

THE IMPACT OF BEEF CATTLE PROJECTS ON YOUTH LEADERSHIP  
AND LIFE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

by

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(Under the Direction of John C. Ricketts)

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the youth leadership life skills development of youth, and to determine if there is a relationship between YLLSD and participation in the beef project. This study was conducted using a correlational and *ex post facto* design. A sample of 376 individuals was randomly selected from a population of 4,229 National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members ranging in age from 18 to 21. A total of 102 responses (30%) were returned for analysis. NJAA members' Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) scores ranged from 40 to 90 with a composite mean of 73.02. The three highest skill means were observed for the YLLSDS items "show a responsible attitude," "can set goals," and "can set priorities." The strongest relationship existed between YLLSDS scores and show per year followed by gender, hours working with project per week, and years of beef project exhibition.

INDEX WORDS: National Junior Angus Association, Beef projects, Livestock exhibition, Youth leadership life skill development,

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Barry and Iris Walker, who invested much of their lives into me and my siblings' livestock exhibition experiences. Their dedication to our leadership and life skill development through competitive livestock projects has enabled me to meet people and go places that I would have never dreamed. My parents' selfless example of parenthood is a pattern that I wish to follow in the years to come.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The following study examines the self-perceived youth leadership and life skills' of National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members involved in the beef project. What exactly are youth leadership and life skills? Miller (as cited in Dormody & Seevers, 1994) defines youth leadership life skills development as the “development of life skills necessary to perform leadership functions in real life” (¶ 4). Miller (as cited in Bruce, Boyd, & Dooley, 2004) separated leadership life skills developed in the 4-H program into the following categories: decision making, relationships, learning, management, understanding self, group processes, and communications.

Hendricks (1996), using the Targeting Life Skills model, defined life skills as “abilities individuals can learn that will help them to be successful in living a productive and satisfying life” (¶ 5). Boyd, Herring, and Briers (1992) termed leadership life skills as those skills needed by youth for everyday life when they become adults. Such skills may include working with others, understanding self, communicating, making decisions, and leadership.

The question still remains as to why the development of youth leadership life skills is significant to beef cattle exhibitors and to society? Boyd et al. (1992) suggested that “the development of life skills allows youth to cope with their environment by making responsible decisions, having a better understanding of their values, and being better able to communicate and get along with others” (¶ 2). Learning a trade or a technical skill is important, but as Brock (1992 states in the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS, 1992),

“there is much more to life than earning a living, and we want more from education than productive workers. We want citizens who can discharge the responsibilities that go with living in a democratic society and with becoming parents” (p.4). Brock’s (1992) statement impresses upon our society the great need for youth to develop leadership and life skills in order to become productive members of society. Shurson and Lattner (1991) further iterated the importance of presenting young people with opportunities to investigate career options and develop essential life skills so as to become constructive members of society.

This study examines livestock project exhibitors and more specifically, beef cattle exhibitors and their development of leadership life skills. What is particularly significant about livestock project exhibitors as compared to other youth groups? Researchers (Sawer, 1987; Boleman, Cummings, & Briers, 2005) who have studied the effects of livestock exhibition on life skill development have found that there are many benefits for young people who participate in livestock projects. For example, Sawer (as cited in Rusk, Early, Machtimes, Talbert, & Balshweid, 2003) found that Oregon 4-H beef, sheep, and swine members identified key life skills such as responsibility, decision-making, communication, getting along with others, and leadership as being developed by livestock exhibition experiences. Similarly, Boleman et al. (2005) found that livestock exhibitors indicated that they were developing life skills as a result of exhibiting livestock.

A study conducted by Rusk, Early, Machtimes, Talbert, and Balshweid (2003) to determine project and life skills as a result of 4-H member’s involvement with the beef, sheep and swine projects indicated youth were able to accomplish project skills in the categories of sportsmanship, safety, animal grooming, and animal selection. The results of the Rusk et al.



study also demonstrated that 4-H members used responsibility skills developed from raising 4-H animal projects to complete homework (2003).

Similarly, while researching the life skills gained from youth exhibiting beef, swine, sheep, and goat projects, Boleman et al. (2005) found that livestock exhibitors indicated accepting responsibility, setting goals, and developing self-discipline as life skills developed through the influence of exhibiting the beef project.

Furthermore Carol K. Ward (1996) surveyed New Jersey 4-H alumni asking them to respond to perceived impacts of exhibiting livestock projects on life skill development. Life skills such as spirit of inquiry, decision making, ability to except responsibility, maintain records, and public speaking were surveyed by respondents. The life skill “ability to accept responsibility” received the highest score by respondents. The study indicated that participation in the 4-H animal science program does have a positive affect on life skill development.

After thorough investigation, there seems to be very little research data that documents the benefit and impact of livestock exhibition on youth leadership life skills development. Federal, State, and local policy makers, extension coordinators, school administrators, and career technical and agricultural education directors seek such evidence from research that validates the funding of grant money and overall support of youth livestock projects. One goal of this research study is to provide verifiable research data to these policy makers and key public education officials to ensure the continuation and growth of youth development through livestock exhibition projects. By assessing information and investigating data surrounding the impacts of the beef cattle project on youth leadership life skills development, one may be better equipped to improve existing livestock programs and identify specific variables surrounding the beef project that have the greatest impact on leadership and life skills development.

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the youth leadership life skills development of youth, and to determine if there is a relationship between YLLSD and participation in the beef project. Specifically the researcher sought to:

- Describe National Junior Angus Association members by their age, gender, FFA participation, 4-H participation, and influence of significant individuals on members' decision to participate in the beef project.
- Describe the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members as a result of involvement in the beef project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and the livestock exhibition variables; additional species shown, shows per year, years of involvement, and time spent working with project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and their age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation.

### **Background**

The measurement of youth leadership and life skills were the primary focus of this study, though it was through the context and framework of beef project exhibition that this was accomplished. Although it is difficult to state when youth livestock projects came into existence, it is through the 4-H and FFA programs that they would eventually be established and developed into what they are today. During the late 1800's, tax paying rural farmers became discontented over the kind of education their children were receiving in school. Instead of training in skills that would prove useful to farm life, rural public schools were preparing its' students for life in

the city (Reck, 1951). Cornell naturalist, Dr. Liberty Hyde Bailey, expressed his sentiment toward the failure of education in rural America in his day in the following:

How unrelated much of our teaching is to the daily life is well shown by inquiry recently made of the children of New Jersey by Prof. Earl Barnes. Inquiries were made of the country school children in two agricultural counties of the state as to what vocation they hoped to follow. As I recall the figures, of the children at seven years of age, 25 per cent desired to follow some occupation connected with country life. Of those fourteen years, only 2 per cent desired such occupation. (Reck, 1951, p. 6)

In an effort to change the direction in which education was headed, Bailey started the Nature Study Clubs which instilled in rural young people knowledge and adoration for the environment. He also wrote and distributed educational nature study leaflets (Reck, 1951). Reck (1951) states that farm children were ashamed of their rural upbringing, but Bailey set out to re-instill in them the idea that “scholarship began in their back yards, in the grass underfoot, the tree that shaded the house, and the crops that grew in the fields” (p. 8).

Other experimental agricultural clubs for boys and girls became popular during the early 1900's which produced corn contests and vegetable garden projects (Reck, 1951; Wessel & Wessel, 1982). Known as the “Father of Extension”, Seaman A. Knapp was a main proponent of boys and girls agricultural demonstration clubs (Richardson, 1994; Enfield, 2001). Through these demonstration clubs young people would often demonstrate agricultural practices to their parents, encouraging them to change to more efficient and productive farming practices. Agriculture education proponents like Knapp believed in a hands-on application of learning. Rasmussen quotes Knapp (as cited in Enfield, 2001) as once saying, “What a man hears, he may doubt; what he sees, he may possibly doubt, but what he does, he cannot doubt” (¶ 8).

Rasmussen (as cited in Enfield, 2001) reported that young people were involved in “result demonstrations” which consisted of large time commitments and reporting of results and comparisons. Raising cattle and swine projects were examples of such result demonstrations.

The learning by doing ideology infused in the original demonstrations projects has continued over the decades to be the heart-beat of the 4-H organization (Enfield, 2001). An up-to-date pamphlet of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service’s 4-H Beef Project stated project goals and objectives such as “develop leadership skills, build character, and instill citizenship; develop integrity, sportsmanship, and decision making skills; and develop public speaking skills and promote the beef industry” (“The 4-H Beef Project,” n.d., p. 2).

Vocational agriculture education falls very much in line with 4-H’s learning by doing mentality by teaching students practical skills through hands-on activities and personal experience (Arrington & Cheek, 1990). John Dewey (as cited in Cheek, Arrington, Carter, & Randell, 1994) said “An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has a vital and verifiable significance” (§ 2). The National FFA’s Motto, “Learning to Do, Doing Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve,” (“National FFA Organization,” 2006, About FFA section, ¶ 2) further accentuates agricultural education’s commitment to experiential learning of the student. Furthermore, direct application of learning takes place in agriculture education through the Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE) program. Students participating in a SAE are given the opportunity to use the principles learned in the classroom and apply them to real life circumstances (Cheek, Arrington, Carter, & Randell, 1994). The livestock exhibition project is one of many SAE projects that agriculture education students are involved in.

Baker and Kieth (as cited in Davis, Akers, Doerfert, McGregor, & Kieth, 2005) reported that FFA and 4-H livestock exhibitor programs offer a competitive and educational activity for many young people today. The livestock project fulfills the mission of both agricultural sciences and the cooperative extension service by instilling in young people the responsibility of caring, feeding, and showing livestock animals.

There is an array of youth organizations that boast youth leadership life skills development as a primary goal of existence. In direct relation to this study, the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) exists with youth leadership development as a core focus. Historically, the Junior Activities Department of the American Angus Association (AAA) began in 1956 in an effort to encourage young people's involvement and increase proficiency with Angus steer and heifer calf projects. Today the Junior Activities Department of the AAA has expanded its horizons with a greater purpose of helping junior members develop character, skills, and leadership potential by offering a variety of activities, services, and projects for members ("About the National Junior Angus Association," 2006, ¶ 1). Jake Tiedeman, 2005 NJAA Board Chairman, describes the impact of the National Junior Angus Association on leadership and life skills development in the following:

The National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) provides an infinite number of opportunities for youth to gain industry knowledge, develop public speaking skills, hone showmanship abilities, and increase marketing capabilities, in addition to others. The activities and contests sponsored by the NJAA provide a great chance to meet friends, while yet perfecting skills that will be valuable to you in your search for higher education and a career. There are few other organizations in existence that can offer the chance to

make lifelong friends, as well as develop skills that will serve as a catalyst to your success (“Directions,” 2005, p.1).

### **Research Problem**

Hammatt (as cited in Rusk and Machtmes, 2003) says, "one purpose of the 4-H animal projects is to teach young people how to feed, fit and show their animals. The more important purpose is to provide an opportunity for personal growth and development of the young person" (¶ 1). But does involvement in youth livestock projects, specifically beef projects, really enhance and contribute to leadership and life skills development? In addition, does leadership and life skills development really make a significant difference in an individuals' ability to function in society? Why do parents, young people, and agriculture education professionals spend great amounts of time, money, and resources investing in youth livestock projects? Although several studies have been conducted regarding youth leadership and life skill development in youth organizations (Seevers & Dormody, 1995; Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997; Rusk, Martin, Talbert, & Balshweid, 2002; Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992), very little research has been carried out dealing specifically with the impact livestock project exhibition on YLLSD and even fewer with beef projects as a primary focus. To properly answer the above questions there appears to be a need for a study that would validate the exhibition of beef projects as a means of youth leadership life skills development.

