

THE IMPACT OF GEORGIA 4-H LIVESTOCK PROJECTS ON PARTICIPANT LEADERSHIP SKILLS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF 4-H ALUMNI

by

SHERRY WILSON ABRAMS

(Under the Direction of Nicholas Fuhrman)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify what leadership learning outcomes adults perceive to have gained from participation as youth in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Participant reflections may serve to inform improvements to Georgia 4-H livestock projects. The leadership and life skills participants self-identified we analyzed through qualitative research methods. Nine domains emerged to illustrate the types of experiences that developed leadership and life skills for participants. These domains included communicating, helping others, managing, working, responsibility/commitment, connecting, passion, thinking, and achieving. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and Katz's Three-Skill Approach to Leadership provided a basis for interpreting the findings.

INDEX WORDS: Georgia 4-H, Livestock projects, Cooperative Extension, Kolb's
Experiential Learning Theory, leadership outcomes, life skills, Katz's
Three-Skill Approach to Leadership

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B.S., The University of Georgia, 2003

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2015

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Alexander; and our boys, Aidan and Bailey. Thank you for supporting me all the way. I know it wasn't always easy to figure out how it would work, yet as a team we did it. I also thank you for never tiring of frozen pizzas.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to Dr. Henry Amos, professor emeritus of Animal and Dairy Science at The University of Georgia. As my freshman advisor in 1999, he recognized early during my brief time as an Animal Science student that it wasn't the major for me. He encouraged me to follow my passion for writing and to find a way to use it to impact people while telling important stories and sharing messages that are vital to our communities. I was privileged to have him write a recommendation letter for my graduate school application in 2013. I consider Dr. Henry Amos and his wife Mrs. Wanda Amos to be true friends and mentors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge all of my professors from the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at The University of Georgia. I appreciate your guidance and support through the Master of Agricultural Leadership program.

I would also like to thank my thesis committee – Dr. Nicholas Fuhrman, Dr. Dennis Duncan, and Dr. Kari Turner – for your time and help with this research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Livestock projects are one of many activities in which young people can engage in 4-H. Activities within the organization, including livestock projects, “develop leadership skills among young people” (Hoover, Scholl, Dunigan, & Mamontova, 2007, p. 107). Research supports the effectiveness of youth organization, including 4-H in the positive development of leadership and life skills (Connor, 2012; Hoover et al., 2007; Phelps & Kotrlik, 2007; Nash & Sant, 2005; Fox, Schroeder, Lodl, 2003; Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997). Young people entering the workforce need strong development of life skills, including leadership, to be successful and 4-H must also work to document how programs are preparing young people for the current employment environment (Cochran, Catchpole, Arnett, & Ferrari, 2010).

The University of Georgia Extension Service has implemented learning outcomes as part of Georgia 4-H base programming. Current livestock market animal projects encompass learning outcomes including development of leadership traits and development of leadership abilities. Little has been written to document if these outcomes have a long-term impact. This study explored how the long-term impacts of Georgia 4-H livestock projects may influence participants’ leadership skills. The design of the study included purposeful sampling to “directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide the identification of information-rich cases” (Merriam, 2009, p. 78).

The theoretical and conceptual frameworks were developed from Kolb’s experiential learning theory (ELT) model and Katz’s three-skill approach to leadership (three-skill approach).

The ELT model was used to create qualitative interview questions and to interpret the data collected from participant interviews. What experiences within 4-H livestock projects had the greatest impact on the participants' leadership experiences and why? What elements of raising and exhibiting a 4-H livestock project animal did the participant transfer to other learning experiences? The three-skill approach was also used to evaluate qualitative data to classify areas of accomplishment related to leadership and life skill development as related to interview analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe what leadership learning outcomes adults perceive to have gained from participation as youth in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Participant reflections may serve to inform improvements to Georgia 4-H livestock projects. The overarching goal of this study was to contribute to the knowledge about leadership and life skills that are perceived to be gained by participants of Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Understanding the leadership and life skills participants self-identified as important in their experiences through phone interviews was one method of achieving this goal.

Problem Statement

Problem Statement: What leadership learning outcomes do adults perceive to have gained from participation as youth in Georgia 4-H livestock projects? Based on the literature review which demonstrates a variety of elements related to leadership and life skills participants perceive to have gained through their participation, the researcher assumed that alumni of Georgia 4-H livestock projects did experience and gain some elements of leadership and life skills; however, the individual participants may not have classified them in the same way as the researcher.

Assumptions

The following assumptions helped inform this study:

1. Participants in the phone interviews will be honest about their experiences in Georgia 4-H livestock projects and other related activities.
2. Certain patterns will be observable in the qualitative data gathered in the phone interviews and these patterns will inform the domains constructed from the raw data.
3. The results of the data collection will provide a rich understanding of the leadership learning outcomes alumni of Georgia 4-H projects perceive to have gained through their experiences. These findings may assist in further developing aspects of the Georgia 4-H livestock projects.

Definitions of Key Terms

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT): Based on Kolb's model, ELT focuses on a holistic, experienced-based view of learning. The core of the cycle is comprised of the elements of concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

Leadership: “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2013, p. 5)

Leadership skills: “ability to use one's knowledge and competencies to accomplish a set of goals or objectives” (Northouse, 2013, p. 44).

Leadership traits: Identifiable attributes that differentiate a leader from a non-leader. Traits focus solely on the leader (e.g. intelligence, achievement, drive, and agreeableness).

Georgia 4-H Livestock Projects: For the purpose of this study, Georgia 4-H livestock projects are limited to species with a state 4-H show (i.e., breeding ewes, market lamb, meat goat, commercial dairy heifer, breeding heifer, market hog, market steer, and horse).

Three-Skill Approach: Using technical skill, human skill, and conceptual skill, this approach views leadership as a set of skills that can be developed by an individual to various degrees (Northouse, 2013; Katz, 1955).

Targeting Life Skills Model: The TLS model (sometimes referred to as the 4-H Life Skills Wheel) provides classification for elements of 4-H experiences for youth participants. The TLS model has been used as a tool to develop comprehensive youth development programs in 4-H organizations (Hendricks, 1998; Fitzpatrick, Gagne, Jones, Loble, & Phelps, 2005)

Limitations/Delimitations

During the 2013-2014 academic year, almost 2,500 Georgia 4-H members participated in livestock projects at the state level and showed nearly 5,000 animals (K. Turner, personal communication, November 30, 2015). This study will be limited to Georgia 4-H members who competed at a Georgia 4-H state livestock show and graduated from high school between 2007 and 2015. This also limits the generalizeability to Georgia 4-H livestock program participants. Additionally, evaluation of leadership skills influenced by such programs will be confined to those found in the three-skill approach and the Targeting Life Skills (TLS) model. As the age range of participants will not be limited to specific strata, the composition of the Georgia 4-H livestock programs during the individual's year(s) of participation could vary and thus effect the perception of their leadership skills gained.

Throughout qualitative research, "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). It is for this reason, the researcher's own

perspective and experience may present some amount of bias into this study which is important to admit in regard to internal and external validity. Throughout the interviews, my goal was to create an environment where the participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences with Georgia 4-H livestock projects and other related elements. A researcher subjectivity statement outlining my own previous experiences with this subject matter can be found in Chapter 3.

Summary

The leadership and life skills participants gain through Georgia 4-H livestock projects offers the opportunity to gain important elements related to becoming developed leaders. This research strives to provide relevant, qualitative feedback from participants which may serve to strengthen elements of the Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Chapter Two will provide a review of the literature and develop a theoretical framework as well as a conceptual framework as a basis from which this research was conducted.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature will support an understanding of the context and contribution of this research study. This chapter will discuss the factors that may have influenced leadership skills and life skills which alumni of Georgia 4-H perceive to have gained through their participation in their livestock projects. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks will be developed from Kolb's experiential learning theory (ELT) and the three-skill approach to leadership development. Experiential learning theory (ELT) may offer an explanation of how the participants' experiences contributed to the development of their leadership and life skills, specifically through the reflection component of Kolb's model. The three-skill approach to leadership also served as part of the theoretical framework to classify different types of skills. The conceptual framework includes the following elements: recent developments in leadership and life skill development through participation in livestock projects (primarily since 2003), alumni perceptions of leadership skills gained, impact of youth livestock projects on leadership, and elements of 4-H livestock projects that influence leadership skills. This review of the literature will relate previous research to the main research question concerning leadership skills and life skills development which alumni of Georgia 4-H perceive to have gained through their experiences.

Theoretical Framework

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and Katz's Three-Skill Approach to Leadership (Three-Skill Approach) served as the theoretical framework for this study. Based on the elements related to leadership and life skills that are identified by ELT and the Three-Skill Approach, this study examined the overarching question of what leadership and life skills did participants in Georgia 4-H livestock projects perceive to have gained from their experiences. The theoretical frameworks also served as models to classify skills and experiences into established criteria or categories.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory Model– An Overview

Based on Kolb's model, Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) focuses on a holistic, experienced-based view of learning (Figure 1). The core of the cycle is comprised of the elements of concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Kolb's ELT states that "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). Moving through the steps of concrete experiences, reflexive observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation facilitates experiential learning experience for the individual involved in the process (Baker, Robinson, & Kolb, 2012, p. 4). Baker et al. (2012) also state that "all learning is experiential" (p. 7). In the context of this study, the experiences of participants are illustrated through their description of hands-on livestock learning activities (*concrete experiences*), thinking about their activities they engaged in and how those activities helped them or could be used to assist others (*reflective observations*), developing strategies to teach others new skills (*abstract conceptualization*), and providing examples of how they taught others or worked on increasing their own livestock skills (*active experimentation*).

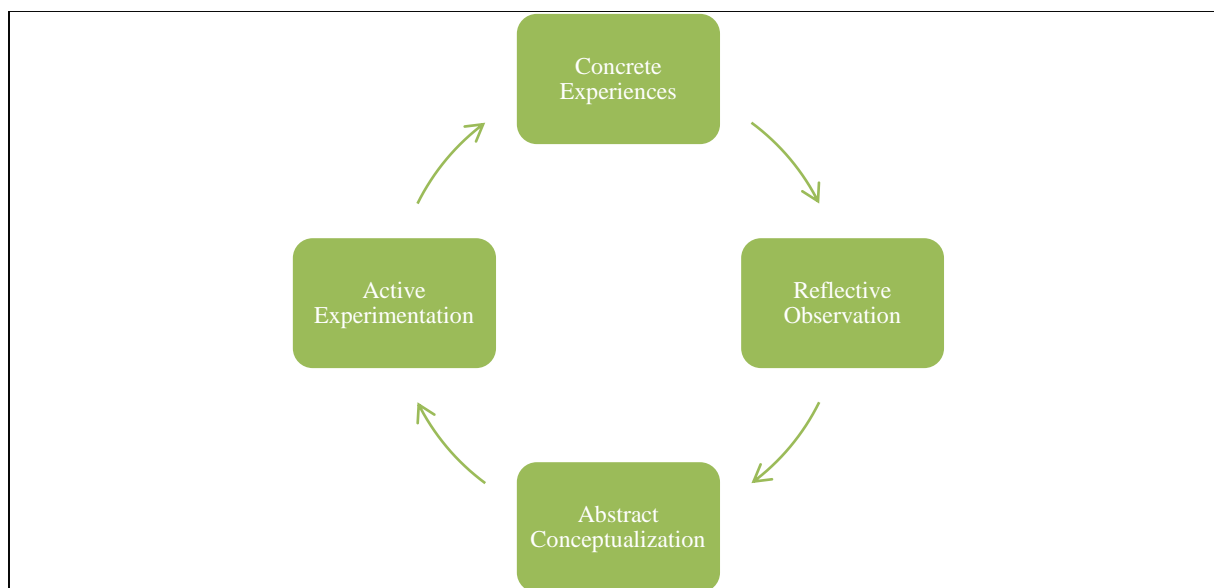


Figure 1. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory uses a cyclical, experienced-based framework to conceptualize the learning process. Adapted from *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (p.42), by D.A. Kolb, 1984, Englewood Cliffs, NJ; Prentice Hall. Copyright 1984 by Prentice-Hall.

Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model – Applications in Related Studies

Baker et al. (2012) state that Kolb’s ELT “illustrates the total learning experience of agricultural education” (p. 6). The hands-on experiences provided by raising a livestock project lend naturally to the framework of Kolb’s ELT. As those authors outlined, agricultural experiences are uniquely positioned to provide experiential learning experiences through student involvement and ownership in such experiences. Phelps and Kotrlik (2007) stressed the importance of including reflection in all 4-H activities as a way to involve members in planning activities and to keep them active with the organization. Chan (2012) also found in a study of engineering students that “real-world encounters leave students with a deeper impression than learning merely from textbooks, which enable more fruitful observation, reflection, conceptualization and experimentation” (p. 413). A study of Pennsylvania Extension agents identified experiential learning as a “critical part of learning within 4-H” and called for an increase in education of staff and volunteer leaders to actively incorporate hands-on learning

within their programming (Bechtel, Ewing, Threeton, & Mincemoyer, 2013, para. 17). Meyer and Jones (2015) found evidence that “doing” and “reflecting” through experiential learning led to an increase in 4-H member participants understanding of giving back to their community. This study contributes to the body of knowledge about how experiential learning can serve as a framework for participants to gain leadership skills and life skills through Georgia 4-H livestock projects.

Outcomes of Experiential Livestock Experiences (Georgia 4-H)

The 2014 Georgia 4-H annual report states that 175,372 young people are enrolled in 4-H programs and activities (*Georgia Cloverleaf*, 2014). Eight-two percent of the Georgia 4-H participants are elementary school aged students. Only three percent of the total participants report residing on a farm while 47 percent are rural non-farm residents; the remaining participants live in towns and small cities, urban/suburban areas or central city locations. Outside of the classroom, 18,550 Georgia 4-H members participated in agricultural science activities (*Georgia Cloverleaf*, 2014).

Georgia 4-H’ers raising and showing livestock have the opportunity to show at local and regional fairs and shows. The state show for market hogs, market steers, beef heifers, commercial dairy heifers, breeding ewes, market lambs, and market goats is held as part of the Georgia Junior National Livestock Shows in Perry, Ga. (*Georgia 4-H Base Programming*, 2015). Breeding heifers, commercial dairy heifers, market steers, and market hogs show in February and market lambs and market goats show in October. The state show for the horse project is held separately in June in Perry, Ga. All livestock species, with the exception of horse, requires the 4-H’ers to “maintain continuous full ownership, possession and provide primary care for their animal project from the time of entry until show day” (*Georgia 4-H Base*

Programming – Market Steer, 2015, para. 1). Show entries are due four to five months prior to the event. The horse project requires the 4-Her to be “the person primarily responsible for the care of the horse, which teaches responsibility and self-motivation” (*Georgia 4-H Base Programming – Horse*, 2015, para. 1). To show at the State 4-H Horse Show, participants must also complete the Novice Horseman 4-H Horse Project manual to demonstrate the skills he or she has learned through their horse project (*Georgia 4-H Base Programming – Horse*, 2015).

Base programming guides are used for each of the livestock species with a Georgia 4-H state show. In addition to providing specifications for the individual show animal criteria, the base programming guides provide learning outcomes for participants. While each species has a unique base programming guide, several of the learning outcomes are consistent. Developing leadership, experiencing pride of owning and raising an animal, increasing knowledge about the animals, and building an appreciation of livestock exhibition are all common elements of the base programming learning outcomes.

4-H practitioners on the national level have used the 4-H Targeting Life Skills Model Wheel “as a framework to plan, implement, and evaluate 4-H Youth Development programs” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2005). The model is used at a variety of levels for planning and evaluating 4-H programs and projects (Fox et al., 2003). Within this study, participants were asked to identify areas on the wheel they identified as contributing to their leadership experiences within their 4-H livestock projects, other 4-H experiences, and youth-centered activities outside of 4-H. Figure 2 shows the 4-H Targeting Life Skills Model Wheel developed by Hendricks (1998).

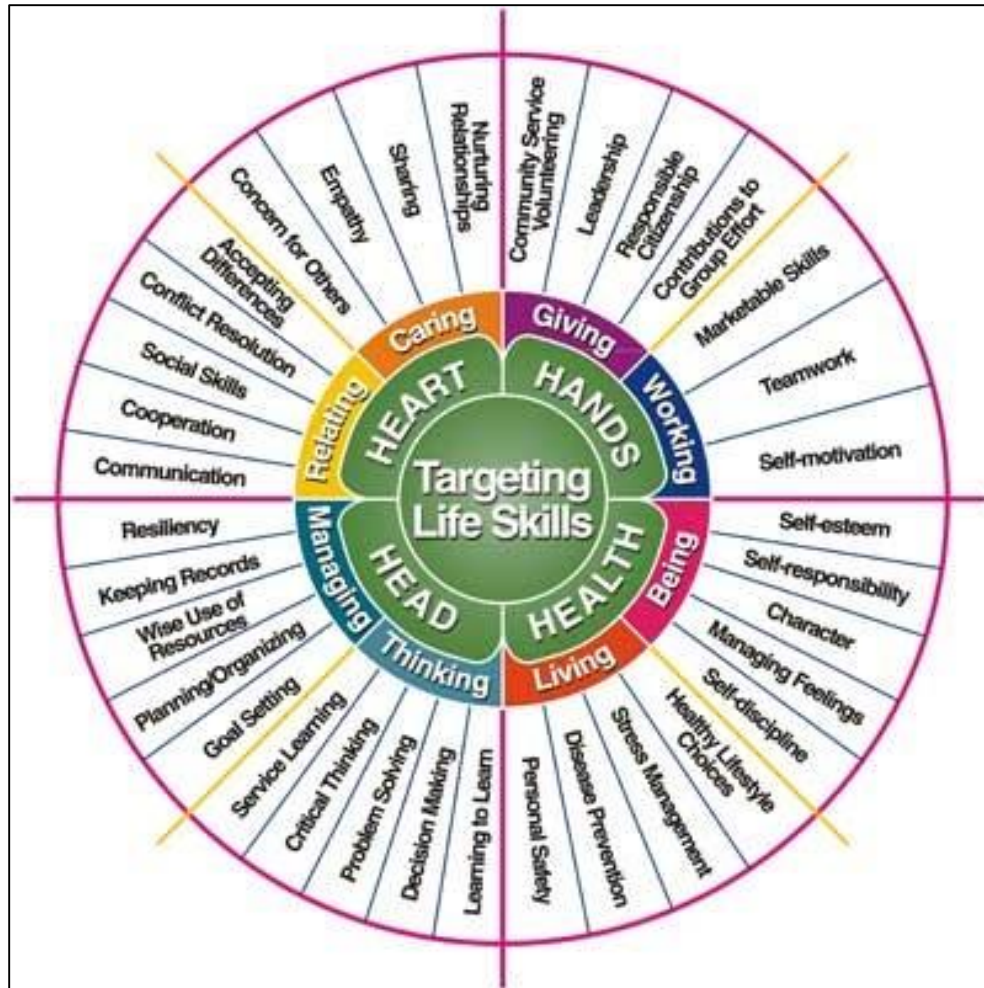


Figure 2. The 4-H Targeting Life Skills Model Wheel was developed in 1998 as a way to classify life skills that may be experienced through various 4-H projects and activities (Hendricks, 1998).

Three-Skill Approach to Leadership – An Overview

The Three-Skill Approach to Leadership (Three-Skill Approach) uses technical skill, human skill, and conceptual skill as a leadership skill set that can be developed by an individual to various degrees (Northouse, 2013; Katz, 1955). Technical skill relates directly to a specific competency in a particular area. Human skill is the “knowledge about and ability to work with people” (Northouse, 2013, p. 44). Conceptual skill is defined as the process of working with ideas. Northouse (2013) states that within the Three-Skill Approach, that “skills are what leaders can accomplish whereas traits are who leaders are” (p. 44). While all three elements of this

leadership approach are important, Northhouse (2013) and Katz (1955) both argue the importance of various skills related to the individual setting. Based on an individual's position in leadership, elements of technical, human, or conceptual skills may be more desired or effective (Northhouse, 2013, p. 46). In the context of this study, the Three-Skill Approach has direct applicability. Figure 3 shows the elements of the Three-Skills Approach Katz found beneficial to various levels of leadership. The Three-Skill Approach may be related to experiences participants of Georgia 4-H livestock projects had by learning how to lead or perform a specific task with their animal (technical skills), sharing or teaching a new skill, including how to pose an animal in the show ring, to another 4-H member or adult (human skills), and combining their experiences to develop a new idea that may be used with their project or to help another 4-H member (conceptual skills).

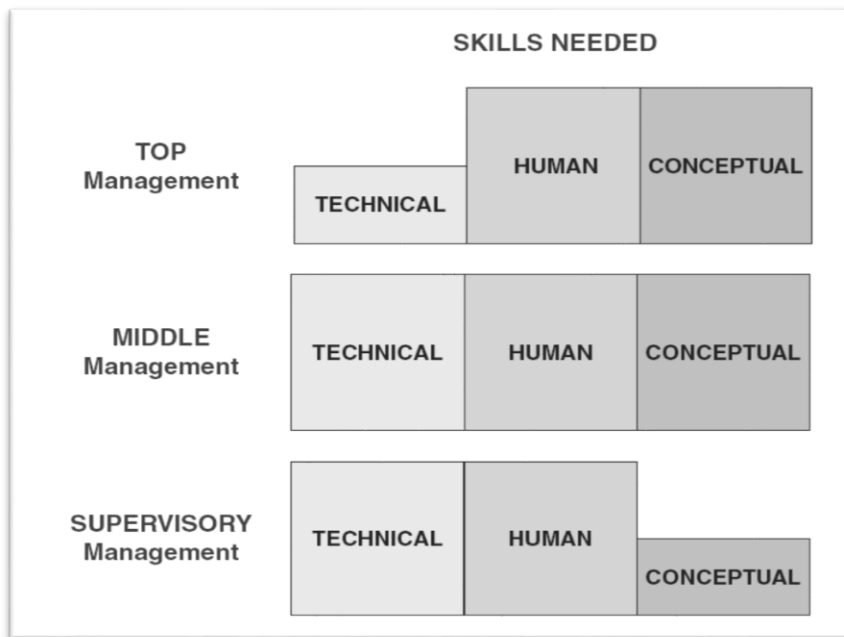


Figure 3. The Three-Skill Approach to Leadership identifies technical, human, and conceptual skills as part of the building block for various levels of leadership (Northhouse, 2013).

