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## Understanding the Views of Beef Show Cattle Parents and the Reasons Why Their Children Participate in Beef Cattle Shows

Matt Schiel

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**UNDERSTANDING THE VIEWS OF BEEF SHOW CATTLE  
PARENTS AND THE REASONS WHY THEIR CHILDREN  
PARTICIPATE IN BEEF CATTLE SHOWS**

A Thesis

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  
Master of Science

in

The Department of Agricultural and Extension Education and Evaluation

by  
Matthew Manuel Schiel  
B.S., Louisiana State University, 1999  
December 2022

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Matthew Manuel Schiel

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The population for this qualitative study were 10 families who participated in showing a heifer at the 2022 Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo during the junior heifer show weekend. The families were all from Texas. This study examined why parents allow their children to participate in showing cattle using a case study design. The study was grounded in human capital theory. Interviews and observations were used for the study's findings. Results showed that the children who showed beef cattle learned responsibility, interpersonal skills, character development, and hard work.

Future research topics include further case studies using the same methodology for other extracurricular junior programs to evaluate similar responses given by parents who participate in events like Boy and Girl Scouts, cheerleading, and a variety of sports. Furthermore, it is recommended that an intensive study on the ethics of show judges be completed to evaluate the views of not only parents and participants but educational leaders, show management, and judges themselves to determine if they are similar or different.

## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The time-honored tradition of cattle exhibition can be traced back to 1811 when Elkanah Watson, often called “the father of American fairs,” formed the Berkshire Agricultural Society and sponsored the first fair (MAFA, 2022). Called simply a “Cattle Show,” the display included 383 sheep, seven bulls, 109 oxen, nine cows, three heifers, two calves, and one boar (Oliver, 2011, p. 2). Unlike their counterparts of today, these early livestock shows would have taken many days to travel to and would have been a large undertaking for all who attended. In contemporary times, livestock shows are now held throughout the year, with every state hosting its own state fair (Sanctioned Shows, 2022). Those who participated include exhibitors of all ages, with many young people being a large focus and part of those who participated in the shows. Further, showing animals and caring for those that are shown has begun to be incorporated across the country as part of educational programs in high schools, colleges, and other clubs and organizations.

Livestock shows that cater to youth exhibitors, ages eight to 21 years old, have a long-standing tradition in the livestock industry. Junior livestock shows were introduced as “a teaching tool to help develop young people in animal agriculture and to make better citizens out of them” (Parrett, 2003, p.1). Parrett (2003) further explained that

beef cattle shows provide important opportunities for young people to learn about the cattle industry, meet successful cattle industry leaders, make friends, and improve their social and communicative skills. Shows offer opportunities for maintaining an interest in farming and agriculture for our youth (Parrett, 2003, p. 2).

And these experiences have been connected to other opportunities and organizations these young people frequent, including, but not limited to educational clubs and groups. In fact, most junior livestock shows require that the participant be a member of a 4-H or National FFA



Organization. The excerpt below is from the Fort Worth Livestock Show and Rodeo special rules that govern the junior shows:

The Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show makes available to County Extension Agents and Agricultural Science Teachers in charge of 4-H Clubs or FFA livestock programs the opportunity to enter members in their programs in the Junior Division of the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show, subject to the following Special Rules. The opportunity to enter 4-H Club and FFA member projects in the Junior Livestock Show is made available only to a CEA and AST supervising these livestock projects. Exhibitors must be bona fide members of a County 4-H Club or FFA Chapter. 4-H entrants must be actively enrolled in a 4-H program and be between the ages of nine (9) and eighteen (18) on August 31 of the coming show year or be eight (8) years old and in the 3rd grade. 4-H exhibitors must be enrolled in public or private elementary or secondary schools of Texas, FFA members must be actively enrolled in FFA and attending elementary or secondary schools in Texas, and be bona fide residents of Texas during the proper ownership periods and show dates. Exhibitors must have continuously, personally, fed and cared for their animals under the direct supervision of a CEA or AST for a period of time as stated under the ownership requirement in each department. (Ft. Worth Livestock Show and Rodeo, Livestock Premium Book, 2022, p. 146)

Based on these requirements, the success of local 4-H and FFA programs have been directly tied to the success of fairs. Thus, the number of youth who participate in the National FFA Organization (FFA) and 4-H Clubs drives this industry significantly, especially compared to earlier iterations. Both of these organizations have been focused on agricultural education, leadership development, and personal growth. Agricultural education has also been based on students' school system and learning delivered through three major components: (a) classroom and laboratory, (b) Supervised Agricultural Experiences, and (c) youth leadership development through the National FFA Organization. According to Croom (2008) the supervised experience was probably the first of the three components to originate in the United States but reached a highly sophisticated level of development when paired first with formal instruction in agricultural education and then later with formal instruction and the FFA. (See Figure 1.1)

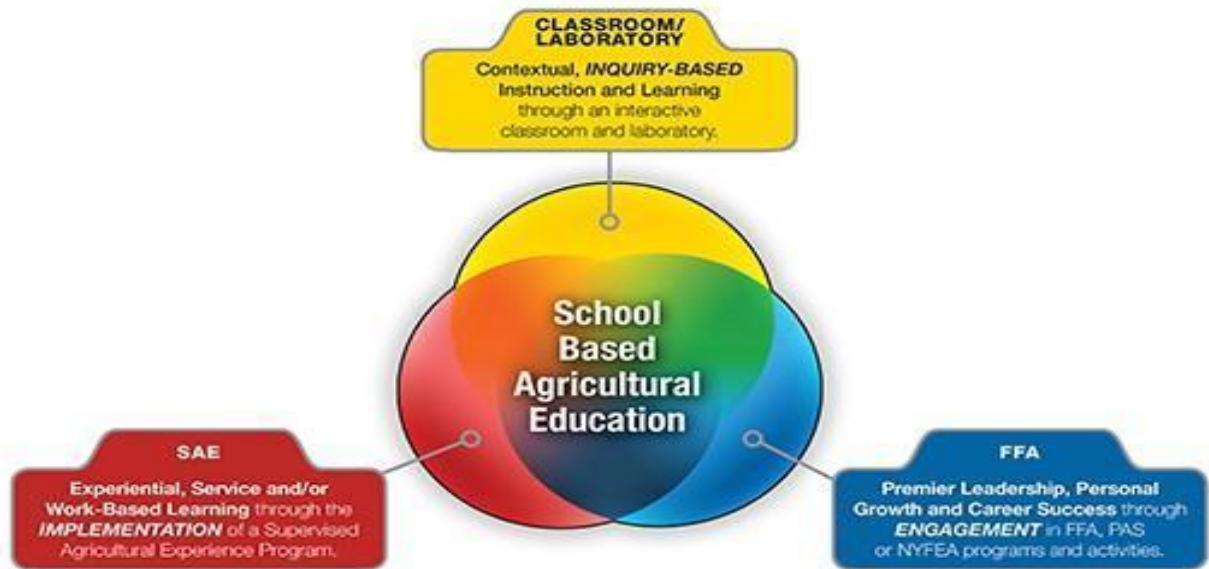


Figure 1.1. The Three-Component Model (About FFA, 2022)

Even though there is no established date or recognized event that created the three-component agricultural model, the integrated model for agricultural education seems to describe the philosophical thought surrounding agricultural education in the early twentieth century, and as such, became the guide for what agricultural education was to be or become (Croom, 2008, p.117),

In 4-H, this program has historically been carried out by the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) in every state and county/parish in the United States. In 4-H, children, and teens complete hands-on projects like health, science, agriculture, and civic engagement in a positive environment where they receive guidance from adult mentors and are encouraged to take on proactive leadership roles. Children experience 4-H through in-school and after-school programs, school and community clubs, and 4-H camps (What is 4-H, 2022). According to the National 4-H website, there is a network of 500,000 volunteers and 3,500 4-H professionals who serve over 6 million 4-Hers in the United States.