Researchers conclude that the development of leadership and life skills in youth is greatly important to ensuring the preparation of future leaders of society. Fox, Schroeder, and Lodl (2003) said that one of the most imperative issues facing the 4-H organization and other youth organizations is how they can best influence youth to become productive and useful members of society. It has been estimated that 25% of United States' youth participate in high-risk activities

which include heavy alcohol consumption, drug use, tobacco use, and failing to attend school or perform poorly at school (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992). Boyd, et al. (1992) said that the high percentage of delinquent youth indicates a lack of leadership and life skills such as working with others, communication, and other skills needed for adulthood.

Some researchers contest that enrollment in programs like 4-H, which is a main avenue for youth livestock project involvement, and others which are founded upon experiential learning are needed for youth to acquire life and leadership skills (Boyd, et al., 1992). The National FFA Organization, which is another avenue for youth livestock exhibition, claims the development of agricultural leadership skills as one of its chief aspirations since its establishment in 1928 (Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997). If the primary aim of organizations like 4-H and FFA, who offer beef project exhibition programs, is youth leadership and life skills development then there seems to be a need for a study that would explain the youth leadership life skills development impact of youth participating in the exhibition of beef projects.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to determine the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development (YLLSD) of National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members who exhibit beef cattle projects. The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. "What are the self-perceived youth leadership and life skills of National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members who are 18-21 years of age?"
2. "What demographic variables and livestock exhibition variables are related to youth leadership life skills development?"

The researcher's primary hypothesis was that there will be a significant relationship between Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale (YLLSDS) (Dormody, Seevers, & Clason, 1993) scores of participants and participation in beef projects. Secondly, the researcher

hypothesized that there will be a significant relationship between YLLSDS scores of participants and various livestock exhibition variables (additional species shown, shows per year, years of involvement, and time spent working with project). Finally, the researcher hypothesized that there will be a significant relationship between Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) scores of participants and various demographic variables (gender, age, FFA participation, and 4-H participation).

As stated above, the primary purpose of this study was to determine the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development level of individuals as a result of participation in the beef project. Specifically the researcher sought to

- Describe National Junior Angus Association members by their age, gender, FFA participation, 4-H participation, and influence of significant individuals on members' decision to participate in the beef project.
- Describe the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members as a result of involvement in the beef project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and the livestock exhibition variables; additional species shown, shows per year, years of involvement, and time spent working with project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and their age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation.



## **Limitations**

Conclusions drawn from this study encountered the following limitations. The data were limited to individuals obtained from the sample population of National Junior Angus Association members, ages 18-21. Consequently, generalization of the study's results to other youth is limited to the degree to which those youth beef exhibitors are analogous to the population and sample used in this study. Due to specific regulations given by the organization from which the population sample was obtained, neither email addresses nor phone numbers were obtainable. Therefore, follow-up contacts were restricted to reminders and additional surveys through the U.S. postal service. Furthermore, the sample size represented in this study was limited to a minimal degree due to mail postage costs.

There were also threats to internal validity that should be noted for this study. The mere participation and response of the individuals surveyed could possibly be seen as an external sign of the participants' leadership qualities. Subject mortality in which participants fail to respond to the survey or fail to receive the survey packet due to delivery problems could also represent internal threats to validity in this study.

## **Operational Definitions**

- **Age-** The ages of those involved in the study ranged from 18 to 21 years. This age range was chosen because it was determined that these individuals would be nearing the end of their beef cattle exhibition eligibility in youth programs. It was therefore determined that these individuals could best reflect on the impact of their beef project experience on leadership life skills development.

- **Beef Project-** A project which is constituted by an individual who raises and cares for a beef steer, heifer, cow or bull for the purpose of exhibition at the local, state or national level.
- **4-H-** “A program set up by the United States Department of Agriculture originally in rural areas to help young people become productive citizens by instructing them in useful skills (as in agriculture, animal husbandry, and carpentry), community service, and personal development” (*Merriam-Webster Online*, 2006).
- **National FFA Organization-** “The National FFA Organization is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education” (*National FFA Organization*, 2006).
- **Gender-** A variable that is known to show variance in YLLSDS scores (Seevers & Dormody, 1995). Gender was used as a variable to determine differences between male and female leadership and life skills development as influenced by involvement in the beef project. The variable of gender is of particular importance because of the recent incursion of females holding leadership positions in agriculture education (Ricketts, Osborne, and Rudd, 2004).
- **Livestock exhibition projects-** A project which is constituted by an individual who raises and cares for any animal categorized as livestock (cattle, horse, sheep, goat, dairy) for the purpose of exhibition at the local, state or national level.
- **National Junior Angus Association (NJAA)** – The junior membership organization of the American Angus Association. “The Junior Activities Department of the American Angus Association was started in 1956. Its purpose then was to encourage young people

to become involved with Angus steer and heifer projects and to help them do a better job with their projects. Today that purpose has been expanded to include more projects and programs that help juniors develop their skills and character” (“About the National Junior Angus Association,” 2006, ¶ 1).

- **Youth-** “The time of life when one is young; *especially* the period between childhood and maturity” (*Merriam-Webster Online*, 2006). Youth in this study ranged in age from 18-21.
- **Youth Leadership Life Skills Development-** Miller (as cited in Dormody & Seevers, 1994) has defined youth leadership life skills development as the “development of life skills necessary to perform leadership functions in real life” (¶ 2).
- **Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS)-** “The Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale (YLLSDS) was developed to provide youth organization leaders and others concerned with youth development with an evaluation and research tool for measuring leadership life skills development” (Dormody, Seevers, & Clason, 1993, ¶ 1).

### **Chapter Summary**

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of individuals as a result of exhibiting beef projects. A summary of the research study was provided in this chapter to give the reader a broad overview of the research content. A concise description of youth leadership and life skills was given, as well as a historical background of livestock projects and affiliated youth organizations. The overall purpose and need for the research study was discussed. Young people need to develop life and leadership skills to become productive and responsible adults. Youth involved in livestock

projects have the opportunity to develop these leadership and life skills to enable them to succeed. As a result of this study, verifiable research data may be available to policy makers and key public education officials and so ensure the continuation and growth of youth development through livestock exhibition projects. The next chapter will discuss the literature related to the specific theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study, similar studies conducted addressing youth leadership life skills development, and studies related to livestock exhibitions' impact on youth leadership life skills development.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 1 introduced the study of youth leadership impacts of beef project exhibition and the importance and rationale of investigating these specific impacts. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the self-perceived youth leadership life skill development level of individuals as a result of participation in the beef project. This study specifically sought to

- Describe National Junior Angus Association members by their age, gender, FFA participation, 4-H participation, and influence of significant individuals on members' decision to participate in the beef project.
- Describe the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members as a result of involvement in the beef project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and the livestock exhibition variables; additional species shown, shows per year, years of involvement, and time spent working with project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and their age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation.

This chapter illustrates the conceptual and theoretical frameworks and experiential research significant to this study. The literature review utilized professional and educational publications. The first section looks at experiential education and its impact on student learning.

Secondly, leadership and life skills development is discussed in relation to its relevance to society. Following these discussions is a review of research investigating impacts of livestock exhibition on leadership and life skills. Finally, research literature was examined regarding livestock exhibitor variables that may influence youth leadership and life skills development.

The researcher focused on a specific group (National Junior Angus Association members who exhibit beef cattle projects) and the explicit context (youth leadership life skills development). Literature was reviewed that looked specifically at studies on leadership impacts of exhibiting livestock. The review of literature found there to be very few studies investigating the impacts of participation in livestock projects, specifically beef projects, on youth leadership and life skills development.

### **Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning is one of the key theoretical bases for this study. The 4-H youth organization sees the development of life skills through experiential learning as the foundation of its programming (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992). According to some, young people must be presented opportunities to investigate career options and develop essential life skills to become constructive members of society (Shurson & Lattner, 1991). 4-H and other youth organizations see experiential learning as an avenue to the development of life skills, but what exactly is experiential learning and from where did the concept of experiential education originate?

Experiential education is not a new idea to the realm of education. Numerous individuals in academia have propositioned learning models that resembled experiential learning (Wulff-Risner & Stewart, 1997). John Dewey, who is perhaps the most influential scholar in education of the twentieth century (Smith, 1997), strongly believed in offering experiential learning opportunities to the learner (Richardson, 1994). Dewey (1938) stated:

...all principles by themselves are abstract. They become concrete only in the consequences which result from their application. Just because the principles set forth are so fundamental and far-reaching, everything depends upon the interpretation given them as they are put into practice in the school and the home. (p. 6)

In addition, Dewey believed that a worthwhile education should entail purpose for society and the student learner. The value of an experience is determined by present and future impacts on an individual and degree of societal influence (Neill, 2005). Furthermore, Dewey (1938) remarked that “there is an intimate process of actual experience and education” (p. 7). John Dewey was an educator who believed, rather than teaching abstract content, individuals should be given learning opportunities which are expressly in touch with reality (Wulff-Risner & Stewart, 1997).

Carl Rogers, an American psychologist, is another great proponent of experiential education. Experiential learning, to Rogers, was especially significant because it speaks directly to the interests and desires of the learner (Kearsley, 2006). In contrast, Rogers purported that cognitive (learning facts and figures) learning seemed meaningless. To Rogers, a student learning about cattle physiology in order to become a veterinarian is much more consequential than academic knowledge comprehension such as vocabulary memorization which may not be directly applied. Rogers concludes that when “the student participates completely in the learning process and has control over its nature and direction, [learning] is primarily based upon direct confrontation with practical, social, personal or research problems, and self-evaluation is the principal method of assessing progress or success (Kearsley, 2006, ¶ 3).”

In an effort to measure the actual experience an individual encounters in learning, Gibbins and Hopkins (as cited in Neill, 2005) developed the Scale of Experientiality. The scale

includes five standards for determining experience. Priest and Gass (as cited in Neill, 2005) summarize these standards in the following:

- experience was mediated, that is, the more "direct" the experience, the more experiential,
- client was involved in the planning and execution of the experience
- client was responsible for what occurred in the experience
- client was responsible for mastering the experience to fullest extent possible, and
- experience enabled clients to grow in directions that were helpful to them (§ 7)

Although it is often cited, Gibbins and Hopkins' (as cited in Neill, 2005) scale hasn't gone without criticism. Neill (2005) states that the scale "seems flawed from the outset since life is 100% experiential, a point made powerfully in John Dewey's theory of experience" (§ 3).

In an attempt to break down the stages of learning that occurs in experiential education, Experiential Learning Cycles were developed. These models stress the Deweyian principle of the experiential nature of learning as of primary concern in education. In relation to Experiential Learning Cycles, Neill (2005) suggests that:

It is the teacher's responsibility to *structure and organize a series of experiences* which positively influence each individual's potential future experiences. In other words, "good experiences" motivate, encourage, and enable students to go on to have more valuable learning experiences, whereas, "poor experiences" tend to lead towards a student closing off from potential positive experiences in the future. ("Underlying Philosophy", § 4)



Several models have been developed to illustrate the cycles or stages which occur in experiential education. Kolb's (as cited in Smith, 2004) Experiential Learning Cycle 4-stage model is one of great popularity among education professionals (See Figure 2-1).

