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Level of youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H youth development program as perceived by State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Agents/Educators

Todd Anthony Tarifa
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, tatarifa@agctr.lsu.edu

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LEVEL OF YOUTH VOICE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
WITHIN THE 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AS PERCEIVED BY STATE
4-H PROGRAM LEADERS, STATE 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SPECIALISTS, AND
4-H AGENTS/EDUCATORS

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 Department of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development

by

Todd A. Tarifa
B. S., Louisiana State University, 1996
M. S., Louisiana State University, 1998
December 2006
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my late Mother, Beverly M. Tarifa, who was taken from our lives much too early. I love you and I miss you with all my heart. You always believed in me and encouraged me to create my own destiny. I know you are an angel by my side, and I hope you are proud. Your spirit has provided me the strength to achieve my goals. You are a great Mother and there is not a day that goes by that I do not wish to hug you once again. You were always there when I needed you, and I know you will continue to watch over our family. I love you Mom.


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Dad, you are great. You have never stopped believing in me and we have gotten through a great deal together. You are a great father and a great friend. Mom, I know you are with me everyday, and I know you are proud and smiling down from heaven. Granddaddy and Dawlin, I am lucky to have such great in-laws, and thank you for all of your support, prayers, and encouragement over the years. You have always treated me like your son, and you have been a like a true Father and Mother to me over the years.

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Abstract

This study aimed at determining the level of inclusiveness of youth voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H youth development program. It described the 4-H program’s position on youth voice among State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H State Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators. The information gathered was utilized in identifying the level of inclusiveness of youth voice in the decision-making process to better understand how to suit youth’s needs, identify promising practices, and barriers.

A factor analysis identified three underlying constructs that represented State 4-H Program Leader’s, 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s, and 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process. They are as follows: Adult Initiated, Youth Involved; Youth Led, Adult Supported; and Youth Involved, Adult Decision-Making.

Some of the findings indicated that as an organization, 4-H, has to gather the emerging research on youth voice and base trainings that specifically address the primary issue of youth voice. Four-H needs to become more directional in its purpose and focus on trainings and issues that will aid youth development professionals in becoming true youth developers that accurately address the needs of youth in our nation. Most interaction with youth within the 4-H program takes place at the county/parish level. It is evident that 4-H needs to include youth voice at the regional and state level to ensure that youth needs are being met at the higher levels within the organization. While aware of emerging research on youth voice, 4-H state faculty, need to value the benefits of this new ideology.
When viewing youth voice inclusion from the standpoint of organizational culture, it was found that as a youth development program, 4-H has a double standard on including youth voice in the decision-making process. The 4-H youth development program can not include them as full partners and let them have little or no choice on how and when they participate. Four-H creates a sense of mistrust with youth, and this type of inconsistency will negatively affect youth voice on all levels. It will take time for the organizational culture to shift the paradigm and recognize and adjust the value of, and respect youth voice in the decision-making process.
Chapter 1
Introduction

Justification/Rationale

Through youth development programs, such as 4-H, young people are provided with opportunities to develop the competencies they need to become successful contributors within their communities (Pittman & Wright, 1991; Politz, 1996). However, to have an exceptional youth development program, youth need to become empowered, make informed decisions, engage in actions based on their informed decision, and feel that they have the ability to make choices that affect their lives (Pittman, 1991).

The Cooperative Extension Service dates back to the Hatch Act of 1887, and the first 4-H club appeared in Iowa as early as 1903 (Hillison, 1996). With 4-H being around for over a century, there is little doubt that 4-H has endurance on its side. However, with the many opportunities that youth development organizations provide youth with today, it is vital that 4-H allows youth to become a larger contributor to the decision-making process to aid in recruiting and retaining young people. This would require a change in the culture within 4-H and a shift in the paradigm of adults controlling the programming within the 4-H program (Hillison, 1996).

The 4-H youth development program originated at the turn of the 20th century because of a vital need to improve life in rural areas. The 4-H program taught youth to "learn by doing," and the program in the traditional early clubs consisted of growing corn, garden planting, soil testing, parliamentary club meetings, and visits to club members' homes (Hillison, 1996).

In the field of youth development, adults commonly organize and implement projects; however, youth rarely get involved in the decision-making process (Kothari, 1996). Youth are perceived as lacking the maturity to effectively contribute to the
program. However, it is critical that youth are included in the design of the program because they understand the needs and desires of their peers and the manner in which they can be reached (Kothari, 1996; Laidlaw Foundation, 2001). In addition, youth gain valuable skills from being included in the decision-making process, while the organization and the community benefit from the programs that the youth create (Kothari, 1996).

There are many reasons why youth-serving organizations, such as 4-H, should consider engaging youth in the decision-making process. The fact that youth are affected by an organization, should give them the right to a voice in how it is run. By enabling youth we are aiding them in developing critical social and leadership skills (Kothari, 1996; Laidlaw Foundation, 2001; Pittman & Wright, 1991). Furthermore, by allowing youth to have a voice, we tap into the unique perspective and ability of youth and the creativity and energy they bring with them to the table. Overall, we are equipping youth with the tools they need to become more active members and citizens in their community (Laidlaw Foundation, 2001).

Adults cannot assume that our approach to planning meets youth’s needs. In many regards the needs and preferences of youth are different than that of adults (Frank, 2006). In fact, there is evidence that conventional planning is failing our young people (Frank, 2006; Meucci & Redmon, 1997). Some researchers indicated that organizations planning their programs based on the desires and preferences of adults, make youth feel disconnected, alienated, unsupported, and unacknowledged by adults within the organization (Newsome & Scarela, 2001).

Over the next 40 years, it is predicted that youth ranging from the ages of 5 to 19 will make-up almost 20% of the United States population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). In addition, the 49 million students enrolled in America’s elementary and high schools in
1999 equaled the all-time high first set in 1970 when their baby boom parents went to school; therefore, the baby boom generation’s (those born between 1946 and 1964) children are comprising the youth population today (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). According to the U.S. Census Bureau of 2000 72.3 million, or 26% of the U.S. population, were under age 18. With the above information and the awareness of the size of today’s youth population, planners in the field of youth development need to include youth voice in the decision-making process. Because youth are the future of our communities and the decisions they make now will affect them and carry over into adulthood, it is critical that they have a voice which allows them to take part in the decision making process that has far-reaching implications for their future (Frank, 2006).

Allowing youth to have a voice in the decision-making process means that a youth-serving organization needs to take youth’s ideas and opinions into consideration and respect what they have to say. In the field of youth development, adults typically create, plan, and implement projects with little or no consideration of involving youth in the process. However, it is critical that youth are included in the program creation, planning and implantation because they know what their peers need and how to reach them successfully. Youth benefit from the learning process of being involved and planning programs, and they develop a sense of ownership and consecutiveness with the organization (Kothari, 1996). It also entails taking risks and working together with youth to accomplish the mission of the organization (Fletcher, 2002). When an organization practices youth voice, it allows opportunities for youth to take on the responsibility of an adult role, which they are getting prepared for later in life. The purpose of engaging and empowering youth should be to teach them to define and communicate concerns of interest to them, and to design, discuss and implement solutions to those concerns (Pittman & Wright, 1991). In addition, by youth having a
voice in the decision-making process, they see themselves as persons who have something of significance to add to the community they live in (Pittman, 2000).

There is a great deal of literature that identifies the needed components to have a successful, vibrant youth development program (Carstarphen, 2001; Checkoway, Figueroa & Richards-Schuster, 2003; Justiniano & Scherer, 2001; Kurkoski, Markendorf & Straw, 1997; Mason & Goll, 2000; Parker, 1998; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Young & Sazama, 1999; Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000). The process of youth development aids youth in meeting the basic development needs and competencies they require to smoothly evolve into adults. In other words, youth development is an effort to promote the positive psychological, emotional, physical and spiritual development of youth to help them move towards adulthood. Youth development is channeling resources that encourage youth development professionals to work with youth to create activities, programs and environments that will enable youth to build confidence and gain critical life skills while meeting their basic human needs (Pittman & Wright, 1991).

The key components of a vibrant youth organization must focus around building youth’s competencies and meeting their needs. The competencies youth development organization must concentrate on are: Health: the knowledge, mind-set and behaviors that will assure one’s future well-being; Social: the ability to work with others, develop and sustain friendships, be empathic, deal with difficult situations, and exercise good judgment; Intellectual: admirable verbal and writing skills, problem-solving skills, and capability to learn and be creative; Vocational: knowledge of existing career options and the steps for obtaining employment. Citizenship: an understanding of one's personal and community history, ethical principles, and aspiration to contribute to the greater good; Mental Health: the ability to develop and preserve a sense of personal well-being.
and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The youth needs that youth development organization must concentrate on are: Safety: feeling that one is physically and psychologically safe; Self-Worth: perception that one is a good person who is valued by self and others; Mastery: perception that one is accomplished, has abilities valued by self and others, and maintains some control over daily events; Autonomy: perception that one is a unique individual with a past, present and future, and that one can be a success in the human race; Belonging: perception that an individual loves and is loved by family and friends, and that as an individual, one is an important part of a larger community; Self-Awareness/Spirituality: perception that one is intimately attached to a larger system that provides meaning and purpose to one’s life (Pittman & Wright, 1991). In order to meet the above components of a vibrant youth development program, youth-serving organizations must include youth in the decision-making process so youth can gain the competencies and meet their needs to become productive adults in the community. If we fail to include youth, how can they gain the experience and life skills they need to be successful in the future?

Society is changing at a rapid pace; therefore, programs that impact today’s youth need to adapt. Once known for “Cows and Cooking,” 4-H has now made its way into urban society (Astroth & Haynes, 2002). According to the National 4-H Headquarters ES 237 4-H Youth Development Statistics Report 2005, just 10% of 4-H members reside on farms compared to 25% of 4-H members that reside in cities larger than 50,000 in population. This shift means that 4-H needs to adjust its programming efforts to meet the needs of a different population of youth than we have had in the past. By not taking into account these changes and overlooking differences in society, it could prove to be terminal for those youth development programs that do not wish or refuse to change. The most efficient and effective way to keep pace with a changing society is to
involve clientele and stakeholders in the decision-making process. In 4-H, the main clientele are youth; therefore, youth need to be involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs. Since, it is through these programs, 4-H youth gain the knowledge and skills that assist them in becoming optimistic, competent, and concerned members of their communities.

An analysis of the inclusion of youth voice in the decision-making processes within 4-H, needs to take place to determine if it truly involves youth voice. Procedures for engagement, suggested settings, length of activities, and age-appropriate activities are all issues that will challenge youth development educators (Checkoway et al., 2003; Justinianno & Scherer, 2001; Kurkoski et al., 1997; Mason & Goll, 2000; Parker, 1998; Pittman & Wright, 1991; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Young & Sazama, 1999; Zeldin et al., 2000). As adults, we could find reasons for why children should participate and many creative and thoughtful ideas for how they might participate. In each endeavor youth organizations reinvent the wheel because of the lack of studies that identify if youth-serving organizations are involving youth voice in the decision-making process. There is a strong need for studies that identify if we are truly including youth in the decision-making process (Frank, 2006; Knowles-Yánez, 2005).

**Problem Statement**

It has been shown that by involving youth in the planning of programs, chances for successful implementation would be improved (Earl & Lee, 1999; Lee & Zimmerman, 1999; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000; Silvestre, Faber, Shankle & Kopelman, 2002). Organizations need to identify what will lead to youth voice being included in the decision-making and what factors inhibit and/or prevent youth voice from being part of the decision-making process.
The issue is, does the 4-H youth development program actively include youth voice in the decision-making process? Is 4-H including youth voice in the decision-making process at the county/parish, state level, and national level? Are youth given the opportunity to freely express their views, concerns, and vision when it concerns the future endeavors of 4-H? Is the organizational culture of 4-H allowing youth to have an active voice and to fully participate in the decision-making process?

Other studies have shown that youth feel resentful if their views are not sought or seriously considered, and they find it difficult to take ownership of decisions when they have no part in the decision-making process (Newsome & Scarela, 2001). However, with a limited number of studies that discussed the effects of youth voice (Fielding, 2001; Franklin, 1995; Hart, 1992; Mitra, 2003; SooHoo, 1993; Westhorp, 1987), the subject requires much more empirical research and theoretical framing. This study will provide data on youth voice efforts, advances and barriers. It will offer much-needed data on the level of youth voice that professionals allow in the decision-making process within the 4-H program on the county/parish, state and national level.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the perception of inclusiveness of youth voice in the decision-making process as viewed by each State 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and selected 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States.

**Objectives**

The particular objectives devised to direct the researcher include:
1. The first objective was to describe State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States on the following selected demographic characteristics:
   a. Gender;
   b. Highest level of education;
   c. Ethnicity;
   d. Volunteer service in other youth organizations;
   e. Years served in current position;
   f. Number of trainings on youth voice; and
   g. Number of hours of training on youth voice.

2. The second objective was to determine the perception of State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program.

3. The third objective was to determine the perceptions of State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States regarding their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process.

4. The fourth objective was to determine the perceptions of State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States regarding the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process.

5. The fifth objective was to determine the perceptions of State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth
Agents/Educators throughout the United States regarding their views on factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process.

6. The sixth objective was to determine if underlying constructs exist within the personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process of State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Agents/Educators.

7. The seventh objective was to determine if a relationship exists between perceived personal views of youth voice in the decision-making process by State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators and the following variables:
   a. Years served in current position;
   b. Number of trainings on youth voice; and
   c. Number of hours of training on youth voice.

8. The eighth objective was to gather information on obstacles that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H youth development program utilizing open ended questions.

**Significance of the Study**

This study will allow the researcher to determine the level of inclusiveness of youth voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H youth development program. This study will describe the 4-H program’s position on youth voice among State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H State Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators. The information gathered will be used to identify the level of inclusiveness of youth voice in the decision-making process to better understand how to suit youth's needs and identify promising practices and barriers.
Definition of Terms

The following definition of terms are defined to assist in the understanding of the study.

**Youth Voice**: is the involvement of youth in policy and program creation, development, implementation, and evaluation. Youth voice is when youth have a say and are involved in decisions about what is incorporated in the organization (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002).

**Youth Development**: A process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Positive youth development addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models which focus solely on youth problems. (National Collaboration for Youth, 2001)

**Youth Development Organization**: An organization with a major emphasis on providing youth development programs that provide opportunities targeted at helping youth develop positively (Youth Development Community Block Grant, 1995).

**Youth Development Programs**: Prepare young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood (through a structured, progressive series of activities and experiences) by developing social, emotional, ethical, physical, and cognitive competencies. Youth development programs address the broader developmental assets all children and youth need (such as caring relationships, safe places and activities, health and mental health, marketable skills, and opportunities for service and civic participation), in contrast to deficit-based approaches which focus solely on youth problems (National Youth Development Information Center, 2000).

**4-H**: The 4-H program combines the cooperative efforts of nearly 7 million youth; 572,834 volunteer leaders; about 3,600 FTEs of professional staff; 105 state land-grant
universities; state and local governments; private-sector partners; state and local 4-H foundations; the National 4-H Council; and the National 4-H Headquarters in the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Annual 4-H Youth Enrollment Report 2003 Fiscal Year, 2003). Four-H programs are conducted in 3,051 counties of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, Micronesia, and Northern Mariana Islands. 4-H alumni now total about 60 million. 4-H-type programs are truly international, with 4 million youth in more than 60 countries in similar programs (Annual 4-H Youth Enrollment Report 2003 Fiscal Year, 2003).

**4-H Club:** Typically led by an adult, a 4-H club is an organized group of youth, led by an adult, with a planned program that is carried out throughout all or most of the year. Four-H clubs may meet in any location and typically have elected officers and a set of rules approved by the membership to govern the club (Annual 4-H Youth Enrollment Report 2003 Fiscal Year, 2003).

**State 4-H Program Leader:** An individual who provides administrative leadership to the entire state 4-H program

**4-H Youth Development Specialists:** An individual who provides leadership to specific statewide/regional 4-H programs and subject matter areas in order to support the county/parish and state 4-H program.

**4-H Agent/Educator:** An individual who provides leadership to county/parish or multi-county/parish 4-H programs and subject matter areas in order to support the county/parish 4-H program.

**Theoretical Base for the Study**

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 (2000) identified several benefits of allowing youth in the decision-making process to
have a voice. By youth actively contributing, it allows them to articulate what is important to them, to own decisions that are made about their lives, and to increase their self confidence and skills. Empowering youth provides adults with the opportunity to show respect for youth’s views; therefore, creating a channel for the wider participation of all parties involved. By allowing youth to have a voice, organizations can improve the quality of decision-making and become more efficient and effective in meeting the needs of youth (Formage, 2001). Youth that have a voice directly benefit as an outcome of the educational and networking facets of planning processes; in addition, youth are grateful for having a voice in public affairs and feel more connected to their community and the environment (Frank, 2006). Communities, where both youth and adults have a voice in the decision-making process, benefit directly from the project outcomes because youth are viewed as resources; in addition, the larger community benefits ultimately from the social learning that transpires. Youth voice enhances their civic capabilities, and adults achieve a better understanding of youth, and the position of youth within the community is advanced (Frank, 2006). With all the distracters youth face in the present day, such as, technology, poverty, politics, drugs and increasing violence, youth development organizations can limit the negative influences by getting youth involved and allow them to have a voice in the decision-making process (Brendtro, Brokenie, & Van Bockern, 1990; Clarke, & Cornish, 1978; Cooper, Altman, Brown, & Czechowicz, 1983; Friedman & Beschner, 1985). Undoubtedly, the best way to get youth involved is including them in the decision-making process.

The size of the youth population and the extent of their feelings of social seclusion are two very good reasons for youth development organizations to include youth voice in the decision-making process (Frank, 2006). Since youth rapidly develop physically, mentally, and in a social context, they need to be included in the decisions
that concern and shape the future of their communities (Lennard & Lennard, 2000).

Planning has far-reaching implications for youth because they are the generation that will experience the results of the decisions the longest. The impending benefits affect the youth that participate, their communities, and society at large. Of course, some benefits would be immediately noticeable and others accrue and emerge in the fullness of time (Checkoway et al., 2003; Hart, 1997).

As a community-based youth development organization, it is critical to the future and success of 4-H that we, as an organization, truly listen to and serve youth by including them in the decision-making process. The question is, are we including youth in the decision-making process? Are we practicing youth voice at the state and county/parish level? According to the Annual 4-H Youth Development Enrollment Report for 2003 Fiscal Year, there are 7,090,920 youth between kindergarten and 12th grade that participated in 4-H programs throughout the United States (Annual 4-H Youth Development Enrollment Report 2003). Since the 4-H program’s consumers are all clearly youth-based, shouldn’t 4-H be including youth in its program planning and implementation? Youth within the 4-H program need to have a part, a voice in the decision-making process within 4-H for them to want to fully participate.

Within the framework of this research, youth voice is the concept that will be examined to shed light on the effective practices and barriers by professionals that affect the engagement of young people and include or exclude them in the decision-making process. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the level of youth voice being practiced by 4-H professionals on the county/parish, state and national level; in addition, barriers that limit youth participation and the promising practices that encourage youth voice will be identified.
Youth voice is the involvement of young people in policy and program development, in having a voice and being involved in decisions about what is incorporated in the program. A program should recognize positive youth participation practice as the nurturing, valuing and respect of young people and their ability to contribute meaningfully to issues and decisions that affect their lives (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002). Studies have repeatedly shown that informative and educational programs that lecture youth are ineffective (Hair, Jager & Garrett, 2002; Redd, Brooks & McGarvey, 2002; Zaff & Calkins, 2001; Zaff & Michelsen, 2001). One explanation for the failures of these programs may be that these programs do not engage and invest youth in the decision-making process. Without a doubt, those programs that build relationships and effectively engage youth in the decision-making process provide well planned and structured programs that promote positive youth development (Hair et al., 2002; Manlove, Terry-Humen, Papillo, Franzetta, Wereiams, & Ryan, 2002; Redd et al., 2002; Zaff & Calkins, 2001; Zaff & Michelsen, 2001). The value of engaging youth in the decision-making process makes theoretical and practical sense. Larson (2000) has examined what makes a program stimulating for youth. He found that activities that are enjoyable and necessitate concentration are the most engaging. In his work he identified that young people develop initiative, learn teamwork, become empowered, and gain responsibility through experiences in youth programs. He also examined changes whereby youth developed a multicultural orientation and build connections to adult worlds. The most engaging activities, therefore, tend to be those where youth face challenges and take initiative. Youth development programs must aid young people in developing their sense of voice that they need to face challenges in order to prepare them to be successful in today's fast changing world (Larson, 2000).
It has been shown by involving youth in the planning of programs, chances for successful implementation would be improved (Earl & Lee, 1999; Lee & Zimmerman, 1999; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000; Silvestre et al., 2002). According to the National 4-H Impact Study (2001), even though active youth were involved in the decision-making process, those same youth thought it was still worthwhile to involve non-active youth in the decision-making process. In a study conducted by Tassin (2005), it was found that Louisiana parish 4-H advisory committee members felt that parish 4-H Agents have the greatest influence on parish 4-H program development. Youth need to be in partnership with 4-H Agents in developing programs. This is a potential problem in program development. If there were more youth involvement in the advisory process on the local, state and national levels, it could result in the development of programs based on youth needs as seen by youth.

The Convention on the Rights of a Child (2000) identified child participation as one of its embracing strategies in the following terms: “Children were be involved in making decisions and in the organization and management of activities affecting their lives, and were not be treated just as passive beneficiaries or recipients of services” (p. 9).

Furthermore, when Shier (2001) referred to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, it was noted that there are some basic principles that aid in the successful inclusion of youth in the decision-making process. They are as follows: youth have the right to be included in decision-making regardless of age or understanding; children and young people have a right to express themselves freely; children and young people often require support to ensure they have the confidence and information to express their views and influence decision-making; individual adults,
and organizations run by adults, need to be prepared to change the way that decisions are made to ensure youth have effective participation and influence.

Youth feel resentful that their views are not sought or seriously considered, and they find it difficult to take ownership of decisions when they have no part in the decision-making process (Newsome & Scarela, 2001). Organizations can contribute to the positive development of youth by creating opportunities for young people to influence, enlighten, and design a program. By allowing youth to have a voice in the decision-making process, it aids in ensuring that an organization’s guiding principles, services and programs meet their needs and desires. Both adults and youth can develop new skills and gain knowledge through youth’s participation in the decision-making process (Pittman & Wright, 1991).

Assumptions

1. The instrument used in this study will measure youth voice in the decision-making process as perceived by the State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Specialist, and 4-H Agents/Educators.

2. The study only focuses on youth voice in the decision-making process as it pertains to 4-H. The results cannot be generalized to all youth organizations.

Limitations

1. This study was delimited to include only those individuals who are part of the 4-H program. The participants volunteered to participate in the study.

2. The study was limited to the State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Specialists, and 4-H Agents/Educators.
Positive youth development is an approach, a way to think about young people that focuses on their assets (capacities, strengths, and developmental needs) and not solely on their deficits (risks, negative behaviors, and problems). This approach requires a shifting of attention away from a crisis frame of mind that concentrates on stopping problems to developing strategies that increase youth's exposure to beneficial relationships and constructive activities that promote healthy, responsible, and empathetic choices. It is vital that youth have diverse opportunities for learning, receiving guidance, discovering limits, learning consequences, developing self-esteem and self-control, serving others, and improving their communities (ACT for Youth Downstate Center for Excellence, ACT for Youth Upstate Center of Excellence (2003).

The idiom youth development is applied in several different ways. It refers to the natural process of development in youth, principles and practices. The most frequently utilized idiom is that youth development is a natural process, whereby youth grow to understand and act on their surrounding environment. In optimal development, youth grow to lead healthy, productive and satisfying lives. The term youth development mainly focuses on the second decade of life. The principle of youth development refers to a philosophy or approach that encourages active support for a young person on the individual, organizations, and institutions on the community level. This philosophy is a commitment to allowing, encouraging and enabling youth to succeed, thrive and flourish into adulthood. The practice of youth development is exactly what it implies; it is the planned practices or activities that allow one to put into practice the principles of youth development which in turn allow our youth to grow naturally. These practices take place
in our homes, schools, neighborhoods, youth organizations, churches and a whole host of other places (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2005).

The field of youth development was created and shaped to describe and illustrate why a change in approach has been supported for how youth topics and concerns are addressed in the United States. In the 20th century, American society assumed an increased sense of responsibility for the care of its young people when it was discovered that adolescence is a special stage in a person’s life during which young people should be given support to learn and develop. An increase in juvenile crime and anxiety about troubled youth led to the beginning of major federal funding initiatives to address these issues in the 1950s. These trends accelerated during the 1960s, as did national rates of poverty, divorce, out-of-wedlock births, family mobility, and single parenthood. These changes in socialization forces, which in the past were responsible for nurturing the development of children — especially in the family — required a nation to reevaluate and rethink their school and community practices to support the family in its mission to raise successful children (Hernandez; 1995, Weissberg & Greenberg, 1997).

At the outset, involvement to support parents and their children were predominantly responses to existing crises. Youth development mainly focused on reducing things such as juvenile crime, or transforming and improving character in young people. As the country observed young people’s trials and tribulations become more widespread, involvement and treatment for a broad range of specific problems emerged. Within the last three decades, both services and guidelines have been designed to decrease the troubled behavior of youth. The value of these approaches has been examined at length in an array of research studies on substance abuse, conduct disorders, delinquent and antisocial behavior, academic failure, and teenage

Prevention approaches began to emerge two decades ago, and these efforts concentrated on supporting youth prior to problem behaviors emerging. More and more, researchers and practitioners wanted to address the circumstances (families, schools, communities, peer groups) of a child's life. However, many of the early prevention programs were not founded on theory and research on child development or the factors influencing it. Prevention strategies evolved as programs were evaluated, for the most part because some approaches failed to show positive impact on such issues as youth drug use, pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, or delinquent behavior (Kirby, Harvey, Claussenius & Novar, 1989; Malvin, Moskowitz, Schaeffer & Schaps, 1984; Mitchell et al., 1997; Snow, Gilchrist & Schinke, 1985).

A turning point in the field transpired as researchers and practitioners began to put together information from longitudinal studies that identified significant predictors of problem behaviors in young people. Therefore, the subsequent generation of prevention efforts sought to use this information on predictors to disrupt and stop the development leading to particular problem behaviors (Ellickson & Bell, 1990; Flay et al., 1988; Pentz et al., 1989).

In the 1980s, the principal prevention models were those that examined a multitude of problem behaviors within a single child, and the common predictors of multiple problem behaviors. Further, many activists wanted to focus on factors that promote positive youth development, in addition to concentrating on problem prevention. During this time, concerns expressed by both practitioners and researchers aided in expanding the purpose of prevention programs to incorporate components designed to promote positive youth development. Agreement began to develop that a
successful shift to adulthood involves more than evading drugs, violence, or precocious sexual activity. It is the promotion of the child's social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development that is the key to preventing problem behaviors (W.T. Grant Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence, 1992).

During the 1990s, practitioners, policy makers, and prevention researchers accepted a broader focus for tackling youth issues (Pittman, O’Brien & Kimball, 1993). Today, there is a mounting body of research on the developmental etiology of problem and positive behaviors in youth (Hawkins, Catalano & Miller, 1992; Kellam & Rebok, 1992; Newcomb, Maddahian, & Bentler, 1986), and complete outcome reports from accurate randomized and non-randomized controlled trials of positive youth development programs (Greenberg & Kusche, 1997; Hahn, Leavitt & Aaron, 1994).

In a recent article by Park (2004), she explored the role of subjective well-being of a child and its link to positive youth development. She found that most studies on life satisfaction among youth looked at variables individually, leaving unanswered issues of chronological priority and importance. For instance, personality characteristics, positive life events, and self-esteem are all related to life satisfaction; however, their comparative importance is mostly unidentified. Recent studies with adults provided some insights on this issue. Participating in social activities makes people happier in spite of their personality type (Fleeson, Malanos, & Achille, 2002). Even individuals who were reserved were happiest when they acted in an outgoing and social way. This implies that behavior can override personality. Consequently, creating programs and providing more opportunities where youth can be socially active participants and share their voice might promote the psychological well-being of all youth. Life satisfaction and positive affect may safeguard against the negative effects of stressful life events.
According to Park (2004), making youth happy is not just about making the child feel good. It is about making them believe that their lives are good. When we converse about positive youth development, the issue of the subjective well-being of the child warrants special attention as an indicator, as a predictor, and ultimately as a positive outcome.

Development is a process not a goal – it is the ongoing growth process in which all youth are engaged in trying to meet their fundamental personal and social needs to feel cared for, safe, respected, valuable, and be morally grounded. Additionally, youth development aids young people in building needed life skills and competencies that permit them to function and contribute to society in their daily lives (Pittman et al., 1993).

Individuals develop continuously throughout their lifetime; thus, developing youth is an enduring process and a journey that is overarching. Youth development involuntarily involves all of the individuals around a young person, be it their family, teachers, peers, or community. A young person may not be able to gain the life skills and competencies they need to feel secure, cared for, respected, and mentally grounded unless their community provides them with the support and opportunities they need throughout their adolescence (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004).

Youth development is the normal process of developing a young person’s capacities. This development occurs through a young person’s every day occurrences and experiences. With organizations such as 4-H, positive youth development takes place intentionally; it is a course of action that encourages and supports positive results for youth. The 4-H youth development program provides youth the needed opportunities, social interaction, and support to aid them in acquiring the life skills that
are essential for them to meet the challenges of both their teenage years and adulthood (Annual 4-H Youth Development Enrollment Report 2003).

Through the process of youth development, young people become more focused on achievement and goals, work in the direction of those goals, and avoid behaviors that would prevent the attainment of those goals (Hirschi, 1969). Research in youth development programs has identified the following key elements: a comprehensive strategy with clear mission and goals, committed, caring, professional leadership, youth-centered activities in youth-accessible facilities, culturally competent and diverse programs, youth ownership and involvement, and a positive focus including all youth (National Youth Development Information Center, 2000).

Additional research in youth development programs has identified the following key fundamentals to a successful program: an all-inclusive strategy with an understandable mission and goals, dedicated and compassionate professional leadership, activities centered around youth in accessible facilities, diverse programs, youth ownership and involvement, and an optimistic focus including all youth (National Youth Development Information Center, 2000).

According to Mahomad and Wheeler (2001), the process frequently called youth development is one that young people in America pass through on their way to adulthood. Hopefully, during adolescence we surround young people with support from their peers, families, caring adults, schools, and community institutions; in so doing, we increase the probability of positive youth development and enhance life outcomes. However, even under the best circumstances, teenage years are often a time of confusion and instability. It is a stage of quick development physically, psychologically, and socially. At the same time, young people are confronted with issues of identity and
sense of worth in addition to acquiring a wide-ranging set of skills needed to function as an adult in society.

Youth development is more than developing one child at a time; it is inclusive, internally coherent, externally connected to other systems and enduring. A system that is inclusive is large enough to accommodate all those who are eligible. A system that is internally coherent provides participants the information they need to move through it, and what a participant does in one part counts in the next part. A system that is externally connected is linked to other systems, which allows youth to utilize multiple venues to develop. Finally, a system that endures is one that is not dependent on soft money to survive (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004).

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), the theory of human development is generally promoted by engagement in activities that are regular and continuing and that are challenging in the logic of increasing in complexity and difficulty as individuals become more competent over time. In addition, youth must have relationships with others that are enduring and mutual. Both relationships with adults and peers are important to the development of youth.

**Youth Development Programs**

A youth development organization is a community based nonprofit youth-serving organization with a chief emphasis on providing youth development programs (Youth Development Block Grant, 1995). Whereas, a youth-serving organization is an organization with a main focus on providing youth development that usually focus one or a few outcomes such as, health and fitness, educational, substance abuse prevention, child welfare, child protective, psychological, parenting, vocational and training, teen pregnancy, rehabilitative, or residential services to youth (Youth Development Block Grant, 1995).
A youth development organization prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a well conceived, progressive sequence of activities and experiences which help them obtain social, emotional, ethical, physical, and cognitive competencies. They address the broader developmental assets all youth need, such as: caring relationships, safe places and activities, both health and mental health, life skills, and opportunities for community service and civic participation. This is different than the shortfall approach of youth-serving organizations that focus solely on youth troubles and tribulations (National Youth Development Information Center, 2000).

Community-based youth development programs, such as 4-H, apply theory and experimental evidence indicating that such a program is essential to the positive development of young people through involvement designed to help youth build individual fortitude. In theory, a young person who participates in a youth development program displays the following attributes: social competence; problem-solving skills; a sense of self-identity, which gives them the ability to act independently and to exercise control over their environment; and, a sense of purpose (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1995).

Youth development programs seek to organize communities to create positive goals and outcomes for all youth, not just to stop young people from engaging in risky behaviors. These programs believe that being problem-free is not the same as being fully prepared. The most successful programs are youth centered: staff and activities engage youth’s diverse talents, skills, and interests, building on their strengths and involving them in planning and decision-making (Cashmore, 2003; Smart, Neale & Wade, 2001; Smith, Taylor & Tapp, 2003). These programs are also knowledge based: building life skills and activities show youth that “learning” is a reason to be involved. Whether clubs, arts, or community service, provide opportunities to connect with a
extensive group of adult and peer mentors. In addition, youth development programs are centered around caring and compassion: providing family-like environments where youth can feel safe to build trusting relationships (National Youth Development Information Center, 2000).

The goal of youth development programs is to aid young people in gaining life skills needed to effectively deal with the challenges of early life and prepare them for the responsibilities of being contributing, productive and caring parents, workers, and citizens. These programs also: support the role of families in positive youth development, promote increased community coordination and collaboration, develop or increase community-based youth development programs in response to local needs, and support and encourage community partnerships for youth. Youth development programs should have measurable outcomes that include changes in the necessary competencies of individual participants in programs, which reduce high-risk behaviors, increase protective factors, and reduce risk factors. Overall, these programs are generally defined by their nonacademic activities, which are designed and intended to help youth develop social, moral, emotional, physical, and cognitive competencies using active, experiential learning methods (Youth Development Community Block Grant, 1995).

Youth development programs are designed to meet personal and social assets needed for young people to successfully participate in adult life. They assist young people in developing the following personal and assets identified by the National Research Council (2002): Physical Development – health habits, physical development; Intellectual Development – life skills, vocational skills, critical-thinking skills, and appreciation for diversity; Psychological and Emotional Development – coping skills, self-esteem, resolution skills, optimism, moral character, and a sense of a larger
purpose in life; Social Development – good relationships with parents, peers and other adults, sense of social place, attachment to conventional institutions (schools, church, youth programs), and a commitment to civic engagement. Through youth development programs, youth gain the above personal and social assets that were enable them to grow, develop life skills and become strong, responsible and caring citizens within their communities (National Research Council, 2002).

Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (1998) created an operational definition of positive youth development through a thorough literature review and a consensus meeting of leading scientists. According to their definition, a positive youth development program should seek to achieve one or more of the following objectives: promote bonding, foster resilience; promote social competence; promote emotional competence; promote cognitive competence; promote behavioral competence; promote moral competence; foster self-determination; foster spirituality; foster self-efficacy; foster clear and positive identity; foster belief in the future; provide recognition for positive behavior; provide opportunities for pro-social involvement; and/or, foster pro-social norms.

