Developing Youth Leadership and its Importance in Youth Organizations

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Master of Education Degree in the
College of Education and Human Service Professions

By
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Committee Signatures:
Chair
Member
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Dedication

This research project is dedicated to all of the members and adult leaders of Nobles County 4-H in Nobles County, Minnesota. They have graciously given their time to help me work on my thesis and help by doing my research survey. They have been an inspiration through all of my 4-H work and are the reason I love my profession. To my fiance, Tim, for putting up with shorter weekends together, sometimes longer travel and long nights of phone calls while working on homework, for his understanding of the 4-H program and the time it demands, and also, to my family, for being supportive through my progress through the entire program, missing family events and to help my mom decide to begin her own master’s degree.
Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the University of Minnesota-Duluth, Cohort 14, for their support, help and guidance while we have been working on our research and program together. It has been a wonderful experience to work with each and every one of you.
Abstract

Developing youth leadership and its importance in youth organizations is a quantitative study that involves 47 Nobles County 4-H members and adult leaders, who actively participate in the 4-H program and other youth leadership organizations. It represents results of a study within a small outreach in Nobles County, which resides in Southwestern Minnesota. It was the researcher’s intent that the study noted leadership qualities that were gained from involvement in extracurricular activities including 4-H.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“The number of our nation’s youth exhibiting at-risk behavior points to a lack of skills necessary for adulthood skills in working with others, understanding self, communicating, making decisions, and leadership” (Boyd, Herring & Briers, 1992, p. 1). Skills such as these required by adults for everyday living are often called leadership life skills. Development of these skills allow youth to cope with their surrounding environment by making decisions responsibly, better understanding their values and being able to better communicate with others.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study was to identify people’s perceptions about where they gained their leadership skills. The objective of this quantitative study was to identify leadership skills and qualities that youth improve upon. Another objective of the study is to verify that leadership skills are learned from youth organizations with positive environments surrounded by adult role models. The study is conducted through the Nobles County 4-H program and also other youth based opportunities within Nobles County. This study covers these main questions:

1) What leadership qualities or skills do youth feel they possess before joining Nobles County 4-H or another youth organization?

2) If youth participate in more than one extracurricular activity that provides leadership opportunity, will that provide leadership opportunity?

3) How have adults who work with youth feel they have benefited from such programs?

Some subsequent questions include but are not limited to:
1) How do adults view their effective leadership skills?
2) How do they view their impact on youth?
3) What do youth view as the key role for learning leadership from adults?
4) How will interviewing and surveying both adults and youth benefit this study?
5) What differences may exist between youth learning about leadership on their own versus learning about leadership with adult role models?
6) How does a positive outcome of role models increase youth leadership skills?

**Background**

Leadership skills are essential for young people to feel satisfaction and contribute to society (Boyd, 2001; Sheer, 1997). Youth leadership opportunities allow youth to grow in a positive environment that promotes personal growth. Increasing opportunities given to youth allows them to become more active in the community and in extracurricular activities and while creating lifelong skills.

Leadership is also part of experiential learning. Experiential learning takes place when a person is involved in an activity, looks back at it critically, determines what was useful or important to remember, and uses that information to perform another activity, (Boyd 2001). Providing an experience alone does not create "experiential learning." The learning comes from the thoughts and ideas created as a result of the experience. This is a "learn by doing" or experiential process (Boyd 2001).

**Setting**

The participants in this study are all Caucasian group with a mix of both genders. While Nobles County is a diverse county, the 4-H program is predominantly white. The youth are in the seventh through twelfth grade, in schools in Nobles County in
southwestern Minnesota. These children are either members of the Nobles County 4-H program or other local youth organizations. Nobles County is a rural setting.

**Assumptions**

Leadership is something that the researcher works with consistently on an everyday basis through the 4-H organization. The members of Nobles County 4-H work with leaders each time they meet with their 4-H club and other youth programs. Nearly all of these youth also participate in more than one of these youth organizations. Growing up through this organization, as well as participating in FFA (formerly known as Future Farmers of America): Family, Consumer, Careers and Leadership of America (FCCLA): Residence Hall Association (RHA): and more, the researcher attended a small university reliant on students providing leadership to offer its students the best opportunities. With these opportunities to continue her own personal development, there is a desire to educate others, both youth and adults about the benefits of being in an organization that promotes personal growth and recognizes the need for leadership skills. In spite of personal involvement with youth leadership organizations and attending a college with leadership activities, the researcher will conduct the study and examine the results in a neutral manner.