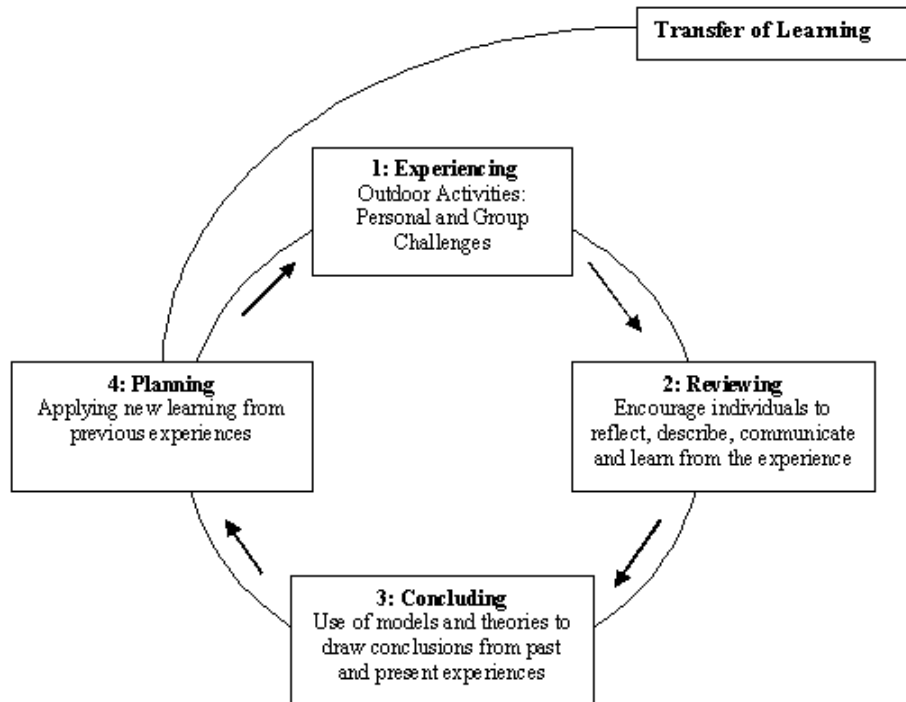


Figure 2-1. The Experiential Learning Cycle (Neill, 2005).

As the model above describes, Kolb and Fry (as cited in Smith, 2001) propose that effective learning possesses the abilities of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. The learner may enter at any point on the four-stage cycle, but the sequence must be followed. Kolb states that "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Healey & Jenkins, 2000, p. 185). This statement sums up precisely the theoretical base from which his model was created. Healey and Jenkins (2000) further comment "the experiential learning theory affirms the importance of

experiential activities, such as fieldwork and laboratory sessions; however, it does not prioritize those forms of learning” (p.186).

### **Leadership and Life Skill Development**

In addition to experiential learning, the body of research in leadership and life skills development was also a theoretical anchor for this study. As is often quoted, Miller (as cited in Dormody & Seevers, 1994) defined youth leadership life skills development as the “development of life skills necessary to perform leadership functions in real life” (¶ 4). In addition, Miller (as cited in Bruce, Boyd, & Dooley, 2004) separated the leadership life skills students developed through involvement in the 4-H program into seven categories which include decision making, relationships, learning, management, understanding self, group processes, and communications. Using Miller’s categorical breakdown of leadership life skills, Seevers, Dormody, and Clason (1995) developed the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS).

Hendricks (1996), using the Targeting Life Skills model attempts to define life skills as “abilities individuals can learn that will help them to be successful in living a productive and satisfying life (¶ 3).” Researchers Boyd, et al. (1992) describe examples of leadership life skills as communication, decision making, and self-understanding. These skills and others, the researchers stress, are those which will enable youth to transition and function as an adult.

In the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS, 1992), Brock (1992) states “there is much more to life than earning a living, and we want more from education than productive workers. We want citizens who can discharge the responsibilities that go with living in a democratic society and with becoming parents (p.4).” Brock’s (1992) statement impresses upon our society the great need for youth to develop leadership and life skills in order to become productive members of society.

Fox, Schroeder, and Lodl (2003) reported that one of the most imperative issues facing the 4-H organization and other youth organizations is how they can best influence youth to become productive and useful members of society. It has been estimated that 25% of the United States youth participate in high-risk activities which include heavy alcohol consumption, drug use, tobacco use, and fail to attend school or perform poorly at school (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992). Boyd et al. (1992) stated that the high percentage of delinquent youth indicates a lack of leadership and life skills such as working with others, communication, and other skills needed for adulthood.

### **Impacts of Livestock Exhibition**

Many youth leadership organizations have worked to instill life skills in young people through various activities and trainings. The 4-H organization desires its members to receive more than just trophies and money for their achievements, but also gain essential life skills that will enable them to become better citizens (Rusk, Summerlot-Early, Machtmes, Talbert, and Balschweid, 2003). One of the chief aims of the National FFA Organization has been to develop agricultural leadership skills in its members (Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997). School administrators, parents, and youth organizations have raised the question of the legitimacy of youth raising livestock projects as a means to develop leadership and life skills. Proprietors of the Cooperative Extension Service have often inquired of the idea of life skill development in youth who exhibit livestock (Boleman, Cummings, & Briers 2005).

Rusk, et al. (2003) developed a study to determine project and life skills as a result of 4-H member's involvement with the beef, sheep and swine projects. The design of this study consisted of surveying Indiana youth who exhibited 4-H animal projects. Results of the study indicated youth were able to accomplish project skills in the categories of sportsmanship, safety,

animal grooming, and animal selection. The study's results also showed that 4-H members used responsibility skills developed from raising 4-H animal projects to complete homework (2003).

In a similar study Boleman, et al. (2005) found that livestock exhibitors indicated that they were developing life skills as a result of exhibiting livestock. The study used a questionnaire to survey 4-H members exhibiting beef, swine, sheep, and goats. Those surveyed indicated that accepting responsibility, setting goals, and developing self-discipline were the top three life skills influenced by exhibiting the beef project. Those involved with the swine project reported accepting responsibility; develop self-disciplining; and self motivation as top life skills influenced by the project.

Davis, Keith, Williams, and Frazee (2000) developed a qualitative study that sought to validate benefits of livestock exhibition. After conducting interviews of 4-H youth exhibitors, parents, advisors and show officials, the researchers identified six themes that resulted from competition through the exhibition of livestock. They were: social relations; character; family; competition; new cultures and environments; and finance for education.

A similar study to the above was conducted using a case study of an autistic child who exhibited livestock (Davis, Akers, Doerfert, Keith, & McGregor, 2005). The research reported similarities between the special needs exhibitor studied and main stream exhibitors who participated in earlier research studies. Such themes regarding the benefits of livestock exhibition emerged as social relations, family, and responsibility/knowledge and care of animals.

Shih and Gamon (1997), in a study to assess the educational needs of the extension's 4-H beef program found positive results concerning life skill development. The study showed that among life-skill topics rated by more than 50% of experts as Very Important (VI) or Extremely

Important (EI), honesty, money management, pride in a job well done, and self-confidence were at the top of the list.

In a study conducted by Carol K. Ward (1996), New Jersey 4-H alumni were asked to respond to perceived impacts of exhibiting livestock projects on life skill development. Life skills such as spirit of inquiry, decision making, ability to accept responsibility, maintain records, and public speaking were surveyed by respondents. The life skill “ability to accept responsibility” received the highest score by respondents. The study indicated that participation in the 4-H animal science program does have a positive affect on life skill development.

Sawer (as cited in Rusk, Early, Machtimes, Talbert, and Balshweid, 2003) conducted a study involving Oregon 4-H beef, sheep, and swine members which identified key life skills being developed. Responsibility, decision-making, communication, getting along with others, and leadership were all life skills that were reported as being developed by livestock exhibitors.

In a study examining the Iowa 4-H swine project effects on life skill and subject matter skill development, Gamon and Dehegehus-Hetzel (1994) reported that swine exhibitors perceived that participation in the project had a positive effect on their life skill development. Parental support may play a role in life skill development of youth involved with livestock projects. In the above study Gamon & Dehegehus-Hetzel (1994) reported that respondents rated parents as their top source of information regarding the swine project. The researchers also stated that parents played a strong part in swine project participant’s decision to enroll in the project.

Rothlisberger (2005) suggested that the junior livestock program is an avenue to develop young peoples’ life skills by using live animal projects. He stated:

Youth learn something about agriculture and livestock production and develop an appreciation for the livestock industry. However, the main objectives are to

teach life skills and help youth become productive citizens. The experience of youth owning and working with animals, being responsible for their care, health, and growth, and exhibiting them in a competitive environment is a tremendous character building process. Junior livestock projects help develop life skills such as: leadership, communication, decision making and problem solving skills. Character building, record keeping and the development of personal responsibility are other skills youth can develop from their involvement in the broad range of programs in junior livestock. (p.1)

The National Junior Angus Association, established in 1956, is a youth beef cattle organization that not only encourages young people to be involved in Angus steer and heifer projects but also helps youth develop skills and character through many other programs offered (“About the National Junior Angus Association”, 2006, ¶ 1).

### **Related Livestock Activities**

A greater number of studies have been published that have considered relationships between related livestock activities and youth life skills development. Rusk, Martin, Talbert, and Balshweid (2002) said that the 4-H livestock program not only benefits youth in teaching proper livestock evaluation, but also profits youth by the development of life skills. The Indiana study surveyed 4-H livestock program alumni on the influences of the program on personal growth and career preparation. Alumni rated the ability to verbally defend a decision, livestock industry knowledge, oral communication, and decision making as skills having been most influenced by the 4-H livestock judging program.

A study conducted by Nash and Sant (2005) involving the Idaho 4-H livestock judging program and life skill development revealed similar results as those above. The participants involved in the study rated the influence of the 4-H livestock judging activity on specific life

skills. The surveyed population consisted of those who had participated in livestock (including dairy) or horse judging in Idaho. The researcher's data concluded that the program was greatly influential in animal industry knowledge development and showed at least moderate influence on development of beneficial life skills as related to workforce preparedness.

Shurson and Lattner (1991) surveyed swine project members in Ohio about swine production knowledge, career knowledge, and life skill development. In measuring life skill development, respondents revealed they learned the most about sportsmanship and working with others. Accepting responsibility, communicating with others, and making decisions were also listed as life skills developed by swine project participants. The study also noted that public speaking and leading a group were learned least.

### **Predictors and Correlates of Life and Leadership Development**

Two of the primary objectives of this research study were to determine the livestock exhibition variables and exhibitor demographic variables that may influence youth leadership and life skills development. Figure 2-2 serves as a model to demonstrate the variables that may influence youth leadership life skills development among livestock project exhibitors.

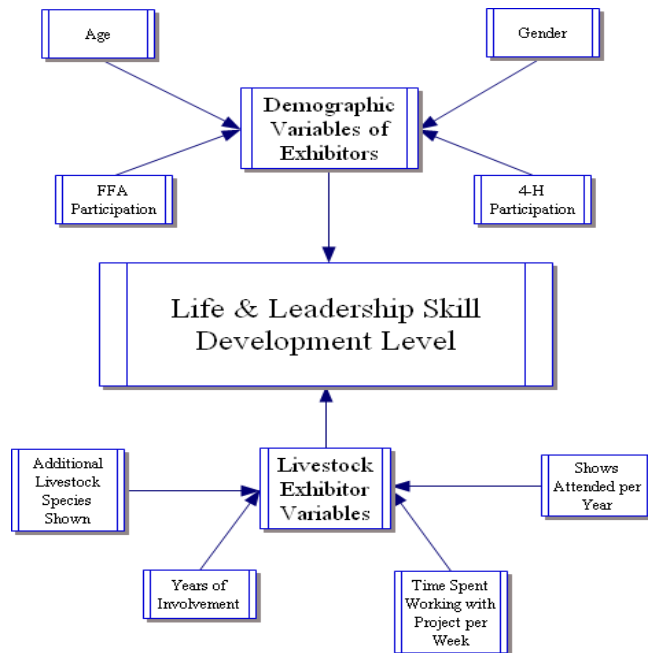


Figure 2-2

Conceptual Model of Factors Impacting YLLDS Development of Beef Cattle Project Exhibitors (Walker, 2006).

