

A Content Analysis of Teen 4-H Member Responses in Relation to the Factors that Affect Their Involvement in Pennsylvania 4-H Programming

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Abstract

Studies have shown that teenage 4-H member retention lies within the context of the program offerings (Lauver & Little, 2005; Ritchie & Resler, 1993). In this study a content analysis was completed on data collected from apriori open-ended questions from a larger study. The questions were designed to provide rich data on 4-H members' personal accounts of their experiences within 4-H. The researcher classified opportunities for participation into three categories (based on the questions): most memorable 4-H experience, opportunities to plan 4-H events, and factors that would encourage increased participation and emergent themes were identified. Following the content analysis of the responses included in the most memorable 4-H experience, four different themes emerged: events, friends and meeting new people, recognition, and club activities. The analysis of the responses in relation to opportunities to plan 4-H events yielded three common themes: planning club activities, planning county and regional 4-H events, and never planned an event. Finally, when asked to describe what would encourage them to participate more often in 4-H events/activities at the county, regional and state levels, the analysis of the participants' responses were analyzed and resulted in three common themes: friends and the opportunity to meet new people, more available resources (i.e. money, time, and transportation), and more information provided on the events.

Introduction and Framework

Throughout history, community programs such as 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and the YMCA have promoted youth development by providing a safe environment where young people of all ages can explore personal interests and develop peer groups that share those same interests (Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, & Ferrari, 2003; Cano & Bankston, 1992; Ferrari & Turner, 2006; Lauver & Little 2005; Weber & McCullers, 1986; Weiss, Little, & Bouffard; 2005; Wingenbach, Nestor, Lawrence, Gartin, Woloshuk, & Mulkeen, 2000). Community programs provide youth with various learning opportunities in order to acquire the skills needed so that they can make plans, overcome obstacles, and achieve desired ends (Larson, 2000). Dworkin, Larson, and Hansen (2003) reported, "...youth activities such as sports, arts groups, and organizations" (p. 25) provide learning opportunities that encourage members to be "...agents of their own development" (p. 25). The learning opportunities (i.e. goal setting workshops, structured planned practices, teamwork activities, leadership roles) allow members to improve time management skills, conduct business with adults, and improve their public speaking, confidence, and teamwork skills (Dworkin et al., 2003).

Pennsylvania 4-H members are provided learning opportunities through participation in 4-H projects. The project curriculum areas offered through Pennsylvania 4-H are: *animal science, citizenship and civic education, communication and expressive arts, environmental and earth sciences, family and consumer science, healthy lifestyles education, intergenerational programming, leadership and personal development, and science and technology* (Pennsylvania 4-H, n.d.). Pennsylvania 4-H also provides additional learning opportunities to members through various activities and events: *State Leadership Conference, Capitol Days, State 4-H Achievement Days, County Ambassador Program, and State Council*.

Membership recruitment and retention are challenges faced in 4-H, particularly when referring to older youth (Harder, Lamm, Lamm, Rose, & Rask, 2005). Between 2001 and 2007, Pennsylvania 4-H has experienced a decline in overall membership. Membership in 2001 exceeded 123,000 which dropped to under 93,000 by 2007 (Pennsylvania 4-H, 2007). All membership statistics exclude cloverbud members. Even though an overall decline in membership was evident across age groups, enrollment of 13-18 year old club members have been consistently lower since 2001 with a slight increase in membership in 2006-2007 (see Figure 1).