Participation in several youth leadership organizations and attendance at a university which relied heavily on student leadership will not influence the results of this research. Awareness of several youth leadership organizations and attendance a university that relied heavily on student involvement will make also help put those thoughts aside and be as neutral as possible.
Limitations

Interpretations of the results may only be pertinent to this small area in rural Minnesota. Results of the study may not be replicable if the study is conducted with a different pool of participants from a different program or different location in Minnesota. Different demographics may also provide different results.

Summary

This quantitative study will be used to identify what kinds of leadership skills are perceived to be gained through personal involvement in extracurricular and youth organizations.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Is leadership an important asset for youth in today’s society? Leadership skills are essential for young people to feel satisfaction and contribute to society (Scheer, 1997). The review of this literature is to identify the importance of leadership in youth and adults. The purpose of this review is to establish the benefit of leadership qualities to youth organizations.

Identifying Leadership and its Qualities

In order to identify leadership in individuals, one must understand the variability of skills. The development of leadership 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 (Boyd et al. 1992).

Setting goals, solving problems, and making wise decisions are not just skills for leaders, but are necessary skills for leading a successful life. The progressions of leadership roles are available so teens can expand their leadership skills by performing different roles with different audiences. Recognition and respect by adults, peers, and younger youth enhances self-esteem and teens’ sense of belonging in their community (Groff, 1992).

In accordance to the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), many leadership skills and qualities among groupings of basic skills, thinking skills, personal qualities, resource allocation skills, interpersonal skills and organizational
skills have been identified that will be needed by workers for “productive and meaningful” employment in today’s workforce.

Miller (1976) defined leadership life skills development as self-assessed and organization specific "development of life skills necessary to perform leadership functions in real life" (p.2). The literature shows that different researchers have attempted to measure this for different target populations. Miller (1975) and Miller (1976) are two of the earliest sources of indicators on youth leadership life skills development (Seevers, Dormody & Clason, 1995).

However, there are some pieces of literature that offer explanations for the current outlook on the lack leadership today. One reason offered for the apparent lack of leadership in today’s society is because people do not understand its complexity. According to Ricketts and Rudd (2002) and Bennis and Nanus (1985) there are as many definitions of leadership development as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept. DesMaria, Yang, and Farzenhkia (2000) indicated certain elements which were necessary in the development of youth leadership. They listed the critical elements as: youth/adult partnerships; granting young people decision making power and responsibility for consequences; a broad context for learning and service; and recognition of young people’s experience; knowledge and skills (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002).

**Why Youth Should Develop Leadership Skills**

In researching the need for leadership among youth, there are several studies to justify the importance of these skills. We simply cannot wait until the later teen years to begin respecting youth as individuals, affording them the dignity to make their own decisions (Groff, 1992).
Organizations, afterschool programming and extracurricular activities provide opportunities for youth where leadership is learned and taught. Service-learning projects are one method for increasing leadership opportunities for at-risk youth. Service-learning projects offer teens the opportunity to practice leadership skills and reflect on the experience to learn more about themselves (Boyd, 2001). While 4-H prides itself on providing leadership opportunities to all youth, attracting at-risk youth can be challenging (Boyd, 2001).

Teens and Role Models for Leadership

While many can insist that youth need to learn leadership, they also must be given opportunities to learn from those around them and in leadership roles in the community. “If the goal of youth development programming is to prepare youth for adulthood, this study indicates that 4-H programming is accomplishing its mission,” (Boyd et al, 1992). For years, those working as 4-H youth development professionals have claimed that participation in 4-H provides a variety of benefits to youth. These claims to such results have often been more conjecture than substantiated; however, now significant research results prove the value of sustained, continuous 4-H participation (Astroth & Haynes, 2002).

Teens’ general participation in 4-H club activities showed a positive and statistically significant relationship to their life skill development in the areas of leadership, personal development, and citizenship (Cantrell, Heinsohn & Doebler, 1989). Building teen leadership experiences into 4-H activities and events not only provides youth with valuable life skill development opportunities, but also stretches Extension’s staff resources (Cantrell, Heinsohn & Doebler, 1989).
Importance of Leadership

Leadership has been an important topic to many youth development workers and educators. With increasing demands on both professionals and adult volunteers in a time of shrinking financial resources, Extension staff cannot afford to ignore teenagers as a valuable resource pool. Extension staff can capitalize on the developmental needs of youth to do something useful and to assume adult-life roles (Groff, 1992). Leadership attitude, will power, and desire are the dimensions designed to stress the importance of motivation, self realization, and health in fulfilling a student’s leadership capacity (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002).

