chapter to provide clarity for the choice of the design. A cross-sectional quantitative survey research design allowed for the description and determination of relationships among the variables as well as efficient access to information from the large population. The variables, participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis are also included in this section.

Chapter four presents an analysis of the research findings. Tables with descriptive statistics and correlation matrices are displayed with acquired data.

The fifth chapter includes a summary and discussion of the perceptions of 4-H county agents/educators regarding the 4-H experience and the impact that experience has on the youth in the county program. Also included in the fifth chapter are the significant findings from the study along with conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature associated with 4-H youth development and character development were reviewed in this chapter. The first section focuses on 4-H and positive youth development. Nonformal education is discussed as it relates to positive youth development and 4-H. The second section addresses the essential elements and delivery modes of the 4-H experience. The third section includes a discussion and illustration of Kress's (2006) model of Content/Context in 4-H. The next sections of this chapter explore the literature and research related to developmental systems theory and Sartre's theory of character. The chapter concludes with beneficial links between the 4-H experience, positive youth development, and character development.

4-H and Positive Youth Development

The 4-H youth development movement began in response to a growing need for families in rural America to adopt new technological practices based upon research from the Land-Grant University system. What began as corn clubs quickly evolved into organized 4-H programs teaching youth advanced agriculture skills, ultimately becoming the only federally mandated organization of positive youth development (Seevers, et al., 1997; United States Department of Agriculture, 2008). From the program's inception, the educational basis of 4-H youth development was found in three mission areas linked to the Land Grant University and the United States Department of Agriculture: (a) science,

engineering and technology, (b) healthy lifestyles, and (c) citizenship. Embedded in the philosophies of national 4-H leadership and the Land Grant University is the concept of experiential learning (Kress, 2005,2006; Seevers et al., 1997).

Experiential learning opportunities teach knowledge and skills which enhance the quality of life (Kress, 2005, 2006; Miller & Bowen, 1993). The “learn by doing” method of teaching and learning is exemplified in 4-H through the attention to practical application. According to Catalano et al. (1998), positive youth development programs are approaches that seek to achieve one or more of the following objectives.

1. Promotes bonding
2. Fosters resilience
3. Promotes social competence
4. Promotes emotional competence
5. Promotes moral competence
6. Fosters self-determination
7. Fosters spirituality
8. Fosters self-efficacy
9. Fosters clear and positive identity
10. Fosters belief in the future
11. Provides recognition for positive behavior
12. Provides opportunities for prosocial involvement
13. Fosters prosocial norms (¶ 32).

Critical to 4-H and positive youth development are elements of developmental values that most likely result in children who are emotionally and physically healthy (Kress, 2006). These young people are more likely to “demonstrate a sense of maturity and civic engagement as adults and become stronger individuals, creating stronger families and better communities” (United States Department of Agriculture, 2008, ¶ 3).

Nonetheless, concerns exist regarding the well-being of youth. Substantial changes in family structure, community organization, employment opportunities, and economic climate require an innovative approach to youth development (Mincemoyer & Perkins, 2001). Youth development takes place, either positively or negatively, as a result of interaction with family, peers, other adults, and youth groups (Perkins et al., 2001). Consequently, many communities have prioritized the need for positive youth development (Mincemoyer & Perkins, 2001; Perkins et al., 2001). The communities are overhauling their reputations with respect to youth development. This involves developing positive and healthy behaviors in youth while addressing problem behaviors (Perkins et al., 2001).

Historically, the trend has been a focus on the elimination of problems rather than opportunities for positive youth development (Perkins et al., 2001). Perkins et al. offered the following explanation:

The disparity between the desire to create a community that promotes positive and healthy youth development and the ability to actually implement this goal suggests a lack of understanding of critical

components needed for a comprehensive community approach to fostering positive and healthy youth development. (Perkins et al., 2001, p. 42)

Prior to the late 1990s and early 2000s, the literature/research on adolescent behavior and development resounded with the psychological science of Erikson and Piaget as noted by Lerner (2005). Adolescents were viewed as entangled in a period of storm and stress imperiled by an identity crisis. When positive youth development was talked about, it was characterized as the absence of negative behavior (Lerner, 2005; Sarver et al., 2000). Lerner (2005) stated “A youth who was seen as manifesting behavior indicative of positive development was depicted as someone who was not taking drugs...not engaging in unsafe sex...and, not participating in crime or violence” (p. 3). At the conclusion of the 20th century the idea of positive psychology attracted a great deal of attention from youth development researchers (Lerner, 2005). The perspective changed from seeing youth in the position of needing help to one of lifting them up as helpers in society (Delgado, 2002).

In order to prepare youth to forge successfully into their future place in society, it is critical to provide a platform upon which they can base their decision making. Making wise decisions equips youth to further their own positive development (Perkins et al., 2001). Prioritizing the intervention and prevention of negative behaviors delays the impact of programs designed to engage youth in skill-building opportunities (Perkins et al., 2001). “Programs that are designed to foster youth development build on the strengths of young people...[and] they stand in contrast to programs that attempt to ‘fix’ young people” (Quinn, 1999, p. 103). This is not to say that positive youth development

programs ignore prevention – it simply means that the absence of problems is not indicative of being fully prepared for life (Quinn, 1999; Perkins et al., 2001). Positive youth development programs are characterized by a focus on advancement, rather than prevention. Successful development is a more substantial feat than the avoidance of problems (Granger, 2002). The promotion of normal development in challenging and nurturing environments is the baseline expectation of positive youth development programs (Quinn, 1999).

Positive youth development best occurs in environments where youth can realize advanced social roles and individual potential (Calvert, 2005). Environmental characteristics considered the building blocks in the positive development of a young person are often reflective of that individual's personal abilities, values and interests (Perkins et al., 2001; Russell, 2001). Communities committed to positive youth development consider their youth as resources (Quinn, 1999). These youth must be totally engaged as partners in their communities to realize whole development. Perkins et al. (2001) stated, "Fully prepared is not fully participating" (p. 43).

Thriving young people play a functional role in forming their own development through self-prescribed engagement and relationship building (Calvert, 2005). Central to John Dewey's interest in democratic education is the idea of how young people develop identities as contributing citizens. He posited that young people respond to community concerns by getting involved in activities that are meaningful to them (Hildreth, 2004; Russell, 2001). One of the benefits of nonformal education is the ability of youth to explore emerging interests while interacting with society (Calvert, 2005; Russell, 2001).

Nonformal Education

A substantial amount of literature exists explaining the importance of nonformal education in the lives of young people. Findings include reports on 4-H members' versus non-4-H members' success in school, tendency to refrain from at-risk behaviors, and contributions to society (Astroth & Haynes, 2002; Lerner et al., 2008). Studies suggesting a link between positive youth development and nonformal education and/or 4-H focused on three major features of effective programs: positive and sustained relationships between youth and caring adults, activities that cultivate key life skills, and opportunities for youth to employ those life skills for self and society (Lerner, 2005; Lerner et al., 2008). Nonformal educational youth serving organizations, such as 4-H, facilitate the development of individuals as competent, coping, and contributing members of society (Miller & Bowen, 1993; Russell, 2001; Sarver et al., 2000).

According to Fox, Schroeder, and Lodl, "one of the most pressing issues facing youth-serving organizations such as 4-H is how to best support youth in becoming productive, contributing individuals of society" (Fox et al., 2003, ¶ 1). The mission of the Cooperative Extension Service, through 4-H, is to provide opportunities for youth to gain knowledge, develop life skills, and form attitudes better positioning them as self-directing members of their communities (Miller & Bowen, 1993). In a descriptive, mixed model survey of 4-H alumni (Fox et al., 2003), 196 respondents indicated that 4-H participation had some influence on the development of 32 life skills. Those skills that were influenced the most by the 4-H experience were responsibility, product production skills, ability to handle competition, ability to meet new people, working as a family, leadership, project

skills, sportsmanship, presentation skills, self confidence, and willingness to try new things. “The 4-H/Youth program is the most widely recognized of the Extension program areas ... helping young people gain skills needed to become responsible, productive members of society” (Seevers et al., 1997, p. 78).

The categorization of life skills into three major areas – competency, coping, and contributory – is a common organizational theme throughout literature on 4-H positive youth development (Lerner, 2005; Lerner et al., 2008). Scholars conducting research on positive youth development and nonformal education hypothesized that the availability of activities that support competency, coping and contributory life skills would help direct young people toward a life of successful contributions and serve as preventive measures with regards to the engagement of youth in at-risk behaviors (Catalano et al., 2002; Lerner et al., 2008).

Astroth & Haynes (2002) compared 2,500 fifth, seventh and ninth grade students regarding participation in nonformal education programs. “There is a significant number of youth who are not engaged in any structured out-of-school activities” (¶ 7). Students involved in out-of-school activities made better grades and were less likely to engage in at-risk behaviors than those students who were not active in such programs. Further comparisons, in this study, between 4-H and non-4-H members provided significant data concerning perceived levels of proficiency in eight categories of behavior. The categories included leadership, social competency, positive self-identity, relations with adults, self-confidence, empowerment, compassion, and acquired skills. Astroth and Haynes found that 75% of the 4-H members in their study were involved in approximately four out-of-

school activities as well as their 4-H work. Of those same members, 33.4% reported making mostly As, opposed to just 19.6% of their non-4-H counterparts; 32% held elected leadership positions in school while only 20% of non-4-H members shared the same experience; and, just 5% of the 4-H members reported engaging in drug use of any kind which is 6.6% less than that of the non-4-H members surveyed (Astroth & Haynes, 2002). Specifically, this research indicated that Montana 4-H members made positive contributions to their communities at a greater rate than their non-4-H peers. They were also more confident, competent, connected, and caring/compassionate.

A replication of the Montana study was conducted with about 3,600 students in 53 Idaho schools (Goodwin et al., 2005). The results from this study supported the findings of Astroth and Haynes (2002). A strength of this study was that responses from 9th grade students were examined separately from the 5th and 7th graders for eight at-risk behaviors: (a) cheating on a test, (b) alcohol use, (c) shoplifting, (d) drug use, (e) drinking and driving, (f) damaging property, (g) carrying a gun to school, (h) smoking cigarettes, and (i) use of smokeless tobacco. Justification for this adjustment to the original study was that 5th and 7th grade students do not have the level of exposure that their 9th grade peers have to several of the at-risk behaviors. With respect to all grades, 4-H members were significantly less likely to shoplift, use drugs, intentionally damage property and smoke than non-4-H members. Ninth grade 4-H members were far less apt to shoplift, use drugs, intentionally damage property, smoke, or drink alcohol than their non-4-H peers (Goodwin et al., 2005).

Goodwin et al. (2007) conducted a study in Colorado based upon the work of Astroth and Haynes (2002) and Goodwin et al. (2005). The findings in this study were congruent with those in the Montana (Astroth & Haynes, 2002) and the Idaho studies (Goodwin et al., 2005). In each of these studies, students involved in nonformal education programs out of school were better at avoiding at-risk behaviors by making healthy decisions. Moreover, the data showed that Colorado 4-H members “were more likely to help others, had better relationships with adults, were glad to be who they are, and had a significantly more positive outlook on life and the world around them than did non-4-H Youth Development members” (Goodwin et al., 2007, ¶ 26).

The Tufts University study of 4-H youth development provided the initial empirical evidence of the infusion of the Five Cs in nonformal education (Lerner et al., 2005, Lerner et al., 2008). The Five Cs are accepted terms and concepts of positive youth development and are based upon experiences of practitioners (Lerner, 2005). Competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring have been hypothesized as a way to integrate indicators of positive youth development as well as to describe characteristics of successful youth (Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2008).

The first wave of the study included a cohort of approximately 1,700 fifth grade youth and their parents from 13 states. Waves 2 and 3 introduced re-test control groups which became members of new cohorts for the study. By the end of the fourth wave, about 3,500 youth and 1,500 of their parents from more than 25 states participated in the longitudinal sequence study (Lerner, 2005; Lerner et al., 2008). A summary from the study includes the following.

1. Participants who experienced a higher level of positive youth development in the fifth grade contributed to their family and community at a greater rate in the sixth grade than those young people who were not exposed to the same intensity of positive youth development. These same youth were less likely to take part in negative behaviors or show signs of depression.
2. Developmental assets such as out-of-school activities, collaboration with adults on community projects, and engagement with caring adults promoted positive youth development.
3. It is non-productive to concentrate on promoting positive youth development without recognizing the need to address problem behaviors even though they are separate.
4. Causal relationships cannot be assumed between the two.
5. Youth identifying themselves as 4-H members had consistently higher scores on positive youth development, the Five Cs and contribution than their non-4-H peers. These 4-H youth scored lower on measures of depression and negative behaviors. They also had higher grades, more extensive engagement in school, and a more positive outlook on their college aspirations (Lerner et al., 2008, p.11).

In the spring of 1991, 500 4-H members received a leadership skill inventory (Boyd et al., 1992). These youth, ages 13 to 19 and from 19 counties in Texas, were questioned concerning their perceived leadership development as it related to 4-H participation (Boyd et al., 1992). Over 500 non-4-H youth were asked to respond to similar questions about their leadership life-skill development. As a group, 4-H members rated themselves higher than their non-4-H peers on working with groups, understanding self, communicating, and decision making. In a second section of the study, for 4-H members only, participants' responses showed that as their levels of participation in 4-H activities increased, so did their levels of leadership life-skill development (Boyd et al., 1992).

Much of the aforementioned research focused on outcomes that resulted from youth engagement in 4-H programs. Reviewing and synthesizing the essential elements and delivery modes of the 4-H experience are critical for the understanding of the *inputs* of 4-H programming (Mulroy & Rickaby, 2006; Kress, 2005, 2006). Mulroy and Rickaby (2006) recommended that national 4-H leadership and Land Grant University administration work closely with county 4-H staff for a closely aligned understanding of 4-H programming. Doing so will “allow stronger inferences to be made about the dynamics involved in 4-H programming” (p. 17).

Essential Elements and Delivery Modes of the 4-H Experience

The promotion of positive youth development in 4-H programming is directly tied to four critical and eight essential elements in a 4-H experience (Kress, 2005). The critical elements include belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity (Kress, 2005, 2006; Lerner et al., 2008). The eight essential elements consist of (Astroth & Haynes, 2002; Goodwin et al., 2007; Kress, 2005, 2006; Lerner et al., 2008):

1. A positive relationship with a caring adult
2. A safe environment
3. An inclusive environment
4. Engagement in learning
5. Opportunity for mastery
6. A futuristic view
7. Self-determination

8. Service

The four major delivery modes of 4-H programming were designed based on the eight essential elements. The 4-H club, special interest, school enrichment and camping experiences provide youth opportunities for sustained 4-H participation (Kress, 2006). The Iowa State 4-H essential elements matrix (2003) provides a comprehensive visual framework of 4-H positive youth development integrating the four delivery modes and eight essential elements of 4-H programming. Although staff and volunteers implement each of the delivery modes at the local level with different approaches, all four should show evidence of the eight elements (Iowa State University, 2003). The delivery modes characteristic of 4-H distinguish it from other youth development recreational efforts (Russell, 2001).

Essential Elements

The four critical elements encompassing the eight essential elements are represented by “a philosophy that values youth, provides the foundation for the 4-H program, and ensures significant impact” (Goodwin et al., 2007, ¶ 5). These elements were found in the literature to positively influence youth development (Astroth & Haynes, 2002; Goodwin et al, 2007; Kress, 2006; Lerner et al., 2008). The four critical elements include belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

Belonging: Caring Adult, Safe Environment, and Inclusive Environment

Belonging, a critical element, encompasses three of the eight essential elements: (a) a positive relationship with a caring adult, (b) a safe environment, and (c) an inclusive environment. Kress (2005) stressed that purposeful belonging may be the most significant element a youth professional can offer a child. Youth who experience caring relationships with the adults in their lives feel a stronger and more meaningful connection to their community (Calvert, 2005). A young person who feels valued and sees himself as a serious resource for the community makes greater contributions (Hensley et al., 2007).