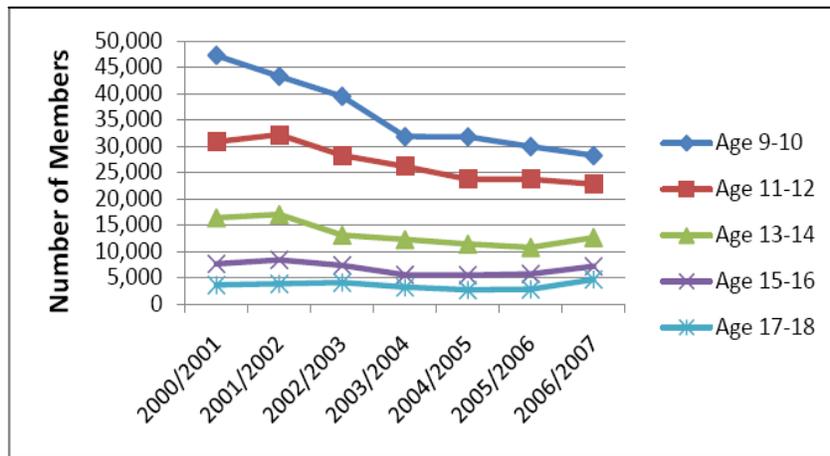


Figure 1. Pennsylvania 4-H Membership (Excluding Cloverbuds) from 2001-2007.

Source: Youth Development Annual Report, Pennsylvania 4-H. (<http://pa4h.cas.psu.edu>)

In the context of 4-H participation, youth involved in 4-H are presented with various opportunities and activities to participate. Research advocates that recruitment and retention programs geared towards teenagers are needed in 4-H and other youth programs (Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, & Ferrari, 2003; Ferrari & Turner, 2006; Huebner & Mancini, 2003; Lauer, Little, & Weiss, 2004; Lock & Costello, 2001). Teens can serve as an important resource by providing valuable educational experiences for younger members (Ponzio, Junge, Smith, Manglallan, & Peterson, 2000). Thus, retaining older members strengthens their skills, while enhancing the learning experiences of younger members and reducing the workload of volunteers (Cantrell, Heinsohn, & Doeblner, 1989).

Studies have shown teenage 4-H member retention lies within the context of the program offerings (Lauer & Little, 2005; Ritchie & Resler, 1993). If 4-H programs appear to be of low quality and do not meet the needs of teens, then teens will look elsewhere to fulfill those needs (Acosta & Holt, 1991; Ferrari & Turner, 2006; Harder et al., 2005; Lauer & Little, 2005; Radhakrishna, Leite, & Hoy, 2003; Ritchie & Resler, 1993). According to Acosta and Holt (1991), “designing programs to meet felt needs of clientele is definitely the key to maintaining involvement...” (p. 4). Additionally, overall program quality plays a key role in retaining members in youth community programs (Acosta & Holt, 1991; Ferrari & Turner, 2006; Harder et al., 2005; Lauer & Little, 2005; Radhakrishna et al., 2003; Ritchie & Resler, 1993).

A conceptual framework based on McClelland’s motivational needs theory (McClelland, 1987), links the opportunities available to 4-H members to factors affecting member retention (see Figure 2). McClelland’s theory consists of three motivational factors: a need for achievement, a need for affiliation, and a need for power (Rohs & Anderson, 2001). According to the conceptual framework, the need for achievement can be met through the projects members complete and the goals they reach. The completion of projects and goals are recognized in various forms through 4-H; money, prizes, or awards. The need for affiliation can be met through the relationships made with friends, parents, siblings, and 4-H leaders. Leadership roles such as serving as a committee chair, mentoring a younger 4-H member, serving as a teen leader, serving as a club officer, or being a member of the state 4-H council are offered to 4-H members and

assist in meeting the need for power (see Figure 2). The opportunities and factors that are noted in the conceptual framework play a key role in the overall quality of a 4-H program.