Three-Skill Approach to Leadership – Applications in Related Studies

Related studies show how individuals utilize the three elements of the Three-Skill approach to leadership. The need for additional studies is evident through the lack of studies. This may be a beneficial model in distinguishing skills from traits.

Conceptual Framework

The Link between Leadership Skills and Life Skills

Leadership skills and life skills continue to be an integral part of 4-H programming and experiences. Recent studies have been conducted regarding leadership skills and life skills 4-H participants gain; these studies have been modeled from the current participant view, parent view, and alumni view (Emo, 2007; Fox, Schroeder, & Lodl, 2003). Emo (2007) stresses the importance of evaluating learning experiences “through a systemic lens of activity” to better understand the impact they have on participants (p. 405). Additionally, as 4-H organizations are required to document the tangible and intangible value 4-H provides for youth participants to justify funding, resources, professional involvement, and volunteer time, the need for documented justification has remained an important component (Nistler, Lamm, & Stedman, 2011; Hoover, Scholl, Dunigan, & Mamontova, 2007; Fox et al., 2003). This study provides further documentation of the value 4-H livestock experiences provide for participants several years after their participation. Prior to this study, few studies have examined these outcomes longitudinally.

Ladewig and Thomas (1985) conducted one of the most comprehensive longitudinal national research studies of 4-H alumni experiences of 4-H participants, participants of other youth organizations, and non-participants with the objective to ‘determine the impact of participation in youth programs such as 4-H on the development of individuals’ life skills and

their subsequent involvement in community activities” (p. 46). The mean age of participants in the Ladewig and Thomas (1984) study was 43 years of age with a range of 18 to 85 years old. One of their findings included interactions with others as one of the positive aspects participants identified to contributing to their individual gain in life skills.

This study examined the leadership skills and life skills participants perceived to have gained through participation in 4-H livestock projects as youth. These skills and accompanying experiences were tied to Kolb’s ELT model and the Three-Skill Approach to leadership framework. While the Georgia 4-H base program outcomes focus on leadership traits, this study will focus on skills as related to the three-skill approach. This design will allow the study to move past traits and use skills to address leadership competencies gained (Northouse, 2013).

Alumni Perceptions of Leadership Skills and Life Skills Gained

A number of studies have been conducted on the alumni perceptions of leadership skills gained through 4-H activities (Allen, Ricketts, & Priest, 2012; Fox et al., 2003; Radhakrishna & Sinasky, 2005). In a study of Wyoming 4-H alumni, conducted in part to show the impact of 4-H programs, the researchers found 4-H membership influenced the development of a select set of life skills (Fox et al., 2003). Many of the life skills referenced (e.g. leadership, project skills, and presentation skills) can be categorized within the three-skill approach. Following a review of the literature since 2003, the researcher found no published studies focusing exclusively on leadership traits or skills gained or influenced by participation in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. However, Allen et al. (2007) did conclude from a study of The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences alumni that participation in 4-H and FFA created experiences “important to leadership development” (p. 59).

Impact of Youth Livestock Projects on Leadership

In a study of national junior cattle exhibitors, Walker, Morgan, Ricketts, and Duncan (2011) looked at the relationship between youth participation in beef projects and development of leadership life skills. The researchers found a positive correlation between leadership life skills that may have been developed “through participations in NJAA [National Junior Angus Association] and other livestock exhibition activities” (p. 58). The authors recommended that further research be conducted to determine if specific elements of life skills are impacted by livestock exhibition. Researchers on a study of youth participants at the 2010 North Carolina State Fair also found a positive correlation between leadership life skills and participating in 4-H livestock projects and recommended further research in other states as North Carolina had a small livestock program at the time research was conducted (Anderson, Bruce, Jones, & Flowers, 2015). “Can set goals” ranked highest of the group of life skills evaluated using the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) (Anderson, et al., 2015).

Elements of 4-H Livestock Projects that Influence Leadership Skills

Soft skills are often cited as necessary for the workplace and as areas where young people and recent graduates need improvement. Rusk et al. (2003) found in a study of Indiana 4-H members who exhibited livestock that contributed to gaining soft skills. “Improvement in both people skills and public speaking ability” were found through their qualitative study along with gaining responsibility in areas including “being on time for work” (Rusk, et al., 2003, p. 10). Anderson et al. (2015) outline how livestock exhibition contributes to life skills or soft skills for participants.

Anderson et al. (2015) state that understanding the experiences and activities that lead young people to develop leadership skills and life skills is important to the ultimate development

of individuals who are active and positive contributors to society. A study of alumni of 4-H projects in New Jersey found that showing animals resulted in an increased self-perception of developing life skills (Ward, 1996). In a 2010 survey of youth (under age 21) participants at the North Carolina State Fair, researchers found that “livestock exhibition may in fact increase the leadership life skill development in the participants” (Anderson, Bruce, Jones, & Flowers, 2015, para 25). Figure 4 illustrates examples of how participants in Georgia 4-H livestock projects could move through a conceptual model of Kolb’s ELT.

Conceptual Model

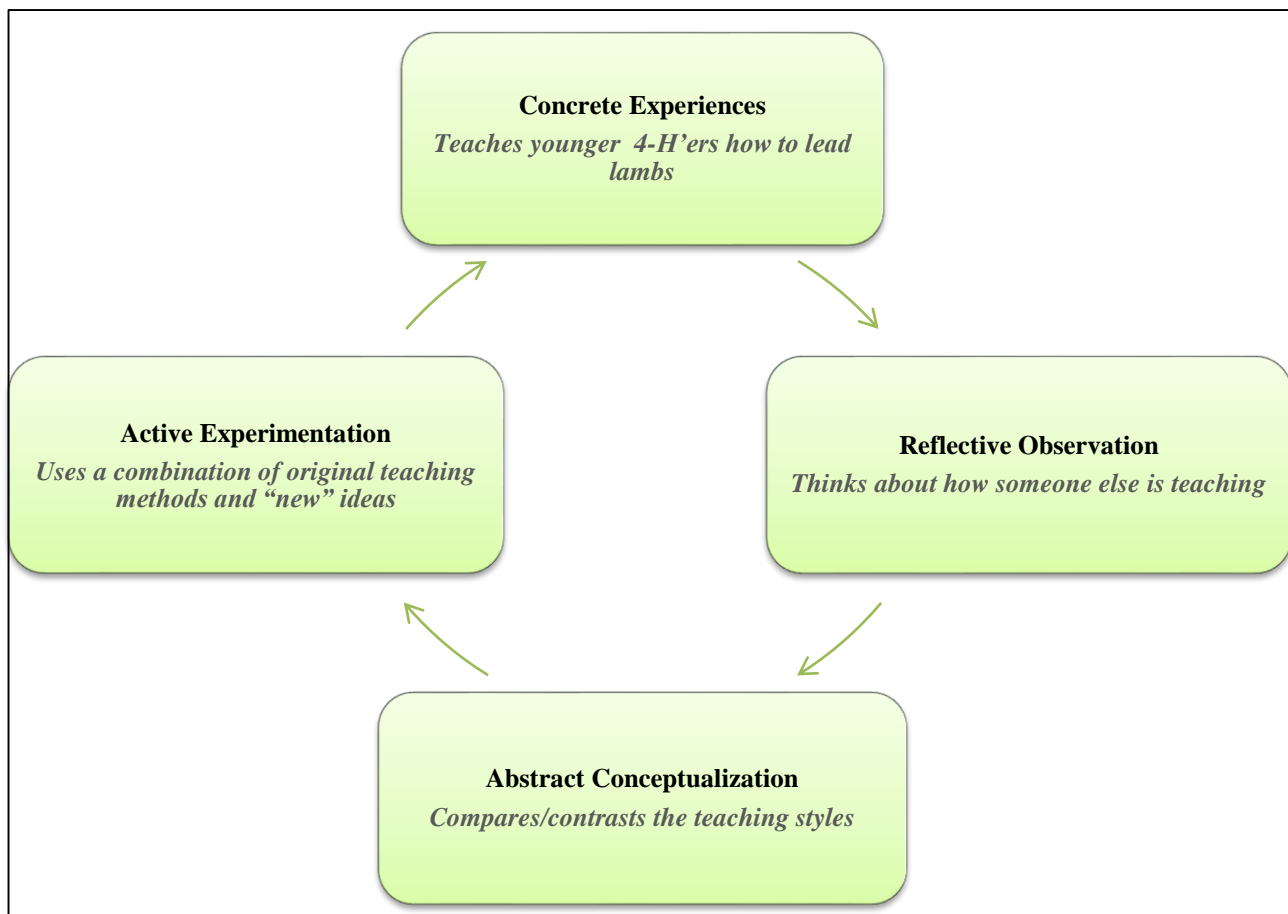


Figure 4. Flow chart showing Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory model as it relates to a Georgia 4-H’ers experience in a livestock project. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory provides insight for the way participant leadership skills and life skills may influenced in such projects (Baker, Robinson, & Kolb, 2012; Kolb, 1984).

Summary

Previous research provides support for leadership skills and life skills as integral elements of 4-H livestock projects. However, previous research also calls for additional research on individual skills that are influenced or developed from youth participation in livestock projects. Few studies have been concluded which examined leadership and life skill outcomes longitudinally, several years after 4-H or FFA program participation. As Baker et al. (2012) outlined, agricultural experiences, such as participation in 4-H livestock projects are positioned to provide experiential learning outcomes. This chapter explained how Kolb's Experiential Learning Model and Katz's Three-Skill Approach to Leadership framework could be combined to better understand the outcomes of 4-H participation in livestock events on leadership development. The following chapter provides details on the methods used to collect, analyze, and interpret the data corresponding to the research questions addressed in this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

A qualitative design was chosen to evaluate the impact of Georgia 4-H livestock projects on participant leadership skills. Five phone interviews were conducted with alumni of Georgia 4-H projects to understand the experiences and leadership skills they perceive to have gained through their participation in one or more Georgia 4-H livestock projects. For the purpose of this study, alumni of Georgia 4-H livestock projects is defined as an individual who participated in at least one Georgia 4-H state livestock show and graduated from high school between 2007 and 2015. This chapter provides a rationale for the research design and describes the researcher's role in this qualitative study. Participant selection is discussed within the context of the study. Methods for data collection, analysis, and interpretation are also described.

Rationale for the Research Design

This study used the findings from five interviews with alumni of Georgia 4-H livestock projects to better understand the leadership learning outcomes alumni perceive to have gained through their participation in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. The researcher conducted interviews with alumni of Georgia 4-H livestock projects who competed at a Georgia 4-H state livestock show, graduated from high school between specific years, and showed at least one species of livestock. This qualitative study has the potential to enhance what we know about the leadership and life skills gained and used by alumni of Georgia 4-H livestock projects.