### Livestock Exhibition Variables

#### Years of Involvement

Research has reported that youth leadership and life skill development is affected by the years an exhibitor is involved with a livestock project. Sawyer (as cited in Rusk et al., 2003) determined that 4-H livestock members demonstrated an evolution of development the longer they were involved in a project.

A study assessing the impact of exhibiting beef, swine, sheep, and goat 4-H projects on life skills development found low, positive relationships between years of exhibition and 13 specified life skills. The life skills accepting responsibility and building positive self-esteem reported low, positive relationships at the .05 level using a Pearson product-moment coefficient.



Eleven other life skills showed higher, positive correlations at the .01 level of significance. They were decision making, ability to relate to others, develop and maintain records, self motivation, knowledge of the livestock industry, develop organizational skills, ability to problem solve, develop oral communication skills, setting goals, develop self-discipline, and work in teams.

### **Additional Species**

Boleman, et al. (2005) compared the perceived life skill development of 13 specific life skills between four different species of livestock projects. Ten of the thirteen showed no significant mean differences ( $p < .05$ ) when they were compared with the four animals species (beef, swine, sheep, goat). Conversely, three of the thirteen life skills (knowledge of the livestock industry, development of organizational skills, setting goals) revealed significant differences in mean scores ( $p < .05$ ) among at least one of the four projects. Beef project respondents showed the highest mean score which was significantly higher than the goat project respondents. Swine project respondents also revealed a significantly higher mean score than goat project respondents. The life skills of developing organizational skills and setting goals both revealed beef project respondents as having the highest mean values and were significantly higher than goat respondents. Swine project respondents also had a significantly higher mean score when compared with goat respondents.

In a study by Rusk, et al. (2003), the perceived levels of project skill development by Indiana 4-H beef, sheep, and swine members who exhibited at the county fair only and those who exhibited at both the county fair and Indiana State Fair were compared. Their research revealed that a greater percentage of state fair exhibitors exhibited in two or more of the three projects and were much more likely to show all three species than exhibitors who exhibited at the county fair only.

## **Exhibitor Demographic Variables**

### **Age**

While attempting to describe significant relationships between self-perceived leadership life skills development of Iowa FFA members and age, Wingenbach and Kahler (1997) reported that age ( $r = .27$ ) ranked third in significance behind FFA leadership activities ( $r = .37$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and years of membership in the FFA ( $r = .31$ ).

### **Gender**

Seevers and Dormody (1995), while conducting a study with senior 4-H members in Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico found gender to explain 1.8% of variance in YLLSDS scores when controlling for self-esteem, years in 4-H, age, ethnicity, and place of residence (Seevers & Dormody, 1995). While conducting a study with Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico FFA members, Dormody and Seevers (1994) found that gender explained 0.9 percent of variance in relation to Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) scores with female FFA members scoring higher than male members. The researchers concluded that gender, along with other demographic variables, was not related to leadership life skills development.

Ricketts (2003) studied the critical thinking skills of youth leaders in the FFA. While no significant relationship was found, females scored somewhat higher on the critical thinking sub-skills analysis and inference. Gamon and Dehegedus-Hetzel (1994) conducted two studies researching skill development as a result of participation in the swine project. Females in the study scored their gain of life skills higher than their gain of swine subject-matter. Contrastingly, males participating in the same study rated the acquisition of swine subject-matter higher than acquisition of life skills.

### **Involvement in 4-H**

The 4-H organization has been a popular group in which researchers have found evidence for leadership life skill development. Boyd, et al. (1992) found that participation in the 4-H program was positively correlated to perceived leadership life skill development of Texas 4-H members. In addition, they found that 4-H youth rated their leadership life skills development higher than youth who were non-members. In their 1993 study, Dormody and Seevers found that leadership activities participated in by senior 4-H members proved to be an important predictor of youth leadership life skills development.

### **Involvement in FFA**

The National FFA Organization is recognized as developing youth leadership skills by a number of research studies (Ricketts & Newcomb, 1982; Townsend & Carter, 1983; Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997). In particular, Ricketts and Newcomb (as cited in Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997) found that “vocational agriculture students/FFA members from both superior and non-superior chapters possessed significantly more leadership and personal development abilities than non-vocational agriculture students” (p. 19).

Dormody and Seevers (1994) found that participation in FFA leadership activities displayed a weak positive relationship with youth leadership life skill development, which explained a 2.3 percent variance in YLLSDS scores.

### **Influence of Individuals**

Gamon and Hetzel (1994) studied swine project skill development and found that parents received the highest scores when rating the sources of information used in their swine project. The researchers also stated that parents played a highly influential role in the youth’s decision to be involved in the swine project (Gamon & Hetzel, 1994).

## **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to review literature and research studies in relation to youth leadership life skills development, experiential learning, and leadership life skills development and its relationship to livestock exhibition variables and demographic variables. The review also provided the theoretical background of this study and provided a conceptual framework that guided the study of youth leadership and life skills.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter discusses the methods that were used in addressing the research questions. Particularly, this chapter reviews the study population and sample selection, description and measurement of variables, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development level of beef project exhibitors. The secondary rationale for conducting this study was to determine livestock exhibition variables that influence self-perceived youth leadership and life skill development. Furthermore, the researcher sought to determine demographic variables that impact youth leadership life skills while describing the demographic variables of National Junior Angus Association members.

#### **Population and Sample**

The data from this survey (Appendix A) were obtained from National Junior Angus Association members, ages 18-21. To obtain a representative sample of National Junior Angus Association members, the subsequent procedures were followed:

1. The entire population of 4,228 NJAA Members ages 18-21 was obtained from the American Angus Association database.
2. A sample size of 374 was needed for a precision of  $\pm 4.84\%$  in order to represent the population. A simple-random sample was taken from the accessible population of NJAA members ( $N = 374$ ) using the random sample generator function of SPSS.

## **Description and Measurement of Variables**

This study was chiefly concerned with the self-perceived youth leadership and life skill development level of beef project exhibitors. This study also sought to:

- Describe National Junior Angus Association members by their age, gender, FFA participation, 4-H participation, and influence of significant individuals on members' decision to participate in the beef project.
- Describe the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members as a result of involvement in the beef project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and the livestock exhibition variables; additional species shown, shows per year, years of involvement, and time spent working with project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and their age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation.

The independent variables in this study were gender, age, FFA participation, 4-H participation, additional species shown, shows attended per year, years of project involvement, time spent working with project, and level of influence specific individuals had on youth's decision to exhibit a beef project. The independent variables were generated from an extensive literature review which identified a conceptual model of YLLSD associated with exhibiting livestock (Figure 2-2).

The dependent variable represented in this study was total self-perceived youth leadership life skill development (YLLSD) level. The study was conducting using correlation and causal-comparative research methods.

### **Context of the Study**

#### **Time**

The pre-post card mailing was conducted on May 17, 2006. Twenty-three days later the first survey packet was sent out containing Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) (Dormody, SeEVERS, Clason, 1993) survey, demographic survey, consent forms, and a stamped addressed return envelope. Approximately three weeks later a reminder post-card was sent out from the University of Georgia. On October 2, 2006 a second survey packet was mailed. The final data collection was accomplished November 3, 2006. The complete duration of the study lasted from May 10, 2006 to December, 2006.

#### **American Angus Association/National Junior Angus Association**

This study was conducted with the authorization and support of the American Angus Association. This study was conducted with members of the National Junior Angus Association. Implications and conclusions from this study could benefit both the National Junior Angus Association as well as young people around the nation. Leadership development is a primary focus of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). The Junior Activities Department of the American Angus Association (AAA) began in 1956 in an effort to encourage young people's involvement and increase proficiency with Angus steer and heifer calf projects. Today the Junior Activities Department of the AAA has enlarged its' purposes by helping junior members develop character, skills, and leadership potential through the offering of a variety of activities, services,

and projects for members to participate in. The leadership nature of the NJAA and its large population size were primary reasons for targeting the Association for this study.

### **Research Design**

This study was conducted using descriptive research and a correlational and causal comparative or *ex post facto* design. The independent variables in this study were gender, age, FFA participation, 4-H participation, species shown, shows attended per year, years of project involvement, time spent working with project, and level of influence specific individuals had on youth's decision to exhibit a beef project. The dependent variable represented in this study was total youth leadership life skill development level. The total youth leadership life skills development level was determined by participants scores obtained on the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) (Dormody, Seevers, & Clason, 1993). YLLSDS scores were totaled by determining the percentage correct out of a possible score of 90.

### **Research Questions**

This research study reported the demographic variables of National Junior Angus Association members involved in the beef project; the self-perceived youth leadership life skill development level of beef project exhibitors; the relationship between self-perceived youth leadership life skills development level of National Junior Angus Association members and livestock exhibition variables; and the relationship between self-perceived youth leadership life skills development level of NJAA members and their age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation by answering the following research questions:

- "What are the self-perceived youth leadership and life skills of National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members who are 18-21 years of age?"



- "What demographic variables and livestock exhibition variables are related to youth leadership life skills development?"

### **Instrumentation**

This research documented the self-perceived youth leadership and life skill development of beef project exhibitors; the relationships between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development and livestock exhibition variables; and the relationships between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development and selected demographic variables (gender age, FFA participation, 4-H participation). The research also described NJAA members by their age, gender, FFA participation, 4-H participation, and influence of significant individuals on members' decision to participate in the beef project.

Two separate tools were used in the instrumentation of this study. The first instrument was used to measure the Youth Leadership Life Skill Development level of beef cattle project exhibitors. The instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire developed by previous researchers referred to as the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) (Dormody, et al., 1993). The second tool used in the study was a researcher-developed demographic survey which consisted of questions pertaining to livestock exhibitor variables (species, shows per year, years of involvement, level of competition, time spent working with project/week, and influence of specific individuals on youth's decision to exhibit a beef project) and further leadership involvement and personal characteristics (gender, age, FFA participation, 4-H participation). Enclosed with the two questionnaires was a cover-letter (Appendix B) to explain the purpose of the study and a self-addressed stamped envelope.

### **Youth Leadership Life Skills Instrument**

The Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) developed by Dormody, SeEVERS and Clason (1993) was utilized to collect data regarding the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of beef project exhibitors. The instrument listed 30 specific leadership life skills and used a four-point summated rating scale, which some refer to as a Likert-type scale, to measure the amount of leadership skill improvement gained as a result of their beef project experiences. According to the authors, the YLLSDS was assessed for face and content validity by University of New Mexico faculty representing a broad spectrum of professional backgrounds. In addition, the assessment tool was field tested on 262 New Mexico senior FFA members using a stratified random sample. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient generated from the field test was .98.

### **Demographic Instrument**

Other variables documented in the study; related livestock exhibition variables (additional species, shows per year, years of involvement, time spent working with project) and demographic variables (age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation) were documented using an instrument developed by the researcher. Leadership and demographic data were collected coincidentally. The demographic instrument asked study participants to list their age, gender, years of involvement in the beef project, additional species shown, shows per year, level of competition, time spent working with the beef project, and level of influence of specific individuals on their decision to exhibit the beef project. Because the demographic instrument mostly analyzed personal attributes, which is known to produce "very little measurement error" (Salant & Dillman, 1984, p. 87), reliability was not established for the demographic questionnaire.