*Promoting bonding* reaches far beyond the family. How a youth establishes early bonds with adults will directly affect the way in which youth later bond with their peers, school, and community. The quality of the bonds that youth develop with others is essential to the positive development into a healthy adult. The positive youth development construct of *competence* includes five elements, including social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and moral competencies. *Self-determination* is the capability to think for oneself and to take action constantly with that consideration. Fetterman, Kaftarian, and Wandersman (1996) defined self-determination as the ability to chart one’s own course. The construct of spirituality is associated in some research...
with the development of a youth’s moral reasoning, moral commitment, or belief in the
moral order (Stark & Bainbridge, 1980). Self-efficacy is the awareness that one can
achieve desired goals through one’s own actions. Clear and positive identity is the
internal organization of a logical sense of self. This construct is linked with the theory of
identity development emerging from how youth establish their identities across different
social environments, cultural groups, and genders. Belief in the future is the
internalization of hope and optimism about possible outcomes. This construct is linked
to studies on long-range goal setting, belief in higher education, and beliefs that support
employment or work values. Recognition for positive involvement is the encouraging
response of those in the community environment to desired and preferred behavior by
youth.

Behavior is in big part an outcome of the reinforcement or lack of reinforcement
that follows action. Behavior is strengthened through reward and evasion of punishment
(Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, & Radoevich, 1979). Opportunity for pro-social
involvement is the presentation of events and activities across diverse social
environments that encourage and promote youth to participate in pro-social actions.
Providing pro-social activities in after-school hours has been the focus of much
discussion and study (Pittman, 1991). For a child to obtain vital interpersonal skills in
early development, positive opportunities for interaction and participation have got to be
available (Hawkins, Catalano, Jones, & Fine, 1987). Programs that foster pro-social
norms strive to encourage youth to adopt healthy attitudes and clear values for behavior
through a variety of approaches. These may be comprised of providing youth with data
about the small numbers of people their age who utilize illegal drugs, so that they
decide that they do not need to use drugs to be normal (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller
One of the most complicated endeavors when examining a youth development program is to accurately identify its effects on young people. Sometimes, the accomplishments and achievements of youth development programs are overlooked. Naturally, the development of life skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, leadership, responsibility, and decision-making, are not noticeable immediately. In fact, it has been shown that many times the impacts of a youth development program are not recognized and appreciated until a young person has finished the program. In a study that measured college freshman performance, (Garton, Kitchel, & Ball, 2005) researchers gathered data on students who had been involved in 4-H and FFA and compared them to those who had not been involved as youth. The data signified that students who were involved in 4-H and FFA demonstrated significant differences in performance measures that were linked to cumulative GPA. Some of the findings were that youth who were involved in 4-H and FFA scored an average of two points higher on the ACT. In addition, the study showed that youth who were involved in 4-H and FFA had a significant relationship with continuing their education through their sophomore year of college. Therefore, it was concluded that prior participation in 4-H and FFA had a positive influence on performance and retention of youth within the College of Agriculture. Youth development programs, such as 4-H, can offer a wide range of developmentally flourishing environments where relationships are created, intellectual and personal growth are stimulated, and learning can safely take place. This approach does afford youth the opportunities to associate and interact with peers, to obtain life skills and develop their talents, to give back to the community, and to increase their self-esteem and confidence. Youth development programs are all-inclusive because they cultivate all aspects of a young person’s development - physical, social, moral, and emotional (Youth Development Community Block Grant, 1995).
What is Voice?

Each one of us has an authentic voice which sets us apart from every living individual despite the number of common or mutual experiences we have with others. It is not a carbon copy of someone else’s way of speaking or of observing the world. However, voice has not been generally understood as that which enabled others who have been silenced to speak. Voice has not been the uncontested signifier of inclusion, and silence has not been the indicator of the oppressed. Historically, very different meanings have resided in the application of voice as a political strategy. This suggests that the classification of inclusion and exclusion are not analogous with vocal expression and silence, respectively (Baker, 1999).

How can we include and embrace everybody’s voice equally in the structuring of programs? In terms of integrating or understanding an array of voices into a pre-existing program, there is no agreement to what this thing called “voice” is. Voice, as a social science concept, has been woven into the politics of difference and noticed across forms of expression; for example, spoken, written, and so on; therefore, it has not been exclusively restricted to physiological inscriptions of vocal or verbal utterances. Voice is not just articulations that are capable of being heard, it is not oversimplified representation or inclusion, and it is not a function of taking into account only one side (Baker, 1999).

Youth Voice

A main impasse for study on the phenomenon, which in this study is referred to as youth voice, has been the lack of a clearly-defined term. There are many catch phrases that have arisen from youth being included in the decision-making process. They included: youth participation, youth action, youth inclusion, youth infusion, youth on board, youth as resources, youth governance, youth engagement, youth organizing,
youth-as-partners, and, of course, youth voice (Carstarphen, 2001; Checkoway, 1996; Education Commission of the States (ECS), 2001; Forum for Youth Investment & International Youth Foundation, 2000; Irby, Ferber, & Pittman, 2001; Justinianno & Scherer, 2001; Zeldin et al., 2000). The above terminology describes forms of youth participation and their contributions within an organization. The definitions of the above expressions share the characteristic of youth involvement in the decision-making process. The term youth voice has gained increasing credibility as a concept that describes the many ways in which youth might have the opportunity to actively participate in having a voice in the decisions that shape their lives (Fielding, 2001; Levin, 1999). In addition, existing research implies that youth voice serves as a catalyst for change in schools, including helping to improve teaching, curriculum, and adult-youth relationships (Fielding, 2001; Mitra, 2003; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000).

Youth voice concerns taking into consideration the opinions and ideas of youth with respect to what they have to say. It also involves taking risks and working together to accomplish the mission of the organization being served (Fletcher, 2002). When organizations practice youth voice, they give ample opportunities for youth to try out the adult roles in which they are getting prepared for later in life. The general goal of engaging and empowering youth should be to teach youth to define and express concerns of interest to them, and to design, discuss and put into action solutions to those concerns (Pittman & Wright, 1991). By youth participating in the decision-making process, they see themselves as persons who have something of significance to add to the world they live in (Pittman, 2000).

The concept of youth voice has surfaced as an approach for improving the success of community and school reform efforts, and so far, few studies have examined this concept either in theory or empirically (Felix, 2003). However, youth advocates in
the decades between 1960 and 2000 have contributed to a tremendous shift in youth policies and practices in America. Through this shift in paradigm, there has been a growing awareness of the combined efforts of youth, families, and community stakeholders working together to create, plan and implement projects together (Pittman, 2000). Thus, youth are redefining their role in the decision-making process and the efforts that affect or change the communities in which they live (Pittman & Wright, 1991). Today’s youth seek to have their views, beliefs, concerns, and input respected at levels of the decision-making process that not only affects them as individuals, but also affects the schools they attend, organizations they stand by, and communities they develop in (Felix, 2003).

An example of youth voice is demonstrated through the HOME organization, which was established by the Alameda School Superintendent in 1996 to encourage youth to become effective citizens within their community. At HOME youth create, propose, put into action, and evaluate project ideas and participate in building the governance and structure of the organization. HOMES’ focus on community projects that are designed and carried out by youth helped established an environment where positive youth development is endorsed. Even though the projects change from year to year, the commitment to involving youth remains constant. For example, an idea that was initially generated by two young people to build the Cityview Skate Park evolved to include many of the youth at HOME, and youth were allowed to participate in ways that built on their individual talents and abilities (National Research Council, 2002).

HOME’s organizational structure allows youth to have an authentic opportunity to share their perspective through structured activities. In addition, adults look to youth for advice, and pay attention and respond in genuine ways to the issues and ideas that
youth create. This youth centeredness is the answer to the nurturing relationship that developed between youth and adults (National Research Council, 2002).

Adults in organizations such as HOME actively listen to what youth have to say within the organization and in its programs. This type of commitment and trust allows youth to share their concerns and fosters a stronger community as a result. Youth development does not always consider youth voice; however, examples such as HOME imply that youth voice needs to be included as a central part of the effort to connect with youth and to create and build programs that youth find appealing and merits their time (National Research Council, 2002).

Young people often speak their minds and bring a fresh perspective to organizational decision-making. According to Zeldin et al. (2000) adults noted how youth change the content and quality of discussion and procedure on governing boards, commissions, and other planning bodies. Young people bring direct knowledge of youth that simply is not accessible to adults, such as their interests, concerns, fears, passions. They bring connections to other youth and can influence the participation of their peers.

**What is Participation?**

According to Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, and Sinclair (2003), participation is used to describe many different processes and covers a wide continuum of involvement which is a multi-layered concept. Boyden and Ennew (1997) stated that the level and nature of participation can vary. There are different interpretations of the term participation; for instance, it can simply mean taking part, being present, being involved or consulted. On the other hand, participation can represent a transfer of power so that participants’ visions influence the decisions in an organization.

Numerous researchers have developed models to aid in illustrating what participation is. Most of these models, which will be discussed later in further detail,
generally make a ranking characteristic between levels of participation according to the amount of power that is shared or shifted between parties. For instance, Arnstein (1969) developed the ladder of participation relative to citizen involvement in community development. Hart (1992) adapted Airstein’s ladder for youth participation. Since Hart, numerous similar models have pursued (Franklin, 1995; Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002). Another model of youth participation was created by Westhorp (1987). This model is based on youth involvement and is integrated into six factors on a continuum. In 2003, Kirby et al. developed a nonhierarchical model of participation. The difference between Kirby’s model as compared to those that preceded it, is that no one level is assumed to be better than another. As an alternative to ranking, the degree of participation will be determined according to the circumstances in Kirby’s model. Nevertheless, all of the above mentioned models emphasize the need to comprehend the term participation.

It is obvious that over the past decade there have been key findings that have changed our understanding of and the way we think about children, and this has led to a larger and more open acceptance of young person’s right to be included in the decision-making process on issues that directly effect them and their community (Kirby et al., 2003). Youth-serving organizations have developed many different and innovative ways of including youth in the decision-making process (Kirby et al., 2003; Kothari, 1996); however, there is still inadequate documented evidence of the impact of participation in terms of significant changes (Kirby et al., 2003).

In a case study of 29 youth-serving organizations, Kirby et al. (2003) identified three different cultures of participation. The three cultures are: Consultation-focused organizations: this culture consults youth to inform them of services, policy and product development; Participation-focused organizations: this culture involves youth in making decisions within participation activities that are time bound or context specific. Often a
small population of the youth are involved rather than including all the youth involved in the organization; in Child/youth-focused organizations, youth’s participation is vital and essential to the organizations’ practice, and they establish an atmosphere in which it is understood that all youth were be listened to and included in all decisions that affect their lives. The three cultures are non-hierarchical, as each one can be appropriate within different settings.

**Youth Participation Models**

Different levels of youth engagement have been described in the literature (Franklin, 1995; Hart 1992; Westhorp, 1987). Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation was the first participation model of its type, was adapted as a method for defining the level of youth of participation in programs. Arnstein (1969) presented participation in eight broad categories or levels. Her “ladder” is made up of eight rungs, and each individual rung represent the degree of citizen decision-making authority relative to the number of United States federal social programs of the time. The rungs are positioned at an increasing level of power from the bottom to the top of the ladder. The rungs begin with the weakest being 1) Manipulation; and moving upward to 2) Therapy; 3) Informing; 4) Consultation; 5) Placation; 6) Partnership; 7) Delegated Power; to 8) Citizen Control at the pinnacle. The eight categories of power can be separated into three different groups. The first being nonparticipation, which comprises rungs one and two, where the real objective is not to permit people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable power holders to teach or cure the participants. The second group of rungs, including rungs three, four and five, depicts unstable degrees of tokenism where citizens are allowed to have a voice, but are not granted the power to make sure their views are heard. With an increase in power, with every step up the ladder, the degree of decision-making power is transmitted from the
people who hold the power (government) to the citizens; in turn, this provides an
opportunity for compromise and resolution in the decision-making power (Arnstein,
1969).

Hart (1992) followed Arnstein’s proposed concept of participation with his own
ladder of participation. Hart’s adaptation of Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation is
definitely of interest, since it is the participation model chosen for literature such as
Ireland’s National Children's Strategy (2000) and London’s Empowering Children and
Young People (Treseder, 997).

![Rung 8: Young people & adults share decision-making
Rung 7: Young people lead & initiate action
Rung 6: Adult-initiated, shared decisions
with young people
Rung 5: Young people consulted and informed
Rung 4: Young people assigned and informed
Rung 3: Young people tokenized*
Rung 2: Young people are decoration*
Rung 1: Young people are manipulated*

* The last three rungs represent non-participation

Figure 1. Roger Hart’s Ladder of Youth Participation (adapted from The Freechild
Project)

Hart (1992) described participation as a method of sharing decisions that affect
one’s life and the community in which one lives. It is the means by which democracy is
built, and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Hart
declared that participation is the basic right of citizenship.

Decision-making is the key element of Hart’s ladder of participation. Hart’s ladder
of participation includes levels of a child’s involvement ranging from nonparticipation to
full participation. In his model, he identifies eight levels of participation. Based on this model, it is evident that Hart viewed that shared decision-making is beneficial to both young people and adults. Hart believed that young people are empowered when they are making decisions without being controlled by adults. However, this doesn't mean that adults are excluded, but their roles are reduced to that of support and encouragement (Hart, 1992).

The first three steps in the ladder represent nonparticipation. The first step in the ladder involves the Manipulation of youth. This step consists of children being consulted but given no feedback on the use of the ideas they put forth. This leaves youth with no appreciation of the issues and hence, they do not understand how their actions are affecting their community. The second step in the ladder is Decoration. In this step, youth are used as a diversion through performance; thus, providing visual evidence that they are involved in the service or project. The third step and final level in nonparticipation is Tokenism. This is when children are given a voice, invited to serve as representatives; however, they are given no opportunity to create ideas on the subject of discussion (Hart, 1992).

The five levels that follow represent valid participation in which youth are able to meaningfully participate in the process. By thoroughly understanding the process and making the choice to get involved, youth become actively involved in the project. The first level of genuine participation is the fourth step, which is Assigned-but-Informed. This is the level where youth are aware of the purpose of the project and are informed about who made the decision regarding their involvement and why. Their volunteer role becomes meaningful because they actually understand what the venture is about. Consulted-and-Informed is the fifth level on the ladder. This level indicates that the project is planned and carried out by adults; however, youth gain an understanding of
the project, their ideas are taken seriously, and their views are valued by adults. The sixth level of the participation ladder, Adult-Initiated, Shared Decisions with Children, involves adults beginning the project with youth and adults sharing in the decision-making process as related to the project. Next, the seventh level on the ladder of participation is Child-Initiated and Directed, where youth initiate and direct their own projects. Finally, the highest level on the participation ladder and the rarest type of participation is Child-Initiated, Shared Decisions with Adults. The pinnacle of youth participation, this level includes adults in the project; however, the youth are the ones who have designed and managed the project (Hart, 1992).

When considering Hart’s Ladder of Participation, many people believe that Child-Initiated, Shared Decisions with Adults is most valuable to both youth and adults. Others believe that Child-Initiated and Directed is more beneficial because youth are most empowered when they are making choices without the influence of adults. Most often, this doesn't exclude adults but reduces their role to that of support. Even though both points of view have value, it is ultimately up the organization to decide which form of the decision-making process best fits their groups' needs (Hart, 1992).

Hart (1992) presented this ladder to portray different levels of youth involvement within organizations. Similar to Arnstein, the eight-step ladder defines each level from bottom to top as manipulation; decoration; tokenism; assigned but informed; young people consulted and informed; adult-initiated, shared decision with young people; young person-initiated and directed; and young person-initiated, shared decisions.

The adapted version of Hart’s model of youth participation created by the Ministry of Youth Affairs (2002) was used to discuss the rungs of the ladder in further detail: 1) *Manipulation is an adult-initiated approach* where adults run the program after initiating the idea while youth do not understand the matter being dealt with or the events taking
place. Adults act as if the youth are a viable part of the organization; however, the youth are not consulted or given a chance to give their opinion, advice or criticism; 2) *Decoration and manipulation* is similar to manipulation in that it is adult-initiated, and it excludes the input of the youth. The difference is the youth are part of the program, but they still have no say. At this rung, the adults are not pretending that youth are originators of the activity or program; 3) *Tokenism* is described as an adult initiated and run approach in which youth seem to have a voice, but no choice about the subject matter and are not given an opportunity to form an opinion; 4) *Assigned but Informed* is still defined as an adult-initiated approach; however, this time young people recognize and understand the purpose and strategy of the adults. Youth are still not given planning privileges, but they are aware of what is going on and are given an opportunity to volunteer and engage in a meaningful role in the organization; 5) *Young People Consulted and Informed* is depicted as projects that are initiated by adults. The difference is that the adults are open to sharing information with youth; therefore, the youth’s opinions are treated sincerely; 6) *Adult-Initiated Shared Decisions with Young People* describes the stage where youth are considered true contributors and participants; 7) *Young Person-Initiated and Directed* is when youth plan, put into action, and manage their own projects without the help of adult involvement; and, 8) *Young Person-Initiated, Shared Decision with Adults* is defined as youth involving adults in their planned and managed project (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002).

If one reflects on the following three examples of youth participation presented by Kothari in her article on Youth Participation in Youth Development (1996), one can call attention to the practical application of youth participation when organizations put into practice the upper levels (four through eight) of Hart’s "Ladder of Participation."
The first example expresses youth participation through youth forums in Ecuador. Fundacion Esquel-Ecuador started youth forums in 1992 because the government saw a need for youth to voice their views in dealing with the issue of youth development. These forums have involved over 15,000 youth from low income neighborhoods and other youth organizations. At one time, the Ecuador government’s efforts were not doing very well at getting youth involved in government institutions and programs. By allowing youth to participate and articulate themselves in the forum, it proved the inaccuracy of the myth that young people did not want to participate in the country's progress. Kothari described this case as young people consulted and informed (level five), where youth did not take part in the decision-making process. This case study supports the idea of youth voice because it proves that youth just need adequate space and a chance to participate (Kothari, 1996).

The second example exemplified by Kothari (1996) revealed an increase in program effectiveness by permitting youth to have key input and participation in its programs. The Gente Joven program, a program which was created to provide information on sex education to adolescents that lived in the marginal urban areas in Mexico, Mexfam, the parent organization to Gente Joven, aimed to combat the severe problems adolescents face involving teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Both the Mexfam staff and Gente Joven promoters, who were younger volunteers, joined forces with a new philosophy for presenting the information on sex education. With the help of the younger volunteers, the idea was more effective. Mexfam realized that they could not just give a face-lift to their existing adult program to fit a younger audience; they had to take a different approach. With this case study, it was evident that the level of participation was adult-initiated shared decisions with young people (level six). Youth were included in the decision-making process for some
of the topics even though the project was adult initiated. It is believed that once a sizeable amount of the responsibility and leadership was handed over to the youth, more youth became involved and interested in partaking in what the program had to offer.

The third example describes a situation where youth initiated a program to invigorate their native culture. The public school system was discriminating against the students of the indigenous culture. An article written by Healy (1994, p.40) stated that the schools were "providing them [students] with an inferior technical education but treating their traditional culture as a handicap to overcome rather than a foundation to build upon." To combat the prejudice, a group of 25 youth organizers of MINKA, which was originally a mutual fund that permitted youth to buy school supplies at lower prices, became a youth organization that crusaded for the values of indigenous cultures. By the original cause being identified by youth, it influenced other youth to get involved. Therefore, the program benefited to a great extent from youth putting together their own ideas and activities based on their own experiences, and not from activities being dictated by adults (Kothari, 1996). Due to the activities being youth initiated and directed, Kothari (1996) classified this example at level seven. It can be also categorized at level six, due to the governmental organization that supports MINKA, providing adult-initiated ideas and shared decisions with youth. This example revealed the most empowering approach of the three, a youth-initiated program, which is a level six or seven on the Hart's Ladder of Participation (Kothari, 1996).

Another alternative model of youth participation is one created by Franklin (1995). She proposed some changes to Hart’s Model. Franklin categorized participation into three types: nonparticipation, pre-participation and participation. Within each
category she identified several levels. In each level, she defined the role of the adults and the youth.

In the nonparticipation category she indicates two levels. The first nonparticipation level is Level 0: No Consideration, in which youth are not given any help or consideration. The other level of nonparticipation is Level 1: Adults Rule. In this level, adults make all the decisions and the youth are not told anything with the exception of what they must do (Franklin, 1995).

Franklin’s (1995) pre-participation category includes Levels 2-5. Level 2 is Adults Rule Kindly. In this level, adults make all the decision and youth are told what to do and are given cause and clarification for what the group is doing. Manipulation is Level 3, where adults decide what to do and ask children if they agree. However, in this level, youth are pressured to agree. Level 4 is Decoration, where adults decide what to do and children take part by participating in the project in some way or form. The last level of pre-participation is Level 5, Tokenism. Tokenism is when adults decide what to do and youth are allowed to make a decision or suggestions on minor facets of the project at a later time.

Franklin’s (1995) participation levels comprise Levels 6-10. Level 6, Invitation, is when adults encourage youth to express their ideas; nevertheless, adults make the programmatic decisions. In consultation, Level 7, adults confer with youth and reflect on their opinions. In the end, adults have the final judgment, taking the youth’s views in account. The next level, Level 8, Symbolize Joint Decision-Making is adults and youth coming to a decision together. The decision is made on the foundation of equality. Level 9 is Children Led, Adults Help, which signifies when youth lead in the decision-making process with support and assistance from adults. Lastly, the final level is Children In
Charge. In this youth choose what to do and adults get involved only if children ask for their assistance.

Another model of youth participation has been provided by Westhorp (1987). This model is based on youth involvement and is integrated into six factors on a continuum. The lowest factor in youth participation is Ad Hoc Input, when youth have a low level of input. The second factor on the continuum, Structured Consultation, is when there is a two-way flow of information between adults and youth. The next level is Influence, in which youth are given the opportunity to give formal input to an organization and participate, in somewhat of a small role, in the decision-making process. Next on the continuum is Delegation, where youth are responsible for a particular assignment. Following Delegation, is the fifth factor, Negotiation. Negotiation is, of course, where youth have some negotiating power in the decision-making process. The sixth and final factor is Control, where youth are fully included and make all the essential decisions within the organization they serve.

Westhorp (1987) posed a series of questions that should be addressed by an organization in order to make certain the genuine participation of youth exist. These are:

1. Aims: What do we hope to achieve by youth participation, for young people and the organization?
2. Level: What kind or level or participation does the organization want? What do young people want?
3. Target group: Given the aims and desired levels of participation, what target groups are we looking for?
4. Support: What will participants need in order to participate effectively? For example, information, money, adult support, training.
5. Barriers: What are the barriers to youth’s participation in the decision-making process? What strategies can we develop to overcome these barriers?

6. Evaluation: How will we know if we are achieving our goals?

One of the most recent models that explored the participation of youth in the decision-making process was created based on research conducted by Kirby et al. (2003). Kirby et al. (2003) drew on past participation models and evidence from the case studies they conducted to produce a four-level categorization that they felt best described the current youth participatory practice. See Figure 2 below.

![Figure 2. Kirby et al.'s (2003) model of Youth Participation](image)

Kirby et al. (2003) model of Youth Participation is based on the following concepts:

- The starting point of the model is the requirement of Article 12 that youth’s views be taken into account when making decisions affecting their lives; therefore, they did not include Hart’s ladder rungs that imply tokenism or employ manipulative approaches, in which youth’s views do not have any influence on decisions.
- The model is non-hierarchical, no level is assumed to be superior or inferior to the other. The appropriate stage in the model should be determined according to
the circumstances and the level and degree of youth’s participation in the decision.

Kirby’s et al. model (2003), one needs to start with the children and young people’s views are taken into account stage. At this stage, children’s views, whether volunteered or sought after by adults, need to be taken into account if their rights are to be respected under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. When examining the children and young people are involved in decision-making stage, youth are actively and openly involved in the decision-making process. Both youth and adults share their ideas and opinions and converse on issues together that effect the organization. While adults still maintain the final responsibility for making the decisions on the strategies and guiding principles that guide the organization, youth must be involved in guiding the process. Children and young people share power and responsibility for decision-making is another level of Kirby’s model of youth participation. According to Kirby et al. (2003), there is not always an apparent difference between this stage and the preceding one because it depends on the level of influence that youth have in the decision-making process. At this stage adults have committed to share power and to agree to share decision-making with youth. The children and young people make autonomous decisions stage identifies with situations where youth make autonomous decisions. However, one must recognize that often the carrying-out of these decisions were entail input from adults and is ultimately dependent on the amount of the adult’s responsibility and power. The level of participation depends more on how and how much adults engage youth during an activity than what activity they utilize. Power can change quickly from activity to activity, from different kinds of decision and among individual youth. Such as, adults may facilitate a youth forum to allow youth to participate in some decision making processes, but not others. Another example would
be involving some youth but not others; for instance, including older youth, but not younger youth (Kirby et al., 2003).

While all these models aid in measuring youth participation within an organization, there is an urgent need to build an evidence based model that clearly demonstrates the links between youth participation, development and social change. Such a model should be accessible, relevant and practical, and routinely incorporated into all youth participation activities. Thus far, efforts to develop qualitative and quantitative measurements have been poor with additional work being essential (Australian Youth Foundation, 1996).

Critical Elements as They Relate to Youth Voice

In 1997 a team of five evaluators from the National 4-H Impact Design Implementation Team met as part of the National 4-H Impact Study (2001). The group was charged with finding a research-based answer to the question, "What positive outcomes in youth, adults, and communities result from the presence of critical elements in a 4-H experience?" The group analyzed the research on characteristics of effective programs in the youth development field, and importance was placed on utilizing existing research on what impacts positive youth development. The group identified critical elements that were pertinent and applicable to 4-H colleagues, researchers and volunteers. Through this course of action, eight critical elements key to youth development surfaced. The following are recognized as the eight critical elements of the 4-H experience: a positive relationship with a caring adult; a safe environment; an inclusive environment; engagement in learning; opportunity for mastery; opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future; opportunity for self-determination; and, opportunity to value and practice service for others.
These eight critical elements echo Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Out of these eight critical elements, four of them perceptibly require youth voice to emerge: an inclusive environment, engagement in learning, an opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future, and an opportunity for self-determination.

When further exploring what each of the four above-mentioned elements contributes to youth, one can ultimately perceive how youth voice is essential in allowing these elements to occur. An inclusive environment is one that allows youth to have a sense of belonging to develop. It encourages and supports its members with positive and specific feedback. Four-H groups should celebrate the success of all members and take pride in the collective efforts of all members. An engaged youth is one who is mindful of the subject area, building relationships and connections in order to develop understanding. Through self-reflection, youth are allowed to harness the ability to self-correct and learn from their experience. The engaged learner has an elevated degree of self-motivation and an unlimited ability to create. An opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future is the ability for a young person to harness the hope and optimism that were allow them to shape life choices. By allowing youth to have a voice in the decision-making process they are taught self-determination. One must give them an opportunity to see that they have an impact over life’s events rather than submissively surrendering to the wishes of others. Youth voice allows young people to foster a sense of influence over their own lives, exercising their potential to become independent adults (National 4-H Impact Study, 2001). The test for practitioners is to somehow discover a way to create an environment that will bring these elements to life.
The Importance of Youth Voice

The evolution of North American civilization has placed youth in a powerless position, wherein they have no meaningful role in society. Persons without a sense of independence come to see themselves as pawns in a world where others control their future. When youth have a sense that they have no power to make an impact on their surroundings, it leads them to learned irresponsibility. This learned irresponsibility, consequentially, leads to helplessness, disobeying authority, forming of negative peer groups, and the self-absorption of a comfortable generation lacking a sense of social responsibility. The results of this learned irresponsibility is youth having a lack of understanding, knowledge and an inability to accept consequences for their decisions and actions. Contrasting the present-day view that youth must be trained to be obedient and follow instructions of adults, traditional Native American culture suggests that independence, responsibility and conscientiousness are best taught by sharing ideals and models for action, but providing instances to learn and to make choices without intimidation or duress. Even though the opportunity to make decisions is an important learning opportunity, one must also permit youth to accept and understand the consequences of their choices and actions. Tolerating youth’s successes and failures strengthens and supports the notion of accepting responsibility for their choices and actions (Brendtro et al., 1990).

Youth voice is taking into consideration the opinions and ideas of youth with respect to what they have to say. It also involves taking risks and working together to accomplish the mission of the organization being served (Fletcher, 2002). In a qualitative study conducted by Mitra (2004), during a student forum a member of the group explained, “Me being a student, I can really do something. I’m just not an ordinary
guy. I have a voice.... My opinion counts and people need to really respect my opinion, to value it.” The students developed a greater sense of self worth when they felt that people were listening to their perspectives.

When organizations practice youth voice, they give ample opportunities for youth to experience the adult roles in which they are getting prepared for later in life. The general goal of engaging and empowering youth should be to teach youth to define and express concerns of interest to them, and to design, discuss and put into action solutions to those concerns (Pittman & Wright, 1991). By youth participating in the decision-making process, they see themselves as persons who have something of significance to add to the world they live in (Checkoway et al., 2003).

The concept of youth voice has surfaced as an approach for improving the success of community and school reform efforts, and up until now, few studies have examined this concept either in theory or empirically (Felix, 2003). However, youth advocates in the decades between 1960 and 2000 have contributed to a tremendous shift in youth policies and practices in America. Through this shift in paradigm, there has been a growing awareness of the combined efforts of young people, families, and community stakeholders working together to create, plan and implement projects together (Pittman, 2000). Thus, youth are redefining their role in the decision-making process and the efforts that affect or change the communities in which they live. Today’s youth seek to have their views, beliefs, concerns, and input respected at levels of the decision-making process that not only affects them as individuals, but also affects the schools they attend, the organizations they stand by, and the communities they develop in (Felix, 2003).

According to Pittman and Wright (1991), involving youth in the decision-making process helps them understand how choices are made and develops their judgment.
What they learn from their active participation was carried through to their adult lives where they were continued to be a benefit to their community. Youth have ideas and opinions on what directly affects them. While their attitudes may differ from the people who have always made decisions on their behalf, they want to feel that their family and communities value their contributions (Formage, 2001).

Silvestre et al. (2002), found that by having youth fully participate in the state’s planning process for HIV prevention, their participation was consistently valued by adult members of the group. During the evaluation process, when the committee was asked to determine the degree to which they agree that the roundtables gave youth a voice in the planning process, the committee members gave a mean score of 3.5 based on a scale ranging from one (completely disagree) to four (completely agree). This case points that youth voice can have a positive effect. By involving youth in activities is crucial, from the design of the program at the start to the evaluation at the end, they become fully engaged and do not become bored with the program.

An analysis conducted by the Manitoba School Improvement program found a correlation between an increase in youth voice in school policy and an increase in school attachment. Youth who in the past were unpleasant and disagreeable became some of the most passionate participants in the school improvement process once they became involved (Earl & Lee, 1999; Lee & Zimmerman, 1999). Moreover, it has been shown that youth improved academically when instructors assembled the learning environment in ways that integrated and respected youth’s opinions (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000).

Youth-Adult Partnerships and Youth Voice

Youth organizations, like 4-H, frequently come up short of reaching true civic engagement of youth by failing to form partnerships with them in the decision-making
process on issues that directly affect them (Wolff, 2001). Even though youth issues may be the chief concern in the community or within the organization, adults are most often at the forefront of the decision-making process, with little discussion or input from youth. What adults need to realize is that youth are up-to-date on current concerns and matters that directly affect them and their peers. By strengthening youth and adult relationships, an organization can develop a successful approach for addressing youth issues. These partnerships would be a tremendous learning experience for both youth and adults. However, adults all too frequently perceive youth as consumers and not resources within the organization and in their communities (Klindera & Menderweld, 2001; Zeldin et al., 2000).

Based on several studies, adults are hesitant about youth and their roles they play in the decision-making process in society (Guzman, Lippman, Moore, & O’Hare, 2003; Rennekamp, 1993; Zeldin et al., 2000). Through research, it has been well documented that stereotyping of youth by adults confines young person’s potential within their community (Camino, 2000; Klindera & Menderweld, 2001; Yohalem & Pittman, 2001; Zeldin et al., 2000). Youth need to be looked at as a resource within their communities. Benson (1997) stated that allowing youth to serve on boards or committees in a meaningful role is one of the least likely experiences for youth in the present day. Many organizations fail to recognize that youth are talented, competent, and can bring a diversity of ideas to the table. Several research studies have indicated that youth can decipher and resolve problems if empowered through involvement in the decision-making process (Flanagan & Faison, 2001; Kaba, 2000; Lerner, Ostrom, & Freel, 1995; McLaughlin, Irby & Langman, 1994; Villarruel, Perkins, Borden & Keith, 2003; Zeldin, et al., 2000).
Adults are a major influence in youth’s lives; therefore, it is critical that youth development professionals include positive adults as role models so they can mentor, guide, and form connections with the youth of the next generation. Researchers have found that programs that provide a link between youth and adults aids in dismissing the negative stereotypes that youth and adults may have about each other (Camino, 2000; Matters, 1990). It is important that a program, like 4-H, provide rewarding experiences and opportunities for both youth and adults. In a study conducted by Benson (1997) it was concluded that youth are frequently isolated from the positive experiences with caring adults. In addition, Wunrow and Einspruch (2001) indicated that youth-adult partnerships are necessary in developing, implementing, and evaluating programs that impact youth. If youth are going to be the beneficiaries of these programs, then a more unbiased balance of power between adults and youth in decision-making process is necessary as a means of valuing youth voice.

Youth Stakeholders Need to be Involved

The 4-H youth development program does involve stakeholders in decision-making and program development through the use of advisory committees that operate at the parish and state levels (Tassin, 2005). Part of the success of these committees is the inclusion of 4-H members. By allowing youth to have a voice, these committees have recognized barriers to youth participation, such as time, transportation, and lack of interest in existing programs (Tassin, 2005).

Youth participate in society in variety of ways: attend school, participate in sports, work, pay taxes and are consumers. However, adults may not be aware that youth have certain rights. As a society, we have begun to acknowledge the worth and significance of serving the youth of the next generation (Francis & Lorenzo 2002). There has been one major global movement that has impacted the way the world views the role of youth
voice in the decision-making process, the rights of the child and sustainable
development. A document was created at the United Nations (2005), referred to the
Convention on the Rights of the Child, that is based on an internationally agreed upon
framework that defines the minimum standards for the well-being of every child in the
world. This document is known as Article 12, which stipulates the right of all children
and young people, less than 18 years of age, to participate in the decision-making
process that affects them in accordance with their age and maturity. Conceivably, more
so than any other article in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,
Article 12 supports youth under the age of 18 as active Participants with rights as well
as recipients of adult care and concern (Hodgkin & Newell, 1998).

Youth are overlooked as significant movers in their communities; therefore, they
are often left out of this process of developing their community. Time and again, adults
organize and implement youth projects without seeking advice from or getting the input
of youth. It is essential that youth are considered in the decision-making process
because they know the needs and wants of their peers, and how to reach their peers
effectively (Kothari, 1996). It is important to include youth input in the decision-making
process to foster individual and community growth and development. Kothari (1996)
argued that the individual, the organization, and the community benefit from the process
of youth participation. The individual benefits from the learning process and sense of
connectedness of participation while the organization and community benefit from the
effectiveness of the projects (Kothari, 1996). O’Donoghue and Kirshner (2003) found
that youth involved in community-based youth organizations practiced and developed
important competencies through democratic participation, ranging from collaborative
work and decision-making to practical knowledge about local concerns and how to
make an impact on them. Because youth were engaged and involved in real-world,
project-based programs the competencies they gained were rarely available to them in traditional public schools. These opportunities for actual public work geared towards meaningful change meant that youth experienced the successes, challenges, and failures, which only come from genuine encounters with complex public problems. Youth at times experienced frustration; however, this was viewed as part of a learning process that would hopefully enable them to continue their democratic work in other settings with new experiences and wisdom.