It is almost taken for granted by agriculture educators that youth who participate in youth organization leadership activities such as public speaking, holding an office position, or attending meetings are developing leadership skills (Dormody & Seevers, 1994). Combining experiential learning with the opportunity to put those skills into actions is an effective method for teaching leadership skills (Boyd, 2001).

People must be made aware that 4-H activities do not simply teach youth skills in agriculture and home economics, but include nonformal, experiential educational programs that help youth gain valuable life skills (Boyd, et. al., 1992).

Different organizations are looking at circumstances relating to youth and leadership. In agricultural education, both 4-H and FFA are working towards leadership development. The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) and agricultural education have long been interested in whether or not 4-H and FFA programming are effective in developing youth leadership skills. Based on their experience, many CES and agricultural
education personnel, as well as past 4-H and FFA members think youth leadership programming is effective.

According to Fox, Schroeder and Lodi (2003), one of the most pressing issues facing youth-serving organizations such as 4-H is how to best support youth in becoming productive, contributing individuals of society. One 4-H alumnus shared that "4-H was the building block of my leadership skills" in a survey conducted with alumni of the 4-H organization, (Fox et. al 2003, p.1).

4-H does not just attract high-achieving kids from privileged families and 4-H is not able to achieve the kind of results reported in this research summary by only working with “the best kids.” Rather, 4-H is a powerful, proven program that makes a positive difference for all those who participate (Astroth & Haynes, 2002).

**Conclusion**

To conclude this literature review, it is evident that not only is it beneficial for youth in today’s society to be taught leadership skills, it is also apparent those adults rely on youth to possess those skills when they work together. Communities today are relying on a variety of age groups daily to function successfully. It is an opportunity for youth to advance their self-esteem as well as become a valuable part of today’s world.
Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this research project was to identify and document the leadership skills youth and adults gain from youth leadership organizations such as the 4-H organization. It tested the hypothesis that by joining a youth leadership organization, life skills and leadership skills would be enhanced. The hypothesis that involvement benefited adults in youth leadership organizations was also tested.

This study included members of the Nobles County 4-H program that were active members and leaders who were also involved in other youth leadership organizations. The study noted which life skills participants in this study thought were enhanced by being a part of a leadership organization.

This chapter will describe the setting and participants studied, research procedures used, data gathering techniques and analysis of data, followed by a brief summary.

Participants

The population of this study included over 240 youth and 100 adults who are enrolled in the Nobles County 4-H program. 4-H members all have varied backgrounds, including a variety of socioeconomic statuses, cultural heritages and educational opportunities. Membership is open to youth in grades kindergarten through one year past high school. It is open to all youth, male and female and of any descent. Members attend various schools throughout Nobles County as well as post-secondary schools throughout the Midwest. Some members live outside of Nobles County and attend schools in that particular county. There are a variety of socio-economic backgrounds of each child and
family. The members reside in a variety of community sizes, including rural, village, town and city populations. Nobles County 4-H is predominately Caucasian, while the county itself is racially diverse with large Hispanic, Lao, Burmese and Korean populations, to name a few. The 4-H organization itself is diverse both nationally and internationally, representing different races and ethnic backgrounds.

The sample group of this study included 47 Nobles County 4-H members and adult leaders that have participated in a variety of 4-H events including, but not limited to, Ambassadors, Federation, County Fair, County Camp, Regional Camp, BLU (Building Leadership and Understanding), YELLO (Youth Exploring Leadership and Learning Out loud) and Minnesota State Fair. These events are available to anyone in grades seven through one year past high school. It is also to include adults who have participated in these events as chaperones, volunteer leaders and club leaders. These participants are from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, numbers of years as a 4-H participant, different grade levels, and reside in different areas of the county. Although the participants were not asked to select their socioeconomic status, the researcher is aware that socioeconomic differences exist.

Letters of recruitment for this study were emailed out to a random sampling of 72 email addresses of participants in grade seven or above. These individuals are active in various Nobles County 4-H activities including: Ambassadors, Federation, County Fair, County Camp, Regional Camp, BLU, YELLO, and Minnesota State Fair, as well as many other county 4-H experiences. While several of these 4-H participants have been recognized through different media outlets including local newspapers, recognition and
achievement banquet, and newsletters, the survey data was collected anonymously.