## **Data Collection**

Data collection procedures consisted of a modified version of Dillman's (2000) method of contacts. A sample size of  $N = 374$  individuals was randomly selected, using the SPSS random sample generator, from a population of 4,228 National Junior Angus Association members who ranged in age from 18 to 21. The participants were first informed of their invitation to take part in the research study by a mailed pre-postcard, which explained the purpose of the study and informed them that they would be receiving a survey packet later in the mail. Two weeks later individuals in the sample were each mailed a preaddressed stamped research packet which included a cover letter explaining the research, the 30-item Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale questionnaire composed, and a 9 question demographical questionnaire, and a return preaddressed and stamped envelope. Potential respondents were invited to complete and return the survey in the preaddressed and stamped envelope provided in the survey packet and return it to the Department of Agriculture Leadership, Education, and Communication at the University of Georgia. There were 102 respondents from the sample of 344 possible participants resulting in a response rate of approximately 30% (29.6%). Due to specific regulations given by the organization from which the population sample was obtained, neither email addresses nor phone numbers were obtainable. Therefore, follow-up contacts were restricted to reminders and additional surveys through the mail.

## **Data Analysis**

Data were collected by distributing questionnaires via the U.S. postal service and returned by the same means. Returned surveys were coded and entered into an Excel spreadsheet document and then transferred into SPSS® for Windows™ statistical package for analysis.

A response rate of approximately 30 percent was recorded for the initial survey mailing. According to Miller and Smith (1983), one can control for non-response by comparing late respondents to early respondents to determine if they are similar. Late respondents ( $n = 26$ ) were analyzed and compared to early respondents ( $n = 76$ ) who had completed and returned surveys. Specific variables of the study were analyzed using Independent sample t-tests and reported no differences between early and late-respondents ( $t = .440, p > .05$ ).

Descriptive statistics were used to report demographical information of survey respondents. Means and standard deviations of youth leadership life skills development (YLLSD) scores were reported. Independent t-tests and one-way analysis of variance procedures were used to identify differences in youth leadership life skills development scores as a function of age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation. Pearson's product moment ( $r$ ) statistics were conducted to recognize the degree of the correlation of youth leadership life skills development to various independent variables present in the study.  $R^2$ , omega-squared ( $\omega^2$ ) and Cohen's  $d$  statistics were utilized as an index of the amount of variance in youth leadership life skills explicated by independent variables.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter explained the methods and procedures conducted in this quantitative study regarding self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members who have participated in the beef project. The study was conducted using correlational and causal-comparative research methods. In addition, the context of the study was reported. Research questions were outlined and instrumentation procedures were reported in a discussion of specific instruments used in the study. Furthermore, data collection and analysis were described. Mailed survey instruments were used to collect data from a sample of  $n = 376$

National Junior Angus Association members resulting in a response rate of approximately 30 percent. In conclusion, descriptive statistics and data analysis procedures (means, standard deviations, independent sample t-tests, analysis of variance, Pearson's product moment,  $R^2$ , omega-squared ( $\omega^2$ ) and Cohen's  $d$ ) were discussed in this chapter. The findings of this descriptive study will be reported in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Chapter 1 described the background, significance, and purpose for studying the youth leadership life skill development of beef project participants. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of youth, and to determine if there is a relationship between YLLSD and participation in the beef project.

Specifically the researcher sought to

- Describe National Junior Angus Association members by their age, gender, FFA participation, 4-H participation, and influence of significant individuals on members' decision to participate in the beef project.
- Describe the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members as a result of involvement in the beef project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and the livestock exhibition variables; additional species shown, shows per year, years of involvement, and time spent working with project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and their age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation.

Chapter 2 illustrated the conceptual and theoretical frameworks and experiential research significant to this study. Literature related to experiential learning, leadership life skill

development and livestock exhibition were discussed in this chapter. In addition, literature discussing the relationships between youth leadership life skill development and various livestock exhibition variables and exhibitor demographic variables were address in chapter 2.

Chapter 3 discussed the methods used in addressing the research questions encompassed in the study. Specifically, a review of the study population, sample selection, description and measurement of variables, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis was addressed. The independent variables in this study were gender, age, FFA participation, 4-H participation, species shown, shows attended per year, years of project involvement, time spent working with project, and level of influence specific individuals had on youth's decision to exhibit a beef project. The dependent variable in this study was total youth leadership life skill development level. The study was conducted using correlational and causal-comparative research methods.

Chapter 4 contains the findings related to the specific objectives of the study. The findings are organized into four sections. The first section describes study participants using specific demographical information. The second section reports total youth leadership life skill development scores of study participants. Furthermore, the third and fourth sections report relationships between youth leadership life skills development level and livestock exhibition variables, age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation.

**Objective One: Describe National Junior Angus Association members by their age, gender, FFA participation, 4-H participation, and influence of significant individuals on members' decision to participate in the beef project.**

### **Age**

NJAA members' reported age ranged from 18-21,  $M = 18.98$ ,  $SD = .88$  (Table 4-1). Of the 101 respondents, 37 (36.6%) were 18 years old, 32 (31.7%) were 19 years old, 29 (28.7%)

were 20 years old, and 3 (3%) were 21 years old. The 18 year-old group was represented as the highest percentage age group (36.6%) (Table 4-2).

Table 4-1

Mean Age and Standard Deviations of NJAA Members ( $n = 101$ )

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	Range
Age	18.98	.88	101	18-21

Table 4-2

Individual Age Group Frequencies and Percentages ( $n = 101$ )

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18	37	36.6
19	32	31.7
20	29	28.7
21	3	3
Total	101	100

## Gender

The majority of participants in this study were male ( $n = 57$ ) 56.4%. Females ( $n = 44$ ) made up 43.6% of the sample. (Table 4-3).



Table 4-3

Gender ( $n = 101$ )

---

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	57	56.4
Female	44	43.6
Total	101	100.0

---

**Years in FFA**

Respondents ( $n = 101$ ) reported a range of zero to seven years of participation in FFA with an average of  $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 2.22$  (Table 4-4). The highest frequency ( $f = 32$ ) of FFA participation reported by respondents was 4 years at 31.7%. The second highest frequency ( $n = 27$ ) FFA participation was that of non-participants at 26.5%. 16 respondents (15.8%) reported 5 years of FFA participation (Table 4-5).

Table 4-4

Total mean for years in FFA ( $n = 101$ )

---

Variable	$M$	$SD$	Range
Years in FFA	3.20	2.23	0-7

---

Table 4-5

Frequencies and Percentages for Years in FFA ( $n = 101$ )

---

Years in FFA	$f$	%
1	1	1.0
2	5	5.0
3	7	6.9
4	32	31.7
5	16	15.8
6	8	7.9
7	5	5.0
Total	101	100.0

---

**Years in 4-H**

Years in 4-H reported by respondents ( $n = 101$ ) ranged from zero to sixteen years with an average of  $M = 8.52$ ,  $SD = 3.42$  (Table 4-6). Almost 29 percent of respondents ( $n = 29$ ) reported 10 years in 4-H while 14.9% ( $n = 15$ ) reported 9 years in 4-H. Seven respondents reported zero years in 4-H (Table 4-7).

Table 4-6

Total Mean and Standard Deviation for years in 4-H ( $n = 101$ )

<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
8.53	3.42

Table 4-7

Frequencies and Percentages for Years in 4-H ( $n = 101$ )

Years in 4-H	<i>f</i>	%
0	7	6.9
1	1	1.0
2	1	1.0
3	2	2.0
4	3	3.0
5	3	3.0
6	5	5.0
7	4	4.0
8	6	5.9
9	15	14.9
10	29	28.7
11	14	13.9
12	6	5.9
13	4	4.0

16	1	1.0
Total	101	100.0

---

### **Influence of Significant Individuals on Youth’s Decision to Exhibit a Beef Project**

On a scale of 1-5, 1 = Not Influential At All and 5 = Essential, respondents reported parents as being the most influential on their decision to exhibit a beef project with an average of  $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = .87$  (Table 4-8). Of the 101 respondents, 62 (61.4%) recorded parents as an “Essential” influence on their decision to exhibit a beef project. The influence of siblings was reported as “Moderately Influential” with an average  $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 1.56$  ( $n = 98$ ).

Table 4-8

**Influence of Significant Individuals on Youths’ Decision to Exhibit a Beef Project**

---

Individual	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Parents	101	4.41	.874
4-H Agent	101	2.40	1.28
Agriculture Teacher	97	2.71	1.40
Friends	99	2.61	1.27
Siblings	98	3.02	1.56
Other	96	1.65	1.73

---

*Note.* Summated rating scale ranged from 1-5 with 1 = Not Influential At All and 5 = Essential

**Objective Two: Describe the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members as a result of involvement in the beef project.**

The composite mean Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) score was  $M = 73.02$ ,  $SD = 13.77$  (Table 4-9). Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale scores ranged from a low score of 40 to a maximum score of 90.

Table 4-9

Mean and Total Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale (YLLSDS) scores ( $n = 99$ )

	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) Scores	40.00	90.00	73.02	13.77

Individual survey items were analyzed revealing the top three grand item means: “show a responsible attitude” ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = .51$ ); “can set goals” ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = .63$ ); “can set priorities” ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = .61$ ) where 0 = *No Gain*, 1 = *Slight Gain*, 2 = *Moderate Gain*, and 3 = *A Lot of Gain*. The survey statements receiving the lowest grand item means were: “trust other people” ( $M = 2.07$ ,  $SD = .99$ ), “can express feelings” ( $M = 2.11$ ,  $SD = .86$ ), “am sensitive to others” ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SD = .83$ ) (Table 4-10). All individual survey items reported an average  $M = 2.07$  or higher.

Table 4-10

Ratings of Individual Life Skills items ( $n = 102$ )

Life Skills	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Show a responsible attitude	102	2.71	.51
Can set goals	102	2.64	.63
Can set priorities	102	2.60	.61
Can handle mistakes	102	2.56	.65
Can be flexible	102	2.55	.57
Can solve problems	102	2.55	.62
Can delegate responsibility	102	2.54	.73
Get along with others	102	2.54	.68
Have a positive concept	102	2.52	.62
Have good manners	102	2.52	.74
Can be tactful	102	2.50	.60
Respect others	102	2.50	.70
Have friendly personality	102	2.50	.74
Use rational thinking	102	2.47	.71
Can listen effectively	102	2.42	.70
Recognize the worth of others	102	2.41	.65
Can clarify my values	102	2.40	.72
Can use info to solve problems	102	2.39	.71
Can determine needs	101	2.38	.68
Consider input from all group members	102	2.37	.73
Can be honest with others	102	2.35	.86
Can consider alternatives	102	2.32	.73
Can select alternatives	102	2.32	.70
Consider the needs of others	102	2.30	.76
Created an atmosphere of acceptance	102	2.29	.75
Am open to change	102	2.19	.77
Am open minded	102	2.16	.80
Am sensitive to others	102	2.13	.83
Can express feelings	100	2.11	.86
Trust other people	102	2.07	.99

*Note.* Summated rating scale ranged from 0-3. No Gain = 0, Slight Gain = 1, Moderate Gain = 2,

A Lot of Gain = 3

**Objective 3: Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and the livestock exhibition variables; additional species, shows per year, years of involvement, and time spent working with project.**

**Youth Leadership Life Skills Development and the Relationship to Years of Involvement**

The overall mean score for years of involvement in the beef project was  $M = 8.31$  ( $SD = 3.11$ ) with a range of 1-14 years (Table 4-11). A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, according to Miller (1998), of 0.01-0.09 represents a negligible relationship; 0.10-0.29 represents a low relationship; and 0.30-.0.49 represents a moderate relationship. Years of involvement in the beef project shows a positive, but low relationship with total Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale score. Table 4-12 reveals a Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of .208 for years of involvement in the beef project and total youth leadership life skills development scale scores.