Just like the hog industry, the cattle industry has seen a loss in families who would take their best farm animals to the county fair. More have to buy half-grown animals to show in livestock competitions. This fuels the growth of specialized breeders, and pushes the cost of participation higher. In the end, those with disposable income can buy a good chance at a ribbon, and those who do not have the funds might be stuck with the scraps (DePillis, 2014). There are benefits, though, that livestock exhibitions can instill in today's youth. According to Boleman et al. (2004) youth participating in a beef project reported enhanced life skill development that could help them be more productive as adults. A similar study found that parents have their children in competitive events because it enhances their child's personal skill development, enhances self-esteem, motivates children to success, and helps youth to set goals (Keith & Vaughn, 1998). Further, a study conducted by Holegren and Reid (2007) had 4-H and FFA members rank the life skills they learned from livestock shows from least to greatest. The two like skills that were ranked highest were the ability to accept responsibility and to value the contributions of others. Being a part of agricultural education allows participants to learn through Supervised Agricultural Experiences. "Nothing can take the place of learning about the real world by learning in the real world" (Pals & Slocombe, 1985, p3). This is also true for students who are in 4-H. "Children build life skills by leading hands-on projects in areas like science, health, agriculture and civic engagement – helping them to grow confidence, independence, resilience, and compassion. Adult mentors provide a positive environment where they learn by doing" (What is 4-H, 2022, p.1). These experiences could be why parents encourage their children to participate in cattle shows despite the time and financial investment that both require. Currently, though, the literature on this particular aspect of the show process is not as robust,

which creates a need for a more in-depth understanding of the why parents let their children participate in beef shows.

### **Problem Statement**

The question of what motivates parents of junior exhibitors to spend countless hours looking for the perfect steer or heifer, spend hundreds of dollars at a time at supply stores, and work countless hours in the barn with their child on the project arises, though, as this process is not a simple one, nor is it inexpensive. The time and financial commitment are great, so what drives the participation? Is it simply the buckle and banner that come from winning? Parents looking for an extracurricular program that promotes agriculture endeavors? Are parents searching for activities that the whole family can attend and participate in? Current research discusses the benefits of participation, but the nexus behind such an undertaking is still a bit of a mystery. This study hopes to answer these questions and explore the true reasons for participation in beef cattle shows in an effort to identify the motivation to understand the increasing numbers of participation and the success of such endeavors.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify youth livestock exhibition benefits and detriments as perceived by parents of youth exhibitors. This study aimed to identify the underlying reasons why parents allow their children to participate in livestock shows. The results of this study may help explain the parents' confidence or concerns in their children's participation in livestock shows that can be used by 4-H Extension personnel, FFA Advisors, livestock show management, and the livestock show industry. The findings may be able to be used to help correct weaknesses in the current program or to help elevate the positives that this program has to offer.

## **Objectives**

1. What benefits do parents of beef livestock show exhibitors observed since their child began exhibiting cattle?
2. What positive effects have parents of beef livestock show exhibitors seen from showing cattle?
3. What negative effects have parents of beef livestock show exhibitors seen from showing cattle?
4. Have parents of youth exhibitors noticed better interpersonal skills in their children since they began showing beef cattle?

## **Scope and Limitations**

1. The scope of this study is limited to the Fort Worth Stock and Rodeo exhibitors who participated in the Junior Heifer Show from January 21– January 23, 2022.
2. The scope of this study is limited to the 10 families who agreed to participate.
3. The results of this study were limited to the researcher’s interpretation of the data collected.
4. Some errors may have existed due to background noise in and around the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo grounds.

## **Assumptions**

This study used the thoughts and feelings of individual family members with qualitative interviews for data collection. The researcher has assumed that all families that participated responded truthfully and honestly.

## **Definition of Terms**

4-H: 4-H is delivered by Cooperative Extension—a community of more than 100 public universities across the nation that provides experiences where young people learn by doing.

(What is 4-H, 2022)

Cattle: Domesticated bovine farm animals that are raised for their meat, milk, or hides or for draft purposes. The animals most often included under the term are the Western or European domesticated cattle as well as the Indian and African domesticated cattle. (“Cattle & Heifer)

Exhibitor: Someone who has made or owns something, especially a work of art, shown in an exhibition. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)

Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo (FWSS&R): FWSS&R will organize and administer each year a world-class Stock Show event composed of various public competitions, exhibitions and entertainment such that (1) the event enhances interest and encourages participation in the livestock and agri-business fields by recognizing and rewarding outstanding achievement in them, and (2) the event attracts as many visitors as possible from throughout the state, across the nation and around the world to Fort Worth, the city of this Stock Show’s historic origin in 1896. (Ft. Worth Stock Show and Rodeo, 2022)

Heifer: A heifer is a female bovine that has not had any offspring. The term usually refers to immature females; after giving birth to her first calf, however, a heifer becomes a cow. (Britannica, n.d.)

Interpersonal Skills: Interpersonal skills are the skills required to effectively communicate, interact, and work with individuals and groups. Those with good interpersonal skills are strong verbal and non-verbal communicators and are often considered to be “good with

people”. Whether they’re used in your career or personal life, these skills are important for success. (CFI, 2022)

**Livestock Show:** The site or event where livestock is exhibited. These exhibitions consist of small local shows, county shows, jackpot shows, and major stock shows such as the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. (Davis, 1998, p. 7)

**National FFA Organization:** FFA is an extracurricular student organization for those interested in agriculture and leadership. It is one of the three components of agricultural education. (About FFA, 2022)

**Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE):** SAE is a program involves practical agricultural activities performed by students outside of scheduled classroom and laboratory time. SAEs provide a method in agricultural education for students to receive real-world career experiences in an area of agriculture that they are most interested in. (About FFA, 2022)

**Texas Major Shows:** The Texas Major shows would include; State Fair of Texas, Ft. Worth Stock Show and Rodeo, San Antonio Livestock Show and Rodeo, and Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

## **CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The phenomenon of why parents let their children participate in cattle shows has been limited in scope. For example, there has been limited research that focuses on the beef cattle show industry. In this review of the literature, we find a multitude of reasons why youth are involved in agriculture. The main topics of published research to date offer insights on career decisions, show ethics, efficacy of the FFA program, and life skills that are gained by showing cattle. As the literature will show, most of the research has been in the form of a questionnaire instead of a qualitative one as this paper will attempt to explore. Within the review of the literature, we will investigate what has been studied and other areas out there to be uncovered. In the literature, research has indicated that parents and exhibitors value of interpersonal skills they gain the most as a result of exhibiting livestock animals (Boleman et al., 2004; Holegren & Reid, 2007; Keith & Vaughan, 1998).