Forty-seven surveys were filled out in comparison to the 72 emails that were sent.

Each of the 47 participants in the study completed a brief survey between February and March 2010. Surveys took approximately five to ten minutes and were completed at the Government Center Farmer’s Room where Nobles County 4-H meetings regularly occur as well as on their home computers.

Of the 47 members in the sampling, 25 were male and 22 were female. Ages of the participants ranged from 13 through senior citizens. The majority of the youth and adults have been enrolled in the 4-H program for at least five years. Survey participants were all involved in varied special 4-H events. These members joined 4-H for their own personal reasons and were not recruited to join the organization.

Participation was voluntary for this study. Participants were asked to complete and sign their consent forms at the meetings if their legal guardians were required and present. 4-H members and leaders also signed an assent form that stated that they understood the expectations of them to participate. Only results from participants that had the appropriate approvals were included in the findings for this project.

In January 2010, approval to start the study was granted by the IRB: Human Subjects Committee at the University of Minnesota. The application, copy of the recruitment letter, consent and assent forms given to participants, are included in Appendices A, B and C. A copy of the survey is included as Appendix D.

**Research Design**

A quantitative survey was selected because of the questions the researcher was determining to ask each participant. By using a survey participants were able to identify
specific skills acquired in 4-H and other youth leadership organizations. The survey was created by the researcher and conducted online through Surveymonkey.com, an online website that incurred no additional cost. The survey was created by the author. There was no additional input from 4-H leaders. No pilot was used prior to this study.

The survey began with factual non-threatening questions and progressed into more thought provoking questions as recommended by Cohen (2007).

Survey questions included the following:

- Gender
- Age Group
- Definition of leadership
- What has helped you improve your leadership skills?
- Why have you prioritized improving your leadership skills?
- Have the leadership skills you have learned through different youth organizations benefited you in anyway?
- Do you feel you could have improved these skills without being involved in a youth organization?
- What are the most important skills you have learned from youth leadership organizations?

See Appendix D for the complete survey.

**Data Gathering**

The survey was completed by youth and adults across Nobles County. These participants have participated in Ambassadors, Federation, County Camp, Regional Camp, BLU (Building Leadership and Understanding), YELLO (Youth Exploring Leadership and Learning Out loud), Minnesota State Fair and have varied backgrounds,
ages, grade levels and live in different areas throughout the county and local communities.

Survey Monkey is an online survey tool that was used to complete the survey online. The researcher entered the survey on the website. Once the information was entered, the online website tracked answers submitted, compiled records and prepared information for examination by the researcher.

Method of Analysis

When analyzing the data gathered, descriptive statistics helped summarize the population data. Numerical descriptors, such as means and modes were utilized. Inferential statistics such as age, grade levels, or adult information were involved in providing correlation between the skills gained in 4-H and other youth organizations.

Summary

Review of material collected through the survey acknowledged themes related to leadership skills youth and adults gained by being active in 4-H and other youth leadership organizations. These topics will be analyzed and discussed in Chapter 4 of this study.
Chapter 4

Analysis and Discussion

The following chapter, offered in narrative format, covers the survey analysis of the Nobles County 4-H members and parents that took part in the survey. This chapter analyzes and interprets the survey results which were conducted online. The survey was completely anonymous. These results are taken directly from the online research website, Survey Monkey.

The purpose of this paper is to identify whether or not youth leadership organizations have improved leadership skills and life skills in current Nobles County 4-H members, parents and adult leaders. The youth are in the seventh through twelfth grade and one year past high school. Most are enrolled in schools in Nobles County in southwestern Minnesota. There are some youth that are enrolled in the Nobles County 4-H program, but attend school in another county. These students participated as well. These children are most likely members of the Nobles County 4-H Program, but may also be a part of other youth organizations. Other youth possibly surveyed were guests that are not enrolled in the 4-H program, but were at the event when the survey was presented. The adult 4-H leaders that participated in the survey may be involved in other youth leadership organizations. At the time of the survey, they were all active as Nobles County 4-H volunteers.

In order to identify leadership in individuals, one must understand the variability and different definitions of leadership. 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 (Boyd, et. al, 1992).

Results

The purpose of this research project was to identify and document the leadership skills youth and adults gain from youth leadership organizations such as the 4-H organization. It tested the hypothesis that by joining a youth leadership organization, life skills and leadership skills would be enhanced. The hypothesis that it benefited adults involved in youth leadership organizations was also tested. This study included members of the Nobles County 4-H program who are active members and leaders as well as possibly involved in other youth leadership organizations.