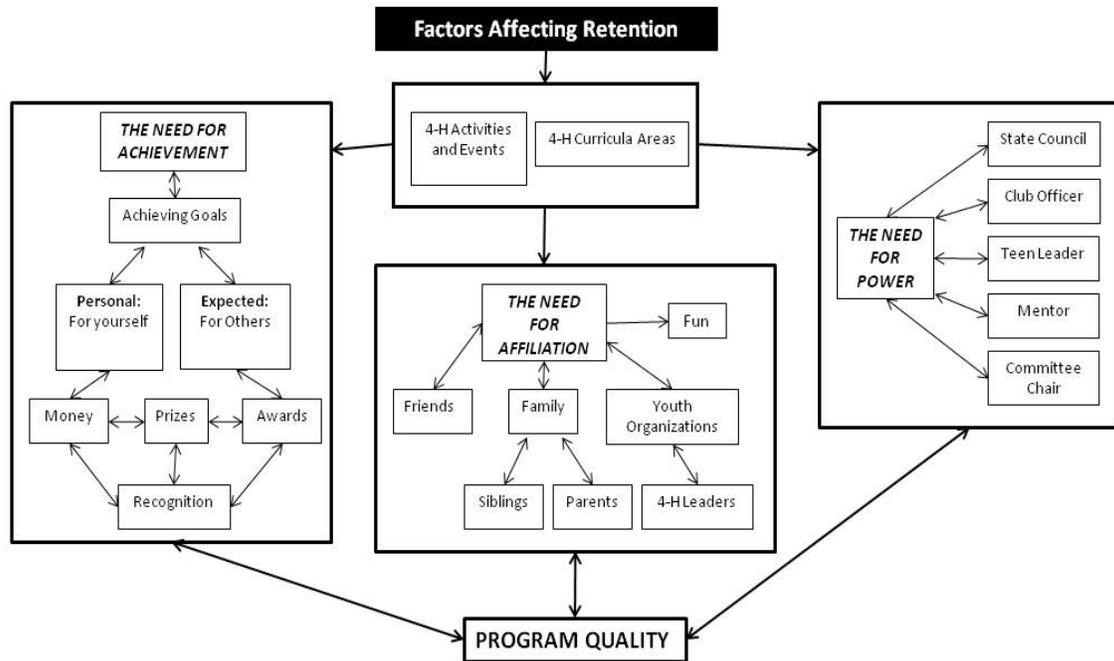


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Factors Affecting Retention, Based on McClelland's Motivational Needs Theory.

The Need for Achievement: Members with a high need for achievement do not like tasks that are too easy or too hard (McClelland, 1987). Individuals with a high need for achievement “are goal oriented and set moderate, realistic, attainable goals” (Lussier & Achua, 2001, p. 42). Research shows teens enjoy achieving goals, whether these goals are set personally or by others (Dworkin et al., 2003). Achieving goals within the 4-H program can result in recognition in the forms of verbal praise, awards, prizes, and sometimes money (see Figure 2) (Pennsylvania 4-H, n.d.). By providing the aforementioned opportunities for recognition and goal achievement, 4-H can better meet the needs of teens.

The Need for Affiliation: Individuals with a high need for affiliation seek close relationships with others, want to be liked by others, enjoy social activities, and seek a sense of belonging (Lussier & Achua, 2001). “Having a sense of belonging motivates young people to show respect and concern, as well as making them more receptive to guidance from other community members” (Hensley, Place, Jordan, & Israel, 2007, p. 3). Additionally, when youth feel valued and needed, the sense of belonging is increased and youth are more likely to remain involved in 4-H (Minnesota Extension Service, 1996). Ferrari and Turner (2006) reported continued participation in 4-H resulted from youth feeling comfortable and connected. According to McClelland (1987), individuals with a high need for affiliation have a tendency to

reflect upon relationships with others. Relationships within the 4-H program could involve friends, family members, or 4-H leaders (see Figure 2). Relationships made within 4-H must be positive and proactive towards the 4-H for members to remain involved (Wingenbach, Meighan, Lawrence, Gartin, & Woloshuk, 1999).

