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FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE RE-ENROLLMENT OF YOUTH
AGES NINE THROUGH TWELVE
IN MUSKEGON COUNTY 4-H CLUB PROGRAMS

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Betty A. Shelby

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FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE RE-ENROLLMENT OF YOUTH
AGES NINE THROUGH TWELVE
IN MUSKEGON COUNTY 4-H CLUB PROGRAMS

By

Betty A. Shelby

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE RE-ENROLLMENT OF YOUTH
AGES NINE THROUGH TWELVE
IN MUSKEGON COUNTY 4-H CLUB PROGRAMS

By

Betty A. Shelby

This study was undertaken for the purpose of investigating the major factors that influenced youth ages 9 through 12 to re-enroll or not re-enroll in the Muskegon County 4-H club program in the 1998-1999 program year. The drop in 4-H club membership for youth ages 9 through 12 is a major concern. Studies show (Cantrell, Heinsohn, & Doebler, 1989; Meszaros, 1993) that youth who participate in 4-H activities are more likely to develop lifelong skills in leadership, decision making, and personal development, thus increasing self-esteem and problem-solving skills.

The research design used in this study can be categorized as a descriptive survey methodology in the form of a directly-administered 4-H Club Assessment questionnaire. The researcher established validity and reliability of the data collection instrument. Questions covered such areas as perceptions about 4-H club meetings, 4-H club projects, and experiences related to the youth's decision to remain a member. Other areas covered were characteristics of 4-H leaders, and individuals who influenced youth to re-enroll in the 4-H club program. Also, questions were asked that gave the youth an opportunity to fill-in their responses.

The population for this study consisted of 133 re-enrolled youth and 98 non re-enrolled youth in the 4-H club program in Muskegon County for the 1998-1999 program year. 4-H leaders were recruited to collect data at 4-H club meetings. Because the participants were minors, study consent forms were signed by parents or guardians. Follow-ups were made with the youth who were unable to attend 4-H club meetings and youth who had not re-enrolled in the 4-H club program. The response rate for re-enrolled youth was 77 percent, and non re-enrolled youth, 34 percent.

The data from the 4-H Club Assessment were coded and analyzed using the SPSS/PC+ computer software program. Statistical techniques such as frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, chi-square, t-test, and discriminate analysis were used to analyze date. Open-ended questions were analyzed using qualitative analysis looking for similarities across responses.

In order to determine what influenced youth to participate in the 4-H club program, their input was of utmost importance. Major findings and conclusions from the youths' 4-H Club Assessments were parents, 4-H leaders and friends had the most influence on youth to re-enroll. Two years of membership seemed to be the critical time for youth to re-enroll or not re-enroll in the 4-H club program. The 4-H projects were a major factor in whether youth re-enroll. There were significant differences in the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of the 4-H club members by race and residence.

Early adolescents (ages 9 through 12) want to become more independent and pursue interests to make decisions on their own. This is a time for the youth to explore and experiment with new and expanded interests.

This dissertation is dedicated in the memory of my parents, Elizabeth and Tom Cummings, who encouraged me to continue my education.

I hope this work will inspire my children, Bobby, Sandy, Poochie and Eric to carry this learning torch in their lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States is facing the challenge of saving its youth. Early adolescence (ages 9 through 12) is a time of dramatic changes and these changes are individualized to the youth and his/her environment. Early adolescence is a time of cognitive, social, emotional, moral, and physical growth to develop the self-identity to become healthy adults. Many of the youths' paths to becoming healthy adults are flocked by crime and violence, poor health and nutrition, child neglect and abuse, teenage pregnancy, school failure, substance abuse, depression and suicide among youth (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; Dryfoos, 1990; Lerner, 1995; National Commission on Children, 1991; Schorr, 1988).

Many of the depictions of early adolescents leave the impression that the majority is at serious risk of school failure, juvenile delinquency, adolescent pregnancy, and other woes. This is not the case. Developmentally, about 80 percent do not experience a turbulent early adolescence (Scales, 1991). Undeniably, all the trends point to a growing number and proportion of early adolescents who are in fact at high risk of being under prepared and unsuccessful in the modern social and economic world.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1992) acknowledged that harnessing free time in a constructive manner is one means of providing or enhancing the positive development of youth. Unsupervised youth are twice as likely to engage in risky behaviors. In addition, programs are classified as school-based, faith-based, or

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community-based, i.e. Girls Scouts of America, 4-H, and YMCA. However, regardless of the location, Pittman (1991) and Lerner (1993) believe that youth programs have a tremendous potential to promote positive, adolescent development.

According to Wessel and Wessel (1982), 4-H was created in the early 1900's with boys' and girls' clubs that taught practical farming and homemaking skills to rural youth. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) adopted the four-leaf clover, a symbol of good luck, as the official 4-H club symbol in 1911 (Seevers, Graham, Gamon, & Conklin, 1997). The clover is green, symbolizing the color of growth. The H's on each clover are white, symbolizing the purity of youth. The 4-H program was officially started with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 creating the Cooperative Extension Service. The 4-H program has evolved into a fun, learn-by-doing, research-based, educational program for youth led by volunteer leaders. The 4-H staff provides training and guidance for the 4-H leaders.

The Michigan 4-H Volunteer and Club Programming Committee (1999) stated that the primary purpose of a 4-H club is to support the development of each youth to his/her full potential. The club structure helps 4-H leaders build significant relationships with members over a long period of time. Projects become a means of achieving the primary purpose of positive youth development. The common needs and interests of the youth and adults involved determine the content of a 4-H club program. Members, volunteers, 4-H leaders and parents work together to set the 4-H club program and to establish expectations for everyone involved.

The 4-H clubs are sanctioned and permitted to use the 4-H emblem at the Michigan State University County Extension offices. The 4-H clubs are open to all

without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status or family status (USDA Civil Rights Directives, 1999).

Muskegon County statistics paint a troubling portrait of adolescents. Muskegon County health officials (Chang & Kraus, 1997) set out in the 1996 – 1997 school year to measure local youths' involvement in sex, drugs and violence. The 5455 students in the 8th, 10th, and 12th grades who responded attended public, non-public and private schools in the county. "We did not expect to find these results," Kraus and Chang said, "but something must be done. The youth are involved in sex, drugs and violence in disturbingly frequent rates" (Treutler, 1999). About 2,000 said they had sexual intercourse. One-third of the girls answering "yes" said they had sexual intercourse for the first time at age 12 or younger. Sixty-two percent of 8th graders said they had tried alcohol, compared with the state rate of 58.3 percent. Of the 2,098 eighth-graders surveyed, 7.1 percent said they had used crack or cocaine. The state rate is 5.2 percent. Nearly 11 percent of girls and 7 percent of boys said they are gang members.

Profile of Muskegon County 4-H Youth Programs

According to the ES-237 Enrollment Report, Muskegon County 4-H in 1998-1999 involved 4568 youth in youth development activities throughout the county. Various programs may involve youth who may not be considered "members" of the 4-H club program. Early adolescents (ages 9 through 12) made up 32 percent of the 4-H youth population; 5 to 8 year olds, 41 percent; and older youth, 27 percent. About 9 percent of 4-H youth live on farms, 18 percent live in communities with populations less

than 10,000 and rural; 66 percent are from towns and cities of 10,000 to 50,000; and 7 percent from suburbs.

In the 1998-1999-program year, there were 1153 active youth considered as members in the 4-H club program. Past history shows that the number of youth who re-enroll in the 4-H club program starts to decline at age 12 and continues to decline throughout high school (1998-1999 ES-237 Enrollment Report). It appears that youth are leaving 4-H when they need it the most. As reported by the *4-H Future Focus* (1986), this is at a time when experiential learning is so crucial to youth development. There appears little attraction for individual, project-focused learning within a highly structured, adult dominated 4-H program. Youth feel a need for greater social interaction and independence.

Statement of the Problem

The drop in 4-H membership for youth ages 9 through 12 and older is a concern for many adults. Studies show (Meszaros, 1993) that youth who participate in 4-H activities are more likely to develop lifelong skills in leadership, decision-making, personal and career development, and global understanding. As a result, youth increase self-esteem and problem-solving skills.

In the beginning years of the 4-H program, its goal was to improve farming and farm life. It did not attempt to reach beyond people on farms and in rural areas. During that time the rural population was nearly one-half the total population. In recent years, the rural population is one-fourth the total population (Rasmussen, 1989). With the decline in the farm and rural populations, the 4-H program has moved into urban areas.

Because the roots of the 4-H program are in agriculture and in rural America, many 4-H clubs and programs reflect these traditions. However, agricultural activities may or may not mesh with the experiences of urban youth. For example, the top two 4-H club projects in the Muskegon program are plants and animals, and healthy lifestyle education.

The problem addressed in this study was to identify factors that influence youth, ages 9 through 12, to continue to be active 4-H club members into and through their teenage years. Factors thought to be important are age, residence (rural/urban), gender, race, 4-H project experience, people who influence re-enrollment, 4-H club experiences, attitude towards 4-H experiences and influence of 4-H leaders.

Research Questions

This study was undertaken for the purpose of investigating the major elements that influenced youth ages 9 through 12 to re-enroll in Muskegon County 4-H club programs. The following were the research questions that guided the study:

1. What was the Muskegon County 4-H club youth re-enrollment and non re-enrollment status in the 1998 - 1999 program year?

2. What was the influence of 4-H club meetings on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

3. What was the influence of 4-H club projects on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

4. What was the influence of youth experiences on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

5. What was the influence of 4-H leaders on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

6. What were other reasons for youth to re-enroll or not re-enroll in the 4-H club program?

7. Who were the people that influenced youth to re-enroll in the 4-H club program?

8. Were there differences in the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by race, age, residence, and gender?

Questioning the youth, ages 9 through 12, about their ideas on 4-H activities, project experience, and people who influence them to re-enroll, may help them develop greater ownership and create more positive expectations of the 4-H club program. Furthermore, by asking for youth input, relationships can be built which are beneficial to the implementation of new 4-H programs.

Need for the Study

Acquiring life competencies and skills continues to be basic to youth's involvement in 4-H. But today's youth face a challenge of growing up in a world that is constantly changing. Many youth are not prepared to meet the future challenges. Changes in family types, demographics, technology, values, and education greatly impact the daily lives of our youth. The 4-H program is known for being ready to meet the needs of today's youth. However, since 1976, according to the *4-H Future Focus* (1986) enrollment in 4-H has declined, with a steady drop in youth participation between ages 11 and 12 and continuing into the teenage years. This is a time when experiential learning is

so crucial to youth development. These changes make continued research necessary for the 4-H club program to continue to be a relevant, effective youth program.

The Lisbeth Schorr's (1988) study of community-based prevention programs, Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage, underscored the premise that the years of early adolescence represents the last genuine chance for primary prevention of the youth problems that concern us. Youth development strategies focus on giving youth the chance to build skills, exercise leadership, form relationships with caring adults, and help their communities.

It is important to find out the reasons why some 4-H club members do not re-enroll, while others re-enroll in the 4-H club program. The 4-H staff should know what factors influence 4-H club members to continue 4-H club work. The 4-H staff can be more effective in meeting the 4-H club member's developmental needs and emerging interests (Heinsohn & Lewis, 1995). Results of the study will have implications for 4-H in the areas of youth development, increasing enrollments and maintenance of the 4-H club program. The 4-H staff will be able to identify changes needed in the 4-H club program.

Minimal research has been done nationally on this topic and no research could be found in Michigan. Identifying the factors in Muskegon County will help other 4-H county staff with similar populations plan and conduct more effective programs.

Assumptions

This is an important area to study. Effective strategies for enabling local organizations to attract youth are not well understood and are the exceptions rather than the rule (Heath & McLaughlin, 1991).

According to research, some programs attract many youth, and others attract very few youth. Practitioners from diverse youth serving organizations say that a major problem they confront is attracting and sustaining the involvement of youth (Heath & McLaughlin, 1991).

According to research, influences on youth's dropout/participation in programs are staff characteristics, program goals, program activities, community, peers and home and parents. The researchers (Dryfoos, 1990; Schorr, 1988; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; Hughes & Ong, 1995; Search Institute, 1994) have identified the common descriptors of staff characteristics, parents, program activities, and home and community for successful programs.

In order to determine what influences youth to participate in programs, their input is of utmost importance. It is logical to ask youth for their input to determine what influences them to participate in programs.

This research will study the youth, ages 9 through 12, who are re-enrolled or have not re-enrolled in the 4-H club program in Muskegon County for the 1998-1999-program year. They will offer their perspectives on successful youth programs. This explains the kind of research, the type of youth in the study, where the research will take place, and youth perspectives on successful programs.

Operational Definitions

Early Adolescent: Nine through 12-year-old youth.

4-H Youth: Re-enrolled members and youth who did not re-enroll ages 9 to 12 in the 1998-1999-program year.

4-H Member: A currently enrolled youth in a 4-H club.

4-H Dropout or Non Re-enrolled: A youth who was once a 4-H member, but did not re-enroll in the 1998-1999-program year.

4-H Leader: The adult who works with the members, teen leaders, and parents in a 4-H club and has the over-all leadership for the 4-H club.

4-H Youth Agent: Professional staff person for Michigan State University Extension who works with the 4-H program.