People under the age of 18 are important members of society. They have the right to take part in making decisions that affect them personally. Such documents as Article 12 give youth the right to express their opinion in any decision that will affect them. By allowing youth to have a voice and be part of the decision-making process, we are helping youth build a sense of connection between themselves and the communities in which we live. Adults should respect the views of youth and take them into account when making decisions (United Nation, 2005).

Less than half of American adolescents participate in community service activities (US Census Bureau, 2003). Organizations need to identify what will motivate youth to become involved in civic activities and what factors keep them from participating. Since the International Youth Year in 1985, there have been numerous International and United Nations Conferences and declarations supporting the need for meaningful youth participation in decision-making (Pittman & Wright, 1991). Organizations need to identify and develop programs to ensure adolescents become responsible citizens (Michelsen, Zaff & Hair, 2002). How can youth development organizations allow youth to voice their ideas and opinions and aid in attracting and retaining youth?
The solution to keeping youth involved in a project or organization is to make certain that they are receiving something from being involved. This might be friendships, information, increased self-confidence and sense of worth. Notably, youth need to know that their involvement is making a valid and positive difference (Grover, 2004). They need to feel engaged in activities. Having youth who are placed into boring volunteer positions will unavoidably ensure that they probably will not want to volunteer again. Allowing youth to be part of the planning process of programs and providing ongoing input into the activities of organizations is one strategy that research suggests helps in providing youth with a voice in the decision-making process (Zaff & Michelsen, 2001).

According to Rennekamp (1993), there is a set of positive steps for youth development professional to take to involve youth in the decision-making process. The first one is to involve youth in the program development process from the beginning. Adults should not make all of the decisions, and then ask youth to assist. Youth should be respected as equal partners in decision-making as well as in planning, carrying-out and evaluating programs. Special efforts should be made to assign significance tasks to youth. Youth should be integrated into all pertinent, ongoing, and special advisory committees and task forces; while avoiding tokenism. For example, naming two youth to a committee of a dozen adults does little to promote the progress of adult-youth partnerships. Adults should share values and ideas with youth, allowing them to make some of their own choices. Adults must offer youth opportunities and allow them to fail as well as successful; therefore, teaching them to recognize, accept and understand both positive and negative consequences of their choices. Lastly, active involvement in the community is essential to our role as citizens and the involvement of everyone is necessary.
Benefits of Including Youth in the Decision-Making Process

Research carried out in the youth development field supports the value of youth voice for both adults and young people. A study conducted by the University of Wisconsin at Madison and the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development affirmed that there are numerous effects that youth have on adults and organizations by being included in decision-making roles (Zeldin et al., 2000). A number of the effects on adults highlighted in the study are: adults enhance their commitment to the organization; adults view the competence of youth, and perceive them as critical to organizational improvement; adults feel more effective and competent in working with youth; and, adults develop a stronger sense of community.

Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 (2000) identified several benefits of youth being involved in the decision-making process. Allowing youth to actively contribute allows them to articulate what is important to them, to "own" decisions that are made about their lives, and to increase their self confidence and skills. In addition, by empowering youth, we give adults the opportunity to show respect for youth’s views; therefore, creating catalysts for the wider participation of all parties involved. By allowing youth to have a voice, organizations can improve the quality of decision-making and become more efficient and effective in meeting the needs of youth (Formage, 2001).

Through their case studies of 26 youth-serving organizations, Kirby et al. (2003) identified three purposes that these organizations had for including youth in the decision-making process. The first purpose: *Practical benefits to services*: this purpose entails ensuring that modified or new services meet the needs of the youth, in addition to offering support for youth, improving the young person’s experience, improving the organization’s accountability, and ensuring that youth have access to and use of the
services that were provided. The second purpose: *Citizenship and social inclusion:* this purpose was seen as helping to establish inclusive practice, and fulfilling an obligation to ensure young person’s rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to empower youth to effect change and to develop the self-confidence in their ability to influence outcomes. In addition, this type of participation can offer youth an opportunity to have increased responsibility within their lives, improve community relationships and feelings. The final purpose: *Personal and social development:* this purpose of participation was also seen as contributing to youth’s wider personal development, including knowledge, skills and confidence. In addition, it was found that organizations have a range of different purposes in involving youth. Some of the organizations in this study focused on involving youth internally, whereas others promoted participation in the form of collaborations with other agencies.

The following factors have been recognized by youth as influencing their feelings of empowerment: non-authoritarian adult guidance, being able to exercise power, receiving training, participating in significant analysis of issues concerning the organization, environment of safety, closeness and approval, being able to openly express opinions and emotions, accepting diversity, developing a voice, and being able to take action on their ideas (Mangan & Smith, 2003). Similarly, Zeldin et al., (2000) reported that youth increased their commitment to the organization when adults viewed them as capable and perceived them as important to organization’s development. Likewise, Newsome and Scalera (2001) found that board members and staff acknowledged that youth provided their organization with vigor, inspiration, creativity and different viewpoints on organizational issues. In addition, it was recognized that youth aided in keeping the organization focused on their mission. Therefore, it can be
said that youth have the capacity to play an important role in the decision-making process via positively affecting the adults around them.

Billig (2000) observed that the effect of community service-learning is maximized when youth are given a greater extent of responsibility for planning, decision-making, problem solving and reflecting on their learning. Therefore, youth voice is not only a crucial component of excellent community service-learning programs; it also helps to magnify positive results. Additional research has shown that there are a number of positive effects that practicing youth voice can have on adults and organizations. Some benefits that have been identified when adults include youth in the decision-making process are: adults view youth as competent and perceive them as critical to organizational improvement; adults enhance their commitment to the organization; adults feel more effective and competent in working with youth; and adults develop a stronger sense of community (Zeldin et al., 2000).

Youth voice has a profound effect on organizations, such as: young people aid in making the organization’s mission clear; youth contribution becomes part of the organization’s standards; the organization becomes better associated and receptive to youth within community; and the organization becomes attractive to potential supporters. According to Hunt’s publication entitled Together with Youth – Planning Recreation for Services for Youth-at-Risk (1999), organizations benefit from practicing youth voice by making better choices on youth related issues. Youth often present organizations with a “reality check” because they provide imagination, creativity, and a new perspective for their programs. Therefore, it is evident that when youth are involved in the decision-making process, the organization is more likely to yield the desired outcomes.
Additionally, research has identified specific benefits for putting youth voice into practice. Some examples are: the development of youth’s skills, knowledge, confidence and awareness; the opportunity for youth to exercise their rights in society; the development of adult awareness of youth’s contribution; an increase in youth’s connection and ownership to communities and adult life and confirmation of their worth when they take part in public activities; development of social competence and social conscientiousness; the opportunity for political self-determination and participation (Hart, 1992; Mokwena, 2004; Pittman, 1991).

A study conducted by Scales and Leffert (1999) concluded that youth having a voice in the decision-making process within the organizations they serve leads to the youth having: an increase in self-esteem; an increase in popularity; a sense of personal control; an enhanced identity; a greater development of life skills; a better sense of communication within their family; a decline in loneliness, shyness, and hopelessness; a decreased involvement in risky behaviors like drug use and juvenile delinquency; enhanced identity development; greater development of life skills including leadership, public-speaking, dependability, and job responsibility; better academic achievement; and increased safety. According to Haid, Marques, and Brown (1999), youth who are active in their community tend to have a reduced amount of conflict and mistrust. When youth and adults work together and learn to appreciate each other, they battle negative stereotypes and perceptions.

In a study conducted by Kahne and McLaughlin (1999), urban neighborhood-based organizations were examined over a five-year period in inner-city areas that were commonly characterized by youth violence and hopelessness. When they inquired for suggestions to give those planning youth programs, for example, one youth told them:
It is good to put a lot of responsibility on the children, so they can do it themselves and not just have an older person do everything and the children sit there and watch and whenever they need the children, they jump in. I think it should be the other way around. The children should do it and whenever the children need something the person who is oldest jump in. Then they get whatever they need, so the children can do it and then that makes the children feel better because they can say, well I did that, or I painted that, or I did that flower box. (p.4)

Youth often related the relationships with peers and supervisors as having a sense of belonging that developed when they described the growth they experienced as part of the service-learning program. Researchers found youth voice was a significant component of organizations that were successful in motivating youth to participate. Youth voice has a remarkable impact on youth participation and program outcomes, both short term and long term. Thus, youth voice is not only a vital element in youth programs, but it also helps to amplify positive outcomes (McLaughlin et al., 1994). The inclusion of youth voice is essential to the overall success and effectiveness of youth programs.

In a study conducted by Ellis and Caldwell (2001), self-determination and self-efficacy were both hypothesized to be predictors of youth voice. Of those two, only self-efficacy was significantly found to be so. Age was also a significant predictor of youth voice. In general, meaningful work facilitates youth development. Although the theory that motivated these programs laid emphasis on community service, it may be the condition of meaningful work that is central to participating youth (McLaughlin et al., 1994).
Barriers to Including Youth in the Decision-Making Process

When youth develop strong, caring relationships with their communities, they are more likely to grow up safe and healthy, participate in educational, cultural and employment opportunities and not become involved in violence and crime (Leifer & McLarney, 1997). For instance, high profile cases have demonstrated the dangerous actions that are sometimes taken by youth that felt underappreciated as members of a community (Egan 1998, Verhovek, 1999). All-inclusive participation is a primary component of any civil society. Yet, opportunities and pathways for youth to engage the community remain limited due to the daily segregation of youth from adults and the negative public opinion about adolescents (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Therefore, youth voice and engagement is an important means of overcoming disrespect of young people that can contribute to constructive and positive change for all of society (Stoneman, 2002).

Some of the common barriers that present challenges to youth’s involvement in the decision-making process have already been identified by researchers. One of the most critical components to the success of youth voice is the youth-adult partnership. If the youth-adult partnership is negatively affected by poor attitudes, a lack of communication and stereotyping; youth will struggle to become part of the decision-making process. The concept of adultism plays a significant role in the failure of youth voice. The meaning of adultism is that youth are not appreciated and respected by adults. Youth are viewed as less important, and adults are always superior when it comes to making decisions. Adultism is a critical barrier because it insinuates that youth can not be trusted to develop correctly without being disciplined and guided into the adult world (Checkoway, 1996). In addition, Pittman, Irby and Ferber (2001) proposed
that paternalism plays a big role in limiting youth voice in the decision-making process. It works as the major barrier to youth’s involvement.

Within the youth development field, when we use such phrases as "preparing youth to be future citizens" and other patronizing idioms, we are often using them to justify youth involvement. However, such words imply that youth aren't currently citizens and can not contribute to the decision-making process now. This way of thinking implies real contributions are postponed until adulthood and that allowing youth to participate in a limited fashion is important practice for when they reach adulthood. Adults who believe that youth should be limited in their involvement don't recognize the potential and beneficial contributions by youth. Such a philosophy on youth involvement impacts the nature of involvement of youth that adults permit. For instance, when youth are asked to partake in a community service project, the roles allotted to them are often unimportant and insignificant, or are those tasks that adults find unpleasant, such as labor intensive tasks (Rennekamp, 1993).

Youth voice models are valuable tools for actively engaging youth in the community. Yet, like most change efforts, achieving youth voice can pose a number of challenges. Common challenges arise from balancing the school/work schedules between youth and adults, and sustaining youth attention and loyalty. A number of challenges that were identified by Justiniano and Scherer, of the Points of Light Foundation (2001), can also be found in areas of: attitudes: many adults still think that young people’s opinions don't matter, that youth are not competent enough or capable of contributing in a valuable way; thus, adults have nothing to learn from youth. Moreover, cultural norms may stop adults from even comprehending that these attitudes are biased (Gilliam, 2002); logistical and organization: adults who give their support to the concept of youth-adult partnerships and youth voice must also be prepared to
identify and adjust the organization’s environment where institutional barriers can be particularly significant for youth. Such institutional barriers as hours for meetings and work, transportation, food, equipment and support, procedures and policies, and training make legitimate youth-adult partnerships and youth voice difficult; sharing power: some adults have trouble giving up power to youth during the planning and decision-making process. Simultaneously, some youth may be uncomfortable with taking on the accountability and responsibility that comes with having power; stereotypes: many adults reach out to youth that they think will act and perform like adults. As a result it may be easier to engage youth who have already been identified as leaders. Youth also have stereotypes of adults and this may lead to lack of confidence, expectations or skepticism from youth about adults’ enthusiasm to support and partner with them; and, viewing youth as recipients: many adults and youth have a difficult time seeing youth as leaders or resources in the social order. Some don’t consider or believe that youth could offer something worthwhile or valuable to the community (Justinianno & Scherer, 2001).

Newsome and Scalera (2001) found that youth who were interviewed stated that they felt disconnected, alienated, unsupported, unacknowledged, and disrespected by adults within the organization. Positive youth-adult partnerships are critical to engaging youth in the decision-making process. Adults need to share power with youth to keep them involved (Justinianno & Scherer, 2001; Young & Sazama, 1999; Zeldin et al., 2000). One of the recurring barriers in the literature that was identified by both youth and adults, is the lack of orientation and training. Similarly, it has been shown that youth are negatively affected when adults do not clearly communicate their expectations (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1998).

Another barrier identified in research is scheduling conflicts with youth participants in decision-making process. The research has specified that youth lack of
time in general and the organization’s resistance to be more flexible in scheduling meetings at times typically more convenient for youth to attend (Hoover & Weisenbach, 1999; Kurkoski et al., 1997; Newsome & Scalera, 2001; Parker, 1998; Parker, 1999; Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1998). In addition, there are technical obstacles that act as barriers to youth that want to be involved in decision-making process, such as transportation (Parker, 1999) and youth being denied access to resources they need to be successful (Checkoway, 1996).

In addition, several roadblocks to incorporating youth voice were identified in a study conducted by Felix (2003). Roadblocks such as, fear of speaking out or up; lack of diversity; the need for a national spokesperson; and political adultism were identified. Some solutions that were identified for the roadblock “fear of speaking out or up,” were working in all youth-led groups to building confidence, communication skills, and perseverance to show youth effective instances where young people were heard by adults and change was enacted. When considering the roadblock “lack of diversity,” youth suggested having youth who are involved in youth voice activities and programming spread the word to their peers to increase diversity, examining the community demographics to ensure that participants are representative of the communities they live in, and more directed outreach and effort to bring in those not traditionally asked to participate. When considering the roadblock of acquiring a “national spokesperson,” the study asserted that having a good national spokesperson for youth is an effective way to take local efforts to the national level. In response to the issue of adultism, youth could be overcome by the idea that voting doesn’t make a difference. To encourage this belief, youth should go with their parents to the voting booths; hold mock elections alongside local, state, or national elections; and begin holding elected officials accountable for campaign promises.
Some barriers documented in a study conducted by Hart (1992) included the youth’s level of self-esteem; their basic capability in taking the perspective of another person; their level of academic development; and child-rearing practices that instill that youth with different attributes. In addition, youth who are disadvantaged, disabled or lacking attention may also have been denied the opportunity to contribute in the decision-making process (Australian Youth Foundation, 1996). Other barriers to participation could include: the amount of time available by young people; a lack of skills, training and/or experience; a lack of resources; an adult “mind set” against youth input or fear of losing power; and an organizational, community or cultural opposition (International Youth Foundation, 1996).

In a report composed by the Laidlaw Foundation (2001), seven potential barriers to youth voice were identified. They were as follows: Different Time Horizons: Youth have a very different time horizon than adults. When it comes to youth, short term is a matter of days or weeks and long term is a matter of months. Youth have a valid interest in seeing immediate implementation of programs and their acceptance for long term planning is often limited; The Confidence/Age to Engage: Many youth feel that they have to have a certain capacity/level of self-confidence to voice their opinion in the decision-making process. Many youth felt that the age of 15 or 16 is often when youth reach the age where their voice may be respected by adults; therefore, they can effectively engage adults in the decision-making process; High Achievers vs. Consumers: In some youth-serving organizations the core leadership group consists of high achievers who may be active in many other community leadership roles. These youth are often not well-connected to, or representative of, the primary clients of youth programs or services; Constant Turnover: Constant youth turnover poses a major challenge for encouraging youth voice in the decision-making process. The ongoing
turnover means that there is a constant need for recruitment, training and staff support; *Youth to Youth Dynamics:* Youth culture is diverse; therefore, in an organization there may be very diverse types of youth, each having their own concerns. With such dynamics, youths' ways of communicating and working together may be different. This diversity means that the one size fits all method to encouraging youth to express their voice is not likely to be effective; *One is Not Enough:* Placing one youth on a board to represent youth as a constituency is not likely to be effective. Youth recommended that at least three or four places be provided for them around the table. Alternative structures may need to be created to aid in ensuring that youth voices are heard and the diversity of youth interests and concerns are represented; and, *Behind the Scenes Staff Support:* Even in organizations where youth have significant voice in the decision-making process, staff support is extremely critical. Staff provides stability and the necessary knowledge of how the organization operates (Laidlaw Foundation, 2001).

In addition to the Laidlaw Foundation Report, Frank (2006) reported that when organizations attempt to make room for youth voice in the decision-making process, their efforts are resisted, because of four interrelated societal views of youth, which cast doubt within organizations over whether the practice is valuable or realistic. These four societal views are: developmental, vulnerable, legal, and romantic. The *developmental view* of youth puts emphasis on their being in a period of early psychosocial growth; thus, lacking the level of knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, and social connections that adults possess. The developmental view leaves adults wondering whether youth possess the capacity to partake in and contribute to the demanding task of planning; in addition, it fosters the belief that adults are more competent to make decisions on behalf of youth. The *vulnerable view* sees youth as less powerful than adults; therefore, they are subject to mistreatment by adults or need adults to safeguard them. The vulnerable
view questions the ability of youth voice in the decision-making process to create meaningful community change, since youth are perceived as not having the political muscle to emphasize their ideas. Youth could become embittered and disenchanted with the process when their recommendations are not listened to, or when participation exposes youth to the forceful and unkind world of politics. The *legal view* of youth assigns youth limited citizen standing, for the reason that youth do not legally hold the full rights and responsibilities of adults. This is when youth are treated like citizens-in-training. This view questions the appropriate level of decision-making weight that should be afforded to youth and centers on the educational benefits to youth while reducing the opportunity for youth to directly influence the community. Lastly, the *romantic view* of youth views youth as having standards and abilities that are distinctive from, even better than adults. For example, youth are considered to display more creativity, inquisitiveness, enthusiasm, eagerness, and concern for their communities than adults. The romantic view favors youth voice over adult voice; therefore, it improperly and disproportionately integrates the two into practice. This leads to unsuccessful youth participation, and perceived differences in perspectives that leave both adults and youth unsure of how to work together. These four societal views forecast negative impacts of youth voice in the decision-making process on both youth, adults, and their communities; consequently, directly contradicting the probable benefits described by advocates of youth voice in the decision-making process.

**Identifying Effective Practices that Foster an Environment for Youth Voice**

According to a study conducted by Young and Sazama (1999), if youth ask questions, are confident, and are continually finding new ways to participate within the organization. This will ensure that the involvement of youth in the decision-making process will continue in partnership with adults who can provide the needed support.
There is an assortment of effective practices for engaging youth in the decision-making process within organizations that have been identified through research. Such practices as identifying youths’ motivation for getting involved; the organization making changes within to more effectively engage youth; the organization providing clear expectations and roles of youth, and providing orientation and ongoing training for youth and adults; the organization providing ongoing support (Justiniano & Scherer 2001).

Other researchers have identified similar practices that are effective in encouraging youth voice. All these practices aid in reinforcing the positive contribution of youth in community-based organizations. Some additional factors that involve youth in the decision-making process that were identified through research are: communicating high standards and clear expectations to all that are involved; creating opportunities for youth to develop and nurture personal relationships and connections with adults; making sure that meeting times, locations, transportation, and other logistics are flexible and available (Carstarphen, 2001; Checkoway et al., 2003; Justiniano & Scherer, 2001; Kurkoski et al., 1997; Mason & Goll, 2000; Parker, 1998; Young & Sazama, 1999; and Zeldin et al., 2000).

Kirby et al. (2003) identified four stages for developing meaningful participatory practice that encourage youth voice in the decision-making process. The researchers described these stages as: unfreeze, catalyze, internalize and institutionalize. The first challenge for the organization is to unfreeze or breakdown existing attitudes, procedures and methods for working with youth. Different factors serve as indicators that an organization needs to change, and these include external pressures such as funding requirement or internal drives such as professional beliefs and the individual's exposure to participatory practice. It is sometimes necessary to draw attention and emphasize the need for change. However, Kirby et al. (2003) pointed out that few
organizations initiate change as a result of research findings. Nevertheless, it is important to reveal links between participation and policy initiatives. If youth are not engaged and interested in the organization, then it should be obvious that youth participation policies must undergo a change. The next stage in creating a meaningful participatory practice is to catalyze. Once individuals within the organization have begun to see the necessity for change there are a number of things that can aid the organization in creating change. Administrative support is a key catalyst for institutionalizing youth in the decision-making process. The leadership within the organization needs to create a climate that encourages and supports change to take place, and it is vital that they ensure youth’s ideas are respected and acted upon. Some additional issues that have not been pointed out include being committed to working with diverse groups (National Collaboration for Youth, 2001); offer imaginative forms of learning or structuring meetings (Lesko & Tsourounis, 1998); correspond frequently with the youth’s guardians (Checkoway et al., 2003); include time for youth to reflect on their experiences (National Collaboration for Youth, 2001); and recognize youth for their work and participation (Advertising Council, 2000; McLaughlin, 1999).

According to Justinianno and Scherer (2001), there are many different models for engaging youth voice into the decision-making process. All the models for incorporating youth voice listed below integrate some form of youth and adult partnership. Youth and adult partnership is defined as a fostered relationship between youth and adults where both parties have the same potential in making decisions, utilizing and developing skills, learning from one another and encouraging change through civic engagement, program development and/or community improvement initiatives (Jones & Perkins, 2006). The difference between youth and partnerships and parent-child, student-teacher, and mentoring relationships is mutuality (Camino, 2000). A successful youth and adult
partnership entails the philosophy and principles that youth and adults use to adjust these partnerships by challenging the roles and the power that typify average youth and adult relationships. Ideally, this means that both youth and adults will avoid a chain of command relationship in which adults act as the authority and youth hold a lesser position (Camino, 2000).

No one model is paramount; however, different models may be better suited in certain circumstances. A few commonly used models identified by Justiniano and Scherer (2001) are:

- **youth as trainers:** youth can develop and improve communication and leadership skills by acting as trainers for others, including the agencies they work with, and staff and other youth in their service-learning program. Young people who are appropriately trained and encouraged can determine training needs, design and propose a training program and train both youth and adults about service-learning, as well as offer the needed training and orientation to a service-learning project;

- **youth as planners:** youth can help plan and put into action service projects. By having youth help develop projects, they are involved in creating a vision, setting objectives, and determining the goals for the project. Youth may possibly help identify community needs, determine objectives, recruit volunteers, develop action plans and timelines, and evaluate the project. Working with program staff to plan and implement a project provides youth a sense of ownership and achievement;

- **youth as evaluators:** by being involved in the evaluation process young people can help assess program effectiveness. They can aid in developing and implementing surveys, conducting interviews and documenting their results. These actions help youth to enhance and improve skills that they have learned; for example, written and verbal communication skills. In addition, by allowing youth to evaluate service-learning programs, they aid organizations in understanding if they are meeting their objectives;

- **youth summits:**
youth summits are a great tool for engaging with youth in dialogue and action around topics and concerns that are significant to them. A youth summit is a meeting that brings youth together from an organization or about a particular concern or problem. Summits offer youth a chance to voice their opinions and develop potential resolutions. It is a time for youth to associate with one another, and to share resources and thoughts. Also, summits allow youth and adults to develop a better appreciation of each other’s perspective; youth advisory/action councils (YAC’s): YAC is a group of youth working in cooperation with an existing organization to guarantee that youth are involved in accomplishing the overall mission/vision of the organization. YACs can aid in making decisions, providing insight or suggestion to groups, and/or address a specific concern or topic. They can take on diverse shapes and structures depending on the needs of the public. To thrive, a YAC’s function to its task and membership must be carefully planned; youth as funders: young people raise funds, develop requests for proposals, evaluate proposals, and decide who gets the money. Sometimes youth are funding youth-driven programs. Other times they are concerned in more extensive projects to aid in providing more resources to the community problem solving efforts; youth governance/youth on boards: when you merge the idea of youth as resources, and respect their voices within organizations, it can result in their partaking in the organization governance. In particular, “governance” refers to serving as a full voting member on an organization board or governing structure. Youth governance then, means that youth are equivalent as stakeholders in choices associated with budget, staff, and strategic planning of the organization: youth as policy-makers: several youth are actively involved throughout their communities through service-learning. Nevertheless, in order to advance the goals and impact of youth in the community, youth and adults unite involvement with policy and other forms of community
engagement. Engaging youth as policy-makers can assist youth in taking their service efforts one more step towards sustainable community transformation and can influence the policies that govern your organization and society.

True youth-adult partnerships are present when the contributions of youth are seen as having value in the present, the here and now and not just as practice for adulthood. Such a partnership recognizes that decision-making roles can be shared by youth and adults. Often, pledging to and practicing such a philosophy means a significant shift in paradigm and we must be prepared to shift our own attitude and assumptions about youth in general. It may also require significant and major changes in the guiding principles, policies and structure of the organizations in which we work (Lofquist, 1993).

In recognizing youths' right to participate in the decision-making process, adults must undertake a different role from merely being a guardian and a provider. In order to accomplish this, adults must learn to work with youth rather than working for them. As adults, we must comprehend that accepting responsibly for youth does not mean taking responsibility away from them. It is this shift in paradigm that several adults find uncomfortable or even painful; however, it is necessary if we truly want to include youth in the decision-making process (Kirby et al., 2003)
Chapter Three

Methodology

A descriptive-correlational study was conducted to describe the 4-H organization’s views on youth voice in the decision-making process. This study examined if a relationship existed among the demographic variables of gender, age, highest level of education, ethnicity, participation in other youth organizations, years served as a 4-H youth development professional, the number and hours of trainings attended on youth voice, and the 4-H professional perceived views on youth voice in the decision-making process. In this section, the research design and sample related to this study will be stated along with the method of data collection.

The researcher-developed instruments that were utilized in this study are contained in Appendix B, C and D. Dillman’s (2000) survey design and methodology was followed in the study. Approval for implementation of the study was obtained from the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board for Human Subject Protection prior to the initiation of the survey (3332).

Population and Sample

This was a national study that was designed to gather information from three different populations that are significant and essential groups of the 4-H youth development program. The accessible population consists of the following three groups: (1) the State 4-H Program Leaders in all 50 states, (2) the State 4-H Youth Development Specialists in all 50 states, and (3) five 4-H Youth Agents/Educators in Cooperative Extension county/parish offices in each state who have assigned 4-H duties as identified by their State 4-H Program Leader.

The first population is the target population of 4-H Program Leaders in all 50 states. These individuals were identified through the USDA Cooperative State
Research, Education, and Extension Service website directory. The second population was the accessible population of 4-H Youth Development Specialists in each state. These individuals were also identified through the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service website directory. All 50 State 4-H Offices were contacted to verify 4-H Youth Development Specialists. The third population, was the accessible population of 4-H Youth Agents/Educators, which were identified by the State 4-H Program Leader in each state. Each 4-H State Program Leader was asked to identify five 4-H Youth Agents/Educators based on the diversity and demographics of their state to complete the survey. Prior to the survey, a letter was sent via e-mail to each state’s 4-H Program Leader, 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators to notify them of the study.

**Survey Instrument and Procedure**

An extensive literature review determined that there was not an existing instrument which measured the 4-H program’s views on youth voice in the decision-making process. After a thorough review of literature on youth voice in the decision-making process, instruments were developed. The instruments were developed based on empirical literature. Specific questions have been developed to obtain the perceptions and demographics of participants in order to aid in determining their perception’s on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H program.

Participants were asked to indicate their perceptions on level of youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H program, their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process, the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process, and the issues that affect youth voice in the decision-making process by rating their perception on a five-point anchored Likert-type scale: “Never,”
“Seldom,” “Sometimes,” “Often,” and “Always.” The instrument was also utilized to collect the following demographic data: gender, highest level of education, ethnicity, participation in other youth organizations, years served as a 4-H youth development professional, and the number and hours of trainings attended on youth voice. In addition, several open-ended questions were utilized to gather qualitative data on participant’s perceptions on youth voice in the decision-making process.

The instruments were reviewed by an expert panel prior to data collection to determine content validity. The panel was made up of a volunteer specialist with 20 years of experience, two researchers/practitioners with 20 years of experience, and a panel of 30 youth whose ages range from 14 to 18 years old.

Data Collection

Data was collected by the researcher administering the instrument via Zoomerang© (electronic survey software), to each State’s 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and five 4-H Youth Agents/Educators in all 50 states at the county/parish level that were selected by the State 4-H Program Leaders to complete the survey. All participants were sent electronically a brief cover letter (Appendix A), requesting their participation and instructions for completing the survey along with a url link to the survey. The following techniques were used for data collection:

- Seven days after the e-mail was sent with the link to the survey, all non-respondents were sent a friendly e-mail reminder.
- One week following the reminder e-mail, the remaining non-respondents were sent another e-mail, which contained the initial letter and the link to complete their specific survey.
Two weeks following the reminder e-mail, the remaining non-respondents were sent another e-mail, which once again contained the initial letter and the link to complete their specific survey.

Five weeks following the initial e-mail, a follow-up e-mail was sent to all non-respondents with the link to fill out their specific survey. The e-mail included a letter stressing the importance of their participation in the survey.

Six weeks following the initial e-mail, a final follow-up e-mail was sent to all non-respondents with the link to fill out their specific survey. Once again, the e-mail included a letter stressing the importance of their participation in the survey.

All survey participants received an e-mailed “thank you” for their participation.

There were 50 State 4-H Program Leaders, 406 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 250 4-H Agents/Educators invited to participate in the study. A total of 706 participants were asked to complete the survey during the time period extending from May 17, 2006 through July 27, 2006. Participants were assured confidentiality in completing the survey. The responses by each wave of data collection are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Completed Questionnaires by Wave of Data Collection via Zoomerang© Surveys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wave</th>
<th>State 4-H Program Leader</th>
<th>4-H Youth Development Specialists</th>
<th>4-H Agents/Educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Wave</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Wave</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Wave</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Wave</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Wave</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Non-Responders

At the conclusion of the survey, 10% of remaining non-respondents from each population were contacted by phone to answer 10 randomly selected questions from the original survey. This was done to determine if there were differences between those that responded and those that did not respond. The data that was gathered from non-respondents during the interviews were compared with those that completed the survey to determine if a difference exists between the two groups. A decision was made \emph{a priori} that if statistically significant differences were found in more than 2 scale items, it would be concluded that the non-respondents differed significantly from the respondents.

Independent samples t-tests were used to compare the means of the 10 randomly selected items from the non-responders to the responders. Results indicated that there were no significant differences on any of the 10 survey items among the responders and on-responders.
Chapter Four
Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore and determine the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H youth development program as perceived by State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Agents/Educators. A total of 50 State 4-H Program Leaders, 406 State 4-H Youth Development Specialist, and 250 4-H Agents/Educators in all fifty states were sent surveys following an extensive search for professionals within population. The response rate for each population was 64% for State 4-H Program Leaders, 46% for 4-H Youth Specialists, and 52% for 4-H Agents/Educators. Findings and analysis for the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H youth development program survey data are presented in this chapter. Results are presented by research objective and include objectives one through eleven.

Objective One

Objective one of the study was to describe State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States on the following selected demographic characteristics:

a. Gender;

b. Highest level of education;

c. Ethnicity;

d. Volunteer service in other youth organizations;

e. Years served in current position;

f. Number of trainings on youth voice; and

g. Number of hours of training on youth voice.
**Gender**

Gender is the first demographic reported by the State 4-H Program Leaders who completed the survey on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H youth development program. The largest group of respondents (\(n = 19\), 59.4%) indicated their gender as male. Thirteen participants (40.6%) reported their gender as female.

The largest group of the State 4-H Youth Development Specialists who completed the survey on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H youth development program indicated their gender as male (\(n = 106\), 56.7%). Eighty-one participants (43.3%) reported their gender as female.

The largest group of 4-H Agents/Educators that participated in the survey on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H youth development program indicated their gender as female (\(n = 103\), 79.2%). Twenty seven participants (20.8%) reported their gender as male.

**Highest Level of Education**

Respondents were additionally described on the variable “Highest Level of Education.” The majority of State 4-H Program Leaders (\(n = 21\), 65.6%) reported that they had earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree. Ten (31.3%) participants indicated that they had earned a Masters Degree, and one (3.1%) had earned a MD/DVM/JD/DD.

Table 2 illustrates data regarding the sample’s highest level of education.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BS/BA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA/MS/MEd</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/EdD</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
The largest group of State 4-H Youth Development Specialist (n = 107, 57.2%) reported that they had earned a Masters Degree. Sixty-two (33.3%) participants indicated that they had earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree, and eighteen (9.6%) had earned a Bachelor's degree. Table 3 presents data regarding the sample's highest level of education.

Table 3
Highest Level of Education Reported by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BS/BA</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA/MS/MEd</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/EdD</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD/DVM/JD/DD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>187</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest group of 4-H Agents/Educators (n = 78, 60.0%) reported that they had earned a Masters Degree. Forty-eight (36.9%) participants indicated that they had earned a Bachelor's degree. Three (n = 3, 2.3%) had earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree, and one (n = 1, 0.8%) participant indicated that they had earned a MD/DVM/JD/DD. Table 4 presents data regarding the sample's highest level of education.

Table 4
Highest Level of Education Reported by 4-H Agents/Educators Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Agents/Educators Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BS/BA</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA/MS/MEd</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/EdD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD/DVM/JD/DD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Ethnicity**

The third variable on which the participants were described was ethnicity. The majority of the State 4-H Program Leaders reported their race as “White” (n = 29, 90.6%). One participant indicated their ethnicity as “African American” (3.1%). One participant indicated their ethnic background as “Native American” (3.1%), and one participant indicted their ethnicity as “Other” (3.1%), they indicated their ethnicity as White/Native America.

The majority of the 4-H Youth Development Specialist reported their race as “White” (n = 175, 93.7%). Four participants indicated their ethnic background as “African American” (2.1%). Seven participants indicated their ethnicity as “Latino” (3.7%), and one participant indicted their ethnicity as “Other” (0.5%), they indicated their ethnicity as Dutch-Oregonian.

The majority of the 4-H Agents/Educators reported their race as “White” (n = 116, 89.3%). Four participants indicated their ethnic background as “African American” (3.1%). Four indicated their ethnic background as “Asian/Pacific Islander” (3.1%). Two participants indicated their ethnicity as “Latino” (1.5%), two indicated their ethnic background as “Native American” (1.5%), and two participants indicted their ethnicity as “Other” (1.5%), these two participants provided their ethnicity as Acadian and Mixed.