Caring Adult. The personal relationships that 4-H youth cultivate with adults outside of their families reinforce the efforts of parents, siblings, and other extended family members (Calvert, 2005; Russell, 2001). The youth receive guidance and feedback from a perspective complementary to familial history and tradition. More meaningful and intense connections between generations evolve. Youth benefit from “social capital- access to knowledge, resources and social support through trusted relationships- an important support to individual and community health” (Calvert, 2005, p. 8).

Safe Environment. Safe environments provide non-judgmental, non-threatening and supportive atmospheres for youth to voice their thoughts, feelings, and opinions (Grégoire, 2004). In safe environments, youth and adults fully participate without fear of physical or emotional harm or danger (Calvert, 2005; Kress, 2005).

Inclusive Environment. Clear, consistent, and age-appropriate expectations provide for meaningful inclusion of every individual regardless of personal characteristics (Calvert, 2005; Hensley et al., 2007). Kress (2005, 2006) stressed the

importance of placing a strong emphasis on sustained membership in 4-H groups that learn, play and serve their community together.

Mastery: Engagement and Mastery

The essential elements of engagement in learning and opportunity for mastery are included in the critical element, mastery (Calvert, 2005; Kress, 2005). Youth participate in active roles in the 4-H learning environment resulting in reinforcement of skills and decision making (Kress, 2005). Youth involved in 4-H participate in experiences designed to foster personal improvement rather than set them up for social comparison (Calvert, 2005). Personal advancement is a process over time and is characterized by the perpetual development of knowledge, skills and attitudes coupled with opportunities for practice and demonstration (Calvert, 2005; Kress, 2005; Peterson et al., 2001).

Accessibility to feedback in safe and inclusive environments promotes confidence for making positive choices for a lifetime (Calvert, 2005; Kress, 2005; Lerner et al., 2008).

Engagement. Engaged learning in 4-H programs exposes young people to challenging tasks in environments intended to motivate and prepare participants for the future (Calvert, 2005). “Youth need to know that they are able to influence people and events through decision-making and action” (Kress, 2005, p. 24).

Mastery. The learn-by-doing philosophy of 4-H challenges and motivates young people to explore a broad range of skills, eventually demonstrating confidence in using certain skills (Calvert, 2005; Grégoire, 2004). The developmental ability of the child is central to determining the level of mastery (Peterson et al., 2001).

Independence: Futuristic View and Self-Determination

The essential elements of a futuristic view and self-determination both embody the essence of independence. Calvert (2005) noted that this over-arching critical element (independence) suggested that as youth assume new roles requiring independence of thought and personal responsibility, they process how they want to live in the future.

Futuristic View. Youth thrive when they realize that they are capable of influencing the people and events in the life both now and in the years to come (Calvert, 2005; Kress, 2005; Peterson et al., 2001). Calvert (2005) identified several features associated with this element such as new experiences, opportunities for identity exploration, integration of past, present and future, confidence, cognitive abilities, and community connections.

Self-Determination. Calvert (2005) postulated that youth must be directive over their lives. “Youth need opportunities to experiment with different choices, evaluate what happens because of them, and consequently learn to improve the quality of their decisions” (Calvert, 2005, p. 10).

Generosity: Service

Participation in 4-H provides opportunities for youth to proactively engage in service to others which is aligned with the critical element of generosity (Calvert, 2005; Kress; 2005). Through generosity and service, youth accept the chance to make a difference and take responsibility (Calvert, 2005).

Service. Community service and citizenship activities introduce youth to the value of giving back to their communities as well as the importance of taking an active role in

civic matters (Calvert, 2005). In 1997, the Director of 4-H/Families/Nutrition at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service granted \$25,000 for a national impact study of the 4-H Youth Development Program. Results from the *National 4-H Impact Assessment Project* reflected youth and adult perceptions about the benefits of 4-H (Peterson et al., 2001).

Finding one self begins with losing yourself in the service of others.

Service is a way for members to gain exposure to the larger community, indeed the world itself. It is necessary to actively practice and treasure service (p. 56).

Members of 4-H report on community service projects as a part of their citizenship activities. They learned that what they do is valuable as a result of their awareness of, compassion for, and attention to the needs of others (Calvert, 2005).

Delivery Modes

Clubs

Traditional 4-H club work developed as a method to teach novel agricultural practices to and through youth (Seevers et al., 1997). As mentioned earlier, corn clubs, established in 1901 in Ohio by Albert B. Graham, established the basis for this mode of 4-H delivery (Kress, 2006; Seevers et al., 1997). In 1910, Marie Cromer, a school teacher in Aiken, South Carolina, established a girls' canning club with help from representatives from the United States Department of Agriculture (Seevers et al., 1997). For more than a

century, youth engaged in 4-H clubs have learned from real-life experiences (Kress, 2006; United States Department of Agriculture, 2008; SeEVERS et al., 1997).

Rodriguez et al. (1999) surveyed approximately 130 4-H agents/educators, program leaders and program assistants to accumulate suggestions for 4-H club program improvement in New York. The results of this survey, along with existing research from the Search Institute's study (Benson et al., 1998) of developmental assets in young people, were used to provide information for the development of a 4-H club *Members Only* survey. The work of the Search Institute, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, resulted in the identification of 40 developmental assets as outcomes of social experiences (Benson et al., 1998). The data from the *Members Only* survey informed researchers as to the difference 4-H clubs make in the lives of youth. New York 4-H club members scored significantly higher than the non-4-H club members in the Search Institute's study. The following developmental assets were tested in the Rodriguez et al. (1999) study: (a) educational aspiration, (b) motivation for success, (c) the desire to help, (d) academic grades, (e) self-esteem, (f) decision-making, (g) ethical and moral standards, (h) meaningful relationships with adults, and (i) the development of friendships.

In order to provide a more consistent experience and impact for youth engaged in 4-H clubs across the United States, National 4-H Headquarters identified the following educational and youth development principles as fundamental to the 4-H club delivery mode:

1. Uses experiential learning—learning-by-doing—as a primary teaching approach.

2. Must have programming that shows evidence of promoting the Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development.
3. Includes planned opportunities to learn and apply life skills such as leadership, citizenship, community service and public speaking.
4. Provides individual project experiences to develop in depth knowledge about science, engineering and technology; citizenship; and, healthy living.
5. Provides programs, curricula, and procedures that are based in research and are developmentally appropriate.
6. Provides members and volunteers access to resources of land-grant universities and to county, state, and national 4-H opportunities.
7. Fosters youth-adult partnerships that encourage active involvement and participation by youth and adults.
8. Provides safe and healthy physical and emotional environments.
9. Offers projects in a wide range of subject matter areas relevant to the Land-Grant University knowledge base to meet youth needs and interests (United States Department of Agriculture, 2008, p. 2).

Special Interest

Extension youth development professionals sought ways to reach diverse audiences by creating opportunities for 4-H participation beyond the traditional 4-H club delivery mode (Wille, 1999). “Novel and successful approaches have been implemented...based on community needs assessment, funding availability, and other factors that help develop long-term program sustainability” (Wille, 1999, ¶ 4). The recruitment of volunteers to lead 4-H programs with diverse audiences and activities was often most successful when focusing on a special interest topic (Rockwell et al., 1984; Smith & Finley, 2004; Wille, 1999).

Adult volunteers working with 4-H youth in special interest programs bring professional and personal knowledge and skills with them (Smith & Finley, 2004; Wille, 1999). As a result, career exploration has emerged as a significant component of 4-H special interest (Rockwell et al., 1984; Smith & Finley, 2004). Results from a study surveying Nebraska 4-H alumni showed that 84% of respondents found 4-H special interest programs helpful in preparing them for adulthood roles (Rockwell et al., 1984). In a 1999 Texas 4-H special interest program, children of migrant farm workers were introduced to over 50 individuals representing educational agencies, private industry, the media, and community organizations (Wille, 1999). Qualitative and quantitative data showed that these migrant youth gained knowledge about work and career paths in the food and fiber industry. In addition, migrant youth participants were connected with training opportunities available to them to prepare for the food and fiber workforce (Wille, 1999).

School Enrichment

The 4-H school enrichment delivery mode represents another opportunity for young people to engage in experiences intended to build life skills (Tochterman et al., 2004). The concept of taking 4-H into the schools grew exponentially in the early 1980s as county 4-H agent/educator travel budgets plummeted. Severely reduced budgets threatened the agents'/educators' ability to move extensively throughout the county to individual clubs (Burrows & Zaremba, 1982). The accessibility to large numbers of youth and potential teacher-volunteers attracted extension youth development professionals to the school enrichment mode of 4-H delivery (Burrows & Zaremba, 1982; Diem, 2001).

At the close of the twentieth century, nearly 3.7 million youth were participating in school enrichment programs across a variety of project areas (Diem, 2001).

Agriculture, horticulture, workforce preparedness, science, and leadership are examples of project area topics most often delivered in 4-H school enrichment programs by agents/educators, teacher-volunteers, and community 4-H volunteers (Tochterman et al., 2004). County 4-H agents/educators worked closely with teachers and volunteers to train them as partners in 4-H projects and programs. Establishing strong relationships with key school personnel was seen as the prime tool for gaining access to students (Diem, 2001; Tochterman et al., 2004). Burrows and Zaremba (1982) suggested a well-planned approach for developing effective school enrichment programs:

1. Begin with a well-structured approach for recruiting, training, and sustaining school enrichment volunteer partners.
2. Provide high quality teaching tools at a low cost.
3. Write age/grade and reading level appropriate curriculum. This requires separate materials in the same project areas for the various levels.
4. Emphasize 4-H visibility and accountability.
5. Focus on subject areas outside the regular school curriculum for which there is extension and land-grant university research support. (Burrows & Zaremba, 1982, p. 20-21)

Camp

Garton et al., (2007) focused their research on leadership and life skill development through 4-H camp. The research question posed in their study asked: “Do 4-H campers learn life-skills and leadership skills as a result of their participation in a week of 4-H camp?” (Garton et al., 2007, ¶ 5). The nature of the 4-H camping experience is to

place youth in a new environment and hold them accountable for themselves and, sometimes, the well-being of others (Garst & Bruce, 2003). More than 2000 West Virginia campers, age 9-19, participated in this two-phase study by responding to one of two age-appropriate surveys. Each survey measured four areas: (a) overall experience, (b) life skills, (c) leadership skills, and (d) demographics. Although the 28 camps in which the youth participated across the state varied with respect to content and theme, they all incorporated four basic elements. Classes, assembly programs, experiential youth-led learning groups, and evening campfire programs characterized all of the experiential learning environments at these camps.

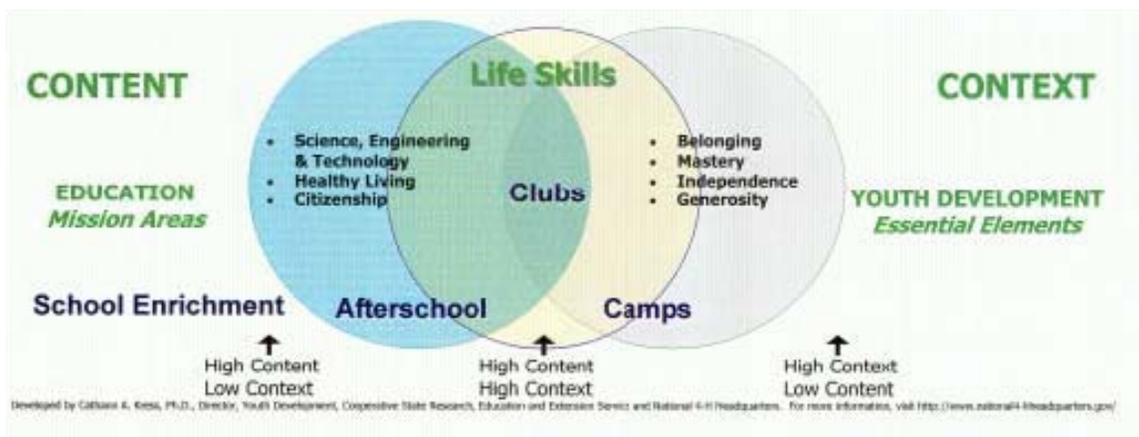
The life skills and leadership skills results of West Virginia study supported the findings of a 2005 American Camp Association (ACA) evaluation of how camps impact change in young people (Garton et al., 2007; Philliber Research Associates & American Camp Association, 2005). The four major areas considered for the ACA evaluation included: (a) positive identity, (b) social skills, (c) physical and thinking skills, and (d) positive values and spirituality (Philliber et al., 2005). In West Virginia, responsible citizenship and accepting differences emerged from the life skills area as having realized the strongest impact of the 4-H camping experience. In addition, West Virginia 4-H campers reported significant changes in skills associated with assertive leadership activities. Garton et al. (2007) recommended that the 4-H camp experiential learning environment be a primary vehicle in any comprehensive 4-H program to support citizenship and the development for the appreciation of differences in others.

Kress's Model of Content/Context in 4-H

The 4-H delivery modes of club, special interest, school enrichment, and camp each make a unique contribution to the development of youth as involved members of society. Kress (2006) integrated the four critical elements (belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity) of positive youth development, the three educational mission areas (science, engineering and technology; healthy living; and, citizenship) linked to the Land Grant University and the United States Department of Agriculture, and the four major 4-H delivery modes (clubs, special interest/afterschool, school enrichment, and camps) in the model of Content/Context in 4-H. Figure 2.1 provides the visual interpretation of this model.

Figure 2.1

Kress's Model of Content/Context in 4-H



(Kress, 2006)

Kress uses a continuum to illustrate the different levels of content and context in the 4-H experience. Kress's model suggests that the highest level of content and context of 4-H

programming occurs in 4-H clubs. School enrichment programs exhibit high content but low context experiences for youth. Afterschool programs are characterized by a high content and a moderate context 4-H experience. Camps are considered high context and moderate content. As a result of high context situations youth should know that they are cared about, feel they are accomplished, recognize that they are influential, and practice selfless assistance to others (Kress, 2006).

It is important to note, here, that the needs for belonging, mastery, independence and generosity can be met in negative ways outside of 4-H. Kress (2005) lists the following as defining factors: gang loyalty, excessive dependence, obsessive overachievement, arrogance, bullying, recklessness, co-dependence, and martyr syndrome. In addition, she goes on to identify what could happen should these same needs go unmet, altogether. Youth will likely be unattached, distrustful, non-achievers, unmotivated, submissive, irresponsible, selfish, and narcissistic. Positive reinforcement of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity is central to 4-H and fosters the imminent impact of positive youth development.

Developmental Systems Model

Within the development systems model, youth thrive as they cultivate actions and responses reflective of behaviors valued by their society (Lerner et al., 2008). Consequently, these young people follow a developmental path that takes them toward a life of contributions to self and society (Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2002; Lerner et al., 2008). Developmental systems theory considers development over the life-span a

product of evolving person-context relations (Granger, 2002; Lerner et al., 2002; Lerner et al., 2008).

Lerner et al. (2008) advocated that it is important to approach this concept with the knowledge that a young person's trajectory is not fixed. Family, school and community members can be significantly influential factors (Lerner et al., 2008). The developmental systems model describes this development as "a bidirectional relationship wherein community assets are both a product and a producer of the actions of the engaged young [person]" (Lerner et al., 2002, p. 26).