Further, quantitative research studies have examined parents and exhibitors perspectives on the value of showing. The majority of these respondents defined life skills as accepting responsibility, goal setting, self-esteem and to be friends with people who are different. All of these qualities could be viewed as highly desirable in a civilized society and should be promoted to all young adults to strive towards. Meanwhile, Anderson et al. (2015) found that exhibitors at the North Carolina Fair had an increased ability to set goals, show responsibility, and set priorities. Part of the reason for this may be that showing cattle was determined to be a Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE). Pals and Slocombe (1985) demonstrated the five greatest benefits from SOE programs that promoted acceptance of responsibility, developed self-confidence, opportunity to learn on their own, developed intendance and learned how to work with others. Topics of less importance to these exhibitors from the studies were sensitivity to



others, financial and scholarship benefits, working in teams, and to meet and work with people of other cultures (Pals & Slocombe, 1985). SOE later became known as Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE) as developed by the National Council for Agricultural Education in the early 1990's (Moore, 2007, p. 83)

Supervised Agricultural Experiences are regulated by The National Council for Agricultural Education. Supervised Agricultural Experience or SAE provides students individualized opportunities to learn and develop real-world skills outside of the classroom beyond the school day (SAE for all teacher edition, 2017, p.1). In the SAE for all Teachers Edition (2017) suggest a foundational SAE model that develop students to incorporate five components. These components are career exploration and planning, employability skills for college and career readiness, personal financial management and planning, workplace safety, and agricultural literacy. By following these five components' students should complete interest inventories and identify a career goal, refine job skills that include responsibility and communication, understand personal finances, know the importance of health and safety, and understand the with width and breadth of the agricultural industry.

According to Croom (2008) Supervised Agricultural Experience is an independent learning program for students enrolled in agricultural education courses. It is designed to provide learning experiences for students in the agricultural career pathway of their choice. He also says the SAE experience helps students put into practice the principals learned in the agriculture classroom. In Croom (2008) study about the development of the integrated three-component model he found that supervised experience was probably the first of the three components to originate in the United States but reached a highly sophisticated level of development when it paired first with formal instruction in agricultural education and the FFA. Formal instruction in

agricultural education probably began in 1858 and FFA was officially established in 1928. The integrated model for agricultural education became the guide for what agriculture education was to or become (Croom, 2008, p.117)

To have a highly successful Supervised Agricultural Experience we need qualified FFA teachers and program to carry out these objectives. We find that teachers think Supervised Agricultural Experience should remain an important and integral part of agricultural education (Blackburn & Ramsey, 2014, Camp et.al 2000, Moore, 2007). Camp et. al, (2000) found that teachers think that SAE's enhances classroom learning by providing real-life experience for students. They go on to say, "SAE's encourage students to learn more in class, students get excited about SAE projects, a sense of ownership is gained through SAE, and SAE provides the opportunity to learn about agriculture while actually working in the agricultural field. In research conducted by Moore (2007) the teachers he researched believe that SAE should be a part of a student's grade, improves students mastery of course objectives, gets students in an agricultural career and that SAE provides real life experiences for the student. In a paper published by Bolton et. al. (2018) they found traits that lead chapters to have successful in SAE programs. Their research indicated student involvement, student personal growth, and that students should enjoy their SAE project. They also mentioned highly successful FFA chapters SAE projects should mold students into productive members of society, and elements of career preparation.

The agriculture teacher is the most important influencer in engaging the students in their SAE program, therefore teacher preparation programs must continue to prepare preservice teachers to develop, implement, and supervise SAE programs (Rubenstein & Thoron, 2015, p.84). In order to prepare future teachers in agricultural education Blackburn and Ramsey (2014) noted that the results of their study preservice teachers only perceive lack of knowledge was on

newer types of SAE, such as Research and Exploratory, to be a barrier in implementing SAE which was also noted in (Moore 2007, p.89). Moore (2007) contends that teachers need help in improving the quality and prioritizing of the SAE component of their program. As long as teachers do not receive recognition or reward for conducting quality SAE programs, this may continue to be a low priority for some (Moore 200, p.89)

In the ever-changing world of the agriculture industry and agriculture education, Camp et.al (200) is still true today, SAE as it is currently structured is a vital component of a comprehensive local program of agricultural education and provides a substantive source of experiential learning as well as a source of motivation for our students. The most important problem with SAE as it is currently practiced is that too many teachers view it as not appropriate in their specific settings. While that perception may be inaccurate, it is nevertheless widely held in the profession. The changes in the definition and structure of SAE should make SAE more flexible to our teachers, more valuable to their students, and more usable in the emerging agricultural education program of the future.

Since it is mandatory for livestock show exhibitors to be enrolled in 4-H or FFA to be eligible these programs are starting to be more connected to what happens post-college, when students take these showing experiences and potentially move into the agricultural industry for their profession. Supervised Agricultural Experience can help lead a student who is showing cattle gain the needed experience for their future career. By being in a SAE a student can leverage their show experience by working for veterinarian clinic, ranch, feed store, show supply dealer or start their own company by sharpening clipper blades and repairing blowers. The need for agriculture job seekers has increased over the years and shows no signs of slowing down. In a publication from the USDA, The National Institute of Food and Agriculture stated that between

the years 2020 -2025 there will be a need for 59,400 new openings for college graduates annually (Feranandez et al., 2020). Most of these jobs will be in the management and business sector, followed by science and engineering, education and government, and lastly food and biomaterials production. “The team feels strongly that the need for graduates and available opportunities in the food, agriculture, renewable natural resources and the environment sector will remain steady and strong” (Feranandez et al., 2020, p. 1). What influencers drive high school students to attend a university and enter the College of Agriculture? Several studies have dealt with this issue and have similar opinions on this subject. According to Swan and DeLay (2014), over 66% of the respondents who were enrolled in the Cal Poly agricultural degree program did not have access to secondary agriculture courses. That means that these students were not involved in a FFA class in high school. This concurs with a study that found that there was no direct relationship found between students in the National FFA Organization choosing an agriculture major at the University of Idaho (Wolf et al., 2020). The final assessment was a study conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln that showed that the most influential dynamic on choosing the animal science department at their institution was prior experience in agriculture or with livestock. Both 4-H and FFA were lower on the list of influence (Winkel et al., 2019, 2020).