The Need for Power: Individuals with a high need for power are driven by influence and control (McClelland, 1987). McClelland recognized there are negative and positive aspects when considering power. The negative aspect arises when individuals are concerned with controlling or dominating a situation. When individuals exercise skills of persuasion or inspiration to help improve others, the positive aspect can be seen. The 4-H program focuses on the positive aspect of McClelland's theory by providing leadership opportunities for 4-H members. Specific leadership opportunities available to 4-H members include the chance to serve as a chair of a committee, mentor a younger 4-H member, be a teen leader, serve as a club officer, or serve as an officer of state 4-H council, (Pennsylvania 4-H, n.d.) (see Figure 2).

Motivation differs from one individual to another (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007; Lock & Costello, 2001). McClelland's theory consists of three motivational factors: a need for achievement, a need for affiliation, and a need for power (Rohs & Anderson, 2001). Youth enjoy being part of a group and desire positive feedback when successfully completing tasks, large or small (Brennan et al., 2007). The need for achievement can be met through the goals members accomplish. By joining 4-H, youth have the opportunity to associate with a group of individuals with similar interests, thus fulfilling their need for affiliation. As cited in Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, (2003), Brown (1990) stated, "When a teen joins a team, club, or activity group, other members often become part of that teen's peer friendship network" (p. 18). Leadership roles such as committee chair, mentoring a younger 4-H member, teen leader, club officer, or being a member of the state council are offered to members and assist in meeting the need for power.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to obtain a rich description of the factors that affect Pennsylvania teen 4-H member involvement within the 4-H program. To serve as a foundation for future retention initiatives, 4-H extension educators and adult volunteers need to know the factors that influence and encourage older 4-H members to remain engaged. To that end, the following objectives were established:

1. To identify memorable 4-H experiences that have impacted 4-H members' lives.
2. To identify opportunities available to 4-H members to assist in planning 4-H events/activities.
3. Determine factors that would encourage increased participation within the 4-H program.

Methods and Procedures

Remaining separate from the research context is impossible when conducting true qualitative research, to attempt to do so, would mean risking the opportunity to gain a great deal (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). So while the data may be “contaminated” by the human research instrument, those that do qualitative research understand that if appropriate standards of rigor are applied, this “contamination” only makes the study stronger (Erlandson, et.al, 1993).

Purposive sampling was used, in the case of this research, to seek out participants with very specific qualities: current members in good standing of a county 4-H program, over the age of 13, and willing to share 4-H experiences and general perceptions. Participants were identified using a roster of state 4-H leadership program participants. While Patton (1990) tells us there is no hard and fast rule for determining sample size in qualitative research, it is important to note that 87 young people participated in the study.

The word document can refer to a “written, visual, digital and physical material relevant to the study at hand” (Merriam, 2009, p.139). Documents do not intrude upon a situation the way that a human instrument might, nor are they dependent upon the ebbs and flows of human nature (Merriam, 2009). Berg (2001) tells us that private records are extremely useful when trying to understand how people make sense of their daily lives (p.200). In the case of this study, data collection used personal accounts of member experiences in the 4-H program, provided to the researcher as part of a larger study. These responses, by 87 young people, ages 13-18, representing each extension region of Pennsylvania, and a variety of programmatic areas, were the primary sources of data for the study.

At its heart, this is a true “basic” qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). Keeping that in mind, the researchers’ most important goal was to gain a true understanding of how young people make sense of their experiences within the 4-H program. This idea is rooted in constructivist epistemology (Merriam, 2009). To analyze the data, researchers employed a latent content methodology. Berg (2001) describes latent analysis as analysis extended to interpretations of the symbolism underlying the data. In order to begin to make meaning of the data, researchers used open coding, allowing the team to “ask the data a specific and consistent set of questions, analyze the data minutely, frequently interrupt the coding to write theoretical notes, and never assume the relevance of traditional variables like age, race, gender, etc.” (Berg, 2001 p. 251).