Embedded in this line of thought is the idea of plasticity (Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2002; Lerner et al., 2008): "the potential that individuals have for systematic change across life" (Lerner et al., 2008, p. 7). This framework supports the principle of positive youth development that promotes the strengths of youth and desired outcomes rather than focusing on the prevention of undesirable behaviors (Lerner et al., 2002; Lerner et al., 2005). Lerner et al., (2008) made the following association between plasticity and youth development:

Integrating the theoretical ideas about the plasticity of adolescent development and the practical findings about the multiple pathways children take through adolescence led to the framework now known as Positive Youth Development (PYD), which views young people as resources to be developed rather than as problems to be managed. (Lerner et al., p. 7)

Desired outcomes are realized through positive change in young people. “The potential for change is a core strength of all youth” (Lerner et al., 2008, p. 8). This change often occurs in three stages. First, youth experience a period of dissatisfaction with the status quo which initiates a time of contemplation of how things can be better. Second, change is instigated through the adaptation of practices intended to make improvements. Third, change is ultimately institutionalized through the identification of ways to sustain the change (Granger, 2002). This development occurs most successfully when new practices, skills, and resources are learned from those we trust. Those that we trust nurture that important interaction between self and context (Granger, 2002; Lerner et al., 2002). Developmental systems theory embraces an interaction between the individual and the world around him as a means for positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2008).

Youth are encouraged to secure the basic needs for safety, social connectedness, inspired inquiry, and self-identity and meaning (Quinn, 1999; Granger, 2002). These strengths or assets are proposed by theorists as a means to categorize and characterize success in youth (Granger, 2002). Simultaneously, common across the literature is a set of conditions linked to positive youth development. These conditions include (a) meaningful, supportive relationships with peers and adults; (b) the chance to develop academic and relational skills; and, (c) calculable limits with both developmental and situational appropriateness (Granger, 2002). Developmental systems theory views the relationship between the aforementioned assets and set of conditions as such that one does not cause the other – it is reciprocal and transactional (Granger, 2002). There is no

one all-important interaction, context, or instant (Granger, 2002; Lerner et al., 2002; Lerner et al., 2008).

Character

Scholars describe character using a variety of attributes (Arnett, 1998; Pritchard, 1988). The American Institute for Character Education defines character with the following distinguishing traits:

“Courage, conviction, generosity, kindness, helpfulness, honesty, honor, justice, tolerance, the sound use of time and talent, freedom of choice, freedom speech, good citizenship, the right to be an individual, and the right of equal opportunity.” (Pritchard, 1988, p. 472)

In his address to the Harvard Club, William Bennett (1986) stated that character is “taking one’s guidance by accepted and tested standards of right and wrong rather than by, for example, one’s personal preference” (p. 2). Maryland’s Values Education Commission identified the following character objectives:

1. Personal integrity and honesty rooted in respect for the truth, intellectual curiosity, and love of learning.
2. A sense of duty to self, family, school, and community.
3. Self-esteem rooted in the recognition of one’s potential.
4. Respect for the rights of all persons regardless of their race, religion, sex, age, physical condition, or mental state.
5. A recognition of the right of others to hold discriminating judgments among competing opinions.
6. A sense of justice, rectitude, fair play and a commitment to them

7. A disposition of understanding, sympathy, concern, and compassion for others.
8. A sense of discipline and pride in one's work; respect for the achievements of others.
9. Respect for one's property and the property of others, including public property.
10. Courage to express one's convictions (Pritchard, 1988, p. 472).

Inherent in the above descriptions and across the literature was the general concept of character as it relates to an individual's practical judgment and disposition to act (Arnett, 1998; Harman, 2000; Pritchard, 1988). Davidson and Khmelkov (2006) identified three areas related to character in action. The researchers developed a measurement of character in action of young people using three scales: (a) pro-social attitudes; (b) acceptance of diversity and attachment to community; and (c) personal and collective responsibility.

Character in Action

The Character in Action instrument was developed by Davidson and Khmelkov (2006) to measure pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility. The instrument included 65 Likert scale items and five multiple choice items. Adult responses were included in the original survey.

Pro-Social Attitudes. This scale includes thoughts and behaviors that reflect a sense of empathy and caring. Youth feel bad when peers are in pain and consider it a personal responsibility for helping those in need. Civility, respect, and justice are

additional examples of pro-social attitudes. Youth who persevere to achieve difficult goals they care about and can be counted on to always do their part exhibit strong pro-social attitudes (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006).

Acceptance of Diversity and Attachment to Community. Youth exhibiting high levels of character work to achieve unity among peers (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006). These young people help new members of the community feel accepted, include those who are different, and protect the integrity of others who might be considered unpopular. It is in these young people's character to share with others regardless of the nature of their relationship.

Youth exemplifying characteristics of personal and collective responsibility challenge themselves to strive to live out the norms of a caring community (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006). These young people work to resolve conflict without fighting, insults or threats. They believe that working together brings about change in their communities. Davidson and Khmelkov (2006) considered the above attributes as central to developing character in action.

Sartre's Theory of Character

Sartre's theory of character implies that the human being is an organized unit of conduct patterns (Gardiner, 1977). Character traits primarily correspond with these patterns of conduct. Sartre's view is that character traits are within an individual's control based upon the projects that one chooses to pursue in life (Webber, 2006). This theory

best speaks to the idea that one's propensity to think, feel, and behave is in response to the activities of one's environment (Webber, 2006).

Sartre vehemently argued that a man's character is not born of some inner force that is inaccessible to ordinary observation (Gardiner, 1977). To the contrary, Sartre states that a man's character is what is typical of him and manifests itself in behaviors that are expected of him (Gardiner, 1977; Harman, 2008). Specifically, a man's character allows others to anticipate his response to a variety of circumstances (Gardiner, 1977).

Summary

This chapter examined the relevant literature concerning (a) 4-H and positive youth development, (b) nonformal education with respect to positive youth development and 4-H, (c) the essential elements and delivery modes of the 4-H experience, (d) Kress's model of Content/Context in 4-H, (e) character, (f) developmental systems theory, and (g) Sartre's theory of character. Researchers concluded that 4-H participation is an important means to encourage youth to remain in school (Astroth & Haynes, 2002; Lamm et al., 2005). In addition, the scholarly literature indicated that county 4-H agents/educators play a critical role in the implementation of 4-H youth development (Kress, 2005; Kress, 2006). Mulroy and Rickaby (2006) noted the importance of National 4-H leadership working with local extension staff to establish consistent, clear and measurable goals and outcomes for 4-H programs and activities. The limited amount of research available based on data collected from county Extension 4-H personnel substantiated the significance of this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the perceptions of 4-H agents/educators regarding essential elements and delivery modes of positive youth development programming and their collective impact on character. One over-arching research question provided the basis for the research: How do 4-H agents/educators perceive elements and delivery modes of positive youth development programming and character?

The following research questions guided this survey research of county 4-H agents/educators in the United States:

1. To what extent do 4-H county agents/educators perceive as the levels of emphases placed on each of the eight essential elements of the 4-H experience for each of the four delivery modes of 4-H programming?
2. How do 4-H county agents/educators perceive character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of the youth in their county 4-H programs?
3. Do relationships exist between 4-H county agents'/educators' perceptions of the emphases on each of the eight essential elements by each type of delivery mode of the 4-H experience and perceptions of character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of 4-H youth members?

The research questions for the study were used to guide the development of the design, data collection, and data analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). This chapter

incorporates descriptions of the research design, participants, and instrumentation.

Descriptions of the data collection and analysis procedures conclude the chapter.

Research Design

Survey research designs are used to learn a variety of information about a population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). This study employed a non-experimental survey research design. More specifically, a cross-sectional quantitative design was selected and used to determine the perceptions of county 4-H agents/educators regarding essential elements and delivery modes of positive youth development programming and their collective impact on character. A cross-sectional quantitative design is appropriate for description as well as the determination of relationships (Astin & Lee, 2003; Babbie, 1990). The selection of this non-experimental survey research design was supported by the scholarly literature. Creswell (2003) advocated the use of survey research design to investigate problems that may not be examined using experimental research..

Babbie (1990) and Creswell (2003) supported the use of the survey questionnaire for the systematic collection of data from a sample population. Such orderly and efficient data collection allows researchers to analyze and generalize sample data to a large population. The population for the present study required the use of a sample because it was too large to be individually observed or directly contacted. Kerlinger and Lee (2000) noted that survey research was useful for acquiring facts, beliefs and attitudes.

Participants in this study were asked for demographic information and their perceptions

of the 4-H program and youth in their respective counties. The survey design used in this study allowed the researcher to collect this information in a methodical manner.

The researcher for this study chose a web-based format for administration of the survey. Dillman's (2007) guidelines for web-based surveys were followed. The design and delivery of the survey included the following recommended components: (a) attention to participant-researcher trust; (b) follow-up communication; (c) expression of appreciation for participation; (d) unambiguous layout; (e) clear and concise questions; (f) easy navigation; (g) shaded categories; and (h) consistent response tool for all questions. The cost savings realized by using a web-based survey versus a mail or phone survey made this format most appropriate for this study.

Variables Used in the Study

The independent (predictor) and dependent (criterion) variables used in the study were based on the research questions for the study. The independent variables included the eight essential elements in each of the four delivery modes of the 4-H experience as described in the conceptual framework. The dependent variables included three character variable proxies of pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility. Table 3.1 lists the predictor and criterion variables used in this study.

Table 3.1
Predictor and Criterion Variables Used in the Study

Type of Variable	Variables
Predictor	<u>4 Delivery Modes: Club, Special Interest, School Enrichment, Camp</u> 1 - Caring adult in activity 2 - Safe environment in activity 3 - Mastery in activity 4 - Service in activity 5 - Self-determination in activity 6 - Inclusiveness in activity 7 - Futuristic view in activity 8 - Engagement in activity
Criterion	<u>Character In Action</u> 1 - Pro-social Attitudes 2 - Acceptance of Diversity and Attachment to Community 3 - Personal and Collective Responsibility

The predictor variables have an impact on criterion variables based upon the level of emphases on each of the eight essential elements in each of the four delivery modes of the 4-H experience. Three scales of character in action were correlated with each of the four delivery modes.

Data on demographics for both participants and county 4-H members were collected for this study. Table 3.2 lists the participants' demographic variables used for this study.

Table 3.2
Participant Demographic Variables

Variables	Survey Question	Scale
Region	In what region are you located?	North Central Northeast Southern Western
Years of Experience	How many years of experience do you have working in 4-H?	<5 6 – 10 11 – 15 16 – 20 21 – 24 >25
Gender	What is your gender?	Male Female
Ethnicity	What is your ethnicity?	Hispanic or Latino Not Hispanic or Latino
Race	What is your race?	American Indian or Alaskan Native Asian Black or African American Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander White Other

Demographic information collected for survey participants included each participant's extension region, number of years of experience, gender, ethnicity, and race. The United States was divided into four extension regions.

Table 3.3 indicates the states comprising each of the four Cooperative Extension Service regions. All 50 states in the United States are included in the table.

Table 3.3
States by Cooperative Extension Region

Region	North Central	Northeast	Southern	Western
States	Illinois	Connecticut	Alabama	Alaska
	Indiana	Delaware	Arkansas	Arizona
	Iowa	Maine	Florida	California
	Kansas	Maryland	Georgia	Colorado
	Michigan	Massachusetts	Kentucky	Hawaii
	Minnesota	New Hampshire	Louisiana	Idaho
	Missouri	New Jersey	Mississippi	Montana
	Nebraska	New York	North Carolina	Nevada
	North Dakota	Pennsylvania	Oklahoma	New Mexico
	Ohio	Rhode Island	South Carolina	Oregon
	South Dakota	Vermont	Tennessee	Utah
	Wisconsin	West Virginia	Texas	Washington
			Virginia	Wyoming

The North Central and Northeast regions each include 12 states. The Southern and Western regions are made up of 13 states each.

Table 3.4 lists the demographic variables of the youth included in each participant's area of service. In order to gain information about the youth in the county programs being studied, participants were asked to provide information taken from their most recent ES237 Federal 4-H enrollment reports.

Table 3.4
County Youth Demographic Variables Reported by Participants

Variables	Survey Question	
Grade Level	Please indicate the number of youth in your 4-H Program in the following school grades (to be taken from the most recent ES237 report):	Number Per Grade Level: K 1 st 2 nd 3 rd 4 th 5 th 6 th 7 th 8 th 9 th 10 th 11 th 12 th Post H.S. Ed. Not in School Special TOTAL
Gender	Please indicate the gender of youth in your 4-H Program (to be taken from the most recent ES237 report):	Male Female
Residence	Please indicate the number of youth in your 4-H Program in the following categories of residence (to be taken from the most recent ES237 report):	Farm Towns of under 10,000 and rural non-farm Towns and cities (10,000 – 50,000) and their suburbs Suburbs of cities of over 50,000 Central cities of over 50,000
Ethnicity	Please indicate the 4-H youth ethnicity in your 4-H Program (to be taken from the most recent ES237 report):	Hispanic or Latino Not Hispanic or Latino
Race	Please indicate the racial make-up of your 4-H Program (to be taken from the most recent ES237 report):	American Indian or Alaskan Native Asian Black or African American Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander White Youth indicating more than One race Undetermined

The demographic variables included grade levels of youth, gender, residence, ethnicity, and race. Data were reported for the 4-H youth in each county represented by participants.

Participants

The participants in the study were County Extension 4-H agents/educators from the four Cooperative Extension regions within the 50 United States. These professionals were considered eligible for the study if their positions had primary responsibility for county level 4-H programming and reporting. E-mail addresses for all participants were obtained from state Extension 4-H websites. In cases where state websites did not have county 4-H agents/educators listed, county Extension websites were relied upon to obtain the information. In some cases, addresses were cross-referenced with the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents database for accuracy. The number of potential participants initially totaled 3,345.

Listserves for each of the four Cooperative Extension regions were developed. An e-mail recruitment message was sent prior to the invitation to participate in the study. This recruitment message was intended to inform the potential participants of the opportunity to take part in the upcoming survey as well as to cull out any bad e-mail addresses and/or ineligible participants from the listserves. The researcher eliminated 272 addresses from the population leaving 3,073 eligible participants. The sample for the study consisted of the entire population from the four Cooperative Extension regions.

Table 3.5 indicates the population sample for each of the four regions. Participants were not asked to identify their respective states.

Table 3.5
Population By Cooperative Extension Region

Region	<i>N</i>	%
North Central	770	25%
Northeast	298	10%
Southern	1573	51%
Western	432	14%
Total	3073	100%

The population from the North Central region constituted 25% ($n = 770$) of the total population. The population from the Northeast region made up 10% ($n = 298$) of the total population. The Southern region's population consisted of 51% ($n = 1,573$), and the Western region's population comprised 14% ($n = 432$) of the total population.

The sample for the study consisted of 484 participants indicating a response rate of 16%. Table 3.6 shows the number of participants by each of the four Cooperative Extension regions.

Table 3.6
Demographic Descriptive Statistics of Participants

Region	<i>N</i>	%
North Central	124	26%
Northeast	51	11%
Southern	166	34%
Western	50	10%
No Region Reported	93	19%

The majority of the participants were from the Southern region ($n = 166$, 34%). The fewest number of participants were from the Western region ($n = 50$, 10%).