A final issue in livestock showing, and especially in the show cattle industry, is the topic of ethics. There have been newspaper accounts of exhibitors who were disqualified from over the last 27 years all across the country (Prodis, 1995, Spangler, 2022, Truitt, 2015, Zippay, 2003). We even see cheating in the Great Yorkshire Show that is located in Harrogate, England where an exhibitor was disqualified because of tampering with a cow’s udder (Great Yorkshire Show: Animal disqualified in udder tampering probe, 2016). Instances such as this, call into question

the ethics of judges and those that participate in these shows. In two recent blog posts from Ranch House Designs (RHD), the topic of ethics has shed a negative light on the show cattle industry. According to a recent survey conducted by RHD, 49% of more than 400 producers who responded believe that judges were not ethical (Kent, 2022). Further, 83% reported there was a problem with over-aging cattle for the show ring (Kent, 2022). In an opinion piece for RHD, Rachel Cutrer estimated that least half the time show placings come down to who you know and how much you've spent (Cutrer, 2022). In response to these incidences of cheating many states have adopted programs that junior exhibitors must complete before they are eligible to show. The programs have been called by different names but are all centered around educating young showmen. For example, in Texas, they have implemented Quality Counts, in Louisiana it is Quality Assurance and Ethics Certification, and on a nation-wide scale Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA). Two studies that have examined the ethics and found that there was evidence that education could lower the incidences of making unethical choices. A study conducted by Rusk et al. (2005), stated that the students who were taught the livestock ethics curriculum had a better understanding of the ethics associated with the youth livestock program, were more aware of the principals involved in making ethical choices when faced with decisions, and had a better understanding of the consequences of an unethical choice.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study used human capital as the theoretical framework (Shultz, 1961). The use of leisure time to improve skills and knowledge is widespread and it too is unrecorded. By investing in themselves, people can enlarge the range of choice available to them. It is the one-way free men can enhance their welfare (Schultz, 1961). Schultz (1961) wrote the most distinctive feature of our economic system is the growth of human capital. Without it there would be only hard,

manual work and poverty, except for those who have income from property. Schultz (1959), in an earlier paper titled *Investment In Man: An Economist's View*, proposed a human wealth hypothesis. His hypothesis is that there is a large and rapid accumulation of human wealth that is being excluded from our conventional measures of “man hours worked” and of tangible capital (Schultz, 1959). He also stated in his (1959) paper that the simple truth is that people invest in themselves. They do it as individuals and as families and through their national and local communities. This paper will explore the statement of investing as families in this section since the main focus of this paper is from a parent’s perspective on providing their children with learning opportunities.

Detractors of human capital theory point out that it is a poor science of understanding either the workings of the capitalist economy, or the way towards an economic order more conducive to human happiness (Bowles & Gintis, 1975). Bowles and Gintis (1975) says it finds the theory to be substantially misleading both as a framework for empirical research and as a guide to policy. They also say the theory of human capital offers no theory of reproduction at all and presents a very partial theory of production, one which abstracts from the social relations of production in favor of technical relations.

Sweetland (1996) contends that with a complete understanding of the foundations of human capital theory, educators and educational policymakers can formulate their own evaluations of human capital. Studies from diverse disciplines and specializations such as economics, sociology, psychology, political science, human development, and business to address public concerns that are based on economic trends and cycles. Further they can design educational programs that contribute to economic growth without compromising educational purpose, and perhaps, to clearly define the economic component of education.

For this study, I will not dive into the students' desire of gaining human capital, but the parents' desire for their children to gain as much human capital in their short time as a junior cattle exhibitor. In most cases, parents only have up to ten years for their children to exhibit livestock through 4-H. Many school districts only have FFA chapters for their high school students (grades 9-12). By looking through a human capital framework, a case study of twenty questions was asked to prepare for this qualitative review of why parents are willing to let their children raise and show cattle from local 4-H & FFA shows to national events like the Arizona National Junior Livestock Show and Denver. What educational experiences are parents looking to teach their children, or even grandchildren, that they cannot receive from other extracurricular activities? Is the junior show program the only avenue that these parents are using to further human capital in their children? For the parents who participate in these events, what history do they have in the show cattle world and why do they think this would be a beneficial activity for their children? As this paper tears apart the evidence that was received from the interviews of ten families at the junior heifer show during the Ft. Worth Stock Show & Rodeo we will use the lens of human capital to reveal the good, the bad, and most common elements of junior exhibitors showing beef cattle.

## **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will explore the methodology of this paper, including the case study, the study's purpose and research questions, the design, setting and participants, and reflexivity.

### **Study's Purpose**

The purpose of this case study was to understand a parent's point of view of the livestock show industry. The study explored the reasons why a parent allowed their child or children to exhibit beef cattle at livestock shows. Further, the study identified specific traits, outcomes, and experiences that would lead a family to invest their money, time, and energy to travel to livestock shows. The results of this qualitative study may deepen the knowledge of 4-H extension agents, FFA advisors, school administrators, livestock show managers, and future show parents of both the positive and negative aspects of showing beef cattle. These questions were asked to all participants by the interviewer.

### **Qualitative Inquiry**

A qualitative study was determined to be the most practical research type based on the subject matter and timing of the study. I conducted qualitative research because I needed a complex and detailed understanding of the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell their stories unencumbered (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Interpretivist Theoretical Perspective and Constructivism Epistemology**

I used epistemological awareness to guide my decision-making in this study, which in context refers to the articulated representations and/ informed positionings taken in regard to knowledge, truth(s), conditions, and justifications in particular research projects and the



instantiation of methods that signifies the ways in which researchers provide instances or “evidence” in support of theories, claims, and method choices (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009, p. 687). For this investigation, I used an interpretivist theoretical perspective and constructivist epistemological position (Crotty, 1998). The interpretivist theoretical perspective uses the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) recommendation, I employed a constructionism lens to describe individuals’ perspectives, experiences, and meaning-making processes. Crotty (1998) explained that constructionism refers to how different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon.

### **Case Study Design**

Case study research is defined as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96). Creswell and Poth (2018) defined features of case studies that should be thought about when conducting a qualitative study.

1. Case study research begins with the identification of a specific case that will be described and analyzed. Typically, case study researchers study current, real-life cases that are in progress so that they can gather accurate information not lost by time.
2. The case identification is bounded, meaning that it can be defined or described within certain parameters.
3. The intent of the case study may be to understand a specific issue, problem, or

concern and a case or cases selected to best understand the problem.

4. In order to present an in-depth understanding of the case the researcher collects and integrates many forms of qualitative data, ranging from interviews, to observations, to documents, to audiovisual materials.

5. The selection of how to approach data analysis in a case study differs. In some studies, the researcher selects multiple cases to analyze and compare while, in other cases studies, a single case is analyzed.

6. A key to generating the description of the case involves identifying case themes. A complete findings section of a case study would involve both a description of the case and themes or issues that the researcher has uncovered in studying the case.

7. Case studies often end with conclusions formed by the researcher about the overall meaning delivered from the case.

For this study, I used an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995). Stake (1995, p.3) explained that when using this approach, “we are interested in it, not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but because we need to learn about that particular case.” The interviews were conducted on January 22, 2022 on the grounds of the Fort Worth Livestock Show and Rodeo between the time of 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. The IRB approval number for this study was IRBAG-22-0010.

### **Setting and Participants**

This study conducted interviews at the 2022 Fort Worth Livestock Show and Rodeo (FWSSR) during the junior heifer show. All interviews were conducted on the grounds of FWSSR and were selected by purposefully. The interviews were recorded using an Apple iPhone 13 Pro Max that is owned by the interviewer. All interviews were recorded with the approval of

the subjects and either conducted in the open or done privately, depending on the subjects' desire. Most interviews were conducted in the cattle tie outs and two were conducted in a medical tent by the W.R. Watt Arena.

Family #1 was represented by the father of the show participant. He had a daughter showing a heifer but she has also shown rabbits, chickens, and goats. His son showed rabbits and chickens. The participant has been showing since the third grade and was in the 11th grade. His son also began showing in 3rd grade and was in the 8th grade at the time of data collection. The father showed Simmental heifers for three years while he was in high school. Both exhibitors were in the junior FFA program. This family attends their local fair and as well as the Texas majors and national Beefmaster show. They attend approximately twelve shows a year.