**Total Number of Years Served in Current Position**

The fourth variable on which respondents were described was their “Total Number of Years Served in Current Position.” This variable was captured as an interval variable and then converted into categories. Most State 4-H Program Leaders have been serving in their position for “1 to 5 years” (n = 20, 62.5%). One participant had served for “16 to 20 years” (3.1%), one participant had served for “21 to 25 years” (3.1%), and one participant had served for “26 to 30 years” (3.1%). Additional
information on State 4-H Program Leader’s total number of years served in current position is provided in Table 5.

Table 5
Total Number of Years Served in Current Position Reported by State 4-H Program Leaders Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leaders Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 25 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 30 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 35 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 40 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 45 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The descriptive statistics for the interval variable are: M = 5.39; SD = 5.2; Range was 1 to 25.

The majority of 4-H Youth Development Specialists reported that they had served for “1 to 5 years” in their current position (n = 67, 36.4%). The second largest group reported that they had served “6 to 10 years” (n = 33, 25.8%) in their current position. The lowest total number of years served in current position was for the category “41 to 45 years” (n = 1, 0.5%). Additional information on 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s total number of years served in current position is provided in Table 6.

Table 6
Total Number of Years Served in Current Position Reported by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 years</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 years</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
The majority of 4-H Agents/Educators reported that they had served for “1 to 5 years” in their current position (n = 41, 31.5%). The second largest group reported that they had served “6 to 10 years” (n = 33, 25.8%) in their current position. The lowest total number of years served in current position were for the categories “31 to 35 years” (n = 1, 0.8%) and “36 to 40 years” (n = 1, 0.8%). Additional information on 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s total number of years served in current position is provided in Table 7.

Table 7
Total Number of Years Served in Current Position Reported by 4-H Agents/Educators Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Agents/Educators Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 years</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 25 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 30 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 35 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 40 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 45 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The descriptive statistics for the interval variable are: \( M = 11.08; \ SD = 8.2; \) Range was 1 to 36.

aThree participants did not indicate their years of service in their current position.
Volunteer Service in Other Youth Organizations

Respondents were additionally described on the variable “Volunteer Service in Other Youth Organizations.” The respondents were asked to check all of the following youth serving organizations in which they served as a volunteer, the response categories were “Boy Scouts,” “FCCLA,” “Girl Scouts,” “Sports,” “Boys and Girls Club,” “Band/Choir/Orchestra,” “FFA,” “School Clubs (FBLA, Key Club, etc.),” “YMCA,” “Religious,” “Other, please specify.” The largest number of State 4-H Program Leaders indicated they served as volunteers for “Religious” youth serving organizations \((n = 13, 33.3\%)\). and the second largest group indicated that they served as volunteers for “Sports” youth serving organizations \((n = 7, 17.9\%)\). None of the respondents indicated that they served as volunteers for “Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)” \((n = 0, 0.0\%)\), or “Boys and Girls Clubs” \((n = 0, 0.0\%)\), or “YMCA” \((n = 0, 0.0\%)\) youth serving organizations. Additional information on youth serving organizations in which State 4-H Program Leaders served as a volunteer is provided in Table 8.

Table 8
 Volunteer Service in Other Youth Organizations Reported by State 4-H Program Leaders Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leaders Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(^b)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band/Choir/Orchestra</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Farmers of America (FFA)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Clubs (FBLA, Key Club, etc.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Scouts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scouts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Club</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) 0 0.0
Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) 0 0.0
Totala 39

Note. Ten individuals did not respond to this item. Range 1-5 organizations.
Total does not equal 100% due to the respondent's ability to select multiple responses.
Five respondents selected the category “Other” and indicated the following responses:
4-H (n = 3), Big Brother/Big Sister (n = 1), Upward Bound Youth (n = 1), Rotary Youth (n = 1), One respondent indicated that they volunteered for two youth serving organizations in the “other” category.

The largest number of 4-H Youth Development Specialists served as volunteers for “Religious” (n = 77, 29.2%) youth serving organizations. The second largest group of 4-H Youth Development Specialists indicated that they volunteer for “Other” (n = 45, 17.0%) youth serving organizations. Forty five respondents selected the category “Other” and indicated the following responses: 4-H (n = 25), community events (n = 5), Collegiate 4-H (n = 1), American Red Cross (n = 1), Civil Air Patrol (n = 1), Campfire Clubs (n = 1), Juvenile Justice (n = 1), Advisory Board (n = 1), GED Tutoring (n = 1), Library (n = 1), Youth Leadership Athens (n = 1), YWCA (n = 1), Youth Serving Agency (n = 1), Fraternity Advisory (n = 1), Mentor (n = 1), National Chianna Association (n = 1), School Sports (n = 1), Big Brothers/Big Sisters (n = 1), Outdoor Recreation (n = 1) (Two respondents indicated that they volunteered for two youth serving organizations in the “other” category). Both “FCCLA” (n = 5, 1.9%) and “YMCA” (n = 5, 1.9%) were two youth serving organizations in which the 4-H Youth Development Specialist indicated they served as volunteers for the least. Detailed information on youth serving organizations that 4-H Youth Development Specialists served is provided in Table 9.

Table 9
Volunteer Service in Other Youth Organizations Reported by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
The largest number of 4-H Agents/Educators indicated that they served as volunteers for “Religious” \( (n = 59, 28.8\%) \) youth serving organizations. The second largest group indicated that they served as volunteers for “Sports” \( (n = 30, 14.6\%) \) youth serving organizations. The smallest number of 4-H Agents/Educators indicated that they had served as volunteers in the “YMCA” \( (n = 4, 2.0\%) \) youth serving organization. Additional information on youth serving organizations in which 4-H Agents/Educators served as a volunteer is provided in Table 10.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>( n )</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(^b)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Scouts</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Farmers of America (FFA)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scouts</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Clubs (FBLA, Key Club, etc.)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band/Choir/Orchestra</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Club</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>205</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Twenty-four individuals did not respond to this item. Range 1-5 organizations.*

a Total does not equal 100% due to the respondent’s ability to select multiple responses.

b Five respondents selected the category “Other” and indicated the following responses:
- 4-H (n = 13), Children’s Museum (n = 1), Junior Fair Board (n = 1), Volunteer to host youth activities (n = 1), Youth Director (n = 1), United Way (n = 1), Chamber of Commerce (n = 1), Special interest areas (n = 1), School PTA (n = 1), PTSA (n = 1), Project Graduation (n = 1), Community (n = 1), Library (n = 1), School Board (n = 1), Special Olympics (n = 1), Make a Wish (n = 1), Red Cross (n = 1). Two respondents indicated that they volunteered for two youth serving organizations in the “other” category.

**Number of Trainings on Youth Voice**

Participants were also asked to indicate the number of trainings on youth voice that they have attended. The respondents were asked to choose from a list of categories indicating the number of trainings they have attended over their career that focused on or addressed the topic of youth voice in the decision making process. The categories in which the respondents could choose from were as follows: “No Training,” “1 to 5 trainings,” “6 to 10 trainings,” “11 to 15 trainings,” “16 to 20 trainings,” and “> 20 trainings.”

The largest group of State 4-H Program Leaders (n = 12, 37.5%) indicated that they attended at least “1 to 5 trainings.” The second largest group (n = 11, 34.4%) indicated that they attended “> 20 trainings.” The smallest group (n = 0, 0.0%) indicated that they received “No Training” on youth voice in the decision-making process. Data regarding the number of trainings on youth voice that 4-H State Program Leaders have attended is presented in Table 11.

The largest group State 4-H Youth Development Specialists (n = 83, 44.4%) indicated that they attended at least “1 to 5 trainings”. The second largest group (n = 41, 21.9%) indicated that they attended “6 to 10 trainings”. The smallest group (n = 6, 3.2%)
indicated that they received “No Training” on youth voice in the decision-making process. Data regarding the number of trainings on youth voice that 4-H Youth Development Specialists have attended is presented in Table 12.

Table 11
Number of Trainings on Youth Voice Reported by State 4-H Program Leaders Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leaders Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Trainings</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 trainings</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 trainings</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 trainings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 trainings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 20 trainings</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12
Number of Trainings on Youth Voice Reported by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Trainings</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No training</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 trainings</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 trainings</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 trainings</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 trainings</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 20 trainings</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>187</td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest of group of 4-H Agents/Educators (n = 60, 46.2%) indicated that they attended at least “1 to 5 trainings”. The second largest group (n = 34, 26.2%) indicated that they attended “6 to 10 trainings”. The smallest group (n = 4, 3.1%) indicated that they received “No Training” on youth voice in the decision-making process. Data regarding the number of trainings on youth voice that 4-H Agents/Educators have attended is presented in Table 13.
Table 13
Number of Trainings on Youth Voice Reported by 4-H Agents/Educators Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Agents/Educators Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Trainings</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No training</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 trainings</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 trainings</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 trainings</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 trainings</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 20 trainings</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hours of Training**

Participants were also asked to indicate the hours of trainings on youth voice that they had attended. The respondents were asked to choose a list of categories on the number of hours of training they received over their career that have focused on or have addressed the topic of youth voice in the decision making process. The following categories in which they could choose from are as follows: “No Training,” “< 1 hour of training,” “1 to 5 hours of training,” “6 to 10 hours of training,” “11 to 15 hours of training,” “16 to 20 hours of training,” “21 to 25 hours of training,” “26 to 30 hours of training,” and “> 30 hours of training.”

The largest group of State 4-H Program Leaders (n = 12, 37.5%) indicated that they attended at least “1-5 hours of training.” The second largest group (n = 11, 34.4%) indicated that they attended “> 30 hours of training.” The smallest groups (n = 0, 0.0%) indicated that they received “< 1 hour of training” or “No Training” on youth voice in the decision-making process. Data regarding the number of hours of training on youth voice that 4-H State Program Leaders, have attended is presented in Table 14.

The largest group of State 4-H Youth Development Specialist (n = 83, 44.4%) indicated that they attended at least “1 to 5 hours of training.” The second largest group
(n = 41, 21.9%) indicated that they attended “6 to 10 hours of training.” The smallest group (n = 2, 1.1%) indicated that they received “< 1 hour of training” on youth voice in the decision-making process. Data regarding the number of hours of training on youth voice that 4-H Youth Development Specialist have attended is presented in Table 15.

Table 14  
Number of Hours of Training on Youth Voice Reported by State 4-H Program Leaders completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leaders Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Hours of Training</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 hour</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 hours</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 hours</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 hours</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 hours</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 25 hours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 30 hours</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 30 hours</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15  
Number of Hours of Training on Youth Voice Reported by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Hours of Training</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No training</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 hour</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 hours</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 hours</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 hours</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 hours</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 25 hours</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 30 hours</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 30 hours</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The largest group of 4-H Agents/Educators ($n = 28$, 21.52%) indicated that they attended “$> 30$ hours of training.” The second largest group ($n = 25$, 19.2%) indicated that they attended “1 to 5 hours of training.” The smallest groups ($n = 1$, 0.8%) indicated that they received “$< 1$ hour training” or “No Training” on youth voice in the decision-making process. Data regarding the number of hours of training on youth voice that 4-H Agents/Educators have attended is presented in Table 16.

### Table 16
Number of Hours of Training on Youth Voice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Hours of Training</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No training</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$&lt; 1$ hour</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 hours</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 hours</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 hours</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 hours</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 25 hours</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 30 hours</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$&gt; 30$ hours</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective Two**

The second objective was to determine the perception of State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program. The following Likert-type scale was used:”1 = Never,” “2 = Seldom,” “3 = Sometimes,” “4 = Often,” “5 = Always.” In addition, an interpretive scale was created and utilized to help in understanding the mean scores of each scale. The interpretive scale was created based on questions within the scales as they related to empirical research on youth voice and the youth development knowledge and
experience of an evaluation specialist, youth development specialist, and two youth 4-H agents with youth development specializations. The following interpretative scale was developed for the perception scores:

1.00 to 1.99 -------------------------- No Youth Voice;
2.00 to 2.99 -------------------------- Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults;
3.00 to 3.99 -------------------------- Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; and
4.00 to 5.00 -------------------------- Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership.

When State 4-H Leaders were asked to select the most appropriate response to indicate their level youth voice within their 4-H program, the highest overall mean ($M = 4.47$, $SD = .567$) was for the question, “As a 4-H Program Leader, I participate in making decisions concerning the 4-H program.” The lowest overall mean ($M = 3.69$, $SD = .821$) was for the question, “As a 4-H Program Leader, I make sure that youth are informed about important issues facing the 4-H program.”

Overall, three items on the scale were interpreted as “Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership,” and the remaining three items were interpreted as “Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control.”

Cronbach’s alpha, a measure of reliability (internal consistency), calculated for this section of the instrument was .832, which according to Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998) indicates an acceptable reliability. Data regarding the State 4-H Leader’s perception on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program is presented in Table 17.

When 4-H Youth Development Specialists were asked to select the most appropriate response to indicate the level youth voice within their 4-H program, the highest overall mean ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .695$) was for the question, “As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I participate in making decisions concerning the 4-H program.”
There were two items that shared the lowest overall mean, the following \((M = 3.50, SD = .845)\) was for the question, “As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth to contribute toward solving problems within the state 4-H program” and “As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth to take action on issues concerning 4-H on the state level” was the other \((M = 3.50, SD = .876)\).

Table 17
State 4-H Program Leader’s perception on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program as Reported by State 4-H Program Leaders Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 =Always
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.99 = No Youth Voice; 2.00 to 2.99 = Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults; 3.00 to 3.99 = Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; 4.00 to 5.00 = Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership.

Overall, one item on the scale was interpreted as “Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership,” and the remaining five items were interpreted as “Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control.”
Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s level youth voice within their 4-H program. The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .858, which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an acceptable reliability. Remaining data regarding 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s perceptions on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program is presented in Table 18.

Table 18

4-H Youth Development Specialist’s Perception on the Level of Youth Voice in the Decision-Making process within their 4-H Program State as Reported by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Development Specialists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State 4-H Youth Development Specialist</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth voice in discussions concerning 4-H activities and programs on the state level.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I make sure that youth are informed about important issues facing the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I participate in making decisions concerning the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth to contribute toward solving problems within the state 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth to take action on issues concerning 4-H on the state level.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth to serve in leadership roles within our state 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 =Always
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.99 = No Youth Voice; 2.00 to 2.99 = Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults; 3.00 to 3.99 = Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; 4.00 to 5.00 = Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership.
When 4-H Agent's/Educators were asked to please select the most appropriate response to indicate the level youth voice within their 4-H program, the highest overall mean (M = 4.48, SD = .718) was for the question, “As a 4-H Agents/Educators, I allow youth to serve in leadership roles within our county 4-H program.” The lowest overall mean (M = 4.07, SD = .809) was for the question, “As a 4-H Agents/Educators, I allow youth to take action on issues concerning 4-H on the county level.”

Overall, all six items on the scale were interpreted as “Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership.” In addition, Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s level youth voice within their 4-H program. The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .787, which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an acceptable reliability. Data regarding the 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s perception on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program is presented in Table 19.

Table 19
4-H Agent’s/Educator’s Perception on the Level of Youth Voice in the Decision-Making Process within their 4-H Program as Reported by 4-H Agents/ Educators Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Agents/Educators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-H Agents/ Educators</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a 4-H Agents/Educators, I allow youth voice in discussions concerning 4-H activities and programs on the county level.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a 4-H Agents/Educators, I make sure that youth are informed about important issues facing the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a 4-H Agents/Educators, I participate in making decisions concerning the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a 4-H Agents/Educators, I allow youth to contribute toward solving problems within the county 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
As a 4-H Agents/Educators, I allow youth to take action on issues concerning 4-H on the county level.  

As a 4-H Agents/Educators, I allow youth to serve in leadership roles within our county 4-H program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>130</th>
<th>4.07</th>
<th>.81</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Note: Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.99 = No Youth Voice; 2.00 to 2.99 = Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults; 3.00 to 3.99 = Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; 4.00 to 5.00 = Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership.

Objective Three

The third objective is to determine the perceptions of State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States regarding their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process. The following likert-type scale was used: "1 = Never," 2 = Seldom," 3 = Sometimes," 4 = Often," 5 = Always."

When State 4-H Program Leaders were asked to please select the most appropriate response to indicate their personal views on the level youth voice in the decision-making process in their 4-H program, the highest overall mean (M = 4.44, SD = .564) was for the question, “I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process.” The lowest overall mean (M = 3.28, SD = .813) was for the question, “I believe youth should create programs, but responsibilities should be shared by both youth and adults.”

Seven items on the scale were interpreted as “Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership,” and the remaining nine items were interpreted as “Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control.” Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the personal views of the State 4-H Program Leaders level of youth voice within the decision making process.
The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .764, which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an acceptable reliability.

Data regarding the State 4-H Leader’s perception of State 4-H Program Leader’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program is presented in Table 20.

Table 20
State 4-H Leader’s perception on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H Program as Reported by State 4-H Program Leaders Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State 4-H Program Leader</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Even though an idea for a program was initially identified by adults, I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning of the program to improve it.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for youth to be included in creating program activities even though the program idea was identified by adults.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for youth to be included in carrying out a program even though program ideas were identified by adults.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that when a program is identified by adults it is important to involve youth in promoting the program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is okay for adults to determine what’s best for youth.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.41*</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is okay to give youth little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.34*</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretive Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is acceptable for youth to give advice on planning programs, but all final decisions still need to be made by adults.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is okay for youth to be involved in carrying out a program, but adults still need to make the final decisions.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe youth should be asked what they would like to help with, not forced to do it.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe programs need to be started by adults, but planning should be shared by youth and adults.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe programs need to be started by adults, but carrying out the program should be shared by youth and adults.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of planning the project.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of carrying out the project.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe youth should create programs, but responsibilities should be shared by both youth and adults.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.99 = No Youth Voice; 2.00 to 2.99 = Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults; 3.00 to 3.99 = Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; 4.00 to 5.00 = Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership
Reverse coded items, 1 = Always, 2 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Seldom, 5 = Never

When 4-H Youth Development Specialists were asked to please select the most appropriate response to indicate their personal views on the level youth voice in the decision-making process in their 4-H program, the highest overall mean (M = 4.52, SD = 0.581) was for the question, “Even though an idea for a program was initially identified by adults, I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning of the program to improve it.” The lowest overall mean (M = 3.48, SD = 0.607) was for the question, “I believe it is okay for adults to determine what’s best for youth.”
Seven items on the scale were interpreted as “Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership,” and the remaining nine items were interpreted as “Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control.” Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the personal views of the 4-H Youth Development Specialists level of youth voice within the decision making process. The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .762, which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an acceptable reliability.

Data regarding the 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s perception of their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program is presented in Table 21.

Table 21
4-H Youth Development Specialist’s perception on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H Program as Reported by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Development Specialists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-H Youth Development Specialist</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Even though an idea for a program was initially identified by adults, I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning of the program to improve it.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for youth to be included in creating program activities even though the program idea was identified by adults.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for youth to be included in carrying out a program even though program ideas were identified by adults.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that when a program is identified by adults it is important to involve youth in promoting the program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is okay for adults to determine what’s best for youth.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.48*</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process.  

187 4.45 .64  Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership

I believe it is okay to give youth little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.  

187 4.47a .59  Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership

I believe it is acceptable for adults to assign youth to specific roles if adults inform them about how or why they are being involved in the activity.  

187 3.53a .63  Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control

I believe it is acceptable for youth to give advice on planning programs, but all final decisions still need to be made by adults.  

187 3.82a .65  Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control

I believe it is okay for youth to be involved in carrying out a program, but adults still need to make the final decisions.  

187 3.81a .67  Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control

I believe youth should be asked what they would like to help with, not forced to do it.  

187 4.39 .71  Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership

I believe programs need to be started by adults, but planning should be shared by youth and adults.  

187 3.81a .68  Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control

I believe programs need to be started by adults, but carrying out the program should be shared by youth and adults.  

187 3.81a .69  Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control

I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of planning the project.  

187 3.78 .76  Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control

I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of carrying out the project.  

187 3.72 .78  Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control

I believe youth should create programs, but responsibilities should be shared by both youth and adults.  

187 3.61 .82  Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control

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**Note:** Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always

Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.99 = No Youth Voice; 2.00 to 2.99 = Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults; 3.00 to 3.99 = Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; 4.00 to 5.00 = Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership.

*aReverse coded items, 1 = Always, 2 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Seldom, 5 = Never

When 4-H Agents/Educators were asked to please select the most appropriate response to indicate their personal views on the level youth voice in the decision-making process.
making process in their 4-H program, the highest overall mean ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .326$) was for the question, “I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process.” The lowest overall mean ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .314$) was for the question, “I believe it is okay for adults to determine what’s best for youth.”

Similar to State 4-H Program Leaders and 4-H Youth Specialist, seven items on the scale were interpreted as “Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership,” and the remaining nine items were interpreted as “Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control.” Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the personal views of the 4-H Agents/Educators level of youth voice within the decision making process. The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .831, which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an acceptable reliability.

Data regarding the State 4-H Leader’s perception of 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program are presented in Table 22.

Table 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-H Agents/Educators</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Even though an idea for a program was initially identified by adults, I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning of the program to improve it.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for youth to be included in creating program activities even though the program idea was identified by adults.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for youth to be included in carrying out a program even though program ideas were identified by adults.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe that when a program is identified by adults it is important to involve youth in promoting the program.</td>
<td>130 4.48 .44 Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is okay for adults to determine what’s best for youth.</td>
<td>130 3.38* .31 Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process.</td>
<td>130 4.56 .33 Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is okay to give youth little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.</td>
<td>130 4.53* .33 Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is acceptable for adults to assign youth to specific roles if adults inform them about how or why they are being involved in the activity.</td>
<td>130 3.53* .39 Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is acceptable for youth to give advice on planning programs, but all final decisions still need to be made by adults.</td>
<td>130 3.79* .39 Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is okay for youth to be involved in carrying out a program, but adults still need to make the final decisions.</td>
<td>130 3.82* .43 Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe youth should be asked what they would like to help with, not forced to do it.</td>
<td>130 4.34 .42 Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe programs need to be started by adults, but planning should be shared by youth and adults.</td>
<td>130 3.65* .44 Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe programs need to be started by adults, but carrying out the program should be shared by youth and adults.</td>
<td>130 3.71* .46 Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of planning the project.</td>
<td>130 3.72 .46 Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of carrying out the project.</td>
<td>130 3.78 .62 Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe youth should create programs, but responsibilities should be shared by both youth and adults.</td>
<td>130 3.65 .70 Youth Voice is Allowed, But (Table Continued) Adult Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always*
Objective Four

The fourth objective is to determine the perceptions of State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States State regarding the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process. The following response in which they could choose from are as follows: “1 = Never,” “2 = Seldom,” “3 = Sometimes,” “4 = Often,” “5 = Always.”

When State 4-H Program Leaders were asked to please select the most appropriate response the following statements as it relates to the organizational views of the 4-H program within your state on youth voice, the highest overall mean ($M = 3.66$, $SD = .545$) was for the question, “The Organization's culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or advance a cause that is identified by adults.” The lowest overall mean ($M = 3.31$, $SD = .644$) was for the question, “The Organization's culture believes programs or projects should be initiated by youth; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.”

All eight items on the scale were interpreted as “Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control.” Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the organizational views of the State 4-H Program Leaders level of youth voice within the decision making process. The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .652, which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an acceptable reliability.

Data regarding the perception of State 4-H Program Leader’s on the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program is presented in Table 23.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State 4-H Program Leader</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Organization's culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advance a cause that is identified by adults.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization's culture brings youth into the group; however, adults give them little</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or no choice about what they do or how they participate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization's culture assigns youth to specific roles and informs them on how or</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>why they are being involved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization's culture seeks advice from youth on programs; however, decisions are</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made by adults.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization's culture believes adults should initiate a program; however, decision</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making is shared by both youth and adults.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization's culture believes it is acceptable for youth to initiate a project</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization's culture believes it is acceptable for youth to direct a project</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization's culture believes programs or projects should be initiated by youth;</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.99 = No Youth Voice; 2.00 to 2.99 = Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults; 3.00 to 3.99 = Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; 4.00 to 5.00 = Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership.*

When 4-H Youth Development Specialists were asked to please select the most appropriate response the following statements as it relates to the organizational views of the 4-H program within your state on youth voice, the highest overall mean (M = 3.68,
SD = .617) was for the question, “The Organization's culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or advance a cause that is identified by adults.” The lowest overall mean (M = 3.26, SD = .755) was for the question, “The Organization's culture believes programs or projects should be initiated by youth; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.”

All eight items on the scale were interpreted as “Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control.” Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the organizational views of the 4-H Youth Development Specialists level of youth voice within the decision making process. The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .530, which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an unacceptable reliability.

Data regarding the perception of 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s on the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program is presented in Table 24.

Table 24
4-H Youth Development Specialist’s perceptions regarding the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H Program as Reported by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Development Specialists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-H Youth Development Specialist</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Organization's culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or advance a cause that is identified by adults.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.68a</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization's culture brings youth into the group; however, adults give them little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.60a</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization's culture assigns youth to specific roles and informs them on how or why they are being involved.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.55a</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
| The Organization's culture seeks advice from youth on programs; however, decisions are made by adults. | 187 | 3.59* | .56 | Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control |
| The Organization's culture believes adults should initiate a program; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults. | 187 | 3.43* | .54 | Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control |
| The Organization's culture believes it is acceptable for youth to initiate a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role. | 187 | 3.27 | .80 | Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control |
| The Organization's culture believes it is acceptable for youth to direct a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role. | 187 | 3.32 | .78 | Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control |
| The Organization's culture believes programs or projects should be initiated by youth; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults. | 187 | 3.26 | .76 | Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control |

*Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always

Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.99 = No Youth Voice; 2.00 to 2.99 = Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults; 3.00 to 3.99 = Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; 4.00 to 5.00 = Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership.

When 4-H Agent's/Educators were asked to please select the most appropriate response the following statements as it relates to the organizational views of the 4-H program within your state on youth voice, the highest overall mean ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .631$) was for the question, “The Organization's culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or advance a cause that is identified by adults.” The lowest overall mean ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .822$) was for the question, “The Organization's culture believes it is acceptable for youth to initiate a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.”

All eight items on the scale were interpreted as “Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control.” Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the organizational views of
the 4-H Agents/Educators level of youth voice within the decision making process. The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .584, which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an unacceptable reliability. Hair et al. (1998) that exploratory research may result in lower reliability scores and that with exploratory research a Cronbach’s alpha of .60 would be acceptable.

Data regarding the perception of 4-H Agent's/Educator’s on the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program is presented in Table 25.

Table 25
4-H Agent’s/Educator’s perceptions regarding the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H Program as Reported by 4-H Agents/Educators Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-H Agents/Educators</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Organization’s culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or advance a cause that is identified by adults.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization’s culture brings youth into the group; however, adults give them little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization’s culture assigns youth to specific roles and informs them on how or why they are being involved.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization’s culture seeks advice from youth on programs; however, decisions are made by adults.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization’s culture believes adults should initiate a program; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization’s culture believes it is acceptable for youth to initiate a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organization’s culture believes it is acceptable for youth to direct a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
The Organization's culture believes programs or projects should be initiated by youth; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.

Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control

Note: Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.99 = No Youth Voice; 2.00 to 2.99 = Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults; 3.00 to 3.99 = Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; 4.00 to 5.00 = Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership

Objective Five

The fifth objective is to determine the perceptions of State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States regarding their views on the factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process. The following response in which they could choose from are as follows: ”1 = Never,” “2 = Seldom,” “3 = Sometimes,” “4 = Often,” “5 = Always.” The following interpretive scale was developed for the perception mean scores as it pertains to factors that affect the level of youth voice in the 4-H program:

1.00 to 1.50 ----------------------- Never;
1.51 to 2.50 ----------------------- Seldom;
2.51 to 3.50 ----------------------- Sometimes;
3.51 to 4.50 ----------------------- Often; and
4.51 to 5.00 ----------------------- Always.

When State 4-H Program Leaders were asked to please select the most appropriate response the following statements as it relates to the factors affecting youths’ voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program within your state, the highest overall mean (M = 4.09, SD = .588) was for the question, “The level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.” The lowest overall mean (M = 2.22, SD = .832) was for the question, “Whether food is provided at activities/programs affects youth voice in the 4-H program.”
Thirteen items on the scale were interpreted as “Often” being a factor that affects the level of youth voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program. Twenty-one items were interpreted as “Sometimes” being a factor that affects the level of youth voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program and one was interpreted as “Seldom” being a factor that affects the level of youth voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program. Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the factors affecting youth voice as perceived by the State 4-H Program Leaders. The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .939, which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an acceptable reliability.

Data regarding the perception of State 4-H Program Leader’s on the factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H program is presented in Table 26.

Table 26
State 4-H Leader’s perceptions on the factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H program as Reported by State 4-H Program Leaders Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State 4-H Program Leader</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of transportation affects the level in which youth have a voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth understanding their role affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of communication skills by youth affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Likelihood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A lack of communication skills by adults affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The decision making skills of youth affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The decision making skills of adults affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult’s ability to deal with conflict affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth’s ability to deal with conflict affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability of youth and adults to work as a team affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability of adults to solve problems affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability of youth to solve problems affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity for youth to develop a caring relationship with adults affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult’s lack of self-esteem affects the level of youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth’s lack of self-esteem affects the level of youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult’s expectations of youth roles within the 4-H program affects youth voice.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth’s expectations of adult roles within the 4-H program affects youth voice.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult’s fear of sharing their ideas with youth affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
| Youth's fear of sharing their ideas with adults affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.53 | .67 | Often |
| Youth not having enough program options to participate in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.16 | .88 | Sometimes |
| An adult's past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.06 | 1.01 | Sometimes |
| A youth's past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.25 | .92 | Sometimes |
| Both youth and adults reflecting on experiences affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.53 | .80 | Often |
| Allowing adults access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.63 | .83 | Often |
| Allowing youth access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.50 | .92 | Sometimes |
| Both youth and adults awareness of the 4-H program's policies affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.78 | .66 | Often |
| The level of diversity within the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.34 | .90 | Sometimes |
| The level of recognition for adults in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 2.81 | 1.07 | Sometimes |
| The level of recognition for youth in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.03 | .97 | Sometimes |
| Adult’s fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.16 | .95 | Sometimes |
| Youth’s fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program. | 32 | 3.09 | .73 | Sometimes |

(Table Continued)
The level in which the organization accepts youth involvement in the decision making process affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

32 3.84 .81 Often

Whether food is provided at activities/programs affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

32 2.22 .83 Seldom

Adults having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

32 3.22 .83 Sometimes

Youth having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

32 3.63 .71 Often

Note. Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always.
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.50 = Never; 1.51 to 2.50 = Seldom; 2.51 to 3.50 = Sometimes; 3.51 to 4.50 = Often; and 4.51 to 5.00 = Always.

When 4-H Youth Development Specialists were asked to please select the most appropriate response the following statements as it relates to the factors affecting youths' voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program within your state, the highest overall mean (M = 4.26, SD = .648) was for the question, “The level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.” The lowest overall mean (M = 2.77, SD = .793) was for the question, “The level of recognition for adults in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.”

Fourteen items on the scale were interpreted as “Often” being a factor that affects the level of youth voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program. Twenty-two items were interpreted as “Sometimes” being a factor that affects the level of youth voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program. Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the factors affecting youth voice as perceived by the 4-H
Youth Development Specialists. The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .924, which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an acceptable reliability.

Data regarding the perception of 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s on the factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H program is presented in Table 27.

Table 27
4-H Youth Development Specialist’s perceptions on the factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H program as Reported by 4-H Youth Development Specialists Completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Development Specialists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-H Youth Development Specialist</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of transportation affects the level in which youth have a voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth understanding their role affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of communication skills by youth affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of communication skills by adults affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The decision making skills of youth affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The decision making skills of adults affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult’s ability to deal with conflict affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth’s ability to deal with conflict affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability of youth and adults to work as a team affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability of adults to solve problems affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability of youth to solve problems affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity for youth to develop a caring relationship with adults affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult’s lack of self-esteem affects the level of youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth’s lack of self-esteem affects the level of youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult’s expectations of youth roles within the 4-H program affects youth voice.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth’s expectations of adult roles within the 4-H program affects youth voice.</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult’s fear of sharing their ideas with youth affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth’s fear of sharing their ideas with adults affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth not having enough program options to participate in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult's past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A youth’s past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both youth and adults reflecting on experiences affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults being aware of the objectives of the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing adults access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing youth access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both youth and adults awareness of the 4-H program’s policies affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of diversity within the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of recognition for adults in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of recognition for youth in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
Adult’s fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program. 187 3.37 .93 Sometimes

Youth’s fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program. 187 3.25 .83 Sometimes

The level in which the organization accepts youth involvement in the decision making process affects youth voice in the 4-H program. 187 4.01 .82 Often

Whether food is provided at activities/programs affects youth voice in the 4-H program. 187 2.78 .91 Sometimes

Adults’ having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program. 187 3.68 .71 Often

Youth having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program. 187 3.90 .64 Often

Note. Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.50 = Never; 1.51 to 2.50 = Seldom; 2.51 to 3.50 = Sometimes; 3.51 to 4.50 = Often; and 4.51 to 5.00 = Always.

When 4-H Agents/Educators were asked to please select the most appropriate response the following statements as it relates to the factors affecting youths’ voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program within your state, the highest overall mean (M = 4.14, SD = .775) was for the question, “The level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.” The lowest overall mean (M = 2.90, SD = .870) was for the question, “The level of recognition for adults in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.”

Fifteen items on the scale were interpreted as “Often” being a factor that affects the level of youth voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program. Twenty-one items were interpreted as “Sometimes” being a factor that affects the level of youth voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program. Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the factors affecting youth voice as perceived by the 4-H Agents/Educators.
The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .954, which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an acceptable reliability.

Data regarding the perception of 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s on the factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H program is presented in Table 28.

### Table 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-H Agents/Educators</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of transportation affects the level in which youth have a voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth understanding their role affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of communication skills by youth affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of communication skills by adults affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The decision making skills of youth affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The decision making skills of adults affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult’s ability to deal with conflict affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth’s ability to deal with conflict affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability of youth and adults to work as a team affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability of adults to solve problems affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability of youth to solve problems affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
The opportunity for youth to develop a caring relationship with adults affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Adult’s lack of self-esteem affects the level of youth voice in the 4-H program.

Youth’s lack of self-esteem affects the level of youth voice in the 4-H program.

An adult’s expectations of youth roles within the 4-H program affects youth voice.

Youth’s expectations of adult roles within the 4-H program affects youth voice.

An adult’s fear of sharing their ideas with youth affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Youth’s fear of sharing their ideas with adults affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Youth not having enough program options to participate in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

An adult’s past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

A youth’s past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Both youth and adults reflecting on experiences affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Adults being aware of the objectives of the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Allowing adults access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Allowing youth access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Both youth and adults awareness of the 4-H program’s policies affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

The level of diversity within the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

The level of recognition for adults in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

The level of recognition for youth in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

(Table Continued)
Adult’s fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program.  

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Youth’s fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program.  

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The level in which the organization accepts youth involvement in the decision making process affects youth voice in the 4-H program.  