Cochran's formula was used to determine the appropriateness of the sample size for this study (Ahghar, 2008). Approximately 175 responses were necessary according to the formula. For correlational research, sample sizes of at least 30 participants are adequate (Gay et al., 2006). Further, tests for assumptions were conducted to determine the adequacy of the sample and collected data.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used for this study. The instruments included the *Essential Elements and Delivery Modes Survey* and an adaptation of the *Character in Action* survey. The *Essential Elements and Delivery Modes Survey* was developed by the research and pilot tested prior to its use.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted using the entire survey instrument (*Essential Elements and Delivery Modes Survey*, *Character in Action Survey*, and demographic information). County 4-H agents in South Carolina were asked to complete the survey and then answer three additional questions:

1. Approximately how long did it take you to complete the survey (<5 minutes, 5-10 minutes, 10-15 minutes, 15-20 minutes, 20-25 minutes, >25 minutes)?
2. Was the survey's content (directions and questions) clear and understandable? If no, please explain
3. If you have any suggestions for the research team concerning this survey, we would appreciate you entering them here.

Twenty-five usable surveys were returned as a part of the pilot study.

Respondents indicated that, on average, the survey took 10-15 minutes to complete. Two respondents replied that they had trouble understanding the content. These respondents gave the following feedback.

1. The questions on the first page were a bit confusing. You may want to consider defining the term emphasis so the person knows exactly what is meant by the question. Also, since the essential elements are asked repeatedly it might be suggested that they are defined so that the reader knows what is exactly meant by mastery, self-determination, etc. The clarifying of the questions would enhance the reliability of the instrument ensuring that your data is valid.
2. The first page seemed repetitive and I was not 100% certain with my answers because they had to be categorized within the given choices.

Four respondents offered the following suggestions and/or comments regarding the instrument.

1. Add "Farm" to the choices when reporting ES237 #'s
2. Would like to see the results.
3. The first page of questions was little confusing because it kept using the term eight elements. I['m] not exactly familiar with these eight elements. It would also make things easier if the questions that have to do with our ES237 were in the exact order as the ES237 form. Also what about kids living on a farm? It didn't ask us about that number.
4. I almost put some information in the wrong order just because I copied the numbers right off my es237. Maybe you could make sure all of the survey demographic categories matched the es237 demographic categories so that numbers aren't accidentally entered in the wrong order. No place to list individuals living on a farm.

Corrections/additions to the survey and recruitment correspondence were made based upon the feedback from pilot survey respondents

Essential Elements and Delivery Modes Measurement Survey

The *Essential Elements and Delivery Modes Measurement Survey* instrument (Appendix A) was developed by the researcher and used to measure perceptions of county 4-H agents/educators regarding the 4-H experience. The survey was developed based upon the 4-H experiences matrix from Iowa State University (2003). The instrument was comprised of 32 items concerning essential elements of 4-H programming (caring adult, safe environment, mastery, service, self-determination, inclusiveness, futuristic view, and engagement) being carried out in the four identified delivery modes (clubs, special interest, school enrichment, and camping). Respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of the levels of emphases placed on each of the elements in the four delivery modes. The participants in the study were asked to consider five ratings: (1) No emphasis, (2) Little emphasis, (3) Some emphasis, (4) Moderate emphasis, and (5) Significant emphasis.

Table 3.7 presents the Cronbach's alpha scores for the *Essential Elements and Delivery Modes* survey instrument. The four Cronbach's alpha scores for the four types of delivery modes consisted of a combined score of each of the eight essential elements in the respective delivery mode.

Table 3.7

Cronbach's Alpha Values for Essential Elements and Delivery Modes Survey

Dimension	Cronbach's alpha
Club (includes 8 items for essential elements)	.853
Special Interest (includes 8 items for essential elements)	.879
School Enrichment (includes 8 items for essential elements)	.903
Camp (includes 8 items for essential elements)	.900

The Cronbach's alpha scores for the *Essential Elements and Delivery Modes* survey were above the accepted level for internal reliability. According to Gay et al. (2006), McMillan and Schumacher (2006), and Santos (1999) scores of .70 and above indicate reliability.

The school enrichment score (.903) indicated significant reliability. The lowest value, for club (.853), represents a strong score. The *Essential Elements and Delivery Modes* survey indicated consistent and reliable responses (Gay et al., 2006; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Santos, 1999).

Character in Action Survey

An adaptation of the *Character in Action Survey* developed by Davidson and Khmelkov (2006) was also used in this study (Appendix B). The adaptation of the original instrument eliminated inquiries for responses by youth. Permission to adapt and use the survey was given by Dr. Vladimir Khmelkov (Appendix C). The original instrument was designed to measure several scales of character development. These scales included pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility. Pro-social attitudes included those

behaviors of forgiveness, respect, honesty, and fairness. Helping someone who is new feel accepted, sharing with others, and supporting those who try to do good are behaviors descriptive of the acceptance of diversity and attachment to community scale. Personal and collective responsibility consisted of actions such as getting others to follow rules, taking an active role in solving club or community problems, and working together to bring about change (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006).

High Cronbach's alpha values for prior research, shown in Table 3.8, indicated a significant level of internal reliability for the Khmelkov's and Davidson's *Character in Action Survey* (Gay et al., 2006; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Santos, 1999).

Table 3.8
Prior Cronbach's Alpha Values for Khmelkov and Davidson's Character in Action Survey

Dimension	Cronbach's alpha
Pro-social Attitudes	.852
Acceptance of Diversity and Attachment to Community	.781
Personal and Collective Responsibility	.833

The Cronbach's alpha values for Khmelkov and Davidson's *Character in Action* survey included values for the three scales. The reported scores were .852 for pro-social attitudes, .781 for acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and .833 for personal and collective responsibility. Santos (1999) noted 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient; therefore, Khmelkov and Davidson's scales were considered reliable.

The adaptation of the *Character in Action* survey developed for this study was comprised of 28 Likert-type questions. Likewise, respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions regarding the youth in their county programs in terms of pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility. Response choices were (1) Completely disagree, (2) Somewhat disagree, (3) Not sure, (4) Somewhat agree, and (5) Completely agree. Cronbach's alpha for the *Character in Action* survey used in this study are shown in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9
Cronbach's Alpha Values for Adapted Character in Action Survey for the Study

Dimension	Cronbach's alpha
Pro-social Attitudes	.838
Acceptance of Diversity & Attachment to Community	.808
Personal & Collective Responsibility	.819

The Cronbach's alpha scores for the adapted *Character in Action* survey were all above the accepted level for internal reliability. Again, Gay et al. (2006), McMillan and Schumacher (2006), and Santos (1999) stated that reliability coefficients of .70 and above are acceptable. The pro-social attitudes scale rated highest (.838) and the acceptance of diversity and attachment to community scale rated lowest (.808). These scores indicated that the instrument elicited consistent and reliable responses.

Data Collection

The study utilized web-based data collection procedures. Dillman (2007) described electronic surveys as a method which allows for high levels of access and communication, feasibility, and user-friendly electronic capabilities. Other advantages of a web-based survey include reduction or elimination of postage expenses, a reduced amount of unsound data, and expeditious data collection (Gall et al., 2003).

The procedure for data collection for this study reduced limitations recognized by Gall et al. (2003) with regards to electronic survey data collection. The availability of a professional on-line survey administration service with restricted accessibility to the data made it possible for the researcher to develop a credible and secure survey. In addition, county extension 4-H agents/educators were assumed to have sufficient access to computers and the World Wide Web giving them full access to the survey.

Survey Administration

Three weeks prior to sending the initial e-mail message of recruitment to county 4-H agents/educators, a message was sent to State 4-H Program Leaders notifying them of the study. State 4-H Leaders were asked for their support of the study and were invited to submit any questions or concerns regarding the intentions of the research team. One State 4-H Leader requested a copy of the survey prior to asking agents in the respective state to complete it. Another State 4-H Leader alerted the researcher of the need to get approval from his university's Cooperative Extension Executive Council prior to the recruitment of agents in that state. The Council required pre-approval of the survey and background information concerning the expectations of the study. This information was

provided via the e-mail message of invitation, which included the purpose of the study, and a link to the survey instrument.

One day prior to sending the e-mail message of recruitment to county 4-H agents/educators, a follow-up message was sent to State 4-H Program Leaders. This message was intended to notify State 4-H Leaders that a recruitment message would be sent within 24 hours to county 4-H agents/educators. No replies to this follow-up message were received.

A total of 3,345 messages of recruitment (Appendix D) were sent to county 4-H agents/educators. Recipients of the recruitment letter were informed of the purpose of the survey, the approximate amount of time it would take to complete the survey, and a recommendation to make their most recent ES237 Federal enrollment report available before initiating the survey. After the recruitment message was sent, bad e-mail addresses and ineligible participants were culled out of the four Cooperative Extension listservs developed for this study. As a result, a total of 3,073 messages of invitation (Appendix E) were sent providing a link to the study survey.

Participants were given two weeks to complete the survey. As an incentive, those who completed the survey were given the opportunity to submit their names and e-mail addresses to a drawing for a \$100 gift certificate to the National 4-H Mall.

Approximately 48 hours before the survey closed, an e-mail message was sent to all four listservs thanking the agents/educators that had already completed the survey and reminding those that had not participated of the time remaining. Two weeks after the

original message of invitation was sent to all agents/educators in the sample, the survey closed.

There were 484 surveys that were completed for the study, indicating a response rate of 16%. As stated earlier, the number of responses received in this study is considered appropriate for correlational research (Gay et al., 2006).

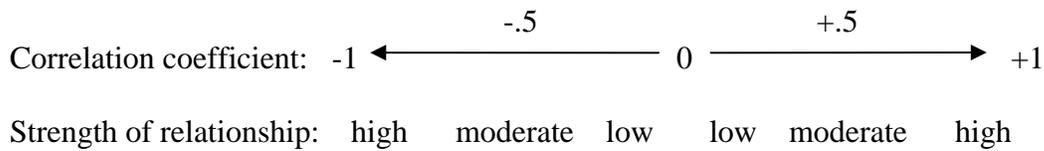
Data Analysis

Data collected from participants were entered into a database and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS 17.0 for Microsoft Windows. Descriptive statistics were computed for all response variables. Frequencies and percentages were determined for all demographic variables. The data for the *Essential Elements and Delivery Modes* survey responses were grouped according to delivery mode and analyzed using means and standard deviations. In addition, means and standard deviations were computed for the *Character in Action Survey* scales.

Correlations were computed to determine if relationships existed between each of the 4-H experiences' essential elements for each of the four delivery modes and each of the character in action scales. The level of statistical significance was determined at the $p < .05$ and $p < .01$. The correlational relationships were interpreted based upon strength and direction as indicated in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

Strength of Correlation Relationships (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 172)



A Pearson product-moment coefficient (r) of -1 indicates a strong correlation. The negative direction shows an inverse relationship. Likewise, a +1 correlation denotes a strong, direct relationship (Gay et al., 2006; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Preliminary Data Analysis

Preliminary data analysis included reliability checks for internal consistency of the survey instruments as well as tests for normality (Creswell, 2003). The assumption of normality presumes that the data were sampled from a population having normal distribution (Gay et al., 2006; McMillian & Schumacher, 2006). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality was performed to determine a normal distribution based on observations (Green et al., 2000). A visual interpretation of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests for normality revealed a normal distribution of the variables from the data collected using the two instruments. Once the assumptions of normality were met, Pearson product-moment correlations were computed to answer research question three.

Summary

This chapter provided descriptions of the research methodology, data collection, and data analysis procedures used in the study. This study employed a non-experimental survey research design. A cross-sectional quantitative design was used to investigate the perceptions of 4-H agents/educators regarding the essential elements and delivery modes of 4-H youth development programming. Survey research provided for knowledge gained about a large population (Creswell, 2003). The two instruments designed for the study, an adaptation of the *Character in Action Survey* and the *Essential Elements and Delivery Modes Survey*, questioned participants concerning perceptions of 4-H youth programming and character in action of 4-H youth. Data analysis conducted measured the level of emphases on the eight essential elements in each of the four 4-H delivery modes and the subsequent impact on the character in action of 4-H youth.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

This study focused on the eight essential elements and delivery modes of 4-H youth development and the character of youth in county 4-H programs. More specifically, the purpose of this research study was to investigate the perceptions of county 4-H agents/educators regarding essential elements, program delivery modes, and character in action of county 4-H youth. Participants were also asked to indicate their perceptions of the character of the youth participating in the county 4-H program. The overarching research question for the study was: How do 4-H agents/educators perceive elements and delivery modes of positive youth development programming and character? In addition, three specific research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent do 4-H county agents/educators perceive as the levels of emphases placed on each of the eight essential elements of the 4-H experience for each of the four delivery modes of 4-H programming?
2. How do 4-H county agents/educators perceive character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of the youth in their county 4-H?
3. Do relationships exist between 4-H county agents'/educators' perceptions of the emphases on each of the eight essential elements by each type of delivery mode of the 4-H experience and perceptions of character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of 4-H youth members?

This chapter covers the presentation of the results of the study. A description of the sample and a description of the county 4-H youth served by the study participants are presented at the beginning of the chapter. Next, descriptive statistics and correlational computations are presented to answer each of the research questions.

Descriptive Statistics

Description of the Sample

The survey was sent to county 4-H agents/educators for which e-mail addresses were obtained in all 50 states. After removing faulty e-mail addresses and/or individuals not serving in the 4-H agent/educator role, a sample of 3,073 emerged for the study. There were 484 respondents to the survey. Data were collected regarding the participants' extension region, years of experience, gender, ethnicity, and race. Table 4.1 presents the descriptive statistics for the sample.

Table 4.1
Demographic Descriptive Statistics of Participants

		<i>N</i>	%
Region			
	North Central	124	26%
	Northeast	51	11%
	Southern	166	34%
	Western	50	10%
	None Reported	93	19%
Years of Experience			
	<5	104	22%
	6-10	83	17%
	11-15	73	15%
	16-20	42	9%
	21-24	28	6%
	>25	60	12%
	None Reported	94	19%
Gender			
	Male	84	18%
	Female	306	63%
	None Reported	94	19%
Ethnicity			
	Hispanic or Latino	4	1%
	Not Hispanic or Latino	381	79%
	None Reported	99	20%
Race			
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	3	1%
	Asian	0	0%
	Black or African American	10	2%
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0	0%
	White	373	77%
	Other	5	1%
	None Reported	93	19%

Region of 4-H Programming

The majority of the participants were from the Southern region ($n = 166$, 34%). The fewest number of participants were from the Northeast Region ($n = 51$, 11%) and the Western region ($n = 50$, 10%). The North Central region was represented by 26% ($n = 124$) of the study participants.

Number of Years of Experience of Participants

Most of the participants had five years or less experience working with 4-H ($n = 104$, 22%). The fewest number of respondents were in the group having between 21 and 24 years experience ($n = 28$, 6%).

Gender of Participants

Regarding gender, the majority of the participants were females. Out of 484 participants, 63% ($n = 306$) were identified as female and 18% ($n = 84$) male.

Participants' Ethnicity

Responses concerning ethnicity indicated that the majority reported that they were not Hispanic or Latino ($n = 381$, 79%). The fewest number of participants ($n = 4$, 1%) were of Hispanic or Latino background.

Racial Demographics of Participants

In terms of race, the majority of participants ($n = 373$, 77%) identified themselves as White. The number of respondents identifying themselves as Black or African American was 2% of the sample ($n = 10$). There were no Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander participants.

Summary of Participant Demographic Variables

The majority of the participants were White females of non-Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Most had less than five years experience working with 4-H and were from the Southern region. There was a 19-20% non-response rate in the participant demographic portion of the survey. Respondents were not required to answer these questions in order to complete the survey.

Demographic Variables of Youth Served in 4H Programming

In an effort to gain information about the youth in the county programs being studied, respondents were asked to provide data from their most recent ES237 Federal 4-H enrollment reports. The demographic variables included the grade levels, gender, residency, ethnicity, and race for the 4-H youth in each county represented by respondents.