The measure of any research is the standards of rigor applied thereto. In the case of qualitative inquiry it is important to ask how researchers responded to questions of confirmability, transferability, dependability, and credibility. Credibility was established using peer debriefing consisting of an outside evaluation of the data analysis process and findings throughout the study, by individuals outside the immediate research context. To establish transferability researchers used thick description and purposive sampling. Remember, purposive sampling allows the researcher to study individuals or contexts that will provide rich and pertinent detail. Many misunderstand thick description, believing that great detail is needed in terms of contextual and participant description. However, Berg (2001) tells us that instead, thick description is a “sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context and reports with sufficient detail and precision” (p.33). To establish dependability, an audit trail of codes to transcriptions

was maintained and methodological journaling was used to establish both dependability and confirmability.

Results

In the context of 4-H participation, youth were presented with questions inquiring about programmatic opportunities. The questions were developed based on previous research and were designed to provide a richer account of members' experiences. Three apriori open ended questions served as the categories for data classification; 1) most memorable 4-H experience, 2) opportunities to plan 4-H events, and 3) factors that would encourage increased participation.

Most Memorable 4-H Experience

The 4-H program offers members numerous events/activities at the club, county, regional, and state levels. The most memorable 4-H experiences category was designed to describe activities or events that have made a large impact on 4-H members' lives. Following the content analysis of the responses, four different themes emerged: events, friends and meeting new people, recognition, and club activities.

Events.

The 4-H mission statement reads, "4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnership with caring adults" (Pennsylvania 4-H, n.d.). Fulfilling the mission statement of the 4-H program requires 4-H to offer quality opportunities for members to explore their interests and realize their full potential while interacting with adults and other 4-H members. State leadership conferences, 4-H camp, 4-H National Congress, regional retreats, and serving in leadership roles provide members with opportunities to improve their own skills and recognize their strengths and weaknesses. One member mentioned, their "...most memorable 4-H experience would have to be what happened this year at 4-H State Achievement days. It was not only fun, but I also learned a lot. I learned a lot about how to give a presentation from preparing for it, and I gained a lot of skills in presenting" (m.128). By recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, 4-H members can then choose activities that will utilize their strengths and manage their weaknesses. For example one member mentioned, "after I returned [from an exchange trip] I gave several speeches to organizations that aided me with donations and I got more comfortable with public speaking" (m.171).

Friends and meeting new people.

Involvement in fairs and shows provide an avenue for 4-H members to develop strong friendships while working together with other 4-H members to achieve a common task or goal. In regards to McClelland's motivational needs theory (1987), relationships within the club or organization can assist in fulfilling a person's need for affiliation (see Figure 2). Participating in club events allows 4-H members to stay connected to a familiar group and establish friendships close to home. In addition to club events, 4-H offers members numerous opportunities to participate in activities/events at the county, regional, and state levels. Attending

events/activities, above the club level, is a great way for 4-H members to interact with individuals from other parts of the county, region, and state and develop life skills that will benefit them in the future. Members mentioned serving as a "...camp counselor has been a great deal of fun..." and "...lifelong friends were made through [being a camp counselor]." Through the experience of being a camp counselor it was mentioned that "...responsibility and leadership skills were learned that wouldn't have been learned otherwise" (m.161). Not only do the members have the opportunity to interact with youth from other parts of the county, region, and state, but they also have the opportunity to develop many new friendships through those interactions. One student's most memorable moment was when he/she "...took a trip out to WI for the [subject specific] program; [He/she] met other teens from all over the country..." (m.171). One other member mentioned "when I went to 4-H camp and met a whole bunch of people..." (m.103), served as their most memorable 4-H experience. With over 90,000 4-H members on the Pennsylvania 4-H roster in 2007 (Pennsylvania 4-H, 2007), 4-H serves as an outlet for youth to meet many new people and make many new friendships that can last a lifetime. One member mentioned "[Regional Camp] was so much fun and I got to hang out with friends and got to know other people" (m.153). Numerous individuals mentioned they will always remember the friendships they made and the people they have met through 4-H, for example, "my most memorable 4-H experience was going to National Congress. It was nice to meet new people from around the United States" (m.160).

Recognition.