A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study. Individual discussions with participants provided rich insight into which experiences and interactions contributed to

their leadership outcomes and life skills acquisition. Person-to-person semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to describe in detail their experiences in Georgia 4-H livestock projects which may inform improvements to the Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Use of a quantitative questionnaire was not deemed appropriate for this study due to the need to gather rich, in-depth data from a small sample group. However, findings from these qualitative interviews could be transferred to inform constructs on a quantitative instrument to be developed in the future.

Researcher Subjectivity

In qualitative research, “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). Researchers using qualitative methods may qualify themselves in this way “because the bulk of their data collection is dependent on their personal involvement in the setting” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 97). Experience and perspective of the researcher, along with values and expectations, may influence the development and conclusions of a study and are important elements for the researcher to disclose (Merriam, 2009). While I did use an interview guide for each participant to keep the questions the same from interview to interview, I do realize that I may have asked a question in a different way or stressed a word or group of words in a different way between interviews. However, my goal was to create an interview tone that invited the participants to freely share their experiences in Georgia 4-H livestock projects and other areas related to the research. Any variation in the researcher’s voice tone or behavior was done simply to establish rapport with the participant and a comfortable environment for discourse.

The purpose of this subjectivity statement is to reveal facts about myself that are integral to understanding how my background may influence my perspective and interpretation of the

qualitative data collected in this study. Throughout elementary, middle, and high school, I was an active participant in Georgia 4-H. I showed livestock and participated in many judging events and other competitions with the Coweta County 4-H Club. Georgia 4-H also provided me with opportunities to compete at regional and national levels throughout my 4-H career.

My husband is employed by the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at The University of Georgia in the Department of Animal Science. As such, we both often volunteer with Georgia 4-H livestock shows, camps, quiz bowls, and judging competitions. Our oldest son is in fifth grade this year and is an enthusiastic participant in Oglethorpe County 4-H activities. We also have a son in second grade who is excited about the opportunities that will be available for him through a variety of 4-H programs. As a family, we routinely attend 4-H livestock shows to observe the animals and participants.

Based on the positive experiences I had in Georgia 4-H where I gained a tremendous amount of leadership skills and experiences, I have maintained a goal of being involved with youth programs that contribute to the positive development of our future leaders. This has been coupled with a desire to evaluate and maintain such programs to ensure their sustainability. Collecting data on leadership skills that alumni of 4-H livestock projects believe their participation contributed to fits with an area I wanted to further pursue. Regardless of the outcome or what the data may indicate, these interviews will contribute to my work with 4-H and other youth-centered organizations.

My experience has taught me that a variety of experiences, organizations, and individuals may influence leadership skills. Northouse (2013) defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p.5). The Northouse definition of leadership serves as a guide of defining leadership in this study. In acknowledging

my past and current involvement with Georgia 4-H activities, I used several measures to create an accurate report of participants' responses during the interviews. The following sections on validity and reliability also describe the measures I used to create the report. The sections also discuss the research context and procedures.

Validity and Reliability in the Research Design

Validity, reliability, and ethics are important elements to verify in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Several strategies to ensure these elements were adhered to are addressed below. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) cite “extensive time in the field,” “feedback from participants,” and “thick description” as strategies to validate findings (p. 104). While some of these strategies were used more than others, they all applied to the study and will be discussed further. At the time of this study, the researcher had been gathering information on this topic for two years. Each interview lasted twenty to thirty minutes and took place over the phone in a non-rushed, conversational tone at times convenient to the participants which allowed collection of a “thick description” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 104).

Validation was tested through a variety of sources. The researcher's major professor provided evaluation and feedback on the interview guide, email communication, and phone script. The interview guide, email communication, and phone script can be found in Appendix B.

Leedy and Ormrod (2013) refer to credibility as part of validity and state that internal validity is “important in terms of minimizing alternative explanations for the results obtained” (p. 104). Validity and credibility are areas that should be addressed in the planning stages, while collecting data, and developing conclusions. It was important for the researcher to remain honest about her own experiences throughout this study since “interpretations of reality are accessed

directly through their observations and interviews” (Merriam, 2009, p. 214). This constant self-reflection was documented by the researcher to enhance data interpretation and the potential influence of her own subjectivity.

To keep a log of the process and methodology of this study, the researcher used an “audit trail.” The audit trail was implemented to provide “in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made” (Merriam, 2009, p. 223). While it is difficult or impossible for qualitative studies to reach the level of reliability that can be verified in quantitative studies, an audit trail may provide clear interpretation of the data (Merriam, 2009). The researcher provides detail of the audit trail for the research in the following sections of this chapter.

Research Context

Participant Selection

The researcher and thesis committee collaborated to determine the best approach to finding a common uniting factor for selecting interview participants for the study. Participation in a Georgia 4-H livestock project, competing with their animal(s) in at least one Georgia 4-H state livestock show, and being involved with Georgia 4-H during a predetermined timeframe served as the uniting factors. A livestock project was defined as raising a species that was eligible to compete in a Georgia 4-H state livestock show. The eligible species included commercial dairy heifer, breeding heifer, horse, market steer, market hog, market goat, and breeding ewe. Criteria to participate in the phone interviews were also set based on when the individual was active in a Georgia 4-H livestock project. The 4-H Targeting Life Skills (TLS) Model was published in 1998 (Hendricks, 1998). The researcher established criteria to include

4-H alumni who graduated from high school between 2007 and 2015 to ensure the TLS Model was utilized during their tenure in 4-H livestock programs.

Interviewees were selected by the Georgia 4-H State Office staff based on the parameters of the study. Due to confidentiality of participant information, the researcher could not have access to the pool of qualified interview candidates. The Georgia State 4-H Office staff selected a sample of alumni on file who met the study requirements and sent them the informational letter from the researcher via email (Appendix B). The interview candidates then contacted the researcher to verify their participation and a suitable day and time were agreed upon to conduct the phone interview.

The names of the phone interview participants have been changed to keep their identities anonymous. Details regarding the years the participants showed the various livestock species are outlined in Table 1. The interviewees' county of participation and year of high school graduation are also listed on the table.

Table 1

Interview Participant Background in Georgia 4-H Livestock Projects

| Name | Livestock Project(s) | Years with Project(s) | County | Total Years in Georgia 4-H | Year Graduated |
|-------------|---|---|---------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Anne | Dairy Heifer | 2012-2013 (1) | Gwinnet | 8 | 2015 |
| Bill | Breeding Heifer Market Steer Market Hogs Breeding Ewes Meat Goats | 2004-2012 (8) 2004-2012 (8) 2011-2012 (1) 2011-2012 (1) 2008-2012 (4) | Bartow | 9 | 2012 |
| Cady | Beef Market Hogs | 2005-2013 (8) 2005-2013 (8) | Berrien | 8 | 2013 |
| Debra | Market Lambs Market Hogs | 2001-2012 (11) 2004-2012 (8) | Heard | 11 | 2012 |
| Elizabeth | Beef Market Ewes Market Goats Market Hogs | 1999-2010 (11) 1999-2010 (11) 1999-2010 (11) 1999-2010 (11) | Hart | 11 | 2010 |

Research Procedures**Instrument and Materials**

All participant communications and interview guide questions were approved by The University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB documentation is included in Appendix A.

The phone interview questions guide was written with the problem statement and associated gaps in the literature (detailed in Chapter 2) in mind. Questions were also written with consideration of elements of the TLS Model. Questions to collect information detailing how long the participants were involved with Georgia 4-H, livestock species shown during their involvement, and county they participated with 4-H were included in the interview questions

guide. The questions were developed to be open-ended to allow the researcher to gather a thick description of the alumni experiences. The interview guide received several revisions and input from the researcher's major professor. Several questions were written based on finding from a review of the literature from the past 16 years. The interview questions guide is attached as Appendix B.

An informational letter was developed and sent to prospective participants by the Georgia 4-H State Office staff. The email from Georgia 4-H and the informational letter served as an invitation to participate in a phone interview. The initial email and informational letter included a description of the purpose of the study along with information about how to contact the researcher should they be interested in being a research participant. After the prospective participants contacted the researcher, they received a follow-up email directly from the researcher to confirm a time convenient for them to participate in the phone interview. Following the phone interview, participants received an email expressing appreciation for their time and participation in collecting rich qualitative research data. These communication documents were used with the IRB submission and are included in Appendix C.

Interview participants received a copy of the TLS Model with their interview confirmation email. Participants were asked to review the TLS Model before and during the interview session as several questions related to the Model. It was confirmed during the interview that participants had received the document.

Data Collection

Five phone interviews were conducted. Each interview was audio recorded to capture each participant's response in its entirety. The individual interviews lasted twenty to thirty minutes. The researcher transcribed the five recordings verbatim. Each recording was of high

quality and easily understandable. Using purposeful sampling, the researcher found after five interviews the original information gained was redundant and therefore the sample size remained five. Merriam (2009) cites “sampling until redundancy” is reached as defining an adequate sample size (p. 80). Data collection reached saturation and a larger sample was not needed (Merriam, 2009).

Domain Analysis

Raw data were summarized into categories using domain analysis, a form of content analysis. The researcher read the individual phone interview transcripts and color coded items that represented various themes that emerged during the interview. Key words were also noted in the margins and a sheet matching the color codes to themes or key words was kept for each interview. Open coding was used in “identifying any segment of data that might be useful,” (Merriam, 2009 p. 178.).

Using open coding to develop broad categories, the researcher grouped themes and developed segments based on the emerging themes. Content analysis was used to develop a “detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material” to identify emerging themes within the transcripts (Leddy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 148). The themes identified through the content analysis were compared to the original problem statement. The researcher compared coding of the first interview with her major professor to gauge the consistency of identifying emerging themes. The researcher also consulted a faculty member with expertise in research methods who reviewed her codes and also implemented a domain analysis on an identical transcription. Overarching domains identified by the faculty member and researcher were compared and consistencies were noted. Where there were discrepancies, discussion as used to determine how each coder interpreted the raw data. Once the researcher and faculty

member established consistency in their interpretation of findings from one interview transcript, the researcher conducted domain analyses on the remaining four transcriptions.

Summary

A rationale for the qualitative design and methods engaged by the researcher were presented in this chapter. The researcher shared her background and potential bias as related to the data collection and research conclusions associated with the five phone interviews which were conducted. Techniques for insuring validity and reliability were stated. Participant selection and descriptions were detailed along with research procedures used for analyzing and interpreting the data. The following chapter will detail the results of this study based on the initial research questions.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to describe the leadership learning outcomes adults perceive to have gained from their participation as youth in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Five phone interviews were conducted with alumni of Georgia 4-H livestock projects after participating at least nine months ago. After transcribing and analyzing the transcripts from these phone interviews using domain analysis, several themes emerged regarding the self-perceived leadership skills and leadership learning outcomes gained by alumni of Georgia 4-H livestock projects. These themes aligned with the research objectives of this study.