Table 4-11

Means and Standard Deviations of the Years of Involvement in Beef Project ( $n = 100$ )

Variable	$n$	$M$	$SD$
Years Exhibiting Beef	100	8.31	3.11

Table 4-12

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients between Years of Involvement in Beef Project and Total Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale scores ( $n = 97$ )

---

	<i>r</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
YLLSDS Total	.208(*)	.041

---

\*Significant at the .05 level.

**Youth Leadership Life Skills Development and the Relationship to Hours per Week Spent Working with Beef Project**

The variable “Hours per week spent working with beef project” was coded using the following categories: 1 = 1-4 hours, 2 = 5-8 hours, 3 = 9-12 hours, 4 = 13-16 hours, 5 = 17-20 hours, and 6 = more than 20 hours per week. 48 (47.5%) respondents reported working with their beef project either 5-8 hours or 9-12 hours per week (Table 4-13). The Pearson product correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) between Hours per Week spent working with the beef project and Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale scores was .309 at the .01 level revealing a positive moderate relationship (Table 4-14).



Table 4-13

Frequencies and Percentages of Hours per week spent working with beef project ( $n = 101$ )

---

Hours per Week	<i>f</i>	%
1-4	13	12.9
5-8	20	19.8
9-12	28	27.7
13-16	17	16.8
17-20	15	14.9
more than 20 hours per week	8	7.9
Total	101	100.0

---

Table 4-14

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients Between Hours per Week spent with Beef Project and Total Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale scores ( $n = 98$ )

---

	<i>r</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
YLLSDS Total	.309(**)	.002

---

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

## Youth Leadership Life Skills Development and the Relationship to Shows Attended per Year

The variable “Shows Attended per Year” was coded using the following categories: 1 = 1-4 shows; 2 = 5-8 shows; 3 = 9-12 shows; 4 = 13-16 shows; and 5 = more than 20 shows. 48 (47.5%) respondents reported attending 1-4 shows per year while 26 (25.7%) respondents reported attending 5-8 shows per year (Table 4-15). Table 4-16 reveals that there was a positive, moderate relationship between shows per year and total YLLSDS score.

Table 4-15.

Frequencies and Percentages of Shows attended per Year ( $n = 101$ )

---

Shows per Year	<i>f</i>	%
1-4	48	47.5
5-8	26	25.7
9-12	14	13.9
13-16	10	9.9
more than 20	3	3.0
Total	101	100.0

---

Table 4-16.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients between Shows per Year and Total Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale scores ( $n = 98$ )

	<i>r</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
YLLSDS Total	.376(**)	.000

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

### Youth Leadership Life Skills Development and the Relationship to Additional Livestock Species Shown

53.4 percent of study participants indicated that they exhibited swine; 39.6 percent indicated exhibiting sheep; 31.6 percent indicated exhibiting horses; 21.7 percent indicated exhibiting goats; and 19.8 percent indicated exhibiting dairy (Table 4-17). Additional livestock species shown was not related to youth leadership life skills development in this study.

Table 4-17

Percentage of Participants Who Have Exhibited Additional Livestock Species

Species Shown	%
Swine	53.4
Sheep	39.6
Horse	31.6
Goat	21.7
Dairy	19.8

**Objective Four: Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Members and their age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation.**

**Youth Leadership Life Skills Development and the Relationship to Gender**

There were more males ( $n = 57$ ), who participated in this study than females ( $n = 44$ ). The Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale composite mean score for males was  $M = 69.32$ ,  $SD = 14.24$  and  $M = 77.84$ ,  $SD = 11.75$  for females (Table 4-18). Overall, females scored higher than males on the YLLSDS in this study. The Pearson product correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) between gender and Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale scores was .371 at the .01 level revealing a positive and moderate relationship. A  $t$ -test measuring the association of gender and youth leadership life skill development revealed a statistical difference between males and females for total Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale score,  $t(98) = -3.154$ ,  $p > .05$ .

Table 4-18

Means and Independent Samples t-test for Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale Score by Gender ( $n = 98$ )

Gender	<i>f</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
male	56	69.32	14.24	-3.15	96	.002
female	42	77.85	11.76			

## Youth Leadership Life Skills Development and the Relationship to Age

The average age of the participants in this study was  $M = 18.98$ ,  $SD = .88$ . The ages of the participants ranged from 18-21. According to Table 4-19, eighteen year-old participants' ( $M = 73.18$ ,  $SD = 13.23$ ) youth leadership life skills development scale scores ranges from 50 to 90 out of 90. Nineteen ( $M = 76.41$ ,  $SD = 11.14$ ), 20 ( $M = 68.82$ ,  $SD = 16.78$ ), 21 ( $M = 73.66$ ,  $SD = 11.01$ ) had scores ranging from 45 to 90, 41 to 90, and 61 to 81.

As revealed in Table 4-19, 19-year-old participants ( $M = 76.41$ ,  $SD = 11.14$ ) scored the highest, and the 20-year-old participants ( $M = 68.82$ ,  $SD = 16.78$ ) scored the lower than any of the other age groups.

One-way analysis of variance procedures revealed that youth leadership life skills development scale score is not dependent on age (Table 4-20). As Table 4-19 indicated, the 19-year-old participants scored higher than any of the other age groups, and the 20-year-old participants scored lower than any of the other age groups, but these findings were not significant.

Table 4-19

Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale Score by Age ( $n = 98$ )

---

Age	<i>f</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
18	36	73.18	13.23
19	31	76.41	11.14

20	28	68.82	16.78
21	3	73.66	11.01
YLLSDS Total	98	72.97	13.83

Table 4-20

One-way ANOVA of Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Differences by Age ( $n = 98$ )

Group	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Between Groups (Combined)	853.78	3	284.59	1.51	.217
Within Groups	17713.39	94	188.44		
Total	18567.18	97			

**Youth Leadership Life Skills Development and the Relationship to FFA Participation**

Years of participation in FFA ranged from 0-7, with an average  $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 2.22$ .

Table 4-21 shows YLLSDS scores for years in FFA. The relationship between years of participation in FFA and youth leadership life skills development was statistically insignificant (Table 4-22).

Table 4-21

Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale Score by Years in FFA ( $n = 98$ )

---

Years in FFA	<i>f</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
0	26	71.32	12.37
2	5	76.40	12.52
3	7	69.71	12.61
4	31	74.80	14.66
5	16	75.75	14.82
6	8	69.12	15.94
7	5	68.60	15.66
Total	98	72.97	13.83

---

Table 4-22

## One-way ANOVA of Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Differences by FFA

Participation ( $n = 98$ )

---

Group		Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Between Groups	(Combined)	645.17	6	107.52	.546	.772
Within Groups		17922.01	91	196.94		
Total		18567.18	97			

---

## Youth Leadership Life Skills Development and the Relationship to 4-H Participation

Years of participation in 4-H ranged from 0-16, with an average  $M = 8.52$ ,  $SD = 3.42$ .

Table 4-23 shows YLLSDS scores for years in 4-H, in an effort to summarize the data. The relationship between years of participation in 4-H and youth leadership life skills development was statistically insignificant (Table 4-24).

Table 4-23

Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale score by years in 4-H ( $n = 98$ )

---

Years in 4-H	<i>f</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
0	7	67.28	16.25
1	1	59.00	.
2	1	81.00	.
3	2	74.00	12.72
4	3	87.33	2.30
5	3	67.00	7.54
6	5	76.00	17.07
7	4	77.25	11.47
8	6	76.00	19.50
9	14	70.42	12.40
10	27	71.03	14.29
11	14	76.46	9.52
12	6	67.83	18.90
13	4	80.50	15.84



16	1	81.00	.
Total	98	72.97	13.83

---

Table 4-24

One-way ANOVA of Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Differences by 4-H

Participation ( $n = 98$ )

---

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Between Groups (Combined)	2199.88	14	157.13	.797	.670
Within Groups	16367.30	83	197.19		
Total	18567.18	97			

---

### Summary

This chapter was structured using four specific research objectives as presented in chapter one. Exclusively, this chapter reported the findings of the following objectives: describe National Junior Angus Association members by their age, gender, FFA participation, 4-H participation, and influence of significant individuals on members' decision to participate in the beef project; determine the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development impact on National Junior Angus Association members as a result of involvement in the beef project; determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and the livestock exhibition variables; additional species,

shows per year, years of involvement, time spent working with project; and determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and their age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation. Chapter 5 will present a more detailed discussion of the results. Chapter 5 will also make conclusions, implications, and recommendations from the results from the study.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the self-perceived youth leadership life skill development level of individuals as a result of participation in the beef project. This study specifically sought to

- Describe National Junior Angus Association members by their age, gender, FFA participation, 4-H participation, and influence of significant individuals on members' decision to participate in the beef project.
- Describe the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members as a result of involvement in the beef project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and the livestock exhibition variables; additional species shown, shows per year, years of involvement, and time spent working with project.
- Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and their age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation.

Chapter 1 described the background, significance, and purpose for studying the youth leadership life skill development of beef project participants. Chapter 2 illustrated the conceptual and theoretical frameworks and experiential research significant to this study. Literature related to experiential learning, leadership life skill development, and livestock exhibition were

discussed in this chapter. Chapter 3 discussed the methods that were used in addressing the research questions encompassed in the study. Specifically, a review of the study population, sample selection, description and measurement of variables, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis was addressed. Chapter 4 reported the results related to the specific objectives of the study. In an effort to aid the reader in greater clarity and understanding of this study, this final and fifth chapter of the thesis restates the research problem and main research methods that were incorporated. In addition, a major portion of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of the results and implications of the study.

### **Research Problem**

Hammatt (as cited in Rusk and Machtmes, 2003) says, "one purpose of the 4-H animal projects is to teach young people how to feed, fit and show their animals. The more important purpose is to provide an opportunity for personal growth and development of the young person" (¶ 1). But does involvement in youth livestock projects, specifically beef projects, really enhance and contribute to leadership and life skills development? In addition, does leadership and life skill development really make a significant difference in an individuals' ability to function in society? Why do parents, young people, and agriculture education professionals spend great amounts of time, money, and resources investing in youth livestock projects? Although several studies have been conducted regarding youth leadership and life skill development in youth organizations (Seevers & Dormody, 1995; Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997; Rusk, Martin, Talbert, & Balshweid, 2002; Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992), very little research has been carried out dealing specifically with youth livestock project exhibition and even fewer had beef projects as a primary focus. To properly answer the above questions there appeared to be a need for a study

that would validate the exhibition of beef projects as a means of youth leadership life skills development.

Researchers have concluded that the development of leadership and life skills in youth is greatly important to ensuring the preparation of the future leaders. Fox, Schroeder, and Lodl (2003) said that one of the most imperative issues facing the 4-H organization and other youth organizations is how they can best influence youth to become productive and useful members of society. It has been estimated that 25% of the United States youth participate in high-risk activities which include heavy alcohol consumption, drug use, tobacco use, and fail to attend school or perform poorly at school (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992). Boyd, Herring, and Briers (1992) said that the high percentage of delinquent youth indicates a lack of leadership and life skills such as working with others, communication, and other skills needed for adulthood.

Some researchers contest that enrollment in programs like 4-H, which is a main avenue for youth livestock projects involvement, and others which are founded upon experiential learning are needed for youth to acquire life and leadership skills (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992). Another primary organization that enables young people to exhibit livestock, the National FFA Organization, continues to boast the development of agricultural leadership skills as one of its chief aspirations since its establishment in 1928 (Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997). If the primary aim of organizations like 4-H and FFA, who offer beef project exhibition programs, is youth leadership and life skill development then there seemed to be a need for a study that would explain the youth leadership life skill development impact of individuals involved in the exhibition of beef projects.