Many fairs and shows signify the completion of 4-H projects members have spent countless hours preparing or creating for several months. Recognition serves as a great retention tool for 4-H (see Figure 2) providing youth with opportunities to meet their needs for achievement as outlined by McClelland (1987). Members mentioned "...it was fun doing the projects and getting rewarded" (m.134). An example of this recognition is "...the state horse show when [the individual] was awarded the outstanding 4-H horse member award trunk at the awards ceremony" (m.106). Some 4-H members described events such as the state 4-H horse show, county fairs, and state farm show as their most memorable 4-H experiences. Experiences such as "...when I got fourth place with my goat in the market show at Farm Show" (m.141) and "going to the 4-H state horse show...with my miniature horse in driving" (m.107), are held as most memorable moments.

Club activities.

Club activities exhibit some of the highest participation rates of any 4-H events/activities and can affect youth involvement (Gill, Ewing, & Bruce, 2010). Several 4-H members shared their memories of being involved in club activities such as "doing a [subject specific] workshop for the public with my entomology club. [The workshop] was a lot of fun and we got to teach the public about insects" (m.143) and "when my club went to do a community service project at an older home" (m.114) as their most memorable 4-H experiences.

Opportunities to Plan 4-H Events

Pennsylvania 4-H members are given the opportunity to be involved in the planning process of the clubs often (Gill et al., 2010). According to Hensley et al. (2007), allowing youth to have a role in the decision making process, increases a youth's sense of belonging and allows the youth to take ownership in 4-H. Previous research has stated, teens that choose to participate in youth organizations, are guided by caring adults who are giving teens the opportunities to be a major part of the decision making process (Heinsohn & Lewis, 1995). Scales and Leffert (1999) reported youth who have opportunities to make decisions develop an "...understanding that they are accountable to themselves, their families, and their communities" (p. 53).

Responses were analyzed in relation to the question, explain a time when they helped plan a 4-H event. Through the analysis of the responses, three common themes emerged: planning club activities, planning county and regional 4-H events, and never planned an event. Through a members' role as a club officer they are given the opportunity to plan 4-H events/activities often (Gill et al., 2010). The opportunities to plan 4-H events category was included in the study to discover specific events and activities that 4-H leaders and extension educators feel comfortable allowing the 4-H members to plan. By knowing this information, 4-H leaders and extension educators can evaluate their clubs and determine whether the 4-H members, in their respective clubs, are given enough opportunities to feel as though they are an integral part of the club organizational structure.

Planning club activities.

Numerous 4-H members stated they had the opportunity to plan club activities such as: shows, banquets, meetings, picnics, trips, officer trainings, and game nights. For example, "[A 4-H member] was chair of the recognition banquet committee for the club. [They] planned what food [they] were going to have and helped organize and acquire the materials to put on the dinner" (m.117). In addition to banquets, 4-H members also were given the opportunity to "...plan and present a 4-H [subject specific] Day Camp. [The 4-H member] planned the whole lesson and with the help of [their] extension agent [the 4-H member] planned the location" (m.155).

Planning county and regional 4-H events.

The 4-H program extends far beyond the individual specialized clubs in the communities which the members may live. Participants stated they take full advantage of the opportunities provided beyond the club, volunteering to assist in the planning process of county and regional 4-H events. Involvement in teen councils allowed 4-H members the opportunity to "...plan the county achievement night, including the program, awards, and entertainment" (m.185) and one 4-H member even "...helped put together a teen group in [their county]. [Putting together the teen group] required calling all the teens in the county, inviting them to a meeting, giving them an incentive to come and pushing my friends to come and increase the population" (m.147). Planning involvement does not stop at the county level, attending camp counselor training allowed one member "...to help plan [Camp] - the theme, daily themes, etc" (m.116), also "...being a counselor, [the 4-H member] had a part in planning the [Regional Camp]" (m.185) and "...round-up events" (m.108).

Never planned an event.