Chapter Four presents the domains that emerged from analyzing the raw data found in the phone interview transcriptions. The domains, or themes, are presented in order of frequency under headings which correspond to the initial research objectives. There were four research objectives originally presented in Chapter One as sub-questions. Raw quotes from phone interview participants and their corresponding domains are presented under the more appropriate research objective in this chapter.

Research Objective One

To identify leadership learning outcomes alumni perceive to have gained from participation in Georgia 4-H livestock programs.

Nine domains emerged from the raw data pertaining to research objective one. The participants used copies of the Targeting Life Skills Model (TLS Model) to reference their comments during the phone interviews. In addition to providing narrative detail from which

domains were constructed, the participants also referenced specific areas on the TLS Model during the phone interviews. The participants described different situations when they used or developed the referenced skills related to leadership learning outcomes. They also spoke of specific areas on the TLS Model which related to their experiences in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. The participants shared anecdotes about aspects of their 4-H livestock projects that were relevant to leadership; participants related these aspects back to leadership learning outcomes and their self-described definition of leadership. The participants talked about the leadership experiences they had in Georgia 4-H livestock projects and compared those experiences to leadership experiences they had in other 4-H projects and activities as well as through other youth organizations. The nine domains which emerged were communicating, helping others, managing, working, responsibility/commitment, connecting, passion, thinking (critical thinking), and achieving.

Communicating

All five participants referenced *communicating* when discussing skills they gained from Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Areas defined within *communicating* also included public speaking and social skills. Regarding *communicating*, “Anne” who showed a dairy heifer for one year and was involved with Georgia 4-H activities for eight years referenced communication in her definition of leadership by stating “through my experiences with leadership, I would define it [leadership] as a 24-seven commitment to contributing to positive change through the use of effective communication and leadership skills.”

“Anne” also added that communication is a skill she felt was developed through Georgia 4-H livestock projects and could be used in all areas of her life. “Bill” expressed that areas of *communicating* experiences and skills, especially public speaking and getting over nervousness

about public speaking were important as it “helped me kind of deal with those emotions.”

“Elizabeth” shared that *communicating* was part of the skills she developed and used within Georgia 4-H livestock projects in implementing those skills to develop communications strategies to use with different learners.

Helping Others

As part of her definition of leadership, “Debra” who showed lambs and hogs for 11 years, incorporated *helping others*:

Leadership, to me, is about inspiring people to take action in something they are passionate about but you see a need and a desire in. It is more about inspiring and leading people. It is not about yourself; it is about others. (“Debra”)

“Bill” shared that his experiences raising multiple livestock projects also prepared him for *helping others*:

One of the things I did [to help others] was showmanship clinics with the dos and don’ts of showing all species of livestock, the feeding, etc. That was not only to young people – people younger than myself and up to my age, but we also did livestock handling workshops that were people around 25 up to 70 or 80 year olds who wanted to come out and see what I had learned traveling all across the country doing 4-H activities. They just wanted to kind of see what I had obtained and take little bits and pieces back to their operation and use them. (“Bill”)

“Bill” added that giving, part of the *helping others* domain, was one of the top areas on the TLS Model he felt was important during his livestock projects. “Elizabeth” also said that giving was an important part of the TLS Model in relation to livestock projects. While not directly a livestock project, “Elizabeth” shared an antecedent of how another showman was injured in a car accident and her fellow livestock friends came together to help and support the injured person.

Managing

In response to being asked a specific question regarding what sections of the TLS Model were most important to participating in her dairy heifer project, “Anne” replied:

I would say managing and working probably as far as showing livestock. Managing – I was responsible for keeping the records on my dairy cow. I forgot to mention that. I actually kept the records and turned in my record book at the state fair. I actually won the record book competition. Yeah, that was a huge deal because to me it showed what I was putting into the cow and what I was getting out. Whether it be like vaccination, cost of feed or the cost of dewormer and then show expenses. Then the return on investment. (“Anne”)

“Bill” also provided an example of why *managing* was a top area of the TLS Model that he felt was influenced by his livestock projects:

Whether it be managing or feeding cows out in the pasture, you have to have time management. And managing the resources you have . . . time management and financial management. Whether capital funds or just getting your school work done or cattle fed . . . management is forefront in my mind. (“Bill”)

Managing was also stated as being a top skill on the TLS Model that was influenced by involvement in 4-H livestock projects by “Elizabeth” as she stated “you are managing your time, you are managing your animal’s feed ration and anything of that sort.”

Working

Every interview participant referenced *working*, either through discussing teamwork and/or self-motivation as an area where they developed leadership skills within their 4-H livestock projects. “Cady” described the responsibility of getting ready for livestock shows as being “really more like a group effort than one single person.” She also shared that teamwork was an integral part of her livestock project experiences:

We had a lot of friends who did help us in making sure that everyone was doing what they were best at and what they excelled at and making sure we distributed our resources so our projects looked the best and everyone was doing what they were most qualified to do. (“Cady”)

“Debra” also stated that when participating in a 4-H livestock project, there was much to learn “about working with others.” “Elizabeth” said that part of the *working* skills form when “you learn how to work not just with an animal, but with other people.” “Elizabeth” also said “you work as a team, but you are building each other.”

“Anne” referenced *working* as an area on the TLS Model that was important to her participating in the Georgia 4-H dairy heifer project through teaching her to provide daily care for her animal and to prepare for showing her animal. “Debra” stated that record keeping, goal setting, and decision making were parts of *working* that she found important and areas she developed through 4-H livestock projects:

Keeping records is extremely important. It was something that when I was younger I didn’t do as great of a job. And they [Extension agents] really stress that – keeping records. Goal setting is important – I always set goal and continue to set goals. Even now I still have goals. (“Debra”)

Responsibility/Commitment

When discussing her dairy heifer project, “Anne” said having a tangible end result illustrated “how my time and commitment was worthwhile.” “Bill” referenced the “act of doing that’s important” as something he thought livestock projects taught regarding how he learned new skills, specifically *commitment*. “Elizabeth” stated that she learned *responsibility* through her 4-H livestock projects:

Nothing teaches responsibility to a first grader like having to wake up half an hour earlier than everyone else my age because I had animals in the barn to feed. It is more the lessons and character traits that I learned through the projects. It changed me, definitely. (“Elizabeth”)

“Elizabeth” also shared that in 4-H livestock projects she learned how to “be devoted and work as a team.” She stated “the livestock kids really know what commitment is. They know

there is something else that depends on them. Every morning they are going to have to get up early and go feed that thing that depends on them.”

Connecting

In defining how participating in a livestock project contributed to his leadership skills and abilities, “Bill” shared “The main things would be just the ability to connect with people of any background whether it be religious, race, ethnic. You learn to connect with people and market what you have to offer in a positive light.”

“Elizabeth” also said *connecting* was an area that helped her succeed by referencing “I would not be in the job I am in today and had the major I had today if it had not been for the livestock projects.”

“Cady” stated how making connections, or *connecting*, gave her opportunities:

For me and my brother, the livestock projects were really my way of getting out, making friends, and meeting new people. Because we were homeschooled we were not on a daily basis going to school and hanging out with our friends; livestock was definitely an avenue for us to get out and make a lot of friends. Great experience. (“Cady”)

“Creating strong bonds” with her family, especially her father, was an area where “Debra” stated participating in 4-H livestock projects was influential. She also used her *connecting* skills to recruit other youth to participate in the county 4-H livestock program. To do this, “Debra” took her animals around to the schools.

Passion

“Anne” described why she wanted to be involved with teaching others skills she learned through her dairy heifer project as “a love of sharing my passion of agriculture and leadership to the younger generation and my generation, as well as the older generation.” “Debra” also

referenced *passion* as part of what motivated her to continue in 4-H livestock projects and an area developed through her participation:

When it comes to being a leader and being successful, you have to develop a passion for it first. No matter what, you are going to face adversity. If you don't have that passion you are not going to be able to face that adversity and if you don't have that passion it will get you down. If you have that passion, you will be able to overcome it and push forward. ("Debra")

In discussing how 4-H livestock projects allowed her to teach others new skills, "Elizabeth" who showed beef cattle, market lambs, market goats, and market hogs for 11 years, said *passion* was important as "the more passionate you are, the more you want to give your talents."

Thinking

"Bill" shared that critical *thinking* was developed from raising and showing livestock and helped with "other things as well." "Elizabeth" said that thinking was important, especially with service learning and developing activities for younger children. However, "Anne" stated she believed participating in livestock judging events, rather than raising an animal, contributed more to developing her critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Achieving

Regarding *achieving* "Cady" who showed beef cattle and market hogs for eight years shared how important the achievement and recognition was to her:

Being able to showcase what you were doing at home [with your livestock project] to the whole state or the national level, either one – all your hard work, you got to go showcase it. It was more so than livestock judging, it [livestock judging] is more like a private showcasing since it is more like reasons takers, things like that. There's the awards [for judging], but you don't see exactly what you've one [with judging contests]. I think that was the exciting part to me, being able to go [show livestock]. ("Cady")

"Debra" also shared how *achieving* was tied to her 4-H livestock projects through avenues that included "scholarships and that really helped me get to the university and helped me chose the path that I had."

The data concerning leadership learning outcomes interview participants experienced within their Georgia 4-H livestock projects are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Leadership learning outcomes identified by participant and according to frequency reported.

| Participant | Communicating | Helping Others | Managing | Working | Responsibility/Commitment | Connecting | Passion | Thinking | Achieving |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|----------|---------|---------------------------|------------|---------|----------|-----------|
| Anne | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | |
| Bill | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | |
| Cady | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x |
| Debra | x | x | x | x | | x | x | | x |
| Elizabeth | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |

Three-Skill Approach to Leadership

The Three-Skill Approach to Leadership (Three-Skill Approach) provides a means to differentiate leadership skills from leadership traits. It also establishes a model that works to describe skills needed for different levels of leadership or management (Northouse, 2013, pp. 44-47). Qualitative analysis of the phone interviews conducted yielded data on human, technical, and conceptual skills acquired by these participants through their activities in Georgia 4-H livestock projects.

Three-Skill Approach – Human Skills

Working with people was mentioned by all the phone interview participants. They mentioned the themes of working with others, sharing information with others, and teaching others frequently throughout the interviews. “Cady” said livestock projects are a great way to

“learn how to teach.” Learning different ways to connect and teach different age groups was an area “Bill” said he worked on through his 4-H livestock projects.

“Bill” also referenced human skills in his definition of leadership in stating one of the main things he gained through participation in Georgia 4-H livestock projects was:

Just the ability to connect with people of any background whether it be religious, race, ethnic. You learn to connect with people and market what you have to offer in a positive light. You learn how to maximize the positive and minimize the negative. It really is a positive attribute to have not only when you are working your way through school and 4-H, but when you enter the job force. It helps you in the long run. (“Bill”)

Three-Skill Approach – Technical Skills

“Cady” shared she learned about specific elements of preparing and showing her beef cattle and market hogs through older 4-H’ers “who taught us a lot about what we need to do and when we need to do it.” “Debra” also stated, in relation to teaching skills needed for showing livestock, that she “could teach her [a county Extension agent with little livestock experience] some things.” “Anne” said she gained a proficiency in showing her dairy heifer by acquiring specific skills through participation in clinics. As she increased her technical skills related to showing her dairy heifer, she was able to use them to compete at a higher level and teach them to other 4-H members.