This survey was completed by 47 members, including current 4-H members and adult leaders throughout Nobles County, grade seven and above. A mix of current members and leaders would ascertain the different perspectives of age groups and life experiences. All surveys were deemed usable because approval by the parents had been received. A total of 47 online surveys from SurveyMonkey.com were used for the data analysis of this study.

Participant Demographics

In section one of the survey, participants completed questions that pertained to their demographics. This part of the survey asked participants’ age based on their grade in school and gender. Adults who filled out the survey would mark “out of school” for their response to this question. According to the survey, 53.2 percent of the participants
were male and 46.8 percent of the participants were female. All participants responded to this question. The sample is not equally divided between genders, with more males in this study compared to females.

Table 1 Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked for their age group. All participants under the age of 18 had parental consent before participating in the survey. Specific age of each participant was not asked.

Table 2 Age
Participants were not asked to indicate their race or ethnicity, religion or socio-economic status. Given the cultural diversity of Nobles County, it would be worth future research to determine why there are more Caucasian participants than ethnic groups.

**Leadership Information**

Once the participants completed the first two questions on demographics, they were asked several other questions pertaining to leadership. Table 3 gives answers when the participants were asked, “What is the definition of leadership?” The majority of people responded to this question with the answer, “ability to lead, guide, direct or influence people.” Thirty one of 47 participants selected this response. The next closest response was, “being a positive role model”, with 10 selecting this.

*Table 3 What is the definition of leadership?*
An important component of this survey was to determine how participants have improved their leadership skills. The researcher asked a variety of questions to report back how leadership qualities have improved. The next set of questions began with, “What has helped you improve your leadership skills?” Each participant was able to select multiple answers for this question.

*Table 4 What has helped you improve your leadership skills?*
According to the survey, 44 of 47 participants, approximately 94 percent, selected leadership based organizations such as FFA, FCCLA, 4-H and others as the reason why their leadership skills have improved. Twenty participants in the survey selected “opportunities offered through their school” as the next option to improve their leadership skills.

Table 5 Why have you prioritized improving your leadership skills?
Results to question number five of the survey were again skewed to one answer, with 31 of 47 participants listing that, “benefits later in life with other opportunity” was their main answer when asked, “Why have you prioritized improving your leadership skills?” Only four responded with, “Because I joined what all my friends/family members are involved in.” The researcher found this response surprising as in Nobles County, most participants join because another family member, cousin or person they know is involved.
Table 6 Have the leadership skills you have learned through different youth organizations benefited you in anyway?

Seventy percent of participants selected that they have received an award or acknowledgement for their abilities in leadership. Only 10 of 47, or approximately 20 percent of the participants selected that because of their leadership skills learned through youth organizations have benefited by them getting a higher grade or mark in assignments. One of 47 participants, selected, “No” for this answer.
Table 7 Do you feel you could have improved these skills without being involved in a youth organization?

![Bar chart showing responses to the question.](chart.png)

Of 47 participants, 87 percent of the participants in this survey selected that they would not have been able to improve these skills without being involved in a youth organization. That is nearly seven times the amount of participants that selected yes as their option, of improving leadership skills without being involved in a youth organization.
Responses to question eight of the survey were spread throughout the answers. Forty-five of 47 respondents selected responsibility as the most important life skill learned from youth organizations, followed by 40 selecting leadership skills. The following three responses, “enhanced self-confidence, time management skills and independency” had
37, 36 and 35 responses respectively. The lowest response selected, was “other” with four votes and 22 responses for “codependency.”

Summary

The findings of this survey are intended to show the importance of youth organizations to help individuals gain youth leadership skills. The Nobles County 4-H Program, Nobles County Extension Committee members, Nobles County Commissioners and University of Minnesota-Extension Youth Development Educators will all be given an opportunity to read the results of this study. Results of this study are able to illustrate the benefits of youth leadership organizations and the skills individuals gain from these opportunities.

For this survey, there were more males than females that participated, which was not anticipated by the researcher, because there are more females than males in the Nobles county 4-H program. Respondents of the survey were in grade seven and above. Adults were not given a different survey to use in order to participate.

The results of this study are consistent with findings from Cantrell, Heinsohn & Doebler (1989) that teen leadership experiences in 4-H activities and events provide valuable life skill development.