Change: Any significant alteration in the status quo, which is intended to benefit the youth involved.

4-H Club Member Enrollment: All of 4-H club members must officially register each program year.

Re-enrollment: A 4-H club member that fills out membership forms for the next year.

Successful Program: 4-H youth participate in positive development activities in structured environment.

Influences on Youth Participation: Program activities, 4-H leader characteristics, parents and program goals are the concepts that are thought to influence youth participation. Each concept has attributes that describe and influence positively or negatively the participation of youth.

A Model 4-H Club Includes the Following (Michigan 4-H Volunteer and Club Programming committee, 1999):

- At least five youth members from two or more families.

- One or more caring adult volunteers working with members, teen leaders, and parents.

- A structure that gives members the primary responsibility for making decisions and operating the club.

- An organized, fun and educational program planned by members, volunteers and parents.

- Six or more club meetings during the year.

- Involvement in the community such as through community service.

- Personal evaluation and recognition of progress on individual and group goals.

Overview

The purpose of this study was to quantitatively examine the internal (4-H club leaders, club activities, re-enrolled/non re-enrolled youth characteristics, age, gender) and contextual process (4-H club structure, rural/urban, environment) of the 4-H club program in Muskegon County for youth ages 9 to 12 from the youths' perspectives. In addition, the program assets and limitations were identified by the youth who re-enroll or did not re-enroll in the program. Jacobs (1988) and Schorr (1988) said there is the significance of the process of designing and delivering a program and of the environment within which a program was implemented. According to Kretzmann and McKnight

(1993), communities are the contexts in which most youth programs are implemented, and communities are multifaceted, complex and unique from one another.

A 4-H club program that is effective in one community may not necessarily be effective in another community. Therefore, a 4-H club program interacts within the context in which it is placed. Addressing the multifaceted nature, complexity, and uniqueness of a program's context is important to understanding the functioning and effectiveness of a particular program.

In addition to 4-H club program context, if an understanding of a program's effectiveness and functioning is to be accomplished, the relationship among program components must be described (Schorr, 1988). Process evaluation is the description of the relationship among program components over time. Program components are characteristics of program staff and participants, activities, and goals. The systematic relationship among these components across time is a process (Lerner, 1986). By assessing processes and context, movement towards program goals and/or impacts by the identified users of the program can be understood (Jacobs, 1988).

Chapter I contained an introduction to the study and a profile of Muskegon County 4-H youth programs. A statement of the problem, research questions, need for the study, assumptions, and operational definitions followed this. An overview of the chapter was presented.

Chapter II was a review of literature relevant to the study. Topics that were discussed included essential components of effective youth programs, early adolescent development and theory, and the history of the 4-H club program. Literatures on the

research regarding youth involvement in 4-H club programs were reviewed. The summary ended the chapter.

Chapter III explained the methods and procedures used to identify factors thought to be critical to influence youth ages 9 through 12 to continue to be an active 4-H club member. This chapter included a description of the design, population, and instrumentation of the study. Also, an explanation of the principles and procedures used for collecting and analyzing the data collected was given.

The results of the data analyses were presented in Chapter IV as findings. Chapter V included an overview of the study, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Recommendations for future research, reflections, and summary also were given.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

During the last decade, researchers and program developers have begun to outline effective prevention efforts for youth, families and communities. The 4-H club program in Muskegon County of youth ages 9 through 12 was selected as the study group to determine the factors why youth re-enroll or do not re-enroll in the program. This review provides an overview of the essential components of effective youth programs: the historical review of the 4-H club program, early adolescent development and theory, and research regarding youth involvement in 4-H club programs.

Youth Programs

Hughes and Ong (1995) in *Effective Prevention Programs for Children* provide an overview for effective prevention efforts for youth. The important characteristics of effective youth programs are identified as the following:

1. Build the youth program on theoretical model and research evidence.

2. Be sensitive to environmental and cultural contexts.

3. Address the risk factors and assets and provide protection from harm.

4. Be concerned with changing institutions and environments.

5. Create programs of sufficient intensity and duration.

Successful programs (those that appear to have potential for changing behavior outcomes) share a number of common elements. Researchers such as Dryfoos (1990) and Schorr (1988), as well as the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1992), believe that "successful" youth programs have common components. Of these, the importance of providing individual attention to youth and the necessity for developing broad community wide multi-agency collaborative approaches appear to have the widest application. Staff and volunteers can play these roles in paying attention to the youth's specific needs. It is perceived that to change the behavior of youth, a number of different kinds of programs and services must be in place.

Staff and volunteers need to have the time, training and skills necessary to build relationships of trust and respect with youth and families. They should provide interesting activities that allow for opportunities for youth to socialize, learn, make new friends and have new experiences. This should all take place in an organizational climate that is flexible and supportive of the program's functioning (Dryfoos, 1990; Schorr, 1988).

The program's setting should be in a safe environment where youth can be themselves (Dryfoos, 1990; Schorr, 1988). The program should have clear rules and high expectations for behavior. The youth should have input and involvement in making decisions for the goals and outcomes. Opportunities where youth can think about and plan for the future should be incorporated into the program.

Programs that pay attention to cultural and life-style diversity as well as individual diversity are most likely to succeed (Dryfoos, 1990; Schorr, 1988). Parent

involvement is of utmost importance. It appears that the more defined the roles are for the parents, the more apt they are to be involved.

History of the 4-H Club Program

At the turn of the nineteenth century, 4-H began as agricultural and domestic science clubs. Youth attended club meetings hosted by demonstration agents and learned skills in hands-on experiences. At competitions, the youth would exhibit products of these meetings, such as field corn and canned tomatoes (Wessel & Wessel, 1982).

As Americans faced racial discrimination questions among its people, 4-H faced the same desegregation decisions as well. The last segregated 4-H camp for Blacks was held in 1961. The 4-H program became open to all youth ages 9 through 19 regardless of race (Wessel & Wessel, 1982).

As the populations of people moved to the cities, so did the urban membership of the 4-H program. Following a Ford Foundation study of 4-H in fifteen metropolitan areas, the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy gave its endorsement of urban programs in 1965 (Wessel & Wessel, 1982). The shift to an urban population has presented a challenge to the 4-H program. Because the 4-H roots are in rural America and in agriculture, many 4-H clubs reflect these traditions. Agricultural activities have found it difficult at best to mesh with the experiences of urban youth.

Since the beginning of the 4-H club program, 4-H has depended on volunteer leaders. A significant challenge has been the decline in the volunteer base both in time and numbers. Because of this, 4-H has had to deal with demographic changes in

American society, i.e. diverse society, dual earner households, and changing family structures (Rasmussen, 1989).

For the youth who participate in 4-H clubs in Muskegon County, the 4-H club structure becomes a part of the contextual environment for positive youth development. The 4-H club youth range in age from five through nineteen years old, and meet in schools, community centers, homes, barns or churches once a month. When the Muskegon County Youth Fair approaches, they meet weekly.

The 4-H clubs provide their members with an opportunity to feel socialized to the group. The 4-H pledge is recited by the youth together with appropriate gestures to start 4-H club meetings. Youth learn social skills, parliamentary procedures, and leadership skills. The 4-H club meetings have a business meeting as well as an educational program and fun time. The teen officers in the 4-H club lead the business meetings although some 4-H leaders play this role. The educational programs consist of presentations or demonstrations by 4-H club members or the 4-H leaders. The educational program centers on the 4-H project, which is self-directed in a content-based area. The 4-H club members "learn by doing." Content skills are subject matter skills that rely on the research-based, and age appropriate resources of Michigan State University Extension 4-H youth programs.

The average 4-H club had between ten and fifteen members with one or two adults serving as volunteer 4-H leaders. Most parents of ages 9 through 12 attend the meetings and help the 4-H leaders with the different tasks during the meetings. The 4-H clubs meet in the evenings, after school, or on weekends.

The youth who join 4-H clubs agree to work on projects with adult supervision, to set goals and keep records, and to explain and show to others what they have learned. The youth demonstrate their accomplishments at the Muskegon County Youth Fair and the Mall Show downtown where they receive trophies and ribbons.

Early Adolescent Development

Early adolescence is a time of cognitive, social, physical, emotional and moral growth when youth develop the self-identify and the ability they will need to become healthy contributors to society as adults (Cobb, 1998; Dryfoos, 1990). Even though every early adolescent experiences these changes, they are at different rates and are specific to the individual because these changes are not in isolation from the context or the environment of the youth (Cobb, 1998; Lerner, 1986). Even when youth belong to the same age group, very specific characteristics distinguish one youth from another. Each has his/her own intellects, abilities, physical capacities, and levels of emotional maturity.

Physical Growth

Early adolescence is a unique period in human development. It is characterized by the dramatic transformation that occurs in youth as a result of puberty. Puberty brings about unprecedented physical and biological changes in youth. These changes strongly affect early adolescent behavior, as well as emotional, social and intellectual development. On the average, puberty may be starting for the early-maturing girls at age 9, while boys' hormonal changes begin about two years later for them (Caissy, 1994).

Physical involvement by the early adolescent should be encouraged. These youth like the movement of active sports like ball games and swimming. Speakers and demonstrators will get more attention if they display things that can be seen and handled (Karns & Myers-Walls, 1996).

Thinking Growth

Youth in early adolescence are beginning to think logically and symbolically. They still think in terms of concrete objects. If ideas are related to something youth can do or experience with their senses, they can handle ideas better. They are moving toward understanding abstract ideas as youth begin to deal with ideas, and think of things as black and white (Karns & Myers-Walls, 1996).

Social Growth

Early adolescents like to be in an organized group with others similar to themselves. They are beginning to identify with peers, but they still look to an adult for guidance. The freedom and responsibility granted to early adolescents by parents and society also contribute to social changes. They are allowed to do more things and go more places. Decision–making skills are developed as parents move away from dictating directions to giving reassurance and support.

Emotional Growth

With all of these changes in early adolescents' lives, sometimes they feel unsure of themselves and need support from adults. One day they may act as a child, and the next day as an adult. They experience tremendous fluctuations in their emotions (Caissy, 1994).

Early adolescents have a strong need to feel accepted and worthwhile. Trying to cope with constant change and struggling with identity formation, they are insecure and vulnerable (Caissy, 1994). Comparing success of others is difficult at this age. It can cause problems in dealing with peers at a time when they are trying to understand and build friendships (Karns & Myers-Walls, 1996).

Usually, youth join organizations as children and participate throughout their elementary school years. As they move towards early adolescence, their participation in youth programs often declines dramatically (Heinsohn & Lewis, 1995). If these programs do not meet their needs, early adolescence tells us youth leaving these programs is a part of the developmental process.

Making friends, being with peers, and being part of an organized group are important for children and early adolescents to meet their needs and to pursue their interests. Children and early adolescents make few decisions as parents determine the experiences and activities their children will do (Cobb, 1998).

Adolescents, on the other hand, want to become more independent and pursue interests to make decisions on their own. It is a time for exploring and experimenting with new or expanded interests. They participate voluntarily. Youth organizations that are flexible and want to make changes to reflect changing early adolescent interests will continue to attract and retain them (Heinsohn & Lewis, 1995).

Adolescent Theory

Piaget and other developmental theorists (Lerner, 1993; Piaget 1977) widely acknowledged the cognitive achievements of adolescence, treating them as central marks

of the period. Researchers and interventionists in adolescent education focus so little on the cognitive aspects, and so much on the social and physiological aspects of adolescence – the "storm and stress" (Lerner, 1993).

Piaget's theory of intelligence illustrates the central assumptions of the organismic model, and the constructive perspective. A transition that occurs during early adolescence is the shift in cognitive development from concrete to formal-logical thought (Piaget, 1977). This enables a youth to construct various logical possibilities or formulate cause and effect about possible relationships. Formal-logical thought is important not only in the development of problem solving and negotiation skills, but also for development of a sense of competency, connectedness, and identity (CSR, Inc., 1997). Piaget (1977) assumed that the early adolescent actively constructs what he/she knows of the world. He believed in the distinct stages in the development of thought. The stages of thought for early adolescents are 7 through 11 years; concrete operation, and 11 years to adulthood; formal operational.

Social learning theory provides a perspective of how behavior is acquired, maintained, and modified by early adolescents in society. Bandura (Cobb, 1998), a social learning theorist, proposed that behavior is shaped through modeling, or observing behaviors, along with positive reinforcement to behaviors. Acquiring and improving skills occur when the early adolescent is exposed to opportunities, or is provided with self-instruction experiences.

Erikson (Cobb, 1998) is known for developing the psychosocial stages of development. Each of the first four stages equips early adolescents to meet the central challenge of achieving an ego identity. Trust establishes the confidence in early

adolescents and in others that is needed to begin the task. Rather than follow goals set by others, autonomy gives self-direction and purpose to establish the ability to set goals for themselves. Initiative allows early adolescents to explore the options that open up with adolescence. Industry allows the early adolescents to realistically evaluate these options and select the ones they will commit themselves (Erikson, 1968). The establishment of identity involves the individual in a succession of commitments to life goals that serve to define the self (Cobbs, 1998).