Three-Skill Approach – Conceptual Skills

“Elizabeth” discussed how she had to take the idea or concept of teaching an autistic child how to show a lamb while keeping in mind that he had a unique learning style.

A lot of people say “how do you put relating [an element of communicating] into a livestock project?” Well, that goes back to I have an autistic child [in our 4-H club] I help show – and he’s still showing and my family still works with him daily. But I had to accept the fact that he was not going to learn at the same rate as other kids. I had to relate to him what he needed to do in the show ring. We’ve come up with some different analogies of what he needed to do. He had to learn a little bit differently than everyone else. (“Elizabeth”)

“Cady” also shared how she was responsible for hosting a field day to familiarize people with livestock. She took the concept of field day and then had to develop the best strategy to deliver the information to multiple audiences and organize the event. Similarly, “Debra” recognized that her county 4-H livestock club needed additional members to be sustainable. She took the concept of recruiting and turned it into tangible event by taking her animals to various schools to showcase 4-H livestock projects and generate interest in showing animals.

Research Objective Two

To examine the perception of leadership skills acquired through Georgia 4-H livestock project participation as youth.

The domains that emerged pertaining to research objective two could be classified under three types of perceptions: leadership skills acquired through Georgia 4-H livestock projects, other Georgia 4-H projects and events, or other youth-centered activities. Each domain is divided into “pros” and “cons” the participants shared related to each area. All participants mentioned at least four ways Georgia 4-H livestock projects influenced or developed their leadership skills. The data related to each domain is further divided into pros and cons where participants discussed different experiences relating to the domains. The researcher categorized “pros” as being aspects which the participants positively identified as influencing their leadership or life skill outcomes. “Cons” were categorized as aspects which the participants identified as not being valid within their Georgia 4-H livestock participation, not being areas which positively impacted their experiences, or as areas that were better gained through other youth-centered activities outside of Georgia 4-H livestock projects.

Perceptions of Leadership Skills Acquired Through Georgia 4-H Livestock Projects

Pros

All five of the phone interview participants shared evidence that they gained leadership skills and other skills related to the TLS Model through participation in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. “Debra” stated leadership and skills developed through Georgia 4-H livestock projects are important elements as “that is something to carry on to other parts of life.”

“Debra” also shared that even though she participated in District Project Achievement (DPA) and judging contests, it was her participation in livestock projects that helped her acquire experience with giving back:

I think, you know, livestock did the Hands [referencing the TLS Model] part as far as giving back. You have to realize as you get older that it becomes your responsibility to show them because they [younger 4-H club members] are the future of the project. The livestock projects did do that. (“Debra”)

When providing her definition of leadership, “Elizabeth” shared how livestock projects helped shape her understanding of leadership:

I see leadership as a team effort. It is not just you, but sometimes you have to be the leader and step up and say “hey, this is what we are going to do.” It is kind of one of those things – and I think showing kind of changed my view of leadership. (“Elizabeth”)

Within her definition of how Georgia 4-H livestock projects contributed to her leadership skills and abilities, “Elizabeth” also shared how she had seen other participants increase their communication skills “I’ve seen kids that would walk through a ring and be terrified to speak to a judge. Then all of a sudden, two years later they are winning showmanship and they are not scared at all to speak to people.” She summed up her long-term outcomes from participating in Georgia 4-H livestock projects with “And it will change you. It is an industry that definitely changes you for the better.” By revealing these specific ways in which Georgia 4-H livestock

projects helped the participants acquire leadership learning outcomes or leadership skills, these participants demonstrated a positive perception of their skills.

Cons

“Anne” stated that Georgia 4-H livestock projects did not provide all the leadership experiences she needed or had. However, she did add that through a variety of other non-livestock Georgia 4-H projects, she was able to experience a full spectrum of leadership experiences.

Perceptions of Leadership Skills Acquired Through Other Georgia 4-H Projects or Events

Pros

Public speaking was a *communicating* area “Debra” identified as developing through her DPA project as the process made her “a lot more comfortable with public speaking.”

Communication skills was also an area “Cady” self-identified as having experienced and developed in an area outside of her livestock project:

My communication skills and I think that was more – to me, I gained more communication and public speaking from the livestock judging part more so than the livestock project part. I still feel like I learned communication skills from that [livestock project]. They just had to be more polished and focused on the livestock judging side. (“Cady”)

When discussing 4-H projects and events outside of livestock projects, “Elizabeth” said:

Yes and no. I think a lot of them – I did consumer judging and you had to have critical thinking portions and stuff. I think they strengthened me in other areas, but I think they all kind of worked together to make you a well-rounded individual. (“Elizabeth”)

Cons

While “Elizabeth” agreed there were several leadership elements and areas on the TLS Model that were positively influenced by 4-H activities outside of livestock projects, she did

state “I do think that while they [non-livestock Georgia 4-H projects] were great in a lot of areas, they couldn’t offer that whole model in one project.”

Perceptions of Leadership Skills Acquired Through Other Youth-Centered Activities

Pros

“Elizabeth” said participation in her church youth group contributed to her leadership skills by giving through community service projects:

I was really active in my church youth group. I was homeschooled, so I couldn’t do FFA, unfortunately. But I did a lot with my church. I actually started my own community service project in high school. I saw a need in my community where there were children who were not getting anything for Christmas. So when I was in the ninth grade, I worked with my church and started what I had coined the Gently Used Toy Drive. So basically, all year I would collect toys that were good condition and then one day in December I would give them back to people in my community. No questions asked. They needed it; I was going to give it. (“Elizabeth”)

“Anne” also shared how she believed “individual [school and church] clubs covered different areas of the life skills model.” “Bill” stated his church groups and school clubs seemed open to providing new leadership experiences for participants.

Cons

“Cady” shared how she was actively involved in her church youth group during middle and high school; however, the leadership experiences she had with church and school were not as wide or varied as the ones she gained with her livestock projects. “Debra” also shared her belief regarding other youth activities in which she was involved did not offer the same leadership experiences as her 4-H livestock projects:

They [Beta Club and school band] were a little different. I feel like though my experiences, 4-H was more all encompassing and was really, really active where some of those other organizations may have done a couple things here and there throughout the year. It didn’t give you the same opportunity to step up and be a leader. You might have been an officer in the club, but your primary responsibility was just leading the meeting. You really were not involved in the planning. You really did not have as much

responsibility. Whereas with 4-H and those livestock projects it is completely on you. They definitely did not provide that same experience. (“Debra)

“Bill” shared he found it difficult to be involved with leadership and activities in FFA because he was only involved his final two years of high school. He stated that compared to 4-H, he felt like he had a disadvantage in FFA and it wasn’t as inclusive in leadership experiences for someone new as 4-H seemed to him.

Research Objective Three

To analyze if the long-term impact on participants reflects the livestock program objectives.

Georgia 4-H Base Programming provides learning outcomes for each of the livestock projects examined in this study. The learning outcomes are worded to match the individual species address in the guides; however, the essential learning outcomes remain the same. Learning outcomes identified include, but are not limited to, developing leadership abilities, being responsible for the animal’s care, learning skills of livestock management and an understanding of the business, and developing skills and attitudes for lifelong use. Interview participants identified areas related to the leadership learning outcomes through examples they provided in reference to their livestock project experiences.

When reflecting on the communication skills, teamwork experiences, and goal setting skills she used and gained from her 4-H livestock projects, “Cady” stated “those are definitely things I not only learned but had to practice with my livestock project.” Working and teamwork were areas “Elizabeth” referenced when reflecting on how participating in Georgia 4-H livestock projects contributed to her leadership skills and abilities:

I started to think that leadership is more of a team effort. Growing up I always saw my animals and I as a team. We were out there to get a job done. Ultimately, that job was to come to be the best that we could and do the best job that we could. . . We are all leaders.

I don't think there is an industry, one, that raises leaders the way that they [Georgia 4-H livestock projects] do. ("Elizabeth")

"Elizabeth" stated the long-term impact Georgia 4-H livestock projects had on her is evident in several facets of her life after her active participation ended:

I moved 500 miles north from everything I had ever known after graduation [from college] and I'm working in the livestock industry. A job that in the seventh grade I told my parents – that's the job I want. And by some miracle and by the grace of God I have it. It is one of those things where I met my boss showing livestock. I honestly don't know what I would do if I didn't have the livestock industry. I've never met so many people in so many different places and done so many different things that I would have never had the opportunity if I hadn't shown livestock. That's true with most 4-H projects, but with livestock it is a little different. ("Elizabeth")

"Bill" shared how his current job was obtained as a result of his experience in Georgia 4-H livestock projects and the connections he made through showing. These comments by participants demonstrated the long-term impact Georgia 4-H livestock projects have on the interview participants.

Summary

The domains reported in this chapter present a rich, detailed illustration of the leadership skills and learning outcomes participants of Georgia 4-H livestock projects perceive to have gained through their experiences. Elements of *communicating*, *helping others*, *managing*, and *working* were domains prominently mentioned by all interview participants. Developing lasting connections through 4-H livestock activities was also identified as a domain that assisted the individuals in obtaining jobs and reaching goals.

The participants were also honest about the skills and experiences they did not gain through Georgia 4-H livestock projects. They identified where and how they gained additional leadership and life skills through non-livestock 4-H projects and involvement in other youth groups and organizations. Each interview participant shared how they perceived the experiences

they had in Georgia 4-H as impacting their life outside of the individual livestock projects.

Chapter Five will discuss conclusions based on the domain analysis with consideration to the literature review. Finally, recommendations for further research regarding leadership skills and leadership learning outcomes from Georgia 4-H livestock projects will be presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the leadership learning outcomes that adults perceive to have gained from participation as youth in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Previous research has identified alumni perceptions of leadership skills gained through 4-H activities (Emo, 2007; Fox et al., 2003; Ladewig & Thomas, 1987). The researcher wanted to investigate which leadership skills and leadership learning outcomes were experienced and developed by participants in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Targeted objectives for this research included:

Objective One: To identify leadership learning outcomes alumni perceive to have gained from participation in Georgia 4-H livestock projects.

Objective Two: To examine the perception of leadership skills acquired through Georgia 4-H livestock projects participation as youth.

Objective Three: To analyze if the long-term impact on participants reflects the livestock projects objectives.

This chapter will respond to these objectives by summarizing key findings and sharing recommendations for the future development of Georgia 4-H livestock projects. In addition, implications for future research and practice will be discussed.

Review of the Methods

This study used a qualitative research design which conducted phone interviews in order to facilitate in-depth conversations with alumni of Georgia 4-H livestock projects about their experiences and the self-perceived leadership skills they gained through their participation. Alumni of Georgia 4-H livestock projects were defined as individuals who competed in at least one Georgia 4-H state livestock show and graduated from high school between 2007 and 2015. The Georgia 4-H state office selected the participants who were invited to participate in the study. The participants represented a purposeful sample of individuals who would likely yield rich information about the study topic (Merriam, 2009).