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Whether food is provided at activities/programs affects youth voice in the 4-H program.  

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Adults having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program.  

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Youth having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program.  

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</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always  
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.50 = Never; 1.51 to 2.50 = Seldom; 2.51 to 3.50 = Sometimes; 3.51 to 4.50 = Often; and 4.51 to 5.00 = Always.

**Objective Six**

The sixth objective was to determine if there are an underlying constructs on the personal views on youth voice in the decision- making process of State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Agents/ Educators.

To compare perceptions of State 4-H Program Leader’s, 4-H Youth Development Specialist, and 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s personal views on youth voice within the decision-making process as measured by the personal views section on the Youth Voice in the Decision-making Process Survey. All three populations (State 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists and 4-H Agents/Educators) were combined in order to an adequate ratio of participants to items. In order to achieve this objective, individual personal views mean scores were computed for each participant. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was further employed to determine the existence of latent constructs. Principal axis factoring and promax rotation was used to analyze the 16 interval level instrument variables. The specific variables loading on the construct...
overall personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process were summed to calculate each participant’s (n = 349) individual satisfaction mean score.

Factor analysis calculations revealed a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy value of 0.770. The KMO value tests whether the partial correlations among variables are small. Values equal to or greater than 0.5 are preferred and acceptable; therefore, with a KMO of .770, the sampling adequacy was determined to be satisfactory for the 349 participants for whom data was entered. In addition, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was conducted. The Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity examines if there is a presence of correlations among the variables. It provides the statistical probability that the correlation matrix has significant correlations among at least some of the variables. Significance levels of 0.05 or lower indicate that the strength of the relationships between variables is strong and acceptable for factor analysis. Therefore, since the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity had a significance level of .001, it was concluded that the strength of the relationships between variables is strong and acceptable for factor analysis (Hair, et al., 1998).

An initial exploratory factor analysis, requesting eigenvalues over the numerical value of one, was performed. The initial model yielded a solution with the highest three eigenvalues noted to be 4.317, 2.100, and 1.759 respectively. These three initial factors were demonstrated to explain approximately 51.1% of the variance as it pertains to the personal views of 4-H State Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialist, and 4-H Agents/Educators on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H program. In addition, a scree plot was utilized, which revealed a flattening of the curve between factors two and four; therefore, signifying a favorable factor solution of three. Consequently, factor solutions were assessed and compared for the two through
four factor models using the following criteria: high loadings, absence of crossloadings, percentage of variance accounted for, and name/identification.

Models exhibiting simple structure contain variables that load highly on one factor. Optimal loading value for items in the study was determined to be 0.4. Items that loaded on primary factors with values of at least 0.4 and that additionally loaded on secondary factors with values of 0.4 and higher were considered as crossloading items in the study. The four factor model was examined and found that less than 5% of variance was explained by including the fourth factor which is one method of selecting the number of factors to retain (Pert, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003). The three factor model was also determined to conceptually fit the empirical literature better than the four factor solution. After the initial EFA analysis, an additional EFA was conducted forcing the 16 variables to load into three factors. Table 29 illustrates the variance distributions and eigenvalues (sum of factor squared loadings) for the initial, three-factor, and three-factor rotated solutions.

Table 29
Summed Squared Factor Loadings and Total Variance Explained for the Three Factor Extraction and Rotated Factor Solutions for Items Representing the State 4-H Program Leader’s, 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s, and 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Three-Factor Solution Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Percentage of Variance</th>
<th>Rotated Model Eigenvalues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.317</td>
<td>26.979</td>
<td>3.441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.100</td>
<td>13.126</td>
<td>2.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.759</td>
<td>10.991</td>
<td>2.521</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three identified factors were determined to represent and consequently labeled to represent the underlying latent constructs of “Adult Initiated Youth Involved,”
Youth Led Adult Supported,” and “Youth Involved, Adult Decision-Making.” A total of 10 items loaded ranging from .414 to .792. These factors with associated item loadings are presented in Table 30.

Table 30
Variables and Factor Loadings for Items Representing State 4-H Program Leader’s, 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s, and 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process for their Using Principle Axis Factoring and Promax Rotation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Factor 1 (Adult Initiated, Youth Involved)</th>
<th>Factor 2 (Youth Led, Adult Supported)</th>
<th>Factor 3 (Youth Involved, Adult Decision-Making)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for youth to be included in creating program activities even though the program idea was identified by adults. (#2-2)</td>
<td>.733</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even though an idea for a program was initially identified by adults, I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning of the program to improve it. (#2-1)</td>
<td>.732</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for youth to be included in carrying out a program even though program ideas were identified by adults. (#2-3)</td>
<td>.731</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process. (#2-6)</td>
<td>.693</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that when a program is identified by adults it is important to involve youth in promoting the program. (#2-4)</td>
<td>.537</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe programs need to be started by adults, but carrying out the program should be shared by youth and adults. (#2-13) RC</td>
<td>.414</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of carrying out the project. (#2-15) .792

I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of planning the project. (#2-14) .768

I believe it is acceptable for youth to give advice on planning programs, but all final decisions still need to be made by adults. (#2-9) RC .516

I believe it is acceptable for youth to give advice on carrying-out a program, but adults need to make all final decisions.(#2-10) RC .459

Since items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 13 specifically either referenced or included the term “adult initiated”, the a priori hypothesis regarding the inclusion of these specific items in each subject’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process the score was not rejected, as items 1,2,3,4, 6, and 13 were determined to be among the 5 items which loaded on the first construct “adult initiated, youth involved.”

Examination of the sub-scales scores indicated that State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Agents/Educators reported they “often” include youth in the decision-making process (M = 4.34, SD = .09), which on the interpretative scaled indicated “Youth Voice, Youth/ Adult Partnerships.” The Cronbach’s alpha for factor one is .824 which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates and acceptable reliability. Factor one’s means and standard deviations are presented in Table 31.

Since items 9 and 10 specifically either referenced or included the term “youth led, adult supported”, the a priori hypothesis regarding the inclusion of these specific items in each subject’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process the score was not rejected, as items 9 and 10 were determined to be among the 2 items
which loaded on the second construct “youth led, adult supported.” Examination of the sub-scales scores indicated that State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Agents/Educators reported they “often” include youth in the decision-making process ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .42$), which on the interpretative scaled indicated “Youth Voice Allowed but Adult Control.” The Cronbach’s alpha for factor two is .756 which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates and acceptable reliability. Factor two’s means and standard deviations are presented in Table 32.

Table 31
Factor One (Adult Initiated, Youth Involved) Variables, Means, Standard Deviations for Items Representing the Personal Views of State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialist, and 4-H Agents/Educators on Youth Voice in the Decision-making Process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Even though an idea for a program was initially identified by adults, I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning of the program to improve it. (#2-1)</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for youth to be included in creating program activities even though the program idea was identified by adults. (#2-2)</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for youth to be included in carrying out a program even though program ideas were identified by adults. (#2-3)</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that when a program is identified by adults it is important to involve youth in promoting the program. (#2-4)</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process. (#2-6)</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe programs need to be started by adults, but carrying out the program should be shared by youth and adults. (#2-12) RC</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.99 = No Youth Voice; 2.00 to 2.99 = Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults; 3.00 to 3.99 = Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; 4.00 to 5.00 = Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership
Reverse coded items, 1 = Always, 2 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Seldom, 5 = Never
Table 32
Factor Two (Youth Led, Adult Supported) Variables, Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Items Representing the Personal Views of State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialist, and 4-H Agents/Educators on Youth Voice in the Decision-making Process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean ( ^a )</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is acceptable for youth to give advice on planning programs, but all final decisions still need to be made by adults. (#2-9) RC</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is okay for youth to be involved in carrying out a program, but adults still need to make the final decisions. (#2-10) RC</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.99 = No Youth Voice; 2.00 to 2.99 = Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults; 3.00 to 3.99 = Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; 4.00 to 5.00 = Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership
\( ^a \)Reverse coded items, 1 = Always, 2 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Seldom, 5 = Never

Since items 14 and 15 specifically either referenced or included the term “youth involved, adult decision-making”, the \( a \ priori \) hypothesis regarding the inclusion of these specific items in each subject’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process the score was not rejected, as items 14 and 15 were determined to be among the 2 items which loaded on the third construct “youth involved, adult decision-making.”

Examination of the sub-scales scores indicated that State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Agents/Educators reported they “often” include youth in the decision-making process (\( M = 3.75, \text{SD} = .64 \)), which on the interpretative scaled indicated “Youth Voice Allowed but Adult Control.” The Cronbach’s alpha for factor three is .919 which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates and acceptable reliability. Factor three’s means and standard deviations are presented in Table 33.

Three factors representing participants’ assessments of “adult initiated, youth involved,” “youth led, adult supported,” and “youth involved, adult decision-making” were formulated and developed from data generated from the exploratory factor analysis.
Individual items for the three subscales consisted of those original 16 interval level items that loaded on each of the three identified factors. Subscale one “adult initiated, youth involved,” consisted of 5 items, subscale two “youth led, adult supported,” consisted of 2 items, and subscale three “youth involved, adult decision-making” consisted of 2 items.

Table 33
Factor Three (Youth Involved, Adult Decision-Making) Variables, Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Items Representing the Personal Views of State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialist, and 4-H Agents/Educators on Youth Voice in the Decision-making Process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of planning the project. (#2-14)</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of carrying out the project. (#2-15)</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Response based on Likert-type scale with values: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 =Always
Interpretive scale: 1.00 to 1.99 = No Youth Voice; 2.00 to 2.99 = Youth Voice Allowed, But Not Acted Upon by Adults; 3.00 to 3.99 = Youth Voice is Allowed, But Adult Control; 4.00 to 5.00 = Youth Voice, Youth/Adult Partnership

Cronbach’s alpha measure of reliability (internal consistency) was calculated for the section of the instrument that determined the State 4-H Program Leader’s, 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s and 4-H Agents/Educator’s personal view’s on youth voice in the decision-making process. Cronbach’s alpha is a measure of reliability that ranges from 1 to 0, with values of .60 deemed the lower limit of acceptability for exploratory research (Hair et al., 1998). The Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to be .792 which according to Hair et al. (1998) indicates an acceptable reliability.

Objective Seven
The seventh objective was to determine if a relationship exists between perceived personal views of youth voice in the decision-making process by State 4-H
Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators and the following variables:

a. Years served in current position;

b. Number of trainings on youth voice; and

c. Number of hours of training youth voice.

The correlations were analyzed using Kendall’s Tau due to the ordinal nature of the data. Kendall’s Tau was used to determine if there was a relationship between the years served in the current position, number of trainings, and hours of trainings on their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process.

When investigating if a relationship did exist between the years served in current position, number of trainings and hours of training that State 4-H Program Leaders received and their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process, it was found that there was not a significant relationship. The years served in current position (tau = -.019, \( p = .895 \)) was found to a negligible relationship, and the number of trainings (tau = .191, \( p = .174 \)) and the hours of training (tau = .109, \( p = .427 \)) were found to have a low relationship to the personal view’s of 4-H Youth Development Specialist on youth voice in the decision-making process. Table 34 presents the Kendall Tau results of the correlations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-H State Program Leaders</th>
<th>tau</th>
<th>( p^b )</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years served in current position</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>(.895)</td>
<td>Negligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Trainings</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td>(.174)</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Hours of Training</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>(.427)</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Interpretations according to Davis’s (1971) descriptors: .01-.09 (negligible), .10-.29 (low), .30-.49 (moderate), .50-.69 (substantial), .70-.99 (very high).

\(^a\) n = a total of 32 participants responded to this item.

\(^b\) Two Tailed Alpha .05
When investigating if a relationship did exist between the years served in current position by 4-H Youth Development Specialists and their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process, the data indicated that there was not a significant relationship. However, the number of trainings and hours of training that 4-H Youth Development Specialists received and their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process was found to have a statistically significant relationship. The years served in current position (\(\tau = -.084, p = .130\)) was found to a negligible relationship, and the number of trainings (\(\tau = .161, p = .004\)) and the hours of training (\(\tau = .106, p = .001\)) were found to have a low relationship to the personal view’s of 4-H Youth Development Specialist on youth voice in the decision-making process. As 4-H Youth Development Specialists attend more hours of trainings and thus number of trainings their personal view of youth voice in the decision-making process fosters youth voice. Table 35 presents the Kendall’s Tau results of the correlations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-H Youth Development Specialist</th>
<th>(\tau)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years served in current position</td>
<td>-.084</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>Negligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Trainings</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Hours of Training</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Interpretations according to Davis’s (1971) descriptors: .01-.09 (negligible), .10-.29 (low), .30-.49 (moderate), .50-.69 (substantial), .70-.99 (very high).

\(\text{\textsuperscript{a}}\) n = a total of 187 participants responded to this item.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{b}}\) Two Tailed Alpha .05.

When investigating if a relationship did exist between the years served in current position by 4-H Agents/Educators and their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process, the data indicated that there was not a significant relationship. However, the number of trainings and hours of training that 4-H Agents/Educators
received and their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process was found to have a statistically significant relationship. The years served in current position (tau = .025, p = .707) was found to a negligible relationship, and the number of trainings (tau = .243, p = .001) and the hours of training (tau = .181, p = .005) were found to have a low relationship to the personal view’s of 4-H Agents/Educators on youth voice in the decision-making process. As 4-H Agents/Educators attend more hours of trainings and thus number of trainings their personal view of youth voice in the decision-making process fosters youth voice. Table 36 presents the Kendall’s Tau results of the correlations.

Table 36
Correlations between the 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process and number of years in current position, the number of trainings and the hours of training received on youth voice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-H Agents/Educators</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years served in current position</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>Negligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Trainings</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Hours of Training</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Interpretations according to Davis’s (1971) descriptors: .01-.09 (negligible), .10-.29 (low), .30-.49 (moderate), .50-.69 (substantial), .70-.99 (very high).

a n = a total of 130 participants responded to this item.
b Two Tailed Alpha .05.

Objective Eight

The eighth objective was to gather information on obstacles that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H youth development program utilizing open-ended questions.

To provide a summary of how each population responded to the open-ended questions, the researcher separated participant’s responses to the three open-ended questions into themes listed below (a complete list of responses to all open-ended questions by population can be found the in Appendixes E, F, G).
State 4-H Program Leaders:

1. What is the biggest obstacle to youth voice in the decision making process within 4-H?
   - Communication
   - Lack of Experience
   - Transportation
   - Organizational Culture
   - Respect/Value
   - Time/Scheduling
   - Expectations on Youth and Adults
   - Power/Control by Adults
   - Policy
   - Preparation
   - Involvement/Involvement Process

2. Why is it the biggest obstacle?
   - Leadership
   - Lack of Experience
   - Transportation
   - Staffing
   - Organizational Culture
   - Respect/Value
   - Accessibility of the Program
   - Time/Scheduling
   - Money
• Power/Control by Adults
• Policy
• Nonparticipation
• Preparation
• Training
• Involvement/Involvement Process
• Generational Gap

3. List any additional concerns or comments you may have regarding the topic of youth voice in the decision making process?

• National Role
• Inclusion of youth on Boards/Committees
• Developmental Stages Impact on Youth Voice Impact
• Youth Voice in Events vs. Policies
• Youth and Adult Ratios
• Youth Voice as a Tradition
• Organizational Culture

4-H Youth Development Specialists

1. What is the biggest obstacle to youth voice in the decision making process within 4-H?

• Leadership
• Lack of Experience
• Youth/Adult Partnership
• Confidence
• Transportation
• Competition
• Resources
• Fear
• Organizational Culture
• Respect/Value
• Time/Scheduling
• Expectations on Youth and Adults
• Money
• Power/Control
• Policy
• Risk Management
• Preparation
• Training
• Acting on Youth’s Wants
• Adults Not Wanting Sharing Experiences
• Youth’s Developmental Stage
• Authentic Voice
• Involvement/Involvement Process
• Generational Gap

2. Why is it the biggest obstacle?
• Lack of Experience
• Transportation
• Fear
• Organizational Culture
• Respect/Value
• Accessibility
• Time/Scheduling
• Expectations on Youth
• Competition
• Money
• Adult Power/Control
• Policy
• Risk Management
• Nonparticipation
• Preparation
• Training
• Acting on Youth’s Wants
• Adults Not Wanting Sharing Experience
• Youth’s Developmental Stage
• Authentic Voice
• Involvement Process
• Generational Gap
• Vision

3. List any additional concerns or comments you may have regarding the topic of youth voice in the decision making process?

• National Role
• Inclusion of youth on Boards/Committees
• Developmental Stages Impact on Youth Voice Impact
Youth’s View of 4-H
Youth Voice in Events vs. Policies
Youth and Adult Roles
Organizational Culture
Youth Capacity
Developing Youth Voice
Resources and Support
Training
Importance of Youth Voice
Staffing
Accessibility
Turnover
Competition
Involvement Process/Involvement

**4-H Agents/Educators**

1. What is the biggest obstacle to youth voice in the decision making process within 4-H?

   • Communication
   • Leadership
   • Lack of Experience/Confidence
   • Staffing/Staff Support
   • Transportation
   • Fear
   • Organizational Culture
• Respect/Value
• Time/Scheduling
• Expectations/Beliefs on Youth and Adults
• Money
• Power/Control by Adults
• Nonparticipation
• Diversity
• Preparation
• Training
• Authentic Voice
• Involvement/Involvement Process
• Turnover

2. Why is it the biggest obstacle?

• Leadership
• Lack of Experience/Knowledge/Confidence
• Communication/Sharing Views
• Transportation
• Parental Support
• Fear
• Organizational Culture
• Respect/Value
• Time/Scheduling
• Expectations on Youth and Adults
• Money
• Power/Control by Adults
• Risk Management
• Nonparticipation
• Diversity
• Competition with Activities
• Preparation
• Training
• Experiences
• Acting on Youth’s Wants
• Involvement/Involvement Process

3. List any additional concerns or comments you may have regarding the topic of youth voice in the decision making process?
• Inclusion of youth on Boards/Committees
• Youth and Adult Roles
• Time
• Organizational Culture Effects on Youth Voice
• Developing Youth Voice
• Resources, Training and Support
• Importance of Youth Voice
• Adult Power/Control
• Youth Capacity

Below in tables 37-39, emerging themes from State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Agents/Educators are compared for the three
open-ended questions contained in the survey. All responses to the questions are listed in full in Appendix E, F, and G.

Table 37
Emerging Themes for the Question, “What is the biggest obstacle to youth voice in the decision making process within 4-H?”, as reported by State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists and 4-H Agents/Educators completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>State 4-H Program</th>
<th>4-H Youth Development</th>
<th>4-H Agents/Educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth/Adult Partnership</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Management</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting on Youth’s Wants</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults Not Wanting Sharing Experiences</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth’s Developmental Stage</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Voice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational Gap</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Experience/Confidence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect/Value</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Scheduling</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations on Youth and Adults</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power/Control by Adults</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
Staffing/Staff Support  
Involvement/Involvement Process  X  X  X  
Money  X  
Non Participation  X  
Diversity  X  
Authentic Voice  X  
Turnover  X  

Note. An “X” indicates that the theme emerged within the identified population:

a A total of 32 State 4-H Program Leaders that responded to this particular question.
b A total of 168 4-H Youth Development Specialists that responded to this particular question.
c A total of 114 4-H Agents/Educators that responded to this particular question.

Table 38
Emerging Themes for the Question, “Why is it the biggest obstacle?”, as reported by State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists and 4-H Agents/Educators completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why is it the biggest obstacle?</th>
<th>State 4-H Program</th>
<th>4-H Youth Development</th>
<th>4-H Agents/Educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Experience/Knowledge/Confidence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect/Value</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility of the Program</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Scheduling</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power/Control by Adults</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonparticipation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continued)
Table 39
Emerging Themes for the Question, “List any additional concerns or comments you may have regarding the topic of youth voice in the decision making process?”, as reported by State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists and 4-H Agents/Educators completing the Level of Youth Voice within the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>State 4-H Program</th>
<th>4-H Youth Development Specialists(^b)</th>
<th>4-H Agents/Educators(^c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Role</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of youth on</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Stages Impact on Youth Voice Impact</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Voice in Events vs. Policies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth and Adult Ratios</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Voice as a Tradition</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. An “X” indicates that the theme emerged within the identified population.
\(^a\) A total of 32 State 4-H Program Leaders that responded to this particular question.
\(^b\) A total of 162 4-H Youth Development Specialists that responded to this particular question.
\(^c\) A total of 109 4-H Agents/Educators that responded to this particular question.
Youth Capacity  X  X
Developing Youth Voice  X  X
Youth’s View of 4-H  X
Youth and Adult Roles  X  X
Resources and Support  X  X
Importance of Youth Voice  X  X
Staffing  X
Accessibility  X
Turnover  X
Policy  X
Competition  X
Involvement Process/Involvement  X
Adult Power/Control  X
Time  X

Note. An “X” indicates that the theme emerged within the identified population
aA total of 8 State 4-H Program Leaders that responded to this particular question.
bA total of 56 4-H Youth Development Specialists that responded to this particular question.
cA total of 18 4-H Agents/Educators that responded to this particular question.
Chapter Five
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to determine the perception of inclusiveness of youth voice in the decision-making process as viewed by State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States. The specific research objectives explored in the study were:

1. To describe each State 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and selected 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States on the following selected demographic characteristics and perceptual measures:
   a. Gender;
   b. Highest level of education;
   c. Ethnicity;
   d. Volunteer service in other youth organizations;
   e. Years served in current position;
   f. Number of trainings on youth voice; and
   g. Number of hours of training on youth voice.

2. To determine the perception of each State 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and selected 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program.

3. To determine the perceptions of each State 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and selected 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States regarding their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process.
4. To determine the perceptions of each State 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and selected 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States regarding the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process.

5. To determine the perceptions of each State 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and selected 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States regarding their views on factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process.

6. The sixth objective was to conduct a factor analysis on the personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process of State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Agents/Educators.

7. The seventh objective was to determine if a relationship exists between perceived personal views of youth voice in the decision-making process by State 4-H Program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators and the following variables: 
   a. Years served in current position;
   b. Number of trainings on youth voice; and
   c. Number of hours of training on youth voice.

8. The eighth objective was to gather information on obstacles that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H youth development program utilizing open-ended questions.

**Procedures**

This was a national study where there were three target populations for this study. They were defined as State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialist, and 4-H Agents/Educators who voluntarily completed a survey on youth
voice in the decision-making process. A sample of 50 State 4-H Program Leaders, 406 Youth specialist, and 250 4-H Agents/Educators were identified and selected for participation in the study. For State 4-H Program Leaders, the sample size included all 50 4-H Program Leaders in all fifty states. For the 4-H Youth Development Specialist, an extensive search was conducted to identify 4-H Youth Development Specialists in all 50 states. To identify 4-H Agents/Educators, each State 4-H Program Leader was asked to identify five 4-H Agents/Educators based on the diversity and demographic of their state. The response rate for each population was 64% for State 4-H Program Leaders, 46% for 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 52% for 4-H Agents/Educators.

Data was collected utilizing an electronic survey that was delivered by e-mail. The Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program Survey (Appendix B, C, and D) was composed of 61 Likert-type items compiled with the intent of including the specific concepts viewed as instrumental to capturing the level of youth voice in the decision-making process as perceived by 4-H State Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialist, 4-H Agents/Educators. The survey consisted of four sections: youth voice in the decision-making process within your 4-H program; personal views on level of youth voice within the decision-making process in your 4-H program; organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process; factors effecting youth voice within the decision-making process within 4-H. Each section of the survey was measured utilizing a 5 point Likert-type survey developed specifically for purposes of this study. The survey additionally included items related to the participant’s demographics, qualitative questions that asked the participant’s opinion on youth voice.
A total of 706 participants were asked to complete the survey during the time period extending from May 17, 2006 through July 27, 2006. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential.

**Summary of Findings**

**Objective One**

Findings of objective one indicated that the greatest number of State 4-H Program Leaders were male (n = 19, 59.4%), and the majority of them (n = 21, 65.6%) reported that they had earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The majority of the State 4-H Program Leaders reported their race as “White” (n = 29, 90.6%). The remaining participants indicated that they were “African American” (n = 1, 19.7%), “Native American” (n = 1, 3.1%), and “Other” (n = 1, 3.1%). The youth-serving organizations in which State 4-H Program Leaders served the most was “Religious” (n = 13, 33.3%). The majority of State 4-H Program Leaders (n = 12, 37.5%) indicated that they attended at least 1-5 trainings on youth voice. The next largest group (n = 11, 34.4%) indicated that they attended greater than 20 trainings on youth voice. A majority of the State 4-H Program Leaders (n = 12, 37.5%) responded that they attended at least 1-5 trainings on youth voice. The next largest group (n = 11, 34.4%) indicated that they attended greater than 20 trainings on youth voice.

Findings of objective one also indicated that the greatest number of 4-H Youth Development Specialist were male (n = 19, 59.4%), and the majority of them (n = 107, 57.2%) reported that they had earned a Masters Degree. The majority of the 4-H Youth Development Specialist reported their race as “White” (n = 175, 93.6%). The youth-serving organizations in which 4-H Youth Development Specialist served the most was “Religious” (n = 77, 29.2%). Second was “Other” (n = 45, 17.0%). The majority of State 4-H Program Leaders (n = 12, 37.5%) indicated that they attended at least 1-5 trainings
on youth voice. The next largest group (n = 11, 34.4%) indicated that they attended greater than 20 trainings on youth voice. A majority of the State 4-H Program Leaders (n = 12, 37.5%) responded that they attended at least 1-5 trainings on youth voice. The next largest group (n = 11, 34.4%) indicated that they attended greater than 20 trainings on youth voice. The majority of State 4-H Youth Development Specialist (n = 83, 44.4%) indicated that they attended at least 1-5 trainings. The next largest group (n = 41, 21.9%) indicated that they attended 6-10 trainings.

Findings of objective one also indicated the gender of the 4-H Agents/Educators that participated in the study were majority female (n = 103, 79.2%). The majority of 4-H Agents/Educators (n = 78, 60.0%) reported that they had earned a Masters Degree, and the majority of the 4-H Agents/Educators reported their race as “White” (n = 116, 89.2%). The youth-serving organizations in which 4-H Agents/Educators served the most was “Religious” (n = 59, 28.8%), and second was “Sports” (n = 30, 14.6%). The majority of 4-H Agents/Educators (n = 60, 46.2%) indicated that they attended at least 1-5 trainings on youth voice. The next largest group (n = 34, 26.2%) indicated that they attended 6-10 trainings. The majority of 4-H Agents/Educators (n = 28, 21.52%) indicated that they attended greater than 30 hours of training on youth voice. The next largest group (n = 25, 19.2%) indicated that they attended 1-5 hours of training.

**Objective Two**

The findings from objective two determined the perception of each State 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and selected 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program.

The findings of objective two indicated the highest overall mean (M = 4.17, SD = .695) for State 4-H Program Leaders was for the question, “As a 4-H Youth
Development Specialist, I participate in making decisions concerning the 4-H program,” and the lowest overall mean (M = 3.69, SD = .821) was for the question, “As a 4-H Program Leader, I make sure that youth are informed about important issues facing the 4-H program.”

The findings of objective two indicated the highest overall mean for 4-H Youth Development Specialists (M = 4.17, SD = .695) was for the question, “As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I participate in making decisions concerning the 4-H program.” For 4-H Youth Development Specialist, there were two items that shared the lowest overall mean, the following (M = 3.50, SD = .845) was for the question, “As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth to contribute toward solving problems within the state 4-H program” and “As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth to take action on issues concerning 4-H on the state level” was the other (M = 3.50, SD = .876).

The final finding from objective two was 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s perception on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program. The highest overall mean (M = 4.48, SD = .718) was for the question, “As a 4-H Agents/Educators, I allow youth to serve in leadership roles within our state 4-H program.” The lowest overall mean (M = 4.07, SD = .809) was for the question, “As a 4-H Agents/Educators, I allow youth to take action on issues concerning 4-H on the state level.”

Objective Three

The findings from objective three determined the perceptions of each State 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and selected 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States regarding their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process.
The findings from objective three identified the perception of State 4-H Program Leader’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process. The highest overall mean (M = 4.44, SD = .564) was for the question, “I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process.” The lowest overall mean (M = 3.28, SD = .813) was for the question, “I believe youth should create programs, but responsibilities should be shared by both youth and adults.” However, it needs to be mentioned that for the statement “I believe it is okay to give youth little or no choice about what they do or how they participate” there was a mean of 4.34 (SD = .55). This was a reverse coded statement; therefore, it is perceived that State 4-H Program Leaders believe that it is okay to make decision for youth without their input.

The findings from objective three identified the 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s perception of their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process. The highest overall mean (M = 4.52, SD = .581) was for the question, “Even though an idea for a program was initially identified by adults, I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning of the program to improve it.” The lowest overall mean (M = 3.48, SD = .607) was for the question, “I believe it is okay for adults to determine what’s best for youth.” Once again, it needs to be mentioned that for the statement “I believe it is okay to give youth little or no choice about what they do or how they participate” there was a mean of 4.47 (SD = .59). This was a reverse coded statement; therefore, it is perceived that 4-H Youth Development Specialist believe that it is okay to make decision for youth without their input.

The findings from objective three identified the perception of 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process. The highest overall mean (M = 4.56, SD = .326) was for the question, “I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process.” The lowest overall mean
(M = 3.38, SD = .314) was for the question, “I believe it is okay for adults to determine what's best for youth.” As with State 4-H Program Leaders and 4-H Youth Development Specialist, 4-H Agents/Educators had a high mean of .34 (SD = .55) for the statement “I believe it is okay to give youth little or no choice about what they do or how they participate,” which was a reverse coded statement. Hence, it can be perceived that State 4-H Program Leaders believe that it is okay to make decision for youth without their input.

**Objective Four**

The findings from objective four determined the perceptions of each State 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and selected 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States State regarding the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process.

The findings from objective four identified 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s perceptions regarding the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process. The highest overall mean (M = 3.68, SD = .617) was for the question, “The Organization's culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or advance a cause that is identified by adults.” The lowest overall mean (M = 3.26, SD = .755) was for the question, “The Organization's culture believes programs or projects should be initiated by youth; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.”

The findings from objective four identified 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s perceptions regarding the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process. The highest overall mean (M = 3.31, SD = .644) was for the question, “The Organization's culture believes programs or projects should be initiated by youth; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.” The lowest overall mean (M = 3.26, SD = .755) was
for the question, “The Organization's culture believes programs or projects should be initiated by youth; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.”

The findings from objective four identified 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s perceptions regarding the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process. The highest overall mean ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .631$) was for the question, “The Organization's culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or advance a cause that is identified by adults.” The lowest overall mean ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .822$) was for the question, “The Organization's culture believes it is acceptable for youth to initiate a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.”

**Objective Five**

The findings from objective five determined the perceptions of each State 4-H Program Leader, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and selected 4-H Youth Agents/Educators throughout the United States regarding their views on the factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process.

The findings from objective five identified State 4-H Program Leader’s perceptions on the factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H program. The highest overall mean ($M = 4.09$, $SD = .588$) was for the question, “The level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.” The lowest overall mean ($M = 2.22$, $SD = .832$) was for the question, “Whether food is provided at activities/programs affects youth voice in the 4-H program.”

The findings from objective five identified 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s perceptions on the factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H program. The highest overall mean ($M = 4.26$, $SD = .648$) was for the question, “The level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program
affects youth voice in the 4-H program.” The lowest overall mean (M = 2.77, SD = .793) was for the question, “The level of recognition for adults in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.”

The findings from objective five also identified 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s perceptions on the factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H program. The highest overall mean (M = 4.14, SD = .775) was for the question, “The level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.” The lowest overall mean (M = 2.90, SD = .870) was for the question, “The level of recognition for adults in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.”

**Objective Six**

The sixth objective was to conduct a factor analysis on the personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process of State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Agents/Educators.

The factor analysis identified three factors that representing State 4-H Program Leader’s, 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s, and 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process. They are as follows: Adult Initiated, Youth Involved; Youth Led, Adult Supported; and Youth Involved, Adult Decision-Making.

**Objective Seven**

Objective seven determined if a relationship exist between each perceived personal views of youth voice in the decision-making process by State 4-H program Leaders, State 4-H Youth Development Specialists, and 4-H Youth Agents/Educators and years served in the current position, number of trainings on youth voice, and number of hours of trainings on youth voice. The correlations were analyzed using
Kendall's Tau due to the ordinal nature of the data. Kendall's Tau was used to determine if there was a relationship between the years served in the current position, number of trainings, and hours of trainings on their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process.

When investigating if a relationship did exist between the years served in current position, number of trainings and hours of training that State 4-H Program Leaders received and their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process, it was found that there was not a significant relationship. The years served in current position (tau = -.019, \( p = .895 \)) was found to a negligible relationship, and the number of trainings (tau = .191, \( p = .174 \)) and the hours of training (tau = .109, \( p = .427 \)) were found to have a low relationship to the personal view's of 4-H Youth Development Specialist on youth voice in the decision-making process.

When investigating if a relationship did exist between the years served in current position by 4-H Youth Development Specialists and their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process, the data indicated that there was not a significant relationship. However, the number of trainings and hours of training that 4-H Youth Development Specialists received and their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process was found to have a statistically significant relationship. The years served in current position (tau = -.084, \( p = .130 \)) was found to a negligible relationship, and the number of trainings (tau = .161, \( p = .004 \)) and the hours of training (tau = .106, \( p = .001 \)) were found to have a low relationship to the personal view's of 4-H Youth Development Specialist on youth voice in the decision-making process. As 4-H Youth Development Specialists attend more hours of trainings and thus number of trainings their personal view of youth voice in the decision-making process fosters youth voice.
When investigating if a relationship did exist between the years served in current position by 4-H Agents/Educators and their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process, the data indicated that there was not a significant relationship. However, the number of trainings and hours of training that 4-H Agents/Educators received and their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process was found to have a statistically significant relationship. The years served in current position (\(\tau = .025, p = .707\)) was found to a negligible relationship, and the number of trainings (\(\tau = .243, p = .001\)) and the hours of training (\(\tau = .181, p = .005\)) were found to have a low relationship to the personal view’s of 4-H Agents/Educators on youth voice in the decision-making process. As 4-H Agents/Educators attend more hours of trainings and thus number of trainings their personal view of youth voice in the decision-making process fosters youth voice.

**Objective Eight**

The eleventh objective was to gather information, utilizing open-ended questions, from State 4-H Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Specialist, and 4-H Agents/Educators on the obstacles that they perceived affected youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H youth development program. When asked the question what is the biggest obstacle to youth voice in the decision making process within 4-H, all three populations responded that lack of experience/confidence, transportation, organizational culture, respect/value of youth voice, time/scheduling, and power/control by adults were often barriers of youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H program. When asked the question why is it the biggest obstacle, all three populations responded that a organizational culture, respect/value of youth voice, power/control by
adults, nonparticipation of youth, training, and involvement/involvement process of youth voice in the decision making process.

Lastly, participants were asked list any additional concerns or comments they may have regarding the topic of youth voice in the decision making process, all three population responded by indicating that there should be inclusion of youth on boards/committees.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

**Conclusion One**

Gender for State 4-H Program Leaders and 4-H Youth Development Specialists is rather balanced in regards to this study. As far as 4-H Agents/Educators, the participants were majority female; however, the population was identified by State 4-H Program Leaders, so this may have had an effect on the results of the number of female 4-H Agents/Educators as compared to the number of male 4-H Agents/Educators that participated in the study. This may not be representative of the 4-H Agent/Educator population in regards to gender.