Research Regarding Youth Involvement in 4-H Club Programs

One study in particular has bearing for this research. In 1982, Hartley designed a study in West Virginia of 776 club members to examine the factors and characteristics related to the re-enrollment and dropout rates of younger first year 4-H club members ages 8 through 11. Hartley felt that the dropouts of the first year 4-H club members reduce the length of participation by youth in the 4-H program. Program goals and objectives cannot be met if 4-H members drop out after their first year. The sources of information to determine factors associated with re-enrollment were responses from 4-H enrollees, dropouts and nonmembers. Also, perceptions were from 4-H club leaders and Extension agents with the examination of the Extension office and school records.

The research of Hartley (1982) was extensive, covering a variety of factors thought to affect 4-H re-enrollment or dropout. One fact not specifically addressed by Hartley was the volunteer 4-H leader. The major findings and conclusions of the Hartley study were that first year 4-H members who rejoined, attended more club meetings and took part in 4-H events, more often than did first year dropouts. The parents of 4-H

enrollees were more supportive than parents of dropouts according to ratings by 4-H members and 4-H club leaders. The youth did want to belong to organized youth groups. The enrollees were more apt to finish their project than dropouts. The older 4-H club members were when they enrolled the first time, the less likely they were to continue. No significant differences were indicated among re-enrollees, dropouts, and nonmembers as to their school achievement scores, reading scores and family economic levels. The gender of 4-H club member, 4-H leader tenure, desired types of recognition, and preferences about activities were not associated with re-enrollment in this study.

Caplinger (1984) in her thesis titled <u>Factors Related to Reenrollment in 4-H Eight through Twelve Year Old Members</u> for the Ohio State University purposed was to identify specific factors, which are important to re-enrollment. She compared re-enrolled members in the 4-H program with non re-enrolled. A mailed questionnaire to a sample size of 400 taken from the population, which consisted of all the traditional 4-H club members in Ohio in 1982, ages 8 through12, was the method for collecting data.

Caplinger (1984) found a substantial relationship between years of club membership and the re-enrollment of 4-H club members. Factors that had moderate associations with re-enrollment were the following: sibling enrollments; parents' attendance at 4-H club meetings; county fair participation; and attendance at 4-H club meetings. The remaining factors investigated had a low or negligible association with re-enrollment in 4-H.

Astroth (1985) in *The Challenge of Retaining 4-H Members* in southeast Kansas recognized they had retention, not enrollment problems. New families were surveyed to find out what was causing the high turnover rates. Most indicated that one or more of the

following were major factors in leaving the 4-H club program: 1. Families moved 2. Members lacked an understanding of the 4-H programs (its goals, activities, events, and time commitment) 3. Members never felt welcome or a part of the group. 4. Project groups did not meet often and/or frequently enough to satisfy youth. 5. Members had conflicting time commitments.

The purpose of Popken's (1986) thesis titled <u>Factors Affecting the Reenrollment and Dropout Rates in Wyoming 4-H Clubs as Perceived by Younger First Year 4-H Members and Their Parents</u> for the University of Wyoming was to determine factors affecting the re-enrollment and dropout rates of younger first year 4-H members in Wyoming 4-H Clubs. She focused upon the work of Hartley (1982), who studied variables that may affect re-enrollment and dropout among younger first year members. Two surveys, one for the 4-H members and one for the parents, were developed and mailed to a random sample of 270 youth who enrolled in a Wyoming 4-H club in 1984-1985 at age eight and either re-enrolled or dropped out the following year. Their parents were sent a similar survey. The survey questions focused on the role of the 4-H leader, the club experience, the project experience, and other 4-H experiences. Demographic questions were included on the parent's form.

After reviewing Popken's (1986) study, each area may be seen as interconnected and contributing to the whole of the 4-H experience. Efforts to provide a well-rounded and coordinated learning experience should be goals for 4-H programming.

Studies show that youth who participate in 4-H club activities are more likely to develop life skills in leadership, personal development, and citizenship. Hartley (1982) suggested as a means to keeping 4-H club members interested, designing activities to

address the needs and expectations of members. Others (Acosta & Holt, 1991; Butler & Bowman, 1998) have promoted improving 4-H programs by assessing the needs of youth.

Butler and Bowman (1998) saw the value of including youth in defining, developing, and implementing 4-H programs. The survey questionnaire was adapted from the "4-H Senior Needs Assessment" questionnaire developed by Acosta and Holt (1991). One hundred fourteen students from four junior high schools in Ouachita Parish in Louisiana were surveyed. The results from this study have been useful in improving the 4-H curriculum; in helping the advisory committee set priorities; and in program development. Youth are more likely to actively participate in programs that meet their needs. In order to find out their needs, they must be asked for their insights.

For the past five years, the Muskegon County ES-237 Annual 4-H Enrollment Report (1994-1999) shows that 4-H programs do not reach the majority of early adolescent youth. Youth find time for the programs that interest them. Individual project focused learning within a highly structured, adult-dominated program has little appeal to early adolescents who want greater social interaction and have the need to become more independent.

Summary

Van Horn, Flanagan, and Thomson (1999) stated that if the 4-H club program continues to meet the challenges of changing times, it would remain a vital youth development organization in the future. If 4-H wants to be a positive force in the future, it needs to be progressive and adaptive to new trends and ideas. The challenge is to meet

the changing needs of today's youth while still maintaining a commitment to the historical strengths and philosophy of the 4-H club program.

The literature review is an overview of the essential components of effective youth programs, early adolescent development and theory and the historical review of the 4-H club program to provide a better understanding of this study. There has been very little research done in recent years on factors affecting re-enrollment of 4-H club members.

The Muskegon County 4-H club program has a turnover rate of 38 percent for club membership during the early adolescent years, and an even higher rate for the adolescent years (ES-237 Enrollment Report, 1998-1999). It is critical to do research in this area to enhance the 4-H club program to better meet the needs of current and future members to retain them.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methods and procedures used to identify factors thought to be critical to influence youth ages 9 through 12 to continue to be an active 4-H club member. This chapter includes a description of the design, population, and instrumentation of the study. Also, an explanation of the principles and procedures used for collecting and analyzing the data collected was given.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the factors as perceived by youth ages 9 through 12 that influence re-enrollment in Muskegon county 4-H club programs. The questions that guided the research are the following:

1. What was the Muskegon County 4-H club youth re-enrollment and non re-enrollment status in the 1998 -1999 program year?

2. What was the influence of 4-H club meetings on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

3. What was the influence of 4-H club projects on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

4. What was the influence of youth experiences on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

5. What was the influence of 4-H leaders on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

6. What were other reasons for youth to re-enroll or not re-enroll in the 4-H club program?

7. Who were the people that influenced youth to re-enroll in the 4-H club program?

8. Were there differences in the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by race, age, resident, and gender?

The Design

The research design used in this study can be categorized as a descriptive survey methodology in the form of a directly-administered 4-H Club Assessment questionnaire (Appendix A). Survey research is one of the most common forms of research engaged in by educational and social science researchers (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Descriptive research studies are designed to obtain information concerning the current status with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. The data collected from the completed 4-H Club Assessments were used to describe how the members of the study population distributed themselves for different variables.

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1996), the difficulties involved in survey research are: (1) making sure the questions asked are clear and not misleading; (2) getting people to answer questions thoughtfully and honestly; and (3) getting enough questionnaires completed and returned so a meaningful analyses can be made.

The advantage of survey research was that it had the potential to provide information from quite a large sample of individuals. The researcher wanted to describe the characteristics of youth ages 9 through 12 who had been or were currently re-enrolled

in the 4-H club program. The directly-administered 4-H Club Assessment questionnaire was an inexpensive way to gather information in a short period of time with a high return rate.

Population

Population refers to the entire group of individuals for which the findings of a study apply. A survey that covers the entire population of interest is referred to as a census (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996). The population for this study consisted of 278 youth ages 9 through 12 who were active members or had dropped out of the Muskegon County 4-H club program in 1998-1999 as reported in the ES-237 Enrollment Report. The accessible population, the population to which the researcher had access, was 231 youth. The difference between the 278 youth and the 231 youth was accounted for in: duplicates of names; youth moving from the area; youth that did not meet the criteria; and, non re-enrolled youth without telephones.   The survey population consisted of 133 re-enrolled youth and 98 non re-enrolled youth. Because the numbers were low, and the difficulty of getting surveys from the youth that did not re-enroll, it was decided to do a census study where all of the youth would be surveyed.

Instrumentation

The study utilized a survey in the form of a directly–administered 4-H Club Assessment questionnaire for data collection. The questions in the 4-H Club Assessment followed the research questions. Questions covered such areas as perceptions about 4-H club meetings, 4-H club projects, and experiences related to the youth's decision to

remain a member. Other areas covered were characteristics of 4-H leaders, reasons for youth dropping out or staying in the 4-H club program because of people who had influenced youth to re-enroll. The last part of the questionnaire asked for demographic information.

The 4-H Club Assessment questionnaire was developed after a thorough review of literature, advice from people working in the youth development area, and the researcher's experiences as a 4-H youth agent. Because of the youths' short attention span, the questionnaire was designed to be completed in 20 minutes.

The researcher established validity and reliability of the data collection instrument. According to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1996), validity is the extent to which a survey instrument measures what it intends to measure. Three types of validity were established in this study: content, construct, and face validity. The panel of experts provided assistance in addressing all three types of validity. The 4-H Club Assessment questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of experts consisting of: an elementary school teacher at Angell School in Muskegon; a 4-H youth agent in adjoining county; a 4-H leader in adjoining county; a 4-H youth development associate at Michigan State University; and the children, youth, and family evaluation specialist at Michigan State University. Panel members were asked to comment on the 4-H Club Assessment in regards to the following:

1. Completeness, clarity and relevance of the items to the purpose of the study.

2. Reading level for youth ages 9 through 12.

3. Format, layout and general appearance of the instrument.

4. General suggestions and comments.

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency which an instrument measures whatever it is measuring (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1996). The question raised was whether the 4-H Club Assessment instrument developed for this study consistently yielded the same results under the same conditions with the same group of youth.

The reliability of the 4-H Club Assessment was determined by conducting a pilot test using 20 youth in the 4-H club program in Newaygo County with a population similar to that found in Muskegon County. A reliability coefficient test was run with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS/PC+) using Cronbach alpha. Cronbach alpha is used when measures have multiple–scored items, such as a Likert-type scale (Ary, Jacobs & Razavich, 1996). The Cronbach alpha for scales related to questions 1 (4-H club meetings); question 2 (4-H club projects); and question 3 (youth experiences) were .74, .82, and .77 respectively. Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) stated that for research purposes, a useful rule is that reliability should be at least .70, and preferably higher. The reliability coefficient for questions 1, 2, and 3 was found to be acceptable for the purpose of this study.

Data Collection

A letter of support for the research study was written by the Interim Assistant Vice Provost and Associate Director for Michigan State University Extension (Appendix B). She stated that this research will be valuable to Michigan 4-H youth program development as staff are addressing the issues of re-enrollment, length of time youth stay in the program, and how to retain youth in the 4-H youth experience.

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) reviewed the project and advised that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appeared to be adequately protected. The methods to obtain informed consent were appropriate. The UCRIHS approved this project (Appendix B).

Information about the study appeared in the 4-H newsletter (Appendix C) which goes out to all 4-H club member families. It was emphasized that families who had 4-H club members between and including the ages of 9 through 12 in the 1998-1999 program year would be contacted by the 4-H leader and the researcher. The newsletter stated the significance of the study and the importance of the parents/guardians giving permission for their youth to participate in the study.

Youth possess a potential wealth of information. A skillfully crafted instrument allows for the accessing of knowledge that better enables the researcher to understand the world of the early adolescent. The 4-H Club Assessments were directly–administered for self-reporting in a non-threatening 4-H club meeting or in the re-enrollee's or non re-enrollee's home. The directly–administered instrument was used as it was administered to a group of people assembled at a certain place for a specific purpose (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996).

According to Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1996), the main advantage of the directly-administered questionnaire is the high response rate. Other advantages are the low costs, and the fact that the researcher is present to provide assistance or answer questions. The disadvantage is that the researcher is usually restricted in terms of where and when the questionnaires can be administered. Also, because the sample is usually quite specific, the findings are generalizable only to the survey population.

Since the participants were minors, the 4-H leaders collected study consent forms (Appendix D) signed by parents or guardians. Arrangements were made with the 4-H leaders for the researcher to collect data at 4-H club meetings. The input of the youth will remain confidential. The youth will remain anonymous in any report of research findings. The 4-H Club Assessment had an identification number that enabled the researcher to check the youth's name off the list when it was completed. The list of names will be discarded. The youth's names will not be placed on the 4-H Club Assessment.

If the 4-H Club Assessment questionnaire was returned, the youth's name was entered into a drawing for an AM/FM Stereo Cassette/CD Player Boom Box held at a 4-H Council meeting. This was an incentive for the youth to complete and return the 4-H Club Assessment. The researcher met with 21 4-H clubs. Follow-up was made with the youth who were unable to attend their club meeting.

The researcher was informed by 4-H leaders about youth who had not re-enrolled in their 4-H club. The 4-H leader and researcher contacted them when possible. Arrangements were made to have the 4-H Club Assessments filled out by the youth who had not re-enrolled in the 4-H club. The 21 4-H club visits and 33 follow-up visits with youth who had not re-enrolled in the program took place in February and March of 2000. This was a good time to make the 4-H club visits, because youth were just beginning to get busy with fair.

For re-enrolled youth, there were 102 useable 4-H Club Assessments collected out of a possible 133. For the youth who had not re-enrolled, there were 33 usable 4-H Club Assessments collected out of a possible 98. The response rate for re-enrolled youth was

77 percent and for the non re-enrolled youth, 34 percent. The researcher tried to contact the total list of non re-enrolled youth. Many of them could not be reached, and others no longer had an interest in the 4-H club program.

Data Analysis

The data from the 4-H Club Assessment were coded and analyzed using the SPSS/PC+ computer software program. In order to detect coding or data entry errors, the data were first submitted to frequency counts. Errors were checked and necessary corrections were made in the data file.

The first part of the analysis consisted of describing the enrollment status of the youth and how many were surveyed. The second part determined the demographic characteristics of the survey population. Considering demographic variables, frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency were generated as appropriate. Cross-tabulations were used when comparing the enrollment status of the youth and demographic characteristics where appropriate. A chi-square test (Cramer's V) was used to determine association with years of membership and continued re-enrollment.

The questions in the 4-H Club Assessment whether perceptions about question 1 (4-H club meetings); question 2 (4-H club projects); and question 3 (youth experiences) related to their decision to remain a member were each analyzed by sub-questions using t-tests. T-tests were performed to see if there was a difference for youth who re-enrolled or did not re-enroll in the 4-H club program. Mean and scale-mean scores were determined using 1.Strongly disagree; 2. Disagree; 3.Neither agree or disagree; 4. Agree;

and 5. Strongly agree scale for the sub-questions. Three new variables (scale mean questions 1, 2, and 3) were established for questions 1 (4-H club meetings), 2 (4-H club projects), and 3 (youth experiences).

A discriminate analysis was run with the 3 scale means (question 1 (4-H club meetings), question 2 (4-H club projects) and question 3 (youth experiences)) and whether the youth had re-enrolled or not re-enrolled. Discriminant analysis is a statistical procedure related to regression. It uses a number of predictor variables to classify subjects into two or more distinct groups, such as re-enrolled and non re-enrolled youth (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996). Re-enrolled and non re-enrolled were the dependent variables. The factors were independent variables.

To determine whether characteristics of the 4-H leaders influenced youth participation, cross-tabulations were completed for question 5 (4-H leader in your club), and re-enrolled and non re-enrolled youth. Frequencies for only re-enrolled youth and the people who encouraged them to re-enroll were computed.

Chi-square tests were run to determine if there were differences in the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by race, age, residence, and gender. Chi-square is a test for differences in categorical data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996).

The open-ended questions revealed what the youth liked about 4-H; why they dropped out; what would influence them to return; and other comments. These questions were analyzed using qualitative analysis looking for similarities across responses.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to:

1. Male and female youth in the County of Muskegon, State of Michigan, who were ages 9 through 12 in the 1998-1999 ES-237 Annual 4-H Youth Enrollment Report.

2. Muskegon County only, and the results are not intended to be generalized to any other population.

3. The capacity to locate youth who have not re-enrolled in the 4-H club program.

4. The perceptions of youth and their understanding of the questions asked on the survey.

5. The possibility that the researcher's experiences as a former 4-H youth agent, and, currently a county extension director with youth responsibilities may be a source of bias.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The data collected from the 4-H Club Assessments in the study were analyzed according to the procedures described in Chapter III. The findings are presented in this chapter. The discussion of findings was in the order of the research questions, which guided this study. The findings in this chapter are organized under the following headings:

1. 4-H club youth re-enrollment and non re-enrollment status 1998-1999.

2. Influence of 4-H club meetings on re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club youth.

3. Influence of 4-H club projects on re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club youth.

4. Influence of youth experiences on re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club youth.

5. Influence of 4-H club meetings, 4-H club projects, and 4-H experiences on re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club youth.

6. Influence of 4-H leaders on re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club youth.

7. Other reasons youth re-enroll or not re-enroll.

8. People who influenced youth to re-enroll.

9. Differences in re-enrollment and non re-enrollment by race, age, residence , and gender of youth.

10. Comments on 4-H program or 4-H Club Assessment.

Follow-up with Re-enrolled and Non Re-enrolled Youth

Follow-ups were made, by the researcher and 4-H leaders, with youth who were unable to attend the 4-H club meeting. When possible the researcher, working with the 4-H leader, contacted the parents of the youth who were non re-enrollees in the 4-H club program. A total of 98 non re-enrolled youth were in the survey population. Thirty-three completed the 4-H Club Assessment. Thirty-seven could not be reached by telephone. Parents (15) communicated that the youth had had a bad experience with 4-H and they did not want their youth to be in the survey. Thirteen said they were too busy with other things to have their youth complete the 4-H Club Assessment.

4-H Club Youth Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment Status 1998-1999
Response Rate

The first research question of this study sought to discover, "What was the Muskegon County 4-H club youth re-enrollment and non re-enrollment status in the 1998-1999 program year?" The survey population was 231 youth of which 133 were re-enrolled youth and 98 were non re-enrolled youth in the 4-H club program. Table 1 shows that there were 102 (77 percent) 4-H Club Assessments completed from re-enrolled youth and 33 (34 percent) 4-H Club Assessments completed from non re-enrolled youth. The number of youth not responding was 31 for the re-enrolled and 65

for the non re-enrolled. More than twice the number of non re-enrolled youth did not

respond, compared to the re-enrolled youth.

Table 1:   **Response Rate of Survey Population**

YOUTH	N Survey Population	%	N Responding	%	N Non Responding	%
Re-enrolled	133	58	102	76	31	32
Non Re-enrolled	98	42	33	24	65	68
Total	N=231	100	N=135	100	N=96	100

Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic variables appropriate for this study were gender, race, age,

years enrolled, and residence.

Gender

As shown in Table 2, the non re-enrolled youth are almost equally represented in

the gender category with 17 boys and 16 girls. The re-enrolled youth are represented

with twice as many girls (68) as boys (34).

Table 2:   **Enrollment Status of Boy and Girl Respondents in Muskegon County 4-H Club Programs Ages 9 through 12 in 1998-1999 Program Year.**

Gender	Re-enrolled		Non Re-enrolled	
	N	%	N	%
Boy	34	33.3	17	51.5
Girl	68	66.7	16	48.5
Total	102	100	33	100

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Race

African American/Black and Hispanic youth represented 50 percent of the non re-enrolled category (Table 3). Re-enrolled youth represented 17.7 percent. There are no native American or Asian/Pacific Islanders represented in the study.

Table 3: **Enrollment Status of Respondents by Race in Muskegon County 4-H Club Program Ages 9 through 12 in 1998-1999 Program Year (N=135)**

Race	Re-enrolled		Non Re-enrolled	
	N	%	N	%
African American/Black	7	6.9	11	34.4
Caucasian/White	80	78.4	16	50.0
Hispanic	11	10.8	5	15.6
Mixed Heritage	4	3.9		
Total	102	100	32	100

Age

Age of the youth in the study ranged from 9 through 12 years with a mean of 10.15 years and standard deviation of 1.14 years. Age nine had the largest numbers of respondents who re-enrolled (40) and non re-enrolled (17). Age nine represents 51.5 percent of the respondents for the non re-enrolled youth (Table 4).

Table 4: **Enrollment Status of Respondents in Muskegon County 4-H Club Program Ages 9 through 12 in 1998-1999 Program Year**

Age	Re-enrolled		Non Re-enrolled	
	N	%	N	%
9	40	39.2	17	51.5
10	18	17.6	4	12.1
11	26	25.6	9	27.3
12	18	17.6	3	9.1
Total	102	100	33	100

Mean = 10.15 (SD=1.14)

Years Enrolled

As shown in Table 5, 15 youth which was 45.5 percent of the non re-enrolled category, dropped in their first year. Thirteen, non re-enrolled youth (39.4 percent), left the 4-H program in their second year. The second, third, fourth, and fifth years of enrollment for the re-enrolled youth comprised 91.7 percent of them.

A chi-square test (Cramer's V) was used to determine association with years of membership and continued re-enrollment. Findings in Table 5 showed Cramer's V test of .65 indicated a high association.

Table 5: Enrollment Status of Respondents by Number of Years in Muskegon County 4-H Club Program Ages 9 through 12 in 1998-1999 Program Year (N = 135)

Years in 4-H Club	Re-enrolled		Non Re-enrolled	
	N	%	N	%
1			15	45.5
2	42	43.8	13	39.4
3	19	19.8	3	9.0
4	17	17.7	2	6.1
5	10	10.4		
6	5	5.2		
7	3	3.1		
Total	96	100	33	100

Cramer's V = 0.65

Residence

Muskegon County has 4-H club members who live in the city (Muskegon), on farms, rural but not on a farm, and in small towns. As Table 6 shows, 18 of the non re-enrolled youth, which represent 54.5 percent lived in Muskegon. The re-enrolled youth were evenly divided between the 4 categories: Muskegon (26); on a farm (26); rural but not on a farm (26); and, small town (24).

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Table 6:   **Enrollment Status of Respondents by Residence in Muskegon County 4-H Clubs Ages 9 through 12 in 1998-1999 Program Year**

Residence	Re-enrolled		Non Re-enrolled	
	N	%	N	%
City of Muskegon	26	25.5	18	54.5
On a Farm	26	25.5	3	9.1
Rural but Not on Farm	26	25.5	6	18.2
Small Town	24	23.5	6	18.2
Total	102	100	33	100

Influence of 4-H Club Meetings on Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment

of 4-H Club Youth

The second research question was, "What was the influence of 4-H club meetings on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?" Question 1, on the 4-H Club Assessment, asked the youth what their perceptions were regarding 4-H club meetings. Question 1 was analyzed by sub-questions utilizing t-tests to discover differences that the influence 4-H club meetings might have on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth. As displayed in Table 7, there are significant differences for: 4-H is fun (t= 2.98, p < .05); belong in 4-H club (t= 5.21, p < .05); attend most meetings (t= 3.41, p<.05); can count on others (t= 2.52, p< .05); and the 4-H leader helps me plan meetings (t= 1.95, p < .05). There are no significant differences for: boys and girls have equal chance of doing projects; members plan 4-H meetings; and 4-H leader too many rules.

Table 7: The Influence of 4-H Club Meetings on the Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment Action of 4-H Youth (N=135)

Statement	Youth	N	Mean	t-value	p-value
4-H is fun!	Re-enrolled	101	4.73	2.98	.00
	Non Re-enrolled	33	4.33		
Boys & girls have equal chance of doing projects	Re-enrolled	101	4.68	1.01	.31
	Non Re-enrolled	33	4.55		
Belong in 4-H club	Re-enrolled	102	4.49	5.21	.00
	Non Re-enrolled	33	3.61		
Attend most meetings	Re-enrolled	102	4.49	3.41	.00
	Non Re-enrolled	33	3.85		
Can count on others	Re-Enrolled	102	4.35	2.52	.01
	Non Re-enrolled	33	3.93		
4-H leader helps me plan meetings	Re-enrolled	98	4.08	1.95	.05
	Non Re-Enrolled	33	3.70		
Members plan 4-H meetings	Re-enrolled	102	3.98	1.61	.11
	Non Re-enrolled	32	3.66		
4-H leader too many rules	Re-enrolled	102	2.01	1.20	.23
	Non Re-enrolled	33	2.27		

Scale: Mean for Re-enrolled = 4.12
Scale: Mean for Non Re-enrolled = 3.77
$p < .05$

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Mean scores rank the sub-questions. The re-enrolled youth have higher mean scores (ranging from 4.08 to 4.73) than the non re-enrolled youth (ranging from 3.61 to 4.33) on a 1-5 scale for sub-questions with significant differences.

Influence of 4-H Club Projects on Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment of 4-H Club Youth

The third research question was, "What was the influence of 4-H club projects on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?" Question 2, on the 4-H Club Assessment, asked the youth if they like doing projects in 4-H. Question 2 was analyzed by sub-questions with t-tests for differences in the influence of 4-H club projects on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth. The findings are reported in Table 8. There are significant differences for: feel good doing projects ($t=$ 2.99, $p < .05$); take the projects I want ($t= 3.36$, $p < .05$); and, try new and different things ($t= 1.97$, $p < .05$). There are no significant differences for: find my own interests; rewards me for being successful; work at my own speed; do things on my own; and work in a group.

Mean scores rank the sub-questions. The re-enrolled youth have higher mean scores (ranging from 4.31 to 4.54) than the non re-enrolled youth (ranging from 4.03 to 4.09) on a 1-5 scale for sub-questions with significant differences.

Table 8: The Influence of 4-H Club Projects on the Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment Action of 4-H Youth (N=135)

Statement	Youth	N	Mean	t-value	p-value
Feel good doing projects	Re-enrolled	101	4.54	2.99	.00
	Non Re-enrolled	33	4.09		
Find my own interests	Re-enrolled	101	4.44	1.90	.06
	Non Re-enrolled	31	4.13		
Take the projects I want	Re-enrolled	102	4.35	3.36	.00
	Non Re-enrolled	32	3.75		
Rewards me for being successful	Re-enrolled	102	4.34	1.01	.28
	Non Re-enrolled	33	4.15		
Work at my own speed	Re-enrolled	101	4.34	1.90	.06
	Non Re-enrolled	33	4.03		
Try new and different things	Re-enrolled	102	4.31	1.97	.05
	Non Re-enrolled	33	4.03		
Do things on my own	Re-enrolled	102	4.26	.83	.41
	Non Re-enrolled	32	4.12		
Work in a group	Re-enrolled	102	4.12	1.57	.12
	Non Re-enrolled	33	3.79		

Scale: Mean for Re-enrolled = 4.34
Scale: Mean for Non Re-enrolled = 4.03
$p < .05$

Influence of Youth Experiences on Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment
of 4-H Club Youth

The fourth research question was, "What was the influence of youth experiences on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?" Question 3, on the 4-H Club Assessment, asked the youth what they had learned in 4-H. Question 3 was analyzed by sub-questions with t-tests for differences in the influence of 4-H club experiences on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth. The findings are shown in Table 9. There are significant differences for: completed projects (t= 3.28, $p < .05$); felt better about myself (t= 2.14, $p < .05$); learned a lot (t= 2.20, $p < .05$); learned about my interests (t= 3.14, $p < .05$); helps set goals for future (t= 2.49, $p < .05$); and, solved my problems (t= 2.47, $p < .05$). There are no significant differences for projects too easy and projects too hard to complete.

Mean scores rank the sub-questions. The re-enrolled youth have higher mean scores (ranging from 4.16 to 4.48) than the non re-enrolled youth (ranging from 3.70 to 3.94) on a 1-5 scale for sub-questions with significant differences.

Table 9: The Influence of Youth 4-H Club Experiences on the Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment Action of 4-H Youth. (N=135)

Statement	Youth	N	Mean	t-value	p-value
Completed projects	Re-enrolled	101	4.48	3.28	.00
	Non Re-enrolled	33	3.94		
Feel better about myself	Re-enrolled	100	4.29	2.14	.03
	Non Re-enrolled	31	3.90		
Learned a lot	Re-enrolled	102	4.27	2.20	.02
	Non Re-enrolled	33	3.91		
Learned about my interests	Re-enrolled	101	4.26	3.14	.00
	Non Re-enrolled	33	3.76		
Helps set goals for future	Re-enrolled	102	4.19	2.49	.01
	Non Re-enrolled	32	3.72		
Solve my problems	Re-enrolled	102	4.16	2.47	.01
	Non Re-enrolled	33	3.70		
Projects too easy to do	Re-enrolled	102	2.97	1.20	.24
	Non Re-enrolled	33	3.24		
Projects too hard to complete	Re-enrolled	102	2.24	.43	.66
	Non Re-enrolled	33	2.33		

Scale: Mean for Re-enrolled = 3.86
Scale: Mean for Non Re-enrolled = 3.57
$p<.05$

Influence of 4-H Club Meetings, 4-H Club Projects, and 4-H Experiences on Re-enrollment and Non-Re-enrollment of 4-H Club Youth

Three new variables (scale mean questions 1, 2, and 3) were established for question 1 (4-H club meetings); question 2 (4-H club projects); and, questions 3 (4-H experiences). In Table 10, discriminant analysis was performed using a number of predictor variables (scale mean questions 1, 2, and 3) to place youth in re-enrolled or non re-enrolled categories. The researcher was trying to determine or predict whether the perceptions about 4-H club meetings, 4-H club projects, and the youth's experiences related to their decision to remain a 4-H member.

The results of the chi-square tests for the three questions shows there are differences between re-enrolled youth and non re-enrolled youth in their decisions to re-enroll. The p values associated with all three scales are .00.

The Wilks' Lambdas for question 1 (4-H club meetings), question 2 (4-H club projects) and question 3 (4-H experiences) was .91, .94 and .94 respectively. Values close to 1.0 indicates no group differences. The canonical correlation measures the association between the discriminant scores and the groups. The canonical correlations of 0.30, 0.24, and 0.24 are low associations. The eigenvalue of 0.11, 0.06 and 0.06 indicates that the discriminant functions can explain 0.11, 0.06 and 0.06 times as much as is not being explained.

The discriminant analysis successfully predicted group membership in 56.3 percent of cases for the non re-enrolled youth and 76 percent of cases for the re-enrolled youth. Overall, the discriminant function correctly predicted 71.1 percent of the cases.

Table 10: **The Influence of 4-H Club Meetings, 4-H Club Projects, and 4-H Experiences on the Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment of 4-H Youth (N=135)**

Discriminating Variables	N	Wilks' Lambda	Eigenvalue	Canonical Correlation	Chi-Square	Sig
Question 1 (4-H club meetings)	128	.91	.11	.30	12.56	.00
Question 2 (4-H club projects)	128	.94	.06	.24	7.50	.00
Question 3 (4-H experiences)	128	.94	.06	.24	7.62	.00

p<.05 with 1 degree of freedom

		Predicted Group Membership				
	Enrolled	No	%	Yes	%
Original Count	No	18	56.3	14	43.8
	Yes	23	24.0	73	76.0

Note. 71.1 percent of original group cases correctly classified.

Influence of 4-H Leaders on Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment of

4-H Club Youth

The fifth research question was, "What was the influence of 4-H leaders on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?" The findings in Table 11 have 20 missing cases. Cross-tabulations were completed on the 4-H leaders' characteristics and re-enrolled and non re-enrolled youth.

Table 11 shows 30 (96.8 percent) of the non re-enrolled and 101 of the re-enrolled youth (100 percent) believed their 4-H leader cared about them. Twenty-two non re-enrolled (75.9 percent) believed their 4-H leader included them in decisions. For the

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re-enrolled youth, 97 (95.1 percent) believed their 4-H leader included them in decisions. The 29 non re-enrolled youth and the 99 re-enrolled youth had percentages of 96.7 and 97.1 respectively for their 4-H leaders listened to them. Thirty non re-enrolled youth for 100 percent believed their 4-H leader wanted them to do their best. Ninety-nine re-enrolled youth (97.1 percent) said that they perceived the 4-H leader wanted them to do their best. The questions whether their 4-H leader played favorites had the most missing cases with 6. Twenty-one of the non re-enrolled youth for 72.4 percent and 67 of the re-enrolled youth for 67 percent said their 4-H leader did not play favorites. All of the youth answered the questions the 4-H leader is my parent. Three of the non re-enrolled youth (9.1 percent) and 24 of the re-enrolled youth (23.5 percent) said their 4-H leader was their parent.

Table 11: Influence of 4-H Leaders on Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment of Youth in the 4-H Club Program (N=135)

4-H Leader Influences	Re-enrolled N=102				Non Re-enrolled N=33				Totals	
	Yes	%	No	%	Yes	%	No	%	Yes	No
Cares about me	101	100			30	96.8	1	3.2	131	1
Includes me in decisions	97	95.1	5	4.9	22	75.9	7	24.1	119	12
Listens to me	99	97.1	3	2.9	29	96.7	1	3.3	128	4
Do my best	99	97.1	3	2.9	30	100	0	0	129	3
Plays favorites	33	33.0	67	67.0	8	27.6	21	72.4	41	88
Is my parent	24	23.5	78	76.5	3	9.1	30	90.9	27	108

Note. Not all respondents reported to each question.

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Other Reasons Youth Re-enroll or Not Re-enroll

The sixth research question asked, "What were other reasons for youth to re-enroll or not re-enroll in the 4-H club program?" This is an analysis of open-ended questions on:

6.B. If a member of a 4-H club, what do you like about 4-H?

6.C. If not a member of a 4-H club, why did you drop out?

The top five comments in Table 12 for what re-enrolled youth like about 4-H and why they stay involved are: 4-H is fun; raising and showing animals; doing 4-H projects; every one is included; and, riding and showing horses.

Table 12:   Other Reasons for Youth to Re-enroll in the 4-H Club Program

Comments	Frequency of Mention
4-H is fun!	19
Raising and showing animals	18
Doing 4-H projects	18
Everyone is included	13
Riding and showing horses	12
Learns a lot about projects	11
Making crafts	8
Challenging	8
Meeting friends	7
The fair	6
Field trips	4
Other comments not included in the above	7

Note. Ninety-eight youth gave responses out of N=102.

Table 13 shows "too busy with other things" was the number one reason for not

re-enrolling in 4-H, followed by "did not like the projects" and "projects were too easy."

Table 13:   Other Reasons for Youth Not to Re-enroll in the 4-H Club Program

Comments	Frequency of Mention
Too busy with other things	10
Did not like the 4-H projects	6
4-H Projects were too easy	4
4-H is boring	3
Started playing sports	3
Unorganized meetings	2
No friends	2
Oldest in 4-H club	2
Other comments not included in the above	4

Note. Thirty-two youth gave responses out of N=33.

The youth who were not re-enrolled in the 4-H club program were asked what

programs, projects or activities would influence them to return. Table 14 shows the

findings. Many of the reasons to return are the reasons why they left. For example, if

sports were added to the 4-H projects, they would return to 4-H. Not having sports as a

possible 4-H project was why they left 4-H. Baking, cooking and horses are already

offered as 4-H project areas. It was just that their 4-H club did not offer them.

Table 14:   Reasons Given as to What Would Influence Non Re-enrolled Youth to Re-enroll in 4-H Club.

Comments	Frequency of Mention
Sports as a 4-H project	7
Baking and cooking offered in their 4-H club	5
If I had a horse	5
Fun things to do – 4-H is boring	3
More challenging projects	3
Animal projects offered in their 4-H club	3
Just not interested in 4-H	3
Math and science projects offered	2
Other comments not included in the above	8

Note.   Thirty youth gave responses out of N=33.

People Who Influenced Youth to Re-enroll

The seventh research question was, "Who were the people that influenced youth to re-enroll in the 4-H club program?" Youth could select as many answers that applied. Table 15 shows the people who influenced youth to re-enroll in rank order. Parents, 4-H leaders and friends have above 50 percent responding "yes" and are considered important people who influenced youth to re-enroll. Brother and/or sister, and teachers are not considered important for re-enrollment.

Table 15: **People Who Influenced Youth to Re-enroll in the 4-H Club Program (N=102)**

People Who Influenced	Yes	%
Parents	86	84.3
4-H leaders	74	73.3
Friends	53	52.5
Brother and/or Sister	34	33.3
Teachers	27	26.5

Note. Above 50 percent responding "yes" is considered important.
Respondents may respond to more than one item.

Difference in the Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment by Race, Age, Residence, and Gender of Youth

The final research question asked, "Were there differences in the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by race, age, residence, and, gender?" A chi-square test to determine if there were differences in re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by race was run. Findings are in the Table 16. The value of 16.57 is over the table X^2 at DF of 2. There was a significant difference at .00.

Table 16:   Determine If There Are Differences in Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment of 4-H Club Members by Race (N=135)

Race	Re-enrolled N	Non Re-enrolled N	Chi Square	Sig.
African American/Black	7	11	16.57	.00
Caucasian/White	80	16		
Hispanic	11	5		
Total	98	32		

Note. Category, "Mixed Heritage," had too few responses to include in the calculation.
p < .05 with 2 degrees of freedom

A chi-square test was run to determine if there were differences in re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by age. As reported in Table 17, the significance was .46 and the value was 2.56 with a DF of 3. With these findings there are no differences of any significance by age.

Table 17:   Determine If There Are Differences in Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment of 4-H Club Members by Age. (N=135)

Age	Re-enrolled N	Non Re-enrolled N	Chi Square	Sig.
9	40	17	2.56	.46
10	18	4		
11	26	9		
12	18	3		
Total	102	33		

p < .05 with 3 degrees of freedom.

A chi-square test was run to determine if there were differences in re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by residence. The findings are in Table 18. The value of 10.46 is over the table X^2 at DF of 3. There are differences and .01 was significant.

Table 18: **Determine If There Are Differences in Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment by Residence (N=135)**

Residence	Re-enrolled N	Non Re-enrolled N	Chi Square	Sig.
City of Muskegon	26	18	10.46	.01
On a Farm	26	3		
Rural but Not on a Farm	26	6		
Small Town	24	6		
Total	102	33		

$p < .05$ with 3 degrees of freedom.

Table 19 shows the results of a chi-square test to determine if there were differences in re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by gender. The value of 3.51 does not show differences and .06 is not significant.

Table 19: **Determine If There Are Differences in Re-enrollment and Non Re-enrollment of 4-H Club Members by Gender. (N=135)**

Gender	Re-enrolled N	Non Re-enrolled N	Chi Square	Sig.
Boy	34	17	3.51	.06
Girl	68	16		
Total	102	33		

p < .05 with 3 degrees of freedom.

Comments on 4-H Club Program or 4-H Club Assessment

Question 7.F. at the end of the 4-H Club Assessment asked the youth to make comments on the 4-H club program or about the 4-H Club Assessment. Table 20 lists the most frequently mentioned comments. "4-H is fun" was the most frequently mentioned comment. The next two frequently mentioned comments were I love animals and the survey was a good idea.