Five phone interviews were conducted at times convenient to the individual study participants. Using five interviews was appropriate based on purposeful sampling, as the researcher found after five interviews the original information gained was redundant and therefore the sample size remained five. Data collection also reached saturation and a larger sample was not warranted (Merriam, 2009). The participants represented individuals who participated in Georgia 4-H livestock projects for only one year (the minimum required to meet the study parameters) and up to eleven years. The participants also represented all species of livestock classified in the study, with the exception of horses. Each phone interview lasted from twenty to thirty minutes.

Phone interview questions were written based on the research objectives. Literature which discusses livestock projects and leadership learning outcomes also informed the choice of phone interview questions. The phone interviews were audio recorded with the participants' consent and the researcher transcribed the recordings verbatim. Each phone interview transcript was analyzed using content analysis procedures and domains emerged which illustrated recurring

themes within the data. The researcher reported the domains from the five transcriptions under the associated research objectives. Domains were reported in order of their occurrence in the raw data and then in line with the research objectives.

Summary of Findings

Raw quotes from the participants were presented in a narrative of the research in Chapter 4. This summary of results provides an overview of the research findings. Each domain is listed under its corresponding research objective.

There were nine domains related to objective one: to identify leadership learning outcomes alumni perceive to have gained from participation in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. These domains are listed in order of the frequency of their occurrence in the raw data:

1. Communicating
2. Helping Others
3. Managing
4. Working
5. Responsibility/Commitment
6. Connecting
7. Passion
8. Thinking
9. Achieving

There were also three areas evaluated from the raw data corresponding to *human*, *technical*, and *conceptual leadership skills* within the Three-Skill Approach to Leadership. Two participants talked about *human skills* as directly related to their livestock projects. Three participants discussed *technical skills* they gained or developed through their participation in

livestock projects. *Conceptual skills* were also spoken of by three participants who provided anecdotal scenarios of how they had to develop an abstract idea or concept.

There were three domain areas where participants self-identified gaining and experiencing leadership: *leadership skills acquired through Georgia 4-H livestock projects*, *leadership skills acquired through other Georgia 4-H projects and events*, and *leadership skills acquired through other youth-centered activities*. These domains related to objective two: to examine the perception of leadership skills acquired through Georgia 4-H livestock project participation as youth.

The responses were reviewed to construct domains related to objective three: to analyze if the long-term impact on participants reflects the livestock project objectives. Three domains emerged: pros and cons for Georgia 4-H livestock projects, pros and cons for Georgia 4-H projects (non-livestock) and events, and pros and cons for other youth-centered activities.

Key Findings and Implications

Leadership Learning Outcomes Alumni Perceive to Have Gained from Participation in Georgia 4-H Livestock Projects

Previous research has suggested that leadership and life skills are an important part of 4-H programming and experiences (Emo, 2007; Fox et al., 2003). This qualitative study sought to broaden our understanding of the leadership learning outcomes participants in Georgia 4-H livestock projects gained from their experiences. Research participants identified nine specific areas that related to their experiences in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. These alumni shared examples of when and how they developed these areas. Additional insight into their experiences was gained through their anecdotal examples.

Understanding the experiences and activities that contribute to youth development of leadership skills and life skills is important to developing an understanding of those individuals (Anderson et al., 2015). *Communicating* was the area most often referenced by the participants in this study. Their use of the *communicating* domain extended to public speaking, social skills, and cooperation. Communication is listed as the top personal quality employers desire based on a 2006 study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2006). Study participants provided examples of gaining communication skills through public speaking activities and answering questions for livestock show judges about their animals. Within the workforce, communication skills are often measured by assessing the quality of an interview performance (Briggeman & Norwood, 2011 p.25). After *communicating*, *helping others* was the most referenced area of 4-H livestock projects stated by interview participants.

Helping others was identified by interview participants as part of giving back to their organization or contributing to the greater good of the project. It further extended into strata outside of 4-H livestock projects. Other 4-H studies have concluded that participants in 4-H projects have a higher rate of helping others than those who do not participate in 4-H (Seevers, Hodnett, & Van Leeuwen, 2011). Seevers et al. (2011) identified helping others as a possible factor in transforming 4-H members “into mature adults who will be productive members of society because they are less likely to engage in activities that are illegal and/or socially unacceptable” (para. 25).

Managing was identified as an area positively influenced by involvement in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Respondents identified *managing* as integral to the direct care of their livestock projects and also indirectly through managing their time to allow for adequate time with school work.

Working, which encompassed teamwork and self-motivation, was also noted as a top life skill all participants identified as being developed through their projects. In a study of Nebraska 4-H alumni, teamwork was part of the overarching series of elements that were identified as leading to development of life skills (Fox et al, 2003). Teamwork has been stated to be important as a life skill as “most jobs require an ability to work well with others” (Briggeman & Norwood, 2011, p.27).

Insights offered by participants involving *connecting* were very informative in understanding how Georgia 4-H livestock projects provided long-term benefits. Participants in this study said connections they made through their projects led to additional educational and work-related opportunities. Not only did the participants in this study feel *connecting* was an important element of their experiences, but the connections have provided lasting experiences and opportunities.

Participants identified *passion* as an area important to their involvement with 4-H livestock projects. Baker et al. (2012) recognized “allowing students to identify an area of interest or passion and assisting them in building a project around that area of interest” (p. 6) as essential in learning transfer as related to agricultural-based projects.

Three of the five participants identified *thinking* as an area positively influenced by their participation in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. The raising and showing of animals was discussed as elements that contributed to developing critical thinking skills. *Achieving* was also an area identified as having a positive impact on the participants. Having strong thinking skills is important as employers place a major emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving skills when evaluating employees and job candidates while documented achievements can lead to increased salaries (Briggeman & Norwood, 2011).

It should be noted that “Anne” was the only interview participant who showed a single species for only one year; all other interview participants showed multiple species for multiple years. As such, “Anne” may be an outlier. Nonetheless, her responses were similar in emerging themes related to showing her animal and detailed similar experiences in 4-H outside of livestock projects as the other interview participants.

Perceptions of Leadership Skills Acquired Through Georgia 4-H Livestock Project

Participation as Youth

All five of the interview participants provided examples of positive experiences they had in Georgia 4-H livestock projects as they related to acquiring leadership skills. Their experiences were documented by the researcher as “pros” while areas they identified to be weaker in 4-H livestock projects than in other 4-H projects or youth organizations were identified as “cons” within the results. The positive self-perceptions matched a study of 4-H livestock project alumni in New Jersey (Ward, 1996). Walker et al. (2011) also found a positive correlation between youth participation in livestock exhibition and leadership life skills.

Long-term Impact on Participants Based on Livestock Project Objectives

Several of the domains which emerged from the raw data are directly applicable to the 4-H Targeting Life Skills Model (TLS Model). The TLS Model in Figure 2 is divided into broad life skill categories and then subdivided into more narrow or specific categories that provide a description of specific skills. The domains of *managing*, *working*, and *thinking* mirror elements on the broader categories of the TLS Model. *Communicating* and *helping others* are most closely related to the specific categories illustrated on the TLS Model. Connecting, passion, and achieving emerged as domains in the raw data; however, they do not directly match TLS Model sections.

Participants identified ways they continued to utilize elements of their experiences gained in Georgia 4-H livestock projects after their participation had ended. Four of the participants stated that *connecting* or making connections was continuing to have a positive impact on their lives. Rusk et al. (2003) concluded that participation in Indiana 4-H animal projects improved the participants' life skills to make "alumni of the 4-H animal projects valuable citizens at work and in their communities" (p. 10). Additional information about the impact of Georgia 4-H livestock projects may continue to be realized by participants as 'the long-term impact often cannot be determined until the youth reach adulthood and can reflect back on how their 4-H experience has helped them' (Fitzpatrick et al., 2005, para. 19). Moreover, extracurricular activities, like 4-H livestock projects, may be seen by prospective employers as setting the candidates apart from the crowd in a positive way based on the perceived soft skills and experiences employers believe the participants have gained from their participant in such activities (Stuart, Lido, Morgan, Solomon, & May, 2011).

Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (ELT) serves as a theoretical framework for application of analyzing long-term impacts of participation in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. The agricultural experiences provided hands-on learning and teaching and positioned participants to develop a well-rounded experience through their livestock projects, which matched the ELT model (Baker et al., 2012). Participants identified various experiences that illustrated the cyclical elements of the ELT model. They described concrete experiences they had working with their livestock projects, ways they reflected on what they learned or experienced, how they thought about other ways to implement the new or increased skills, and new skills they tried or taught to others. Reflection was most often build into the experiences by the creation of

livestock project records books which detailed the activity engagement and skills acquisition by the participants.

“Anne” described how a 4-H agent taught her how to show her dairy heifer through *concrete experiences* at clinics. Several participants described *reflective observation* components of their projects, including the record books they used to document their livestock project activities. “Debra” also shared that she learned a lot about showing by watching more experienced 4-H’ers and emulating their techniques. Their *reflective observation* served as “a natural component of experiential learning” (Ethridge & Branscomb, 2009, p. 407). *Abstract conceptualization* was illustrated in “Elizabeth’s” statements about using her experiences to develop new concepts to teach another 4-H member how to work with her lamb. “Bill” and “Cady” used skills and experiences gained in livestock projects to develop clinics and field days where they engaged *active experimentation* to help others increase their livestock handling skills.

Three-Skill Approach to Leadership Related to Georgia 4-H Project Leadership Outcomes

Participants in the interviews discussed experiences related to *human, technical, and conceptual* skills. The Three-Skill Approach to Leadership (Three-Skill Approach) relates various leadership elements deemed most effective for a given situation (Northouse, 2013). Participants described situations when they used different skills whereas these skills could be classified within the Three-Skill Approach. A positive connection to utilizing each of the elements was revealed during the interviews. Little research has been published to use as comparison to this study where the Three-Skill Approach was used to inform data collection and analysis.

Recommendations for Research

The following recommendations are possible topics for future study:

1. A quantitative evaluation of alumni of Georgia 4-H livestock projects using the domains found in this study as constructs in a questionnaire to understand the full leadership learning outcomes they gained through participation in their projects.
2. Evaluation of leadership learning outcomes gained based on number of projects in which the 4-H members participate and the length of time individuals are involved with the projects.
3. A longitudinal study of current Georgia 4-H livestock project participants to determine the project impact on their leadership learning outcomes.
4. A longitudinal study of alumni of Georgia 4-H livestock project participants to determine the impact of such projects on their long-term leadership learning outcomes. Such study could be conducted in collaboration with an employer evaluation of alumni participants.

The above recommendations for research regarding leadership outcomes from Georgia 4-H livestock projects reflect Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory model. These recommendations also assume, based on the literature reviewed, there will be benefits for 4-H members and others involved with Georgia 4-H livestock projects. The development and continuation of experiences within Georgia 4-H livestock projects that provide intentional and purposeful inclusion of elements of the ELT model may serve to continue providing positive leadership and life skill experiences for participants.