**Recommendation One**

Because the 4-H Agents/Educators were majority female, their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process may have been confounded within their gender. Therefore, further studies need to be conducted to obtain a larger population that will be more representative of the gender as it relates to the gender of 4-H Agents/Educators and their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process throughout the national 4-H Program.

**Conclusion Two**

When examining the level of education of each population, it is clear that the educational requirements increase from the position of 4-H Agents/Educators to the
State 4-H Program Leader position. With greater than 65% of 4-H Program Leaders holding a PhD, it appears that most states require program leaders to obtain the highest level of education in their field. The highest level of educational between 4-H Agents/Educators and 4-H Youth Development Specialists is similar in the fact that 57% of 4-H Youth Development Specialists and 60% of 4-H Agents/Educators hold a Masters Degree. However, 33% of 4-H Youth Development Specialists in the study held a PhD as compared to less than 3% of 4-H Agents/Educators, which does indicate that advanced degree is a prerequisite to becoming a 4-H Youth Development Specialist. Therefore, it is evident that the 4-H program across the nation requires that 4-H Agents/Educators must professionally develop themselves before they have an opportunity to move to the next level.

**Conclusion Three**

When considering ethnicity, it is clear that Extension needs to address the issue of diversity in all leadership positions. With 90.6% of the 4-H Program Leaders being white, it may be necessary to concentrate on meeting the demographic needs of each state to assure that diversity is met across the nation. As the whole, over 91% of a total of 349 participants were white.

**Recommendation Three**

This definitely points to a lack of diversity within the 4-H youth development program. In order to reach a diverse population of youth, it is critical that we hire 4-H staff that reflects the demographics within the communities that we serve. Personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process may vary within different ethnic groups. As a public serving organization, we must strive to match the demographics of the nation in order to attract a diversified youth population.
Lack of diversity can be a tremendous roadblock to youth voice. As an organization we definitely lack in diversity. Hart (1992), suggest that one way to add diversity to a program, youth development professionals need to recruit youth who are involved in youth voice activities and programming and have those youth spread the word to their peers to increase diversity. Youth development professional need to examine the community demographics to ensure that participants are representative of the communities they live in, and they need to have a more direct outreach and effort to bring in those not traditionally asked to participate (Hart, 1992).

**Conclusion Four**

The highest category for the number of trainings on youth voice that all three populations attended was 1 to 5 trainings. The next category that was highly selected was 6 to 10 trainings for 4-H Agents/Educators; however, both the 4-H State Program Leaders and the 4-H Youth Development Specialists choose their second highest category as great than 20 trainings. The first choice of each population was realistic and reasonable because youth voice is an emerging concept. New research is constantly evolving and most youth development professionals may be integrating the concept of youth/adult partnerships and youth in governance with the concept of youth voice. Therefore, the greater than 20 trainings chosen second by 4-H State Program Leaders and 4-H youth Specialists appears to be high. With youth voice being a relatively new concept, it is difficult to believe that there has been greater than 20 trainings available on the subject matter. While youth voice is a component of trainings on youth adult partnerships, youth in governance, or community service-learning, youth development professionals appear to have to broad definition of youth voice. The key is to help staff to understand what youth voice is and how it relates and contributes to positive youth development.
**Recommendation Four**

As an organization, 4-H has to gather empirical research on youth voice and develop trainings that specifically address the primary issue of youth voice. Four-H needs to become more directional in its purpose and focus on trainings and issues that will aid youth development professionals in becoming true youth developers that accurately address the needs of youth in our nation.

**Conclusion Five**

When 4-H youth development professionals were asked their perception on the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within their 4-H Program, it was clear, based on the findings, that 4-H Agents/Educators viewed the level of youth voice in the decision-making process within the county/parish program as a partnership between youth and adults. Whereas, it is perceived that State 4-H Program Leaders and 4-H Youth Development Specialist like to maintain adult control within the program.

**Recommendation Five**

Within 4-H, most interaction with youth takes place at the county/parish level. Therefore, it is reasonable to see why youth voice is infused into our local programs on the lowest level. Through this research, it is evident that we need to include youth voice at the regional and state level to ensure that youth needs are being met at the higher levels within the organization. Therefore, 4-H State faculty, while aware of research on youth voice, need to value the benefits of this fairly new ideology. They need to look beyond the challenges of time, travel, culture, and other barriers of engaging youth voice in order to insure high-quality youth development programs that attract and retain youth.

As Fletcher (2002) stated, practicing youth voice involves taking risks and working together to accomplish the mission of the organization being served. Thus, the
4-H program needs to open to youth voice at all levels. When organizations practice youth voice, they give ample opportunities for youth to try out the adult roles in which they are getting prepared for later in life. As a youth development organization, the general goal of engaging and empowering youth should be to teach youth to define and express concerns of interest to them, and to design, discuss and put into action solutions to those concerns (Pittman & Wright, 1991). It has shown that youth voice is practiced more at the county/parish level; however, all levels within the 4-h program need to value youth voice and what it can bring to the table. Remember, by youth participating in the decision-making process, they see themselves as persons who have something of significance to add to the world they live in (Pittman, 2000).

**Conclusion Six**

When youth development professionals were asked their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process, the major finding was that all three populations indicated that they believe it is okay to give youth little or no choice about what they do or how they participate. This contradicts the statements that all three populations categorized as youth/adult partnership. Those being, “I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process of youth, and believe youth should be asked what they would like to help with, not forced to do it.

**Recommendation Six**

As a youth development program, 4-H can not have a double standard on including youth voice in the decision-making process. Four-H can not include them as full partners and still keep complete control of the program as adults. This creates a sense of mistrust with youth and this type of inconsistency will negatively affect youth voice on all levels.
Justiniano and Scherer (2001) found that by having youth help develop projects, they are involved in creating a vision, setting objectives, and determining the goals for the project. Through allowing youth in the planning process they may possibly help identify community needs, determine objectives, recruit volunteers, develop action plans and timelines, and evaluate the project.

It has been shown that if an organization can create a shift in paradigm and welcome youth voice in the decision-making process, they can combine the efforts of youth, families, and community stakeholders by working together to create, plan and implement projects together (Pittman, 2000). Thus, youth can redefine their role within 4-H and become involved in the decision-making process which affect and change the communities in which they live (Pittman & Wright, 1991). It is important to remember that youth seek to have their views, beliefs, concerns, and input respected at levels of the decision-making process that not only affects them as individuals, but also affects the organizations they stand by, and communities they develop in (Felix, 2003).

**Conclusion Seven**

When youth development specialist were asked their perceptions regarding the organizational views on youth voice in the decision-making process, it was clear that all the populations implied that the concept of youth voice is not universally accepted throughout the 4-H program. The statement that carried the highest mean across all three populations was that the organization's culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or advance a cause that is identified by adults. This insinuates once again that youth are allowed to have a voice, but adults ultimately have the control over the program. In addition the statements that are strongly supportive of youth voice are the ones that carry the lowest mean. Therefore, from an organizational perspective, youth voice is valued as important way to make sure you are meeting youth's needs.
**Recommendation Seven**

The concept of organizational culture is an immense being, and it is hard and slow to change. The Laidlaw Foundation Report (2001) reported that when organizations attempt to make room for youth voice in the decision-making process, their efforts are resisted, because of four interrelated societal views of youth, which cast doubt within organizations over whether the practice is valuable or realistic. With youth voice being such a new and emerging concept, it will take time for the organizational culture to shift the paradigm and adjust and recognize the value of, and respect youth voice in the decision-making process. This change needs to occur from the bottom to the top. Four-H Agents need to be trained on how to properly utilize youth voice in order to shift the thought process of the organization as a whole. As, leaders within the 4-H program, state 4-H faculty and administration need to provide leadership and model the behavior that will support youth voice.

A great example of youth voice can be demonstrated through the HOME organization, which was established by the Alameda School Superintendent in 1996 to encourage youth to become effective citizens within their community. At HOME youth create, propose, put into action, and evaluate project ideas and participate in building the governance and structure of the organization. HOMES’ focus on community projects that are designed and carried out by youth helped established an environment where positive youth development is endorsed. Even though the projects change form year to year, the commitment to involving youth remains constant (National Research Council, 2002). The 4-H Program should utilize an organization like HOME as an example of the potential of youth voice, and that youth voice must become a recognized practice throughout the entire organization in order to be successful.
In addition, according to a study conducted by Young and Sazama (1999), if youth ask questions, are confident, and are continually finding new ways to participate within the organization, it were ensure that the involvement of youth in the decision-making process were continue in partnership with adults who can provide the needed support.

As a youth development organization, we need to realize that youth need to speak their minds and they can bring a fresh perspective to the organization’s decision-making. It has been noted through research (Zeldin et al., 2000) that adults recognized how youth changed the content and quality of discussion and procedure on governing boards, commissions, and other planning bodies within youth-serving organizations that welcomed youth voice in the decision-making process. We need to understand and appreciate that youth bring direct knowledge of their generation that simply is not accessible to adults, such as their interests, concerns, fears, passions (Zeldin et al., 2000).

**Conclusion Eight**

When examining 4-H youth development professional’s perceptions on the factors that affect youth voice in the decision-making process they considered the following factors to often affects youth voice in the decision-making process: the level in which both youth and adults share responsibility, lack of transportation, the ability of youth and adults to work as a team, the opportunity for youth to develop a caring relationship with adults, an adult’s expectations of youth roles within the 4-H program, youth’s expectations of adult roles within the 4-H program, both youth and adults awareness of the 4-H program’s policies, the level in which the organization accepts youth involvement in the decision making process, and youth having too many scheduling conflicts.
Recommendation Eight

Such issues as transportation will always be a dilemma and will often set back progress especially when you are dealing with youth. However, the rest of the factors that serve as barriers to youth voice can be remedied with proper training on youth voice, preparation for youth voice (orientation, position descriptions, etc.), and involvement process that assures that youth and adults become partners and develop meaningful relationships that provide the respect and trust needed for youth voice to thrive. Research has shown that one of the most critical components to the success of youth voice is the youth-adult partnership. If the youth-adult partnership is negatively affected by poor attitudes, a lack of communication and stereotyping; youth were struggle to become part of the decision-making process. The concept of adult power and control (adultism) plays a significant role in the failure of youth voice. As youth development professionals, we can not view youth as less important, and adults are always superior when it comes to making decisions. Adults that control the program and do not allow youth voice in the decision-making process is a critical barrier because it insinuates that youth can not be trusted to develop correctly without being disciplined and guided into the adult world (Checkoway, 1996).

In addition, communicating high standards and clear expectations to all that are involved, and making sure that meeting times, locations, transportation, and other logistics are flexible and available have been identifying as effective practices that foster an environment for youth voice (Carstarphen, 2001; Checkoway et al., 2003; Justinianno & Scherer, 2001; Kurkoski et al., 1997; Mason & Goll, 2000; Parker, 1998; Young & Sazama, 1999; Zeldin et al., 2000).
Conclusion Nine

The relationship between the current years in their position, number of trainings, and hours of training that State 4-H Program Leaders received and how there current years in their position, and trainings affected their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process were found to be non-significant and the relationship was respectively negligible and low. In addition, although there was a significant relationship for both 4-H Youth Development Specialists and 4-H Agents/Educators in regards to the number of trainings and hours of training that they received and how these trainings affected their personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process, it was found that these relationships were low. However, the years served in current position was not associated with the personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process of both 4-H Youth development Specialists and 4-H Agents/Educators.

Recommendation Nine

Training is an important issue when it comes to understanding the concept of youth voice. If 4-H youth development professionals are attending trainings on youth voice and it is not affecting their person view’s on youth voice in the decision-making process, the issue maybe the content of the training. Are we teaching the right information? Are we helping participants apply and reinforce what they are learning? As an organization, we need to evaluate if we a having true “youth voice “ trainings.

It is not unexpected that 4-H Youth Development Specialist’s and 4-H Agent’s/Educator’s personal views on youth voice in the decision-making process were affected by the amount of training they received. Four-H Youth Development professionals in the field need to stay current on new research and methods on how to implement promising practices that encourage youth voice in the decision-making process. However, 4-H Youth Development professionals may not clearly understand
the concept of youth voice. Trainings need to be direct and based on emerging research, so practitioners in the field can truly understand youth voice. High-quality training is one way of changing youth development professional’s mindset on how to successfully include youth voice in the decision-making process. In addition, the 4-H youth professionals need to explore other methods such as, dialogs with youth, immersive experiences to aid in changing their mindset on youth voice being included in decision that affect youth.

**Conclusion Ten**

Information was gathered, utilizing open-ended questions, from all three populations pertaining to the obstacles that affect youth voice in the decision-making process within the 4-H youth development program. Three questions were asked concerning youth voice and the following themes emerged across all three populations: youth’s lack of experience, knowledge, and confidence; transportation; organizational culture; respect/value of youth voice; time/scheduling; expectations on youth and adults; power/control by adults; preparation for youth voice; involvement/involvement process of youth voice; money; nonparticipation of youth; training; and Inclusion of youth on boards/committees.

**Recommendation Ten**

Once again, issues such as time and scheduling, money, and transportation are always going to be concerns and problems in today’s society. There is very little that youth development professionals can do to overcome these huge obstacles. Barriers that have been identified in research are scheduling conflicts with youth participants in decision-making process. The research has specified that youth lack of time in general and the organization’s resistance to be more flexible in scheduling meetings at times typically more convenient for youth to attend (Hoover & Weisenbach, 1999; Kurkoski, et
al., 1997; Michigan Community Service Commission, 1996; Newsome & Scalera, 200; Parker, 1998; Parker, 1999; Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1998). In addition, there are technical obstacles that act as barriers to youth that want to be involved in decision-making process, such as transportation (Parker, 1999) and youth being denied access to resources they need to be successful (Checkoway, 1996).

However, engaging ideas such as providing scholarships and obtaining grants to reduce the financial burden on participants, carpooling to reduce transportation problems, dovetailing meeting times to help with time conflicts of both youth and adults, and possibly having meetings within meetings to cut back on scheduling conflicts may possibly aid in reducing some of the above mentioned concerns.

Such obstacles as youth’s lack of experience, knowledge, and confidence; changing the organizational culture to accept youth voice; respecting and valuing youth voice; addressing expectations of youth and adults; minimizing power and control by adults; preparing for productive youth voice; involving youth in the decision-making process; addressing youth’s lack of participation; training; and actively including youth on boards and committees can be changed over time. To address all the above concerns is going to require a major shift in paradigm. Youth development professionals need to allow youth to create, plan, implement and evaluate the programs they see as a true need in their community. Youth’s confidence, experience and knowledge will increase over time if we give them true ownership within the 4-H program. As youth development professional, we need to increase our expectations of youth and decrease the amount of control that adults have throughout out programs and allow youth to take on meaningful roles as true partners within the organization.

Several roadblocks to incorporating youth voice were identified in a study conducted by Felix (2003). Roadblocks such as, fear of speaking out or up and political
adultism were identified. Some solutions that were identified in the literature for overcoming the barrier of youth’s lack of experience, knowledge, and confidence, were working in all youth-led groups to build confidence, communication skills, and perseverance that will show youth effective instances where they are heard by adults and convince them that change is being enacted.

Other barriers to participation could include: the amount of time available by young people; a lack of skills, training and/or experience; a lack of resources; an adult “mind set” against youth input or fear of losing power; and an organizational, community or cultural opposition (International Youth Foundation, 1996).

Quality training on youth voice will be essential in aiding youth development professionals to address all the above issues. In addition, organizational culture is a reoccurring theme throughout this study; therefore, without a positive organizational change towards including youth as partners in the decision-making process it will be difficult to address the underlying issues of youth’s lack of experience, knowledge, and confidence, minimizing power and control by adults, addressing youth’s lack of participation, and actively including youth on boards and committees.

First, youth development professionals need to recognize youth’s right to participate in the decision-making process. We must undertake a different role from merely being a guardian and a provider. In order to accomplish this, adults must learn to work with youth rather than working for them. As mentors, we must comprehend that accepting responsibly for youth does not mean taking responsibility away from them. It is this shift in paradigm that several adults find uncomfortable or even painful; however, it is necessary if we truly want to include youth in the decision-making process and make the 4-H program more attractive to youth by meeting their needs (Kirby et al., 2003)
References


APPENDIX A

Participants Invitation Letter

Dear 4-H Youth Development Professional:

Please take the time to participate in a national survey on Youth Voice in the Decision-Making Process within the 4-H Program. This survey is part of a dissertation study, and you’ve been selected to participate in the study to help identify the level of youth voice within the decision making process in the National 4-H program. Because you are a professional within the 4-H organization, you have a unique perspective and opinions that are valuable to this study. The link below will lead you to the survey. http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB225A35B9GZT

This study has been approved by the LSU Institutional Review Board. If you have any concerns about the study you can call Dr. Robert Mathews at 225-578-8692. The survey will take you approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participating in this survey is completely voluntary. All information will be kept confidential and your responses will NOT be directly associated with your name.

If you would like your state’s results and/or the national results to assist you in determining the level of youth voice in decision-making within your state, please indicate that in the remarks space in the survey. If you have any questions, please contact any of the researchers. If you have already completed this survey please disregard this message. Thank you very much for your time and effort!

Sincerely,

Todd A. Tarifa
Associate County Agent
LSU AgCenter
tatarifa@agcenter.lsu.edu
Office: 225-389-3055

Krisanna Machtmes, Assistant Professor
School of Human Resource Education
Louisiana State University
Room 135 Old Forestry Bldg.
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-5477
Office: 225-578-7844
machtme@lsu.edu

Janet Fox, Associate Professor,
4-H Youth Development
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-5477
Office: 225-578-2196
jfox@agctr.lsu.edu
Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leaders

Purpose of Survey

This survey will aid in determining the level of youth voice on the state and county level within the 4-H youth development program. This survey will be utilized to describe the 4-H youth development program's position on youth voice in the decision-making process among State 4-H Program Leaders. The information gathered will be used to describe State 4-H Program Leader's perception on youth voice in the decision-making process in state 4-H programs. Your responses to this survey will be dealt with in a confidential manner.

Definition of Youth Voice

Youth Voice is the involvement of youth in policy and program creation, development, implementation, and evaluation. Youth voice is when youth have a say and are involved in decisions about what is incorporated in the organization.
Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leaders

Youth voice in the decision making process within your state 4-H program

Please select the most appropriate response (1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always) to indicate the level of youth voice within your 4-H Program.

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<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
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As a State 4-H Program Leader, I allow youth voice in discussions concerning 4-H activities and programs on the state level.

As a State 4-H Program Leader, I make sure that youth are informed about important issues facing the 4-H program.

As a State 4-H Program Leader, I participate in making decisions concerning the 4-H program.

As a State 4-H Program Leader, I allow youth to contribute toward solving problems within the state 4-H program.
As a State 4-H Program Leader, I allow youth to take action on issues concerning 4-H on the state level.

As a State 4-H Program Leader, I allow youth to serve in leadership roles within our state 4-H program.

Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leaders

Personal views on level of youth voice within the decision making process in your 4-H program
Please select the most appropriate response (1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always) to indicate your personal views on the level youth voice in the decision making process in your 4-H program.

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<td>Never</td>
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Even though an idea for a program was initially identified by adults, I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning of the program to improve it.

I believe it is important for youth to be included in creating program activities even though the program idea was identified by adults.

I believe it is important for youth to be included in carrying out a program even though program ideas were identified by adults.

I believe that when a program is identified by adults it is important to involve youth in promoting the program.

I believe it is okay for adults to determine what’s best for youth.

I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process.

I believe it is okay to give youth little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.
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<td>1.</td>
<td>I believe it is acceptable for adults to assign youth to specific roles if they inform them about how or why they are being involved in the activity.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>I believe it is acceptable for youth to give advice on <em>planning</em> programs, but all final decisions still need to be made by adults.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I believe it is okay for youth to be involved in <em>carrying out</em> a program, but adults still need to make the final decisions.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>I believe youth should be asked what they would like to help with, not forced to do it.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>I believe programs need to be started by adults, but <em>planning</em> should be shared by youth and adults.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>I believe programs need to be started by adults, but <em>carrying out</em> the program should be shared by youth and adults.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of <em>planning</em> the project.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of <em>carrying out</em> the project.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
I believe youth should create programs, but responsibilities should be shared by both youth and adults.

Organizational views on youth voice in the decision making process

Please select the most appropriate response (1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Always) to the following statements as it relates to the organizational views of the 4-H Program within your state.

The Organization's culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or advance a cause that is identified by adults.

The Organization's culture brings youth into the group; however, adults give them little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

The Organization's culture assigns youth to specific roles and informs them on how or why they are being involved.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

The Organization's culture seeks advice from youth on programs; however, decisions are made by adults.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

The Organization's culture believes adults should initiate a program; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

The Organization's culture believes it is acceptable for youth to initiate a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

The Organization's culture believes it is acceptable for youth to direct a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

The Organization's culture believes programs or projects should be initiated by youth; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leaders

Factors affecting youth voice within the decision making process within 4-H

Please select the most appropriate response (1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Always) to the following statements as it relates to the factors affecting youth's voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program within your state.

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
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</table>

The level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Lack of transportation affects the level in which youth have a voice in the 4-H program.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Youth understanding their role affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
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<td>A lack of communication skills by youth affects youth voice within the 4-H program.</td>
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<td>The ability of youth to solve problems affects youth voice in the 4-H</td>
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<td>The opportunity for youth to develop a caring relationship with adults</td>
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<td>affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
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<td>Adult’s lack of self-esteem affects the level of youth voice in the 4-H</td>
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<td>An adult’s expectations of youth roles within the 4-H program affects</td>
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<td>Youth’s expectations of adult roles within the 4-H program affects youth</td>
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<td>An adult’s fear of sharing their ideas with youth affects youth voice in</td>
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<td>4-H program.</td>
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</table>
Youth not having enough program options to participate in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 2 3 4 5

An adult's past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 2 3 4 5

A youth's past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 2 3 4 5

Both youth and adults reflecting on experiences affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 2 3 4 5

Adults being aware of the objectives of the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 2 3 4 5

Allowing adults access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 2 3 4 5

Allowing youth access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 2 3 4 5

Both youth and adults awareness of the 4-H program's policies affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 2 3 4 5

The level of diversity within the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 2 3 4 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Scale (1-5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The level of recognition for adults in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of recognition for youth in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult’s fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth’s fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level in which the organization accepts youth involvement in the decision making process affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether food is provided at activities/programs affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 What is the biggest obstacle to youth voice in the decision making process within 4-H?

6 Why is it the biggest obstacle?

Submit
7. Please choose from the list below the number of trainings you have attended over your career that have focused on or have addressed the topic of youth voice in the decision making process:

- No Training
- 1 to 5 trainings
- 6 to 10 trainings
- 11 to 15 trainings
- 16 to 20 trainings
- > 20 trainings

8. Please choose from the list below the number of hours of training you have received over your career that have focused on or have addressed the topic of youth voice in the decision making process:

- No Training
- < 1 hour
- 1 to 5 hours
- 6 to 10 hours
- 11 to 15 hours
- 16 to 20 hours
- 21 to 25 hours
- 26 to 30 hours
- > 30 hours
Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by State 4-H Program Leaders

Demographic Information

Gender:
- Male
- Female

Ethnicity
- African-American
- Asian-Pacific Islander
- Latino
- Native American
- White
- Other, Please Specify
11

Highest Level of Education Completed:

- Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)
- Master's degree (MA/MS/MEd)
- Doctoral degree (PhD/EdD)
- Professional degree (MD/DVM/JD/DD)

12

Check any of the following youth serving organizations in which you serve as a volunteer:

- Boy Scouts
- FCCLA
- Girl Scouts
- Sports
- Boys and Girls Club
- Band/Choir/Orchestra
- FFA
- School Clubs (FBLA, Key Club, etc.)
- YMCA
- Religious
- Other, Please Specify
13. What is your job/position title?

14. Total number of years you have served as the State 4-H Program Leader:

15. What is your % FTE 4-H youth work?

% 4-H Youth work

16. Please put your e-mail address so we can send you the results of this survey, and list any additional concerns or comments you may have regarding the topic of youth voice in the decision making process?

Your participation is critical to the success of this study. Your time and effort in completing this survey are greatly appreciated. If you have any questions please contact Todd A. Tarifa at tataria@agctr.lsu.edu or 225-287-6716, Dr. Krisanna Machtmes at kmachtmes@agctr.lsu.edu or 225-578-7844, or Dr. Janet Fox at jfox@agctr.lsu.edu.
APPENDIX C

4-H Youth Development Specialist Youth Voice Survey

Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Specialist

Purpose of Survey

This survey will aid in determining the level of youth voice on the state and county level within the 4-H youth development program. This survey will be utilized to describe the 4-H youth development program's position on youth voice in the decision-making process among 4-H Youth Development Specialist. The information gathered will be used to describe 4-H Youth Development Specialist's perception on youth voice in the decision-making process in state 4-H programs. Your responses to this survey will be dealt with in a confidential manner.

Definition of Youth Voice

Youth Voice is the involvement of youth in policy and program creation, development, implementation, and evaluation. Youth voice is when youth have a say and are involved in decisions about what is incorporated in the organization.
# Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Specialist

## Youth voice in the decision making process within your state 4-H program

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
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</table>

As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth voice in discussions concerning 4-H activities and programs on the state level.

- 1
- 2
- 3
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- 5

As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I make sure that youth are informed about important issues facing the 4-H program.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I participate in making decisions concerning the 4-H program.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth to contribute toward solving problems within the state 4-H program.

As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth to take action on issues concerning 4-H on the state level.

As a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, I allow youth to serve in leadership roles within our state 4-H program.

Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Specialist

Personal views on level of youth voice within the decision making process in your 4-H program
Please select the most appropriate response (1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always) to indicate your personal views on the level youth voice in the decision making process in your 4-H program.

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<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
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Even though an idea for a program was initially identified by adults, I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning of the program to improve it.

I believe it is important for youth to be included in creating program activities even though the program idea was identified by adults.

I believe it is important for youth to be included in carrying out a program even though program ideas were identified by adults.

I believe that when a program is identified by adults it is important to involve youth in promoting the program.

I believe it is okay for adults to determine what's best for youth.

I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process.

I believe it is okay to give youth little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.
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I believe it is acceptable for adults to assign youth to specific roles if adults inform them about how or why they are being involved in the activity.

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I believe it is acceptable for youth to give advice on planning programs, but all final decisions still need to be made by adults.

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I believe it is okay for youth to be involved in carrying out a program, but adults still need to make the final decisions.

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I believe youth should be asked what they would like to help with, not forced to do it.

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I believe programs need to be started by adults, but planning should be shared by youth and adults.

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I believe programs need to be started by adults, but carrying out the program should be shared by youth and adults.

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I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of planning the project.

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</table>

I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of carrying out the project.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I believe youth should create programs, but responsibilities should be shared by both youth and adults.

Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Specialist

Organizational views on youth voice in the decision making process

Please select the most appropriate response (1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Somtimes; 4=Often; 5=Always) to the following statements as it relates to the organizational views of the 4-H Program within your state.

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
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</table>

The Organization's culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or advance a cause that is identified by adults.

The Organization's culture brings youth into the group; however, adults give them little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

The Organization's culture assigns youth to specific roles and informs them on how or why they are being involved.

The Organization's culture seeks advice from youth on programs; however, decisions are made by adults.

The Organization's culture believes adults should initiate a program; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.

The Organization's culture believes it is acceptable for youth to initiate a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.

The Organization's culture believes it is acceptable for youth to direct a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.

The Organization's culture believes programs or projects should be initiated by youth; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.
Factors affecting youth voice within the decision making process within 4-H

Please select the most appropriate response (1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Always) to the following statements as it relates to the factors affecting youth’s voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program within your state.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Never</th>
<th>2 Seldom</th>
<th>3 Sometimes</th>
<th>4 Often</th>
<th>5 Always</th>
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<tr>
<td>Level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of transportation affects the level in which youth have a voice in the 4-H program.</td>
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<td>Youth understanding their role affects youth voice in the 4-H program.</td>
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| A lack of communication skills by youth affects youth voice within the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| A lack of communication skills by adults affects youth voice within the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| The decision making skills of youth affects youth voice within the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| The decision making skills of adults affects youth voice within the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| An adult’s ability to deal with conflict affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Youth’s ability to deal with conflict affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| The ability of youth and adults to work as a team affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| The ability of adults to solve problems affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
The ability of youth to solve problems affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

The opportunity for youth to develop a caring relationship with adults affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

Adult’s lack of self-esteem affects the level of youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

Youth’s lack of self-esteem affects the level of youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

An adult’s expectations of youth roles within the 4-H program affects youth voice.

1  2  3  4  5

Youth’s expectations of adult roles within the 4-H program affects youth voice.

1  2  3  4  5

An adult’s fear of sharing their ideas with youth affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

Youth’s fear of sharing their ideas with adults affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5
Youth not having enough program options to participate in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

An adult’s past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

A youth’s past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

Both youth and adults reflecting on experiences affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

Adults being aware of the objectives of the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

Allowing adults access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

Allowing youth access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

Both youth and adults awareness of the 4-H program’s policies affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

The level of diversity within the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
| The level of recognition for adults in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| The level of recognition for youth in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Adult's fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Youth's fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| The level in which the organization accepts youth involvement in the decision making process affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Whether food is provided at activities/programs affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Adults having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Youth having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
What is the biggest obstacle to youth voice in the decision making process within 4-H?

Why is it the biggest obstacle?

Submit
Please choose from the list below the number of trainings you have attended over your career that have focused on or have addressed the topic of youth voice in the decision making process:

- No Training
- 1 to 5 trainings
- 6 to 10 trainings
- 11 to 15 trainings
- 16 to 20 trainings
- > 20 trainings

Please choose from the list below the number of hours of training you have received over your career that have focused on or have addressed the topic of youth voice in the decision making process:

- No Training
- < 1 hour
- 1 to 5 hours
- 6 to 10 hours
- 11 to 15 hours
- 16 to 20 hours
- 21 to 25 hours
- 26 to 30 hours
- > 30 hours
### Demographic Information

**Gender:**
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female

**Ethnicity**
- [ ] African-American
- [ ] Asian-Pacific Islander
- [ ] Latino
- [ ] Native American
- [ ] White
- [ ] Other, Please Specify

11

Highest Level of Education Completed:

- Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)
- Master's degree (MA/MS/MEd)
- Doctoral degree (PhD/EdD)
- Professional degree (MD/DVM/JD/DD)

12

Check any of the following youth serving organizations in which you serve as a volunteer:

- Boy Scouts
- FCCLA
- Girl Scouts
- Sports
- Boys and Girls Club
- Band/Choir/Orchestra
- FFA
- School Clubs (FBLA, Key Club, etc.)
- YMCA
- Religious
- Other, Please Specify

13. What is your job/position title?


14. Total number of years you have served as 4-H Youth Development Specialist:


15. Please select your area of specialization:

- Administration
- Animal Science/Agriculture
- Camp/Conference Program Management
- Character Education
- Citizenship and International Programs
- Technology
- Curriculum Development
- Special Projects
- Foundation
- District/Regional Based Specialist
- Data Management
- Environmental Education
- Family & Consumer Sciences
- Event Management
What is your % FTE 4-H youth work?

% 4-H Youth
work

Please put your e-mail address so we can send you the results of this survey, and list any additional concerns or comments you may have regarding the topic of youth voice in the decision making process?

Your participation is critical to the success of this study. Your time and effort in completing this survey are greatly appreciated. If you have any questions please contact Todd A. Tarifa at tatarifa@agctr.lsu.edu or 225-287-6718, Dr. Kristanna Machmtes at kmachmtes@agctr.lsu.edu or 225-578-7844, or Dr. Janet Fox at jfox@agctr.lsu.edu.
APPENDIX D

4-H Agent/Educator Youth Voice Survey

Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Agents/Educators

Purpose of Survey

This survey will aid in determining the level of youth voice on the state and county level within the 4-H youth development program. This survey will be utilized to describe the 4-H youth development program’s position on youth voice in the decision-making process among 4-H Youth Agents/Educators. The information gathered will be used to describe 4-H Youth Agent’s/Educator’s perception on youth voice in the decision-making process in state 4-H programs. Your responses to this survey will be dealt with in a confidential manner.

Definition of Youth Voice

Youth Voice is the involvement of youth in policy and program creation, development, implementation, and evaluation. Youth voice is when youth have a say and are involved in decisions about what is incorporated in the organization.
Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Agents/Educators

Youth voice in the decision making process within your 4-H program

Please select the most appropriate response (1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always) to indicate the level of youth voice within your 4-H Program.

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<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
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As a 4-H Youth Agent/Educator, I allow youth voice in discussions concerning 4-H activities and programs on the county level.

As a 4-H Youth Agent/Educator, I make sure that youth are informed about important issues facing the 4-H program.

As a 4-H Youth Agent/Educator, I participate in making decisions concerning the 4-H program.

As a 4-H Youth Agent/Educator, I allow youth to contribute toward solving problems within the county 4-H program.
As a 4-H Youth Agent/Educator, I allow youth to take action on issues concerning 4-H on the county level.

As a 4-H Youth Agent/Educator, I allow youth to serve in leadership roles within our county 4-H program.

Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Agents/Educators

Personal views on level of youth voice within the decision making process in your 4-H program
Please select the most appropriate response (1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always) to indicate your personal views on the level youth voice in the decision making process in your 4-H program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
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Even though an idea for a program was initially identified by adults, I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning of the program to improve it.

I believe it is important for youth to be included in creating program activities even though the program idea was identified by adults.

I believe it is important for youth to be included in carrying out a program even though program ideas were identified by adults.

I believe that when a program is identified by adults it is important to involve youth in promoting the program.

I believe it is okay for adults to determine what's best for youth.

I believe it is important for adults to include youth in the planning process.

I believe it is okay to give youth little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.
I believe it is acceptable for adults to assign youth to specific roles if they inform them about how or why they are being involved in the activity.

I believe it is acceptable for youth to give advice on *planning* projects, but all final decisions still need to be made by adults.

I believe it is okay for youth to be involved in *carrying out* a program, but adults still need to make the final decisions.

I believe youth should be asked what they would like to help with, not forced to do it.

I believe programs need to be started by adults, but *planning* should be shared by youth and adults.

I believe programs need to be started by adults, but *carrying out* the program should be shared by youth and adults.

I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of *planning* the project.

I believe adults should act in a supporting role, while youth are in charge of *carrying out* the project.
I believe youth should create programs, but responsibilities should be shared by both youth and adults.

Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Agents/Educators

Organizational views on youth voice in the decision making process

Please select the most appropriate response (1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Always) to the following statements as it relates to the organizational views of the 4-H Program within your state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Never</th>
<th>2 Seldom</th>
<th>3 Sometimes</th>
<th>4 Often</th>
<th>5 Always</th>
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</table>

The Organization’s culture finds it acceptable for adults to utilize youth to further or advance a cause that is identified by adults.

The Organization’s culture brings youth into the group; however, adults give them little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.
The Organization’s culture assigns youth to specific roles and informs them on how or why they are being involved.

The Organization’s culture seeks advice from youth on programs; however, decisions are made by adults.

The Organization’s culture believes adults should initiate a program; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.