Family #2 was represented by the father of the junior show participant. He has one son who is 15 years old and has been showing for four and a half years through FFA. The junior exhibitor only shows breeding heifers while the father has never shown an animal, his brother did. The father was raised on a dairy farm and did not have the time to attend junior shows as he was growing up. The family attends stock shows two times a month throughout the year.

Family #3 was represented by a father and a grandmother of the junior show participant. The father has two children who both show livestock. Only one daughter shows heifers, and she was present at FWSSR. His older daughter shows rabbits and is in band. Both daughters have been showing livestock for six years. Both girls are in 4-H, and the oldest daughter is also a member of FFA. Neither the father nor the grandmother showed animals when they were in school.

Family 4 was represented by the father of the junior show participant. He has two children that show. His daughter has already graduated high school but still comes to help her

brother at shows. His daughter started showing at 18 months in a showmanship show, and now she is twenty years old. His son who is showing at FWSSR started showing when he was in the third grade and is now in eleventh grade. The father started showing when he was in fifth grade and has shown all recognized show species. Both of his children only show cattle. His son also plays baseball and his daughter was basketball player while in high school. The family attends all Texas major shows and a few smaller shows each year. They attend approximately fifteen shows a year. His son is a member of both 4-H and FFA.

Family #5 was represented by the father and has two sons who both show breeding heifers. Both boys have been showing for six years, and both are in 4-H. The father's older son is also in FFA. Both boys currently only show cattle, but have shown pigs in the past. The father did not show his own cattle while growing up, but helped his friends at shows while in high school. The family attends Texas majors and shows at the Mini Hereford and Angus national breed shows. They attend approximately 15 - 20 shows a year. Both sons show Mini Hereford, and his older son also shows Angus heifers and bulls.

Family #6 was represented by the mother of the junior show participant. The mother is also a FFA advisor in her hometown. She has two children that have been showing for eight years. Both of her children have shown heifers and steers. Her oldest child has shown lambs, chickens and commercial heifers. The activity the children participate in is showing. The children are both in 4-H and FFA. The oldest child is in Ag. Ambassador and participates in livestock judging. The mother while she was in school showed Simmental heifers. This family attends approximately 45-50 shows a year including all Texas majors. They typically haul six animals to each show.

Family #7 was represented by the mother of the junior show participant. Her son who is also a calf roper, has been showing for four years. During two of her high school years, she showed commercial heifers at her county fair. The mother also has two older children that have shown livestock in the past. Her older son showed commercial heifers and her daughter showed Santa Gertrudis heifers. Both participated in livestock shows during their FFA careers. Her other two children were also involved in rodeos. Her son is now a diesel mechanic and her daughter is a veterinary assistant. This family only shows cattle at Texas majors.

Family #8 was represented by the mom and dad of the junior show participant. They have one son who is showing Brahman heifers for the first year; however, he has shown pigs for three years. FWSSR was the second cattle show he participated in. Their son is also involved in football, basketball, power lifting and track. The Mom showed pigs for two years and the dad had no show experience while in school. Currently their son is in 4-H, but when he gets into high school, he is planning to be involved in FFA as well. They will be attending all Texas major shows, but not sure how many of the prospect shows they will attend this year.

Family #9 was represented by the mother of the junior show exhibitor. Her daughter has been showing since eighth grade, and she is in twelfth grade. She also has a son who showed pigs for two years. Her daughter has shown lambs and pigs for five years. The mother did not show livestock while in high school. The family is aiming to attend four shows a year. This is her daughter's first year to show a heifer and she was sponsored by a member of her church. The family is very thankful for the individual who sponsored the heifer because the family was experiencing some financial issues this year. Without their gracious benefactor, their daughter would have been unable to show a heifer this year. The daughter shows through FFA.

Family #10 was represented by the mother of the junior show exhibitor. She has a daughter who has been showing for eight years but her first year to show cattle and has a heifer and a steer. The mother did not show when she was in high school but wishes she had. In the past the daughter has shown pigs and goats. She also competes in livestock judging and barrel racing. They are planning on attending four shows this year with their daughters' heifer. The daughter only participates in FFA. (See Table 3.1)

Table 3.1. Summary of Participants

Family	Guardian	Gender of Exhibitor	Years Showing	Member of 4-H, FFA or Both	Purchase or Raise their Projects
1	Father	Daughter	8	FFA	Purchase
2	Father	Son	4	FFA	Both
3	Father & Grandmother	Daughter/grand daughter	6	Both	Both
4	Father	Son	8	Both	Purchase
5	Father	Son	6	Both	Raise
6	Mother	2 Daughters	6	Both	Both
7	Mother	Son	4	FFA	Purchase
8	Father & Mother	Son	3	4-H	Purchase
9	Mother	Daughter	4	FFA	Purchase
10	Mother	Daughter	8	FFA	Purchase

### Solicitation of Study Participants

Two families were picked from each of the five cattle barns to make up the ten families that were interviewed. Some families were chosen based on recommendations from either a FFA advisor or county 4-H agent. Others were randomly asked by the interviewer to participate in this study. Approximately five other families were asked to be interviewed but declined.

### Instrumentation and Data Collection

This study used the 21 open ended questions for the basis of the research conducted by the interviewer. Additional probing questions were asked of certain families based on their answers

to the standard questions that were asked of all ten families. Some examples of additional questions:

1. Family 4: Talking about the public, have you all had any problems with the public, like PETA or another animal rights group at any of these shows?
2. Family 5: So, what does Texas do better than other states, in your opinion? Are we doing things better than most states, or is there stuff that we could probably change up and be just as good? Are we leading the way as far as this junior heifer program?
3. Family 6: Is there anything you would change with the Quality Counts Program?
4. Family 6: What do you say to those administrators who think students should be in class, instead of here at a show?
5. Family 3: How does showing help her forget about the bullying or given her more confidence?
6. Family 8: Did you see a big increase in being responsible after the heifer than before?

### **Data Analysis**

All interviews were transcribed by Rev.com through their online platform. Videos were downloaded from the interviewers iPhone and onto the Rev platform and transcribed the same day. The interviews ranged from nine to 19 minutes. (There was some hesitancy from some of the families about the long interview process as to the reason why the interviewer tried to keep on topic.) The only time that the interviewer asked additional questions if a family had a unique perspective on a topic. A thorough review of the transcripts was initiated after the delivery for completeness and accuracy. After review, very few additions or corrections needed to be made to the transcripts. Some things were deleted from the transcripts such as non-topic conversations between the family and interviewer and self-identifying comments made by the families. All

efforts were made to ensure accuracy of the interviews transcribed correctly and anything that was not deemed correct was corrected.

During the process of data analysis, I analyzed using the coding processes advanced by Saldaña (2021). In qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated interpretation that symbolizes or *translates* data and attributes meaning to each individual datum for later purposes or pattern detection, categorization, theme, assertion or proposition development, theory building, and other analytic processes (Saldaña , 2021).