Grade Level of Youth

Table 4.2 presents the grade levels in school of the youth being served by the participants of the study. Grade levels included Kindergarten through post high school.

Table 4.2

Grade Levels of Youth in County 4-H Programs Served by Study Participants

	<i>N</i>	%
Grade		
K	37,414	6%
1 st	39,846	7%
2 nd	50,954	9%
3 rd	69,383	12%
4 th	87,631	15%
5 th	85,436	15%
6 th	57,772	10%
7 th	38,537	7%
8 th	33,452	5%
9 th	19,095	3%
10 th	18,139	3%
11 th	16,425	1%
12 th	13,893	<1%
Post H.S. Ed.	2701	<1%
Not in School	6267	<1%
Special	1665	<1%

A total of 578,605 youth were represented in the demographic information reported for school grade levels. The highest percentage (15%) of youth in 4-H programs were in 4th grade ($n = 87,631$) and 5th grade ($n = 85,436$; 15%). Following 5th grade, the next three largest groups of youth in county 4-H programs participants were in the 3rd grade ($n = 69,383$; 12%), 2nd grade ($n = 50,954$; 9%), and 6th grade ($n = 57,772$; 10%). The lowest numbers of 4-H youth were in 12th grade ($n = 13,893$; <1%), not in school ($n = 6,267$; %), post high school ($n = 2,701$; <1%), and special ($n = 1,665$; <1%) respectively.

Additional demographic information requested for youth participating in 4-H county programs represented by study participants included gender, place of residence, ethnicity, and race. These data were to be taken from the most recent ES237 report completed by respondents. Table 4.3 includes the descriptive statistics for these demographic information.

Table 4.3
Frequency and Percent of Youth in County Programs

	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Male	258,749	47%
Female	291,172	53%
Residence		
Farm	66,206	12%
Towns of under 10,000 and rural non-farm	222,942	39%
Towns and cities (10,000 – 50,000) and their suburbs	136,186	24%
Suburbs of cities of over 50,000	33,810	6%
Central cities of over 50,000	109,671	19%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	68,813	13%
Not Hispanic or Latino	471,824	87%
Race		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	10,157	2%
Asian	8,272	1%
Black or African American	70,159	13%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1,290	<1%
White	451,580	81%
Youth indicating more than one race	7,571	1%
Undetermined	9,049	2%

Gender of Youth in County 4-H Programs

The majority of the youth served by the sample were female. The 4-H youth population represented was comprised of 53% females ($n = 291,172$) and 47% males ($n = 258,749$).

Place of Residence

Approximately 75% ($n = 425,334$) of 4-H youth resided in towns and cities under 50,000. Of those youth, 12% ($n = 66,206$) lived on farms. Youth living in suburbs of or cities of over 50,000 comprised 25% ($n = 143,481$) of the represented 4-H population.

Ethnicity of Youth

In terms of ethnicity, 13% ($n = 68,813$) of the 4-H youth population represented was identified as Hispanic. Consequently, 87% ($n = 471,824$) were not Hispanic or Latino.

Race of Youth

Of the 558,078 youth included in the race demographics, 81% ($n = 451,580$) were White. Black or African American youth represented approximately 13% ($n = 70,159$) of the reported population. Less than 7% ($n = 36,339$) of the 4-H youth was made up of the following races: American Indian or Alaskan Native (2%, $n = 10,157$), Asian (1%, $n = 8,272$), Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (<1%, $n = 1,290$), multiple races (1%, $n = 7,571$), or undetermined races (2%, $n = 9,049$).

Summary of Demographic Variables of 4-H Youth Served by Study Participants

The majority of the youth in the County 4-H programs served by the study participants were in the 4th and 5th grades. These youth were primarily female, White, and not Hispanic or Latino. Youth represented by the study sample lived primarily in rural towns of under 10,000.

Data Analysis by Research Question

This study was guided by three research questions concerning the perceptions of 4-H agents/educators regarding essential elements and delivery modes of positive youth development programming and their collective impact on character. The results of the statistical analysis on these research questions are presented in this section.

Research Question 1

The first research question was designed to examine the perceptions of county 4-H agents/educators regarding elements and delivery modes of the 4-H experience. Participants were asked to rate the level of emphases of each of the eight essential elements for each of the four delivery modes.

RQ1: To what extent do 4-H county agents/educators perceive as the levels of emphases placed on each of the eight essential elements of the 4-H experience for each of the four delivery modes of 4-H programming?

Data collected from the *Essential Elements and Delivery Modes Survey* instrument were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 for Windows. Participants were asked to indicate the level of emphases placed on each of the eight essential elements of the 4-H experience for each of the four delivery modes. Survey items were presented with the scale: 1 = No emphasis, 2 = Little emphasis, 3 = Some emphasis, 4 = Moderate emphasis, and 5 = Significant emphasis. The findings are organized and presented based on the four delivery modes.

Clubs

Table 4.4 presents the mean levels and standard deviations of the perceived levels of emphases placed on each of the eight elements (caring adult, safe environment, mastery, service, self-determination, inclusiveness, futuristic view, and engagement) in 4-H delivery modes. Mean scores are presented for each of the eight essential elements and an overall mean score was computed for clubs. The overall mean score for clubs consisted of the average computed on the scores for the eight essential elements.

Table 4.4

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Eight Essential Elements in Clubs

Essential Element	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Club 1 – Caring Adult	4.5	.71
Club 2 – Safe Environment	4.6	.62
Club 3 – Mastery	4.0	.76
Club 4 – Service	4.2	.75
Club 5 – Self-determination	3.9	.86
Club 6 – Inclusiveness	4.1	.94
Club 7 – Futuristic View	3.5	.98
Club 8 – Engagement	4.2	.79
Total Club	4.1	.57

The results shown in Table 4.4 indicated that agents perceived the level of emphasis is greatest for safe environment ($M = 4.6$, $SD = .62$) in clubs. Caring adult ($M = 4.5$, $SD = .71$), service ($M = 4.2$, $SD = .75$), and engagement ($M = 4.2$, $SD = .79$) were also considered as being more than moderately emphasized in clubs. The perception of 4-H agents/educators suggested that futuristic view ($M = 3.5$, $SD = .98$) is the least accentuated of all essential elements in clubs. Total club values ($M = 4.1$, $SD = .57$) indicated that 4-H agents/educators perceived substantial emphases on the eight essential elements in the 4-H club delivery mode.

Special Interest Activities

Table 4.5 presents the mean levels and standard deviations of the perceived level of emphases placed on each of the eight elements in the 4-H special interest delivery mode. Respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of the levels of emphases

placed on each of the elements in the four delivery modes by considering five ratings: (1) No Emphasis, (2) Little Emphasis, (3) Some Emphasis, (4) Moderate Emphasis, and (5) Significant Emphasis.

Table 4.5
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Eight Essential Elements in Special Interest

Essential Element	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
SpI 1 – Caring Adult	4.3	.81
SpI 2 – Safe Environment	4.5	.71
SpI 3 – Mastery	4.0	.83
SpI 4 – Service	3.6	.95
SpI 5 – Self-determination	3.7	.97
SpI 6 – Inclusiveness	4.0	.96
SpI 7 – Futuristic View	3.5	1.0
SpI 8 – Engagement	4.1	.89
Total Special Interest	4.0	.65

Safe environment ($M = 4.5$, $SD = .71$) in 4-H special interest was considered emphasized at the greatest level. The perceptions of 4-H agents/educators implied that there was higher than moderate emphasis on caring adult ($M = 4.3$, $SD = .81$), engagement ($M = 4.1$, $SD = .89$), and mastery ($M = 4.0$, $SD = .83$) in 4-H special interest. Self-determination ($M = 3.7$, $SD = .97$), service ($M = 3.6$, $SD = .95$), and futuristic view ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.0$) were perceived as being emphasized at a lower than moderate level in 4-H special interest. The total special interest delivery mode ($M = 4.0$, $SD = .65$) was seen as having moderate emphases on the eight essential elements.

School Enrichment Activities

Table 4.6 presents the mean levels and standard deviations of the perceived level of emphases placed on each of the eight elements in the 4-H school enrichment delivery mode. Participants rated the level of emphases based upon the five item scale: (1) No Emphasis, (2) Little Emphasis, (3) Some Emphasis, (4) Moderate Emphasis, and (5) Significant Emphasis.

Table 4.6
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Eight Essential Elements in School Enrichment

Essential Element	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
ScE 1 – Caring Adult	3.9	1.1
ScE 2 – Safe Environment	4.3	.95
ScE 3 – Mastery	3.8	.98
ScE 4 – Service	3.2	1.2
ScE 5 – Self-determination	3.4	1.1
ScE 6 – Inclusiveness	4.0	1.1
ScE 7 – Futuristic View	3.4	1.1
ScE 8 – Engagement	3.9	1.0
Total School Enrichment	3.7	.82

Safe environment ($M = 4.3$, $SD = .95$) was emphasized greater than the other seven essential elements in 4-H school enrichment. Total school enrichment levels ($M = 3.7$, $SD = .82$) indicated that 4-H agents/educators perceived a slightly lower than moderate emphasis on the essential elements in the 4-H school enrichment delivery mode. Service ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 1.2$) received the lowest mean score for perceived level of emphasis. Six of the eight essential elements had a standard deviation of at least one full value point.

This variance in scores suggests a considerable divergence in 4-H agent/educator perceptions of the eight essential elements in 4-H school enrichment.

Camp

Table 4.7 presents the mean levels and standard deviations of the perceived level of emphasis placed on each of the eight elements in 4-H camping activities. Respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of the levels of emphases placed on each of the elements in the 4-H camp delivery mode by considering five ratings: (1) No Emphasis, (2) Little Emphasis, (3) Some Emphasis, (4) Moderate Emphasis, and (5) Significant Emphasis.

Table 4.7
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Eight Essential Elements in Camp

Essential Element	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Camp1 – Caring Adult	4.5	.87
Camp 2 – Safe Environment	4.7	.75
Camp 3 – Mastery	3.8	.98
Camp 4 – Service	3.4	1.1
Camp 5 – Self-determination	3.8	1.1
Camp 6 – Inclusiveness	4.3	.98
Camp 7 – Futuristic View	3.4	1.1
Camp 8 – Engagement	4.3	.97
Total Camp	4.0	.78

Safe environment ($M = 4.7$, $SD = .75$) was perceived as being emphasized at the greatest level of the eight essential elements in 4-H camp. This essential element was perceived as being emphasized at a greater level in camp than in the club, special interest, and school

enrichment delivery modes. Caring adult ($M = 4.5, SD = .87$), engagement ($M = 4.3, .97$), and inclusiveness ($M = 4.3, SD = .98$) were recognized by 4-H agents/educators as being more than moderately emphasized in 4-H camp. Futuristic view ($M = 3.4, SD = 1.1$) and service ($M = 3.4, SD = 1.1$) were seen as being less than moderately emphasized in 4-H camping. Overall, the eight essential elements were emphasized at a relatively substantial level ($M = 4.0, SD = .78$) in 4-H camping.

Summary of Research Question 1

Table 4.8 includes a summary of the mean scores and standard deviations of the perceived level of emphases placed on each of the eight elements in each of the four delivery modes. Participants were asked to indicate the level of emphases place on each of the eight essential elements of the 4-H experience for each of the four delivery modes. Survey items were presented in a scale with 1= No emphasis, 2 = Little emphasis, 3 = Some emphasis, 4 = Moderate emphasis, and 5 = Significant emphasis. The findings were organized and presented based on the four delivery modes.

Table 4.8

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for the Levels of Emphases on the Eight Essential Elements in the Four Delivery Modes

Delivery Mode	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Club	4.1	.57
Special Interest	4.0	.65
School Enrichment	3.7	.82
Camp	4.0	.78

Participants perceived the 4-H club delivery mode ($M = 4.1$, $SD = .57$) as having the greatest level of emphases of the eight essential elements. Special interest ($M = 4.0$, $SD = .65$) and camp ($M = 4.0$, $SD = .78$) were perceived as having moderate emphases of the eight essential elements. School enrichment ($M = 3.7$, $SD = .82$) was seen as emphasizing the essential elements at a lower than moderate level.

Research Question 2

The second research question was designed to examine the perceptions of county 4-H agents/educators regarding the character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of the youth in 4-H. Participants were asked to rate their perceptions of the character in action of the youth in the county 4-H programs served by participants.

RQ 2: How do 4-H county agents/educators perceive character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of the youth in their county 4-H programs?

Data collected from the *Character in Action* survey instrument were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 for Windows. Participants were asked to indicate the perceived character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of the youth in the county 4-H programs served by the participants. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed for the three scales of character in action. The total character score was determined by computing a mean score of the three scales. Respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of the character in action of the youth in the county 4-H programs by considering five ratings: (1) Completely Disagree, (2) Somewhat Disagree, (3) Not Sure, (4) Somewhat Agree, and (5) Completely Agree.

Table 4.9 presents the means and standard deviations of the perceived character in action of the youth in county 4-H programs across the United States.

Table 4.9
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Character In Action of County 4-H Youth

Character Proxy	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
ProSocial - Pro-Social Attitudes	3.8	.49
ADAC - Acceptance of Diversity & Attachment to Community	4.0	.58
PCR - Personal & Collective Responsibility	3.9	.54
Total Character	3.9	.48

The results presented in Table 4.9 indicated that 4-H agents/educators somewhat agreed in terms of the overall character in action ($M = 3.9$, $SD = .48$) of the youth involved in county 4-H programs for which they were reporting. The perceived development of acceptance of diversity and attachment to community ($M = 4.0$, $SD = .58$) was considered highest by 4-H agents/educators. This score suggests that youth were perceived to be highly likely to do what is right even if they do not agree and could be counted on to do their part for the good of the group. With respect to the development of personal and collective responsibility ($M = 3.9$, $SD = .54$) and pro-social attitudes ($M = 3.8$, $SD = .49$), agents/educators were slightly less confident than with acceptance of diversity and attachment to community. These scores indicate that agents/educators were somewhat sure that the youth in county 4-H programs accept and befriend someone who is new to the group, support those who try to do good, and believe that working together can bring about change for the good of the group.

Summary of Research Question 2

Participants were asked to indicate their perceptions of the character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of the youth in the county 4-H programs by considering five ratings: (1) Completely Disagree, (2) Somewhat Disagree, (3) Not Sure, (4) Somewhat Agree, and (5) Completely Agree. The findings were presented and organized based on the three scales.

County 4-H agents/educators were somewhat sure of the character in action of the youth in their county 4-H programs. The participants were most sure of the acceptance of

diversity and attachment to community of the youth. These youth are more likely to be accepting, inclusive, and reliable. With respect to pro-social attitudes and personal and collective responsibility, agents/educators were somewhat sure that the youth in their county 4-H programs are empathetic, respectful, and cooperative.

Research Question 3

The third research question sought to examine relationships between each of the essential elements for each of the four delivery modes of the 4-H experience and character in action. Three scale scores (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) and a total scale score were used for the independent (criterion) variable character. Dependent (predictor) variables included the eight essential elements by delivery mode.

RQ 3: Do relationships exist between 4-H county agents'/educators' perceptions of the emphases on each of the eight essential elements by each type of delivery mode of the 4-H experience and perceptions of character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of 4-H youth members?