### **Review of Methods**

This study was conducted using descriptive research and a correlational and causal comparative or *ex post facto* design. The research was quantitative in nature and primarily sought to measure and explain the youth leadership life skills development impact on National Junior

Angus Association members as a result of involvement in the beef project. The independent variables in this study were gender, age, FFA participation, 4-H participation, species shown, shows attended per year, years of project involvement, time spent working with project, and level of influence specific individuals had on youth's decision to exhibit a beef project. The dependent variable represented in this study was total self-perceived youth leadership life skill development level. A sample of size of  $N = 376$  individuals was randomly selected from a population of 4,229 National Junior Angus Association members who ranged in age from 18 to 21. The total self-perceived youth leadership life skills development level was determined by participants' ( $n = 102$ ) scores obtained on the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS). Data were collected through mailed surveys for both early and late responders. Descriptive statistics were used to report demographical information. Data were analyzed for interpretation using Pearson's product moment, Independent samples t-tests, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

## **Summary of Results**

### **Objective One**

Objective one sought to describe National Junior Angus Association members by their age, gender, FFA participation, 4-H participation, and influence of significant individuals on members' decision to participate in the beef project. National Junior Angus Association members' ( $N = 101$ ) reported age ranged from 18-21  $M = 18.98$ ,  $SD = .88$ . Eighteen-year-old NJAA members were represented as the highest percentage age group (36.6%). The gender of participants in the study was represented by a higher male population ( $n = 57$ ) than female population ( $n = 44$ ). Respondents ( $n = 101$ ) reported a range of zero to seven years of participation in FFA with an average of  $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 2.22$ . The highest frequency ( $n = 32$ ) of

FFA participation reported by respondents was 4 years at 31.7%. The second highest frequency ( $n = 27$ ) of the variable “FFA participation” was that of those who reported they were not involved in the FFA (26.5%). Years in 4-H reported by respondents ( $n = 101$ ) ranged from zero to sixteen years with an average of  $M = 8.52$ ,  $SD = 3.42$ . Almost 29 percent of respondents ( $n = 29$ ) reported 10 years in 4-H while 14.9% ( $n = 15$ ) reported 9 years in 4-H. 7 respondents reported zero years in 4-H. Respondents reported parents as being the most influential on their decision to exhibit a beef project with an average of  $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = .87$ . Of the 101 respondents, 62 (61.4%) recorded parents as an “Essential” influence on their decision to exhibit a beef project. The influence of siblings was reported as “Moderately Influential” with an average of  $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 1.56$  ( $n = 98$ ).

## **Objective Two**

Objective two sought to determine the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development impact on National Junior Angus Association members as a result of involvement in the beef project. As a group, NJAA members who participated in the study scored in the upper range of the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS), which measured leadership life skills development. All scores were above 70 for the possible range of 0 to 90. The composite mean Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) score was  $M = 73.02$ ,  $SD = 13.77$ . The top three grand item means were reported as: “show a responsible attitude” ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = .51$ ); “can set goals” ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = .63$ ); “can set priorities” ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = .61$ ). Survey items receiving the lowest grand item means were: “trust other people” ( $M = 2.07$ ,  $SD = .99$ ), “can express feelings” ( $M = 2.11$ ,  $SD = .86$ ), “am sensitive to others” ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SD = .83$ ). Wingenbach & Kahler (1997) also found the YLLSDS item “show a

responsible attitude” to be one of the top three grand item mean scores in their study. All individual survey items reported an average  $M = 2.07$  or higher.

### **Objective Three**

Objective three sought to determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and the livestock exhibition variables; additional species, shows per year, years of involvement, time spent working with project. The overall mean score for years of involvement in the beef project was  $M = 8.31$  ( $SD = 3.11$ ) with a range of 1-14 years. Years of involvement in the beef project showed a positive but low relationship with total YLLSDS scores. Forty-eight (47.5%) respondents reported working with their beef project either 5-8 hours or 9-12 hours per week. Hours per week spent working with the beef project revealed a positive moderate relationship with total YLLSDS score. Forty-eight (47.5%) respondents reported attending 1-4 shows per year while 26 (25.7%) respondents reported attending 5-8 shows per year. There was a positive and moderate relationship between shows per year and total YLLSDS score. Almost 53 percent of study participants indicated that they exhibited swine; 39.2 percent indicated exhibiting sheep; 21.6 percent indicated exhibiting goats; 31.4 percent indicated exhibiting horses; and 17.6 percent indicated exhibiting dairy. Additional livestock species shown was not related to youth leadership life skills development in this study.

### **Objective Four**

Objective four sought to determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and their age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation. Females ( $n = 44$ ) scored higher on the YLLSDS than the male ( $n = 57$ ) participants in the study. There was a positive and moderate



relationship between gender and self-perceived Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale scores. The 19-year-old participants scored higher than any of the other age groups, and the 20-year-old participants scored lower than any of the other age groups, indicating that older age does not mean higher scores on the YLLSDS, but these findings were not significant. Average years in FFA were  $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 2.22$ , but the relationship between years of participation in FFA and youth leadership life skills development was statistically insignificant. Study participants indicated participating an average of  $M = 8.52$ ,  $SD = 3.42$  years in 4-H. Again, statistics revealed an insignificant relationship between years of participation in 4-H and youth leadership life skills development.

### **Conclusions**

Since this study selected National Junior Angus Association members, one should be careful to generalize the results of this study beyond NJAA membership. With this in mind, and based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made:

- Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale scores were high. This study revealed higher YLLSDS mean scores ( $M = 73.02$ ,  $SD = 13.77$ ) than two similar studies. Wingenbach and Kahler (1997) used the YLLSDS instrument to study the self-perceived youth leadership life skills of Iowa FFA members by which they reported an overall YLLSDS mean score of  $M = 62.65$ ,  $SD = 17.83$ . In comparison, a study by Dormody and Seevers (1994) reported YLLSDS scores having a mean of  $M = 64.2$ ,  $SD = 17.7$ .
- National Junior Angus Association members developed the leadership life skills of “show a responsible attitude”, “can set goals”, and “can set priorities” to greatest degree of all other skills listed on the instrument. It should be noted that all individual survey items reported an average  $M = 2.07$  or higher.

- NJAA members showed at least a “Moderate Gain” in youth leadership life skills development as a result of their beef project exhibition experience. According to Dormody, et al. (1993), YLLSDS values from 31-60 might be determined as moderate development and scores ranging from 61 to 90 as high development. All National Junior Angus Association member participants in the study scored 40 or higher on the YLLSDS survey.
- NJAA members reported parents as an “essential” influence and siblings as “moderately influential” on their decision to participate in the beef project.
- There was low, but positive relationship between years of exhibiting a beef project and youth leadership life skills development.
- There was a positive and moderate significant relationship between shows per year attended and youth leadership life skills development.
- There was a positive and moderate significant relationship between hours per week spent working with the beef project and youth leadership life skills development.
- There was a positive and moderate relationship between gender and youth leadership life skills development. In fact, females scored higher on YLLSDS than males.
- Increase in age did not render higher total YLLSDS scores.
- The relationship between years of participation in FFA and youth leadership life skills development was statistically insignificant.
- The relationship between years of participation in 4-H and youth leadership life skills development was statistically insignificant.

## Discussion and Implications

**Objective One: Describe National Junior Angus Association members by their age, gender, FFA participation, 4-H participation, and influence of significant individuals on members' decision to participate in the beef project.**

**Parents were considered by participants to be an “essential” influence on decision to exhibit a beef project**

Respondents reported parents as being the most influential on their decision to exhibit a beef project with an average of  $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = .87$ . Of the 101 respondents, 62 (61.4%) recorded parents as an “Essential” influence on their decision to exhibit a beef project. This finding was consistent with Gamon and Hetzel’s (1994) study who researched swine project skill development among Iowa 4-Hers. The researchers reported that parents played a highly influential role in the youth’s decision to be involved in the swine project. The researchers also found that parents received the highest scores when swine project exhibitors rated the sources of information used in their project.

Secondly, the influence of siblings was reported as “Moderately Influential” on exhibitors decision to participate in the beef project with an average of  $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ . The findings in this study regarding influential individuals perhaps may indicate the importance of family involvement in the beef livestock exhibition projects.

**Objective Two: Determine the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members as a result of involvement in the beef project.**

**YLLSDS scores were high**

All participants scored 40 and above ( $M = 73.02$ ,  $SD = 13.77$ ) for the possible range of 0-90 on the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS). In similar studies,

Wingenbach and Kahler (1997) reported an overall YLLSDS mean score of  $M = 62.65$ ,  $SD = 17.83$  for Iowa FFA members, while Dormody and Seevers (1994) reported YLLSDS scores of Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico FFA members having a mean of  $M = 64.2$ ,  $SD = 17.7$ . According to Dormody, et al. (1993), “scale values from 0 and 30 might be considered no to slight leadership life skills development, from 31 to 60 moderate development, and from 61 to 90 high development” (p. 2). NJAA members responses reported a YLLSDS mean value of  $M = 73.02$ , which is considered by the above researcher to reveal high leadership and life skills development. Total YLLSDS mean values for NJAA beef exhibitors were more than 8 points higher than participants in the other studies mentioned above. Although these findings alone cannot provide a foundational basis for youth leadership and experiential education, the high scores in leadership development may suggest that experiences in the beef project are playing a part in the youth leadership and life skills development that researchers (Brock, 1992; Fox, Schroeder, and Lodl, 2003; Boyd et al., 1992) find highly important.

The top three grand item means were reported as: “show a responsible attitude” ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = .51$ ); “can set goals” ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = .63$ ); “can set priorities” ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = .61$ ). The item “shows a responsible attitude” reveals that beef project exhibitors appear to gain greater responsibility through the exhibition of the beef project. This was consistent with the findings of Wingenbach and Kahler (1997) who found “show a responsible attitude” as one of the top three grand item mean scores in their study. In the Rusk, Machtimes, Talbert, and Balschweid (2003) study, forty-four percent of respondents indicated the use of the responsibility learned from raising livestock projects to complete homework and school projects punctually. Similarly, Boleman, Cummings, and Briers (2005) found “accepting responsibility” as the highest mean score value in their study of life skills gained from exhibiting livestock projects. In addition, a

study conducted by Ward (1996) analyzing the influence of the 4-H Animal Science program on the development of life skills, discovered “ability to accept responsibility” as the highest scored life skill. High mean scores on the YLLSDS item “can set goals” is consistent with Boleman, et al. (2005) who found “setting goals” as statistically significant at the .01 level.

**Objective 3: Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Association members and the livestock exhibition variables; additional species, shows per year, years of involvement, and time spent working with project.**

**There was low, but positive relationship between years of exhibiting a beef project and youth leadership life skills development**

The positive, low significant relationship found in this study is consistent with the findings of Boleman, et al. (2005) who found low, positive relationships for all life skills surveyed and years of exhibiting livestock. The significant relationships between years of involvement in the beef project and the development of youth leadership life skills could be a result of the degree of experiences attained during years of beef exhibition. This relationship also suggests that the longer youth participates in the beef project, the more life skills they are likely to develop (Boleman et al, 2005).