The researcher used in vivo, process, and structural coding for the first cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2021). Each transcript was color coded for all three codes by reading through each transcript three times to reveal all possible codes. In Vivo is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code data, and studies that prioritize and honor the participant’s voice (Saldaña, 2021), According to Saldana (2021), “after decades of coding qualitative data, I have personally found In Vivo Coding to be my first ‘go-to’ method with interview transcript data regardless of the study’s research questions or methodological approach.” Process coding uses gerunds (“-ing” words) exclusively to connote action in the data (Saldaña, 2021). The final process was structural coding. Structural coding applies to content-based or conceptual phrases representing a topic of inquiry to a larger segment of data that relates to a specific research question used to frame the interview (Saldaña , 2021).

During the second cycle coding, codes were grouped together that had a similar tone or significance. Additional codes were added to this list after reviewing the data for anything that was missed during the first coding cycle.



During the third cycle of coding is where the themes developed into the four themes that were used for this study. The four themes that ultimately were used are: (1) perceptions of livestock shows, (2) support approaches, (3) perceived short-term outcomes of livestock show participation, and (4) perceived long-term outcomes of livestock show participation. Careful consideration was given to codes that could be arranged in multiple themes. Codes were reviewed by which family they came from and how they used it in each particular interview. Depending on the judgment of a different researcher, these final codes could have easily been interpreted differently into each of the four themes.

### **Researcher Reflexivity**

It was my intention to be as neutral on this topic as possible. This study was not intended to be in favor of showing livestock nor not in favor of not showing livestock. This study's intent was to find the sentiment of 10 families who were currently showing beef cattle and the reasons why they are allowing their children to participate. In all transparency, my family and I have showed cattle, chickens, rabbits, pigs and goats since 1989. I also won a calf scramble certificate from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. This began my show career while congruently building a herd of purebred Simbrah and Simmental cattle. I also have three sons who all showed beef cattle beginning in the third grade. They showed Aberdeen Angus, Simbrah, Braunvieh, Brahmousin and Red Brangus show cattle. Through the years they have also shown pigs and goats.

## **CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS**

This chapter will expose the findings of this study. The findings are arranged in the four major themes that were discovered during the coding process.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to answer these questions:

1. What benefits of showing have been seen since showing cattle?
2. What positive effects have been seen from showing cattle?
3. What negative effects have been seen from showing cattle?
4. Have parents of youth exhibitors noticed better interpersonal skills?

### **Themes**

After completing the coding process, watching the videos, and reading the transcripts, I found that four main themes emerged from this case study.

1. Perceptions of Livestock Shows;
2. Support Approaches;
3. Perceived Short-Term Outcomes of Livestock Show Participation;
4. Perceived Long-Term Outcomes of Livestock Show Participation.

#### **Theme 1 – Perceptions of Livestock Shows**

The perception of livestock shows was a theme that emerged when analyzing the data. The comments made from the 10 families were consistent throughout the entire interview process. The parents interviewed had more favorable perceptions of livestock shows than negative perceptions. During the last coding session, 49 different codes emerged. The data revealed that parents had more of a positive perception of showing beef cattle by a margin of 88% versus 12% with a negative perception.

The one perception that had the most mentions was that showing beef cattle teaches responsibility, something that was said directly by Families #2, #8, #9, and #10. Direct quotes from the families are: Family 2, “This program teaches responsibility and character”. Family 8 said, “He takes the initiative to take care of things and shows that he’s responsible”. Family 9 said, “She is getting up earlier in the mornings as she has two different projects that need to be taken care of”. Family 10 said, “all of the projects have been by herself, these animals teach them responsibility.” Parents also mentioned other interpersonal traits that are learned through showing beef cattle. Families 2 and 3 mentioned character building and family 5 mentioned time management.

The father from Family #1 said that his “daughter needed to learn something and what really mattered is that they are focused and trying to be their best”. He also gave an example on how his daughter reacts when she enters the show ring with her heifer, “it’s like stepping onto the stage in a theater.” The father also mentioned that he thinks the negative experiences have not been from the showing aspect of the show ring; however, he did not elaborate any further.

The father from Family #2 made it clear that showing cattle is not a money maker, but his son has learned responsibility, character, sportsmanship, and how to care for his cattle. He has been impressed by how much his son has learned by attending to and working with his cattle. He has also appreciated that his son has made new friends. He went on to say, “when we get up early and work our tails off and freeze to death like we have in past shows in Fort Worth, it’s all worth it.” The only negative aspect to showing, according to the father, is that they “have seen some unethical stuff by just a few”.

Family #3, represented by dad and grandma, have seen showing as “really positive” and are “pretty excited to be doing this with their daughter and granddaughter.” They say “showing

has brought them closer together and that my daughter has learned so much.” Grandma thinks “showing has taught her granddaughter much more than sports ever would.” She was also pleased by “how much character building is involved in this project.”

Family #4 admitted that “you can’t always win, but it is worth every dollar.” The father also mentioned several times that some people “just forget why we do this, it’s all about the kids.” The father appreciated the friendships that his children have made over the years and that they are not afraid to speak in front of crowds. The father also mentioned the negative perceptions that groups like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Humane Society try to shine on the livestock show industry. He says, “These kinds of groups think we’re doing a lot of harm to these animals, but if you come to my house these animals eat and get treated better than I do.”

The father of Family #5 has seen this program teach his son “how to care for something besides himself and that you don’t have to be a one-dimensional person.” He reiterated that “showing should be all about the kids” which was also stated by other families. The only down side of showing cattle that he has seen is “that there have been some nefarious intentions by others, but that has not stopped them.”

The mom and educator of the group was from Family #6. To her, “these major shows are just like my kids’ Superbowl. They work all year at home, and her daughters do the work needed so they can compete at these shows.” She says, “what it teaches our kids is priceless to me as a parent and as an educator.” Even though this family travels to several shows every month, they don’t do it for the ribbons and buckles, she states that “showing has made her daughters very self-sufficient.” She did mention that there will always be people looking for a “competitive edge, but there will be a show next weekend so you have to keep going.”

Families #7, #8, #9, and #10 restated what our previous families have said and why they continue showing beef cattle. Family #7 said animals are “their favorite love and they think the investment is worth it.” Besides showing cattle her son is a promising calf roper, but she would not give up showing for rodeos. Family #8 mentioned the scholarship opportunities that are out there for exhibitors who participate in the show ring. Family #9 encouraged parents to get their kids invested in something and for her daughter, “it’s more about the animal than it is about her.”

Family #10 summed it up by saying, “It’s just an experience, you can’t really explain it.” This experience can potentially be related back to the idea of human capital theory where we look at the overall experiences, education, etc. of those in the workforce or entering into the workforce and determine what use those skills have for a variety of employers. Based on what is reported by the families here, it is evident, that regardless of winning, the investment in showing goes beyond just simple experience, but, rather, provides a targeted experience that builds a variety of skills that can be used in a future career within the agriculture industry or without it, including organization, responsibility, etc. Experience and strength in such skills could make these participants more productive in all job areas, making the perception of showing not just good for learning about the specific animals, but useful in building future life skills that are applicable in a myriad of workplace settings.