Numerous participants in this study responded that they never helped plan a 4-H event at any level. Many of the participants simply answered with a simple “none” when responding the question of: Explain a time when you helped plan a 4-H event.

Factors that Would Encourage Increased Participation

The factors that would encourage increased participation category allowed the researchers to discover the limitations 4-H members experience as well as what would increase the desirability of the events/activities. When asked to describe what would encourage them to participate more often in 4-H events/activities at the county, regional and state levels, responses were analyzed resulting in three common themes: friends and the opportunity to meet new people, more available resources (i.e. money, time, and transportation), and more information provided on the events.

Friends and the opportunity to meet new people.

Individuals mentioned they would be more involved in activities and events if more of their friends would be involved. The more friends they have within the 4-H will assist in encouraging members to participate in events and activities beyond the club level, because the members would have a chance to spend time with their friends (see Figure 2). Friends and meeting new people was identified as a major influence that would encourage more participation in county, regional, and state events/activities. One member mentioned “I would be more motivated to participate in 4-H activities if more people in my county did 4-H. Hardly any of my friends are in 4-H and I would have more fun if they were” (m.117).

Through participating in the county, regional, and state events/activities the 4-H members are meeting a larger number of people thus increasing their opportunities to create new friendships. One 4-H member mentioned, “what motivated me were my friends I made through 4-H. I know that unless I attended more 4-H functions I probably wouldn’t have been able to see them” (m.161). According to Kress (2005), feeling a sense of belonging increases the chance of youth attaining positive outcomes. Additionally, having a sense of belonging may also encourage youth to stay enrolled in 4-H (Hensley et al., 2007)

More available resources.

Availability of resources, outside of those controlled by the 4-H program, hinders 4-H participation as well. These resources include; money, time, transportation, and family obligations. According to 4-H members, “the main thing that would probably get me to more events/activities at the county, regional, and state levels would be if the events cost less money or if there were more scholarships for our individual counties” (m.178). Furthermore, “finances limit things greatly for me, this is my last year in 4-H, but the first time I have been at SLC” (m.150), so “a smaller cost to attend some events....” (m.185) would encourage more participation. In addition to financial problems, “if I had more time I would attend more

events...” (m.139) was also mentioned. Many members “...just don't have enough time to participate” (m.154) and therefore”... nothing else would make [them] come more” (m.146).

More information provided on the events.

Members mentioned the lack of information, relative to the activities that would take place at 4-H events, discourages their participation. A member stated “many times I would like to participate in more events of 4-H, but my leaders do not supply us with the information or encourage us to do it. My leaders have the attitude of doing just enough to show at the fair” (m.172) and another member mentioned “if I could learn more about the activities provided, I would participate often” (m.143). Members joined 4-H to help develop public speaking and leadership skills. A few members mentioned they were ill-informed about the potential for life skills building that particular 4-H events/activities may offer. It was stated “what would help more is if someone representing the event and told/showed what is going to happen at it” (m.141).

Common Themes Across Categories

After reviewing the data for the three categories; most memorable 4-H experience, opportunities to plan 4-H events, and factors that would encourage increased participation, it is noted that friendships and meeting new people, club activities/events, and county activities/events were common themes across two of the three categories examined. Through these themes it can be acknowledged that there are specific aspects and/or events within 4-H that encourage more 4-H members to remain involved such as, “going to [state achievement] days and participating in Dairy Judging and meeting new people and making new friends” (m.137) or “...planning 4-H club meetings and making the final decision in what needs to be done and what we are going to discuss” (m.161). “[Four-H members] help plan a bunch of events with county council...” (m.141). One 4-H member “...was in charge of Secretary workshop...” (m.141) at the county officer training workshop and the 4-H member “...made a puzzle and showed a slide show...” (m.141). According to the 4-H member the workshop “...turned out great” (m.141). Some 4-H members remember

...club meetings...were some of the greatest times [they] ever had. Meeting with all [their] friends was amazing. [Their] leaders helped [them] with everything. Some of the people they saw there, [they] only saw at the meetings so it was always fun. Some of [their] best friends [they] met at those meetings. (m124)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Most Memorable 4-H Experience

Participants in the study indicated a need affiliation and achievement (McClelland, 1987) when asked to share their most memorable 4-H experience. Whether the experience was a fair, show, leadership event, or club activity the members indicated the importance of being with other people. These interactions are what seemed to stay with the members throughout their 4-H experience, as the experiences help the member to feel important to others, while having fun.