Data collected were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 for Windows. Correlations were computed for each of independent variables (essential elements) for each of the delivery modes and each of the character scales (dependent variables). Pearson product-moment correlation was selected to determine if relationships existed between the variables. A Pearson product-moment coefficient (r) of -1 indicates a strong, inverse correlation. Likewise, a

+1 correlation denotes a strong, direct relationship (Gay et al., 2006; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006)

Clubs and Character

Table 4.10 presents the Pearson product-moment correlations for the eight essential elements and character in 4-H clubs. Significant levels are reported at the $**p < .01$ level.

Table 4.10
Pearson Correlation Coefficients for the Eight Essential Elements for Clubs and Character

	ProSocial		ADAC		PCR		Tchar	
	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig
Club 1	.336**	.000	.274**	.000	.303**	.000	.339**	.000
Club 2	.298**	.000	.246**	.000	.258**	.000	.297**	.000
Club 3	.299**	.000	.253**	.000	.264**	.000	.305**	.000
Club 4	.393**	.000	.289**	.000	.336**	.000	.378**	.000
Club 5	.395**	.000	.257**	.000	.365**	.000	.377**	.000
Club 6	.435**	.000	.341**	.000	.341**	.000	.415**	.000
Club 7	.358**	.000	.204**	.000	.273**	.000	.308**	.000
Club 8	.392**	.000	.308**	.000	.344**	.000	.387**	.000
Total Club	.520**	.000	.383**	.000	.441**	.000	.499**	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.10 indicated positive, significant correlations between all of the eight essential elements in the 4-H club delivery mode and character in action of 4-H county youth at the 0.01 (2-tailed) level. These results showed that relationships existed between the eight essential elements and character in action in the club delivery mode. The strongest correlation was found between inclusiveness in clubs and pro-social attitudes ($r = .435, p = .000$). The lowest correlation was found between futuristic view and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community ($r = .204, p = .000$). When considered collectively, the eight essential elements in 4-H club activities showed a positive relationship with pro-social attitudes ($r = .520, p = .000$). Total character had the most significant relationship with inclusiveness ($r = .415, p = .000$). Results for total club and total character showed a moderate, significant correlation ($r = .499, p = .000$).

Special Interest and Character

Table 4.11 presents the Pearson product-moment correlations for the eight essential elements and character in 4-H special interest. Significant levels are reported at the $**p < .01$ level.

Table 4.11

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for the Eight Essential Elements for Special Interest and Character

	ProSocial		ADAC		PCR		Tchar	
	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig
SpI 1	.229**	.000	.232**	.000	.221**	.000	.254**	.000
SpI 2	.210**	.000	.182**	.000	.172**	.000	.209**	.000
SpI 3	.216**	.000	.230**	.000	.182**	.000	.233**	.000
SpI 4	.259**	.000	.156**	.000	.191**	.000	.222**	.000
SpI 5	.270**	.000	.165**	.000	.210**	.000	.236**	.000
SpI 6	.355**	.000	.273**	.000	.286**	.000	.338**	.000
SpI 7	.302**	.000	.237**	.000	.236**	.000	.287**	.000
SpI 8	.324**	.000	.295**	.000	.288**	.000	.337**	.000
Total Special Interest	.352**	.000	.286**	.000	.290**	.000	.343**	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.11 indicated positive, significant correlations between each of the eight essential elements in 4-H special interest activities and character development of 4-H county youth at the 0.01 (2-tailed) level. These results indicated that there are relationships between these variables. The most dominant correlations were realized in the pro-social attitudes and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community ($r = .210^{**}$ to $r = .355^{**}$) scales of character development. The highest correlation was found between inclusiveness and pro-social attitudes ($r = .355$, $p = .000$). The lowest correlation was found between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community ($r =$

.156, $p = .000$). Total special interest correlated highest with pro-social attitudes ($r = .352, p = .000$). Total character had the most significant relationship with inclusiveness ($r = .338, p = .000$). Results for total special interest and total character showed a low to moderate, significant correlation ($r = .343, p = .000$).

School Enrichment and Character

Table 4.12 presents the Pearson product-moment correlations for the eight essential elements and character in 4-H school enrichment. Significant levels are reported at the $**p < .01$ level unless otherwise noted.

Table 4.12
Pearson Correlation Coefficients for the Eight Essential Elements for School Enrichment and Character

	ProSocial		ADAC		PCR		Tchar	
	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig
ScE 1	.215**	.000	.148**	.001	.184**	.000	.201**	.000
ScE 2	.170**	.000	.169**	.000	.175**	.000	.189**	.000
ScE 3	.222**	.000	.150**	.001	.219**	.000	.221**	.000
ScE 4	.221**	.000	.086	.061	.138**	.002	.162**	.000
ScE 5	.214**	.000	.129**	.005	.202**	.000	.201**	.000
ScE 6	.234**	.000	.164**	.000	.180**	.000	.214**	.000
ScE 7	.204**	.000	.103*	.024	.172**	.000	.177**	.000
ScE 8	.246**	.000	.159**	.000	.222**	.000	.232**	.000
Total School Enrichment	.278**	.000	.174**	.000	.238**	.000	.255**	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.12 indicated positive correlations between the eight essential elements in the 4-H school enrichment delivery mode and character development of 4-H county youth at the $**p < .01$ and $*p < .05$ levels. These results indicated that there was a perceived relationship between these variables. The most dominant correlations were realized in the pro-social attitudes and personal and collective responsibility factors ($r = .175^{**}$ to $r = .246^{**}$) of character development. The highest correlation was found between engagement and pro-social attitudes ($r = .246, p = .000$). The lowest correlation was found between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community ($r = .086, p = .061$). This correlation was not significant. When considered collectively, the eight essential elements in 4-H school enrichment activities correlated highest with pro-social attitudes ($r = .278, p = .000$). Total character had the most significant relationship with engagement ($r = .232, p = .000$). Results for total school enrichment and total character showed a low, significant correlation ($r = .255, p = .000$).

Camping and Character

Table 4.13 presents the Pearson product-moment correlations for the eight essential elements and character in 4-H camping. Significant levels were reported at the $**p < .01$ level.

Table 4.13

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for the Eight Essential Elements for Camping and Character in Action

	ProSocial		ADAC		PCR		Tchar	
	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig
Camp 1	.154**	.001	.187**	.000	.155**	.001	.185**	.000
Camp 2	.152**	.001	.172**	.000	.164**	.000	.184**	.000
Camp 3	.175**	.000	.130**	.004	.153**	.001	.170**	.000
Camp 4	.167**	.000	.067	.146	.134**	.003	.135**	.003
Camp 5	.167**	.000	.157**	.001	.171**	.000	.184**	.000
Camp 6	.248**	.000	.295**	.000	.227**	.000	.290**	.000
Camp 7	.213**	.000	.165**	.000	.168**	.000	.203**	.000
Camp 8	.208**	.000	.235**	.000	.207**	.000	.243**	.000
Total Camp	.216**	.000	.209**	.000	.210**	.000	.238**	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.13 indicated positive, significant correlations between the eight essential elements in 4-H camp activities and character development of 4-H county youth at the $**p < .01$ level. These results indicated that there was a perceived relationship between these variables. The most dominant correlations were realized in the acceptance of diversity and attachment to community factor of character development. The highest correlation was found between inclusiveness and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community ($r = .295, p = .000$). The lowest correlation was found between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community ($r = .067, p = .146$). This correlation was not found to be significant. When considered collectively, the eight

essential elements in 4-H camp activities correlated highest with pro-social attitudes ($r = .216, p = .000$). Total character had the most significant relationship with inclusiveness ($r = .290, p = .000$). Results for total camping and total character showed a low, significant correlation ($r = .238, p = .000$).

Summary of Research Question 3

Research question three sought to determine if relationships existed between each of the essential elements for each of the four delivery modes of the 4-H experiences and character in action. Three scale scores (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) and a total scale score were used for the independent (criterion) variable character in action. Table 4.14 includes a summary of the Pearson product-moment correlations for the four delivery modes and character in action.

Table 4.14
Pearson Correlation Coefficients for the Four Delivery Modes and Character in Action

	ProSocial		ADAC		PCR		Tchar	
	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig	<i>r</i>	Sig
Club	.520**	.000	.383**	.000	.441**	.000	.499**	.000
Special Interest	.352**	.000	.286**	.000	.290**	.000	.343**	.000
School Enrichment	.278**	.000	.174**	.000	.238**	.000	.255**	.000
Camp	.216**	.000	.209**	.000	.210**	.000	.238**	.000

Table 4.14 indicates that the strongest correlation was found between club and character in action ($r = .499, p = .000$). The weakest correlation was between camp and character in action ($r = .238, p = .000$). Special interest ($r = .343, p = .000$) showed a low to moderate correlation and school enrichment ($r = .255, p = .000$) showed a low correlation with character in action. All delivery modes correlations were found to be significant.

Positive, significant correlations were found between all of the eight essential elements in the 4-H club delivery mode and character in action. The strongest correlation in clubs was found between the predictor variable, inclusiveness, and the criterion variable, pro-social attitudes. The weakest correlation was between the predictor variable futuristic view and the criterion variable acceptance of diversity and attachment to community. For the special interest delivery mode, the highest correlation was found between inclusiveness and pro-social attitudes. The lowest correlation was between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community. Regarding school enrichment, engagement and pro-social attitudes had the strongest correlation. Service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community had the weakest correlation. For the camp delivery mode, the highest correlation was found between inclusiveness and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community. The lowest correlation was found between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community.

Chapter Summary

The majority of the participants in this study were white females of non-Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Most had less than five years experience working with 4-H and were from the Southern region. Regarding the youth served by the participants in the study, most were in the 4th and 5th grades, primarily White females, and not Hispanic or Latino. These youth were primarily female, White, and not Hispanic or Latino. Youth represented by the study sample lived predominantly in rural towns of under 10,000.

Major findings included data found for the three research questions. In terms of levels of emphases placed on the eight essential elements of the 4-H experience for each of the delivery modes, the essential element, safe environment, was perceived as being the most emphasized of the elements across all four delivery modes. Futuristic view and service were perceived as being least emphasized of the elements. Participants perceived the 4-H club delivery mode as having the greatest level of emphases of all of the eight essential elements.

County 4-H agents/educators were somewhat sure of the character in action of the youth in their county 4-H programs. The participants were most sure of the acceptance of diversity and attachment to community of the youth. These youth are more likely to be accepting, inclusive, and reliable. With respect to pro-social attitudes and personal and collective responsibility, Agents/Educators were somewhat sure that the youth in their county 4-H programs are empathetic, respectful, and cooperative.

Finally, relationships were found between the emphases on the eight essential elements for each of the four delivery modes and character in action of county 4-H youth.

The criterion variable, pro-social attitudes, correlated highest with most of the predictor variables. The criterion variable, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community correlated the lowest with most of the predictor variables. Total club and total character in action correlated the highest in the 4-H club delivery mode.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major purpose of this research study was to investigate the perceptions of 4-H agents/educators regarding essential elements and deliver modes of positive youth development programming and their collective impact on character in action. The researcher sought to determine if relationships existed between county 4-H agent/educator perceptions regarding each of eight essential elements for each of the four delivery modes of the 4-H experience and their impact on character.

The eight essential elements were identified as (a) caring adult, (b) safe environment, (c) mastery, (d) service, (e) self-determinations, (f) inclusiveness, (g) futuristic view, and (h) engagement. The four delivery modes of the 4-H experience were (a) club, (b) special interest, (c) school enrichment, and (d) camp. Character in action was conceptualized by (a) pro-social attitudes, (b) acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and (c) personal and collective responsibility.

The over arching research question that guided the study was: How do 4-H agents/educators perceive elements and delivery modes of positive youth development programming and character? In addition, three specific research questions were used to guide the study. Participants of the study were county 4-H agents/educators from the 50 states in the United States. The following are the three research questions used in the study.

1. To what extent do 4-H county agents/educators perceive as the levels of emphases placed on each of the eight essential elements of the 4-H experience for each of the four delivery modes of 4-H programming?

2. How do 4-H county agents/educators perceive character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of the youth in their county 4-H?
3. Do relationships exist between 4-H county agents'/educators' perceptions of the emphases on each of the eight essential elements by each type of delivery mode of the 4-H experience and perceptions of character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of 4-H youth members?

The participants for the study included county 4-H agents/educators with responsibility for programming and reporting in their respective counties. Participants responded to a web-based survey regarding their perceptions of the emphases placed on the eight essential elements for each of the four delivery modes in 4-H activities and three dimensions of character of the 4-H youth served by study participants. Data were collected and entered into an Excel database and analyzed using SPSS 17.0 for Microsoft Windows. Chapter Four provided an analysis and interpretation of the findings from the study.

Summary of the Findings

The following sections include a summary of the findings from the study. The analyses of the data from the study included descriptive analysis of the demographic data followed by responses to each of the research questions.

Description of the Sample and Youth Population

The descriptive data obtained for the study showed that participants had an average of 6-10 years of 4-H agent/educator experience. Of those participants reporting gender, 63% ($n = 104$) were female and 18% ($n = 84$) were male. The majority of the

respondents were non-Hispanic or Latino (79%, $n = 381$) and White (77%, $n = 373$). Study participants were asked to provide demographic information for the youth in their respective county 4-H programs. These data were taken from the most recent ES237 Federal enrollment report completed for the county (-ies) for which agents/educators were responsible. Over 540,000 youth were represented by the study participants. Demographic information obtained for youth included grade level, gender, residence, ethnicity, and race.

The largest percentage (15%) of youth represented by the study participants for grade level was in 4th grade. A total of 87,631 fourth grade youth were reported as participating in county 4-H programs represented by participants. The smallest group represented was the special grades with a total of 1,665 ($M = 8.5$). In terms of gender, the majority of youth served by the agent/educators were female (53%, $n = 291,172$). The number of males in this population was 258,749 (47%). Most of the youth resided in towns and cities of under 50,000. Youth were primarily not Hispanic or Latino (87%, $n = 471,824$) and were White (81%, $n = 451,580$).

Overall Summary of Findings from the Research Questions

The overall summary of the findings from the study are provided for each research question. Data from the two instruments used in the study, *Essential Elements and Delivery Modes Survey* and *Character in Action Survey*, were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 for Windows.

Research Question One

RQ 1: To what extent do 4-H county agents/educators perceive as the levels of emphases placed on each of the eight essential elements of the 4-H experience for each of the four delivery modes of 4-H programming?

The first research question investigated the perceptions of 4-H agent/educators regarding the emphases on the eight essential elements of the 4-H experiences in each of the four delivery modes of 4-H programming. Data were collected using the *Essential Elements and Delivery Modes Survey*. Participants were asked to indicate the level of emphases placed on each of the eight essential elements of the 4-H experience for each of the four delivery modes. Survey items were presented in a scale with 1= No emphasis, 2 = Little emphasis, 3 = Some emphasis, 4 = Moderate emphasis, and 5 = Significant emphasis. The findings are organized and presented based on the four delivery modes.

Descriptive statistics indicated that 4-H agents/educators perceived substantial emphases placed on each of the eight elements in the 4-H club delivery mode. Safe environment was emphasized greater ($M = 4.6, SD = .62$) than the other seven elements. Futuristic view received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.5, SD = .98$), but was still considered as being moderately emphasized in club programming. Regarding the 4-H special interest delivery mode, safe environment was perceived as being emphasized the greatest ($M = 4.5, SD = .71$). Overall mean score for special interest ($M = 4.0, SD = .65$) indicated a moderate emphases of the eight essential elements in 4-H special interest. School enrichment activities were perceived to emphasize safe environment greatest ($M = 4.3, SD = .95$) of the eight essential elements. Agents/educators perceived a slightly lower

than moderate emphasis on the essential elements in the overall school enrichment delivery mode ($M = 3.7, SD = .82$). Finally, for camping, agents/educators reported overall moderate levels of emphases ($M = 4.0, SD = .78$) on the elements. Caring adult ($M = 4.5, SD = .87$), engagement ($M = 4.3, SD = .97$), and inclusiveness ($M = 4.3, SD = .98$) were recognized as being more than moderately emphasized in 4-H camping activities.