## **Theme 2 – Support Approaches**

Due to the tremendous amount of work and effort involved, beef cattle projects would be difficult to complete without the support of friends and family. All 10 families provided different levels of support to their children. This was largely dependent on the age of the exhibitors. It was a constant theme that the younger their child, the more help parents provided to their children; however, as they got older and their child was more able to handle day-to-day chores, parents

stepped back and let their child take over more of the responsibilities. From learning the financial aspects of the project to walking heifers back from the wash rack, the parents in this study have demonstrated they support their child in beef cattle showing and that it is truly a family affair.

The father of Family #1 said that he helps his daughter as needed. When he does need to help, he will ask her a lot of questions that he already knows the answers to. He wants her to figure out the problem on her own, instead of relying on him for the answers. When speaking about how they finance this project, the parents pay all the costs associated with the project. At the end of the day, she will have a nice nest egg of money for school. He also mentioned that the family's commercial herd of cattle helps fund the show herd. This family also finds help by asking their agriculture teacher's opinion of the heifers and what they would recommend changing. It is Family #1's belief that quality counts make sure that every kid understands what the goal of raising an animal should be. He ends with "I support my daughter at whatever she wants to do."

Family #2 placed no pressure on his son about coming back home to run the family's business because he wants his son to do "what he wants to do." He tried to help his son out by guiding him through showing beef cattle, but this program is a family affair and they like to keep it that way. The family does lean on the local agricultural education teachers a lot for help with their son's projects and the teachers are very involved in their show life.

Family 3 says his daughter knows what needs to be done and "she gets after it." For this family, showing is a good family outing and his daughter has learned that animals feed off of your emotions. This has helped her keep calm while working with her livestock. The Grandma shared a tragic story which just happened a few months before this interview. The family all had COVID-19, which made getting feed near impossible since they could not be out in public. They

had a friend who knew of their condition and volunteered to get feed for the family.

Unbeknownst to them their friend also had COVID-19, but he did not tell them. He delivered the feed, but was admitted to the hospital on Sunday. He passed away two days after being admitted due to complications from COVID-19. They wish they would have known his medical condition, because they would not have let him get the feed. They have dedicated this show season to him since he put his life in danger to help them out when they were in need.

The dad of Family #4 said the “kids do the majority of the work at the barn and while they are at the shows.” This family only shows cattle because that is “what they do and it’s what they like to do.” A heifer they sold to another family was crowned champion Simmental heifer at this year’s Fort Worth Stock Show. This family not only supports their children but other children throughout the state.

Family #5 summed up support by saying, “family has to commit.” This family does not go to a lot of shows every year, but they do show several different breeds. This takes a lot of time and effort to get their cattle at peak performance for the one or two shows they are taken to. This father also gave a lot of credit to his sons because they do most of the work since he is a firefighter and at times has hectic work schedules.

Family #6 said “it’s livestock all the time and that they usually have a show every weekend in the state of Texas.” To be able to attend all of these shows, the mom makes sure her daughters do all of their own work with their animals. She provides them with whatever they need to be successful. Family #7 only has one junior exhibitor in the house, but his older brother and sister help out when needed. Mom said that if he is at a rodeo then another member of the family will help feed when called upon. She also said that the whole family will help with show and rodeo expenses and that it’s not just on mom and dad.

Family #8 paid for all of their son's show bills, but they do not mind. As the mom explained: "I see it as you keep your kids busy, you don't have to worry about what they're doing because they're busy doing the things they're supposed to be doing and they don't get in trouble." They said they are very lucky to have dedicated help at home. The breeder of her son's heifer is also his coach at school and they are able to keep the heifer at the coach's house.

Our last two family's, #9 and #10 shared some of the same support functions. Family #9 said her daughter is very independent and has seen no drawbacks from the time spent showing cattle. Family #10 said this year their daughter has been more emotional since she is a senior. Her daughter worked on all of her projects by herself and has bought everything with her own money. She has used money from the animals she has sold at the fair. Her Mom was very proud of her daughter and her accomplishments.

### **Theme 3– Perceived Short-Term Outcomes**

When looking at our next theme, perceived short-term outcomes, the emotion and pride began to manifest as families talked about their children. Some families had very direct answers that fell into this theme and some responses could be categorized as either short- or long-term outcomes. No family mentioned a truly negative outcome by raising show cattle. Nevertheless, each family did mention what they perceived as outcomes from their children showing cattle.

Family #1 said that his daughter has become highly motivated with this project. She has learned to communicate better and her dad said "she can talk." He also emphasized that his daughter rarely won a show but made incremental progress on where they placed in the class. To them, as long as his daughter was getting better at showing beef cattle, and she still liked to show, "then that's what this is all about".



For the father of Family #3, watching his daughter set a goal and then working towards that goal was priceless. Before his daughter started showing heifers, she had a hard time at school with bullies and suffered from severe depression. They started to home school her, but she still had the lingering effects of being bullied. Not until they got her a heifer and she started working with it did she come out of her depression. Now she's not worried about her peers who were bullying her. She now doesn't care as much, according to her grandmother. She knows, if she presents her heifer well, if she is confident, the heifer is going to be confident. So for now, they are going to continue doing what they are doing and have fun with it. His daughter has seen some drama, but she has learned to walk away and not be part of that drama.

Families #4, #5, and #6 experienced some of similar perceived outcomes that keep them in showing. These families mentioned learning how to work, knowing how to work, and being responsible as some of the qualities that they have seen in their children from being involved in livestock showing. The father of Family #5 said that participating in showing cattle has taught both his children how to balance projects since both show livestock and also play in competitive sports. Being able to take care of your school work, livestock projects and ready to play a basketball or baseball game takes planning and work to be prepared for a variety of events. All three of the parents were extremely proud that their children because they could multitask school, home life activities, and raising an animal.

Family #7 appreciated that this program taught the value of life. The mother said that "they got to get up and do their responsibility. The animals cannot feed or water themselves." One of the biggest lessons her children have learned is that you have to be patient. Not only with the animals, but also with people. Finally, she is very appreciative of all the different people they have met along the way and it's been a pleasure working alongside different breeds. For Family

#8, though, it's his project, it's about him and the show calf. As a parent, they have learned to let go as their son takes on the responsibility of his project. They also have seen an increase in leadership within their son in the ball field to the cow field. One of the biggest things they see is that the children who are in a show program typically stay out of trouble.

The mother of Family #9 likes the way the show program has helped bring her daughter out of her shell. She is no longer shy, is building her self-esteem by participating in livestock shows and allows her to meet new people. She also says that raising animals keeps her daughter grounded since she is responsible for her animals and that comes first. Similarly, Family #10 puts it very simply. This mom loves seeing her daughter excel in her cattle project and that she is fully committed to agriculture. The mother commented that they do miss a lot of school this time of the year. She thinks they need to have something outside of the class and by coming to these shows, the children are still learning by learning responsibility, being prepared, livestock judging, and teamwork.

#### **Theme 4– Perceived Long-Term Outcomes**

In this theme, the author analyzed the data systematically for what he thought would be life enduring outcomes that could be learned through these projects. Not all families communicated a perceived long-term outcome during the interviews that were different from a short-term outcome. The majority of the responses from families indicated their children were going to seek some type of career in agriculture, even though not all of the families' children live on a traditional farm or ranch. For example, Family #1 said his daughter has learned how to communicate better with others and is more work driven by being involved in this project. He also agreed that his daughter has learned a lot of interpersonal skills that she might not have if

she was not involved in showing cattle. His last thoughts were that persistence was going to be more important than a college degree and that his daughter is ready for the world.