Recommendations for Practice

The purpose of this study was to determine what leadership learning outcomes adults perceive to have gained from participation as youth in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. As a

qualitative study, the results cannot be generalized to other populations; however, the findings can be transferred and used by Extension professions delivering and implementing youth-centered activities. The following recommendations are presented for Extension professionals who would likely work with 4-H members:

1. Build reflection aspects into activities by encouraging group discussions or documentation in project record books may serve as a means to complete Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory cycle.
2. Encourage 4-H members to participate in multiple activities outside of showing an animal (e.g., quiz bowls, judging events, project achievement, etc.) as a way to develop a well-rounded experience related to skills based on the 4-H Targeting Life Skills Model.
3. Allow for opportunities for 4-H members to teach others new skills and to share what they have learned through their projects.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval



The University of Georgia®

Phone 706-542-3199

Office of the Vice President for Research
Institutional Review Board

Fax 706-542-3660

APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL

September 11, 2015

Dear Nicholas Fuhrman:

On 9/11/2015, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Type of Review: | Initial Study |
| Title of Study: | Georgia 4-H Livestock Project Participant Leadership Skills: A Qualitative Study of 4-H Alumni |
| Investigator: | Nicholas Fuhrman |
| IRB ID: | STUDY00002580 |
| Funding: | None |
| Grant ID: | None |

The IRB approved the protocol from 9/11/2015.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Larry Nackerud, Ph.D.
University of Georgia
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

Georgia 4-H Livestock Project Participant Leadership Skills: A Qualitative Study of 4-H

Alumni

Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank you for participating in an interview for a study on leadership skills gained by 4-H alumni who participated in a Georgia 4-H livestock project.

I have a series of questions I'd like to ask you about the experiences you had participating in a Georgia 4-H livestock project. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, and you can choose not to answer any question at any time. I would like for our conversation to be relaxed and focus on what you remember about your experiences. Our conversation will be audio-recorded; however, please know that your name will not be associated with your responses.

1. In which livestock project or projects did you participate and complete in at a Georgia 4-H state show (i.e. breeding ewe, market lamb, meat goat, commercial dairy heifer, breeding heifer, market steer, and/or horse)? When did you participate? When did you first join 4-H? In which county?
2. To begin, how would you define leadership?
3. Thinking back, what activities do you remember most from your experience in 4-H livestock projects? Please share as much detail about these activities as you can remember.
 - a. Were you ever responsible for teaching other 4-H members a new skill? If so, walk me through that process. For example, were you anxious at first about teaching a peer something you knew? How did you deal with that nervousness?

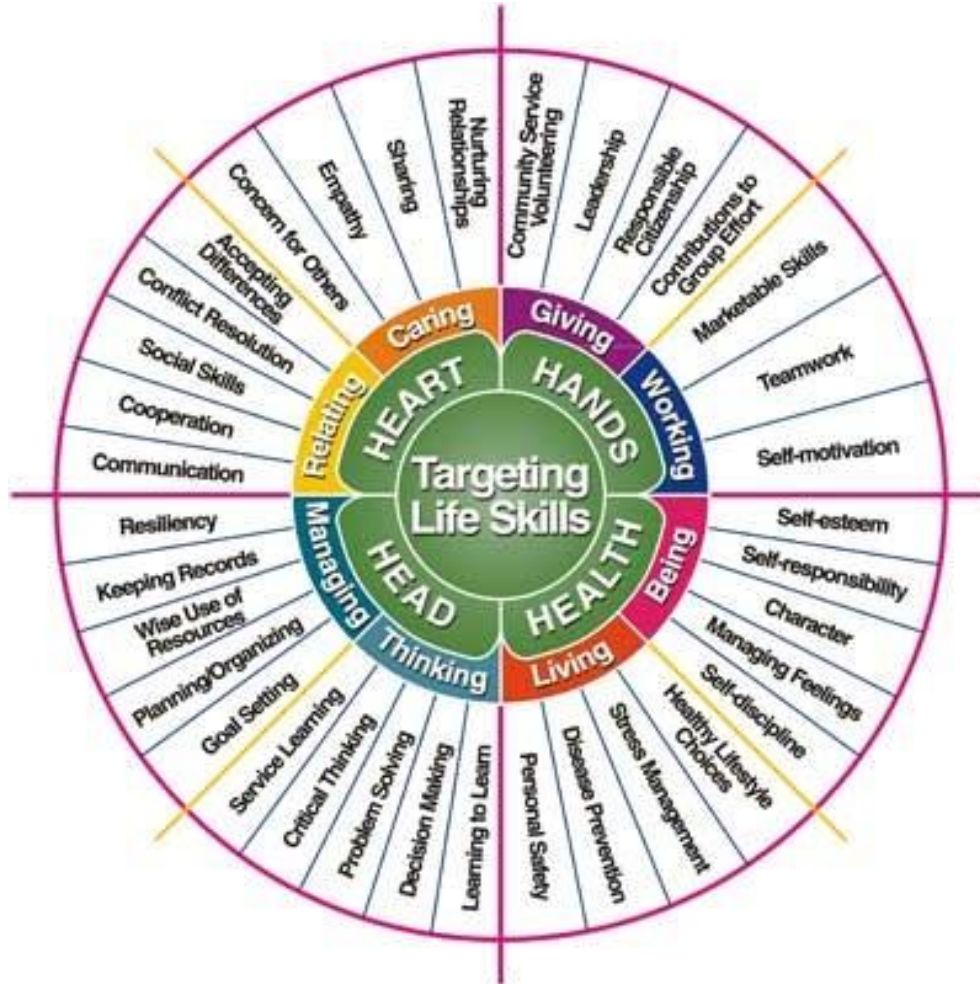
- b. Did you ever reflect on a new skill you learned and think about how you could use it for another project or teach it to someone else?
- 4. Think about your 4-H agent or livestock coach. Tell me about this person. What do you remember the most about them? How did they specifically help you with your livestock and even beyond?
- 5. Are you familiar with the Life Skills Model? (*provide a copy of the Life Skills Model wheel for interviewee to review*)
 - a. Looking at the Life Skills Model wheel, what are the top sections that you feel were most important when participating in a 4-H livestock project.
 - b. What aspects of the livestock project do you believe contributed to your top gained skills? In other words, were there specific “ingredients” that made this recipe most tasty?
- 6. Aside from your 4-H livestock project(s), did you participate in other 4-H events or projects?
 - a. If yes, did these experiences provide different experiences related to the Life Skills Model?
 - b. What got you excited about participating in livestock projects in the first place?
- 7. Were you involved in other youth activities like FFA, church youth groups or school clubs?
 - a. If yes, did these activities provide the same leadership experiences as your 4-H livestock project?
 - b. How were they different from 4-H livestock projects?
- 8. Finally, given everything you’ve shared here today, what do you think was so “special” about participating in a livestock project? Are there aspects of this experience you think could be transferred into other learning experiences?
- 9. Given the definition of “leadership” you shared at the start of this interview, how did participating in livestock projects contribute to your leadership skills and abilities?

Wrap-up:

Thank you for your honest responses. Your input is valuable to the research about leadership skills gained in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you again!



References:

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APPENDIX C

Interview Communications

Informational Letter

September 1, 2015

Dear <<Name>>:

As a graduate student in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication at The University of Georgia, I am conducting research entitled “The Impact of Georgia 4-H Livestock Projects on Participant Leadership Skills: A Qualitative Study of 4-H Alumni.” The purpose of this study is to identify the leadership learning outcomes adults perceive to have gained from participation as youth in Georgia 4-H livestock projects.

I would like to invite you to participate in a 30-45 minute phone interview. I am reaching out to past participants of Georgia 4-H livestock projects (i.e. breeding ewe, market lamb, meat goat, commercial dairy heifer, breeding heifer, market steer and/or horse) who showed their animal(s) at a state show between 2007 and 2015. Your contact information was provided by the Georgia State 4-H Office.

Your experience in participating in Georgia 4-H livestock projects will contribute key insight to leadership skills gained or developed in such projects. The phone interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed; the tape will be destroyed (within approximately 60 days). Any information you provide that is individually identifiable will remain confidential, and your name will not be associated with any of your responses. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in

summary form only. Your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format.

Phone interviews are currently being scheduled for <<DATE RANGE>>. An interview can be scheduled at a date and time convenient for you.

Within the next week, I will be emailing you again to follow up with you about your participation. If there is another email address or number where I should call you, please email me at swabrams@uga.edu or call me at (706) 207-4045.

The findings from this project may provide improvements associated with Georgia 4-H livestock projects. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. By participating in the interview, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact my advisor and principal investigator, Dr. Nick Fuhrman (706-542-8828; fuhrman@uga.edu). Thank you for your consideration, please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Sherry Abrams, Master's Degree Candidate

Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 612 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Phone Protocol

Follow up to Email Invitation for Interviews:

Greeting: “Hello, this is Sherry Abrams. May I speak with <<NAME>>?”

Purpose of Call: “Hi <<NAME>>. I’m calling today to follow-up an email I sent inviting you to participate in an interview that I will be conducting concerning your experience in Georgia 4-H livestock projects. Is this a good time to chat with you about your participation?”

If the response is “No”: “Is there another time that I can call to chat with you about this opportunity?”

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to speaking with you on <<Date>> at <<time>>.”

OR

“Thank you for your time.”

If the response is “Yes”: “Great! I appreciate your time and this will be brief. As stated in the email, I am conducting research to understand how Georgia 4-H livestock projects may have helped participants gain or develop leadership skills. Your input would be very beneficial, and I hope that you can participate in a phone interview at a time most convenient for you. Do you have any questions about the details concerning the date and time for the phone interview?”

(Respond to any questions.)

If the response is “No”: “Well, thank you for your time today. Please contact me if I can be of assistance in any way.”

If the response is “Yes”: “May I confirm your availability today for a phone interview to be held on <<DATE>>, at <<TIME>>? I will call you at <<PHONE NUMBER>>. I look forward to speaking with you on <<DATE>>. You will receive an email reminder from me a few days before the interview. Please call me if you have any questions beforehand, and thank you for your participation.

Email Reminder for Interview Participants

Date

Dear <<Name>>,

Thank you for confirming your participation in a phone interview concerning your experience in a Georgia 4-H livestock project. I look forward to speaking with you on <<DATE>> at <<TIME>>. I will call you at <<PHONE NUMBER>>. The phone interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. A copy of the Life Skills Model wheel is attached for you to reference during our conversation. Thank you again for your participation. We value your input! Please call me at (706) 207-4045 or email me at swabrams@uga.edu if you should have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Sherry Abrams

Email “Thank you” for Interview Participants

(To be sent within one week after interview)

Date

Dear <<NAME>>,

Thank you for your participation in an interview about your experience in a Georgia 4-H livestock project on <<DATE>>. Your feedback was very valuable to my research as well as to the future development and implementation of project materials. I greatly appreciate the time you gave to join our conversation about leadership experiences in Georgia 4-H livestock projects.

Sincerely,

Sherry Abrams