Boyd, Herring and Briers (1992) also state that if the goal of youth development programming is to prepare youth for adulthood, the study indicates that 4-H programming is completing that task.
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusion

An overview of this research study and conclusions are presented here. Topics in this chapter include a discussion of the conclusions, research limitations and implications for future research.

The results of this study are intended to assist families, 4-H members, University of Minnesota-Extension, 4-H staff, and researchers in youth development. The results of this study will be presented at the Nobles County Extension Committees, Nobles County Commissioner Meetings and Nobles County 4-H meetings.

The study was designed to:

• Determine whether or not youth leadership organizations have affects on learning youth leadership skills;

• Determine whether active 4-H members in 7th grade to one year past high school or adults who are past members or current leaders self report that they have been able to improve upon their life skills from youth leadership organizations.

The following hypotheses were developed:

• There is significant evidence that respondents perceived they learned leadership skills from the leadership organizations, which is the overwhelming response, followed by learning leadership skills through other school activities, and also learning at home.

• When asked why youth and adults have wanted to prioritize youth leadership skills, they responded that they have made this choice because of opportunities possible later in life.

• It was also an overwhelming response that respondents perceived youth leadership organizations have taught improved communication skills and organizational skills.
Summary and Conclusions

The objective of this quantitative study was to identify leadership skills and qualities that youth improve upon, sometimes when they are in positive environments and surrounded by adult role models. These leadership skills are learned from youth organizations. Research examined surveys from youth in high school as well as with adults who participate in youth based organizations. The study was conducted through the Nobles County 4-H program. The study was created to determine whether or not youth and adults feel they learn leadership skills and life skills through youth leadership organizations.

It is apparent from the responses to several of the survey questions that respondents feel that youth leadership organizations indeed teach members leadership skills and many other life skills. While both males and females took this survey, there was nearly an equal mix of the two genders, therefore getting an almost complete balance of members.

Educational Implications

It is important that this survey be completed with information to share to the public because in part, budget and finance issues of so many organizations, schools, businesses and governments are looking at cuts during the current time. It is important because so many city, county and other officials look at where they can start saving money. Many may look to cut proposed budgets that fund youth organizations. However, people involved with youth leadership organizations feel that others cannot see the benefits these organizations (such as 4-H) teach participants. Officials who determine budgets may not consider the educational value associated with these youth programs,
when looking at dollars to cut.

**Limitations**

Limitations for this study include a statistically small sample size and specific location. The survey was limited to a rural area in southwestern Minnesota. Questions for the survey could be more specific to provide a greater number of responses and socio-economic indicators could change the results of the survey.

By adding more questions to the survey, more in depth information will be gained from participants. Another limitation found in this study was the research survey being given to both adults and youth, rather than separated. By not separating the surveys, there was no way to determine information for each age group.

The limitation of questions in the study made the results appear to be somewhat skewed to 4-H organization activities. This gives some reservations about the study’s generalization.

**Recommendations**

The first recommendation is to add more questions to the survey for anyone that wishes to continue with this research. By adding more questions to the survey, it will give more in-depth information. The researcher would also give the participant an option to give examples for the questions when they responded with ‘other’. Questions that could be included could range from what events people have specifically learned leadership skills from to breaking the survey down by grade level and using information specific to ages, as well as how individuals plan on using their leadership and life skills in the future.
A second recommendation would be to open it up to a regional level. By opening it to a larger group, the information would be easy to share and publish on a more comprehensive level. The information collected from the survey could be done much in the same way, with gender being the only divider in answers, besides age group. By offering this survey to a variety of counties, information could be published in each county, in all newspapers, newsletters and any other media outlet that county 4-H programs use.

Another recommendation to the study would be to create a separate leadership survey for adults and youth. By surveying the adults separately, different questions could be asked specifically revolving around leadership learned through organizations such as 4-H.

The final recommendation from the researcher would be to add an incentive plan for participants. By adding an incentive available to the participants, it would be possible to get a better response rate as well as more prompt responses.

Conclusion

University of Minnesota Extension Staff must convince decision makers that the potential positive impact on youth justifies significant financial input into the 4-H program (Boyd, Herring & Briers, 1992). Assuming responsibility and accountability for developing youth leadership life skills today assures the promise for effective leadership tomorrow (Seevers, Dormody & Clason, 1995).

The conclusion of this study is that youth leadership organizations like 4-H have been one perceived method for individuals in Nobles county to learn leadership skills and...
life skills. While these results are specific to one county in southwestern Minnesota, they may still be applicable to youth organizations throughout the region, state, and nation.