**There was a positive and moderate significant relationship between shows per year attended and youth leadership life skills development.**

Forty-eight (47.5%) respondents reported attending 1-4 shows per year while 26 (25.7%) respondents reported attending 5-8 shows per year. The positive and moderate relationship between shows attended per year and youth leadership life skills development could be the function of experiences youth exhibitors are exposed to when participating in livestock

shows. It may be that the more shows a youth attends, the more leadership and life skills are acquired. While there no studies found specific to the number of shows attended per year by an exhibitor and leadership development,

**There was a positive and moderate significant relationship between hours per week spent working with the beef project and youth leadership life skills development.**

Forty-eight (47.5%) respondents reported working with their beef project either 5-8 hours or 9-12 hours per week. The positive, moderate significant relationship could be attributed to greater appreciation and responsibility due to more time spent with the project. Although, the relationship could be credited to the possibility that responsible youth spend more time working with their beef project.

**Objective Four: Determine the relationship between the self-perceived youth leadership life skills development of National Junior Angus Members and their age, gender, FFA participation, and 4-H participation.**

**Females scored higher on the YLLSDS than males**

A *t*-test measuring the association of gender and youth leadership life skill development revealed a statistical difference between males and females for total Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale score. Females scored higher than males on the YLLSDS in the study. It seems that gender may be a variable in predicting youth leadership life skill development in beef project exhibitors. This is consistent with other studies (Ricketts, Osborne, & Rudd, 2004; Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997; Dormody & Seevers, 1994) who reported females as outperforming males in the leadership development.

### **Increase in age did not render higher total YLLSDS scores**

Nineteen-year-old participants ( $M = 76.41$ ,  $SD = 11.14$ ) scored the highest on the YLLSDS revealing the most gain of life skills when compared to the other age groups in this study. Eighteen and 21-year-old participants were above the total YLLSDS mean ( $M = 72.97$ ,  $SD = 13.83$ ) while 20-year-old participants ( $M = 68.82$ ,  $SD = 16.78$ ) scored the lowest of the age groups. Analysis of variance procedures revealed that age was not related to youth leadership life skill development. This is supported by other researchers who studied the effect of age on youth leadership life skills development (Dormody & Seevers, 1994). It is interesting to note that years of exhibiting beef, hours per week dedicated to the project, and even shows attended was related to leadership and life skill development, but age was not related. This seems to call on parents, educators, and volunteers seeking to develop youth to encourage students to start early and participate often as quantity and well as quality of experiences are important.

### **Years of participation in FFA is not related to youth leadership life skills development**

A statistically insignificant relationship was revealed between youth leadership life skills development and years in the FFA. These findings are consistent with a similar study conducted by Dormody and Seevers (1994). However, in a study conducted by Wingenbach and Kahler (1997), years of membership in the FFA showed a significant relationship ( $r = .31$ ). The insignificance could be attributed to the nature of the National Junior Angus Association population. NJAA members are allowed to begin exhibiting livestock at the age of 9 and may have already developed an increase of leadership life skills through the NJAA and other leadership organizations.

## **Years of participation in 4-H is not related to youth leadership life skills development**

Although the variable “years of participation” indicated a positive, but insignificant relationship with youth leadership life skills development, several studies (Fox, Schroeder, & Lodi, 2003; Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992) have shown participation in 4-H to have an impact on the development of youth leadership life skills. Further research ought to investigate why the population of NJAA members is different.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

- Since the youth leadership life skills development level of the select group of study participants was high, and the specific leadership life skills of “show a responsible attitude”, “can set goals”, and “can set priorities” were revealed as being developed, agricultural education and extension professionals heighten recruitment efforts to increase the level of participation in beef project.
- Findings from this study reported all YLLSDS items as increasing youth leadership life skills development at least moderately as a result of participation in the beef project. Thus, NJAA members are benefiting from exhibiting beef projects and these skills are enabling them to become both productive leaders and members of society. Beef breed organizations, county extension agents, and agriculture teachers should consider recruitment strategies and opportunities for growth in their present livestock program to enable more youth to benefit from youth leadership development as result of livestock exhibition.
- In this study, a positive, low relationship existed between years of exhibiting a beef project and youth leadership life skills development. Thus, agriculture educators,



extension professionals, and parents of livestock exhibitors perhaps should seek and encourage longevity among participants in the beef project to ensure greater leadership life skills development.

- Because of the relationship between shows per year attended and youth leadership life skills development, parents and agriculture educators ought to consider providing more opportunities during the show season for beef project exhibition.
- Parents and agriculture extension professional need to be aware of the possibility that the more hours per week spent working with a beef project, the greater chance of leadership life skills development is present. This awareness should encourage youth exhibitors to invest greater amounts of time in their livestock project.
- Females in this study scored higher on YLLSDS than males. From the findings of this study, it may be likely that female livestock exhibitors develop leadership life skills just as well or better than male livestock exhibitors. Livestock exhibition professionals, agriculture educators, and parents should be careful to avoid gender-bias when promoting livestock exhibition projects (Ricketts, 2003).
- FFA members may have developed leadership and life skills in other ways other than through the exhibition of livestock. Future research should determine why FFA participation was not necessarily related to YLLSD.
- 4-H members may have developed leadership and life skills in other ways other than through the exhibition of livestock. Future research should determine why 4-H participation was not necessarily related to YLLSD.

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APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE PACKET



**II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION-** Please place the most appropriate response in the blank.

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your gender?

\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_ Female

3. How many years have you exhibited a beef project? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many shows do you estimate you participated in each year while exhibiting a beef project? Please check only one.

- \_\_\_\_ 1 - 4 shows per year
- \_\_\_\_ 5 - 8 shows per year
- \_\_\_\_ 9 - 12 shows per year
- \_\_\_\_ 13 - 16 shows per year
- \_\_\_\_ 17 - 20 shows per year
- \_\_\_\_ More than 20 shows per year

5. How many hours did you spend working with your beef project(s) per week? Please check only one.

- \_\_\_\_ 1 - 4 hours per week
- \_\_\_\_ 5 - 8 hours per week
- \_\_\_\_ 9 - 12 hours per week
- \_\_\_\_ 13 - 16 hours per week
- \_\_\_\_ 17 - 20 hours per week
- \_\_\_\_ More than hours per week

6. How long have you been in FFA? \_\_\_\_\_

7. How long have you been in 4-H? \_\_\_\_\_

8. For each of the following individuals, rate the level of influence each individual has had on your decision to exhibit a beef project. Place an 'x' in the most appropriate box.

Individual	<u>Not Influential at all</u>	<u>Mildly Influential</u>	<u>Moderately Influential</u>	<u>Highly Influential</u>	<u>Essential</u>
Parents					
4-H Agent					
Agriculture Teacher					
Friends					
Siblings					
Other					

9. For each of the following, a) first place an 'x' by all species that you have exhibited and b) then rate the level of influence that you perceive each species has had on your development of life skills. Place an 'x' in the most appropriate box.

Livestock Project Species	<u>Not Influential at all</u>	<u>Mildly Influential</u>	<u>Moderately Influential</u>	<u>Highly Influential</u>	<u>Essential</u>
____ Beef					
____ Dairy					
____ Swine					
____ Sheep					
____ Goat					
____ Horse					

*Thanks so much for your time!!!! Please place this questionnaire in the enclosed envelope and mail.*

THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SCALE (Dormody, Seevers, Clason, 1993) was used in this study.

### YOUTH LEADERSHIP LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SCALE

What leadership skills have you improved because of your **BEEF PROJECT** involvement? Please answer each item by circling the number that you feel represents your gain for each skill. Please answer every question.

As a result of my **BEEF PROJECT** experiences I:

	No Gain	Slight Gain	Moderate Gain	A Lot of Gain	Only for Coding
	0	1	2	3	
1. Can determine needs	0	1	2	3	_____
2. Have a positive self-concept	0	1	2	3	_____
3. Can express feelings	0	1	2	3	_____
4. Can set goals	0	1	2	3	_____
5. Can be honest with others	0	1	2	3	_____
6. Can use information to solve problems	0	1	2	3	_____
7. Can delegate responsibility	0	1	2	3	_____
8. Can set priorities	0	1	2	3	_____
9. Am sensitive to others	0	1	2	3	_____
10. Am open-minded	0	1	2	3	_____
11. Consider the needs of others	0	1	2	3	_____
12. Show a responsible attitude	0	1	2	3	_____
13. Have a friendly personality	0	1	2	3	_____
14. Consider input from all group members	0	1	2	3	_____
15. Can listen effectively	0	1	2	3	_____
16. Can select alternatives	0	1	2	3	_____
17. Recognize the worth of others	0	1	2	3	_____
18. Created an atmosphere of acceptance	0	1	2	3	_____
19. Can consider alternatives	0	1	2	3	_____
20. Respect others	0	1	2	3	_____
21. Can solve problems	0	1	2	3	_____
22. Can handle mistakes	0	1	2	3	_____
23. Can be tactful	0	1	2	3	_____
24. Can be flexible	0	1	2	3	_____
25. Get along with others	0	1	2	3	_____
26. Can clarify my values	0	1	2	3	_____
27. Use rational thinking	0	1	2	3	_____
28. Am open to change	0	1	2	3	_____
29. Have good manners	0	1	2	3	_____
30. Trust other people	0	1	2	3	_____
				Grand Total	_____

APPENDIX B  
INSTRUCTIONAL/INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

**June 6, 2006**

**Dear Livestock Exhibitor,**

**You have been asked to participate in a research study about the development of your leadership skills. You are one of a population of over 4,200 individuals that have been chosen to participate. You were chosen because of your involvement in exhibiting beef cattle. Your name and address were obtained by permission from the American Angus Association.**

**The research project is entitled, “Leadership Impacts of Exhibiting Beef Cattle.” Through this project I am learning about how young people learn and develop life and leadership skills. The reason for this study is to examine the possible impacts of exhibiting livestock projects on life and leadership skill development.**

**Your participation will involve completing a 30-question survey and 9 demographical questions. It should only take you about 10 minutes to complete the questions. The findings from this project may provide information that will help students identify leadership skills that may have been developed due to their participation in exhibiting beef projects. Agriculture teachers and extension agents may also be able to use the results of this research to support beef and other livestock programs in their schools and counties. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.**

**Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop participation at any time. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. 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.**

**If you have any questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, please feel free to contact me, Brandon Walker, Graduate Assistant at (706)-338-7586; email address 2cor520@uga.edu or Dr. John C. Ricketts, Assistant Professor at (706)-542-8646. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 612 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.**

**By completing and returning this questionnaire in the envelope provided, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project.**

**Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.**

**Sincerely,**

**Brandon F. Walker**

APPENDIX C

INTRODUCTORY/ PRE-POSTCARD

**May 22, 2006**

**A few days from now you will receive in the mail a request to fill out a brief questionnaire for an important research project being conducted by the University of Georgia.**

**It concerns the impacts of exhibiting beef cattle on leadership and life skills.**

**I am writing in advance because we have found many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. The study is very important because it will (1) it will help us identify leadership skills in youth, such as yourselves, that may have been developed due to your participation in exhibiting beef projects and (2) enable agriculture teachers and extension agents to use the results of this research to support beef and other livestock programs in their state or local district.**

**Thank you for your time and consideration. It's only with the generous help of people like you that our research can be successful.**

**Sincerely,**

**Brandon F. Walker, [2cor520@uga.edu](mailto:2cor520@uga.edu)**

APPENDIX D

THANK YOU/ REMINDER POSTCARD

**June, 28, 2006**

**About three weeks ago you should have received a request to participate in a study trying to determine the leadership impacts of exhibiting beef cattle.**

**If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. Your input is important, and this information could go a long way towards developing the leadership and life skills of all students involved in exhibiting beef cattle.**

**If you did not receive a questionnaire, or if it was misplaced, please contact us at (706) 338-7586, or by email at [2cor520@uga.edu](mailto:2cor520@uga.edu).**

**Thank you for your anticipated cooperation in this project.**

**Brandon F. Walker  
University of Georgia  
Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication**