How voice affects perceptions of relationship with adults, ownership, and engagement in youth

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HOW VOICE AFFECTS PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH ADULTS, OWNERSHIP, AND ENGAGEMENT IN YOUTH

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development

by
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated with all my love to my husband, Paul, and my children, Casey and Erica. Paul, I would never have made it this far without your unfailing love and support. Thank you for being so patient with my need to always learn more. Casey, I know that you have an insider’s understanding of the trials and tribulations associated with writing your own book, and I appreciate the encouragement that you have always been quick to offer me when I’ve been down-hearted. I look forward to seeing your book in print some day soon. Erica, I think you have learned as much as I have during all those classes you so willingly attended with me. It would have been a much lonelier journey without you there to talk to as I commuted to and from class. Each of you has contributed your own unique piece in helping me to reach this goal, and I hope you each know how much I love you and appreciate you making this journey with me.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if youth voice affects the ownership and engagement experienced by youth in a county 4-H program. For the treatment group, a youth-led approach was used where “having a voice” included youth sharing decision-making power with the adults in the program. The comparison group consisted of 4-H members in three other clubs in the county. These youth experienced an adult-led approach where the decisions about the club programming were made strictly by the adults.

The Youth Voice Survey instrument was developed to assess youths’ perceptions of ownership, engagement, and relationship with adults at both a pre- and post-measurement. Interviews were conducted with six youth in the treatment group to determine if their lived experiences confirmed the factors that emerged from the Youth Voice Survey. Exploratory factor analysis was used to investigate the underlying latent constructs in the instrument. Analysis of covariance was utilized to determine if differences existed between youth participating in the treatment and comparison groups and if differences existed between youth based on race. Findings indicated statistically significant differences between the treatment and comparison groups on all three constructs of ownership, engagement, and relationship with adults. Findings also indicated statistically significant differences between white and non-white youth on all three constructs of ownership, engagement, and relationship with adults. It was concluded that, in programs incorporating voice, youth experience more ownership and engagement and have a more positive relationship with adults. An implication of this study is that adults who work with youth should receive training on the incorporation of youth voice and the support of youth as decision-makers.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The field of youth development is rapidly evolving. Research emerges daily concerning the importance of positive experiences to the overall development of youth and children. Public interest in youth programs designed to promote positive adolescent development outcomes is also growing (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002).

Nonformal youth development programs provide a place for youth to develop life skills, to become involved in meaningful, challenging activities, and to develop positive relationships with peers and adults. Early indications of the benefits for youth who are involved in these programs include a decrease in substance abuse and delinquency, an improvement in school performance, and an improvement in overall psychological and social development (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002; Simpkins, Ripke, Huston, & Eccles, 2005).

While researchers and practitioners have failed to agree upon a common definition of youth development, there is consensus that a wide range of approaches can lead to positive outcomes (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998, Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Recent research has focused on the importance of retaining youth in high-quality programs. A common challenge that is faced by practitioners is the high drop-out rate of youth in out-of-school time programming. Increasingly, researchers are looking at the characteristics of successful programs to try to determine what factors lead to success (Little & Lauver, 2005). Why are some programs very successful at engaging youth while others seem to operate a “revolving door” program?

Many factors are being considered as part of the success equation, including the importance of youth voice in the program (Anderson-Butcher, 2005; Hart, 1992; Kellett, Forrest, Dent, & Ward, 2004; O’Donoghue, Kirshner, & McLaughlin, 2002; Weiss, Little, & Bouffard, 2005).
While the individual benefits for youth who are actively involved in youth development programs are substantial, the benefits to society are no less impressive. In 2003 Louisiana incarcerated 1,821 youth, while the national total juvenile incarceration was 96,655 (Sickmund, Sladky, & Kang, 2005). The 2005-2006 Louisiana state budget included appropriations for services for 1,900 youth in residential incarcerations. With an average cost of $107.10 per day, per juvenile bed for the 660 beds available, the state has the potential to spend approximately $25,800,000 in direct costs each year on delinquent youth, with total appropriations for the state juvenile justice system exceeding $138,000,000 (House Bill 1, 2005). If the early indications that youth development programs decrease the likelihood of youth becoming involved in delinquent activities, and if there is also a subsequent decrease in substance abuse, then the savings to state government has the potential to be tremendous (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002).

While a reduction in state spending is a very tangible benefit to society, an additional benefit is the potential for positive development. Youth who are involved in meaningful and challenging projects in their communities have an opportunity to develop civic attitudes that lead to adult commitment to the democratic process (Nicholson, Collins, & Holmer, 2004; Pearson & Voke, 2003). At a time when the media increasingly portrays youth in a negative light, the potential of positive youth development to improve the public’s image of youth is tremendous (Damon, 2004). Damon asserted the importance of viewing youth as resources who can be actively engaged in their own development rather than viewing youth in terms of their problems that need to be fixed or the potential problems they may become that need to be prevented.

A key issue in youth development programs is the retention of youth in nonformal programs. Youth who do not maintain involvement cannot reap the benefits of participation. Common reasons that youth give for not participating include transportation and safety issues,
boredom with the program, and time constraints associated with youths’ desire to spend time with friends, work, and care for family responsibilities (Little & Lauver, 2005). Strategies abound for recruiting and retaining youth. The most familiar ones include program quality features like providing a sense of safety and belonging, engaging staff who are committed and supportive, and conducting activities that are both age appropriate and challenging (Lauver & Little, 2005). The promotion of efforts to include youth in leadership and decision-making roles has grown in popularity over the last eight years. As the literature on this subject has evolved, words like “youth empowerment,” “youth decision-making,” and “youth voice” have become more prevalent. Studies of the supports and barriers to youth involvement in these roles frequently cited the importance of the adult’s role in the program as well as the opportunities provided for youth to have a voice (Anderson-Butcher, 2005; Golombek, 2002; Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005; Pearson & Voke, 2003).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to determine if youth voice affects the ownership and engagement experienced by youth. Witt (2005c) broadly defined youth voice as “the perception that one’s opinions are heard and respected by others – particularly adults.”

**Objectives of the Study**

1. To describe youth of a 4-H club in a rural high school in northeast Louisiana on the following demographic characteristics:
   a. Gender
   b. Age
   c. Race
   d. Number of years in 4-H
   e. Number of years in junior leader club
f. Highest educational level completed

2. To determine the level of youth voice of 7th through 12th graders participating in four high school 4-H clubs in a rural Louisiana parish as measured by the Youth Voice Survey.

3. To compare post-measurement summated scores of the sub-scales measured by the Youth Voice Survey for youth who participated in a 4-H club emphasizing youth voice with those of 4-H youth who participated in a club that did not emphasize youth voice on the following variables: group and race.

4. To examine the lived experiences of 4-H youth who are participating in a club that emphasizes youth ownership and engagement to determine whether or not their lived experiences confirmed the factors that emerged from the Youth Voice Survey.

**Operational Definition of Terms**

Engagement – This researcher defines engagement as the state of being actively involved in a task, activity, or event.

Ownership – This researcher defines ownership as a feeling of having rights or feelings of possession toward something, particularly a club or program.

Youth voice – Witt (2005c) broadly defined youth voice as “the perception that one’s opinions are heard and respected by others – particularly adults.”

**Significance of the Study**

Youth development programs struggle with retaining youth in their programs, especially teenaged youth. Understanding what motivates youth to develop ownership and to become more engaged in the program is essential to the development of high-quality youth development programs that meet the needs of youth. Programs that cannot retain youth will not have an opportunity to impact youth. Youths’ perceptions of their degree of voice play an important role in their decision to remain with or depart from a program. Because of the important role that
adults play in facilitating the development of voice, understanding how youth perceive their interactions with adults would provide insight into strengths and weaknesses of the interactions that could be addressed through training programs for adults who work with youth. The research in the area of youth perceptions of voice in programs primarily targeting youth development is limited. This research provides an opportunity to better understand how youth experience the development of voice in a program specifically targeting youth developmental outcomes.

**Expectations**

An expectation of this study is that the chosen intervention will lead to a growth in youths’ perception that they have a voice.

**Limitations**

A limitation of this study is that the time available for the treatment is limited to six monthly meetings of approximately 45 minutes each. There is no opportunity for additional interaction with the large group between meetings and only very limited time for interaction with small groups of members. This results in a relatively short amount of time with the students in which to expect to see an effect occur. An additional limitation of this study is that the youth range in age from 13 to 19 years old and maturation is also occurring during this six-month time period when the measurement of changes in perception of voice is taking place. This could have a confounding effect because six months is a significant length of time in a teenager’s life.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The History of the Youth Development Movement

The idea that youth are resources who have strengths and assets that should be utilized and developed has evolved over the last 125 years from what has been alternately considered a movement into what some now consider an educational practice and field of study. Witt (2005a, 2005b) described the late 1800s and early 1900s as a period of social reform brought on by the effects of rapid industrialization, immigration and migration, and urbanization of the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries. He described the time leading into the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century as one of increasing scrutiny of child-labor practices which led to the creation of a life-period called adolescence. Witt described this as a time between childhood and adulthood when youth were encouraged to develop their skills for adulthood. He also identified an increasing awareness of the importance of education before entering the workforce resulted in child labor laws and compulsory education laws, thus creating a longer period of childhood/adolescence. This longer period of adolescence led to large numbers of youth with an increased amount of free time. Witt went on to explain that the advent of youth-serving organizations like Boys Clubs, YMCA, Camp Fire Girls, Girl Guides, settlement houses, 4-H and playgrounds was society’s response to the question of how to make productive use of this increased free time while preventing or stopping the increased prevalence of youth involved in problem behaviors.

The deficit model of the 1970s and 1980s focused on interventions that led to prevention of problem behaviors. If teen pregnancy was identified as a community problem, then programs were designed to specifically treat or prevent this problem. However, in the last 10 years the paradigm has shifted from seeing youth as problems that need to be prevented or solved to considering youth as assets to be developed. Youth development has come to encompass a broad
range of endeavors aimed at addressing Pittman, Irby, and Ferber’s (2000) now famous phrase, “problem free is not fully prepared” (p. 20). These wide-ranging endeavors also encompass extensive attempts to define “what is a youth development program?”

**Defining Youth Development**

While no commonly agreed upon definition of a youth development program has been reached, it can be noted that there is some consensus among researchers and practitioners that a wide range of approaches can lead to positive outcomes for youth (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Roth, et al., 1998). The most common approaches included the following elements: comprehensive, sustained programming, caring adult/youth relationships, family involvement, skill development, and safety (Roth et al., 1998). Roth et al. (1998) described youth development programs as “programs that provide opportunities and support to help youth gain the competencies and knowledge they need to meet the increasing challenges they will face as they mature” (p. 423).

Inherent in this discussion of describing and defining a youth development program is the notion that a youth development program must lead to some outcome, preferably a positive outcome. This positive outcome of a youth development program has become known as positive youth development. Damon (2004) described positive youth development as an endeavor “... at understanding, educating, and engaging children in productive activities rather than at correcting, curing or treating them for maladaptive tendencies or so called disabilities” (p.15). Damon framed this description of positive youth development around the changes that had occurred as a result of the switch from a deficit model of youth development to an asset-based approach.

One way to frame positive youth development is within the context of cognitive, social, and emotional development, physical health, morality, and spirituality. Damon (2004) discussed the development of moral identity and its effect on how youth view themselves as members of
society. Damon defined moral identity as “a person’s use of moral beliefs to define the self” (p. 21). Youth who use words like honest and caring to describe themselves are making statements about their perceived moral identity. Damon contrasted this to youth who define themselves by physical characteristics, such as the way they look; material characteristics, like socioeconomic status; and intellectual characteristics, such as degree of intelligence. Damon proceeded to discuss how youth who developed moral identity not only recognized societal problems but also recognized their role in both the cause as well as the solution to the problem. Ultimately, he connected moral identity with life-long purpose and happiness.

Park (2004) included subjective well-being in her discussion of positive youth development. She pointed to the role that life satisfaction plays in youths’ ability to positively navigate adolescence through identification of positive correlations with physical health and healthy behaviors, psychological characteristics such as motivation, self-efficacy and self-reliance, and prosocial behaviors. She also noted that high life satisfaction is negatively correlated with drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, violent behavior problems, depression, anxiety, and other psychological disorders. She observed that the quality of social interactions provided by youth development programs was of more importance than the quantity of such opportunities.

Positive youth development (PYD) can also be described in terms of the Five Cs: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring and compassion, which add to the emergence of contribution as the sixth C (Lerner et al., 2005). Roth (2004) positioned the five Cs as a “succinct way to identify and organize the specific goals for programs promoting positive youth development” (p. 5). Because of the newness of the concept of positive youth development, there has been some question of the authenticity of this developmental theory. Lerner et al. (2005) described the framework in which they studied the Five Cs as a part of
healthy development across the lifespan and how this development becomes a factor in contribution. The study was framed as a longitudinal study with an overall goal of testing the developmental contextual view of the thriving process. The sample was drawn from 40 cities and towns in 13 states and included 1,700 fifth-grade youth. Of this group 47.2% were males with a mean age of 11.1 years and 52.8% were females with a mean age of 10.9 years. This age group was chosen by the researchers because of the relative low frequency of risk behaviors among these youth. Data were collected via surveys of both youth and parents. Upon collection of parental consents, 1,117 useable youth surveys were obtained and paired with parental surveys. The parental survey included questions about parental educational level and family income as well as questions aimed at verifying the information gathered from youth about physical development and participation in extra-curricular activities. The youth survey used a variety of questions compiled from existing instruments to measure attitudes, behaviors, participation, parental warmth, parental monitoring of outside activities, beliefs about themselves, perceived self-competence, peer relations, empathy, social responsibility and giving, developmental regulation, school and career aspirations, physical development, and psychosocial development. Data analysis consisted building a model of the Five Cs and PYD based on a pilot study of 339 youth. Confirmatory factor analysis was then used to assess the fit of the data from the 1,117 youth with the model built during the pilot phase. Four models were tested and the best fit model was retained; however, some shared variance between Confidence or Competence and Character or Caring was still unaccounted for by the model and will be further developed as data from succeeding waves of the study is collected. Lerner et al. (2005) concluded that the preliminary data suggested the empirical reality of a “relationship between PYD and the Five Cs and contribution” (p. 55).
While many definitions of youth development have focused on development as it relates to the individual, another way of looking at youth development is through the lens of community youth development. An underlying principle of community youth development is that youth are products of an interaction with their environment or community, and this interaction is an integral part of the development (McLaughlin, 2000; Perkins, Borden, Keith, Hoppe-Rooney, & Villarruel, 2003; Witt & Caldwell, 2005). Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) put it in these terms: “Our best chance of positively influencing adolescent development through programs lies in increasing the web of options available to all youth in all communities . . .” (p. 97).

Damon’s (2004) discussion of the child-community connection looked at the holistic aspects of the interaction as opposed to the child in isolation. He described his earlier exposure to treating children with a variety of learning, social, and behavioral disorders without consideration for the context within which the problems were occurring. In contrast, today the approach is holistic and considers all contexts within which the child interacts. Rather than trying to fix identified problems, Damon described an approach that strengthens the contexts within which the child is a participant. Damon also paralleled his own belief in the child’s responsibility to the community with Benson’s external assets of youth as resources, service to others, and high expectations which relate to youth empowerment.

**Cooperative Extension System and 4-H Youth Development**

The Cooperative Extension Service was established by the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 as a partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture and the land-grant university system. Subsequent state legislation in many states allowed for the inclusion of local and county-level governments in the partnership. The mission of the Cooperative Extension Service is to provide research-based educational information to citizens that will enable them to improve their
lives. This information covers a broad base of knowledge in agriculture, home economics, youth development, community economic development, and other related information.

The 4-H Youth Development program originated at the turn of the 20th century (National 4-H Headquarters, n.d.). The program was initiated both in response to a desire to connect “hands-on” learning and country life with public education and in response to the low adoption rates of recommended farming practices by farmers. The idea that youth were interested in experimenting and learning and would then share this learning with the adults was considered an excellent method of disseminating information and increasing the potential usage of the information. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 included a component for the inclusion of work with youth; however, the clubs had already been in operation for approximately 12 years. Over the years, the program evolved to become less focused on using youth work as a conduit for reaching an adult audience and more focused on developing youths’ life skills and providing a space for personal growth. The program is largely project-focused, with areas of concentration including agriculture, family and consumer sciences, science and technology, and electronics. Methods of delivery vary from state to state but commonly include a club component, either at the school or community level, which is led by volunteers and a youth development professional. Youth are offered opportunities to develop specific skills and to showcase those skills through various means such as fairs, local, state and national contests, and other non-competitive events.

The Role of Participation in a Youth Development Program

Participation is a key element of any youth development program. Through participation in quality youth development programs, youth not only gain skills that help them in school, but they also develop life skills that are essential ingredients for long-term success. Increasingly, researchers identified higher self-esteem, a stronger sense of self efficacy, and a higher degree of
civic engagement as common outcomes of participating in youth-development organizations (McLaughlin, 2000).

In order to understand youth participation, it is important to first understand the historical development of the conceptualization of citizen rights to participate in the decisions that affect them. The model of youth participation was largely influenced by the work of Hart (1992) and his essay for the United Nations Children’s Fund entitled *Children’s Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*. His work was an adaptation of an earlier publication *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* by Sherry Arnstein (1969). Both Arnstein and Hart described levels of nonparticipation and participation of citizens and youth. Arnstein conceptualized the process of participation as rungs on a ladder, an image that Hart also used for his iteration of the process. At the lower levels of the ladder, citizens are not participating. Instead, those who have power control participation in such a way that the powerless are simply a figurehead. They have no real decision-making authority. Arnstein labeled these rungs manipulation and therapy while Hart used the labels manipulation and decoration. Both Arnstein and Hart described manipulation in terms of rubber-stamp committees. The decisions have really already been made, but this level of non-participation gives the public appearance of having solicited input from the constituency. Arnstein illustrated therapy as the rung above manipulation; however, she stated that in some of its guises therapy should actually fall below manipulation. Therapy takes the stance that powerlessness is synonymous with mental illness, and citizens need to be cured of their illness through group rehabilitation. Hart diverged somewhat from Arnstein by using decoration as the second rung of the ladder. He described this as adults using youth to further their cause with no pretension that the cause was inspired by youth.

Arnstein’s (1969) ladder described the next three rungs as tokenism while Hart (1992) labeled the third rung of the ladder as tokenism. Hart described these as symbolic efforts to give
children a voice when in fact they do not have any say. In Arnstein’s portrayal these tokenistic
tactics include three successive rungs: informing, consultation, and placation. The informing
level, which is quite similar to Hart’s assigned but informed rung, allows for the transfer of
information in one direction, from the powerful to the powerless. While it may be a step toward
ture participation in that it does at least provide citizens with information, it does not allow for
ture influence by the powerless over the decisions that are made. Consultation provides an
avenue for citizen views to be taken into account, yet there is still no mechanism in place which
assures them the right to influence decisions. This rung is similar to Hart’s consulted and
informed level. At the upper level of tokenism, Arnstein used placation to describe a situation
where a designated few citizens hold positions on boards or committees with decision-making
authority. The drawback to this symbolic representation is that the powerful still retain the
majority vote for any decisions that are made. Arnstein described this as ultimately, the powerful
still judge the worthiness of any idea or thought presented. This is similar to Hart’s level, adult-
initiated with shared decisions with children, although Hart’s model allows for many children to
be involved and not just a designated few as in Arnstein’s representation.

Finally, Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation described three levels of true citizen
power: partnership, delegated power, and citizen control. Partnership describes a true sharing of
power and decision-making rights among citizens and the powerful. At this level each group has
equal voting rights and citizens begin to have a voice in the decisions affecting them. At this
point, Hart’s (1992) and Arnstein’s models differ slightly. In Hart’s model the eighth rung, child-
initiated with shared decisions with adults, is probably closer to Arnstein’s partnership rung than
to any other with the clarification of who initiates the action (the youth for Hart and no
designation for Arnstein) as the only difference. Hart did not have a rung that is similar to
Arnstein’s delegated power rung. Delegated power represents the assumption of the majority of
the decision-making power by the powerless at a single level. Citizens gain command of one program. Citizen control represents the most egalitarian expression of citizen power. At this point citizens obtain control of their communities and are the final authority over the degree to which others may change them. Arnstein does point out that “no one in the nation has absolute control” (p. 223). Hart’s seventh rung, child-initiated and directed, where adults do not influence the decisions and actions of children may be most analogous to Arnstein’s citizen control rung.

It is upon this foundation that the rights of children have been described. Children’s rights became an issue in the early 1990s when the United Nations (1989) issued the document entitled *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. This document outlines the rights of children, and in particular Article 12 outlines children’s rights to voice:

**Article 12**

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law. (United Nations, 1989, p. 4)

This document has led to the current literature which clarifies what youth participation means. Hart’s (1992) justification for the need for youth participation was much the same as Arnstein’s (1969) rationalization for citizen participation and is summed up best in the following quote:

A nation is democratic to the extent that its citizens are involved, particularly at the community level. The confidence and competence to be involved must be gradually acquired through practice. It is for this reason that there should be gradually increasing opportunities for children to participate in any aspiring democracy, and particularly in those nations already convinced that they are democratic. (Hart, 1992, p.4)
Arnstein (1969) validated her belief that citizen participation is a basic democratic right in her opening paragraph with “Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy...” (p. 216), which Hart (1992) corroborated with his statement that “Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship” (p. 5). Hart alluded to the idea that youth participation is a learning and growth experience and then went on to support that in the following excerpt:

An understanding of democratic participation and the confidence and competence to participate can only be acquired gradually through practice; it cannot be taught as an abstraction. Many western nations think of themselves as having achieved democracy fully, though they teach the principles of democracy in a pedantic way in classrooms which are themselves models of autocracy. (Hart, 1992, p. 5)

Hart’s support of a collaborative, hands-on approach to participation set the stage for further discussion of true participation. His graphical representation of participation was very similar in structure and thought to Arnstein’s; however, the basic premise differed in that Arnstein advocated for basic citizen rights while Hart used his illustration to teach both how adults used children to achieve their own ends and how the youth-adult interaction could be improved so that there is opportunity for greater learning through increased responsibility for decision-making by youth.

One of the more confusing aspects of Hart’s (1992) model, when strictly interpreted by the visual illustration, is the role of adults in the process of participation. Shier’s (2001) model, pathways to participation, offered a clearer elucidation of the partnership between youth and adults by taking a more in-depth, cohesive look at the process. Shier focused his attention on the participation portion of the model and did not seek to further describe the non-participation parts. His major contribution to understanding the process of participation was his clarification of the differing levels of commitment that adults and organizations have to empowering youth. He named three stages of commitment: openings, opportunities, and obligations. An opening occurs
when a person makes a decision or commitment to empower youth. An opportunity occurs when
the events or conditions conspire to allow empowerment to happen. An obligation is the level at
which the organization makes empowerment a standard operating procedure to which everyone
is committed. Shier provided questions for each level to assist in determining the individual’s or
organization’s position along the continuum. He noted that it is probable that a person or
organization is at more than one position on the continuum based on the particular task or aspect
of their work.

Mitra (2006) described participation in terms of a “pyramid of student voice” (p. 7). The
pyramid is a three-layer illustration outlining a categorization of participation in schools from
simply being heard, to collaborating with adults, to building capacity for youth leadership. The
pyramid was framed as a way to provide increasing opportunities for youth to move to greater
chances for involvement in shaping the school environment.

Youth participation in after-school programs is important because of its potential for
positive effects for youth. These effects include the development of initiative and teamwork
(Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005) and efficacy and mattering (Larson, Eccles, & Gootman,
2004), as well as increasing their social interaction abilities, their social connectedness, and their
abilities to organize groups and efforts (Checkoway et al., 2003).

Developing Engagement and Ownership in Youth

Pittman et al. (2000) extended the idea of what youth development means to include the
idea that “fully prepared is not enough—young people need to find ways to become
fully engaged” (p. 21). In two recent issues of New Directions for Youth Development
(O’Donoghue et al., 2002; Weiss et al., 2005), the questions of what participation and
engagement really mean were posed. Kirshner, O’Donoghue, and McLaughlin (2005) defined
youth participation as “a constellation of activities that empower adolescents to take part and

influence decision-making that affects their lives and to take action on issues they care about” (p. 16). Weiss et al. extended this concept to include participation as an equation of “participation = enrollment + attendance + engagement” (p. 19) with engagement noted as the critical key to true participation. The study of engagement is an emerging issue in the field of youth development and one which Weiss et al. connected to behaviors such as persistence, effort, and attention and emotions like enthusiasm, interest, and pride in success. Contento, Manning, and Shannon (as cited in Dunn, Thomas, Green, & Mick, 2006) noted that changes in behaviors could require as many as 50 hours of contact time for the change to occur.

Ryan and Deci (2000) viewed this engagement or disengagement “as a function of the social conditions in which they (human beings) develop and function” (p. 68). Through their research of self-determination theory, they posited that the satisfaction of the psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness led to higher levels of intrinsic motivation or higher levels of external motivation aligned with their individual internal values. In its most simplistic form, intrinsic motivation is conceptualized as a drive to learn because of the joy and challenge that is engendered in the individual, whereas extrinsic motivation involves external forces motivating a person to perform or engage for some external reward or outcome.

Ryan and Deci (2000) also proposed a subtheory of self-determination theory, cognitive evaluation theory, which specified social and environmental factors that enhanced intrinsic motivation. These factors are competence, autonomy and relatedness. Competence, feeling proficient or capable, and autonomy, or internally perceived locus of causality, work together to enhance intrinsic motivation (deCharms, 1968; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy is linked to locus of causality which describes a person’s belief that their actions originate within themselves (deCharms, 1968). Additionally, Ryan and Deci (2000) hypothesized that the presence of feelings of relatedness, connectedness or attachment influences the perseverance of intrinsic
motivation. Larson (2000) tied the construct initiative to autonomy. Park (2004) noted autonomy, competence, and relatedness as mediators of life satisfaction, a person’s overall determination that life is good, an important construct of subjective well-being.

In terms of engagement, youth who are intrinsically motivated, or who are naturally interested in or challenged by a subject, can experience increased engagement by experiencing contexts supporting feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The challenge rests in engaging those youth who do not feel an innate desire to engage in a particular subject. Ryan and Deci (2000) observed that providing social contexts that enhance an individual’s feelings of personal endorsement and choice led to more internalization and thus higher levels of engagement. Essentially, within the particular place of interaction (in this case the social context) youth who are internally motivated, or experience external motivation at the level of either personal identification or integration with their own values, are more engaged.

Vallerand (2001) expanded this motivation continuum to encompass a hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that proposes three levels of generality: global (the person’s overall personality disposition toward motivation), contextual (how the particular place, like home or school, affects motivation), and situational (how immediate experiences affect on-the-spot motivation). Vallerand posited that the levels of generality have a reciprocal effect on each other. In other words, youth who repeatedly experience intrinsic motivation at the situational level, for example in a sports activity, will begin to develop a contextual motivation toward the sports program. When contextual motivation in several life contexts supports a particular type of motivation, for instance intrinsic motivation, then a person’s personality begins to reflect more intrinsic motivation. There is also a top-down affect in that whatever motivational level youth typically exhibit at the personality level will trickle down to her different life contexts. This in turn will affect her motivation in different situational settings.
Researchers in youth development are also beginning to look at the role context plays in engagement. Bartko (2005) provided a description of a positive developmental context which is conducive to engagement. These qualities include a safe environment where rules are clear and consistent, opportunities for connecting with others and developing a sense of belonging, opportunities for independence, responsibility, and opportunities for skill mastery. These qualities were echoed by Anderson-Butcher (2005) in her discussion of program development strategies that lead youth to develop feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness. These strategies include providing a place to experience mastery within a context of meaningful, challenging activities (competence), providing an opportunity to develop a sense of responsibility and ownership while exercising independence (autonomy), and providing an environment for connecting with friends and caring adults (relatedness).

Vandell et al. (2005) conducted a study of middle school youth who participate in school-based after-school programs as compared to youth who do not participate in after-school programs. The study tracked levels of motivation and engagement for the experimental group while involved in the after-school program and during other after-school hours like nights and weekends that were unrelated to the program. The comparison group was tracked for a similar time period but had no associated after-school program in which they participated. It was found that after-school program participants experienced more intrinsic motivation, concerted effort, and importance of activities while engaged in the program than the comparison group of youth who did not participate in an after-school program. There were no differences between the two groups when in settings outside the after-school program. The findings suggest the program context as the reason for the higher levels of motivation and engagement. These studies of context support Larson’s (2000) recommendation to structure supportive environments in order to encourage the development of initiative. Larson (2000) advocated providing an environment
where the “motivation, direction, and goals of the groups’ activities came from the participants” (p.177), providing a place where youth experienced authentic, real-world challenges, and providing an experience that occurred over a period of time that he referred to as an “arc of activity” (p. 177).

In a qualitative study aimed at understanding the developmental process occurring in organized youth activities, Larson, et al. (2004) used qualitative interviews and observations guided by the grounded theory approach to study three after-school programs. Data was collected through a series of 206 interviews conducted with 34 youth over the course of a 16-week period. Interviews were conducted using both phone interviews and face-to-face interviews. An additional 33 interviews were conducted with the four adult leaders of the programs to help ascertain their role in the process. The study found that as youth become more engaged they developed initiative, motivation, social capital, tolerance, and responsibility. While many youth shared that they had joined the programs for extrinsic reasons, like the reward of being paid, as they participated in the program and became more engaged, their motivations changed to intrinsic. This shift in motivation was attributed to the opportunities afforded by the program and to the internal satisfaction gained from involvement.

As motivation and engagement increase, youth become more invested in the programs of which they are a part. This investment leads to feelings of ownership and the associated desire to take responsibility for the program. Kirshner et al. (2005) described ownership in terms of youths’ involvement in an after-school research project and their feelings about the work that they do. They depicted ownership as a feeling of caring about, engaging in, and taking responsibility for the outcome of the project, and they identified the relationship shared between the youth and adults as the key factor in the quality of ownership experienced by youth. This
echoes the basic premise of Shier’s (2001) pathways to participation model of participation that makes clear the power that adults hold over the opportunities afforded to have a voice.

Kirshner et al. (2005) profiled two after-school youth-adult research programs in which they were collaborators. Interviews with adults in one of the programs revealed that they felt that youth did not fully develop a sense of ownership for the project and never reached a stage of personally caring about the data collected. Alternately, the second group was able to achieve a sense of shared ownership between youth and adults as evidenced by their active engagement in developing the final reports and the youths’ willingness to take responsibility for presenting the findings.

Camino and Zeldin (2002) cited the development of trust as an important benefit of increased ownership. Larson (in press) suggested that when a relationship of trust is established between youth and adults, then youth are more likely to experience a sense of ownership. Larson also indicated that if adults are too controlling or provide too much leadership, youth experience a loss of ownership. Larson went on to say that if adults place too much emphasis on ownership youth may sacrifice opportunities for challenge, growth, and development, while the establishment of trust allows for youth-adult interaction without the requisite loss of youths’ sense of ownership. Ennis and McCauley (2002) echoed the importance of trust in building a sense of ownership in disruptive and disengaged classroom students. This extension of trust and development of ownership helped these students develop a more internal locus of causality. The issue of who held the power and control in the classroom emerged as underlying mediators of ownership.

Kellett et al. (2004) also positioned ownership as a function of the power and control traditionally held by adults. Children are not afforded the opportunity to participate or have a say in the issues that affect their lives. In a description of a school-based leadership program,
Kirshner (2003) affirmed the impact that adults have on ownership by describing how the expectation that youth would own the projects was a mediator of the youth actually taking responsibility and ownership.

Prilleltensky, Nelson, and Peirson (2001) framed their understanding of power and control within the context of opportunities to develop these capacities as an interaction of the individual and his environment. These opportunities are afforded through access to material and psychological resources, opportunities for meaningful participation in cooperation with significant opportunities to make decisions that affect the individual’s sense that they are the originators of their own actions, and chances to master new skills.

In a study of student ownership in the formal classroom, O’Neill and Barton (2005) suggested that it is “a dynamic and generative process that exists in tension with ownership as an outcome” (p. 299). They contrasted ownership as an outcome, something that is achieved and then used over and over again, with the idea that it is a continually evolving process influenced both by the individual and the social context. Not only is each individual’s experience of ownership influenced by his or her own life experiences, but it is also influenced by interactions “with and among other individuals” (O’Neill & Barton, 2005, p. 300). O’Neill and Barton hypothesized that core content is more easily learned and used within a context of personal ownership as opposed to a traditional context of teacher-centered power. This is consistent with Freire’s contention that learners whose role is passive and dependent have no sense of ownership of the learning process and are thus alienated and unmotivated to learn (Freire, 1970).

In a qualitative study of 23 elementary students, Valaitis (2002) found that, although youth understood the meaning of community and felt that they had ideas to share, youth felt that they had no power or control in the community. Students further clarified that they felt adults perceived them as lacking in competence and not worthy of trust.
Through his research of youth involved in sports activities, Vallerand (2001) found that ownership is a construct that is influenced by external rewards and punishments. When these external rewards or punishments are present, these factors reduce youths’ locus of causality, or their belief that they are in control of their own actions. This reduced sense of autonomy results in a lowered desire to participate in the experience. Anderson-Butcher (2005) put it in simpler terms:

In essence, youth may no longer feel personal power and control over their experience and may even feel manipulated by others who are in control. In the end, they may discontinue participation because they feel little ownership, sense of responsibility, or locus of causality in relation to their involvement. (p. 4)

As noted in previous sections, the interaction of youth with adults is an important component of the youth development process as well as the participation equation (Arnstein, 1969; Hart, 1992; Mitra, 2006; Shier, 2001). Key indicators of high quality youth-adult relationships that have been identified include respect, equality, effective communication, flexibility, tolerance, cooperative behavior, and openness (Camino, 2000; Jones, 2004; Noam & Fiore, 2004; Royce, 2004). Mitra (2004) also noted the reciprocity of learning that is important in the youth-adult relationship. She pointed to the empowerment that occurs for youth in a “symbiotic relationship” (p. 685) where sometimes “the teachers are the experts” (p. 685) and sometimes “the students are the experts” (p. 685).

Two themes that recur often when considering the challenges of youth-adult partnerships are voice and power and control. Those programs that struggle with participation from older youth tended to have few opportunities for youth to have a voice and the power and control of the program tended to rest with the adult leaders of the program. A qualitative study by Royce (2004) that looked at how youth made meaning of empowerment provided insight into particular styles of adult communication that prevented youth from developing a positive relationship.

Youth noted that adults who were overly controlling and did not share power, who were too
directive in their communications, who prejudged, who acted in a parental manner, who were patronizing or too critical, who pressured youth, or who simply did not believe in the youths’ capabilities and expected them to fail were retaining the power in the relationship and were failing to initiate and sustain a true partnership. In his case study of a high school reform effort, Calvert (2004) echoed this finding of the importance of clarifying the power structure between youth and adults as part of the process. He suggested that a focus on shared leadership and ownership by both students and teachers was critical to the success of any efforts to fully engage students.

**Finding the Voices of Youth**

As the literature on youth development, youth-adult partnerships, youth engagement, and youth ownership evolved, youth voice was repeatedly mentioned as an important factor in the development of engagement, and ownership. Witt (2005c) broadly defined youth voice as “the perception that one’s opinions are heard and respected by others – particularly adults.” After the United Nations (1989) outlined children’s rights to a voice in Article 12 of *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Lansdown (2001) later clarified the meaning of Article 12. In essence, all children are capable of articulating their views either through speech or other communication forms like art, signing, or play, and adults have the responsibility for providing the opportunity for this articulation to occur. Lansdown further offered the caveat that children are not required to express their views if they do not so desire. In actions and decisions that affect children’s lives, they have the right to be heard. He cited this as the grounds upon which many youth have been able to choose which parent they want to live with in divorce and custody cases. Article 12 (United Nations, 1989) also ensured children’s views must be given proper consideration, although it does not necessarily mean that their wishes must be fulfilled. Lansdown clarified that the addendum about age and maturity does not mean that very young children can be ignored.
Instead, their relative competence and capacity to understand must be considered. This explanation concerning the views of youth, along with Hart’s ladder of participation, has contributed to the increased awareness of youth voice as an important element within youths’ domains of existence.

In the field of youth development, youth voice is a relatively new concept for empirical research. Baker (1999) provided insight into the history of voice from its earliest inception in religious practices to its role in government and education as both a question of power and control and identity. She pointed to the idea that interpretations of voice were subject to the biases of the interpreter which led to the silencing of some voices and the inclusion of other voices. She urged the careful consideration of “the complexities, the multiplicities, and the divergence that give different meaning to voice, identity, and representation in the first place” (p. 381).

Practitioners commonly cite voice as a best practice for youth programming, and researchers mention it as a contributor to ownership and engagement. For instance, Quinn (1999) and Mead (2003) observed that the inclusion of voice during the planning stages, as well as throughout the program, is a key best practice in youth development programs. Frank’s (2006) review of literature of studies that involved youth participants in the field of community and environmental planning also revealed that one of the commonly cited conditions for effective youth participation was the inclusion of increased youth voice and youth responsibility with a corresponding relinquishment of some of the power by adults. Cruz’s (2004) case study of youth participating in a neighborhood planning and design club found that as a result of involvement, youth realized that their ideas were important and that they could make a difference when allowed to have a voice in the process. Youth in the study felt that their participation and right to have a say in the community was a right that they should have. Although she does not
specifically name it youth voice, Anderson-Butcher (2005) listed the practice of giving youth a say in how the program is planned and implemented as a means to encourage autonomy and independence in youth, and she named these as important indicators of retention. Schoenberg (2005) echoed the importance of voice in engaging and retaining youth in her study of girls in the Girl Scouts program. In his study of youth-adult relationships, Jones (2004) frequently mentioned the level of voice as factor in the type of relationship developed between youths and adults. He posited that youth voice was an important element in any relationship regardless of whether it was adult-led or youth-led. In describing the principles and values that were the basis of effective youth-adult partnerships, Camino (2000) noted that youth wanted to have a say, wanted to be heard, and wanted to be treated as an equal partner. As pointed out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, these are all elements of youth having a voice.

Mitra (2004) conducted a qualitative study of youth voice which looked at voice in terms of youth development outcomes. A case study approach was used to collect data from youth involved in two school-initiated efforts to address the increasingly high student drop-out rate. Youth were recruited for the projects by the adults working with reform efforts. One group of youth was composed of Latino youth recruited by the teacher working with Latino education reform efforts while the other group of youth was chosen based on demographics to work on a ninth grade academic improvement project. Eight Latino youth were active participants in the Latino education reform project with another five students occasionally participating. Twelve of the 30 students chosen for the ninth grade academic improvement project were active participants. Data were collected over a period of two years through 73 semi-structured interviews and 50 observations. Interviews were conducted with a mix of active group members and the two adult advisors of the projects, the school administrator, and a small number of other teachers and students at the school who were not involved with the two groups. Mitra served as
an outside observer in the school over the course of three school semesters. Observational data was conducted both formally and informally during this time. Archival data in the form of written documents was also collected. Data was analyzed using grounded theory and evidence was found of increases in agency, belonging, and competence in the youth involved in the reform. Mitra found that youth who were involved in the program felt more confident about speaking out, being “change makers” (p. 664), and taking leadership roles, developed greater connections to a caring adult, teachers, and the school in general, and developed skills in problem-solving, facilitation, social skills, and public speaking.

In another ethnographic qualitative study, this one conducted by Silva (2002), the questions of how to include the voices of all youth, the perception of youth as change agents, and the supports and barriers to youth voice were explored. Over a period of three years, 34 students, 3 teachers, and 2 university students were involved in a research project aimed at addressing racial disparities in a Berkeley, California, high school. Of the 34 students who were involved, participation was variable over the three-year period. Data was collected through researcher observation and field notes, semi-formal interviews with participating and non-participating individuals, and written artifacts including school newspapers and student essays. As a participant observer, the researcher became an active member of the student group. Grounded theory guided data analysis. Themes that emerged included the importance of preparation for inclusion of student voice at both the individual and organizational levels as well as the role that the students themselves play in the reinforcement of the structures of power and powerlessness. The need for planned integration of student voice in and administrative support of the school reform effort was highlighted. The experiences at this school were contrasted to those of a neighboring school where the reform effort was incorporated as a class within the regular school curriculum and the positive effects of this integration. The development of a close youth-adult
relationship at the neighboring school was also noted as a potential method of facilitating youth voice. At one point, youth in that school took their teachers on community tours to help the teachers learn about the community from the youths’ perspective. This reciprocity of learning is similar to that described by Mitra (2004). Silva also pointed to the importance of developing trust as a key factor to any reform effort’s success. This echoes the findings of other researchers’ exploration of youth-adult relationships (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Larson, in press). Silva found that the question of why students become involved in reform efforts and the nature of participation were framed within the context of identity, power, and equitable representation. Students of color viewed their participation in terms of activism and a movement to right perceived wrongs. Youth involved in the project developed a sense of shared identity. Silva noted an interaction among race, class, and gender identity that influenced the students’ voice and participation. Issues of power and influence also affected the group. Again, race, class, and gender affected those students chosen to assume leadership positions and also affected the outcome of democratic votes with those voices identified as less important becoming silenced. She observed that, over time, participation in the research project lagged with those remaining students exhibiting self-confidence and ownership and high levels of engagement. Those members who stayed were predominantly white, middle-class females which Silva noticed was a reflection of the race/class/gender patterns seen throughout the school. Silva’s findings clearly illustrated the heart of Baker’s (1999) contention that voice is part of a complex interaction with identity and the power struggles inherent in discussions of representation.

Ellis and Caldwell (2001) conducted a quantitative study looking at how level of participation in recreation centers affected youth voice. Hypotheses of the study included 1) participation in a youth-directed recreation program would increase youths’ perception of voice more than participation in a traditional, adult-directed program, 2) youth’s level of voice would
predict level of community attachment, 3) youth’s level of self-efficacy would predict the level of voice, and 4) youth’s level of self-determination would predict the level of voice. The 33 experimental group participants were drawn from four teen centers in an urban Virginia county that were guided by teen councils. While the councils only included 10 youth per site, the other youth at the centers were given a voice through the councils and this input was used to guide programming direction. The 27 comparison group members were drawn from two community centers that follow a more traditional adult-run format of offering programming to youth without a formalized method of youth input. Youth, in both the experimental and comparison groups, ranged in age from 12 to 18 years of age. Participation in all of the centers, both treatment and comparison, was on a voluntary, self-selecting basis. Youth voice was assessed via a 10-item Likert-type scale with a Cronbach’s alpha of .71. Community attachment was measured using a 9-item scale with a Cronbach’s alpha of .69. Self-determination was assessed with a 4-item Likert-type scale with a Cronbach’s alpha of .69, while self-efficacy was measured using an adapted 12-item scale version of the Self-Efficacy Scale. The Cronbach’s alpha for the self-efficacy measure was .79. Due to the ebb and flow nature of youth participation, data was collected from the youth throughout the fall of 2000. T-test results indicated that there was no significant difference in perception of youth voice between the experimental and comparison groups. Predictors of voice were determined using hierarchical linear regression while controlling for age, race, and length of program participation. Significant predictors were self-efficacy, type of program participation, and age. The overall model had an adjusted $R^2$ of .359 (p<.001). Hierarchical linear regression was also used to determine the predictors of self-efficacy. The model had an adjusted $R^2$ of .135 (p<.012) and included a single predictor, type of program participation (i.e. participation in the experimental group had significantly higher levels of self-efficacy). The hypothesis that community attachment was predicted by voice was tested
and found to be non-significant as was the hypothesis that level of self-determination was a predictor of voice. Ellis and Caldwell posited that self-efficacy was essential to youth speaking out and having a voice. Limitations identified in the study included sample size and the fact that youth participants in the groups were not from the same centers.

An evaluation conducted by Camino (2005) sought to determine promising practices in service-learning that enable youth to engage their voices and lead youth and adults in community building. The evaluation used a multiple case study approach to collect data from 40 youth involved in two separate 4-H community service-learning programs (n=15 and n=25). Data was collected through four site visits to each community, observation of activities and events, document review, monthly conference calls with Extension educators in each community, 11 focus group interviews with the youth, and 20 individual in-depth interviews with Extension educators, volunteers working with the project and youth. The evaluation highlighted that the development of leadership skills led to increased confidence when speaking out. Youth who learned community asset mapping both increased their civic understanding and developed confidence in their ability to speak out.

In another qualitative study conducted by Royce (2004), youth identified barriers to expressing themselves and having a voice. These barriers included “1) the prevailing negative images adults have of youth, 2) the fear of saying something wrong, 3) an omnipresent and overly watchful program leader, 4) adult determined feasibility of youth ideas, 5) unconstructive criticism from adults, and 6) adult dominated decision-making and control” (p. 123).

Summary

Participation in youth development programs is predicated on the idea that engagement is an essential component of the process if the best outcomes are going to be attained for youth. As youth become more engaged in the program, their feelings of responsibility for and ownership of
the program increase. Youth development literature describes youth voice as an important
component of engaging youth and building ownership, yet very little research has been
conducted that explores the true connections between youth voice and ownership and
engagement. A better understanding of the concept of youth voice and its contribution to
ownership and engagement would assist youth development staff in creating programs that
support the positive development of youth and in retaining youth, especially older youth, in those
programs.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if youth voice affects the ownership and engagement experienced by youth. Witt (2005) broadly defined youth voice as “the perception that one’s opinions are heard and respected by others – particularly adults.” This study used a survey design with phenomenological interviews as its foundational framework.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study was defined as high school 4-H members in Louisiana. The accessible population consisted of all high school 4-H members in a north Louisiana parish (county). Every high school student in the parish was offered the opportunity to join a local school 4-H club, and those who chose to join become local club members. One school club was purposefully selected to serve as the treatment group while the other three high school clubs served as the comparison group.

The treatment group consisted of a high school 4-H club whose population is made up of eighth through twelfth graders. For the 2005-2006 school year, there were 295 students registered at the school, and 53.9% of the student population was eligible for free or reduced price lunches (A. Guarino, personal communication, January 23, 2006). There were 86 club members in the treatment group. In the comparison group, one of the high school 4-H clubs was made up of seventh through twelfth graders while the school population consisted of kindergarten through twelfth graders. There were 77 students registered at the school, and 64.94% of the students in K-12 qualified for free or reduced price lunches (A. Guarino, personal communication, January 23, 2006). The other two high school clubs making up the comparison group consisted of ninth through twelfth graders. One school had an enrollment of 70 students
with 81.43% qualifying for free or reduced price lunches while the other school enrolled 91 students for the 2005-2006 school year and 33% of those qualified for free or reduced price lunches (A. Guarino, personal communication, January 23, 2006). There were 107 club members, out of a potential 238 members, in the comparison group. In the comparison group, an overall proportionalized average of 57.6% of the students qualified for free or reduced price lunches as compared to the 53.9% of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunches in the treatment group.

**Setting**

The Louisiana 4-H program utilizes an in-school club setting as the predominant delivery mode for the educational component of the program. The 4-H club year begins with a standard enrollment period during the month of September. The months of October, November, January, February, and March are devoted to a focused series of educational lessons conducted during the in-school club meetings. A traditional meeting consists of a short business session followed by an adult-led educational lesson. Each lesson includes one or more hands-on activities to reinforce the learning objective for that month’s lesson.

**Instrumentation**

This study used a survey design with phenomenological interviews. Following a thorough review of the literature, it was determined that no instrument existed which measured perceptions of voice. A review of the literature and professional opinion were used to develop the Youth Voice Survey, a 21-item, 4-point, Likert-type survey, aimed at capturing youths’ perceptions of voice. The instrument was validated by expert panel review. An exploratory factor analysis was used to categorize the items in the Youth Voice Survey, a new tool developed to elicit youths’ perceptions of their degree of voice, into variables. Factor analysis groups the individual items in the survey into latent subgroups or factors. Based on the items correlations and
interrelationships, they were classified into smaller subgroups representing an underlying latent subgroup of the larger construct under investigation.

Factor analysis is divided into two types of inquiry, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The difference in the two methods rests in how the data is treated. A researcher would use EFA when she has a survey instrument with items about which she does not know if there are any latent subgroups present. EFA seeks to define if these subgroups are present and how many items factor into each group. CFA is used with an existing survey in which the items have already been factored into subgroups. The purpose of CFA is to see if the previously determined subgroups are influencing the data in a predictive manner. Since the Youth Voice Survey is a new tool, EFA was used to determine the nature and number of any underlying subgroups.

This research was also grounded in a phenomenological qualitative approach. The researcher is the instrument through which this learning occurs. Phenomenology is a research genre that seeks to understand the lived experience of a small group of people (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Moustakas (1994) refers to this as an empirical phenomenological approach. It was an appropriate research genre for this particular study because it is through the “lived experiences” of these youth and them telling their stories that the themes of how they have made meaning of their experiences of having a voice and experiencing ownership and engagement were made transparent.

**Procedures**

This study utilized a rural northeast Louisiana high school 4-H club as the treatment group and three comparable high school clubs in the parish as a comparison group. The use of multiple untreated clubs in the comparison group helps to account for any differences between groups inherent in using only one club as a comparison (Trochim & Campbell, n.d.).
Demonstration programs and pilot projects usually receive only very weak and methodologically suspect evaluation. Often there is only a comparison of rates for that one unit for a time period before the special effort and a time period afterward. Or a single comparison unit (e.g., another city similar to the demonstration one) is employed, inevitably differing in many ways even in the very unlikely event that there had been a "random" choice between the pair as to which would receive the program. The potential power of the RPDD comes from using numerous untreated units as "controls," and from not requiring pretreatment equality between any one of them and the experimental unit (p. 4).

The treatment group club program evolved within a semi-structured framework designed to allow the participants to determine the tone and direction the club would take. At the November 2005 meeting, the researcher in her role as 4-H agent introduced the idea that the members could choose their own projects to work on by presenting an overview of the types of activities that teen youth in other programs were becoming involved in. The list included examples of teens planning programs, serving as trainers, evaluating programs, conducting youth summits, serving on advisory committees, raising and managing money to fund projects, serving in a governance capacity, and working to affect policies pertaining to youth (See Appendix D). Youth were challenged to brainstorm as many ideas as possible of what they would like for their 4-H club to be involved in for the year and were asked to form small groups of their own choosing to list their ideas. These groups spent approximately 10 minutes discussing and listing their ideas. Groups then chose a reporter from their group to present their ideas to the large group. As each group’s reporter shared their ideas, the 4-H agent typed the ideas into a word processing program that was projected onto the wall of the room so that as the ideas for projects were heard they were also seen by the large group (See Table 1).

Table 1
A List of Projects Club Members Were Interested in Generated in Small Group Discussions and Shared With All Club Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burger King in Cafeteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More certified teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
Need a swimming pool  
Wear caps in school  
No uniforms  
Youth school board (to address uniforms, lunch, lunch shifts, money)  
More 4-H activities (Christmas project)  
Youth school board for parish from all schools (All schools under same rules)  
Planning for school  
More activities around school  
More electives  
More sports  
Raise money for students from hurricane  
Plan events like dances, parties, etc  
Change uniform policy  
Raise money to improve local schools  
Community service  
Better teachers/better attitudes  
Better students/better attitudes  
Mentors for students  
More clubs  
Teen institute programs  
Powerlifting  
Youth choirs, deacons, ushers  
Laptops for students  
Town movie theater  
Step team  
Game room  
More organization when it comes to school activities  
More food choice  
Career opportunities

At the December 2005 meeting, members reviewed the list of ideas and then voted on an overarching theme for their project of providing more activities at school in which youth could be involved. They again used small group discussions to brainstorm ideas for activities to propose. These lists were combined and results were evaluated by the large group. A list of five potential activities was produced. Those activities were track, choir, swimming, weightlifting, and volleyball. The group discussed what steps they needed to take next. The discussion centered on what they thought they needed to do to actually succeed in providing a new activity at their school. Group members noted the importance of getting administrative approval and also
determining the level of interest and support that the rest of the school had for the idea. It was decided that a survey of the school body was an easy way to get feedback from the school. Six members of the club volunteered to put together the survey (See Appendix D).

In January 2006, the list of potential activities was evaluated by the entire school body through home room surveys. Thirty club members worked together in teams to take the surveys to the different homerooms, to explain the purpose of the survey, and to answer any questions the students had as they filled out the survey. Once the members collected the surveys and returned to the meeting, the results were tabulated. Three of the five activities emerged as the top activities of interest – volleyball, weightlifting, and choir. One member volunteered to research how other schools incorporated volleyball and choir into their school day. Members had previously discussed that weightlifting had been offered at the school in previous years but had been dropped after the coach left the school for another job. Three members offered to talk to the new coaches to see if there was any interest among them in reinstating the program.

At the February 2006 meeting, the large group discussed the pros and cons of the three activities. Members reported on their research into the activities at other schools. Five schools in their division had competitive volleyball programs. Two schools offered choir as an elective during the school day. No progress was made on determining interest in coaching a weightlifting team. Members discussed the possibility of obtaining administrative support for a proposal for three new extracurricular activities. The members were divided on how many activities to propose. Some members wanted to take all three activities to administration while others only wanted to propose one or two activities. Feelings of nervousness about the reception they might get from administration about the proposal were a dominant undercurrent in the discussions. The teacher indicated that she might help mediate the situation with the principal. Members eventually decided to drop choir, the activity receiving the fewest school-wide votes, from the
list of possible activities because they thought the possibility of adding another class to the curriculum was unlikely. This left two activities, volleyball and weightlifting, as the top two proposed additions.

At the April 2006 meeting, members decided that the proposal was ready to go to school administration for feedback. A committee of nine members was chosen to represent the group. This committee met with the school principal to discuss the possibility of adding volleyball as a new activity and reinstating weightlifting as a sport at the school. Approval was given to explore the potential of reinstating weightlifting. The principal was opposed to the idea of volleyball as a potential sport but did grant permission for the group to host an intramural volleyball tournament during an upcoming school activity day. At the May 2006 meeting, members discussed the outcome of their meeting with administration. There was disappointment that the idea of a competitive volleyball team was not supported. Members were not highly supportive of the tournament idea because it was scheduled for the day of the prom, a day when many students did not attend school. Ultimately, no action was taken on the volleyball proposal. The outcome of the reinstatement of the weightlifting team was pending the identification of a coach.

The comparison groups’ 4-H club meetings were traditional, adult-led meetings which followed a very strict protocol of club business meeting first, followed by an educational program presented by the 4-H agent. The meetings for each of the comparison groups included a call to order by the president of the club and pledges to the American and 4-H flags led by club members. Two of the comparison group clubs made cursory efforts to conduct a business meeting which included a short recap of the minutes from the last meeting at each meeting. One club in the comparison group gave a brief financial report at two of the seven meetings. Club members were offered the opportunity to present a short educational program. Two of the clubs in the comparison group presented a short two-to-five minute program at the November 2005,
January 2006, and February 2006 meetings, while one club never planned or presented a program. After the club officers and members concluded their portion of the program, the 4-H agent distributed the monthly newsletter and discussed upcoming events and activities. The 4-H agent then presented an educational program on citizenship, a focus which was chosen by the 4-H agent to align with the state 4-H service learning initiative. The topics for each month’s presentation included What is Citizenship? (October 2005), Identifying Community Assets (November 2005), Identifying Community Needs (January 2006), Planning for Community Improvement (February 2006), and Developing a Community Service Project (March 2006). Each month’s lesson included a short presentation followed by a hands-on activity including a newspaper activity in October where members were divided into groups and asked to find examples of good citizens, a community mapping activity in November and January where members worked in groups to draw pictures of the community assets and needs, a small group assignment to prioritize wants and needs in February, and a large group discussion in March of how to use identified priorities to work together to accomplish a task.

Data Collection

The researcher collected data from youth in the treatment and comparison groups through pre-post surveys, formal and informal interviews, and researcher observations. A pretest was given to all youth in both the treatment and comparison groups in October 2005 to ascertain youths’ perception of voice. Phenomenological interviews were conducted with six participants in the treatment group during late January 2006 and early February 2006 to provide a clearer understanding of youths’ perceptions of ownership, engagement, and relationship to adults. Each interviewee was asked to respond to a standardized set of guiding questions. Due to the emergent nature of qualitative research, sub-questions were included as appropriate based on interviewer/interviewee discussion. The questions used for the youth interviews solicited
interviewee thoughts on their perceptions of ownership, engagement, and relationship to adults.

Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed immediately following the interview. A posttest
was given in May 2006 to all youth in the treatment and comparison groups to assess changes in
perceptions of youth relevant to the constructs of ownership, engagement and quality of youth
and adult partnerships.

Informal observation of the treatment groups yielded qualitative data relevant to changes
in how youth interacted with each other and with adults in the program. This information was
recorded in the researcher’s field notes.

**Data Analysis**

The data collected in this study were statistically analyzed as described below.

**Objective 1**

The purpose of objective one was to describe youth in 4-H clubs in four rural high
schools in northern Louisiana on the following demographic characteristics: gender, age, race,
number of years in 4-H, number of years in junior leader club, and highest educational level
completed. The variables gender and race were nominal in nature and were summarized using
frequencies and percentages. The variables, number of years in 4-H, number of years in junior
leader club, and highest educational level completed were interval-level data and were measured
on a continuous scale of measurement using means and standard deviations.

**Objective 2**

The purpose of objective two was to determine the level of youth voice of 7th through 12th
graders participating in four high school 4-H clubs in a rural Louisiana parish as measured by the
Youth Voice Survey and was descriptive in nature. A pretest measurement was taken in October
2005 and was followed by a posttest measurement in May 2006. These measurements were
collected for both the treatment and comparison groups. A 21-item, interval-level survey was
used with the groups. Participants were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding engagement, ownership, and youth-adult relationship by choosing “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree.” Responses were then coded “Strongly Disagree = 1,” “Disagree = 2,” “Agree = 3,” and “Strongly Agree = 4.” Data from the survey was described through summation and calculations of means and standard deviations.

An exploratory factor analysis was used to determine if latent subgroups existed which could be used to categorize the 21 items in the survey. Factor analysis is a statistical technique “whose common objective is to represent a set of variables in terms of a smaller number of hypothetical variables” (Kim & Mueller, 1978, p. 9). There are two types of factor analysis: exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. Exploratory factor analysis is appropriate for use with newly developed instruments where there is no prior knowledge about the existence of underlying patterns in the data while confirmatory factor analysis is appropriate for testing hypothesis about the structuring of variables into significant factors (Kim, 1970). Exploratory factor analysis “seeks to uncover the underlying structure of a relatively large set of variables” (Garson, 2006, paragraph 12). Confirmatory factor analysis “seeks to determine if the number of factors and the loadings of measured (indicator) variables on them conform to what is expected on the basis of pre-established theory” (Garson, 2006, paragraph 13). Since this was a newly developed instrument, exploratory factor analysis was used.

The data was analyzed using SPSS. Principal axis factoring was used for extracting factors into their underlying latent subgroups. This method of extraction utilizes communalities inserted on the diagonal of the correlation matrix (Benson & Nasser, 1998). The communality is the “variance in an observed variable accounted for by the common factors” (Benson & Nasser, 1998, p. 19).
Unrotated factor solutions can be very hard to interpret, therefore rotation aids the researcher in identifying a simple structure. “Simple structure occurs when each item loads highly on as few factors as possible, or, more preferably, has a substantial loading on only one factor” (Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003, p. 124). The choice between orthogonal rotation and oblique rotation involves the determination of whether or not the factors are allowed to correlate. Orthogonal rotation does not allow factors to correlate and is generally accomplished using VARIMAX while oblique rotation does allow for the correlation of factors and utilizes PROMAX. Oblique rotation is appropriate when theory suggests that the factors may be correlated (Benson & Nasser, 1998; Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999; Netemeyer et al., 2003). Because empirical research in the field of youth development points to the idea of an interrelationship among the constructs of interest, oblique rotation was used for this study.

Both the latent root criterion, or rule of eigenvalues greater than 1, and scree test were used in determining the number of factors to retain. Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998) suggested that the use of eigenvalues was most reliable when there were between 20 and 50 variables while the scree test visually plots the eigenvalues against the number of factors extracted. “An eigenvalue represents the amount of variance explained by the factor” (Benson & Nasser, 1998, p. 21). Netemeyer et al. (2003) explained that factors above the sharp elbow are retained for consideration while factors below were discarded since they explain very little variance.

In interpreting the rotated factors when using oblique rotation, both the pattern matrix and structure matrix were used (Henson & Roberts, 2006). The pattern matrix reports the standardized regression weights (betas) showing the relationship between the item and the factor after the relationship between that item and the remaining items has been factored out (Benson &
Nasser, 1998). The structure matrix reports the correlation between the item and the factor and the factor’s correlation with the other factors (Benson & Nasser, 1998).

**Objective 3**

The purpose of objective three was to compare post-measurement summated scores of the sub-scales measured by the Youth Voice Survey for youth who participated in a 4-H club emphasizing youth voice with those of 4-H youth who participated in a club that did not emphasize youth voice on the following variables: group and race. Analysis of covariance was used.

**Objective 4**

The purpose of objective four was to examine the lived experiences of 4-H youth who were participating in a club that emphasized youth ownership and engagement to determine whether or not their lived experiences confirmed the factors that emerged from the Youth Voice Survey. A phenomenological approach to data analysis was used. Moustakas (1994) described this approach in the following excerpt:

The aim is to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the individual descriptions general or universal meanings are derived, in other words the essences or structures of the experience (p. 13).

Interviews were conducted using the responsive interviewing model (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This model is based on the idea that the interviewer and interviewee will briefly share a relationship that allows the interviewer to develop a more in-depth understanding of the interviewee’s world, and it allows for flexibility throughout the process. Nvivo software was used to code data for emergent themes.
**Researcher Role and Background**

This researcher’s role was program facilitator, formal interviewer and participant observer. The researcher used the list of guiding questions to facilitate discussion with the participants about sense of ownership, engagement, and relationship with adults in the program.

This researcher has a background both as a youth educator and a certified classroom teacher. Although her undergraduate training was in merchandising, during her years in undergraduate school she worked at a children’s home as a youth mentor/trainer and later as a teacher’s assistant for adult continuing education classes. She obtained teacher certification through a non-traditional educator training program while working as a classroom teacher. She taught in this formal school setting for six and one-half years. She is currently working as a 4-H youth development educator in a non-formal setting and has 10 years experience in this position. As part of her educational training for this job, she has earned a master’s of education degree with a concentration in secondary education and a minor in family and consumer sciences. This researcher acknowledges that these experiences have shaped her thoughts about the abilities of youth to create and implement projects and have impacted her thoughts on the roles that adults traditionally assign to youth.

**IRB Procedures**

Research projects which include human subjects are required to undergo review by the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board. This group reviews the purpose and procedures for the research proposal to ascertain that participants are not subjected to harm and that measures are taken to protect the participants and their privacy. This study was approved for implementation (#3330) by the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board for Human Subject Protection.
A potential risk for participants is the inadvertent release of sensitive information during the interview process. To aid in maintaining anonymity, participants were not identified by name during the interview process or in the typewritten transcription of the interview. Tapes are locked in a file to which only the researcher has access.

Since the study participants are legal minors, a Statement of Informed Consent was obtained from a parent or legal guardian. This consent form communicated to both the parent and the participant that participation was strictly voluntary and the parent or participant could withdraw the participant from the process at any time. This form revealed to the parent and the interviewee the purpose of the study, the type of participants, the procedures for conducting the interviews, and the benefits and risks of the study. It also explained to participants their right to refuse without penalty and the measures taken to ensure their privacy. In the event that the results of the study are published, no names or identifying information will be used. The identity of the participant will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The parent or legal guardian and the participant were asked to sign the Statement of Informed Consent.

**Ethical Dilemmas**

As a result of the interviews, sensitive information could be revealed to the interviewer. Depending on the nature of the information revealed, the researcher had various courses of action that could be considered. Because the interviewees were youth, there was the possibility that information could be revealed that was pertinent to a child’s welfare. In such a case, as a mandatory reporter the researcher was required to report the information to child protection officials in the home parish of the subject and child. In other cases, the interviewee may have revealed information of a personal or embarrassing nature. As per the Statement of Informed Consent, the researcher protected the participant’s right to privacy and did not disclose
information of an embarrassing or personally damaging nature nor did the researcher use such information when compiling the data for analysis and interpretation.

The responsibility of keeping the interview on-topic rested with the interviewer. It was the researcher’s responsibility to direct the interview in such a manner that the person felt comfortable enough to answer the questions but not pressured to reveal information that was not relevant to the purpose of the study.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter with the results organized by objective.

Objective One

Objective one was to describe youth of a 4-H club in four rural high schools in northeast Louisiana on the following demographic characteristics: gender, age, highest educational level completed, race, number of years in 4-H, and number of years as a junior leader.

Characteristics measured on a categorical scale of measurement (nominal and ordinal scales of measurement) were summarized using frequencies and percentages. The variables measured on a categorical scale included gender and race.

Characteristics measured on a continuous scale of measurement (interval scale of measurement) were summarized using means and standard deviations. Those variables measured on a continuous scale included age, highest educational level completed, number of years in 4-H and number of years as a junior leader.

Data was collected using the 4-H member enrollment cards that were a part of the researcher’s archival data and was matched to the participant’s completed Youth Voice Survey. This archival data was obtained from 4-H enrollment records spanning the years 1999-2006. There were 193 participants in the treatment and comparison groups. Archival records for two participants were incomplete, therefore information regarding their age and grade in school was not available.

Gender

The first variable used to describe youth was gender. Youth from one rural northeast Louisiana high school 4-H club formed the treatment group while youth from the other three
high school 4-H clubs in the parish served as the comparison group. As shown in Table 2, the largest percentage of youth were female with 72.1% females (n = 62) in the treatment group and 59.8% females (n = 64) in the comparison group.

Table 2
Gender of Youth in the Treatment Group and the Comparison Group Based on Archival Data as of January 1, 2006, Completing the Youth Voice Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age

Table 3 shows that participants in the treatment group ranged in age from 13 to 19 years old with the largest number of participants in the 16-year-old group (n = 23; 27.4%). The next largest group was the 15-year-old group (n = 19; 22.6%). The mean age for the group was 15.4 years old.

Participants in the comparison group (see Table 3) ranged in age from 12 to 18 years old with the largest number of participants in the 17-year-old group (n = 29; 27.1%). The next largest group was the 15-year-old group (n = 26; 24.3%). The mean age for the group was 15.6 years old. Age was computed using archival data as of January 1, 2006, for each respondent in the treatment and comparison groups.
Grade Level of Participants

While 4-H participation in a typical parish ranges from 4th grade through 12th grades, the focus of this study was on high school aged students. Because of the makeup of the individual high school clubs, participants range from grades 7 through 12. In Table 4, the largest number of treatment group members were in 10th grade (n = 27; 32.1%). The mean grade level for participants was 9.81 (SD = 1.275). In the comparison group, the largest number of members were in 9th grade (n = 42; 39.3%) with a mean grade level of 10.07 (SD = 1.286).

Table 3
Age of Youth in the Treatment Group and the Comparison Group Based on Archival Data as of January 1, 2006, Completing the Youth Voice Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total | 84 | 100.0 | 107 | 100.0 | 191 |

a M = 15.4 years; SD = 1.417 years; Range = 13 – 19 years
b M = 15.6 years; SD = 1.334 years; Range = 12 – 18 years
c Archival data was incomplete for two youth, thus no information was available regarding their Age.
d Total rounded to 100.0%.
Table 4
Grade Level of Youth Completing the Youth Voice Survey Based on Archival Data

| Grade | Treatment Group<sup>a</sup> | | | | | Comparison Group<sup>b</sup> | | | | | Total | |
|-------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
|       | n<sup>c</sup> | Percentage | n | Percentage | n | Percentage | n | |
| 7     | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 1.9 | 2 | | |
| 8     | 17 | 20.2 | 4 | 3.7 | 21 | | |
| 9     | 16 | 19.0 | 42 | 39.3 | 58 | | |
| 10    | 27 | 32.1 | 13 | 12.1 | 40 | | |
| 11    | 14 | 16.7 | 28 | 26.2 | 42 | | |
| 12    | 10 | 11.9 | 18 | 16.8 | 28 | | |
| Total | 84 | 100.0<sup>d</sup> | 107 | 100.0 | 191 | | | |

<sup>a</sup>M = 9.81 grade level; SD = 1.275 grade level; Range = 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades
<sup>b</sup>M = 10.07 grade level; SD = 1.286 grade level; Range = 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades
<sup>c</sup>Archival data was incomplete for two youth, thus no information was available regarding the Highest Educational Level Completed.
<sup>d</sup>Total rounded to 100.0%.

Race/Ethnicity of Youth

In describing participants by race/ethnicity, Table 5 illustrates that the largest percentage of participants in both the treatment group (n = 58; 67.4%) and comparison group (n = 87; 81.3%) was white.

Number of Years in 4-H

Participants in the study sample ranged from a high of 10 years in 4-H to a low of 1 year in 4-H. Because of the way years are counted in the 4-H enrollment system, a member who was identified as having been in 4-H for 1 year was actually a first year member who had been in 4-H for less than six months. As indicated in Table 6, the largest number of youth in the treatment
group had been in 4-H for 5 years (n = 17; 19.8%) while the largest number of comparison group
members had been in 4-H for 6 years (n = 23; 21.5%).

Table 5
Race/Ethnicity of Youth Completing the Youth Voice Survey Based on Archival Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Total n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonwhite</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6
Number of Years in 4-H for Youth Completing the Youth Voice Survey Based on Archival Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-H Years</th>
<th>Treatment Group a</th>
<th>Comparison Group b</th>
<th>Total n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>25</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>19.8</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>14.0</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
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<td>15.1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
Senior 4-H members have an opportunity to become more engaged in developing leadership skills and in contributing to the betterment of their community as members of the parish Junior Leader Club. The majority of 4-H youth in both the treatment group (n = 76; 88.4%) and comparison group (n = 88; 82.2%) had never participated in the Junior Leader Club (See Table 7). Of those 29 members who are or have been actively involved in the Junior Leader Club, membership ranged in years from 1 to 4 years. The mean number of years as a junior leader for participants in the treatment group was .27 years (SD = .789), while the mean number of years as a junior leader for comparison group participants was .32 (SD = .784).

Table 7  
Number of Years Participated in the Junior Leader Club for Youth Completing the Youth Voice Survey Based on Archival Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Treatment Groupa</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Comparison Groupb</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
Objective Two

The purpose of research objective two was to determine the level of youth voice of 7th through 12th graders participating in four high school 4-H clubs in a rural Louisiana parish as measured by the Youth Voice Survey. Overall scores were computed for individual 4-H club members. Overall mean scores were computed for 4-H club members (See Table 8) at pre-measurement in October 2005 and post-measurement in May 2006.

Table 8
Youth Voice Survey Pre-Measurement and Post-Measurement Means, Standard Deviations and Ranges for Treatment and Comparison Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Measurement - Treatment</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.481</td>
<td>1.62 – 4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Measurement – Comparison</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>.477</td>
<td>1.00 – 4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Measurement - Treatment</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.530</td>
<td>1.71 – 4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Measurement – Comparison</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>1.95 – 4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exploratory factor analysis was used to determine if latent subgroups existed which could be used to categorize the 21 items in the Youth Voice Survey by reducing the number of variables into smaller subsets of variables (Factor Analysis, n.d.). The majority of items for the 193 observations used for the factor analysis had either no missing data or only one or two
missing responses. Only one question had five missing responses, therefore the pattern of missing data was considered random and pairwise deletion was used (Hair et al., 1998).

A correlation matrix was produced and checked for intercorrelation of variables using Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity. The test was significant ($\chi^2 = 2209.704; \text{df} = 210; p < .000$) indicating that there was intercorrelation among at least some of the variables. This could be at least partially explained by the 9-to-1 observation-to-question ratio which Hair et al. (1998) notes will cause the Bartlett test “to become more sensitive to detecting correlations among the variables” (p. 99). This test also indicated that the matrix was significantly different from an identity matrix where there are 1’s on the diagonal and 0’s everywhere else (Neuendorf, 2002). If the data were in the form of an identity matrix, it would not be suitable for factor analysis since there would be as many factors as there are variables.

The matrix was also checked for multicollinearity which would indicate that the variables were too highly intercorrelated and would cause problems when sorting variables into factors. Multicollinearity was checked by examining the determinant of the correlation matrix. A value greater than .00001 would indicate an absence of multicollinearity; however, the results for this investigation were inconclusive since SPSS only reported the determinant to three places beyond the decimal point (determinant = .000). An examination of the correlation matrix revealed that the highest intercorrelation was .772 which did not indicate extreme multicollinearity (values greater than .9).

One of the assumptions of factor analysis was that the sample size was large enough. Several schools of thought on the number of observations needed for a factor analysis exist. Most of these pertain to the ratio of observations to survey items. General recommendations included a minimum of 5 observations for each item, 10 to 15 observations per item, and 50 observations per item (Hair et al., 1998; MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999; Mundfrom, Shaw, Ke,
Knofczinski, & McFann, 2003). One hundred ninety-three participants completed the 21-item survey, resulting in 9.2 responses per survey item. Increasing the ratio of observations to items increased the certainty about the underlying subgroups identified. Additionally, with communalities ranging from .384 to .720 with the majority of values clustering around a median value of .507 and a mean of .527, a larger sample of between 100 and 200 observations was recommended (MacCallum et al., 1999). The KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy was used as another way to determine through statistical analysis if the sample was large enough. A value greater than .5 would indicate an adequate sample (Field, 2000). The KMO-test value for this study was .919. Hair et al. (1998) identified the measure of sampling adequacy as another determinant of the appropriateness of factor analysis by calculating the sampling adequacy for both the entire correlation matrix and each individual variable. The measures of sampling adequacy (MSA’s) fell in the meritorious range with all values exceeding .80.

Principal axis factoring was used to extract the factors using an estimate of the common variance among the original variables. This method of extraction used a more correlational approach to data reduction (Garson, 2006). A model with four factors was initially obtained. The eigenvalues for this model were 9.032, 1.167, .949, and .612 with the factors explaining 55.996% of the variance in youth voice. An examination of the Catell scree plot indicated a flattening between factors two and three and a substantial drop between factors three and four, which suggested an ideal model of between two and four factors.

A subsequent examination of a two-factor solution resulted in a model that explained 47.979% of the variance in youth voice. Fourteen variables loaded on the first factor with values ranging from .828 to .456, and seven variables loaded on the second factor with values ranging from .959 to .418.
An assessment of a three-factor solution yielded a model that explained 52.669% of the variance in youth voice. Eight variables loaded on factor one with values ranging from .814 to .389. Another eight variables loaded on factor two with values ranging from .762 to .429. The third factor loaded with five variables ranging from .846 to .513.

Upon inspecting a four-factor solution, a model was derived that explained 55.996% of the variance in youth voice. Factor one loaded with eight variables ranging in value from .769 to .426. Factor two loaded with five variables ranging in value from .839 to .503. The third factor included four variables ranging in value from .784 to .701. Factor four also loaded with four variables ranging in value from .813 to .511.

As shown in Table 9, the final factor solution represented approximately 52.669% of the variance in the data. A model with a three-factor solution was selected as the best representation of the underlying latent constructs of “relationship with adults,” “engagement,” and “ownership.”

Table 9
Summed Squared Factor Loadings and Total Variance Explained for Items in the Youth Voice Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Percentage of Variance</th>
<th>Rotated Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.998</td>
<td>42.848</td>
<td>7.580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.149</td>
<td>5.472</td>
<td>7.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>4.349</td>
<td>6.711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Promax, or oblique rotation, was chosen for this study because the youth development literature supported the idea that the factors were correlated. An oblique rotation allowed rotation to occur using angles less than ninety degrees. The individual factors were essentially allowed to
rotate independently to fit each cluster of variables (Rummel, n.d.). The advantage of this was that the X and Y axis could be adjusted to more closely match the pattern of the data.

Since an unrotated factor matrix can be very difficult to interpret, a rotated matrix provided more interpretable information. The factors were interpreted and named based on loading. The pattern matrix was used to interpret the factor loadings. The structure matrix provided the correlations between variables and factors and was also used in interpreting the loadings. Based on this information it was determined that items 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 loaded together to form factor 1. Items 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 loaded into factor 2. Items 1, 3, 11, 12, and 13 composed factor 3. Initial inspection of factors indicate that factor one was measuring youths’ perceptions of relationship with adults, factor two was measuring youths’ perception of engagement, and factor three was measuring youths’ perception of ownership. Factor loadings for each variable are printed in bold in Table 10.

Table 10
Variables, Factor Loadings, and Communalities for Items in the Youth Voice Survey for the Rotated Three-Factor Solution Using Principle Axis Factoring and Promax Rotation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pattern Matrix</th>
<th>Structure Matrix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My ideas are heard by adults (#16)</td>
<td>.814</td>
<td>.778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust the adults (#21)</td>
<td>.741</td>
<td>.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults listen to me (#14)</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td>.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults involve youth in making decisions (#15)</td>
<td>.667</td>
<td>.734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My ideas are respected by adults (#17)</td>
<td>.638</td>
<td>.709</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
<th>Factor 5</th>
<th>Factor 6</th>
<th>Factor 7</th>
<th>Factor 8</th>
<th>Factor 9</th>
<th>Factor 10</th>
<th>Factor 11</th>
<th>Factor 12</th>
<th>Factor 13</th>
<th>Factor 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to an adult (#20)</td>
<td>0.604</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.451</td>
<td>0.669</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help adults better understand youth (#18)</td>
<td>0.477</td>
<td>-0.094</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>0.484</td>
<td>0.647</td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>0.613</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults view me as a valuable resource (#19)</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>-0.034</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>0.428</td>
<td>0.600</td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that I participate in meetings (#9)</td>
<td>-0.068</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.552</td>
<td>0.480</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good about myself when I am involved (#8)</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>0.740</td>
<td>-0.081</td>
<td>0.593</td>
<td>0.561</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>0.435</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to be a part of the program (#2)</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.726</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
<td>0.474</td>
<td>0.454</td>
<td>0.686</td>
<td>0.365</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud of the work we do (#4)</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td>-0.057</td>
<td>0.562</td>
<td>0.586</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td>0.452</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My attendance at meetings is important (#7)</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.523</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>0.485</td>
<td>0.532</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.545</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an active participant (#6)</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.452</td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>0.530</td>
<td>0.636</td>
<td>0.543</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the activities we are involved in are valuable (#5)</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td>0.437</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.501</td>
<td>0.626</td>
<td>0.667</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can make a difference through my work (#10)</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>0.429</td>
<td>0.194</td>
<td>0.547</td>
<td>0.635</td>
<td>0.691</td>
<td>0.593</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help choose the projects in which we are involved (#11)</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>0.846</td>
<td>0.720</td>
<td>0.568</td>
<td>0.501</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an active participant in planning our projects (#12)</td>
<td>0.191</td>
<td>-0.226</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.706</td>
<td>0.586</td>
<td>0.404</td>
<td>0.823</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an equal partner with the adults (#13)</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td>0.535</td>
<td>0.502</td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td>0.731</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have influence(#3)</td>
<td>-0.196</td>
<td>0.225</td>
<td>0.641</td>
<td>0.447</td>
<td>0.381</td>
<td>0.476</td>
<td>0.647</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make decisions about what we do (#1)</td>
<td>-0.218</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>0.384</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>0.497</td>
<td>0.572</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Factor 1 = Relationship with Adults; Factor 2 = Engagement; Factor 3 = Ownership
Youth were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the 21 items on the 4-point Likert-type scale. Responses include “1 = Strongly Disagree,” “2 = Disagree,” “3 = Agree,” and “4 = Strongly Agree.” A subscale score was computed for the factor “Relationship with Adults.” Scores ranged from 1.00 to 4.00. Based on the grand mean results of the subscale scores, youth experience a moderate perception of relationship with adults (n = 193; M = 2.87; SD = .531). Grand means for the subscale were interpreted using the following researcher-developed interpretive scale: 1.00-1.49 = low perception of relationship with adults; 1.50-2.49 = mild perception of relationship with adults; 2.50-3.49 = moderate perception of relationship with adults; and 3.50-4.00 = strong perception of relationship with adults. Table 11 shows variable means and standard deviations for the eight items loading on factor one, “Relationship with Adults.” The variable with the highest mean value loading on factor one, the relationship subscale score, was item 21, “I trust the adults” (M = 3.23, SD = .66). The item with the lowest mean value for the relationship subscale was item 18, “I help adults better understand youth” (M = 2.64, SD = .75).

Table 11
Factor One (Relationship Score) Variables, Means, and Standard Deviations for Items Representing Relationship with Adults on the Youth Voice Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I trust the adults (#21)</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults involve youth in making decisions (#15)</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My ideas are respected by adults (#17)</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults listen to me (#14)</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
My ideas are heard by adults (#16)  
I feel connected to an adult (#20)  
Adults view me as a valuable resource (#19)  
I help adults better understand youth (#18)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My ideas are heard by adults</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to an adult</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults view me as a valuable resource</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help adults better understand youth</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aNot all participants responded to each survey item  
bMean values based on the 4-point Likert-type response scale 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree.

Factor two, engagement, with its associated variable loadings, means, and standard deviations, is presented in Table 12. This factor included eight variables. A subscale score was computed for the factor “Engagement.” Scores ranged from 1.00 to 4.00. Based on the grand mean results of the subscale scores, youth perceive a moderate level of engagement (n = 193; M = 3.10; SD = .513). Grand means for the subscale were interpreted using the following researcher-developed interpretive scale: 1.00-1.49 = low perception of engagement; 1.50-2.49 = mild perception of engagement; 2.50-3.49 = moderate perception of engagement; and 3.50-4.00 = strong perception of engagement. The variable with the highest mean value loading on factor two, the engagement score, was item 2 (M = 3.32, SD = .63). The variable with the lowest mean value for the engagement subscale was item 10 (M = 2.95, SD = .77).

Table 13 presents the means and standard deviations for the third factor, representing the ownership subscale, of the Youth Voice Survey. Five variables made up this factor. A subscale score was computed for the factor “Ownership.” Scores ranged from 1.00 to 4.00. Based on the grand mean results of the subscale scores, youth had a mild perception of ownership (n = 193; M = 2.48, SD = .632). Grand means for the subscale were interpreted using the following researcher-developed interpretive scale: 1.00-1.49 = low perception of ownership; 1.50-2.49 =
mild perception of ownership; 2.50-3.49 = moderate perception of ownership; and 3.50-4.00 =
strong perception of ownership. The item with the highest mean was item 3, “I have influence”
($M = 2.65, SD = .77$), while the item with the lowest mean was item 1, “I make decisions about
what we do” ($M = 2.31, SD = .86$).

Table 12
Factor Two (Engagement Score) Variables, Means, and Standard Deviations for Items
Representing Engagement on the Youth Voice Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want to be a part of the program (#2)</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the activities we are involved in are valuable (#5)</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud of the work we do (#4)</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good about myself when I am involved (#8)</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that I participate in meetings (#9)</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an active participant (#6)</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My attendance at meetings is important (#7)</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can make a difference through my work (#10)</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aNot all participants responded to each survey item
*bMean values based on the 4-point Likert-type response scale 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree.

As illustrated in Table 14, the correlations between the factors and subscales for the
three-factor model were computed. Davis’ (1971) descriptors of associations were used to
interpret the correlations. Correlations among the three factors were substantial which is
consistent with the literature that the youth-adult relationship and the level of youth engagement and youth ownership are closely intertwined, yet the correlations were not so substantial that the individual natures of the three factors are lost.

Table 13
Factor Three (Ownership Score) Variables, Means, and Standard Deviations for Items Representing Ownership on the Youth Voice Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n^a</th>
<th>M^b</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have influence(#3)</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an equal partner with the adults (#13)</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an active participant in planning our projects (#12)</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help choose the projects in which we are involved (#11)</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make decisions about what we do (#1)</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^aNot all participants responded to each survey item
^bMean values based on the 4-point Likert-type response scale 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree.

Table 14
Factor Correlations Between the Constructs “Relationships,” “Engagement,” and “Ownership”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>.683</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>.660</td>
<td>.600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Cronbach’s alpha measure of internal consistency was computed to determine the degree to which the variables measure a factor or latent construct (Crocker & Algina, 1986). Table 15 illustrates the results of this test.

Table 15
Names, Number of Items, Reliability, Means, and Standard Deviations from the Three-Factor Solution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor/Scale</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Reliability&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>M&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Voice Survey</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60.61</td>
<td>10.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.885</td>
<td>23.10</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.891</td>
<td>24.85</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.844</td>
<td>12.44</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Cronbach’s alpha measure of internal consistency and reliability

<sup>b</sup>Mean values based on the 4 point Likert-type scale 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree.

**Objective Three**

The purpose of objective three was to compare post-measurement summated scores of the sub-scales measured by the Youth Voice Survey for youth who participated in a 4-H club emphasizing youth voice with those of 4-H youth who participated in a club that did not emphasize youth voice on the following variables: group and race.

**Factor One – Relationship with Adults**

In order to determine which interval variables to use as covariates, a bivariate correlation was conducted between the posttest summated scores on factor one and the interval level demographic variables. Results (See Table 16) indicated that Number of Years in Junior Leader Club (R = .343; p = .000) was the most significant variable and was appropriate for use as a covariate.
Table 16
Bivariate Correlations for Posttest Summated Scores on Factor One and Interval Demographic Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years in 4-H</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Leader Years</td>
<td>.343</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: .05 Alpha Level for the 2 Tailed Test of Significance*

In the Analysis of Covariance conducted on the post measurement perception of youth voice using the summated score for factor one, Relationship with Adults (n = 124; Range = 8 – 32; M = 23.51; SD = 4.422), controlling for the pre measurement of perception of youth voice using the summated score for factor one and for number of years in junior leader club, an examination of Levene’s test of homogeneity of variances (F = .298; p = .827) indicated non-significance and that the variances were homogeneous. An assessment of the fit of the model was conducted using a lack of fit test. The results (F = 1.481; p = .065) were also non-significant indicating that the fit of the model was good.

Table 17 reports the results of the analysis of covariance using the summated scores for factor one, Relationship with Adults. The covariates Pretest (F = 15.417; p = .000) and Junior Leader Years (F = 7.165; p = .008) were significant when entered into the model indicating the appropriateness of their use as covariates. Additionally, when modeling the regression relationship the validness of the inclusion of Junior Leader Years as a covariate was supported by a reduction in the error term when the covariate was included (Error Mean Square = 15.838) as opposed to an increase in the error term when it was not included (Error Mean Square = 16.652). Analysis of covariance assumes that the slope of the regression relationship between the
covariates and the response is the same for all factor levels (Freund & Wilson, 2003; Kutner, Nachtsheim, Neter, & Li 2005). In order to test this assumption, the full model was analyzed including main effects and interactions. This analysis utilized type one sums of squares. Four interaction terms were modeled and analyzed: Group * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 1 ($F = 1.583; p = .211$), Group * Junior Leader Years ($F = .120; p = .730$), Race * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 1 ($F = 2.678; p = .104$), and Race * Junior Leader Years ($F = 2.417; p = .123$). None of the interaction terms were significant which confirmed the assumption that the slope of the regression relationship between the covariates and the response was the same for all factor levels. Thus, the interaction terms were deleted from the model and only the main effects were analyzed. Both of the independent variables, group ($F = 5.932; p = .016$) and race ($F = 4.332; p = .040$), were significant when they were entered into the model. An $R^2$ value of .216 and an adjusted $R^2$ squared value of .190 were returned for this model indicating that a substantial amount of variance was still unexplained by the model.

Table 17
Analysis of Covariance of POST Measurement of Perception of Youth Voice Using the Summated Score for Factor One (Relationship with Adults) Controlling for PRE Measurement of Perception Of Youth Voice Using the Summated Score for Factor One and for Number of Years in Junior Leader Club

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Partial $\eta^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>93.959</td>
<td>5.932</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68.611</td>
<td>4.332</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>244.174</td>
<td>15.417</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Leader Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>113.487</td>
<td>7.165</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>15.838</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A comparison of adjusted group means (See Table 18) revealed that the treatment group \( (M = 24.12) \) had a statistically significantly higher Relationship with Adults subscale score than did the comparison group \( (M = 22.67) \). This means that youth in the treatment group felt a closer, more equal relationship with adults than did those youth in the comparison group. Additionally, a comparison of adjusted group means (See Table 18) also revealed that white youth \( (M = 24.06) \) had a statistically significantly higher Relationship with Adults subscale score than did nonwhite youth \( (M = 22.73) \). This indicates that white youth felt more equality with and a closer relationship to adults than did nonwhite youth.

Table 18
Unadjusted Group Means and Adjusted Group Means for Race and Group for Factor One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Unadjusted M</th>
<th>Adjusted M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>23.85</td>
<td>24.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonwhite</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22.53</td>
<td>22.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24.68</td>
<td>24.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>22.86</td>
<td>22.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Range = 8.00 – 32.00

Partial Eta squared was used to determine the effect size of the model. An effect size of .216 was returned indicating a low effect size based on Sheskin (2004).

**Factor Two - Engagement**

In order to determine which interval variables to use as covariates for factor two, a bivariate correlation was conducted between the posttest summated scores on factor two and the interval level demographic variables. Results (See Table 19) indicated that Number of Years in Junior Leader Club \( (R = .405; p = .000) \) was the most significant variable and was appropriate for use as a covariate.
Table 19
Bivariate Correlations for Posttest Summated Scores on Factor Two and Interval Demographic Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years in 4-H</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Leader Years</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

.05 Alpha Level for the 2 Tailed Test of Significance

In the Analysis of Covariance conducted on the post measurement perception of youth voice using the summated score for factor two, Engagement (n = 120; Range = 13 – 32; M = 24.78; SD = 4.129), controlling for the pre measurement of perception of youth voice using the summated score for factor two and for the number of years in the junior leader club, an examination of Levene’s test of homogeneity of variances (F = .626; p = .599) indicated non-significance and that the variances were homogeneous. An assessment of the fit of the model was conducted using a lack of fit test. The results (F = .894; p = .664) were also non-significant indicating that the fit of the model was good.

Table 20 reports the results of the analysis of covariance using the summated scores for factor two, Engagement. The covariates Pretest (F = 18.777; p = .000) and Junior Leader Years (F = 13.303; p = .000) were significant when entered into the model indicating the appropriateness of their use as covariates. Additionally, when modeling the regression relationship the validness of the inclusion of Junior Leader Years as a covariate was supported by a reduction in the error term when the covariate was included (Error Mean Square = 12.952) as opposed to an increase in the error term when it was not included (Error Mean Square = 14.326). Analysis of covariance assumes that the slope of the regression relationship between the
covariates and the response is the same for all factor levels (Freund & Wilson, 2003). In order to test this assumption, the full model was analyzed including main effects and interactions. This analysis utilized type one sums of squares. Four interaction terms were modeled and analyzed: Group * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 2 ($F = 1.219; p = .272$), Group * Junior Leader Years ($F = 2.688; p = .104$), Race * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 2 ($F = .003; p = .955$), and Race * Junior Leader Years ($F = .402; p = .527$). None of the interaction terms were significant which confirmed the assumption that the slope of the regression relationship between the covariates and the response was the same for all factor levels. Thus, the interaction terms were deleted from the model and only the main effects were analyzed. The independent variable, group ($F = 7.406; p = .008$), was significant when entered into the model. An R squared value of .266 and an adjusted R squared value of .240 were returned for this model indicating that a substantial amount of variance was still unexplained by the model.

Table 20
Analysis of Covariance of POST Measurement of Perception of Youth Voice Using the Summated Score for Factor Two (Engagement) Controlling for PRE Measurement of Perception Of Youth Voice Using the Summated Score for Factor Two and for Number of Years in Junior Leader Club

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Partial Eta$^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>95.923</td>
<td>7.406</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.465</td>
<td>2.121</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>243.202</td>
<td>18.777</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Leader Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>172.294</td>
<td>13.303</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>12.952</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A comparison of adjusted group means (See Table 21) revealed that the treatment group had a statistically significantly higher Engagement subscale score than did the comparison group. Youth in the treatment group felt that their participation in the meetings was more important to the functioning of the club than did youth in the comparison group. Additionally, a comparison of adjusted group means (See Table 21) also revealed that white youth had a higher Engagement subscale score than did nonwhite youth. White youth felt that their participation in the meetings was more important to club functioning than nonwhite youth did.

Table 21
Unadjusted Group Means and Adjusted Group Means for Race and Group for Factor Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Unadjusted M</th>
<th>Adjusted M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>24.98</td>
<td>25.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonwhite</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24.20</td>
<td>24.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26.02</td>
<td>25.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>24.14</td>
<td>24.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Range = 13.00 – 32.00
Partial Eta squared was used to determine the effect size of the model. An effect size of .266 indicated a low effect size based on Sheskin (2004).*

**Factor Three - Ownership**

In order to determine which interval variables to use as covariates for factor three, a bivariate correlation was conducted between the posttest summated scores on factor three and the interval level demographic variables. Results (See Table 22) indicated that Number of Years in Junior Leader Club \( (R = .406; p = .000) \) was the most significant variable and was appropriate for use as a covariate.
Table 22
Bivariate Correlations for Posttest Summated Scores on Factor Three and Interval Demographic Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in 4-H</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Leader Years</td>
<td>.406</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:*.05 Alpha Level for the 2 Tailed Test of Significance

In the Analysis of Covariance conducted on the post measurement perception of youth voice using the summated score for factor three, Ownership (n = 123; Range = 6 – 30 M = 13.38; SD = 3.074), controlling for the pre measurement of perception of youth voice using the summated score for factor three and for number of years in junior leader club, an examination of Levene’s test of homogeneity of variances (F = .071; p = .975) indicated non-significance and that the variances were homogeneous. An assessment of the fit of the model was conducted using a lack of fit test. The results (F = .912; p = .632) were also non-significant indicating that the fit of the model was good.

Table 23 reports the results of the analysis of covariance using the summated scores for factor three, Ownership. The covariates Pretest (F = 14.181; p = .000) and Junior Leader Years (F = 22.636; p = .000) were significant when entered into the model indicating the appropriateness of their use as covariates. Additionally, when modeling the regression relationship the validness of the inclusion of Junior Leader Years as a covariate was supported by a reduction in the error term when the covariate was included (Error Mean Square = 6.455) as opposed to an increase in the error term when it was not included (Error Mean Square = 6.842). Analysis of covariance assumes that the slope of the regression relationship between the
covariates and the response is the same for all factor levels (Freund & Wilson, 2003). In order to test this assumption, the full model was analyzed including main effects and interactions. This analysis utilized type one sums of squares. Four interaction terms were modeled and analyzed: Group * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 2 ($F = .698; p = .405$), Group * Junior Leader Years ($F = .029; p = .865$), Race * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 2 ($F = .901; p = .345$), and Race * Junior Leader Years ($F = 1.389; p = .241$). None of the interaction terms were significant which confirmed the assumption that the slope of the regression relationship between the covariates and the response was the same for all factor levels. Thus, the interaction terms were deleted from the model and only the main effects were analyzed. The independent variables, group ($F = 8.165; p = .005$) and race ($F = 15.659; p = .000$), were significant in this model. An $R^2$ squared value of .339 and an adjusted $R$ squared value of .317 were returned for this model indicating that a substantial amount of variance was still unexplained by the model.

Table 23
Analysis of Covariance of POST Measurement of Perception of Youth Voice Using the Summated Score for Factor Three (Ownership) Controlling for PRE Measurement of Perception Of Youth Voice Using the Summated Score for Factor Three and for Number of Years in Junior Leader Club

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Partial Eta$^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52.699</td>
<td>8.165</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>101.070</td>
<td>15.659</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Leader Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>146.107</td>
<td>22.636</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>91.532</td>
<td>14.181</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>6.455</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A comparison of adjusted group means (See Table 24) revealed that the treatment group had a statistically significant higher Ownership subscale score than did the comparison group. Treatment group youth felt that they held more power and control of the club than did those youth in the comparison group. Additionally, a comparison of adjusted group means (See Table 24) also revealed that white youth had a statistically significant higher Ownership subscale score than did nonwhite youth. White youth felt that they had more power and control of the club than did nonwhite youth.

Table 24
Unadjusted Group Means and Adjusted Group Means for Race and Group for Factor Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Unadjusted M</th>
<th>Adjusted M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>13.81</td>
<td>13.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonwhite</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11.93</td>
<td>12.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14.33</td>
<td>13.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>12.93</td>
<td>12.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Range = 6.00 – 20.00
Partial Eta squared was used to determine the effect size of the model. An effect size of .339 indicated a low effect size based on Sheskin (2004).

Objective Four

The purpose of this objective was to examine the lived experiences of 4-H youth who are participating in a club that emphasizes youth ownership and engagement to determine whether or not their lived experiences confirmed the factors that emerged from the Youth Voice Survey. Phenomenological interviews were used with six youth who were members of the study treatment group. The youth participated in researcher-led interviews based on guiding questions (See Appendix B) that were taped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The interviews
were analyzed using a phenomenological approach and using QSR Nvivo software to connect themes within and across interviews.

**Participants**

Youth were purposefully selected for the interview process based upon their participation in the meetings and upon their long-term connection with the program. Participation in the meetings was defined as high intensity involvement, where the member was actively taking part in the meetings, was freely voicing thoughts and opinions, and frequently led discussions in the meeting, medium intensity involvement, where the member would speak up occasionally or would offer thoughts and opinions but did not lead discussions, and low intensity involvement, where the member did not speak up during meetings and seemed to be more of an observer of the group than a participant. These levels of participation allowed selection of individuals along the continuum of participation from non-participation levels to active, youth-led participation levels so that a wide range of perceptions would be represented in the interviews.

Another factor in the selection of participants was their outside involvement in the program. This involvement was defined by youths’ participation in the 4-H program beyond the local school club level. In order to understand how youth perceived the experience of having a voice in the club, the researcher felt it was important to look at the phenomenon from different perspectives of outside involvement ranging from low levels of involvement where youth typically attended only the local club meeting to very high levels of involvement where youth were active members of the parish junior leader program, an out-of-school time leadership program, and who participated in events and activities on the parish and state levels.

Prior to interviewing youth, consent forms for participation in the interviews were attained from a parent or legal guardian and the youth. Youth were reassured at the beginning of the interview that they did not have to participate in the interviews if they did not want to and
they were free to stop the interview at any time during the process. All youth chose to proceed with the interviews. The names of both the youth and adults participating in the program have been changed to protect their privacy.

Luke

The first interview was conducted with Luke, a Caucasian male, in January 2006. The interview was held in the school library because Luke typically had a free hour that was spent there, and it was easy for him to meet me there. We sat at a rectangular table in the research section of the library. Bright, indirect light from the windows set high in the outside wall to my left illuminated a bank of quietly humming computers. Occasionally, the printer would purr as a student printed materials. The librarian’s desk was located to my right and several chest high bookcases were behind me. A student worked quietly at a computer behind the cases. She never spoke while we were interviewing, but occasionally she would pass by on her way to pick up materials from the printer. Through the glass dividing wall, we could see the substitute teacher sitting at her desk. There were two interruptions during the course of the interview that involved two students, and later two adults, walking into the library to talk to the substitute teacher. Neither occasion caused us to stop the interview. Neither the youth nor the adults paid us any attention so we continued with our conversation.

Before we started the interview, he expressed his nervousness. I shared with him that I was nervous too, but that it would be okay and that neither one of us really had anything to be nervous about. I explained that the interview was simply about his thoughts and opinions and there were no right or wrong answers. He asked if it would be okay for him to see the list of interview questions before we started. I told him that I didn’t mind, and I shared the list with him. I explained that they served as a guide to help me remember the important points that I wanted us to cover. He read over the questions very carefully. At the time I was afraid I had
made a mistake because he kept commenting on how hard the questions seemed. I reassured him that they really would not seem as hard once we got started. Ultimately, I believe I made the right decision because it seemed to give him a sense of confidence as we started with the first question.

Luke is a senior, and he and I know each other fairly well. He has been vice president of the club for the past two years and has been a semi-regular member of the junior leader club. In spring 2005 he assisted with an educational program as a youth leader. Through these interactions we’ve developed a fairly good relationship that allows for conversations with relative depth to them. A better description might be that he’s normally not afraid to tell me what he thinks, and I routinely ask him for his help if I need something done right the first time with club business. The trust level between us is high. Interestingly enough, Luke has not been publicly outspoken in the club meetings. He will speak up and voice his thoughts and opinions if he feels very strongly about an issue, but he does not typically lead the group from the front. He tends to take more of a networking role and works to accomplish goals from behind the scenes. While I ranked his outside connections at a medium-high level, his participation within the club fell more in the medium range.

Luke likes the community service aspects of his 4-H club experience. He spoke with pride as he talked about the school beautification project that he had been a part of and the visits he would like to begin making to the nursing home. The passion was evident in his voice as he described how the club members’ work could make a difference in the community and how proud he was to see people from different backgrounds, cultures, and religions work together to make their community a better place.

As he explained how the club was functioning, Luke spoke of the members’ participation and the opportunity that all members had to have a say in what projects the club was involved in.
He thought that members having a say was important because it kept members involved and gave them a sense of “part ownership” in the club. He told of the members voting as a way of determining priorities. He also mentioned that a survey was conducted with all of the school’s students to assess their interest in the sports activities that the club was considering taking on as a project. He felt that the club was more organized than in previous years and not as prone to making spur-of-the-moment decisions.

Luke thought that members of the club were unsure about making decisions at the beginning of the year. In the beginning, he felt like many members were simply following the crowd rather than voicing their own opinions. Yet as the year has progressed, he has noticed that members are not as quick to follow. They are “stepping out of their comfort zones and actually voicing their true opinion.”

One of the barriers that he saw to members speaking out was their discomfort with the diverse membership. Luke seemed to feel that many members only had a superficial acquaintance with each other that precluded them feeling comfortable sharing their true thoughts and feelings within the group. He felt that if members got to know each other better, then it would help them become more accepting of each other’s ideas throughout the year.

Luke thought that his attendance at meetings was very important. Failing to attend the meetings would result in him not knowing about opportunities for involvement as well as not having a chance to have input into decisions about what the club would do. He believed that if he was not going to attend the meetings, then there was no reason for him to join the club.

Luke described his role in the club as one of keeping order. He explained that sometimes he had to remind the other members that everyone had ideas and that they had to take turns expressing their ideas. He saw himself ensuring that every person’s opinion was heard.
Luke seemed to value the contribution of the adult leaders. He liked the way the leaders challenged the members to consider the possibilities of what the club could be. Writing down the members’ ideas was one of the ways that he knew the adults had listened to the youth. Luke liked the interaction with the adults where they responded to the members’ ideas and posed questions that helped members think through their ideas. He described the adults as being involved in the process without taking over the control of the meeting. He thought that the adults respected the members’ feelings and opinions. He also credited the importance of the adults’ role in keeping order and avoiding chaos and in handling the financial matters of the club.

Karen

The second interview, with Karen an African-American female who is in eleventh grade, was conducted immediately following the interview with Luke. It was also conducted in the library, but this time there were no interruptions or people working around us. While there were no outside distractions, the internal dynamics of this interview were different. One of the reasons I chose Karen for the interview was because of her involvement in the club meetings. While she was not a leader in the meetings, she tended to easily express her opinions and thoughts. I rated her participation level within the club at medium-high. Her outside involvement in the program was very low, since she had never participated in any programming beyond the monthly club meeting. I did not have the same connection with Karen that I had shared with Luke, so the interview felt more stilted.

Karen describes herself as being more involved in the club this year than she has in previous years, yet she struggled to express her feelings about her involvement this year. She explained that this year she just feels more involved in trying to change things for the better. She also seemed to really enjoy soliciting the input of other high school students through the homeroom surveys. She contrasted these thoughts and feelings to the year before when she came
to the meetings and just sat there, reading the newsletter that was given out each month, and not interacting with her peers or the adults in the program. I can corroborate this from my own observations of Karen in the club. Her enrollment card indicates that she has been a 4-H member for seven years, yet this is the first year that I have known her name. As Karen has become more involved in the club, she speaks out to me, to the other adult in the club, and to her peers. She has become more than just another warm body in a chair and is instead someone who is becoming actively involved in the program. Karen ascribes this change in her involvement to the activities the club is doing and the fact that the youths’ opinions have taken center stage rather than the adults simply telling everyone what to do. She felt that in previous years the adults were not interested in the youths’ ideas because they never asked them for their opinions. She admits that she has stayed more involved this year because each meeting brings something new and exciting.

Karen says that she knows the adults are really hearing her opinions and those of the other members because they, the members, are getting to act on their opinions. She also notes that the adults are encouraging them to give their opinions at every meeting, not just at isolated times, and they are writing down the ideas that are given by the members. She acknowledges that having her opinion solicited makes her feel like she can make a difference. She also speaks of the connection between the meetings and how they reflect back each month on the previous month’s meeting.

Karen sees her role as that of someone who is important and who can help make things happen. She is well aware that by speaking up and giving her ideas she can help the adults better understand what youth are interested in.

**Jenny**

The third interview was with Jenny, a Caucasian female in eleventh grade. This interview took place in January 2006 at the LSU AgCenter Extension Meeting Room. I chose this room
rather than my office because of the privacy that it afforded us. We sat at a rectangular table in the center of the room. One drawback to this setting was that it did not provide the same warm, inviting feeling as the library had provided. At first I was concerned because the room was quite cold; however, once we began the interview my awareness of the temperature faded, and Jenny did not express any undue discomfort, either.

Jenny brought a friend with her to the interview. She told me before we began that he could wait for her in another room. I wanted her to feel comfortable with the interviewing process, so I told her that he could join us if she wanted him to do so or he could wait for her in my office. He sat in the room with us and never said a word or even moved, and she never looked at him during the interview. I felt like his presence gave her a sense of security, yet she did not noticeably look to him for support. Before the interview started, Jenny expressed her excitement about participating both in the 4-H program this year and in the interview.

I chose Jenny to participate in the interviews because she has had a very high level of involvement in the club program this year. Not only has she voiced her opinions freely, but she has also taken on quite a bit of responsibility in the club. She has provided the club with a substantial portion of the research into activities in other schools through exploring offerings via the web and even calling administrators at other schools to ask them about their extra-curricular activities. She also created the survey that was used for gauging school-wide interest in the proposed activities (See Appendix D). When the members appeared to waiver in their dedication to the project, Jenny has stepped forward to encourage them to continue to work and support the ideas they were proposing. Jenny has also been actively involved in the 4-H program outside of school time through her work in the livestock project. I would rate her external involvement in the 4-H program as high.
Jenny spoke with obvious enthusiasm about the changes in the school club. She noted that, while she was not tired of 4-H, she was very excited about the changes that were occurring in the program. She seemed very concerned about the support the project would elicit from administration. She also was concerned about her peers within the club carrying their part of the load for advancing their project.

Jenny spoke adamantly about the importance of attending the meetings. She also pointed out the importance of the other club members attending meetings because the decisions that the club members were making required the support of a majority of the members. Jenny described the process used within the club for making decisions as one where ideas were generated and members weighed the advantages and disadvantages of the different ideas before finally settling on the major sports that they were interested in pursuing as possible projects to support at their school. She explained that they considered the number of participants that they would need for a particular sport or activity, the money involved for uniforms and equipment, the possibilities for instructors or coaches. She gave an example of their decision to eliminate the possibility of a swim team because they did not have a pool and the funding for building the pool was beyond the resources at hand. An example she gave was of the weightlifting team. The school had lost this sport in the last few years, but the equipment was still available for use. It was added to the list of possibilities because they only really needed a coach to be able to reinstate the sport, and it seemed like a very reachable goal. In relating her feelings about being a part of this decision-making process, Jenny described herself as “ecstatic.” She believed that the work they were attempting to do was important because it would be remembered.

Jenny described the role of the adults as one keeping everyone on track, but she emphasized that the members were making the decisions about what the club did. She stressed the importance of communication among the club members. She pointed out that there were
times when the members disagreed about the direction they should take, but that they had to work at listening to each other and accepting different points of view. She added that she felt like the atmosphere was more conducive to youth giving opinions than it had been before.

Jenny was very open with her thoughts and feelings about the survey that was conducted throughout the school. She admitted that when the idea was first suggested she did not think the survey would even be developed. She did not think anyone would remember to create it. Yet Jenny did remember the survey, and she did bring it to the next meeting for the members to approve. She seemed surprised that she had remembered. She described the fear she felt when she stood in front of the group to tell them about the survey and to ask for their opinion about distributing it school-wide. In her words, “and that’s so not like me.” She could not seem to believe that she had the courage to stand up and speak in front of the group. She went on to describe her feelings of elation when she realized that the members liked the survey she had developed (See Appendix D), and they wanted to help distribute the survey.

Jenny explained that the decision-making process included opportunities for members to vote about what the group was doing at each stage of the process. If a few people were unsure about the decision, she said that they stopped and tried to talk through the concerns until members were satisfied. Sometimes they altered the proposal after the discussions so that it was more representative of the entire group’s wishes. She felt that this led to more unity within the group.

**Amanda**

Amanda was the fourth person that I interviewed. She is a Caucasian female in eleventh grade. I chose her for the interview process because her involvement in the club program this year has been very high. Amanda has unreservedly expressed her thoughts and opinions to the group and has taken a very active leadership role in the club. She has taken personal
responsibility for trying to keep the momentum high as the club worked to put together their proposal. When the school administrator vetoed the idea of a competitive volleyball team, she offered ideas for a compromise that would allow students to play ball at the county level rather than the district level. When this idea was not accepted, she proposed the idea of an intramural league.

While Amanda’s in-school participation in the club has been very high, I would classify her out-of-school time participation as medium-low. She had participated in the statewide camping program at a younger age and has provided episodic volunteer efforts at a county-level event, but her involvement has not been sustained through her years in high school.

Amanda thinks members typically join 4-H to just get out of class, but this year it seems different to her. She thinks maybe the members have either matured or are just more interested. She bases this on a group of boys that typically come to meetings to just talk to each other, but this year they are talking to her about the sports project that the group is working on. She thinks that her attendance at meetings is important because she wants to see “how everybody reacts to everything that we say and the questions that you ask.”

Amanda says that she has never been involved in the livestock project but describes herself as more involved in the club this year because of the project that they are working on. She thinks that this year she is more involved than she has been in the past. She explains that she has helped Jenny research information that was needed for meetings, and she says that when she helped distribute the school-wide survey she didn’t just hand out the survey. She took the time to explain to the students what the survey was about.

Amanda believes that the changes in the club are good because the members are “actually doing something, like trying to change something.” She comments that it is not the same old routine where they get their newsletters and go over it. She also emphasizes that she likes to do
something different. She likes change in the club, and she thinks this encourages members to be more interested. In her words, “something that’s never been done gets more reaction than stuff that has.”

Amanda feels like the upperclassmen are making the decisions in the club. She remarks that she and other upperclassmen have had conversations with Mrs. Abbot, beyond the club meeting, and she seems to think that this has translated into the upperclassmen making the decisions. She states that she thinks the underclassmen look up to the upperclassmen and will listen to them. She believes that the upperclassmen have the ability to talk to the underclassmen.

Amanda also speaks of the important role that the school-wide survey played. She acknowledges that a lot of times the students just arbitrarily choose an answer and many circle “no” for every answer. She says that people [club members] talked to them about the survey. The survey served as a way to both report to non-members about what the club was considering and to solicit opinions beyond just the club member’s opinions. Amanda believes that the more people who are involved in providing opinions, the better the outcome will be. She thought that either she or Jenny was the person who suggested the idea of surveying the school body to get their opinions. She also said that she assisted Jenny in the research for the survey, although Jenny was the person who ultimately constructed the survey.

Amanda reflected on how the group first decided to try to get more sports for their school. She remembered talking about different issues of interest to the teens including the cafeteria food, school rules, school spirit, and sports. She recognized that there were some issues that they just could not work on, like school rules, so she said that they chose the sports project because they felt like it was something that they could change.

Amanda thought that most members had been involved in the decision-making. She believed that the underclassmen had not been as involved because they were scared to voice their
opinions. She felt that this was because they were “not used to anything.” She went on to say that she thought that the majority of members have “had voices come out and had more people get involved in it this year.” She thinks that everyone just wants to be heard this year. She was adamant that people who did not want to be involved needed to be told “don’t waste our time.” She felt that she should give her best effort, and she was concerned that some people only showed up for the meetings and did not put forth any effort. It seemed that because what the group was doing was important to her, she wanted it to be important to everyone.

Amanda explained that she felt like people heard her because she was loud, but she went on to say that she could also tell when she was being heard by the body language of the members. She noted that they would turn their heads and shrug their shoulders and make “ooh” noises that let her know that they had heard what she said. This made her feel like she was getting a response from them. She went on to explain that, when some of the other members were talking, there were always the quiet members who did not say much but who would tell her what they thought because they knew that she would speak up and voice their thoughts or opinions to the other members. Amanda related that sometimes it was hard to get members with good ideas to speak up. She thought that the class time discussions had played an important role in obtaining everyone’s ideas and opinions. She admitted that sometimes she would put people on the spot when she knew they had something to add and would draw attention to them and ask them to tell members their ideas. She thought this helped them learn to feel more comfortable speaking out to the group.

Amanda thought that the members should choose topics of interest to them to work on in the club because they were more likely to stay involved if it was something that interested them. She noted that, even if the adults in the club did not seem to like an idea, they still recorded the idea for everyone to consider. She went on to say that usually the ideas that the adults did not
like were ideas that the other members did not agree with either. But the act of recording them for consideration was important so that everyone knew that their ideas were heard. She said that the decision to include or eliminate ideas was based on “majority rules.” This meant mainly the club members, but she said that by getting input from the rest of the school through the survey they were able to get the whole school involved. She said that the same “majority rules” principle was used with the school-wide survey results. Amanda explained that the club members were in control of the decision-making and the adults provide them with support that the upperclassmen in turn provide to the underclassmen.

Amanda sees her role in the club as one of expressing her opinions. She feels she is a compromiser and works to find solutions that everyone is pleased with. She felt like Mrs. Abbot understood what it was like to be a teen and because of their connection she was more involved.

**Beth**

In February 2006, I interviewed a fifth member of the treatment group, Beth, who is a Caucasian female in tenth grade. The interview was conducted at the local branch of the county library in the meeting room. This room provided a fairly private location; however, we did have two interruptions during the interview by friends who knew we were meeting and who stopped by to chat. The two interruptions were very brief, two to three minutes each, and did not seem to disrupt the flow of the interview in any noticeable manner. I attribute this to my comfort with the interruptions. The interruptions were nothing of major importance to Beth or the other youth, so I treated it with the same nonchalance. Once they left, we resumed with the interview.

Beth and I know each other well. She is an active member of the county junior leadership program, and she has participated in at least one regional or state-level event each year for the past six years. Beth is very good at reading the undercurrents in the club, and she frequently provides me with feedback about how the program is going. I value her perceptiveness because
she is very honest and willing to “tell me like it is” even when she knows that her observations do not match my view.

While Beth’s outside involvement in the program is very high and while she is more than willing to comment privately about the in-school program, she has not been actively involved in the in-school club program. She has tended to take a passive role in the club of listening and observing, but not offering her thoughts or ideas to the larger group. I found this surprising given her active role in the out-of-school junior leadership group, but I have respected her stance and have not questioned her lack of involvement. I have observed that, while she has made no effort to become involved with her peers in the club meetings, she has worked quietly behind the scenes to try to influence the adults in the program.

Beth feels like the 4-H club is more of a democracy this year because the students are running the meetings and making more decisions. She describes the adults’ roles as more equal in terms of presenting their ideas to the group, too, but the youth have the final say about what they want to do. She thinks that more members are getting involved in the program since they have a say than before when the adults just told them what they were going to do. Beth describes the meetings as a place where youth are encouraged to say what they would like to do. She refers to it as a democratic place, “a student system.” She contrasts this to previous years where they read over the newsletter and participated in an educational program that the adults chose. Now the youth are choosing the program. They are discussing the pros and cons of their ideas and voting on which ideas with which to proceed. She says that there are people in the club that she wasn’t sure if they had been members before or not. Now they are raising their hands and speaking up in the meetings, and she definitely knows that they are there.

Beth thinks that since the youth are leading the meetings, other members feel more comfortable speaking up because they feel more confident that their ideas will be considered. To
her, this translates into a larger group of people trying to get things done with more collective power than individual students have. Beth described how students who did not want to speak up knew others in the club who would and they were telling them their ideas so that their voice could be heard. She reiterated several times that everyone “gets their say.”

She seems pleased that the members are trying to involve the entire school student body through the homeroom surveys. She also thinks this will contribute to increased interest in the club, thus resulting in more members enrolling in the 4-H club. She sees increased involvement in terms of personal investment because she’s more willing to work on the project outside of the designated monthly meeting time. In her words, “We’ll do our homework. Research it.”

In discussing the role of adults in the club, Beth was very complimentary of the teacher working with the group because she not only talked to them about their ideas at the club meeting, she also continued the dialogue throughout the month within the classroom. Beth observed that the teacher also requested ideas from youth who were not in the club and passed those thoughts and opinions on to the club members.

Beth readily admits that having missed the last two meetings has had negative consequences. She says that there is no way for her to recapture what has happened in the meetings by just visiting with a friend for a few minutes. She says she cannot bring back the “whole feel” of what went on in the meetings.

Beth reports that she attempts to be involved in the program beyond the local meeting. She names parish-level and state-wide events that she is a part of. She seems to picture her involvement in 4-H on a much broader scale than just the local meeting. She describes herself as having a “leadership personality.” She sees her roles as one of taking charge, organizing and discussing thoughts and opinions, and researching ideas. She also views herself as influential in the club, a person who can make things happen.
Mindy

The final person whom I interviewed was Mindy, a Caucasian female in the eleventh grade. The interview was conducted in February 2006 in the school library. The setting was very quiet, and there were no interruptions during the interview. Mindy expressed nervousness at the beginning of the interview, which I tried to alleviate by explaining to her that the questions were simply about her thoughts and opinions.

I chose Mindy because of her low involvement in both the in-school program and out-of-school program. Mindy has not interacted with any of her peers in the club meetings, yet she continued to attend each and every meeting.

Mindy thinks that the group has been successful in deciding what they want to do, although she expressed some concern that upper administration may not be supportive of their idea. She likes that they have been actively involved in doing something and expresses appreciation that they are not just reading the newsletter. She sees the club as important because they are trying to affect change rather than just getting out of class.

Mindy acknowledges that attending the meeting is important. On an individual level, she recognizes that if she missed the meeting she would not know what was going on, while on a collective level, her absence might affect the decision-making process. Since the group votes on their ideas, she is concerned about having enough people at the meeting to vote. Mindy admits that her continued involvement in the group is both a function of the activities that she is involved in at the meetings as well as her personal desire to become more involved in 4-H outside of the school club. In describing the group’s activities, she clarifies that this year they are working to improve their school and community as opposed to previous years when activities were more educational fun and games. She was quick to emphasize that having meaningful activities was an important way to keep her and other youth involved in positive activities that
would keep “them away from like drugs and alcohol and stuff.” She says that her involvement in the program makes her feel good because she is helping others.

Mindy seemed to struggle to explain how she knows when adults or peers are listening to her and are respecting her opinions. She says that she feels respected when others, both peers and adults, listen to her ideas without correcting her or giving their own opinions, yet I could hear the hesitancy in her voice as she tried to explain this.

**Themes in the Data**

The purpose of objective four was to determine whether or not the youths’ lived experiences confirmed the factors that emerged from the Youth Voice Survey. Guiding questions were developed to elicit youths’ perceptions of the program (See Appendix B). Responsive interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) was used to facilitate a deeper understanding of youths’ perceptions of voice. Data was coded for ideas that surfaced. Themes that emerged from analysis of the interviews included youth’s understanding of their relationship with the adults in the program, their engagement in the program, their ownership of the program, and their perceptions of self and others as advocates within the program who helped others’ voices to be heard.

**Relationship with Adults**

The first factor to emerge from the exploratory factor analysis of the Youth Voice Survey dealt with youths’ perception of their relationship with the adults involved in the program. What follows are excerpts of the themes that emerged from the interviews supporting the items included in the “Relationship with Adults” construct.

**Item 14:** Adults in this program listen to what I have to say.

**Researcher:** How do you know that we’re listening to what all the students are saying?

**Beth:** Well, I know I take Mrs. Abbot. She’s one of my teachers, and we discuss our ideas with the students in her class.

**Researcher:** So how do you think (pause) what are the things that have been done that have helped people know they are being listened to?
Jenny: Well we started off with a blank sheet of paper. We asked for ideas, and we wrote them down.

Researcher: Umhm
Jenny: Every idea that we had we wrote down whether it could or could not be done. We didn’t evaluate that. We took their ideas and then we evaluated them. We didn’t completely write them off, off the bat, like swimming. No, we can’t do that. We already wrote it down, and then we evaluated it.

Karen: It’s different. We rarely did anything last year because they didn’t like really hear our opinions.

Researcher: What helps you know they are listening?
Luke: Well that they’re not just there to make everyone behave. They’re there to you know like for instance you with your little board writing everything down on paper. And taking vote of what different people like and everything. And maybe making suggestions. Or maybe helping to compromise between two similar things you know. Just involvement in the meetings and discussions and everything.

Karen: They’re listening to your opinions they’re not just you know hearing. They’re writing it down and asking you your opinion.
Researcher: What are their actions that let you know that they are acting on your opinions?
Karen: Because every time you like say something they’ll write it down and they’ll ask you like what stuff would it take to make this happen. And can we as a group make it happen.

**Item 15:** Adults in this program involve youth in making decisions about our program.

Researcher: What has their (the adults’) role been in that (decision-making)?
Jenny: Y’all really act like a guide or a leader. I mean y’all don’t (short pause) you’re not a dictator.

**Item 16:** My ideas are heard by adults in this program.

Researcher: So can you tell me some of the things that let you know that your ideas are heard?
Beth: Well you write them on the board.

Mindy: Because like everybody’s getting heard not just one or two certain people.

Amanda: People say some stuff and you [the researcher] say “ummm” but you write it anyway and you let them know that they are being heard anyway, whether you think it’s right or not. They are still getting what they think up there to which other people see. And you know most of the time when you don’t really agree with it, others don’t either. But at least their being up there, so you know that they’re getting heard. And Mrs. Abbot, she asks us like in class. She’ll ask us and stuff.
Amanda went on to also describe how she knows when she is heard by the youth in the club.

**Researcher:** So can you give me an example of how, like when you’re talking, how you know you’re heard?

**Amanda:** Well I always . . . I’m loud. I’m just loud anyway. So people do hear me. But then like when I see people’s body language, like their turned towards me. And when I talk I use my hands so everybody has to watch me. It’s like “eyes on me.”

**Researcher:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** And so I feel like I’m being heard by their body language and by the way they turn their heads and shrug their shoulders or their heads. Or maybe they disagree with me and then they “ooh” noises and stuff like that.

**Researcher:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** I feel like I’m getting a response from them.

**Item 17:** My ideas are respected by adults in this program.

**Jenny:** You know I just (pause) I feel like more voices are being heard, you know. And it just (pause) it makes me feel more accepted and just that I’m of more importance than just somebody sitting on the seat you know.

**Karen:** Like our ideas on the list of things, they support us there. Because we were just bringing it up and stuff. And Mrs. Abbot, she went and printed off the surveys for us to go out there just get peoples’ opinions. And she tallied them up and stuff and told us which ones people prefer over the others.

**Luke:** Y’all show respect, by listening to our opinions and trying to encourage us to go ahead with our thoughts. Even though it may be something like, such as a swim team. Very expensive to start. Lots and lots and lots of resources and things and just tons of stuff to do. And it almost seems a little out of reach for such a small school, but still there was encouragement and support. And you know that lets us know that you respect us and our ideas. Although, it’s something you know and by saying you can achieve whatever you want to. May not be this year; may not be next year. You may graduate, but you can make a difference in your school.

**Karen:** Because they listen. Last year and year before last we like talk to them and they’d just sit there and like change the subject or something.

**Item 18:** I help adults better understand youth.

**Karen:** I speak up. I give my opinions. I tell them what I think about stuff and what I think would be a good idea and what students might not like and what students might enjoy doing.

**Item 19:** Adults view me as a valuable resource.

**Karen:** I see myself as being someone important and someone that they might even look up to help make things happen.
**Item 20:** I feel connected to an adult in this program.

**Researcher:** So why do you think the upper classmen are getting more involved this year as opposed to last year?

**Amanda:** You see I’m not sure. I don’t know if it’s um, you [the researcher] come once, or you know when you can, once a month when you come. But then we have, now I guess the upper classmen we have this, the teacher, like Mrs. Abbot. She just got into it. And we have classes with her and she asks us questions and then it gets us interested. And I think it’s how she comes out and is telling us it. And then we get interested and when we do we spread it on to the under classmen. And then they get ideas and stuff with it.

**Amanda:** I mean I enjoy Mrs. Abbot being (short pause) I mean she is important to me. I like her because she’s like involved with us. She remembers what it was like. It wasn’t too long ago when she was in our shoes. So I feel more like a connection with her than I did with the other teachers that did it that were here at the school. Like I’m getting more involved if she’s there.

While specific support of item 21, “I trust the adults in this program,” did not emerge from the youth interviews, confirmation of the importance of the inclusion of this item in the instrument is both alluded to and confounded within the support found for the other items. An element of trust between youth and adults is alluded to through the very act of the adults listening to and involving youth in the decision-making process and through the youths’ confidence in sharing their thoughts and ideas and their belief that their thoughts and ideas matter to these adults.

**Perceptions of Engagement**

The second factor emerging from the exploratory factor analysis of the Youth Voice Survey was related to how engaged youth were in the program. Engagement is defined as the state of being actively involved in a task, activity, or event. The following excerpts from the interviews support the items constituting the “Engagement” construct of the quantitative instrument.

**Item 2:** I want to be a part of this program.

**Karen:** Out of all the years I think this year is the best because I’ve been more involved with stuff.
Researcher: What was it that made you remember to do the survey?
Jenny: Probably because I want to do this. I want what’s on the survey. . . I want to do everything that I can to make it happen. And I guess that’s what made me remember to do the survey ’cause I know usually if I’m not involved, and if I’m not interested, then I probably won’t remember to do it.

Item 4: I am proud of the work we do in this program.

Jenny: You know whenever you stood up there and said something about it like, I was just (pause) I was kind of expecting the usual you know. I’m not saying the stuff wasn’t useful cause it really is.
Researcher: Yeah.
Jenny: I mean, I love 4-H. You know I do.
Researcher: Yeah.
Jenny: But it’s nice to have something different you know. And it’s something more (pause) I can’t think of the word. Something rich.

Researcher: So how does that make you feel about the club?
Luke: As a whole it makes me feel proud of 4-H. Proud of what it stands for. What it’s trying to do. It’s people coming together and using their hands, their heart and their mind and trying to make our world a better place. It makes me feel proud to be a member of the club.

Item 5: I think the activities that we are involved in with this program are valuable.

Beth: Um, well it makes the club seem more (pause) we’re actually doing stuff. We’re not just going to meetings and sitting there reading our little flyer and you know staring at the agent when she preaches, you know. We’re starting something. We’re getting involved. This is what 4-H does. You know, this is our hands part of 4-H. We’re really going to get involved in our community, and we want to do something. And other people are going to look up to that. Younger children who are in 4-H that aren’t in high school that don’t do that much. To look up and say, “Wow!” This is what 4-H did. It makes them want to get more involved. Now or whenever they do get in high school.

Mindy: We didn’t just sit around and talk about the newsletter. We actually did something. We’re trying to get something actually done.

Jenny: We wanted to do something that would (pause) what am I trying to say (pause) be remembered.

Item 6: I am an active participant in this program.

Beth: You know, people that I think they were in 4-H last year possibly. Didn’t speak up much. You know, you start on the subject they’re interested in and they’re raising their hand and asking “well we could do this, and I know something about this. I’ve read somewhere this and this.” And they’re speaking up more. I think they’re enjoying it, too.
**Amanda:** Well, I’ve never really done any like chickens or horses or anything. I’ve never been to any kind of stuff like that. But this year I think that I am more interested in it simply because of the subject that we’re doing. So I think that I’m more involved this year. Like I’ve been a junior leader before. Doing that stuff. Like at Achievement Day. I’ve helped with Achievement Day before, but this year I’m thinking I’m more involved than the other times.

**Researcher:** Okay. Can you describe your involvement for me?

**Amanda:** Yeah. Like I’ve actually like looked up stuff when you’ve told us to look up stuff. Like me and Rhonda. I actually kind of did it, you know. The surveys I was interested in when we went to classes to tell the people about it I explained exactly what was going on. Not just hand them the survey and let them fill it out. I kind of talked about it with them with teacher and stuff.

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**Item 7:** My attendance at meetings is important.

**Researcher:** So do you think attendance at meetings has been important this year?

**Beth:** I think so. Well, I’ve missed the last two. But it hurts. Because everybody else is talking about something and I’ve missed out. You know, even if I ask somebody what went on you don’t get the whole feel of it you know. You can’t sit down for the 55 minutes that our meeting is and go through every detail.

**Mindy:** Yeah, if you don’t [attend meetings] you miss out on what we did and it may not be enough people there to vote on stuff.

**Karen:** I come because I want to see what more ideas people are going to come up with and act on it. And what all we can change with those ideas.

**Jenny:** We make a lot of important decisions. Like on our first meeting we decided whether we wanted to go through with this. If we had a lot of attendance and a lot was for it then we have a stronger opinion but if we didn’t a lot of attendance and a lot of them said yes then the next meeting more students came and they said no then they wouldn’t come ever again.

**Luke:** Without attending the meetings they [the members] have no clue what’s going on. They have no clue what’s available for them to participate in. Without being at the meetings they can’t, you know, they can’t have their say or their word or their two cents put in to what’s going on in the club. Like we just talked about the activities there . . . without attending the meetings they’ll have no clue. There’s no use to be in 4-H.

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**Item 8:** I feel good about myself when I am involved in this program.

**Karen:** I think it makes it more fun and more interesting than hearing the teacher tell you what she’s going to do and what she wants us to do. Yeah.

**Researcher:** So when you’re making the decision how does that make you feel inside as opposed to just hearing someone tell you what you’re going to do?

**Karen:** It makes me feel like you know my opinion makes a difference in that.
**Jenny:** I raised my voice and I was like “I need your attention.” They’re like, their mouths dropped. Their eyes were fixed on me and that was the weirdest feeling in the world. I was like “oh my God there’s probably 50 people looking at me right now.” (laugh) That’s a hundred eyes looking at me.

**Researcher:** But that made you feel how, knowing that they stopped to listen?

**Jenny:** I was like “hmm. I’ve got their attention now what am I going to do with it?” You know, it was kind of exciting ’cause usually you know I’m the one that (pause) I’m quiet. I go along with the flow of the day. If I don’t like something I’ll speak up, but if I’m for something I usually didn’t, I usually don’t speak up. But whenever it’s something that I’m this enthused about I just can’t see myself backing down. If I know it can happen then it’s a shame that nobody stands up. And I’m glad that I finally stand up cause it’s just (pause) you don’t want to miss out on this.

**Item 9:** It is important that I participate in meetings.

**Researcher:** So how do you see your role in helping the club do more important things?

**Jenny:** Well before this last meeting I couldn’t tell you. Because like I said, I’m a quiet person.

**Researcher:** Umhm.

**Jenny:** I really didn’t understand why I spoke up said why I would type up the survey. I have no clue why. But I do now, because I am passionate about it. And I feel that my role is to make sure that it goes through and to do whatever I can just to see that everything goes through smoothly.

**Item 10:** I can make a difference through my work in this program.

**Luke:** The work that you’re doing actually, you know, makes you feel (pause) like you can make your world a better place. You can make a change.

**Karen:** The years before I just sat there and like read the newspaper, and this year we’re getting more involved in trying to change things.

**Researcher:** How does that make you feel?

**Karen:** Like I’m helping change things for the better and stuff. And being more involved in it.

**Researcher:** How does that feel to get to make those decisions about what y’all are doing?

**Mindy:** It feels like it’s . . . pretty good, ’cause we’re helping others and stuff that they want to do.

**Karen:** It makes me feel like I am somebody. That I can do something. I can really make a change.

**Beth:** A lot of people have said that we only have a few sports at our school. That’s the thing we’ve been discussing the last few meetings. We don’t have much at this school, and if we could start something that would be school-ran, you know not just 4-H ran, but let the students take over and administration support. We could turn it in to be as big as the sports that we already have. And it was started by 4-H. You know, 4-H made the
difference in the school. They did something that the students wanted to do but the students themselves didn’t have the power to do, alone. Kind of got everybody together. Put our ideas together and said this is what we want to do. Let’s do it.

Researcher: Yeah.

Beth: A lot of people have said that we only have a few sports at our school. That’s the thing And you know, 4-H we started something that wasn’t originally there. 4-H would have made the difference. And that could be around for a hundred years.

Perceptions of Ownership

The final factor to emerge from the exploratory factor analysis concerned how youth experienced ownership. Ownership is defined as a feeling of having rights or feelings of possession toward something. The following items constitute the latent factor, “Ownership,” and the data from the interviews supporting them.

**Item 1:** I make decisions about what we do in this program.

Jenny: I mean, um, a lot of the adults are helping like to make sure we don’t get side tracked, but they’re not making the decisions. Like, we did, we took a vote on if they [the members] were satisfied with the events that we’re working for. If they weren’t then we discussed them.

Mindy: We’re basically all voting on it. And then we picked like one group to take it to administrators and then they’re going to have to do the final decision. So we’re all kind of getting involved in it.

Amanda: We sent the survey out [to the school body] and you always have these people that just circle, you know, “no” to everything. Or just close their eyes and pick something. Then you have people talking to them and they actually do the surveys. And when you get surveys it’s not only to report it to everyone else you get everybody’s opinion. You get like a better outlook on things and how you see it and how everybody else would want it, too. So the bigger crowd you get the more right the income would be.

Researcher: What is different about the meetings themselves?

Beth: Well I think last year we always go over the flyer. I think last year we did more we had a topic each month. We discussed it. What can we do with this topic? We can do this. And now it’s “what do you want the topic to be? Would you like to start something? Would you like to do something? Would you like to sit back and watch TV? You know, what do you want to do?” It’s more student involved, student ran. . . it’s kind of like democratic. You know, it’s like a student system.

Researcher: Yeah.

Beth: We present the idea. We discuss it and go over the pros and cons and kind of vote on it verbally and see where everybody else stands on it. And ask the rest of the students and so I think it’s more (pause) you know, they get to do more than they would have normally.
Amanda: We do the majority rules. And that’s us mainly. The majority rules. And then how we did with the survey. We didn’t just get the members. We went and got the whole school involved . . . It’s that we’re in control.

Researcher: So when you think about what we’re doing this year, who’s deciding about what you do?
Karen: We are. The members.
Researcher: And what is it that’s made that possible this year as compared to say other years? Why are the members able to make more of the decisions do you think?
Karen: Because like I guess the people who are over it constantly are asking us for our opinions now than before. They not . . . before they didn’t ask they just told.

Researcher: So how do you think we’ve finally come to decide, you know, whatever you are deciding to do?
Luke: It’s just been a mix of everybody’s opinion and then it eventually coming down to just a few things and say for instance with starting new clubs and organizations and possibly even talking about volleyball team and weight lifting and swim teams. Different things. You know everyone had different opinions and views but at the same time they eventually reached a certain point. You know we took a vote and the top three were chosen and then we did a survey of the whole school by homerooms to ultimately decide which of the activities that we had the most support for or enough support for to try to start.

Item 3: I have influence in this program.

Amanda: Because usually the under classmen will listen to . . . they look up to you [the older students]. So usually they’ll listen to what you have to say. And get somebody who like can talk to them and who they’ll listen to.

Researcher: Why did y’all do the survey?
Amanda: We did the survey whenever (pause) It was an idea somebody gave. I don’t know if it was me, maybe it was me. It was either me or Jenny, I think. One of us said do the survey, you know, ask and we were kind of getting involved in it and then you told us to do the research and stuff on it, which we did. Jenny made the survey. It was either Jenny or someone with her. She made . . . they made the surveys. And then we just decided to do it.

Item 11: I help choose the projects in which we are involved.

Researcher: So when you talk about feeling like the club’s backing you. Describe what it is that lets you know that.
Jenny: Well practically their face, their faces. You know, when I stood up and said we can do this everybody was just like “really?” I was like “yeah.”
Researcher: (laugh)
Jenny: And it was their face. I know, I just know, that they’re going to support the club’s decision because we’re going to do everything that we can to make sure that the entire club is satisfied with their choice. And if they’re not then we work with that to get a
better choice. You know we’re not going to choose to do something that is in the minority of the vote.

**Researcher:** How are you working to make sure that it’s something that the majority of the members want to do?

**Jenny:** We take a vote before we write anything down. And number one choice, we take a vote and, if it’s any, if it’s a close vote then we’ll alter a little bit to make sure that everybody is not upset or that they don’t feel like their not being listened to. Because they are being listened to. And their voices are being heard. Because if not, then they’re not going to come back to the next meeting and we won’t have as much to work with.

**Researcher:** So tell me what you think about 4-H this year.

**Beth:** I think it’s going very well this year. I think we’re getting more student involvement going, and the students are kind of running the meetings more. So it’s more of a democracy as a 4-H club.

**Researcher:** Umhm.

**Beth:** We’re kind of more choosing what we want to talk about and that kind of stuff. So it gets more involvement because we’re more interested.

**Researcher:** Okay. So can you compare that to previous years?

**Beth:** Maybe in the past years we haven’t had as much student involvement. We’ve had some.

**Researcher:** Umhm.

**Beth:** To a certain percent. This year you present ideas. What would you like to do? And we say what we would like to do.

**Researcher:** Umhm.

**Beth:** And then we go from there. But we choose the subject more.

**Researcher:** So how do you think that’s going?

**Beth:** Well I think it’s going well. It’s getting more people involved. People who usually sit in the back want to participate because they have a say in it instead of just being told “we’re going to do this.”

**Amanda:** Because it’s more of the members coming together with the ideas, and I think they should choose the topic. They should choose the ideas. And then they’ll act on it better because if (pause) you do better in a subject that you most like. That you know you’re really interested in.

**Item 12:** I am an active participant in planning our group’s projects.

**Beth:** And you’re more interested in something if you’re doing it instead of just sitting back and watching everybody else. They’re getting more hands-on.

**Luke:** At first there’s a lot of people who are kind of iffy. They don’t really know. Some are new to 4-H and some have never done anything other than just attended a meeting where they brought up old business, new business. Never really activities or anything that would actually affect them a lot. Or their wants I guess you would say. And at first there’s people who are unsure, you know, about what other people are going to say. They’re going to look and see who raises their hand to vote for this. They’re just going to go with what other people want. But as the year progresses I see more and more people
who are stepping out of their comfort zones and actually voicing their true opinion rather than following others.

**Item 13:** I am an equal partner with the adults in our program.

**Jenny:** I don’t hear anybody saying, “well that’s just what Ms. Melissa wanted, or that’s what Ms. Sarah wanted or that’s just what the president wanted.” I don’t hear any of that. Because that’s not just what they wanted. We got the club’s opinion, and we also got the school’s opinion after the survey.

**Amanda:** It’s that we’re in control. And the stuff the adults provide us with we need to be led. Even though we’re leaders ourselves being upper classmen we need to be led as well as the under classmen who get led by us.

**Amanda:** So I think the adults listen to the upper classmen who actually speak out. So I think mainly we’re actually being controlled by the middle, which is like the upper classmen.

**Researcher:** Cool. And that ends up being a good thing for everybody?

**Amanda:** Right. Because we all started out being guided by y’all [the adults] but then we guide the younger ones.

**Perceptions of Self and Others as Advocates**

One of the themes that emerged from the interviews that was not included in the quantitative instrument was the perception that youth saw either themselves or others helping members voices to be heard. Essentially, they acted as an advocate for another person or groups of people. Reasons for this varied. One youth observed that she spoke up for more timid members of the 4-H club.

**Amanda:** You always have your quiet ones. Like Jana. Jana’s real quiet. I’m usually with her and whatever she says she (pause) some people usually tell what they think to me because they know I’ll say it.

**Amanda:** I have class with Jenny and we’ve learned some of the same what some of the others think but they’re not as talkative or something as me. So we all talk about everything. We get to hear their opinions, too. So come next time we also mention what they think, too.

Or they know people who are known for speaking up for others in the group.

**Beth:** We have a few prominent people who usually present ideas. Or someone will tap them on the shoulder and “well ask about this.” And it’s more – well some people just don’t want to shout out because they don’t want to look dumb or something. And you know if a few people present ideas for the rest of the students well the 4-Hers kind of
decide what they want to do and tell so-and-so. You know the person who is sitting by them who’s likely to speak up.

Their teacher, Mrs. Abbot was also recognized as someone with power who can help their voices to be heard by other students, even those who are not in the club.

**Beth:** I take Mrs. Abbot. She’s one of my teachers and we discuss our ideas with the students in her class. The majority of them aren’t in 4-H. But you know she’s talking to the students about it, too. You know, we present an idea to her and she uses her power as a teacher. She’s able to talk to students. She talks to the students. You know uses her power to talk to other . . . you know might want to persuade them. You know kind of takes our ideas and brings it out to the rest of the students.

Another student spoke of his role in making sure all of the voices were heard.

**Researcher:** So how do you see your involvement this year? What role do you think you’ve been playing?
**Luke:** As a senior I’m trying to keep everybody on the right track. And keeping some order (laugh). You know at times it can get a little loud in there. At the meetings. Everyone has their own opinion, ideas . . . and wants to make it known. But I’ve had quite a bit of involvement and will hopefully be even more involved.

**Researcher:** When you say keeping them on the right track how do you see yourself helping them stay on the right track? What does that . . . I mean can you explain like what you do? What are some of the things that you think help make that happen?
**Luke:** Say for instance we were talking about these activities. I keep going back to those.

**Researcher:** That’s fine.
**Luke:** There were a lot of times when it was just chaos. Everybody had an opinion and everything and we started getting it down to fewer and fewer and you know stand up and just say it hey, we know everybody has something different to say. Just take turns. Just less chaos and we get a lot more done.

He also presented an idea that he thought would help students feel more comfortable with each other when sharing ideas.

**Luke:** Something that I’ve thought about this year and last year but didn’t make mention of was possibly have a day set aside to where the whole 4-H club could get together and just have not necessarily a meeting but just a gathering maybe some refreshments and things and just kind of I guess you’d say become a little more comfortable with each other before we begin all those other things and maybe it would help people feel more involved from the beginning and you know because even in a small school like this everybody knows everybody’s name but what do you truly know about that person. Are you willing to share your honest opinions in front of that person?

**Researcher:** Oh that’s a good point. And that would be a way to help everyone?
**Luke:** Yes ma’am. To help everybody. I guess you would just become a little more unified. And throughout the whole course of the year it could make a huge difference. A
big impact on the way things are handled and how people react to other people’s opinions. People being more open to things they may not really agree with or like but they would actually be willing to listen.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to determine if youth voice affects the ownership and engagement experienced by youth. Witt (2005c) broadly defined youth voice as “the perception that one’s opinions are heard and respected by others – particularly adults.” The objectives of the study were the following:

1. To describe youth of a 4-H club in a rural high school in northeast Louisiana on the following demographic characteristics:
   a. Gender
   b. Age
   c. Race
   d. Number of years in 4-H
   e. Number of years in junior leader club
   f. Highest educational level completed

2. To determine the level of youth voice of 7th through 12th graders participating in four high school 4-H clubs in a rural Louisiana parish as measured by the Youth Voice Survey.

3. To compare post-measurement summated scores of the sub-scales measured by the Youth Voice Survey for youth who participated in a 4-H club emphasizing youth voice with those of 4-H youth who participated in a club that did not emphasize youth voice on the following variables: group and race.

4. To examine the lived experiences of 4-H youth who are participating in a club that emphasizes youth ownership and engagement to determine whether or not their lived experiences confirmed the factors that emerged from the Youth Voice Survey.
Procedures

The target population for this study was defined as high school 4-H members in Louisiana. The accessible population consisted of all high school 4-H members in a north Louisiana parish (county). Every high school student in the parish was offered the opportunity to join a local school 4-H club, and those who chose to join become local club members. One school club was purposefully selected to serve as the treatment group while the other three high school clubs served as the comparison group. The treatment group consisted of 86 club members at a high school 4-H club whose population was made up of eighth through twelfth graders. The other three high schools, consisting of 107 club members whose populations ranged from kindergarten through twelfth and whose target population consisted of seventh through twelfth graders in one school to ninth through twelfth graders in the other two schools, made up the comparison group.

Data were collected using pre-post surveys, formal and informal interviews, and researcher observations. A 4-point Likert-type survey designed specifically for this research study, the Youth Voice Survey (See Appendix A), containing 21 items was used to collect pre and post measurements of youths’ perceptions of voice. The survey was given to 193 youth at the pre-measurement and 133 youth at the post-measurement. In the treatment group, attrition accounted for the loss of 40 subjects with 26 of those subjects leaving the program before its completion, 8 subjects being absent on the day of posttest administration and on the day of follow-up administration, and 6 subjects being unable to complete the posttest due to 12th grade senior final exams. Attrition in the comparison group accounted for the loss of 20 subjects, with 1 subject quitting school and thus the program before its completion, 1 subject relocating as a result of evacuation from south Louisiana during Hurricane Katrina, 11 subjects being absent on
the day of posttest administration and on the day of follow-up administration, and 7 subjects being unable to complete the posttest due to 12th grade senior final exams.

**Summary of Findings**

**Objective One**

Findings for objective one of the study indicated that the largest percentage of youth were female with 72.1% females (n = 62) in the treatment group and 59.8% females (n = 64) in the comparison group. The greatest number of youth in the treatment group were in the 16-year-old group (n = 23; 27.4%) while the next largest group was the 15-year-old group (n = 19; 22.6%). In the comparison group, the largest number of participants were in the 17-year-old group (n = 29; 27.1%) while the next largest group was the 15-year-old group (n = 26; 24.3%).

Most of the youth were either in the 9th or 10th grades with the largest number of treatment group members in the 10th grade (n = 27; 32.1%) and the largest number of comparison group members in 9th grade (n = 42; 39.3%). The majority of participants in both the treatment group (n = 58; 67.4%) and comparison group (n = 87; 81.3%) was white. Archival data indicated that the largest number of youth in the treatment group had been in 4-H for 5 years (n = 17; 19.8%) while the largest number of comparison group members had been in 4-H for 6 years (n = 23; 21.5%). The majority of 4-H youth in both the treatment group (n = 76; 88.4%) and comparison group (n = 88; 82.2%) had never participated in the Junior Leader Club.

**Objective Two**

Findings for objective two of the study showed that the three-factor model explained 52.669% of the variance in youth voice. The eight variables loading on factor one, with values ranging from .814 to .389, was named “Relationship with Adults.” The eight variables loading on factor two, with values ranging from .762 to .429, was named “Engagement.” The third factor, loaded with five variables ranging from .846 to .513, was named “Ownership.”
Youth voice subscale scores were calculated from the responses of members on the items loading for each of the three factors. In Factor One “Relationship with Adults,” the mean subscale score was 23.10 (n = 193) out of a possible score of 32. Eight items loaded on Factor One. Factor Two, “Engagement,” also loaded with eight items and had a mean subscale score of 24.85 (n = 193) out of a possible subscale score of 32. In Factor Three, “Ownership,” five items loaded with a mean subscale score of 12.44 out of a possible subscale score of 20.

**Objective Three**

Findings for objective three revealed that the number of years in the junior leader club had a significant correlation with the dependent variable, post-measurement summed scores for factor one, factor two, and factor three, and was a candidate for inclusion in the regression model as a covariate with the pre-measurement summed scores for factor one, factor two, and factor three. The decision to use Junior Leader Years as a covariate was supported by its significance in the regression models (Factor 1 - $F = 7.165; p = .008$, Factor 2 - $F = 13.303; p = .000$, Factor 3 - $F = 22.636; p = .000$) as well as its effect of reducing the error term in the models.

An analysis of covariance was subsequently conducted for each factor, Relationship with Adults, Engagement, and Ownership. In Factor One, Relationship with Adults, Levene’s test of homogeneity of variances ($F = .298; p = .827$) indicated non-significance while the lack of fit test ($F = 1.481; p = .065$) indicated that the model was a good fit. Interactions between the independent variables, group and race, and the covariates, pretest and junior leader years, were modeled and found to be non-significant (Group * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 1 ($F = 1.583; p = .211$), Group * Junior Leader Years ($F = .120; p = .730$), Race * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 1 ($F = 2.678; p = .104$), and Race * Junior Leader Years ($F = 2.417; p = .123$)). Both of the independent variables, group ($F = 5.932; p = .016$) and race ($F = 4.332; p = .040$), were significant when they were entered into the model. An R squared value of .216 and an
adjusted R squared value of .190 were returned for this model indicating that a substantial amount of variance was still unexplained by the model. A comparison of adjusted group means indicated that the treatment group had a higher Relationship with Adults subscale score than did the comparison group and that white youth had a higher Relationship with Adults subscale score than did nonwhite youth. An effect size of .216 was returned for the model.

In Factor Two, Engagement, Levene’s test of homogeneity of variances ($F = .626; p = .599$) indicated non-significance while the lack of fit test ($F = .894; p = .664$) indicated that the model was a good fit. Interactions between the independent variables, group and race, and the covariates, pretest and junior leader years, were modeled and found to be non-significant (Group * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 2 ($F = 1.219; p = .272$), Group * Junior Leader Years ($F = 2.688; p = .104$), Race * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 2 ($F = .003; p = .955$), and Race * Junior Leader Years ($F = .402; p = .527$)). The independent variable, group ($F = 7.406; p = .008$), was significant when entered into the model. An R squared value of .266 and an adjusted R squared value of .240 were returned for this model indicating that a substantial amount of variance was still unexplained by the model. A comparison of adjusted group means indicated that the treatment group had a higher Engagement subscale score than did the comparison group and that white youth had a higher Engagement subscale score than did nonwhite youth. An effect size of .266 was returned for the model.

In Factor Three, Ownership, Levene’s test of homogeneity of variances ($F = .071; p = .975$) indicated non-significance while the lack of fit test ($F = .912; p = .632$) indicated that the model was a good fit. Interactions between the independent variables, group and race, and the covariates, pretest and junior leader years, were modeled and found to be non-significant (Group * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 2 ($F = .698; p = .405$), Group * Junior Leader Years ($F = .029; p = .865$), Race * Pretest Summated Scores for Factor 2 ($F = .901; p = .345$), and Race *
Junior Leader Years ($F = 1.389; p = .241$). The independent variables, group ($F = 8.165; p = .005$) and race ($F = 15.659; p = .000$), were significant in this model. An $R$ squared value of .339 and an adjusted $R$ squared value of .317 were returned for this model indicating that a substantial amount of variance was still unexplained by the model. A comparison of adjusted group means revealed that the treatment group had a statistically significant higher Ownership subscale score than did the comparison group ($t = -2.266; p = .025$). Comparison group members scored -1.143 lower than treatment group members. Additionally, a comparison of adjusted group means revealed that white youth had a statistically significant higher Ownership subscale score than did nonwhite youth ($t = -3.235; p = .002$). Nonwhite youth scored -1.803 lower than white youth. An effect size of .339 was returned for this model.

**Objective Four**

Objective four findings revealed four themes in the interviews. Three of the themes supported the factors from the survey instrument. These themes included youths’ understanding of their relationship with the adults in the program, their perceptions of their engagement in the program, and their insights into their ownership of the program. Within each factor, qualitative statements from the youth supported many of the items in the instrument. One exception to this was item 21, “I trust the adults in this program.” Support for this item is both confounded within the other items and alluded to by the youth as they describe being allowed to make decisions in the program and being listened to and heard by adults yet is not specifically mentioned by any of the youth during the interviews.

A theme that emerged from the analysis that was not included in the survey instrument was youths’ perceptions of self and others as advocates within the program who helped others’ voices be heard.
Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Conclusion One

The findings of this study indicate that giving youth a voice in the program does result in an increase in their perceptions of engagement and ownership as well as making a difference in youths’ perception of their relationship with adults in the program. These quantitative findings were also supported by the interviews with the youth. This researcher is unaware of any previously published research that looks at the effect of voice on the constructs of ownership and engagement in a quasi-experimental design. The implication of this study is that giving youth voice in developing programs of which they are a part is one way to address the problem of decreasing program participation for older youth. An additional implication of this study is that the training of youth professionals and volunteers in the program is a key factor to successfully implementing programming in which youth have a voice. This is supported in studies by Kirshner et al. (2005), Mitra (2004), and O’Neill and Barton (2005) who found that the relationship between youth and adults was an important factor in youth developing ownership and taking responsibility for the program. The issue of power is a common theme in many studies (Anderson-Butcher, 2005; Calvert, 2004; Kellett et al., 2004; Kirshner, 2003; Prilleltensky et al., 2001; Royce, 2004; Valaitis, 2002; Vallerand, 2001) and is a topic that must be addressed via training for adults working with youth. The basic idea that adults are not giving up all of the power to youth but are instead sharing the power equally with youth should be a guiding tenet embedded in training. A recommendation is made to provide adults with training in how to balance youth ownership and adult ownership of the program. Additionally, the idea that increased engagement and ownership might lead to retention of youth points to the need for attendance records by individual that can be used as a tracking mechanism to determine if increasing youths’ perceptions of ownership and engagement does in fact lead to retention of
youth in the program. Replicating this study using a longitudinal design would allow for the examination of the effects of ownership and engagement on retention.

**Conclusion Two**

The findings of this study indicate that white youth feel a closer relationship to adults and feel more ownership and engagement in the club than do nonwhite youth. This finding is similar to what Silva (2002) observed where, over time, participation in the research project lagged with those remaining students exhibiting self-confidence and ownership and high levels of engagement. Those members who stayed were predominantly white, middle-class females which Silva noticed was a reflection of the race/class/gender patterns seen throughout the school. This implies that there is a lack of understanding of how nonwhite youth make meaning of the opportunity to have voice. A further implication is that different supports may be necessary from adults for nonwhite youth to have voice. Based on these conclusions, a recommendation is made to examine youth-adult relationships within the same race/ethnicity and culture.

**Conclusion Three**

The qualitative component of this study provided strong support for the items included in the quantitative instrument. A recommendation is made to include interviews as part of the scale development process in both experimental and quasi-experimental research involving youth. A theme that emerged from the interviews that was not a part of the quantitative instrument was youths’ perceptions of themselves and others as advocates who helped others’ voices to be heard. This implies that advocacy may be a construct that should be explored as it contributes to an overall model of youth voice and should be included in the quantitative instrument for future study.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

YOUTH VOICE SURVEY

Name__________________________________________

Instructions: Rate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements as it pertains to THIS CLUB.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOUTH VOICE SURVEY</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I make decisions about what we do in this program.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I want to be a part of this program.</td>
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<td>I have influence in this program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am proud of the work we do in this program.</td>
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<td>I think the activities that we are involved in with this program are valuable.</td>
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<td>I am an active participant in this program.</td>
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<td>My attendance at meetings is important.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel good about myself when I am involved in this program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that I participate in meetings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can make a difference through my work in this program.</td>
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<td>I help choose the projects in which we are involved.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am an active participant in planning our group’s projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am an equal partner with the adults in our program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adults in this program listen to what I have to say.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adults in this program involve youth in making decisions about our program.</td>
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<td>My ideas are heard by adults in this program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My ideas are respected by adults in this program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I help adults better understand youth.</td>
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<td>Adults view me as a valuable resource.</td>
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<td>I feel connected to an adult in this program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I trust the adults in this program.</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX B

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What do you think of 4-H this year?
   a. How’s it going?
   b. Are you enjoying yourself?
   c. Do you think your attendance is important for your understanding? Why or why not?

2. How involved are you in 4-H this year?
   a. Are you more involved than you were last year? Why?
   b. Has anything changed about 4-H this year?
   c. What has made this year different?
   d. How does this make you feel?
   e. How does this make you feel about your club? Do you like it more, less?
   f. Do you think attending the club meetings is important? Why or why not?

3. So tell me about the things you are doing in your club this year.
   a. Who’s deciding what you do?
   b. Are the club members making decisions or helping to make decisions? Tell me about how this is working?
   c. What about the adults, do you think we make too many of the decisions?
   d. Do you think the members want to make decisions?
   e. How could we, adults, make it easier for club members to get to make the decisions?

4. So do you think that the adults are listening to what you have to say?
   a. What is it that adults do that let you know that we are listening?
b. Do you think the adults respect your opinions?

c. Other than listening to you, what are other ways that adults show that they respect your opinions?

d. How do you feel about the adults that are part of the 4-H program?

e. How do you think those adults feel about you?

5. Do you think the work your club is doing is important? How?

a. Do you think the club members want the work of the club to be important? Why or why not?

b. How could you see yourself making this club into one that does important things for your school or your community or just yourselves?
APPENDIX C

SLIDE USED AT NOVEMBER CLUB MEETING
TO INTRODUCE BREADTH OF ROLES YOUTH COULD ASSUME

What \textbf{ARE} Our Possibilities?

- Youth as Planners
- Youth as Trainers
- Youth as Evaluators
- Youth Summits
- Youth Advisory/Action Councils
- Youth as Funders
- Youth Governance/Youth on Boards
- Youth as Policy-Makers

Source: Learn and Serve America
Choose one or two *(no more than two)* events you would participate in if they were added to our school’s extracurricular activities. If you would NOT like to participate but would support the event, choose support. If you are serious about joining the activity and committing to it, choose participate. If you do not care one way or another, choose indifferent. Please mark one answer.

- **Volleyball**
  - Participate
  - Support
  - Indifferent

- **Weightlifting**
  - Participate
  - Support
  - Indifferent

- **Choir**
  - Participate
  - Support
  - Indifferent

If we have enough supporters and participants, the 4-H club will petition to add the activity or activities to the school.
VITA

Melissa Wade Cater is a native of Central Louisiana. She graduated from Block High School in 1986. Melissa attended Louisiana Tech University, graduating in May 1989, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in fashion merchandising. She became a certified high school business teacher through the alternative teacher certification program at Northwestern State University. She taught home economics, gifted English, and business courses during her six and one-half years in the classroom.

Melissa joined the LSU Agricultural Center as an Extension Associate in June 1996, working with the parenting education program. While working with this program, she oversaw program development and supervision of paraprofessional staff. In January 1997, Melissa began working on her Master’s degree and was subsequently promoted to Assistant Extension Agent in October 1997, working with the 4-H Youth Development Program. Melissa completed her Master of Education in Secondary Education, with a minor in Family and Consumer Sciences, in August 2000 at the University of Louisiana at Monroe.

Melissa’s love of learning led her to continue her education, and she began pursuing her doctorate in 2004 from Louisiana State University. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy will be conferred at the fall commencement ceremony in December 2006.