The members also indicated that recognition for their achievement was important. Thus, continued opportunities for members to connect with other 4-H members and leaders should be encouraged. Also, leaders should continue to recognize members for their accomplishments at the club, county, regional, and state levels.

Opportunities to Plan 4-H Events

Members are being given opportunities to plan events through 4-H at the club, county, and regional levels. No matter the “level” or the purposes of the event, planning of events/activities provide the members opportunities to meet their need for power and achievement (McClelland, 1987). By being part of a team that is developing an activity, members are given leadership responsibility and are given the opportunity to achieve goals that either they have set as a team, or that have been set for them by a leader of the 4-H. Teenage youth need to feel like an integral part of program administration (Brennan et al., 2007; Larson, 2000; Lauver & Little, 2005). Four-H educators and leaders should continue to allow members to assist in program facilitation and add new opportunities for planning, leading, and facilitating activities/events (Hensley et al. 2007). Through the experience of planning events and leading others, 4-H members can fine tune their time management and organizational skills. In turn, these skills will assist members in their future.

Factors that Would Encourage Increased Participation

Members need to see the value in the experiences provided through 4-H, as well as see the opportunity to be with friends (McClelland, 1987). Many 4-H members find it difficult to participate in the numerous opportunities that are presented to them as they age and transition from middle school to high school (Weiss, Little, & Bouffard, 2005). One way to compete with other activities is to ensure that all 4-H activities and events are age appropriate and present an appropriate level of challenge to the member (McClelland, 1987). Leaders and extension educators should evaluate programs and be sure to incorporate events/activities that are age appropriate and appealing. Additionally, teens involved in 4-H programming should be included in the evaluation of the programs (Acosta & Holt, 1991; Harder et al., 2005; Hensley et al., 2007; Lauver & Little, 2005).

Opportunities available to members need to be publicized and show how members can advance their life skills, while having fun with others (McClelland, 1987). Lack of sufficient information about 4-H activities limits a member’s participation. When members know about an activity and how it can benefit them, they are more likely to take the time to participate. Also, by getting members to interact with their friends will also add to the likelihood of participation. The allocation of funds to produce informational materials focused on particular activities would allow 4-H members to be better informed about happenings beyond the club level. If the 4-H members do not view the activity/event as beneficial in building life skills then they are less likely to attend. In addition to the informational materials, former attendees (Lauver & Little, 2005) of the activities/events should travel to 4-H club meetings, informing members of how they benefited through their attendance. When younger members see the benefits older members have gained through an experience, they want to become part of that experience. The members’

need for affiliation (McClelland, 1987) can be fulfilled through the actual participation in similar events as their fellow members.

The cost of participating in 4-H events/activities limits some 4-H members' ability to be involved (Brennan et al., 2007). Members can overcome many of the barriers associated with participation in an event by simply knowing about the event, feeling as though they are a part of the group (affiliation), and knowing they will gain from the event (achievement). However, the actual financial burden to participation often cannot be as easily overcome. Therefore, opportunities should be provided to members to offset the cost of participation. Various fundraisers could be established at the club level to help members pay for their experiences. By offering more opportunities for 4-H members to earn/win registration fees for county, regional, and state events, members would be encouraged not only to participate in these events, but this would also increase participation in club activities. In addition, Extension educators and 4-H leaders should seek funding from outside sources to assist in providing funding for registration fees.

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