Research Question Two

RQ 2: How do 4-H county agents/educators perceive character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of the youth in their county 4-H?

The second research question examined the perceptions of county 4-H agents/educators regarding character development of the youth in county 4-H programs. Data were collected from the adapted *Character in Action Survey*. Participants were asked to indicate the perceived character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of the youth in the county 4-H programs served by the participants. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed for the three scales of character in action. The total character score was determined by computing a mean score of the three scales. Respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of the character in action of the youth in the county 4-H programs by considering five ratings: (1) Completely Disagree, (2) Somewhat Disagree, (3) Not Sure, (4) Somewhat Agree, and (5) Completely Agree.

Results indicated that 4-H agents/educators were somewhat sure of the overall character in action development ($M = 3.9, SD = .48$) of the youth involved in their respective counties. The perceived development of acceptance of diversity and attachment to community ($M = 4.0, SD = .58$) was seen as most prominent by respondents. According to the results for personal and collective responsibility ($M = 3.9, SD = .54$) and pro-social attitudes ($M = 3.8, SD = .49$), agents/educators were somewhat sure that these areas of character in action were developed in the youth in county 4-H programs.

Research Question Three

RQ 3: Do relationships exist between 4-H county agents'/educators' perceptions of the emphases on each of the eight essential elements by each type of delivery mode of the 4-H experience and perceptions of character in action (pro-social attitudes, acceptance of diversity and attachment to community, and personal and collective responsibility) of 4-H youth members?

The third research question investigated the relationships between each of the eight essential elements for each of the four delivery modes of the 4-H experience and character in action development. Correlation analyses indicated positive, significant relationships between total character and 4-H club ($r = .499, p = .000$), total character and special interest ($r = .343, p = .000$), total character and school enrichment ($r = .255, p = .000$), and total character and camp ($r = .238, p = .000$). For the four delivery modes, the highest correlation was between club and pro-social attitudes ($r = .415, p = .000$). Two correlations were found to be not significant. In addition, the correlation between service

and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community in 4-H school enrichment ($r = .086, p = .061$) was not significant. The correlation between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community in the 4-H camp delivery mode ($r = .067, p = .146$) was not significant. Results for total club and total character showed a moderate, significant correlation ($r = .499, p = .000$). For total special interest and total character, a low to moderate, significant correlation was found ($r = .343, p = .000$). Both total school enrichment ($r = .255, p = .000$) and total camp ($r = .238, p = .000$) showed a low, but significant correlation with total character development.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

This section provides a discussion of the findings and conclusions for the study. The components are organized according to the research questions.

Demographic Variables of the Participants and the Youth Represented by Participants

The majority of the participants in this study were White females of non-Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Most had less than five years experience working with 4-H and were from the Southern region. Regarding the youth served by the participants in the study, most were in the 4th and 5th grades, primarily White females, and not Hispanic or Latino. These youth were primarily female, White, and not Hispanic or Latino. Youth represented by the study sample lived primarily in rural towns of under 10,000.

Conclusion #1: The majority of county 4-H agents/educators in the United States are White, non-Hispanic females. Furthermore, most county 4-H agents/educators work in the Southern region and have less than five years experience.

According to the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents, these findings are consistent with national data (Olsen, 2002). Ninety percent of agents/educators

responding to an NAE4-HA membership assessment survey were reported as White.

Findings indicated that 70% of the respondents were female, 51% worked in the Southern region, and the majority had less than five years experience.

Conclusion #2: County 4-H programs are comprised of primarily White, non-Hispanic females living in rural towns of under 10,000.

These findings are consistent with the data collected by National 4-H Headquarters during FY 2007 (USDA, 2007). According to this report, 52.8 % ($n = 3,119,283$) of 4-H participants were female. The majority (77%, $n = 4,553,216$) were White and not Hispanic ($n = 4,807,426$; 81%). Thirty-six percent ($n = 2,129,644$) lived in towns of under 10,000 and rural, non-farm.

Emphases Placed on Eight Essential Elements by Delivery Modes

Results from this study supported the organization of 4-H programming around eight identified essential elements (Kress, 2005, 2006; Goodwin et al., 2007). This study, however, provides insight, unlike previous studies, in that the agents/educators who are developing and delivering programs provided exclusive perceptions concerning the 4-H experience.

Clubs

County 4-H agents/educators perceived that a safe environment was emphasized the most of the eight essential elements in the 4-H club delivery mode. Calvert (2005) and Kress (2005) stated that in safe environments, youth and adults fully participate without fear of physical or emotional harm or danger. Such environments provide non-judgmental, non-threatening and supportive atmospheres for youth to voice their thoughts, feelings, and opinions (Grégoire, 2004).

Caring adults, service opportunities, and engagement in learning were considered as being more than moderately emphasized in clubs. According to Calvert (2005) and Russell (2001), the personal relationships that 4-H youth cultivate with adults outside of their families reinforce the efforts of parents, siblings, and other extended family members. Participating in community service activities with adult volunteers and other 4-H youth introduces youth to the value of giving back to their community as well as the importance of taking an active role in civic matters (Calvert, 2005). Such opportunities engage youth and expose them to challenging tasks in environments intended to motivate and prepare them for future living (Calvert, 2005).

With respect to futuristic view, agents/educators perceive this element as being the least accentuated of all essential elements in clubs. A futuristic view implies that youth assume a mature perspective on identity exploration, confidence, and integration of past, present, and future (Calvert, 2005).

Kress (2006) uses a continuum to illustrate the different levels of content and context in the 4-H experience. Kress's model suggests that the highest level of content and context of 4-H programming occurs in 4-H clubs.

Conclusion #3: The essential elements of safe environment, caring adult, service, and engagement were identified as most emphasized for the high content/high context experience realized in the 4-H club delivery mode.

Special Interest

According to county 4-H agents/educators, a safe environment in 4-H special interest was considered emphasized at the greatest level. The 4-H school enrichment delivery mode is considered an opportunity to engage youth in experiences intended to

build life skills (Tochterman, et al., 2004). Most often, these experiences are short-term making it important for youth to feel comfortable to fully participate early in the experience (Kress, 2005).

Agents/educators considered the emphasis on caring adults in 4-H special interest notable. Adult volunteers working with 4-H youth in special interest programs bring professional and personal knowledge and skills with them (Smith & Finley, 2004; Wille, 1999). Taking a strong, personal interest in what is being taught is central to the success of a 4-H volunteer leading 4-H special interest programs.

Futuristic view was, again, considered by county 4-H agents/educators as being the least emphasized of all the essential elements. The short-term aspect of special interest programs makes it very difficult for youth to make connections to what might come to fruition in their later years (Calvert, 2005; Peterson et al., 2001).

Conclusion #4: County 4-H agents/educators considered safe environments and caring adults as elements most emphasized in to the 4-H special interest delivery mode.

School Enrichment

The 4-H school enrichment delivery mode gave county 4-H agents/educators access to large numbers of youth in one location easing the burden on shrinking travel budgets in the 1980s (Burrows & Zaremba, 1982). Although the school interest delivery mode requires a great deal of coordination with teachers, school administrators, and volunteers, the outcome of the experience can be quite effective (Diem, 2001).

According to 4-H agents/educators, the essential element of safe environment was the only element perceived as substantially emphasized. The remaining seven elements were perceived at a slightly lower than moderate emphasis. A possible reason for the lack

of recognition of the elements in school enrichment is that evaluation of programs in school enrichment environments is difficult due to the large number of participants.

Conclusion #5: County 4-H agents/educators considered safe environment as the element most emphasized in the 4-H school enrichment delivery mode.

Camp

Safe environment, caring adult, engagement, and inclusiveness were each recognized by 4-H agents/educators as receiving a considerable level of emphasis in the 4-H camp delivery mode. Safe environment was perceived as being emphasized at a greater level in camp than in the club, special interest, and school enrichment delivery modes. The nature of the 4-H camping experience is to place youth in a new environment and hold them accountable for themselves and, sometimes, the well-being of others (Garst & Bruce, 2003). Garton et al. (2007) recommended that the 4-H camp experiential learning environment be a primary vehicle in any comprehensive 4-H program to support citizenship and the development for the appreciation of others. The essential elements perceived as considerably emphasized in 4-H camp support the views of the researchers.

Conclusion #6: Safe environment, caring adult, and engagement were emphasized most in the 4-H camp delivery mode.

Conclusion #7: Safe environment was perceived the most important essential element in the four delivery modes of the 4-H experience.

Conclusions #8: Futuristic view was perceived the least important essential element in the four delivery modes of the 4-H experience.

Safe environments provide non-judgmental, non-threatening and supportive atmospheres for youth to voice their thoughts, feelings, and opinions (Grégoire, 2004). In safe environments, youth and adults fully participate without fear of physical or emotional harm or danger (Calvert, 2005; Kress, 2005). Although the literature shows

that youth thrive when they are encouraged to embrace a futuristic view, 4-H agents/educators in this study did not perceive this element to be largely emphasized in the four delivery modes. This perception could be attributed to the attention paid to the current-day educational efforts for which agents/educators are responsible.

Perceptions of Character

The results of the study indicated that 4-H agents/educators were somewhat sure of the overall character in action development of the youth involved in county 4-H programs. This finding might suggest that 4-H agents/educators do not consider the level of character of the youth participating in their county 4-H programs to be as elevated as parents and youth in earlier studies (Astroth & Haynes, 2002; Goodwin et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2008). Nonetheless, the results of this study did imply that 4-H agents/educators recognized notable aspects of acceptance of diversity and attachment to community in the youth from their respective counties. This suggests that youth were perceived to be highly likely to do what is right even if they do not agree and could be counted on to do their part for the good of the group (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006). The American Institute for Character Education defined character with attributes such as tolerance, good citizenship, and justice (Pritchard, 1988).

With respect to the development of personal and collective responsibility and pro-social attitudes, agents/educators were slightly less confident than with acceptance of diversity and attachment to community. This is surprising in light of the studies identifying 4-H as a mechanism for the development of youth as competent, coping, and contributing members of society (Miller & Bowen, 1993; Russell, 2001; Sarver et al.,

2000). Sartre did say, however, that one's propensity to think, feel, and behave is in response to the activities of one's environment (Webber, 2006). Youth involved in 4-H throughout a county participate in a variety of activities and environments. The amount of time a 4-H agent/educator is given with any one group or individual is dependent upon the size of the county 4-H program making confident judgments about character challenging.

Conclusion #9: County 4-H agents/educators agreed in terms of overall character in action of the county 4-H youth

Conclusion #10: County 4-H agents/educators perceived the development of acceptance of diversity and attachment to community as greatest in the youth involved in county 4-H programs.

Conclusion #11: County 4-H agents/educators were somewhat sure of the development of personal and collective responsibility in the youth involved in county 4-H programs.

Conclusion #12: County 4-H agents/educators were somewhat sure of the development of pro-social attitudes in the youth involved in county 4-H programs.

Club and Character

Positive and significant relationships were found between all of the eight essential elements in the 4-H club delivery mode and character in action. The strongest correlation in clubs was found between inclusiveness and pro-social attitudes. Rodriguez et al. (1999) found that 4-H club members scored significantly higher than non-4-H club members with respect to the desire to help, ethical and moral standards, and the development of friendships. Davidson and Khmelkov (2006) defined pro-social attitudes by incorporating the concepts of empathy, caring, civility, forgiveness, respect, justice/fairness, honesty, tolerance, self-discipline, perseverance, moral courage, and responsibility. The weakest correlation in the 4-H club delivery mode was found between

futuristic view and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community. A possible explanation for this is that youth in clubs are often brought together with youth of similar interests and backgrounds.

Conclusion #13: The strongest correlation in the 4-H club delivery mode was between inclusiveness and pro-social attitudes.

Conclusions #14: The weakest correlation in the 4-H club delivery mode was between futuristic view and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community.

Special Interest and Character

The most significant relationship found between the essential elements and character in action in the special interest delivery modes was also found between inclusiveness and pro-social attitudes. Recruitment for volunteers to lead 4-H special interest programs for diverse audiences is often most successful when focusing on a special interest topic (Rockwell, et al., 1984; Smith & Finley, 2004; Wille, 1999). The essential element of inclusiveness provides for the meaningful inclusion of every individual regardless of personal characteristics (Calvert, 2005; Hensley et al., 2007). The weakest relationship in the 4-H special interest delivery mode was between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community. Again, youth involved in special interest projects most often have similar interests and backgrounds, thus negating the attention to diversity in that particular 4-H experience. Unless the special interest project is leadership or community service, the likelihood of an emphasis on service is remote.

Conclusion #15: The strongest correlation in the 4-H special interest delivery mode was between inclusiveness and pro-social attitudes.

Conclusions #16: The weakest correlation in the 4-H special interest delivery mode was between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community.

School Enrichment and Character

Regarding school enrichment, the strongest correlation was found between engagement and pro-social attitudes. Engaged learning in 4-H programs exposes young people to challenging tasks in environments intended to motivate and prepare participants for future living (Calvert, 2005). Coupled with such pro-social attributes as honesty, self-discipline and perseverance (Davidson & Khmelkov, 2006), the impact of this element of 4-H increases substantially. Service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community had the weakest correlation in terms of school enrichment. Community service and citizenship activities introduce 4-H youth to the value of giving back to their community as well as to the importance of taking an active role in civic matters (Calvert, 2005). In school environments, it is difficult to distinguish between a student's 4-H involvement and student government or service club involvement. This could attribute to the low correlation between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community in 4-H school enrichment.

Conclusion #17: The strongest correlation in the 4-H school enrichment delivery mode was between engagement and pro-social attitudes.

Conclusions #18: The weakest correlation in the 4-H school enrichment delivery mode was between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community.

Camp and Character

For the camp delivery mode, the highest correlation was found between inclusiveness and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community. Garton et al. (2007) found that responsible citizenship and accepting differences emerged as having realized the strongest impact of the 4-H camping experience. Inclusiveness in 4-H

programming is exemplified by those experiences that have clear, consistent, and age-appropriate expectations regardless of personal characteristics (Calvert, 2005; Hensley et al., 2007). The lowest correlation was found between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community. This weak relationship might be explained with the understanding that 4-H camp participants are not often expected to complete service projects. The camp experience is considered an opportunity for 4-H youth to fellowship with other 4-H members with similar interests.

Conclusion #19: The strongest correlation in the 4-H camp delivery mode was between inclusiveness and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community.

Conclusions #20: The weakest correlation in the 4-H camp delivery mode was between service and acceptance of diversity and attachment to community.

Limitations

The researcher identified several limitations during the study that could inhibit the generalization of the findings. The first limitation was related to sampling. The decision to survey county agents/educators with sole responsibility for 4-H ultimately excluded other extension professionals with partial appointments to 4-H. This also eliminated responses from extension agents that conduct 4-H programs in addition to their primary duties. As a result, responses could have had the tendency to be narrowly focused.

A second limitation related to sampling was non-response error. Because the survey was not designed to require answers to the questions, participants were able to pick and choose which responses they offered. Surveys with excessive missing data were eliminated from the data analysis.

The research design and methodology were considered a third limitation of this study. Because the researcher utilized a cross-sectional research design, research questions and findings were limited. The inclusion of open-ended questions would have provided for qualitative responses which often provide further explanation of response choice (Astin and Lee, 2003). Astin and Lee (2003) posited that cross-sectional research designs provide less compelling evidence for the determination of the relationship between development and learning.