Table 20: Other Comments on 4-H Club Program or 4-H Club Assessment

Comments	Frequency of Mention
4-H is really cool and fun!	20
I love animals.	10
Survey was good idea.	10
Great 4-H club.	5
I learned a lot in the 4-H projects.	4
Liked the challenges.	4
Liked winning and awards.	4
I have friends.	4
Interest in horses.	3
I can not wait for fair.	3
Other comments not in the above	5

Note. Sixty-four youth gave responses out of N=135

Summary

The data collected from the 4-H Club Assessments in the study were analyzed according to the procedures described in Chapter III. The discussion of findings in this chapter was in the order of the research questions, which guided this study.

The survey population was 231 youth of which 133 were re-enrolled youth and 98 were non re-enrolled youth in the 4-H club program in the 1998-1999-program year. There were 102 (77 percent) 4-H Club Assessments completed from re-enrolled youth and 33 (34 percent) 4-H Club Assessments completed from non re-enrolled youth.

The demographic variables appropriate for this study were gender, race, age, years enrolled, and residence. The non re-enrolled youth are almost equally represented in the gender category with 17 boys and 16 girls. The re-enrolled youth are represented with twice as many girls (68) as boys (34). There are no native Americans or Asian/Pacific Islanders represented in the study. African American/Black and Hispanic youth represented 50 percent of the non re-enrolled category while re-enrolled youth represented 17.7 percent. Age of the youth in the study ranged from 9 through 12 years with a mean of 10.15 years and standard deviation of 1.14 years. Twenty-eight (84.9 percent) of the non re-enrolled category left the 4-H program in the first two years. Eighty-eight (91.7 percent) of the re-enrolled youth continued from the second to fifth years of enrollment. Eighteen (54.5 percent) of the non re-enrolled youth lived in the city of Muskegon. The re-enrolled youth were evenly divided between the 4 categories: City of Muskegon (26); on a farm (26); rural but not on a farm (26); and small town (24).

Question 1 on the 4-H Club Assessment asked the youth what their perceptions were regarding 4-H club meetings. Question 1 was analyzed by sub-questions utilizing t-tests to discover differences that the influence 4-H club meetings might have on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth. There are significant differences for: 4-H is fun; belong in 4-H club; attend most meetings; can count on others; and, the 4-H leader helps me plan meetings. There are no significant differences for: boys and girls have equal chance of doing projects; members plan 4-H meetings; and, 4-H leader has too many rules.

Question 2, on the 4-H Club Assessment, asked the youth if they liked doing projects in 4-H. Question 2 was analyzed by sub-questions with t-tests for differences in

the influence of the 4-H club projects on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth. There are significant differences for: feel good doing projects; take the project I want; and, try new and different things. There are no significant differences for: find my own interests; rewards me for being successful; work at my own speed; do things on my own; and, work in a group

Question 3, on the 4-H Club Assessment, asked the youth what they had learned in 4-H. Question 3 was analyzed by sub-questions with t-tests for differences in the influence of 4-H club experiences on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth. There are significant differences for: completed projects; feel better about myself; learned a lot; learned about my interests; helps set goals for future; and, solved my problems. There are no significant differences for projects too easy to do and projects too hard to complete.

Cross tabulations were completed on the 4-H leaders' characteristics and re-enrolled and non re-enrolled youth. The re-enrolled youth and non re-enrolled youth had a 95 percent or better "yes" response rate for 4-H leader: cared about them, listened to them, and wanted them to do their best. The re-enrolled youth also had a 95 percent or better "yes" response rate for 4-H leader included them in decisions.

The top five comments for what re-enrolled youth like about 4-H and why they stay involved are: 4-H is fun; raising and showing animals; doing 4-H projects; every one is included; and riding and showing horses. "Too busy with other things" was the number one reason for not re-enrolling in 4-H, followed by did not like the projects, and projects were too easy. Many of the reasons given by non re-enrollees that would influence them to return, related to 4-H projects that were not offered in their 4-H club.

Chi-square tests were used to determine if there were differences in re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by race, age, residence, and gender. There were significant differences found by race and residence, but not by age and gender.

Above 50 percent responding "yes" to the people who had influence on youth to re-enroll is considered important. Parents, 4-H leaders and friends in that order are considered having the most influence on youth to re-enroll in the 4-H club program. Brother and/or sister and teachers are not considered important.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

An overview of the study, procedures and methodology is presented in the first section of this chapter. The research questions are listed in the second section with key findings. The recommendations were formulated based upon the findings and conclusions. The third section gives the recommendations for future research. Reflections by the researcher make-up the fourth section, and is followed by a summary for the final section.

Overview

This study was undertaken for the purpose of investigating the major factors that influenced youth ages 9 through 12 to re-enroll or to not re-enroll in the Muskegon County 4-H club program in the 1998-1999 program year. Limited research has been done on factors affecting re-enrollment of 4-H club members.

The drop in 4-H club membership for youth ages 9 through 12 and older is a concern for many adults. Studies show (Cantrell, Heinsohn, & Doebler, 1989; Meszaros, 1993) that youth who participate in 4-H activities are more likely to develop lifelong skills in leadership, decision making, personal development, career and global understanding, problem-solving skills and enhanced self-esteem.

The population for this study consisted of 133 re-enrolled youth and 98 non re-enrolled youth in the 4-H club program in Muskegon County for the 1998-1999 program year. Because the numbers were low, and the difficulty of getting surveys from the youth that did not re-enroll, it was decided to do a census study where all of the youth would be surveyed.

The research design used in this study can be categorized as a descriptive survey methodology in the form of a directly-administered 4-H Club Assessment questionnaire. Questions explored perceptions about 4-H club meetings, 4-H club projects, and experiences influencing a youth's decision to remain a member. Characteristics of 4-H leaders and individuals that influenced youth to re-enroll in the 4-H club program were investigated. The last part of the questionnaire identified demographic information.

Validity and reliability of the data collection instrument were established. A panel of experts provided assistance in addressing content, construct, and face validity. The reliability of the 4-H Club Assessment was determined by conducting a pilot test of 20 youth enrolled in a 4-H club program in Newaygo county. A Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient test was run using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS/PC+). The reliability coefficient was found to be acceptable for the purpose of this study.

4-H leaders were recruited to collect data at 4-H club meetings. Because the participants were minors, study consent forms were signed by parents or guardians. Follow-up was made with the youth who were unable to attend 4-H club meetings and youth who had not re-enrolled in the 4-H club program. The response rate for re-enrolled youth was 77 percent and non re-enrolled youth, 34 percent.

The data from the 4-H Club Assessment were coded and analyzed using SPSS/PC+. Frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, chi-square, t-test, and discriminant analysis were used to analyze data. Open-ended questions were analyzed using qualitative analysis looking for similarities across responses.

Research Question I

What was the Muskegon County 4-H club youth re-enrollment and non re-enrollment status in the 1998-1999 program year?

The demographic variables appropriate for this study were gender, race, age, years enrolled, and residence. Researchers (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996) conducting descriptive inquiries often sought to find out the demographic characteristics of their population. This was a way of better understanding the nature of the population.

Gender

<u>Findings</u>

- There were twice as many girls (68) as boys (34) who re-enrolled.

- Non re-enrolled youth were equally represented with 17 boys and 16 girls.

<u>Conclusions</u>

There were 18 male (24 percent) and 58 female (76) percent) registered 4-H leaders in the 4-H club program during the 1998-1999 program year. The female 4-H leaders are more apt to do 4-H project areas attracting girls rather than boys to the 4-H club program, i.e. horse clubs. Sometimes, membership in 4-H clubs self-select along

gender lines. From the findings girls tend to re-enroll in 4-H clubs in larger numbers than boys.

Recommendations

Efforts must be made to recruit boys and male 4-H leaders into the 4-H club program. Also, 4-H projects should be evaluated as to what gender they are attracting. There should be a balance of 4-H projects for both boys and girls.

Race

Findings

- No native Americans or Asian/Pacific Islanders were represented.

- African American/Black and Hispanic youth represented 50 percent of the non re-enrolled and 17.7 percent of the re-enrolled.

Conclusions

The racial make-up of Muskegon County is African American/Black 13.6 percent; Caucasian/white 84.2 percent; Hispanic 2.3 percent; native American 0.8 percent; Asian/Pacific Islanders 0.3 percent; and other 1.0 percent (Michigan State University Extension, 1994). This study's findings indicate no native Americans or Asian/Pacific Islander youth were involved in the 4-H club program creating a program that is not racially diverse. There is a recruitment and retention problem with youth of color.

There were three African American/Black 4-H Leaders and one Hispanic 4-H leader out of 76 leaders (5 percent) registered for the 1998 - 1999 program year. There are no native American or Asian/Pacific Islander 4-H leaders. The composition of 4-H

leaders is not racially diverse. Bankston (1992) in her research found the need for 4-H volunteers of color to recruit and maintain the youth of color in the 4-H program.

There was one Hispanic male 4-H staff person and one African American/Black female 4-H staff person. This may influence the involvement of Hispanic and African American/Black youth in the 4-H club program.

Recommendations

In-service training for 4-H staff and 4-H leaders on how to attract and maintain a diverse audience must be provided. Training should include sensitivity to environmental and cultural contexts.

4-H staff and 4-H leaders should utilize educational materials that are research-based that relate to diverse audiences. The multiple interests necessitate a wider range of 4-H projects.

People of color should be targeted as recruits for 4-H leader positions. 4-H should make efforts to become more visible and build trusting relationships where there are large concentrations of people of color.

Age

Findings

- Ages of the youth ranged from 9 through 12 with a mean of 10.15 years and standard deviation of 1.14 years.

- Nine year olds (42 percent) comprised the largest number of ages 9 through 12 youth.

Conclusions

Being with peers and being a part of an organized group are important for children and early adolescents to meet their needs and to pursue their interests (Cobb, 1998). The high number of nine year olds (42 percent), appears that 4-H projects tend to be more suited to this age group. 4-H leaders should be aware of and develop programs that fit different ages and stages of growth.

Recommendations

4-H leaders should be given training to become aware of the ages and stages of early adolescent development. Also, the 4-H project resources should be evaluated for age appropriateness.

Years Enrolled

Findings

- Non re-enrolled youth (84.9 percent) left the program in their first two years.

- Re-enrolled youth (91.7 percent) were included in the second, third, fourth and fifth years in a 4-H club.

- High association with years of membership and continued re-enrollment.

Conclusions

Caplinger (1984) concluded a substantial relationship between years of 4-H club membership and the re-enrollment of 4-H club members. This study also concludes a high association with years of membership and continued re-enrollment. This study found that two years was a critical decision point for re-enrolling or not re-enrolling. After the second year of re-enrollment, the youth tended to remain additional years.

Recommendations

4-H staff and 4-H leaders should conduct "exit" interviews to assess why youth do not re-enroll.

Residence

Findings

- Re-enrolled youth live equally in the City of Muskegon (26), on a farm (26), rural but not on a farm (26), and small town (24).

- Eighteen (54.5 percent) of the non re-enrolled youth live in Muskegon.

Conclusions

Seventy-one percent of Muskegon County's population was considered urban in 1990, and 29 percent considered rural (Michigan State University Extension, 1994). The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy gave its endorsement of urban programs in 1965 (Wessel & Wessel, 1982). The shift to an urban population has presented a challenge to the 4-H program. The findings in this study indicate youth who re-enroll in 4-H clubs are primarily from rural areas: "Living on a farm", "rural but not on a farm", and "small town" are all considered rural in Muskegon County. The 4-H club programming is more attractive to rural populations.

Recommendations

4-H staff, with non-agricultural backgrounds, should be recruited who are willing to work in and relate to urban audiences. A stronger research and knowledge base in areas outside agriculture and home economics are needed. These new educational resources will complement the current 4-H projects.

Research Question II

What was the influence of 4-H club meetings on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

<u>Findings</u>

- Significant differences of influence of 4-H club meetings on re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H youth were the sub-questions: 4-H is fun (4.73 and 4.33); belong in 4-H club (4.49 and 3.61); attend most meetings (4.49 and 3.85); can count on others (4.35 and 3.93); and, 4-H leader helps me plan meetings (4.08 and 3.70).

- Re-enrolled youth have the higher mean scores (noted above) for these sub-questions on a scale of 1-5.

<u>Conclusions</u>

This study indicates that the re-enrolled youth agree more with the sub-questions: 4-H is fun; belong in 4-H club; attend most meetings; can count on others; and 4-H leaders help me plan meetings. The National Clearing House on Families and Youth (1996) recognized that early adolescents benefit from experiential learning; need to belong to a group while maintaining their individuality; and want adult support. The social aspects of the 4-H club appear to be important to this age group.

Hartley (1982) determined that social aspects were important influences on 4-H member retention in West Virginia, and Popken (1986) confirmed these are important for 4-H member retention in Wyoming. Early adolescents have a strong need to feel accepted and worthwhile (Caissy, 1994).

From the findings the 4-H leader should keep in mind the varying ages and interests of the 4-H members when assisting 4-H members in the planning of the 4-H club's yearly goals. These goals should include all members in the 4-H club, so they feel connected to the 4-H club experience.

Recommendations

In-service training for 4-H leaders should be provided on how to make the 4-H club experiences more conducive to all the 4-H members in this age group. The 4-H leader should encourage participation by all the members in the 4-H club activities to enhance the 4-H club experience. The 4-H members must be made to feel they are integral to the operation of the 4-H club.