The Organization’s culture believes it is acceptable for youth to initiate a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.

The Organization’s culture believes it is acceptable for youth to direct a project involving youth with adults only in a supportive role.

The Organization’s culture believes programs or projects should be initiated by youth; however, decision making is shared by both youth and adults.
Factors affecting youth voice within the decision making process within 4-H

Please select the most appropriate response (1=Never; 2=Seldom; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Always) to the following statements as it relates to the factors affecting youth's voice in the decision-making process in the 4-H program within your state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. The level in which both adults and youth share responsibilities within the program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

2. Lack of transportation affects the level in which youth have a voice in the 4-H program.
Youth understanding their role affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

A lack of communication skills by youth affects youth voice within the 4-H program.

A lack of communication skills by adults affects youth voice within the 4-H program.

The decision making skills of youth affects youth voice within the 4-H program.

The decision making skills of adults affects youth voice within the 4-H program.

An adult’s ability to deal with conflict affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Youth’s ability to deal with conflict affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

The ability of youth and adults to work as a team affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

The ability of adults to solve problems affects youth voice in the 4-H program.
The ability of youth to solve problems affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

The opportunity for youth to develop a caring relationship with adults affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Adult’s lack of self-esteem affects the level of youth voice in the 4-H program.

Youth’s lack of self-esteem affects the level of youth voice in the 4-H program.

An adult’s expectations of youth roles within the 4-H program affects youth voice.

Youth’s expectations of adult roles within the 4-H program affects youth voice.

An adult’s fear of sharing their ideas with youth affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Youth’s fear of sharing their ideas with adults affects youth voice in the 4-H program.
Youth not having enough program options to participate in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

An adult’s past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

A youth’s past negative experiences when being involved in 4-H affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

Both youth and adults reflecting on experiences affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

Adults being aware of the objectives of the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

Allowing adults access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

Allowing youth access to resources affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

Both youth and adults awareness of the 4-H program’s policies affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5

The level of diversity within the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

1  2  3  4  5
The level of recognition for adults in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

The level of recognition for youth in the 4-H program affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Adult's fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Youth's fear of failing affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

The level in which the organization accepts youth involvement in the decision making process affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Whether food is provided at activities/programs affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Adults having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program.

Youth having too many scheduling conflicts affects youth voice in the 4-H program.
5. What is the biggest obstacle to youth voice in the decision making process within 4-H?

6. Why is it the biggest obstacle?
Please choose from the list below the number of trainings you have attended over your career that have focused on or have addressed the topic of youth voice in the decision making process:

- No Training
- 1 to 5 trainings
- 6 to 10 trainings
- 11 to 15 trainings
- 16 to 20 trainings
- > 20 trainings

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- 16 to 20 hours
- 21 to 25 hours
- 26 to 30 hours
- > 30 hours
Level of Youth Voice in the Decision Making Process within the 4-H Youth Development Program as Perceived by 4-H Youth Agents/Educators

Demographic Information

9 Gender:
- Male
- Female

10 Ethnicity
- African-American
- Asian-Pacific Islander
- Latino
- Native American
- White
- Other, Please Specify

Highest Level of Education Completed:

- Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)
- Master's degree (MA/MS/MEd)
- Doctoral degree (PhD/EdD)
- Professional degree (MD/DVM/JD/DD)

Check any of the following youth serving organizations in which you serve as a volunteer:

- Boy Scouts
- FCCLA
- Girl Scouts
- Sports
- Boys and Girls Club
- Band/Choir/Orchestra
- FFA
- School Clubs (FBLA, Key Club, etc.)
- YMCA
- Religious
- Other, Please Specify
13. What is your job/position title?

14. Total number of years you have served as a 4-H Youth Agent/Educator:

15. What is your % FTE 4-H youth work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% 4-H Youth work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16. Please indicate if you are serving in a part-time position or full-time position:

- [ ] Part-time
- [ ] Full-time

17. Please put your e-mail address so we can send you the results of this survey, and list any additional concerns or comments you may have regarding the topic of youth voice in the decision making process?

---

*Your participation is critical to the success of this study. Your time and effort in completing this survey are greatly appreciated. If you have any questions please contact Todd A. Tarifa at tatarifa@agctr.lsu.edu or 225-287-6718, Dr. Krisanna Machtimes at kmachtimes@agctr.lsu.edu or 225-578-7844, or Dr. Janet Fox at jfox@agctr.lsu.edu.*
APPENDIX E

State 4-H Program Leaders Responses to Open-Ended Questions

What is the biggest obstacle to youth voice in the decision making process within 4-H?

Communication
- Lack of effective communication tools with youth for response collection in a timely manner.
- Communication.

Lack of Experience
- Youth interest and knowledge level with respect to decisions they might have to make.

Transportation
- Transportation.

Organizational Culture
- The culture of control by the 4-H faculty member at either the state or county level.
- Tradition.
- Organizational culture.

Respect/Value
- Adults truly valuing young people as resources and not objects.
- Inability of both adults and youth to engage in meaningful relationships.
- Acceptance of the youth voice.
- Lack of acceptance for the concept and principle.
- Youth and adults having preconceived ideas about each others’ capacity.
- The ability of each to accept and value what the other may bring to the table.
- At the local level, the biggest obstacle to youth voice is adults who do not value or want the youth to be involved or engaged in decision making -- tend to be autocratic leaders rather than democratic leaders.
- Understanding.

Time/Scheduling
- Logistics, time of professionals does not dovetail with times youth are available.
- Busy schedules.
- The time meetings are held.
• Time (4).
• At the state level (committees, task forces, action teams), the biggest obstacle to youth voice is their time availability to attend meetings and respective functions (trainings, conferences, events & activities).
• Other things sometimes get in the way, like time.

**Power/Control by Adults**
• Not always giving the youth opportunity for decision making.
• Volunteers who are reluctant to allow youth involvement.
• Culture of the times. Youth for the most part are told this is what will happen and then go along with the decisions and are given smaller roles in the activity.

**Policy**
• We do a pretty good job of including youth in events/activities planning and implementation. It is difficult to include them in state administrative issues that many times are connected to university policy or liability/risk management concerns.

**Preparation**
• Adults creating opportunities and allowing for youth voice.
• Developing a sense of trust within the group making the decision and being sure that both youth and adults come to the table with the same background knowledge whenever possible.
• Practicing, demonstrating, succeeding with youth voice seems the most obvious.

**Involvement/Involvement Process**
• Ability to convene opportunities for youth to be heard and involved in the program development and implementation.

**Why is it the biggest obstacle?**

**Leadership**
• There ARE some emerging new volunteers who see the value of sharing leadership.
• An unwillingness to work through the process to implement. It is a mental unwillingness to problem solving and to address observations and concerns that would truly allow the youth to have citizen leadership versus token leadership - it is giving up the "power" in the minds of the adults.

**Lack of Experience**
• Youth and adults generally have little experience interacting with one another. Both need advance preparation for engagement with the other.

• So many new staff with lack of experience in working with youth.

**Transportation**
• Some youth do not have the transportation.

**Staffing**
• Lack of staff.

**Organizational Culture**
• Ultimately 4-H staffs are responsible for the program and need to allow for youth voice.

• That's the way we've always done it... if it isn't broke, don't fix it -- these attitudes do not reflect the transition of positive youth development elements in programming.

• Too much baggage being shared from the past.

• History and tradition have a strong influence.

• Youth are trained to not be in decision roles from the school system and it is hard to make them realize that their voice is really valued and that we want to hear from them.

**Respect/Value**
• The door is not open for youth involvement as well as the mind is not open to potentials.

• The world that youth live in does not usually allow them to speak out or to be involved in decision making. We, as a group, must preach it, teach it, and allow for it to happen. Each has pre-conceived notions about what they think the other feels and then don't value the full worth.

**Accessibility of the Program**
• Access.

**Time/Scheduling**
• Time (2).

• Scheduling to have voices around the table.

• We are seldom willing to give up one more evening or weekend in order to have meetings so youth can be there.

• A very rural state, and too many conflicting activities that take priority.
• Difficult to convene groups of youth to give input on critical issues--even via conference calls.
• Youth are heavily involved and meetings or programs need to be designed at times youth can become involved.
• Youth have lots of interests and ways to use their time.
• Adults want to meet during work hours; youth must meet after school.
• Youth often have many demands on their time and a number of these demands are outside of their control. Consequently, their input many not be gathered in a timely manner and therefore they are sometimes seen as being disinterested or lacking in decision making skills.
• State level --- time crunch is a reality for youth. They are busy people with school, extra-curricula activities, family obligations and other community involvement.

Money
• Lack of resources to facilitate this process and provide oversight.

Power/Control by Adults
• A variety of reasons...some volunteers are perfectionists, some are reliving their youth through their volunteer role, some have limited skills.
• Attitudes toward youth by adults reflect usually their past experiences and treatment by adults. Let's break the "cycle"!

Policy
• State statute regarding minors under age 18 participating in organizational decision making -- legal opinion that they may not be held accountable for their decisions.

Nonparticipation
• Youth have lots of interests and ways to use their time. They just don't care or have strong feelings about some decisions that may need to be made.

Preparation
• However this is true when creating any new team. It is important that the same background information is given to both youth and adult. They can build upon the basic information with the perspective of either a youth or adult. If one party has more information they naturally lead the discussion and have thought more about the issue.

Training
• Training of adults.
• Adult training in this area.
• Lack of training and a true understanding on the local level of youth involvement/development, are contributing factors.
• It is necessary to encourage, train, support, and process the experience with youth or youth/adult teams.
• Knowledge.

Involvement/Involvement Process
• They just don't care or have strong feelings about some decisions that may need to be made.

Generational Gap
• The adults have often worked with the other adults and the youth with the youth. Until they work together and understand each other and know that they all are respected it is hard for open communication.
• Attitudes of adults towards working with youth.

List any additional concerns or comments you may have regarding the topic of youth voice in the decision making process?

National Role
• What happened to N4-HYDC? Does the federal partner value the youth voice?

Inclusion of youth on Boards/Committees
• Include 4-H youth on all program committees.
• We are moving in the right direction by empowering more teens--our goal is to have teens on EVERY 4-H Committee, Council, and 4-H Educational Center Board

Developmental Stages Impact on Youth Voice Impact
• Maturation level seems to affect youth interest in having a voice in decision making.

Youth Voice in Events vs. Policies
• I found some of the questions difficult to answer because the level of youth involvement depends on whether we are discussing events/activities --- or policies.

Youth and Adult Ratios
• We have found that youth/adult teams works well--at a ratio of 2 youth to one adult. Many of our events and activities utilize this ratio (at higher numbers) and there are sufficient youth to keep their voice strong.

**Youth Voice as a Tradition**

• My 4-H experiences really were a youth-adult partnership and youth voice was emphasized... over 40 years ago. That's why I know it works and will work.

**Organizational Culture**

• Very important but can be lost when you are continually in a crisis management (severe budget restraints) mode.
APPENDIX F

4-H Youth Development Specialist Responses to Open-Ended Question

What is the biggest obstacle to youth voice in the decision making process within 4-H?

Leadership

- A history of adult leadership that does not expect youth to act in leadership roles.
  - Adult perceptions that they "know better."

Lack of Experience/Confidence

- Their lack of life experiences sometimes leaves them without enough information to make good choices or suggestions.
- Experience on the part of both adults and youth.
- Lack of skills by the adults to encourage youth voice and involvement.
- Adults having the confidence that youth can make adequate decisions.

Youth/Adult Partnership

- Adults having the confidence that youth can make adequate decisions.
- Trust among the youth and adults to be equal players, time to develop this trust and create true partnerships...to bring youth truly into partnerships with us.
- Taking the youth voice in an adult/youth partnership seriously without trying to change their decisions.
- Adult and youth thinking of each other as equal partners and being able to consider the other's opinions as a possibility instead of not even considering it.

Transportation

- Transportation and logistics.
- Transportation (5).
- Transportation, distance to travel to gather for meetings.
- Travel restrictions for face-to-face meetings of State 4-H officers.
- Distance required to bring all parties together.
• They can't drive or do not have their own car, money is being saved for college and or a car, and they have little time as starting to work and school work and activities are very important.

• Finding transportation is a huge barriers affecting involvement.

**Competition**

• Youth's involvement in other activities.

• Schedule conflicts with school activities and sports prevent 4-Hers from being more involved in the decision making processes. It appears 4-Hers have to choose too often between sports or 4-H activities.

• School obligations.

• Also many of our communities are small - high schools with fewer than 100 students. Almost every student is involved in sports and other school activities.

**Resources**

• Resources needed to support youth voice (e.g. transportations, time, financial).

• Access to computers connected to the web.

**Fear**

• Adult fear

• Adultism-some adults are scared to let youth take the lead or have a say in decision making, program planning etc.

• Fear that youth will not plan and follow through.

• Fear of letting people down and not being able to make a mistake both with peers and especially adults.

**Organizational Culture**

• Organizational culture of adult centered decision making.

• Changing the culture to allow youth to participate by adjusting meeting times and schedules to accommodate them.

• The organization . . . needs to be receptive and aware to involving youth as equal partners.

• Tradition.

• Overcoming our own culture and embracing youth as full partners.
• Inculcating both a culture that expects youth involvement and lack of understanding and knowledge of Youth Development principles and pressures of getting programming done at the service level.

• Preconceived ideas.

• Adults accustomed to making decisions for youth rather than involving youth from the beginning — organizational culture.

• Changing organizational culture, adult and youth experience with youth in DM roles, and opportunities.

• Adult willingness to recognize youth as equal program partners.

• Changing organization culture.

• Extension Administration – Gatekeepers.

• Youth voice, as well as many adult perspectives, is not included to improve efficiency.

• Culture believes that youth don't have the skills and abilities to live up to the expectations of adults.

**Respect/Value**

• Acting on their voices.

• Many of them feel their opinion does not matter. Adults sometimes have to do action to prove they are listening.

• Adults understanding the importance of youth voice in the 4-H program.

• Adults with preconceived notion of how youth will interact in the planning/implementation.

• Having adults value their input and to seek their input.

• Youth and adults mutually respecting each others opinions and ideas.

• The adults need to honor the youth in the youth-adult partnerships. To see the role of the youth's voice as equal.

• Adults' perception that youth voice is valuable to the 4H process.

• Our inadvertent patronization of youth.
• The biggest obstacle is having an equal partnership between youth & adults when making decisions in 4-H.

• Adults don't want to spend the time it takes to involve youth in decision-making or believe that youth should not be involved in decision making roles.

• The adults allowing them to voice their opinions and being asked to serve on committees where their voices can be heard.

• Adults who value and support opinions and input of youth.

• Adults failing to trust and support youth decisions.

• An acceptance of youth as having valued and creditable ideas.

• Adults asking for & listening to youth input.

• Adult’s willingness, or lack of it, to respect the youth voice as a viable option.

• Acceptance by the adults that the youth are capable, viable decision makers.

**Time/Scheduling**

• Overcoming scheduling conflicts.

• Time (12).

• Changing the culture to allow youth to participate by adjusting meeting times and schedules to accommodate them.

• Often youth do not have the time to participate in the decision making process.

• Scheduling time that adults and youth can meet.

• Scheduling (11).

• Many planning meetings take place during the day when youth are in school. Many youth are busy with school sports on weekends and evenings.

• Structuring youth engagement to accommodate schedules.

• Time required to bring all parties together.

• Schedules for both youth and adults work against each other.

• Coordinating schedules between busy youth and adults and finding the time to meet.

• Finding youth and adults who can share the same time frame to participate in activities is a huge challenge.

• Lack of adult time and resources to support youth involvement.

• Availability.
• Making this a priority and also the logistics of getting youth on Campus.
• Youth getting time off from school.
• Meetings held during times youth aren't available.
• Time on the part of youth and adults.
• Trying to accommodate schedules of youth and adults, with varying demands, both night and day in order to have meaningful engagement.
• Busy schedules & travel.
• There just aren’t enough hours in their schedule for additional responsibilities.
• Finding the time to bring youth and adults together on a consistent basis (scheduling conflicts).
• Youth are already over committed and seem hesitant to get involved and spend energy/time.
• Finding time and volunteers to devote to a project.
• Scheduling conflicts and lack of planning time.
• Time - Ability to focus on a limited number of projects, events, activities at a time.
• Fitting schedules together and ability to meet.
• Time to meet--youth are involved in so many after school activities & many adults--especially Extension professionals--don’t want to meet on weekends.

**Expectations on Youth and Adults**

• They are given the opportunity and do not meet up to what is expected of them. For example not meeting deadlines set by them or wanting to take on the responsibilities of a position and not fulfilling them due to have other multiple activities.
• Expectations of both youth and adults.
• Communication about expectations between youth and adults
• Adult expectations of youth roles and youth expectations of adult roles.
• Adults low expectations of youth.
• Commitment! Kids/Parents must make a time commitment and follow through or ideas will not be carried out.

**Money**

• Resources needed to support youth voice (e.g. transportations, time, financial).
• Funding and man power.

**Power/Control by Adults**

• Adults.
• Fear of losing control of how the event is run.
• Adult’s fear of youth taking control and adults not getting their way.
• Adult’s need for control.
• Controlling adults.
• Adults being willing to share power and expertise.
• Bad adult attitudes.
• Overcommitted youth.
• Adults not inviting youth into the process.
• Lack of shared ownership for the program.
• Adults willingness to share power with youth.
• Adults who want to stay powerful and control the program themselves.
• Adults are use to planning for youth and not with youth.
• Adults negative perspective of youth capacity in decision making.
• Adults not wanting to give up control.
• Adults feel that youth opinions will be in conflict with theirs on decisions.
• The lack of adults willing to let them have a voice. Then when they do have a voice, the adults allow the youth to believe they will do what they want when they actually have no intention of doing what the youth planned.
• Over-involvement of adults in meetings and decision-making process.
• The inability of adults to understand how to play an EQUAL or guiding role with youth.
• Adults’ attitudes toward youth and their inability to share power.
• Adults being over-invested in the program.
• Coworkers not being open to youth opinions and coworkers wanting to control everything.

**Policy/Risk Management**

• Policy of the university, national and risk management.

**Preparation**

• Lack of preparation and training.
• Possibly lack of knowledge on the part of youth of the infrastructure (and limited support) of 4-H programs at the state level (from my perspective).
• Adults knowing how to effectively team with youth.
• Adults - lack of understanding as to how to work effectively in partnership with youth.
• Adults staff and volunteers understanding the real role of 4-H youth development programs.
• People having the confidence to work together.
• Adults remembering and making the effort to open the process to youth; Youth can't participate if they're not invited.

Training
• Lack of preparation and training.
• Lack of understanding of how youth and adults can work together to make decisions.
• Convincing adults that youth are capable of making important decisions.
• Teaching adults how to accept, encourage, and facilitate opportunities for youth voice.
• Providing sufficient training to adults so that they understand the value of youth voice in the decision making process.
• Lack of training for youth-adult partnerships.
• Volunteer adults need to be trained as to how to encourage youth voice by more self-awareness and participatory group process, diversity and respectful communication skills training.
• Differing definitions of "decision making" held by adults and youth.

Acting on Youth’s Wants
• Adults being able to listen and look at things in a new way.

Adults Not Wanting Sharing Experience
• Lack of true success stories.

Youth’s Developmental Stage
• Their lack of life experiences sometimes leaves them without enough information to make good choices or suggestions.
The fact that neither adolescents nor younger children are developmentally ready or able to effectively take on actual adult decision-making roles and responsibilities for the overall 4-H program, and adults who attempt to engage youth as "equal partners" in 4-H decision-making at all levels are often misguided in what they do.

Also the youth I work with (prevention related programming), sometimes, do not have the skills to engage in youth adult partnerships of this magnitude. However, I do believe it is the goal and we should move to this end.

Thinking of ways to involve youth according to their age and ability—age appropriateness involvement.

**Authentic Voice**

- Giving them the opportunity to speak what is on their minds.
- We tend to involve them AFTER adults have come up with the issue/program, etc instead of asking them to help in brainstorming and coming up with the issue/program.
- The same youth are repeatedly called on to serve, thus excluding many capable youth.

**Involvement/Involvement Process**

- Access to the opportunity to be involved in the decision making process.
- When youth are invited to participate, they don't provide opinions or ideas.
- Youth being able to be involved on a continual basis in the process.
- Correctly using the involvement process.
- Getting them there, and speaking with one voice toward their collective goals.
- Not having the vision to allow adults and youth to be full partner in the process.
- Taking the time to involve youth in the process. Working with both the youth and adults to ensure a successful experience.
- Adults who forget to involve them.
- Adults and organizations providing a mechanism for youth voice. Providing youth with information that their voices are important. Then allowing the youth to speak out.
- Being invited to participate in decision making groups.
• Equipping youth with the tools and skills to go through the process. Involving adults that will allow youth to make decisions. Failure is part of the process. It’s not what failed it's what can we learn from this and do differently so the next time we have different results.

• Adults lack of willingness to actively recruit and involve young people in making those decisions.

• Allowing time for the exchange of ideas to take place.

• Identifying youth to be involved that will speak their mind & thoughts, not their parent's views.

• Allowing the youth to have the opportunities.

• Adults not familiar with youth involved in the decision making.

• Many times youth do not realize the power and knowledge they bring to the entire process.

• Effort required making it happen.

• Wanting to be involved.

• Adults who lack a positive understanding of the contributions youth can make while still participants in the program.

• Logistics of having youth at the table as well as appropriate engagement of youth in discussions.

• Collecting or hearing their voice from afar.

• Adults not being open to youth involvement in decision making, because they lack an understanding of the capabilities of and desire of youth to be involved in meaningful roles.

• Agents including it in their program planning.

• Establishing a relationship between the youth and adults that makes both feel comfortable in sharing their ideas and trust that both will complete their assignments.

• Getting enough youth together in a decision making opportunity to feel comfortable in using their voice.
• Man power.
• Youth have not been presented with the concept in their local communities. Because they have not had previous experience with youth participation, they are not even aware that it is an option.
• Youth being included in the decision making process and program planning.
• Thinking that one youth rep is enough presence to assure their voice is heard.
• Lack of encouragement to get involved in the decision making process.
• Lack of an effective structure or process for decision making, particularly at the state level.
• Youth being included in the decision making process and program planning.
• Having 1 teen on a committee and expecting youth voice.

Generational Gap
• Have not engaged youth in the manner in which today's youth communicate most frequently and most freely (e.g. technology). Adults try it, but do not use it as frequently and effectively as youth.
• Preconceived ideas by both youth and adults about each other. They each think they know about the other and what the other expects from them, but they are usually incorrect.

Why is it the biggest obstacle?

Lack of Experience
• Supporting and engaging youth in decision-making experiences can enhance positive youth development if handled appropriately. However, all too often it's handled inappropriately, youth voice is subverted, and it becomes a negative experience all-around for both the youth and the adults involved.

Transportation
• They can't drive or do not have their own car,
• Means (transportation, conferencing, etc) to accomplish effective positive working relationships.
• Transportation.
• Lack of transportation is a secondary factor.
• Travel is always a problem because of lack of available funds, coupled with high fuel prices and the large size of our state.

**Fear**

• Adults sometime fear the interaction between youth and adults in the decision making/problem solving situations.

• Power/Expertise--fear of failure by adults and a belief that youth don't really know since they don't have enough experience

• Everyone is afraid we won't get it right, that it won't be meaningful for youth and manageable for adults.

• Adults are afraid of failure.

**Organizational Culture**

• Culture is hard to change.

• Organizational culture as well as control issues.

• Our busy schedules make this difficult and are often used as excuse for not including them.

• History/ past experiences, etc.

• It keeps 4-H from moving forward and evolving into an organization that better meets the needs and interests of today's youth. Many of our older volunteers and staff are still stuck in the 1950's mentality related to 4-H.

• Because without the organization's willingness to fully embrace youth, it is never going to happen. No one else can make it happen.

• Past traditions and some adults thinking.

• It is hard to get people to accept change.

• Our 4-H culture hinges around 4-H projects and getting ready for a fair or competitive event. This mind set clouds volunteers opportunity to really focus on youth development and often affects extension staff's ability to get beyond providing service to a small vocal group that see the competitive events as the outcome of 4-H programming.

• Our 4-H culture hasn't always been so open to allow youth to have a voice. Many volunteers really believe they have the responsibility, authority and obligation to plan and implement. It was often the way it was done for and to them!
• First of all there is a mentality for service delivery as the most important function of our job and that youth development is that service delivery. Most of our folks come through the Ag education system which is not infused with youth development principles.

• Youth need to be involved in committee meetings for 4-H programming across the state - but that has not yet taken place. Without their knowledge of organizational systems and the state of 4-H our 4-H'ers have limited voice in decisions about events that affect them (state level events).

• Adults have not experienced working as true partners with youth. Society has in the past had a paradigm that adults are in charge and youth should follow the adults. To change this paradigm adults and youth must experience some success with youth and adults as true partners.

• Most Extension professionals in the state have multiple programming assignments, the smaller portion allocated to 4H and trying to do too much to be effective.

• Organizational culture and experience. It's easier to do it the same way it has always been.

• Too spread out too many counties.

• This is an obstacle because we say we want youth involvement in decision making but when we meet or start planning we alienate or disregard the youth's input during the process.

• Most often it is easier to just make the decisions and move ahead rather than involving more individuals in the decision-making, planning, implementation, etc.

• In 4-H we like to keep the schedule busy, too busy at times, to allow for youth to work through the planning process.

• The organization often looks up the administrative ladder and youth voice is new. With additional experiences by all, this will increase the comfort level of all.

• History.

• Organizational culture has allowed adults to make decisions for the organization.

• Large and complex, so few resources available to apply to changing it.

• Fund different projects causes hardships on current resources, because in 4-H we never turn loose of anything. We try to keep everything supported so as not to hinder a member's chance at an opportunity. Therefore, the only way to offer new
programming is to add more people to the leadership role. In doing so, Extension culture is to have paid staff be responsible.

- Many Extension faculty members do not let 4-H members and leaders know that they can be involved in programming.
- Because we've always done it this way, causes resistance to youth ideas frequently.
- Decisions are often made by the group that is most closely tied to the issue and often by the group that is most convenient to reach at the time. If we had an accepted and understood process for decision-making, we would have a framework within which decisions can be made and we would be more accountable to ensuring youth voice in decision making.
- It is a matter of limited time and resources and often mutually exclusive priorities.

Am I doing basic (one-on-one) youth development or am I delivering a program? It often takes more time to include youth (or any new perspective) into a planning and decision-making process. Do I spend my time helping a few youth to be effective group members or do I just make the planning decisions and get on with delivering a program for a much larger group of youth. For me it usually breaks at about 33/67. A third of my program time (one or two programs) involves encouraging youth as active partners. The other two thirds, about ten programs, youth are more than welcome, but the emphasis is getting the product delivered.

- My supervisor is the ultimate Micro Manager and doesn't believe youth have the ability to plan something effectively- she doesn't even believe I have the ability to do so and I have worked for Extension for 9 years.
- Creates "perfection or nothing" environment and keeps youth from being motivated to be involved in decision making.

**Respect/Value**
- Our ideas and opinions are often based on different issues and although they are based on different issues, if we do not respect all of the opinions we will never find a mutual ground.
- Some don't support youth as partners.
- Because many adults don't value the input of youth.
- If we don't see youth as full partners their impact is impeded.
- Adults and sometimes youth don't have enough confidence in one another.
• Adults don't know how to work with youth; youth don't realize they could/should have a voice.
• The world that youth live in does not usually allow them to speak out or to be involved in decision making. We, as a group, must preach it, teach it, and allow for it to happen.
• Adults not understanding the value of leadership development for youth.
• Attitude, time, and recognition that working together as full partners will bring about the highest degree of success.
• Youth are not taught to value their voice, their thoughts, and feelings within our society. This translates into having a lack of confidence in themselves and processes they are involved in.
• Youth who feel their opinions count are more likely to give valid input - if their ideas are not accepted, they quit giving them.
• Adults sometimes forget how to listen.
• Youth feel defeated before they begin and will find another program where they are given more power.
• This is an obstacle because we say we want youth involvement in decision making but when we meet or start planning we alienate or disregard the youth's input during the process.
• Beliefs of adults regarding youth roles and abilities.
• Most often it is easier to just make the decisions and move ahead rather than involving more individuals in the decision-making, planning, implementation, etc.
• Youth realize the need to work in partnership with adults, but if adults are not willing to learn how to best be a partner, they are often not willing to even consider the possibility - which means that youth are not informed or educated about the possibilities to make a difference in their world.
• Adults in this profession feel they have an educational base and training as educational professionals. When teens working in youth/adult partnerships have opinions or ideas that do not fit with the educator's perspective or vision, the youth are often convinced to change their minds. True partnerships should allow for the youth's final decisions on a committee to be final (barring any unsafe conditions).
• Youth are not seen as full partners in the process, so youth ideas and opinions may not be valued as highly as they should by adults.

• Open mindedness in adults and providing opportunities for youth to develop related skills and understanding of their responsibilities.

• Lack of communication between youth and adults.

• The two groups rarely communicate. There may be one adult communicating with the youth or vice versa, but as a whole, the two groups act independently.

• Youth are willing and most adults are open to their input and involvement.

• If they are not invited and encouraged to get involved, youth may not feel welcome.

• It leads to a matter of trust and without trust between the adults and youth, both sides feel threatened this will create barriers when they are working together.

**Accessibility**

• Too spread out too many counties.

• In our state, geography (distance between cities)

**Time/Scheduling**

• Youth and adult schedules often are in conflict, making it difficult for both groups to meet together to initiate and develop plans.

• Time (5)

• Scheduling.

• You also have time conflicts between when adults and youth want to meet.

• Youth have many obligations to multiple activities and programs.

• Our busy schedules make this difficult and are often used as excuse for not including them.

• Youth are involved in a multiple of activities and it is hard to plan adult schedules around student schedules.

• Scheduling--youth have so many demands from others and don't have control of their schedules and adults have timelines they think they need to maintain.

• Hard to get all the right players together.

• Kids are very active and adults are very busy.

• Getting folks together so everyone is at the table at the same time.

• Youth are in school 9 months out of the year and it is difficult to have adults involved in weekend meetings.
• Pressure to do so many things does not allow for the time necessary to work on this routinely.
• Time constraints make staff support of statewide youth involvement difficult.
• Youth are at school all day, while adults have to work and make decisions. It's not always convenient to include youth.
• Often times, I believe adults feel it is easier to disregard the input of youth due to scheduling conflicts, when really they are the ones who the programs are intended to be targeted toward, so their ideas and assistance should be solicited.
• Not enough time to do this and everything else that is expected.
• Too busy.
• Time and schedules for both adults and youth to accomplish effective positive working relationships.
• Youth and parents fail to communicate to the family unit, "You have to choose, you can't do everything." Too many families are trying to do "everything" and fail to prioritize extra curricular things, such as 4-H and sports. Scheduling difficulties result from a lack of planning and prioritizing.
• Adults like to work around their schedules.
• Not able to meet schedules/timelines/commitment.
• Both youth and adults have busy schedules and often forego processes which take time, give-and-take in order to get things planned or implemented "efficiently."
• Time constraints.
• Time restraints.
• Geography -- our state is so big, it is very difficult to manage face to face meetings for state committees or even regional or district committees.
• School usually comes first (as it should) and travel is always a problem because of lack of available funds, coupled with high fuel prices and the large size of our state.
• It is hard for youth to engage in frequent face to face planning sessions.
• Scheduling and time needed.
• Because all the good intentions in the world cannot make a successful youth and adult partnership work if we continue to struggle getting the same youth and adults at the same table more than once a year.
• Lack of staff time.
Both youth and adults have very busy schedules. It is becoming more difficult to get both parties in the same spot for planning sessions. It also seems our busy schedules are not allowing for sufficient planning time. We seem to be going from one event and activity to another and "turn around times" are shorter, with deadlines coming sooner.

Youth have lots of choices, want to be involved in other things, and adults work during the day when youth are at school.

Traditional work hours for a large portion of both groups causes (youth at school-Ext. professionals at work) conflict.

Time -- to get youth together with adults when it works for both in scheduling. We are often doing too many things and don't do what we know is the right way to approach a project, policy or task.

Our state officers are able to meet just three times each year because they live all over the state.

The demand on both the youth and adult time and lack of easy face-to-face or "net meeting" capacity where faces can be seen.

**Expectations on Youth**

Both need to understand and agree to expectations and who will do what. If this is mutually agreed upon, I think it can be a team. Sometimes, I involve a youth (or adult) who agrees to do a particular task. I assume it will get done. It doesn't. Next time, I tend to not involve that person or end up "checking up" that it was completed and it might feel like micromanagement or a lack of trust. Ongoing communication seems to be the best way to do this--in my experience.

Follow through makes it happen.

Possibly control on the part of the adult, possibly concern that follow-up will not be done.

**Competition**

School usually comes first (as it should).

**Money**

Money is being saved for college and or a car, and they have little time as starting to work and school work and activities are very important.

Cost.
• The field of youth development has fewer and fewer financial resources available for youth programs. This affects the amount of staff and faculty (especially front line delivery staff). In turn, this affects our ability to engage youth into meaningful decision making etc. To engage youth, it takes resources, time, and financial commitment.
• School usually comes first (as it should) and travel is always a problem because of lack of available funds, coupled with high fuel prices and the large size of our state.
• Money (5).
  • Fund different projects causes hardships on current resources, because in 4-H we never turn loose of anything. We try to keep everything supported so as not to hinder a member's chance at an opportunity. Therefore, the only way to offer new programming is to add more people to the leadership role. In doing so, Extension culture is to have paid staff be responsible.
  • Money (cost of gas, motels, meals, snacks, movies, etc.) are additional items that aren't respected as being legitimate costs of programming when so many youth move out of our state.
• No money is available to subsidize travel expenses.

**Adult Power/Control**
• The concept of youth-adult partnerships is difficult for some adults who have the traditional thinking that youth have a "helper" part but not a real partnership.
• Adults sometimes think they know best or will not take the time to involve youth.
• Adults still want the power to plan and run the programs.
• Adults want control of the program and run it their way, sometimes living vicariously through youth or doing what they wanted to do when they were 4-H members and now can as an adult, which impedes youth leadership.
• Adults are not patient enough to allow youth to arrive at the right decision on their own - they tell them that "ABC" won't work and we have to do it this way.
• Adults want to meet when it is convenient for them and don't want to work around youths schedules.
• They limit involvement. They prefer programming to or for youth not with youth.
• Power/Expertise--fear of failure by adults and a belief that youth don't really know since they don't have enough experience.
• Our 4-H culture hasn't always been so open to allow youth to have a voice. Many volunteers really believe they have the responsibility, authority and obligation to plan and implement. It was often the way it was done for and to them!
• Too often the youth will split and adults will use their differences to steer the group towards outcomes they want, rather than what is at the heart of what the youth want. Too often youth can be manipulated because they don't understand the depth of issues.
• Because adults will come up with 100 reasons why NOT instead of just one reason WHY.
• Travel and busy schedules.
• Past traditions and some adults thinking.
• Some adults still feel they know what is best and do not want to share the leadership and responsibility with youth.
• There seems to be a real timidity of relinquishing programming power on behalf of many adults. There may be a sense that there is no way youth could know what is best for them and therefore an adult must make the decisions.
• Adult try to get youth to adjust adult methods of communication and "voice." Adults should be communicating the manner that youth feel most comfortable.
• This is a change for most adults and adult actions seem more likely to keep the youth voice from being heard than youth being unwilling to speak.
• Adults tend to think youth cannot make good decisions.
• The Do what I say mentality.
• Egotism. A sincere belief that youth lack experiences to have sufficient wisdom to plan and carry out efforts, whether resources are provided up front or not.
• Adults are slow to change.
• Adults are not comfortable allowing youth to have a say so.
• Adults in this profession feel they have an educational base and training as educational professionals. When teens working in youth/adult partnerships have opinions or ideas that do not fit with the educator's perspective or vision, the youth are often convinced to change their minds. True partnerships should allow for the youth's final decisions on a committee to be final (barring any unsafe conditions).
• The adults often have the attitude that I know best.
• It is hard for them to "let go" - they often view 4-H as their program, not that of the youth members.
• Old time view of roles.
• They do not want to involve youth in the decision making process. They believe that kids today are the same as they were 20 years ago and they are not!!
• For some reason, adults seem to think that they know what is best for youth.
• It discourages youth and events planned by adults are NOT fun or enticing to youth!
• Certain adults in our county have been involved in 4-H for a long time and they resist the idea of changing and letting youth have input (Adults on the 4-H council don't seem to trust youth to carry out a major project by themselves).
• They are unable to let go of ultimate control because they lack the skill to provide guidance rather than direction.
• Possibly control on the part of the adult, possibly concern that follow-up will not be done.
• Adults' tendencies to focus on the accomplishment of a task and not thinking to involve youth in the educational process of accomplishing the task.
• Adults re-living their own 4-H experience.