This quantitative study left many opportunities for others to continue the research on a larger scale. It is the intent to provide a beginning framework for others to build upon for gathering further data.
References


Ricketts, J. & Rudd, R. (2002). A comprehensive leadership education model to train,
teach and develop leadership in youth. *Journal of Career and Technical Education*, 19 (1).

Appendix A

IRB Human Subject Documentation

Information on the IRB process is available in the form of a guide for researchers entitled, What Every Researcher Needs to Know, found at http://www.research.umn.edu/irb/WERNK/index.cfm

The IRB wishes you success with this research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at 612-626-5654.

We have created a short survey that will only take a couple of minutes to complete. The questions are basic, but will give us guidance on what areas are showing improvement and what areas we need to focus on:


Sincerely,

Felicia Mroczkowski, CIP
Research Compliance Supervisor
FM/pm
CC: Kim Riordan
Appendix B

Assent Form

Developing Youth Leadership and its Importance in Youth Organizations

Jo Ann Ammann, graduate student researcher from the University of Minnesota Duluth, is asking if you are willing to participate in a survey that discusses your thoughts and feelings about youth leadership skills and the skills you learn from youth leadership organizations, such as 4-H. I am hoping to learn more about how your leadership skills have increased as you have become active in youth leadership based organizations.

Because you are enrolled in the Nobles County 4-H Program, I am asking if you would be interested in participating in this study.

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to fill out a brief survey.

If you change your mind during the study and don’t want to participate, you don’t have to. Being in this study is totally up to you, and no one will be mad at you if you don’t want to do it.

You can ask any questions that you have about this study. If you have a question later that you didn’t think of now, you can ask me next time. Signing here means that you have read this paper or had it read to you and that you are willing to be in this study. If you don’t want to be in this study, don’t sign. Remember, being in this study is up to you, and no one will be mad at you if you don’t sign this or even if you change your mind later.

Signature of participant________________________________________

Signature of person explaining study____________________________________

Date_______________________
Appendix C

Consent Form

Developing Youth Leadership and its Importance in Youth Organizations

You and/or your child are invited to be in a research study on the development of youth leadership and its importance in youth organizations. You/and or your child were selected as a possible participant because of your status as an enrolled member in Nobles County 4-H. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Jo Ann M. Ammann, graduate student researcher through the University of Minnesota-Duluth.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is: to determine how youth organizations benefit and help create youth leadership skills and what the benefits are of having those skills.

Procedures:

If you/or your child agrees to be in this study, I would ask you/or your child to do the following things:
Complete a very brief survey - either via email or hard copy. This survey will take approximately ten minutes of your time.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

The study has no risks in participating. All responses will be used anonymously.

The benefits to participation are learning how the importance of the 4-H Youth Organization benefits both you and adults who participate and are active members in it.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation for participating.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.
Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: JoAnn M. Ammann. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact them at (507) 295-5313 or email at amman003@umn.edu. If you need to contact JoAnn’s advisor, you may do so. Kim Riordan may be contacted at (218)726-7251 or by email at kriordan@d.umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects’ Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: __________________

Signature of parent or guardian: ____________ Date: ________________
(If minors are involved)

Signature of Investigator: ________________ Date: ________________
Appendix D

Survey

Developing Youth Leadership and its Importance in Youth Organizations
JoAnn M. Ammann, UMD M.Ed graduate student

Are you:

____ Male

____ Female

Please mark the appropriate age group:

____ grades 7-9

____ grades 10-12

____ out of school

What is your definition of leadership?

a) Able to take initiative in different situations

b) Being a positive role model

c) Ability to lead, guide, direct or influence people

d) Other _______________________________________________________

What has helped you improve your leadership skills?

a) Leadership-based organizations (FFA, FCCLA, 4-H, etc)

b) Skills developed at home

c) Opportunities offered through

d) Other _______________________________________________________

Why have you prioritized improving your leadership skills?

a) It will benefit me later in life with other opportunities

b) My friends/family members are in leadership roles

c) I was able to find a group where I believed in the goals/outcomes

d) Other _______________________________________________________

Have the leadership skills you have learned through different youth organizations benefited you in anyway?

a) Received a higher grade or mark for assignments

b) Received award or acknowledgement for abilities in leadership

c) No

d) Other _______________________________________________________
Do you feel you could have improved these skills without being involved in a youth organization?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Not sure