Research Question III

What was the influence of 4-H club projects on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

Findings

- Significant differences of influence of 4-H club projects on re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H youth were the sub-questions: feel good doing projects (4.54 and 4.09); take the projects I want (4.35 and 3.75); and, try new and different things (4.31 and 4.03).

- Re-enrolled youth have the higher mean scores (noted above) on these sub-questions on a scale of 1-5.

Conclusions

The findings from this study indicate the re-enrolled youth agree more with the sub-questions with significant differences than the non re-enrolled. Youth, ages through 12, seek to become more independent in making decisions. Youth need opportunities to express opinions and develop and test new skills. If the 4-H leader teaches the same 4-H projects over and over, the development of youth is not enhanced. It is a time for exploring and experimenting with new and expanded interests. Youth organizations that are flexible and adopt programs to reflect early adolescent interests will continue to attract and retain them (Heinsohn & Lewis, 1995). The 4-H club programs that are designed for youth development realize the need for both ongoing personal support and challenging growth opportunities for the youth.

Recommendations

In-service training of 4-H leaders should focus on compatibility of 4-H project materials and with age and development. Project materials should provide the 4-H leader with direction to provide a meaningful learning experience for the youth.

4-H staff should examine the project materials used by 4-H leaders to determine if they are appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the youth.

Research Question IV

What was the influence of youth experiences on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

<u>Findings</u>

- Significant differences of influence of youth experiences on re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H youth were the sub-questions: completed projects (4.48 and 3.94); felt better about myself (4.29 and 3.90); learned a lot (4.27and 3.91); learned about my interests (4.26 and 3.76); helped set goals for the future (4.19 and 3.72); and, solved my problems (4.16 and 3.70).

- The re-enrolled youth have the higher mean scores (noted above) on these sub-questions on a scale of 1-5.

<u>Conclusions</u>

The findings from this study indicate the re-enrolled youth agree more with the sub-questions with significant differences than the non re-enrolled. The 4-H clubs are designed to encourage relationships and offer learning experiences over a period of time. Through their involvement with caring 4-H leaders, youth gain meaningful experiences that contribute to their personal growth and development, thus increasing self-esteem, problem-solving skills, and plans for the future.

Participation in 4-H activities is an important part of 4-H programming. The freedom and responsibility granted to youth by parents and society contribute to social changes. Decision-making skills are developed as parents move away from dictating directions to giving reassurance and support (Caissy, 1994).

<u>Recommendations</u>

4-H leaders should focus on how to work with youth ages 9 through 12 on life skills, including goal setting and decision-making. 4-H club members should be encouraged by 4-H leaders to acquire these skills, leading to positive experiences.

Research Question V

What was the influence of 4-H leaders on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?

Findings

- The re-enrolled youth had a 95 percent or better "yes" response rate for the following statements:

  4-H leader cared about them.

  4-H leader included them in decisions.

  4-H leader listens to them.

  4-H leader wanted them to do their best.

- The non re-enrolled youth had a 95 percent or better "yes" response rate for the following statements:

  4-H leader cared about them.

  4-H leader listens to them.

  4-H leader wanted them to do their best.

Conclusions

From the findings, the influence of 4-H leaders on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H members is motivated by opportunity for youth to make decisions. Decision-making skills are developed during early adolescence (Caissy 1994). Hartley (1982) also supported the conclusion that the perceptions of the 4-H leader (a youth's capability to make decisions) influenced youth to re-enroll or not re-enroll in the 4-H club program.

Recommendations

In-service trainings and educational materials for 4-H leaders should stress strategies and techniques for involving youth in decision-making activities. Other areas that should be presented are leadership styles, group dynamics, and individual leadership skills.

Emphasis should be placed on the importance of the role of the 4-H leader and the relationship between the 4-H member and 4-H leader. Effective 4-H leaders are critical to a successful 4-H club program.

Research Question VI

What were other reasons for youth to re-enroll or not re-enroll in the 4-H club program?

Findings

- The top five comments for what re-enrolled youth liked about 4-H and why they stay involved are: 4-H is fun; raising and showing animals; doing 4-H projects; every one is included; and riding and showing horses.

- Being too busy with other things was the number one reason for not re-enrolling in 4-H.

- The next two comments for not re-enrolling were they did not like the projects and projects were too easy.

- Six out of eight comments were related to 4-H projects for the reasons given as to what would influence non re-enrolled youth to re-enroll.

- The majority of comments were related to 4-H projects for the re-enrolled and non re-enrolled.

Conclusions

From the findings in this research, 4-H projects are a major factor in whether youth re-enroll or not re-enroll in the 4-H club program. The comments "4-H is fun", and "everyone is included" are consistent with early adolescent feelings of excitement and belonging to a group. Early adolescents have a strong need to feel accepted and worthwhile (Caissy, 1994). The statement, "4-H is fun", seems to surface in a number of responses throughout the survey.

Raising and showing animals and riding and showing horses indicate the areas that are attractive to rural populations. It is a part of the youth's lifestyle, and the history of the 4-H club. (Wessel & Wessel, 1982).

Recommendations

An examination of current 4-H projects and new 4-H project areas is critical. 4-H projects should be appropriate for youth ages 9 through 12.

4-H staff and 4-H leaders should review 4-H project materials to determine compatibility with various age levels. Also, strategies for identifying interests of new audiences should be implemented. This is especially true if new 4-H project areas are added.

Research Question VII

Who were the people that influenced youth to re-enroll in the 4-H club program?

<u>Findings</u>

- Parents, 4-H leaders and friends in that order have the most influence on youth to re-enroll in the 4-H club program.

- Brothers and/or sisters and teachers were not considered as important for re-enrollment.

<u>Conclusions</u>

From the findings in this research, parents have the most influence on youth to re-enroll in the 4-H club program. Early adolescents make few decisions, as parents tend to determine the experiences and activities for their children (Cobb, 1998). Harley (1982) concluded that parents of re-enrollees tended to be more supportive of their youth's efforts than the parents of non re-enrolled youth.

The findings indicate that 4-H leaders and friends also influence re-enrollment of youth. Making friends, being with peers, and being part of an organized group are important for early adolescents to meet developmental needs and to pursue personal interests. The 4-H club also provides youth with ongoing adult relationships through which they experience support, care and guidance. Caring and connectedness within and beyond the family are factors in protecting youth from negative behaviors and in encouraging good social skills, responsible values, and positive identity (Search Institute, 1997).

Recommendations

Parents should be encouraged to participate in the 4-H club program. Parental involvement is of utmost importance. 4-H leaders need to define the roles for parental contributions. Parents of re-enrolled youth tend to be more supportive of their youth's efforts, than the parents of non re-enrolled.

Research Question VIII

Were there differences in the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by race, age, residence, and gender?

Findings

- Significant differences in the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by race and residence.

- No significant differences in the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members by age and gender of youth.

Conclusions

Since the Extension Committee on Organization Policy gave its endorsement of urban programs in 1965 (Wessel & Wessel, 1982), the shift to an urban population has presented a challenge to the 4-H program. Because the 4-H roots are in rural America and primarily in agriculture, many 4-H clubs reflect these traditions. The 4-H club program is part of the rural family's life style, and heritage (Wessell & Wessel, 1982). For example, they raise animals and have a garden – the largest 4-H project areas in the 1998-1999-program year. 4-H club programming continues to be more attractive to the rural populations.

From the findings, youth that re-enroll in 4-H club programs are mostly from rural areas and are predominantly Caucasian/white. Nearly all of the youth of color, however, live in the city of Muskegon, which is considered urban. Therefore, 4-H programs that give attention to cultural and life-style diversity, as well as individual diversity, are most likely to succeed (Dryfoos, 1990; Schorr, 1988).

Recommendations

The 4-H staff and 4-H leaders need to be educated in the areas of diversity, cultural differences, and audiences of color. Significant efforts must be given to recruiting and retaining diverse youth in 4-H club programs.

Since 4-H club programs attract and retain rural populations and Caucasian/white audiences, efforts should be made to ensure the 4-H program appeals, are useful, and culturally attractive to urban, youth. Educational materials that are research-based should be acquired to be used with diverse audiences.

The 4-H staff should become known in the urban communities. They should build trusting relationships with community leaders, striving for results similar to those achieved in rural communities. Time will be needed to build trusting relationships and to personally know the people in leadership roles.

The 4-H image is still very rural and farm related in Muskegon County. A major image change for 4-H would help the 4-H club program to attract diverse audiences. A marketing plan for 4-H promotion should be targeted to the specific needs of youth, 4-H leaders, 4-H staff, decision makers and educators.

As new 4-H staff are hired, they should have non-traditional backgrounds. They should be indigenous to and reflective of populations in urban areas.

Additional Question

What was the influence of 4-H club meetings, 4-H club projects, and 4-H experiences in re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club youth?

Findings

- Can predict whether the perceptions about 4-H club meetings, 4-H club projects, and the youth's experiences are related to their decision to remain a 4-H member.

- There are differences between re-enrolled and non re-enrolled youth in their decision to re-enroll.

- There was a high prediction of group membership for the re-enrolled and non re-enrolled.

Conclusions

The findings offer some tendency that prediction of re-enrollments and non re-enrollments can be made. There was an influence of 4-H club meetings, 4-H club projects, and 4-H experiences on re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club youth.

Recommendations

At the six months period in the youth's 4-H club membership, ask them if "4-H is fun?" If not, "What would make 4-H fun?" If 4-H is fun, "Why?" Answers to these questions give direction as to what steps should be taken encouraging continued membership. The youth could be surveyed after their first year of 4-H club membership to determine if they will be re-enrolled or non re-enrolled youth for the next year.

Recommendations for Future Research

Very little research has been done on factors affecting re-enrollment of 4-H club members. Because the youth are minors, it complicates research. Changes in family types, demographics, technology, values, and education greatly impact the daily lives of youth. These changes make continued research necessary for the 4-H club program to continue to be a relevant, effective youth program.

As a result from the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for future research are made:

1. In addition to directly-administered surveys, structured interviews of youth or case studies would provide more in-depth information about factors influencing re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of 4-H club members.

2. Longitudinal studies over time of 4-H club members ages 9 through 12 may be more reliable for determining the factors that influence youth to re-enroll or not re-enroll.

3. A similar study could be done comparing the re-enrollment trends between urban and rural audiences. As the 4-H club program has followed the populations to urban areas, such studies would help 4-H staff relate to broader audiences.

4. A similar study could be done comparing the factors that influence re-enrollment or non re-enrollment among the different racial groups. As the populations become more diverse, this knowledge becomes increasingly more important.

5. Further research should be done on 4-H club project areas that attract youth; depth of learning from 4-H projects; and evaluation of 4-H projects by the 4-H club members. The 4-H club project is the vehicle for youth development.

6. Further research should be done on the 4-H leader's role, and the orientation and training of the 4-H leader. The 4-H staff need to know the most effective methods of training the 4-H club leaders and how to keep them updated to the youth today.

7. Since parents have the greatest influence on youth to re-enroll, a study should be done on parental involvement. The research question could be, "What factors of parental involvement, or degree of involvement affect re-enrollment?"

8. An area outside the realm of this study could be to research competition and rewards for the 4-H club member. Further research could relate to how competition and rewards influence youth to re-enroll or not re-enroll in the 4-H club program.

Reflections

The input from the youth was extremely important although some might question youth ages 9 through 12 as being too young to contribute. The researcher sensed the youth understood the questions. The youth were excited about the survey and the attention given by the researcher.

The 4-H leaders and youth welcomed the researcher to their club meetings. It was expressed over and over that there should be more contact with the central administration

office staff. The 4-H leaders wanted staff to attend 4-H club meetings. The 4-H clubs need to be visited on an on-going basis to strengthen the 4-H clubs' relationship with the central administration office. The researcher believes that if more staff were involved in 4-H club activities, more youth would re-enroll. The youth were pleased the researcher spent time with them.

Twenty-one 4-H clubs were visited. The 4-H clubs that followed most closely the desired 4-H club format had the fewest non re-enrolled youth ages 9 through 12. The range was from zero to ten percent dropout rate in these clubs. The patterns that were key to the 4-H clubs with low non re-enrollment rates were organized 4-H club meetings with the youth taking the leadership roles; reciting the pledge together; parental support; and, an educational component. Clubs that did not follow the recommended 4-H club format had a dropout rate as high as 86 percent.

The fifth research question was, "What was the influence of 4-H leaders on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth?" The researcher observed that many of the youth were hesitant in answering the questions about the 4-H leaders in the 4-H Club Assessment. These questions had the most missing cases (20). The youth were more comfortable answering the technical / numerical types of questions rather than the behavior of their 4-H leader.

"4-H is fun!" was at the top of the list for the influence of 4-H club meetings on the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment action of 4-H youth. There was a difference shown by the t-test, and it was significant. As shown by the mean scores, re-enrolled youth had more fun. Also, "4-H is fun!" was at the top of the list for the open-ended comments on the 4-H program. "4-H is fun!" is a significant factor influencing re-

enrollment in the 4-H club program. The key is to find out what "fun" means to youth ages 9 through 12.

The quality of 4-H staff is a critical component making 4-H club programs work. Recruitment and training efforts must actively pursue 4-H staff indigenous to and reflective of the populations of the communities in urban areas. Understanding the urban communities, including its people, cultures, values and habits, provides the 4-H staff the foundation for an effective 4-H club program.

The 4-H staff should provide the leadership and vision or sense of mission for the 4-H club program. Leadership and vision are key elements of implementing a 4-H club program that is creative, exciting, and inclusive to all audiences. Leadership is the ability to draw upon the 4-H leaders and youth talents, assets, and energy in guiding the 4-H club program to create a new vision.

Achieving a successful, inclusive, multicultural 4-H club program requires embracing and accepting diversity as a way to success. Building an inclusive 4-H club program is a developmental process requiring new styles of leadership communication, thinking, and strategic planning.

Applying old strategies in new circumstances may not work, even if they worked in the past. Developing new strategies requires helping 4-H staff and leaders think in new ways. Youth should be involved as equal partners, and recognized as resources in developing and implementing 4-H programs. The 4-H staff, 4-H leaders and youth must come together and become flexible in thinking about new 4-H club programs and applying existing educational resources in new ways. It is a matter of getting rid of self-imposed boundaries that limit creativity.

The 4-H delivery system for 4-H clubs should be expanded to include new electronic and communications technologies, such as, using the computer for 4-H project areas. 4-H youth would not always have to meet face to face. Also, this may include some who do not re-enroll because their 4-H club does not offer the project. The delivery system (methods, events and programs) should be evaluated and improved delivery systems put in place.

Summary

This study was undertaken for the purpose of investigating the major factors that influenced youth ages 9 through 12 to re-enroll or to not re-enroll in the Muskegon County 4-H club program in the 1998 -1999 program year. The results of this study have implications for hiring 4-H staff and recruiting 4-H leaders to work in the 4-H club program with a charge to reach new audiences, especially those in urban areas of minority status. Youth development components and factors that influence re-enrollment of youth in 4-H club programs will be of particular interest to those who are working directly with youth ages 9 through 12 in 4-H club settings.

The research questions were listed with major research findings. The recommendations were formulated based upon the findings and conclusions. In order for the 4-H club program to be a relevant, effective youth program, continued research is necessary. As a result of the findings and conclusions of this study, recommendations for future research were made. Personal reflections were also provided.

Influencing youth to participate in the 4-H club program, were parents, 4-H leaders, and friends. Two years of membership emerged as the critical decision point to

re-enroll or not re-enroll in the 4-H club program. The 4-H projects were a major factor in whether youth re-enrolled. There were significant differences in the re-enrollment and non re-enrollment of the 4-H club members by race and residence.

Early adolescents (ages 9 through 12) want to become more independent and pursue interests to make decisions on their own. Decision-making was a key factor that may influence youth to re-enroll or not re-enroll in the 4-H club program. This is a time for the youth to explore and experiment with new and expanded interests.

APPENDIX A

4-H CLUB ASSESSMENT

4-H Club Assessment

We would like to identify and understand things that may be important to youth nine to twelve years old who are involved in Muskegon County 4-H club programs. Because you were involved in the 4-H club program and were in this age group last year we would like for you to participate in the 4-*H Club Assessment*. Even if you are no longer involved in 4-H, we value what you think.

The *4-H Club Assessment* will take you about 20 minutes to complete. Please read all questions carefully before giving an answer. This is not a test! There are no right or wrong answers.

Completing the *4-H Club Assessment* is completely voluntary. This means it is up to you to decide whether you want to participate in the study by filling out the form. You do not have to fill out any part or question that makes you feel uncomfortable, or that you or your parents think, you should not answer. If you do not understand a question, ask your 4-H leader or researcher for help.

The *4-H Club Assessment* is completely confidential. This means that we do not want you to write your name on it. Your name will not be used in any report of research findings. The information will be used to review and improve the 4-H club program for current and future members.

Thanks for your help!

<div align="center">

Survey conducted by

Betty Shelby
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Communication Systems
and
County Extension Director
MSU Extension
635 Ottawa Street
Muskegon, MI 49442

</div>

1. How do you feel about your 4-H club meetings? Please read each sentence and circle the face that best shows what you think.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A. My 4-H leader helps me plan the 4-H club meetings.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
B. I feel I belong in 4-H club meetings.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
C. Boys and girls have equal chance of doing projects in 4-H.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
D. I can count on others in my 4-H club.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
E. Members help plan 4-H club meetings.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
F. 4-H is fun!	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
G. My 4-H leader has too many rules.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
H. I attended most meetings.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀

2. **Do you like the projects we do in 4-H? Read each sentence and circle the face that best shows what you feel.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A. In 4-H I often try new and different things.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
B. 4-H teaches me to do things on my own.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
C. I was able to take the projects I wanted.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
D. In 4-H I can find my own interests.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
E. 4-H allows me to work at my own speed.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
F. In 4-H we always work in a group.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
G. I feel good doing 4-H club projects.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
H. 4-H rewards me for being successful.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀

3. What have you learned in 4-H? Read each sentence and circle the face that best shows what you think.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A. I learned a lot from my projects.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
B. Some of my 4-H projects are too easy to do.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
C. My 4-H projects are too hard to complete.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
D. In 4-H I learned about my interests.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
E. 4-H has helped me feel better about myself.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
F. I completed my projects.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
G. 4-H teaches me I am able to solve my problems.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀
H. 4-H helps me set goals for the future.	☹	☹	😐	☺	☀

4. Who encouraged you to re-enroll in 4-H? Circle the face that best shows what you think.

	No	Yes
A. Parents	☹	☀
B. Brother and/or sister	☹	☀
C. Teachers	☹	☀
D. 4-H Leader	☹	☀
E. Friends	☹	☀

5. Think about your 4-H leader in your club. Read each sentence and circle the face that best shows what you think.

	No	Yes
A. My 4-H leader cares about me.	☹	☀
B. My 4-H leader includes me in decisions.	☹	☀
C. My 4-H leader listens to me.	☹	☀
D. My 4-H leader wants me to do my best.	☹	☀
E. My 4-H leader plays favorites.	☹	☀
F. My 4-H leader is my parent.	☹	☀

6. We would like you to answer the following questions:

A. Were you enrolled last year in a 4-H Club?   ___NO ___YES

B. If a member of a 4-H club, what do you like about 4-H?

_____

_____

C. If not a member of a 4-H Club, why did you drop out?

_____

D. If not a member of a 4-H club, what programs, projects or activities would influence you to return?

_____

_____

E. Would you tell a friend about 4-H?   ___NO ___ YES

7. Finally, tell us about you. Fill in the blanks.

A. How old are you? _____ YEARS OLD.

B. How many years have you been in a 4-H Club? _____YEARS

C. Are you a ____BOY ____GIRL?

D. What best describes your ethnic background?

_____AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK   _____ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER

_____CAUCASIAN/WHITE _____ NATIVE AMERICAN ____ HISPANIC

_____ MIXED HERITAGE (BI-RACIAL OR MULTI-RACIAL)

E. Where do you live?

_____ MUSKEGON   _____ ON A FARM

_____ RURAL BUT NOT ON A FARM   _____ SMALL TOWN

F. Do you have comments you would like to make about the 4-H club program or about this survey?

_____

_____

Thank you for answering these questions! Please give the completed questionnaire to your 4-H Leader.

APPENDIX B

SUPPORT LETTER AND APPROVAL LETTER FOR RESEARCH

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

January 4, 2000

MEMORANDUM

TO: University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

FROM: Cheri Booth *[signature]*
            Interim Assistant Vice Provost and
            Associate Director for MSU Extension

RE: Support for Betty Shelby's research proposal

It has come to my attention that Betty Shelby, the County Extension Director in Muskegon County, is seeking approval to do research in Muskegon County on 4-H Youth within the Muskegon County 4-H Youth Program.

I have had the opportunity to review Betty's proposal and approve of this approach to study the high dropout rate of youth from the program. Her study will review such factors as age, gender, residence, adolescent development, 4-H project experience, attitude toward the 4-H experience, skills and knowledge gained through the program experience and the people who influence the sustainability of the enrollment in the program.

Betty has assured me that all of the reports of the research findings will be kept confidential and the anonymity of the youth will be protected.

This research will be valuable to the 4-H Youth program across the state of Michigan. Staff are wrestling with the issues of enrollment, length of time youth stay in the program and how to maintain youth in the 4-H Youth experience.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 517-355-0265.

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

January 28, 2000

TO: Frederick WHIMS
        410 Agriculture Hall

RE: **IRB# 00-016**   CATEGORY:1-C

        APPROVAL DATE: January 26, 2000

TITLE: FACTORS AFFECTING THE REENROLLMENT IN MUSKEGON COUNTY
        4-H AS PERCEIVED BY NINE THROUGH TWELVE YEAR OLD MEMBERS
        AND DROPOUTS

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this project is complete and I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and methods to obtain informed consent are appropriate. Therefore, the **UCRIHS approved this project.**

RENEWALS: UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year, beginning with the approval date shown above. Projects continuing beyond one year must be renewed with the green renewal form. A maximum of four such expedited renewals possible. Investigators wishing to continue a project beyond that time need to submit it again for a complete review.

REVISIONS: UCRIHS must review any changes in procedures involving human subjects, prior to initiation of the change. If this is done at the time of renewal, please use the green renewal form. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written request to the UCRIHS Chair, requesting revised approval and referencing the project's IRB# and title. Include in your request a description of the change and any revised instruments, consent forms or advertisements that are applicable.

PROBLEMS/CHANGES: Should either of the following arise during the course of the work, notify UCRIHS promptly: 1) problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects or 2) changes in the research environment or new information indicating greater risk to the human subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and approved.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517 355-2180 or via email: UCRIHS@pilot.msu.edu. Please note that all UCRIHS forms are located on the web: http://www.msu.edu/unit/vprgs/UCRIHS/

Sincerely,

[signature: David E. Wright]

David E. Wright, Ph.D.

DEW: br

cc: Betty Shelby
    P.O. Box 1454
    Muskegon, MI 49443

OFFICE OF
**RESEARCH
AND
GRADUATE
STUDIES**

University Committee on
Research Involving
Human Subjects

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FAX: 517/353-2976
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E-Mail: ucrihs@msu.edu

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APPENDIX C

4-H NEWSLETTER

Muskegon County

4-H Family Newsletter

Dear 4-H Families:

I hope all is well with you! The snow is gone (as of 2/28/00) and hopefully it will not return. Spring is just around the corner and clubs are becoming a little more active with the warmer weather. As you read through this newsletter you'll find many opportunities available to you through Michigan 4-H Youth Programs.

Being a part of 4-H provides you with many opportunities to learn new skills that will enhance yourself and your 4-H club. Muskegon County 4-H Leaders Council is committed to helping volunteers, teen leaders and clubs reach their fullest potential. There are scholarships available to help you attend these sessions. The opportunities are endless, take advantage of them!

Sincerely,

Ray A. Ostos
4-H Youth Agent
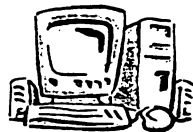
Muskegon County 4-H Leaders Council's new computer is great!

For your information:

- Please continue to turn in your Meijer's receipts so that 4-H Council can turn them in for gift certificates.

- Leaders Council is conducting their Annual Sub-sale fundraiser. Please lend your support!

- Leaders Council sponsored 16 volunteers that attended the 4-H West Central Leadermete!

- The Fair dates for the 4-H participants are July 10-16.

4-H Parents & Leaders....Your Help is Needed!

I am conducting a study on the *Factors Affecting the Re-enrollment in Muskegon County 4-H as perceived by Nine through Twelve Year old Members and Dropouts.* If you have a child that was between the ages of nine to twelve during the 1998-1999 4-H year, we would like for you to sign a permission slip for your child (children) so your child can fill out the questionnaire. We will be working with your 4-H leader and attending 4-H club meetings.

It is very important that you sign the permission slip so your child will be included in the study. Your child's answers will be kept confidential. We hope you encourage your child to fill out the questionnaire as soon as possible. Once the *4-H Club Assessment* is returned, your child's name will be entered in a drawing for an AM/FM Stereo Cassette/CD Player Boom Box, to be held at a 4-H Council Meeting. Your child's participation is extremely important to the

results of this study. The input we receive will help identify the factors affecting the reenrollment of 4-H club members. We will be able to improve the 4-H program for current and future 4-H members. If you have any questions please call me at 724-6361

Thank you for your time and cooperation.—Betty Shelby, Muskegon County Extension Director

APPENDIX D

PARENT CONSENT FORM

STUDY CONSENT FORM
PARENTS OF PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE MINORS

I, _____ voluntarily agree to allow my child (children),
Parent or Guardian

_____ to participate in the study of youth who are
Names of Children

enrolled 4-H club members or have dropped out of the Muskegon County 4-H

youth program ages 9 to 12 years of age in the 1998-1999 program year. All

results from this study will be treated with strict confidence. My child (children)

will remain anonymous in any report of research findings. The information will be

used to improve and enhance the 4-H club program for currently enrolled youth

and those that will be enrolled in the future.

_____   _____
        Signature of Parent   Date

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