Policy
• Youth need to be involved in committee meetings for 4-H programming across the state of FL - but that has not yet taken place. Without their knowledge of organizational systems and the state of 4-H our 4-H'ers have limited voice in decisions about events that affect them (state level events).
• School policies differ, especially in public schools.

Risk Management
• We are living in a society that sues others more now than ever.

Nonparticipation
• Shyness, lack of self-esteem, unwillingness to risk rejection of ideas.
• Rural communities, school pressures to be involved in many school activities/organizations.
• 4-H isn't perceived as the cool thing to do so it is a lower priority than other activities.
• If youth can't be present at the planning meetings, then they don't have a voice from the start of a program. They are many times involved in other ways, but not at the initial start of an idea.

• Youth often time are not able to attend those meetings, because of timing and location (i.e. school, transportation, location of meeting, finances, etc.).

• When youth don't come forward to plan, organize participate, brainstorm, etc. the adults are left to complete activities or other plans.

• Youth want to be involved in everything but since 4-H is extra, it gets put off and is often the piece that gets pushed out.

• The message soon reaches those excluded and they refrain from participating.

Preparation

• Because their full effort is not put into an event causing it to not be presented at its fullest potential.

• Hard to get all the right players together.

• Adults not understanding the value of leadership development for youth.

• They were brought up without their voice being heard, so that is how adults think things work.

• People may not understand youth development and the importance of youth voice for adolescents.

• Not enough adults realize the importance of the youth voice in the success of the program.

• They have not had the experience of working with youth in governance roles.

Training

• Most of it is a lack of training and understanding that including youth voice will positively impact a program many times over.

• Youth don't know how to work with adults and adults don't know how to work with youth.

• Adults don't know how to work with youth; youth don't realize they could/should have a voice.

• Both adults and youth need competencies to work together successfully: communication skills, conflict resolution skills, leadership and problem-solving.

• Lack of staff to train busy volunteers who can't come to trainings.
• Youth are trained to not be in decision roles from the school system and it is hard to make them realize that their voice is really valued and that we want to hear from them.

• Because most adults have not had training on age appropriateness or feel because they have reared youth they are an authority on what is age appropriate involvement.

**Acting on Youth's Wants**

• They assign roles that youth don't feel comfortable in or wish to move beyond. They don't allow freedom of creativity in the youth voice.

• Youth feel defeated before they begin and will find another program where they are given more power.

• This is an obstacle because we say we want youth involvement in decision making but when we meet or start planning we alienate or disregard the youth's input during the process.

**Adults Not Wanting Sharing Experience**

• Relationship building.

**Youth's Developmental Stage**

• Egotism. A sincere belief that youth lack experiences to have sufficient wisdom to plan and carry out efforts, whether resources are provided up front or not.

**Authentic Voice**

• They assign roles that youth don't feel comfortable in or wish to move beyond. They don't allow freedom of creativity in the youth voice.

• When a critical mass of people are unavailable to build trust, a relationship (even if on conference calls) and take some personal risks in revealing their wishes, meaningful conversation, communications and progress are inhibited.

**Involvement/Involvement Process**

• An unwillingness to work through the process to implement. It is a mental unwillingness to problem solve and to address observations and concerns that would truly allow the youth to have citizen leadership versus token leadership - it is giving up the "power" in the minds of the adults.

• Adults don't look at youth voice as a developmental process. They are worried for various reasons (reputation, need for control, perfectionism, etc.) about how the
product or event goes off. Rather, than looking at the experience as a growth development opportunity for youth.

- Because your 4-H year may be half over by the time the youth builds the confidence to speak up and they are graduating out or only have one year left.
- It takes time to get everyone together. If you want youth to be true full partners in the process you have to allow time for them to gain the background and knowledge to be effective in the planning process. It can also take time for adults to learn how to understand and work with youth. It is a skill that some have to learn.
- Adults have not experienced working as true partners with youth. Society has in the past had a paradigm that adults are in charge and youth should follow the adults. To change this paradigm adults and youth must experience some success with youth and adults as true partners.
- If youth can’t be present at the planning meetings, then they don’t have a voice from the start of a program. They are many times involved in other ways, but not at the initial start of an idea.
- Often times, I believe adults feel it is easier to disregard the input of youth due to scheduling conflicts, when really they are the ones who the programs are intended to be targeted toward, so their ideas and assistance should be solicited.
- The process needs to be taught by levels and youth need to see how it applies immediately. If they do not see an immediate application, a way they can use it today... they disengage from the process. Adults tend to think youth cannot make good decisions. They may not have the same amount of experience as adults but they are capable, given the tools and the opportunity.
- If the adult staff and/or volunteers do not encourage, actively recruit or agree to involve young people in decision-making, the youth may not be aware that the opportunities for being involved even exist.
- I need to be spending my time gathering youth voice.
- Making it a priority and logistics. Finding the right youth and who have the skills to be active participants and the training for staff to make it happen. I think we all know we should be doing this.
- Decisions are often made by the group that is most closely tied to the issue and often by the group that is most convenient to reach at the time. If we had an
accepted and understood process for decision-making, we would have a framework within which decisions can be made and we would be more accountable to ensuring youth voice in decision making.

- A 10:1 ratio of adults to youth doesn't help the youth to express themselves, especially if he disagrees with the adults!

**Generational Gap**

- Our current inability to effectively work in and across age partnerships.
- They do not want to involve youth in the decision making process. They believe that kids today are the same as they were 20 years ago and they are not!!
- Lack of Respect because of differences in age, experience, involvement as well as not being empathetic or able to view the other person's opinion as a possibility.

**Vision**

- It tends to be the biggest obstacle because sometime youth do not see the big picture. This includes the expenses and/or cost of what they want to do or accomplish. It also is related to the timeline that youth wish to move at and what the Extension organization can move at.
- Adults have not experienced working as true partners with youth. Society has in the past had a paradigm that adults are in charge and youth should follow the adults. To change this paradigm adults and youth must experience some success with youth and adults as true partners.
- People fail to recognize the opportunities that could exist.

**List any additional concerns or comments you may have regarding the topic of youth voice in the decision making process?**

**National Role**

- It's an important topic and needs to be addressed nationwide, in all groups designed to develop youth.
- There is a mission mandate to address opportunities in science, engineering, and technology literacy among youth. There should be an avenue for youth to provide their perspective in this area.

**Inclusion of youth on Boards/Committees**
We are still introducing these concepts to youth in several state events but have not yet involved them in the collaborative process of committee work.

**Developmental Stages Impact on Youth Voice Impact**

- I would say good decision making skills will always affect the youth voice, but I would say bad decision making skills will always affect the youth voice.
- I strongly believe that the level of youth voice is dependent upon the age of the youth participant. Nine year olds, for example, don't need the same level of youth voice input that 19 year olds should have. 9 year olds need fewer options and more direct instruction (this is what you need to do and how you need to do it) than do 19 year olds. This belief played a big part in selecting my responses to your questions.
- I think there are always levels of youth voice within the program as age appropriate.

**Youth’s View of 4-H**

- In a lot of cases, youth want to be entertained, and fail to see the learning aspect of 4H.

**Youth Voice in Events vs. Policies**

- Opinions vary from action and type of programming makes a difference in level and type of youth involvement. Not sure how valid responses may be.

**Youth and Adult Roles**

- For example, I do not think only adults can start programs, but I do think whoever starts it, responsibility (depending on the program) is shared between youth and adults.
- Many adults are interested in shared decision-making but it is difficult to attract youth to the concept. They are not looking for another boring meeting to attend. Many also believe that their ideas won't be taken seriously and they are hesitant to express their ideas for this reason. It is takes time to build confidence in emerging teens and it often does not become well-established until they are juniors or seniors.
- We want and appreciate Youth input, but adults provide the resources and both must make the time commitment for follow through to make a project work.

**Organizational Culture**

- Comfort level of some agents and volunteers.
- This (questionnaire) helped me to realize how as much as we discuss values of youth voice and youth adult partnerships, we fall short of practicing these to the fullest at the state level.
• Youthful ideas are wonderful, but reality is usually dealt with by the professional,
• It is essential to a great 4-H program. I think our state does a good job of involving youth voice. There is always room for improvement. There is always new staff, new youth and new volunteers to get involved and to learn to value youth voice.
• I think youth and adult partnerships are a tradition in the 4-H program, this gives youth voice in club meetings and county programming.
• It has improved in the 25 years I have been involved in 4-H work, but there is still a lot of work to do and attitudes to change.
• Youth love it; the only opposition is my supervisor who doesn't believe it can be done.

**Youth Capacity**
• In the 4-H after-school programs, youth voice is key for the success of programming. The role of junior leaders and youth members all contribute to an atmosphere where youth voice happens.
• I have been privileged to know and work with some outstanding youth who went on to wonderful careers/ personal lives. It’s a joy to be a part of!
• I've learned a great deal from the youth I work with. They are much more capable than the average adult thinks they are.

**Developing Youth Voice**
• Youth voice if difficult in short term programs since it takes time to cultivate the understanding of partnerships and people of all ages bringing great assets to the table. As well as experiences that make us who we are.
• I think this is important. I think that logistically it is easier on a local level. However, this should also be done on a state level. I work with one specific project that at this point has not used youth in governance. We do have other projects that are very successful in this area. I should move more toward this concept of youth governance.
• We need to figure out how to build on the successes of engaging youth voice at the local (club/group) level and help youth and adults understand that the ability to influence decisions is what makes their 4-H experience meaningful. Then, we need to ensure it happens for all youth in all clubs/groups and finally we need to translate those local actions for engaging youth voice into actions that are appropriate at the county/city, regional, state and national level.
• I feel we are looking towards a paradigm shift in our professionals to lead our members towards increasing the number of true youth/adult partnerships in the 4-H culture.

• I attended the session at Rock Eagle led by the LSU staff- it was excellent! Since then, I have tried to involve youth in decision making for things affecting them. I remember Todd telling us it is important to let them make decisions and not to shoot down their crazy ideas. Also, their failure is a learning experience.

• We are continually working to better the process of youth voice in our state and in our counties.

• Youth voice is very critical to the future of 4-H and varies depending on the project or activity. Finding ways to establish and maintain youth voice, at all levels of the organization is needed.

**Resources and Support**

• We need to continue to develop practical tools for both youth and adult audiences that will enable them to learn to work together more effectively and will encourage these partnerships.

• I’m working to address this issue in two programs that I manage. I want more training on how to better involve youth in decision making.

**Training**

• 4-H volunteers and educators are not well trained on youth voice or youth and adult partnerships, so they do not necessarily understand the terminology or some of the concepts, even though they practice it everyday.

• I wish we could train youth today and in turn their parents on the importance of priority. Decisions youth will make in later life thrive on the ability of someone to prioritize.

• I see us moving in the direction of more meaningful training of youth in this area. Especially the last 3 to 5 years.

**Importance of Youth Voice**

• Youth Voice is a critical component of Extension remaining vital for the future.

• Not all youth can or will let their interests be known unless they have confidence in the adults they are working with.

• Prior to my work at the state level, I worked for 17+ years at the county level as an Extension Educator. My belief in youth voice has always been part of my effort as I
believe that youth are not problems to be solved, but rather resources to be developed.

- With budget cuts we have faced Educator staff fulfilling many roles. We need youth and adult volunteer assistance in volunteer recruitment and events management and would appreciate successful models used by other states to make that happen.
- Youth voice is necessary to keep 4-H as a leader in organizations that help youth learn citizenship, leadership and life skills!

**Staffing**

- Youth voice is very critical to the future of 4-H and varies depending on the project or activity. Finding ways to establish and maintain youth voice, at all levels of the organization is needed.

**Accessibility**

- Being able to build those relationships is difficult because of distance in the state.

**Turnover**

- The rapid turn-over of 4-H members.
- Frequent turnover of youth also seems to hamper effective youth involvement.

**Policy**

- Youth do not understand the restraints put on professionals, such as budget and time allocation and the impact it has on programming.

**Competition**

- Sports programs are wonderful for kids, no doubt, 4-H offers unique opportunities for youth also. They have to be an acceptable blending of both activities in today’s society.

**Involvement Process/Involvement**

- I see us moving in the direction of more meaningful involvement of youth in this area. Especially the last 3 to 5 years.
- Youth need to be involved at every level, but please realize that today’s youth are involved in MANY things, and often do not involve themselves in this process.
What is the biggest obstacle to youth voice in the decision making process within 4-H?

**Communication**
- Being able to verbalize their ideas.
- Communication between adults and youth.
- Communication.

**Leadership**
- Lack of self esteem.
- Lack of positive 4-H leadership roles among public school youth.
- It is hard to involve youth in some leadership activities at the local and especially the state level.
- Youth stepping up to the plate.
- Leadership.

**Lack of Experience/Confidence**
- I believe the biggest obstacle to youth voice in decision making is lack of confidence (self esteem) of the youth. After guidance from adults, youth build confidence in themselves and their ideas and begin having a larger youth voice.
- Adults with a lack of experience in working with youth.
- Our clubs are relatively new, with many new leaders, and they sometimes meet sporadically, or youth
- It is hard to involve youth in some leadership activities at the local and especially the state level.
- The lack of opportunity to develop their communication skills in other areas of their lives.
- Adults who do not think youth can handle it.
- Adults lack of confidence in youths decision making abilities/ability to follow through.

**Staffing/Staff Support**
• Staff shortages.
• Capable volunteers to expand staff efforts.

Transportation
• Transportation (12).

Fear
• Fear of being made fun of by their peers or adults.
• To speak up when adults are around.

Organizational Culture
• Sense of trust in the organization.
• A history of not including them on advisory councils, fair boards, committees, etc. - currently doing more of that, but youth and adults aren't used to it and often don't understand/appreciate roles of each.
• Tradition - failure of adults to recognize youth's abilities.
• Tradition .
• The biggest obstacle is "past history."
• Youth not in on the decision-making process.
• Old habits and routines.
• 4-H volunteers stuck in the "way we've always done it" mode makes it hard for them to see that youth can do. My experience with such leaders is that the kids are recipients of the program, not a partner.
• Developing an atmosphere of openness between youth and adults.

Respect/Value
• To being taken serious.
• Support, understanding, and buy in by extension leadership/management.
• Adults being willing to hear youth voice and accept it as equal to their own.
• Youth voice being overlooked by adults.
• Adults understanding why youth representation is not only important but necessary for the continuation of the 4-H program.
• Getting adults to interact maturely in such a manner as to encourage youth, rather than making youth want to back away and avoid the negative environment.
• Parents who do not understand the importance of youth voice in decision making.
• Trust and communication play a major role in youth voice.
• Youth & adults learning to view each other as equals during the process of planning and conducting 4-H activities.
• Changing the mindset of some adults to value the ideas and skills youth can bring to the planning and implementation process.
• Once the group establishes trust and objectives both groups work better together as a unified team.
• Mutual trust and respect between youth and adults.
• Lack of caring.
• Getting adults to open up and to realize that the youth are responsible enough and capable of participating in the decision making processes.
• True and honest youth/adult partnerships.
• Being asked to serve on committees and then the committee members not listening to what they have to say.

**Time/Scheduling**

• Time (15).
• Accessibility.
• Scheduling Conflicts (13).
• Probably the extra time needed to involve youth in the process. The scheduling of youth and adults being together is sometimes hard.
• Available time to devote to the program. Thus, the parent's schedule is a factor as well.
• With the high school teens, it is a matter of prioritizing their time commitments to settle on a good time to do things.
• Scheduling activities at the right time so the highest number of youth can participate.
• Availability (2).
• Time commitments.
• Adults believe youth are too busy doing activities - 4-H, school, church, etc - to care about making decisions about any of those activities.
• The greatest obstacle facing older youth is scheduling. More youth have more opportunities for extra curricular activities today than ever in history. Therefore, finding available dates for activities where the majority of youth can participate is many time a great obstacle.
• Other Activities.
• Over commitment to other programs and activities.
• Find the time to participate and plan. Youth are too involved in other activities and other organizations, and it is difficult for them to find time to plan and carry out projects.
• Busy kids - school work, jobs, sports activities.
• Getting youth and adults together at the same time.
• Over scheduling of youth.
• Time to involve youth in all county programming decisions.
• Time - our 4-H members are usually involved in several other activities (especially sports), and 4-H will always come second to these other "requirements."
• Youth are involved in too many other activities.
• Time management.

**Expectations/Beliefs on Youth and Adults**

• Convincing adults that youth are capable of working in true partnership with adults . . . that they can accept responsibilities and follow through.

• Perceptions of each others expectations.

• How adults view youths abilities to make decisions.

**Money**

• Money.

• Financial- Youth often times lack financial skills and adults lack faith in their ability to set priorities with regard to program planning within a financial realm. This is especially true of Governmental, Foundation and Grant funders who have a preconceived notion about what constitutes youth voice. Youth can have a voice, but the adults on the Boards still maintain all control of program direction through the purse strings.

**Power/Control by Adults**

• Adults letting go of total authority.
• Adult’s ability to be quiet and let youth dominate.
• Adults, parents, leaders.
• Adults allowing youth to build a responsible partnership in the decision making process.
• Adults being overbearing and wanting to have all of the control of the program.
• Adults letting go.
• Adults who are afraid of losing control to youth.
• Adults.
• Overzealous adults in volunteer roles - whose vision differs from the educator's.
• Adult resistance to allowing them a voice.
• Attitudes of adults involved in the program or lack of adults involved.
• Adults being able to "let go" and trust the youth to plan and conduct a program successfully.
• The ability of adults to step back and give youth a chance to participate equally.
• Adults allowing kids to voice their opinions without interference and then allowing the follow through.
• Getting youth to "buy in" to a program suggested by an adult, or adults dismissing youth's ideas.
• Adults being willing to change and try something different; willing to take a chance.
• Adults unwillingness to share decision making with youth.
• Adults who do not allow youth to participate in decision making process.
• Adults have been planning and deciding programming needs for youth without considering youth's ideas.
• Even though 4-H is a youth organization, most adults do not give the youth the opportunity to create, plan and deliver programs.

**Nonparticipation**

• Active participation.
• Active participation year in year out.
• Adults' prior experiences.
• A strong motivation to be involved in the decision making process.
• Lack of participation.

**Diversity**

• Lack of diversity.

**Preparation**
• Ensuring that both youth and adults fully understand the full scope of the issue to make informed, effective decisions.

**Training**
• Leadership training opportunities.
• Poor communication skills.
• Training for both youth and adults.
• Information.
• Provide appropriate training and experiential opportunities.

**Authentic Voice**
• Sometimes youth are afraid to share ideas or speak their opinions.

**Involvement/Involvement Process**
• Getting youth to take ownership in activities, decisions.
• Not allowing the youth to have a voice in any processes.
• Unenthusiastic adults who are not engaged in creating motivated youth and cannot identify or understand the concept of the "teachable moment."
• An overt effort to include them in significant, meaningful decision making.
• Initially engaging them.
• Adults and youth both perceiving equality at the same table.
• Teamwork.
• Follow through.
• Following through with youth voice planning.

**Turnover**
• Their turnover.

**Why is it the biggest obstacle?**

**Leadership**
• If our clubs had more consistent meetings and membership attendance, they would have the continuity to develop more leadership skills and be involved.

**Lack of Experience/Knowledge/Confidence**
• By the time they have enough skills and experience to take on enhanced leadership roles - they graduate and a new class of youth comes along.
• Adults may not have had a chance as a youth to make decisions and does not now know how to involve youth effectively.
• The youth adult partnership is a new concept that many adults have not grown to accept and appreciate until they have experienced this new approach to 4-H Leadership.
• Lack of experience working with youth.
• They may not have had the opportunity to do so they lack the confidence to speak up.
• Caring youth and adults are only restrained by lack of knowledge of opportunities available.
• Adults don't always communicate effectively.

**Communication/Sharing Views**
• Communication; how youth and adult interact with each other authentically.
• Can’t communicate when either is not open.
• Youth have to be strong to feel comfortable talking in front of a group that there are a lot of adults present.

**Transportation**
• Also, the youth may not have transportation or the finances to transport themselves to the meeting.
• A lot of the young people do not have license to drive and many of their parents work shift work.
• Youth’s transportation.
• No way to get to meeting or conflict with team oriented sports activity.
• Transportation.
• Many youth want to attend meetings, events, etc. but do not drive and parent’s schedules do not permit them the flexibility to transport youth.

**Parental Support**
• Children without parental involvement lack transportation. Children of poverty who lack parental involvement have no hope of getting there or the encouragement to make the attempt.
Fear

- Youth feel intimidated and not thinking that they have any worth while ideas.
- Because of the lack of trust that adults have in youth and the adults fear of failure and its reflection on them (the adults).
- Fear of youth engaging in something different than what the staff member things the program should be doing.
- Adults are afraid that the program will not turn out like it should if youth are in control.

Organizational Culture

- Many different things pulling the kids as well as the adults away from our programming. We still do things in extension that are standards more than things that are relevant to what the kids are interested in.
- The history of not involving them created strong-rooted misconceptions of how youth should/shouldn't be involved.
- Many 4-H volunteers are resistant to change and are hesitant to try something new, such as allowing youth to serve on advisory board, assist with creating policy, etc.
- Other things are allowed to take precedence.
- Because people's minds get patterned and it's hard to initiate change.
- Because we concentrate on theory or programs to accomplish what we think is needed. Youth need challenges, encouragement and an environment that allows failure, success, and motivation to participate to the best of their ability. Agents and leaders have to provide that environment and administration needs to support it.
- Tradition drives many, many projects for the adults; some adults not willing to partner with youth.
- Organizational frame may not allow for sidetracking to follow through on youth voice planning. Organizational leadership would need to be approving of agents' time frame/rescheduling to accommodate the implementation of youth voice initiated programming.
- Adults often lack organizational support to turn over control to youth.
- Once you have been ignored or put down the chances of you speaking up again are slim to none.

Respect/Value
• I don't know... but the youth have stated it clearly that they don't want to waste their time attending meetings where the youth just fight with each other.

• I believe this is a large obstacle because so many youth grow up without having a voice in decision making issues concerning their welfare. When they are first encouraged to share their voice, they must be encouraged to learn that they have valid ideas.

• Acceptance by adults that youth are capable of making decisions.

• The need for support of the youth and for greater collaborations.

• To be effective, youth are more comfortable to be on a committee with adults, if they have confidence in themselves and know they are valued as assets by the adults.

• Because you are dealing with feelings.

• Most adults don't realize what youth are capable of accomplishing.

• If something needs to be done, and the kids suggest it, it works out well. If an adult suggests it, sometimes the youth have a hard time getting on board. Often you have youth with ideas, and adults dismiss the ideas immediately without trying to make it work. I think it's hard for adults to let go and allow youth to make decisions, whether they succeed or fail. Sometimes failure teaches far more than a success would have.

**Time/Scheduling**

• Planning meeting are often done by staff and volunteers who meet during the day at the office, and youth are in schools and not able to attend because of the time.

• Caring youth and adults are only restrained by the time to plan together.

• Youth aren't able to get together in a timely manner to make decisions and to have input in the programming.

• Because of the competition with the youth's other choices of activities.

• Time.

• Young people and adults have many scheduled conflicts. The interest and commitment are there, but the schedules are tight.

• Have too many other things to attend and don't choose 4-H as a priority (both for adults and 4-H'ers).
• With scheduling problems for older youth, many youth are torn between their priority, and the priorities of their parents. They feel as if they must "do it all" and become over extended.
• No way to get to meeting or conflict with team oriented sports activity.
• Youth are spread too thin and have too much on their plate to focus on one program.
• Limited amount of time for planning, preparation and activities.
• Youth are involved in so many activities there often isn't enough time.
• Too many activities, too little time.
• Too many other activities going on at the same time.
• People just don't have enough time in their lives to commit to this.
• Scheduling.
• More people are in the work force, overwhelmed with their schedules, less likely to help.
• My experience shows that youth in leadership roles tend to be the busiest youth - who can't always make time for 4-H.
• On both the adult and youth side, many just want to be involved with their 4-H project - not with all the overall planning, implementing, etc. Their schedules are so active they can't see a need to get involved at what they perceive is at such a greater level.
• Extra curricular school/sport activities - not seeing 4-H as a priority.
• Too many demands on youth and 4-H isn't always the top priority. Inflexibility by sports teams and schools contributes greatly to this.
• TIME and need to excel at school.
• Youth are spread so thin that they do not give enough time to any one activity. They do not want to take the time to understand the issues at stake.
• Many 4-H youth and parents are involved in community, school, work, church and family events-schedules are full. It is difficult to get everyone to the "table" for all decision making.
• Too many other commitments or options for use of time.
• Time can be an obstacle in getting every one together as well as the notion that adults know what is best.
- Youth are being pulled in many different ways by sports and other activities. Living in an 'over-achieving' society has youth trying to do it all and being just too busy.
- Coordinating schedules.
- Time restraints and overburdened work schedules of agents reduce the number and quality of youth opportunities in the field.
- Change in times.
- It takes a lot of time to inform youth of the issues so that they can make an informed decision. It seems to work better for youth to just tell us when they like or dislike a program and then we listen and change it accordingly.
- Time can be an obstacle in getting everyone together.

**Expectations on Youth and Adults**
- I think there are a lot of preconceived notions of what each group thinks and wants.

**Money**
- Programs are often times funded with an outcome in mind long before youth are involved and then the direction is driven by the funding source and the expected outcomes from that funding, not by the voice of the youth.
- Lack of money is a major obstacle as well.
- They are donors and think they are more important than the educators.

**Power/Control by Adults**
- They are seen as gatekeepers and final authority.
- Adults have difficulty in staying out of the control mode - they feel they need to be in control or the environment will get out of control.
- Many adults have come to expect that they would be in charge of any youth program, not just their to advise.
- Some adults are not willing to give up control.
- Because agents and other adults find it quicker and easier to do many things themselves without consulting or involving youth.
- Many believe it is easier to do the work him/herself instead of involving youth.
- Adults do not want to let go of the control they have over the youth.
- Youth become bored as they are held to a strict agenda which the adults create and rigidly stick to.
- Too often decisions are made by adults and imposed upon the youth.
• Because you have to be careful giving full reign to youth. Many times they do not know what is best for them so you have to teach them. That is what we are here for, to educate youth from every situation you can think of to be productive citizens all of us are proud to live with.
• Adults are too often unwilling to work with youth, to take the time and make the effort to really get to know youth.
• It's hard to take time to build rapport and adult/youth partnerships. It's easier just to make decisions and go on.
• The adults aren't willing or don't understand the value in getting the youths' perspectives on their program. They make the majority of the decisions with minimal or no input from the youth.
• We as humans all want to be in control. I think adults find it very difficult to allow that control (over decisions, actions, etc.) to be in the hands of kids. They like that they come up with ideas, but to allow them complete control is hard.
• Sometimes parents will try to control a decision through their child, but is not willing to be part of the decision making body.
• Most youth think adults will cut them out.
• Many adults do not like change.
• Because the adults are uncomfortable with change and don't trust that the youth will make the "right" decisions.
• 4-H volunteerism is strong and sometimes adults have a difficult time relinquishing control, etc.
• Adults are used to making the decisions and do not take the time to involve the youth.
• Adults are developing youth programs they feel are beneficial without the youth having a say in whether these programs are of need to their age group.
• Because they do not want to give up the power and they are not willing to share responsibility.
• As well as the notion that adults know what is best.
• Adults naturally feel like they should be in control, I, adults often lack organizational support to turn over control to youth, adults don't trust the wisdom, experience, or decision-making abilities of youth.
Risk Management
• Transportation also has liability attached to it.

Nonparticipation
• Youth will not feel a part of the decision making and that will lead to lack of participation.
• Adults have done it for them, lack of interest, and other priorities.
• Often they will keep their ideas to themselves.

Diversity
• Minorities are not represented in our state’s programming on a state level...Youth or adults. When there are elections to be held, minorities are not voted in. There may be one out of 10 this is very discouraging to the youth that I work with.

Competition with Activities
• We compete with so many other youth activities that we don't always get 100% participation.
• Kids have to make choices where their involvement will be. Sometimes this keeps them from being more involved in 4-H programs, decision making, etc.
• 4-H is optional; if you miss a few meetings you can still participate. If you miss a sports practice or game, you don't play.
• Because it is often just youth sitting around listening to adults.

Preparation
• Caring youth and adults are only restrained by lack of knowledge of opportunities available and the time to plan together.
• It takes time to make sure both youth and adults are knowledgeable about the issue. Often decisions are made or new programs initiated without adequate understanding of the broader issues involved (risk management, funding, scheduling, etc.). To make effective decisions, volunteers need to fully understand the various factors impacting each decision.

Training
• Not enough staff /volunteers to commit to time for trainings etc.
• Staff can only do so much. You can mandate more training for them, which only pushes them further away, while the intent for quality volunteers is good.

Experiences
• Past experiences were negative and an overall misconception of youths' abilities and commitment.
• Usually they are reluctant to do so if they haven't had a positive experience with this in the past.
• Negative past experiences.

**Acting on Youth's Wants**
• Lot of talk, but no action to support.
• Leadership sets the pace - inspires, and makes the difference in a successful program. Degree of 4-H youth interest determines pursuit of voice in 4-H.
• If they don't come to the table-you have no youth voice (disbelief that they really have a voice).

**Involvement/Involvement Process**
• Then, later on, they will come to me with their suggestions. I wish they would come to me before the planning meeting.
• In order to have equal representation and decision making opportunities, the youth need to be present and heard.
• Lack of information for adult audiences about the importance of youth input. Adults don't want to listen to some fluff - they want/need the facts in fewer than 5 minutes about why youth must be involved at all levels with the 4-H program. I believe a lack of continual growth in 4-H is the number one reason middle/high school youth quit the organization.

List any additional concerns or comments you may have regarding the topic of youth voice in the decision making process?

**Inclusion of youth on Boards/Committees**
• More opportunities/trainings for youth and mandatory bylaws to adhere to for involving youth on boards.
• This is the 3rd county that I have worked in, I have been successful in getting 6 youth on the 4-H Council in one of my previous counties and the other county we formed a youth fair board. I have not been here long enough to make any major changes yet, but I hope to at least get our board to change their by-laws to include youth board members in the near future.
Youth and Adult Roles

- Youth need guidance but they should help in the decision-making processes as the decisions affect them the most.

Time

- It takes a lot of time to involve youth in the process. With minimal staff, you have to be careful that they just don't go ahead and plan things themselves due to time constraints!

Organizational Culture Effects on Youth Voice

- A lot of agents say they allow youth voice, but only give youth lip service, or sway kids to decide in a certain way and then call that youth voice, they plant their own ideas into the heads of youth in the name of youth voice.

Developing Youth Voice

- Communication and Caring are the keys to a successful Youth Voice.
- The key is to empower all people to be engaged in their communities in areas or topics that individuals are passionate about changing.
- Youth voice must be advertised in as many forms as possible. Anytime youth are involved in a program or project, people need to be made aware. Most common people still think of 4-H as a bird house project or some program taken in the 4th or 5th grade. The promotion of 4-H and its benefits are rare in our state as a whole.

Resources, Training and Support

- I feel there is a need for training on youth on boards and communities need other supports to help keep the youth voices initiative going. We have had the Adult youth partnership training but having some booster sessions as we call them for staff would be of value. The other problem we have had was that we had trained a group of youth and adults to teach others about youth adult partnerships but we have not had follow-up groups be trained. I feel we need a training to help community people understand this concept. Sometimes we can't get training teams to be able to involve youth but we shouldn't hold back on training adults if we don't have trained youth/adult teams.
- Also, I believe that trainings should be held on how to give youth more options in expressing their opinions.
- As we continue to develop Master series training, a Master Teen Leadership program should be included to provide educational opportunities for youth to learn
more about their roles and responsibilities in youth voice practices and experience youth voice decision-making efforts. Levels of accomplishment open doors for greater achievement and success for youth voice in our 4-H programs.

- Suggestions to incorporate a strong youth voice in decision making.
- Have had numerous in-service trainings regarding the topic of including 4-H members in planning process, on advisory boards and in all phases of 4-H programming.

**Importance of Youth Voice**

- Youth are involved in many more opportunities now than ever before and 4-H seems to be continuing to fall farther from the top of the list of favorites. Maybe youth voices can help reverse the trend or tell us what we need to do to affect + change.

**Adult Power/Control**

- Some adults are overbearing on the kids and do not allow the youth to have input. They do not understand or agree with the youth development concept.
- Also, volunteers differ in willingness to share decision-making power.

**Youth Capacity**

- Youth are capable of organizing, budgeting, setting up an event, if allowed to.
Vita

Todd Anthony Tarifa was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on January 9, 1973. He is the son of Frank J. Tarifa Jr. and the late Beverly M. Tarifa. He graduated from Chalmette Senior High School in 1991 and attended Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in May, 1992 where he went on to receive a Bachelor of Science Degree in animal, dairy, and poultry. After receiving that degree in 1996, Todd received an assistantship with the Department of Dairy Science to conduct research and earn his Master of Science degree. His research interest was within the field of ruminant nutrition, and his master's thesis was titled, Effect of Chromium and Calcium Propionate on Growth, Gastrointestinal Development, and Metabolism Of Milk-Fed Dairy Calves.

In 1998, he began his career with the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, a division of the LSU Agricultural Center. During his tenure with the LSU AgCenter, he completed his specialization in youth development, and is currently holding the position of Associate County Agent in East Baton Rouge Parish. He further went on to obtain a Doctor of Philosophy degree, which will be conferred by Louisiana State University at the December, 2006 commencement ceremony.

Todd is currently a member of the Louisiana Association of 4-H Agents and the National Association of 4-H Agents. He is a member of the Louisiana chapter of Honor Society of Agriculture, Gamma Sigma Delta and Epsilon Sigma Phi. Throughout his professional career, Todd has been a frequent presenter at national conferences, educational gatherings, and has presented at the National CYFAR Conference and the American Evaluation Association.