What are the most important skills you have learned from youth leadership organizations? (Please circle all that apply)
   a) Leadership skills
   b) Time management skills
   c) Independency (relying on self)
   d) Codependency (relying on others)
   e) Responsibility
   f) Enhanced self-confidence
   g) Already been beneficial in a school or post-school experience
   h) Helped in a job interview or other interviews
   i) Self-awareness
   j) Better awareness of others
   k) Mentoring abilities
   l) Other_______________________________________
   m) Other_______________________________________
   n) Other_______________________________________
UMD Faculty,

By now I expect you will have seen the message below from CIO Steve Cawley. I know that many of you will be disappointed to leave WebVista behind. However, the vendor has chosen to drop support for this product, and it is my hope that having a single course management system will make it easier on students and faculty alike. You will have more than two years to make the transition.

ITSS staff Amanda Evans and Bruce Reeves will be available to assist those of you who need to make the transition from WebVista to Moodle. Feel free to contact either of them directly to make an appointment. We will do our best to make this a smooth transition.

Linda Deneen

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Vice President and CIO Steve Cawley" <cms-trans@lists.umn.edu>
Date: May 19, 2010 8:59:00 PM CDT
To: ldeneen@umn.edu
Subject: Course Management Systems at the University of Minnesota

Dear colleagues,

Blackboard, the company that owns WebVista, will discontinue support for WebVista beginning January of 2013. Faculty will need to stop using WebVista by August 2012 and move their courses to a supported course management system. The University supports a second course management system called Moodle. One of the questions we needed to address was whether we needed to implement a new course management system to replace WebVista, or if Moodle could serve as the sole course management system for the University of Minnesota.

In phase one of our effort, vice president and CIO Steve Cawley charged a technical working group to explore, analyze, and recommend a strategy for the future use of Course Management Systems (CMS) at the University. A thorough investigation was conducted by the workgroup that included representatives from CEHD, CLA, CSOM, Office of the Vice Provost for Distributed Education and Instructional Technology, Office of Information Technology (OIT), and UMD. This group did not recommend replacing WebVista with a new CMS system. This group recommended Moodle as the sole CMS. Based on this recommendation and increased use of Moodle, OIT has begun to increase the capacity of Moodle servers, and is working to re-architect the technical infrastructure that works with Moodle.

Students indicate a strong preference for one system. Additional assessments indicate that it is cost prohibitive over the longer term to run two CMS systems. OIT is committed to continuing its funding level and support of Moodle long term as Moodle use is rapidly increasing at the University while WebVista use is declining.

The Moodle CMS is open source, meaning its development and production is "open" and available. It has a large and diverse user community with CMS sites being used in 212 countries and territories worldwide. The University of Minnesota is one of the largest higher education users of Moodle in the U.S.

The University Libraries has advocated for a transition to Moodle due to its open
architecture, community development model, and potential for service integrations. The Office of the Vice Provost for Distributed Education and Instructional Technology and the Office for Education, AHC (and the AHC Learning Commons) support the transition to Moodle as the sole CMS. Recently, Senate Committee on Information Technology (SCIT) members noted that this transition will help advance the goals for an integrated, centrally supported learning platform, facilitating the broader Digital Campus vision. Some SCIT members also expressed concern about the cost of transition and support for Faculty.

In phase two of our effort (beginning June 2010), OIT will establish an academic working group and work closely with faculty, administrators, IT directors, and instructional technology staff throughout the University system as we proceed. This working group includes faculty members from SCIT. OIT will work in partnership with collegiate units in terms of sharing the costs and efforts to complete this migration. OIT will provide central support services, associated training, and research into identifying and implementing migration tools as needed.

As additional information becomes available, it will continue to be posted on the CMS website and on the MyU portal. In addition, an FAQ on the CMS process is available. Ongoing updates will be presented at the Academic Technology Advisory Committee (ATAC), University Technology Enhanced Learning Leaders (UTELL), SCIT, and IT Directors meetings.

If you have any questions, please e-mail cms-trans@lists.umn.edu. Thank you for your input and help as we embark on this two-year transition.

Steve Cawley
Vice President and CIO
Office of Information Technology

Ann Hill Duin
Associate Vice President and Associate CIO
Office of Information Technology, and
Professor of Writing Studies, College of Liberal Arts

This message was sent by the Vice President and CIO of the University of Minnesota to the Administrative Email Lists (AEL), WebVista site designers, and all U of M faculty.

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