General Recommendations

Participation by a large number of 4-H agents/educators in this study indicated that these professionals have a vested interest in the future of 4-H youth development programming. Results from this study showed that 4-H agents/educators exhibited confidence in the impact of 4-H. These findings have important implications for leaders, policy makers, and program development specialists. The following general recommendations are offered based on the findings from the study.

Recommendation 1. Conduct deliberate recruitment efforts for the 4-H youth development profession targeting minority males.

The participants for this study were predominantly White females of non-Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Establishing stable relationships with adults of diverse backgrounds and beliefs would assist to attract and support a very diverse youth audience.

Recommendation 2. Develop a consistent evaluation tool to determine the importance of each of the essential elements in each of the four delivery modes.

Although the eight essential elements were identified as being critical to the 4-H experience, it is clear that 4-H agents/educators believed that some were more important than others depending upon each individual delivery mode. Caring adults and a safe environment were clearly most important to 4-H agents/educators in clubs, special interest, school enrichment, and camp activities. Futuristic view, however, was decidedly the least important of the elements across all delivery modes. The remaining elements of mastery, service, self-determination, inclusiveness, and engagement received differing marks across the delivery modes. This was an indication that 4-H agents/educators make decisions about program development and content differently for each of the four delivery modes. This also suggested a hierarchical consideration of the eight elements on an activity by activity basis.

This study sought to determine the perceived levels of emphases on each of the essential elements in each of the four delivery modes of 4-H. An evaluation tool should be developed to determine a hierarchical relationship between the elements for each delivery mode. Doing so will assist in program development, professional development, and policy.

Recommendation 3. Develop a base-line measurement of character development as a result of participation in 4-H experiences.

Reporting that 4-H has significant impact on the lives of young people without recognizing that involvement in other youth organizations may have similar impact is irresponsible. A clear identification of the character development expectations of 4-H should help with evaluation, curriculum development, and policy making. Regular comparisons to other youth serving programs will ensure that 4-H remains timely and innovative. Engaging in these types of evaluative exercises also lessens the likelihood of duplication of efforts across programs.

Recommendations for Future Research

Scholarly research is built on the work of others. This study is no different and should be considered an additional resource for those pursuing answers to questions for the good of scholarly inquiry. The following recommendations are made to inspire additional research in the area of 4-H youth development.

Recommendation One: Target minority 4-H agents/educators audiences for input regarding the 4-H experience.

A study targeting minority audiences would require purposeful sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Youth demographics for this study showed a diverse youth participant population. The participant sample from this study, however, was predominantly White females. A deliberate study with minority males would add substantial data to the findings.

Recommendation Two: Conduct a study based solely on each delivery mode (club, special interest, school enrichment, and camp) with attention to the eight essential elements and agent programming efforts.

The diversity with which agents conduct county 4-H programming deems attention. A solid study could be conducted with respect to agents' attention to the eight essential elements in 4-H club programming, special interest programming, school enrichment programming, and camp programming. Data from youth, parents, volunteers, and agents would substantiate the relevance of the elements in each of the delivery modes.

Recommendation Three: Conduct further research to determine scales of character development of the 4-H experience.

The essence of 4-H programming provides for meaningful qualitative research. Future research could result in understanding the meaning of character development through 4-H. Youth members could provide descriptions of their experience and why they consider involvement in 4-H to be central their character development. Volunteers can provide countless anecdotes about their encounters with young people and the change they witness as these youth progress through 4-H. Coupled with the professional explanations from 4-H agents/educators, this type of data could add richness to the findings from this study.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Essential Elements and Delivery Modes Survey

Clemson University, in conjunction with South Carolina 4-H, is interested in learning about your perceptions of positive youth development as a County 4-H Agent/Educator. By completing this 32-item survey, you will have the opportunity to voice your opinion and share your thoughts regarding the eight essential elements of positive youth development and how they relate to 4-H programming and activities. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

	No Emphasis 1	Little Emphasis 2	Some Emphasis 3	Moderate Emphasis 4	Significant Emphasis 5
4-H Clubs					
1. Caring adults in successful 4-H club programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. A safe environment in successful 4-H club programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Mastery in successful 4-H club programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Service in successful 4-H club programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Self-determination in successful 4-H club programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Inclusiveness in successful 4-H club programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. A futuristic view in successful 4-H club programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Engagement in successful 4-H club programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4-H Special Interest					
9. Caring adults in successful 4-H special interest programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. A safe environment in successful 4-H special interest programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Mastery in successful 4-H special interest programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Service Mastery in successful 4-H special interest programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Self-determination in successful 4-H special interest programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Inclusiveness in successful 4-H special interest programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. A futuristic view in successful 4-H special interest programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Engagement in successful 4-H special interest programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4-H School Enrichment					
17. Caring adults in successful 4-H school enrichment programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. A safe environment in successful 4-H school enrichment programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	No Emphasis 1	Little Emphasis 2	Some Emphasis 3	Moderate Emphasis 4	Significant Emphasis 5
19. Mastery in successful 4-H school enrichment programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Service in successful 4-H school enrichment programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. Self-determination in successful 4-H school enrichment programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. Inclusiveness in successful 4-H school enrichment programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. A futuristic view in successful 4-H school enrichment programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. Engagement in successful 4-H school enrichment programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4-H Camping					
25. Caring adults in successful 4-H camping programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. A safe environment in successful 4-H camping programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. Mastery in successful 4-H camping programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. Service in successful 4-H camping programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. Self-determination in successful 4-H camping programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. Inclusiveness in successful 4-H camping programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. A futuristic view in successful 4-H camping programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. Engagement in successful 4-H camping programming/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX B

Character in Action Survey

Clemson University, in conjunction with South Carolina 4-H, is interested in learning about your perceptions of 4-H positive youth development as a County 4-H Agent/Educator. By completing this 28-item survey, you will have the opportunity to voice your opinion and share your thoughts regarding the character of the youth in your county program. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Thank you, in advance, for your cooperation.

Do you agree or disagree with these statements about 4-H members in your county program?

The 4-H members in my county program ...	Completely Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Not Sure 3	Somewhat Sure 4	Completely Sure 5
Pro-Social Attitudes					
1) ... feel badly when others are in pain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2) ... feel responsible for helping those in need.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3) ... try to be nice even to those who are not their friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4) ... can forgive those who hurt them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5) ... never talk disrespectfully about 4-H Staff of Volunteers to other members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6) ... believe it's important that everyone has a fair chance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7) ... sometimes cheat to win or get ahead.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8) ... are respectful to others even if they do not agree with them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9) ... would give up watching a favorite TV show to work on their 4-H project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10) ... keep working to achieve difficult goals they care about.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11) ... do what they think is right even if others disagree.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12) ... can be counted on to do their part for any group they are members of.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acceptance of Diversity & Attachment to Community					
13) Members would help someone who is new feel accepted.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14) Members exclude those who are different (i.e., they belong to a different race, religion, or culture).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15) Members make fun of ideas that are different.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16) Members who are not part of the popular groups get picked on or excluded.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17) Members are willing to share with others, even if they are not friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The 4-H members in my county program ...	Completely Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Not Sure 3	Somewhat Sure 4	Completely Sure 5
18) If members are in trouble, they can rely on other members to help them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19) Members only care about themselves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20) Members would support those who try to do something good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal & Collective Responsibility					
21) Members resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22) Members try to get others to follow the rules.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23) Members do not care if their friends cheat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24) When members see someone being picked on, they try to stop it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25) Members take an active role in helping solve club and/or community problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26) Members would try to stop their friends from spreading rumors or gossip about others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27) When trying to solve a problem, members are willing to consider everyone's opinion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28) Members believe that working together they can bring about change in their club or project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The Character in Action of County 4-H Members Survey is an adaptation of the Character in Action Survey (Khmelkov & Davidson, 2006). Permission to use the original survey may be obtained by contacting the authors at CornerstoneCE@gmail.com.

APPENDIX C

Kellye Rembert

From: Kellye Rembert
Sent: Monday, February 09, 2009 12:59 PM
To: Cornerstone Consulting & Evaluation, LLC
Subject: RE: Character in Action Survey
Attachments: Character In Action of County 4-H Members.doc
Importance: High

Dear Dr. Khmelkov-

I apologize for the delay in receiving your email, and therefore for getting back to you so late. Please don't apologize about the delay in response – I completely understand the complications of cyberspace. I truly appreciate your response. I am especially grateful to you for spending a few moments on the phone with me today (2/9/2009, 10:45 AM, EST). I have answered your questions below, but feel that you and I reached an agreement for me to move ahead with the survey as I have adapted it.

Permission to use the instrument is granted free of charge on condition that all of the following stipulations are met:

(1) the user will properly cite the authorship of the instrument(s), i.e., keep the authors' names on the survey forms that are handed out to participants or uploaded for online data collection, and cite the authors in any subsequent reports or publications based on the data collected with the instrument(s); Khmelkov and Davidson (2006) are cited in all references to the survey. The survey is referred to as "an adaptation of the Character in Action Survey (Khmelkov & Davidson, 2006)."

(2) the user will keep the original title and content of the survey unchanged but may modify the formatting; The survey is entitled "Character in Action of County 4-H Program Members" and is modified to survey adult 4-H professionals. The survey items selected ask about youth members of the program rather than the program itself. The survey items are grouped according to the scales in the original survey.

(3) the user will provide copies of reports/publications based on the data collected with the instrument(s); I will be more than happy to provide this information.

(4) the user will not sell or grant permission to use the instrument(s) to third parties; Permission will not be granted by the user. Reference information for the survey will provide appropriate information for others to seek permission for use.

(5) the user will obtain an IRB approval for the use of the instrument(s) in their project if required; This research is subject to IRB approval from Clemson University and will follow these procedures; *and*

(6) the user will be willing to share with Cornerstone Consulting & Evaluation, LLC individual level data (with any individual participants' identifying information removed)

for continued reliability and validity analyses on the instrument(s). This condition is negotiable based on the circumstances and the nature of the research/evaluation project. Please contact us if you cannot share your data with us but would still like to use the instrument(s). This is acceptable.

Please let us know if you intend to modify the survey. Generally, this would not preclude you from using it but we would like to ensure the survey integrity. The modified survey is attached for your information. Again, thank you for your permission to use the survey. Take care!

Kellye S. Rembert
South Carolina 4-H, Director
4-H Youth Development and Families Program Leader
Clemson University
210 Barre Hall
Clemson, South Carolina 29634

864-656-3848 (Voice)
864-656-7595 (Fax)
krember@clemson.edu

From: Cornerstone Consulting & Evaluation, LLC [mailto:cornerstonece@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 08, 2009 8:24 AM
To: Kellye Rembert
Subject: RE: Character in Action Survey

Dear Kellye—

I apologize for the delay in receiving your email, and therefore for getting back to you so late.

Permission to use the instrument is granted free of charge on condition that all of the following stipulations are met:

- (1) the user will properly cite the authorship of the instrument(s), i.e., keep the authors' names on the survey forms that are handed out to participants or uploaded for online data collection, and cite the authors in any subsequent reports or publications based on the data collected with the instrument(s);
- (2) the user will keep the original title and content of the survey unchanged but may modify the formatting;
- (3) the user will provide copies of reports/publications based on the data collected with the instrument(s);
- (4) the user will not sell or grant permission to use the instrument(s) to third parties;

(5) the user will obtain an IRB approval for the use of the instrument(s) in their project if required; and
(6) the user will be willing to share with Cornerstone Consulting & Evaluation, LLC individual level data (with any individual participants' identifying information removed) for continued reliability and validity analyses on the instrument(s). This condition is negotiable based on the circumstances and the nature of the research/evaluation project. Please contact us if you cannot share your data with us but would still like to use the instrument(s).

Please let us know if you intend to modify the survey. Generally, this would not preclude you from using it but we would like to ensure the survey integrity.

Best,

Vlad Khmelkov

Vladimir T. Khmelkov, Ph.D.
Director of Research & Technology
Cornerstone Consulting & Evaluation, LLC
10 Edgewood Parkway
Fayetteville, NY 13066
315-663-7420

From: Kellye Rembert [mailto:KREMBER@exchange.clemson.edu]
Sent: Friday, January 09, 2009 2:35 PM
To: CornerstoneCE@gmail.com
Subject: Character in Action Survey
Importance: High

Good Afternoon-

I am a doctoral student at Clemson University. I am interested in adapting the Character in Action Survey to use in my study: *Perceptions of County 4-H Agents/Educators Regarding Essential Elements and Activities of Positive Youth Development and Their Collective Impact on Character*. Please let me know how I should go about obtaining permission to adapt this survey. Thank you so much and have a great day!
Kellye

Kellye S. Rembert
South Carolina 4-H, Director
4-H Youth Development and Families Program Leader

3

APPENDIX D

Kellye Rembert

From: Kellye Rembert
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2009 3:02 PM
To: NER_4H-L@clemson.edu
Cc: krember@CLEMSON.EDU
Subject: 4-H & Character Study

Importance: High

Dear 4-H Agent/Educator:

Beginning Thursday, April 16th, 9:00 AM EST you will have the opportunity to participate in a research project entitled "Perceptions of County 4-H Agents/Educators Regarding Essential Elements and Activities of Positive Youth Development and Their Collective Impact on Character." You will be provided an electronic link to a short survey asking for your perceptions concerning 4-H programming in your county or parish. Demographic information will be requested. This information reflects ES237 data, so it will be beneficial to have that report accessible when you are ready to complete the survey. All responses will be kept anonymous; however, you will be invited to submit your name to be included in a drawing for a \$100 gift certificate to the National 4-H Mall upon completing the survey. Thank you in advance for participating in research that will enable us all to continue to *Make the Best Better!*

Kellye S. Rembert
South Carolina 4-H, Director
4-H Youth Development and Families Program Leader
Clemson University
210 Barre Hall
Clemson, South Carolina 29634

864-656-3848 (Voice)
864-656-7595 (Fax)
krember@clemson.edu

APPENDIX E

Kellye Rembert

From: Kellye Rembert
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2009 9:02 AM
To: NER_4H-L@clemson.edu
Subject: 4-H & Character Study

Dear 4-H Agent/Educator: *If you have received this message in error, please disregard.*

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kellye S. Rembert at Clemson University. The purpose of this research is to investigate the perceptions of 4-H Agents/Educators regarding essential elements and activities of positive youth development programming and their collective impact on character.

Your participation will involve following the link below in order to complete demographic questions (from your program's most recent ES237 report) and a two-part survey regarding your perceptions of 4-H programming in your county or parish. The first part of the survey, "Essential Elements and Activities Data Collection Instrument," asks for your perceptions concerning the level of emphasis placed on the essential elements (caring adult, safe environment, mastery, service, self determination, inclusiveness, a futuristic view, and engagement) in each of the 4-H delivery modes (clubs, special interest, school enrichment, and camping). The second part, "Character Survey," asks for your perceptions of the character of the youth in your 4-H program. The entire survey should take less than 20 minutes to complete.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with completing the survey. Your participation in completing the survey is voluntary. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. All responses will be kept anonymous; however, upon completing the survey, you will be invited to submit your name to be included in a drawing for a \$100 gift certificate to the National 4-H Mall.

Thank you, in advance, for participating in research that will enable us all to continue to *Make the Best Better!* The results of the research study will help to improve benefits to leaders/educators and youth served by extension services.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Frankie Keels Williams, at fkw@clemson.edu or 864 656-1491 at Clemson University. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Institutional Review Board at 864-656-6460 (IRB Protocol #IRB2009-067).

The survey will remain open until Thursday, April 30th.

Please click here to begin taking the survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Ofar_2bOO1T_2fPTeXZ9kC3xng_3d_3d

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