The father of family #2 says he believes by letting his son be involved with show heifers that he will come into the family business of raising cattle or help in running their family's tractor dealerships. As the dad said in the interview, "I want him to do what he wants to do." For Family #3, they say their daughter is leaning towards agriculture and possibly being a teacher. They have seen her change so much through showing heifers. She got bullied so badly in school, it hurt her self-esteem, but she's rebuilding it through her cattle projects. The final lesson he wants his daughter to learn is that "cheating is not going to get you nowhere." Additionally, Families 4 and 5 both felt this project teaches children how to work. They also felt that it was important to understand that you should give back to the next group of children who start to show, so that it doesn't end where they are at. They see their boys learning balance in life so they are able to pass their knowledge down while still in school as well as later on in life as adults.

Family 6 made it very clear that "raising them in the barn is the best decision I could have ever made." They say that these kids learn in the barn will take them further than they'll ever learn from basketball or anything else. It teaches them leadership, responsibility, dedication, and time management. Mom says, "I think it's the best way for them to be raised and hopefully they will pass it on to their kids." On the other hand, the mom from Family #7 has a different perspective since she has two grown adult children in this group of interviews. A motto she goes by is "if you achieve what you're doing now, you can achieve even higher as you grow." Her youngest son says that he loves showing beef cattle and has positive thoughts of furthering his career with animals. Further, Family 8 has the least amount of experience with raising cattle, but their son is learning patience every day because of his project. They are seeing that he is taking

an initiative to do everything for himself and that they know that his hard work is going to pay off in the long run.

The children of our last two families, #9 and #10 both want to continue in agriculture. One wants to be a professional cattle judge and the other wants to be an agriculture teacher at a high school. Both moms say their daughters are learning responsibility, and that they have to be committed, in order for them to succeed in life.

## **CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY OF STUDY, CONCLUSIONS, AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

This chapter will review the study's problem statement, purpose, research questions, and participants, along with procedures for data collection and analysis. This portion of the research paper will contain conclusions from the data of this qualitative study as well as proposals for future research.

### **Problem Statement**

This paper and study sought to answer the question of why do parents of these junior exhibitors spend countless hours looking for a great steer or heifer, spending hundreds of dollars at a time at Sullivan Supply or buying that secret supplement to fix all the problems of their project, for a buckle and banner? In the world of competitive sports, livestock exhibiting at local to national shows is a full-time extracurricular activity for many local 4-H and FFA students alike. The pressure to win at all costs has cast a dark shadow over these programs from time to time and many efforts have been made to keep these types of programs an educational experience. Programs like Quality Counts in Texas, Youth Quality Beef Assurance in Oklahoma, Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA), and Ethics in Youth Livestock Programs sponsored by the Pork Checkoff are just a few examples of how the livestock show industry has created programs to educate junior exhibitors on the proper management and purpose of youth livestock show projects. The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify youth livestock exhibition benefits or detriments as perceived by parents of youth exhibitors. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What benefits of showing have been seen since showing cattle?
2. What positive effects have been seen from showing cattle?
3. What negative effects have been seen from showing cattle?

4. Have parents of youth exhibitors noticed better interpersonal skills?

This study examined past literature to guide the process of the study. Literature was reviewed for not only the parent's role in their children's cattle project, but was also reviewed for ethics and job opportunities that are available in agriculture. The literature outlined the conceptual and theoretical frameworks for this study which were using human capital as the theoretical framework developed by Theodore W. Schultz (1961) in his paper *Investment in Human Capital*. The use of leisure time to improve skills and knowledge is widespread and it too is unrecorded. By investing in themselves, people can enlarge the range of choices available to them. It is the one-way free men can enhance their welfare (Schultz, 1961). Schultz (1961) wrote the most distinctive feature of our economic system is the growth of human capital. Without it there would be only hard, manual work and poverty except for those who have income from property.

### **Setting and Participants**

This study conducted interviews at the 2022 Fort Worth Livestock Show and Rodeo (FWSSR) on January 22, 2022 during the junior heifer show. All interviews were conducted on the grounds of FWSSR and were selected by random chance. The interviews were recorded using an Apple iPhone 13 Pro Max that is owned by the interviewer. Most interviews were conducted in the cattle tie outs and two were conducted in a medical tent by the W.R. Watt Arena.

The population for this study were 10 show families whose child or children were showing a heifer at the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo. The participants were selected by random chance. At the stock show there were five cattle barns that house cattle during the three weeks of the show. Two families from each barn were selected by walking up to them and

asking if they would like to participate in this study. Help from FFA advisor and a county agent were sought to help recruit two of the families in the study. Of the ten families that were part of this study six were fathers, five were mothers, and one grandmother. The study was granted permission by the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo with help from the livestock show manager Mr. Stefan Marchman in association with Mr. Matt Brockman.

### **Data Collection**

This study used the 21 open-ended questions for the basis of the research conducted by the interviewer. Additional probing questions were asked of certain families depending on their answers of the standard 21 questions that were asked for all ten families. The interviews were recorded using an Apple iPhone 13 Pro Max that is owned by the interviewer. All interviews were recorded with the approval of the subjects and either conducted in the open or done privately depending on the subjects' desire. All interviews were transcribed by Rev.com through their online platform. Videos were downloaded from the interviewers iPhone and onto the Rev platform and transcribed the same day. The interviews ranged from 9 minutes to 19 minutes. There was some hesitancy from some of the families of a long interview process as to the reason why the interviewer tried to keep on topic.

### **Data Analysis**

During the process of data analysis, I analyzed the data using. In qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated interpretation that symbolizes or “translates” data and thus attributes meaning to each individual datum for later purposes or pattern detection, categorization, theme, assertion or proposition development, theory building, and other analytic processes. (Saldaña, 2021)

The researcher used in vivo, process, and structural coding for first cycle coding. Each transcript was analyzed by reading through each transcript three times to reveal all possible codes. In vivo is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code data, and studies that prioritize and honor the participant’s voice. (Saldaña, 2021). Process coding uses gerunds (“-ing” words) exclusively to connote action in the data. (Saldana, 2021) The final process was structural coding. Structural coding applies to content-based or conceptual phrases representing a topic of inquiry to a larger segment of data that relates to a specific research question used to frame the interview. (Saldana, 2021) (See Table 5:1)

Table 5.1. Themes and most meaningful responses from findings.

Perceptions of Shows	Parental Support	Short Term Outcomes	Long Term Outcomes
Responsibility Interpersonal Character	There for them No pressure Livestock all the time	Work Grounded Value of life	Responsibility Communication Patience

### Conclusions

I used the interpretivist theoretical perspective and constructionism epistemology for this study. The interpretivist theoretical perspective uses the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Crotty (1998) summarized that constructionism is the understanding of knowledge and that it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon.

The results of this research project demonstrated the positive impacts of what showing beef cattle has done in the lives of these ten families. By partnering with 4-H and FFA these parents are seeing the effects of what this program was designed to do, “learn about the cattle industry, meet successful cattle industry leaders, make friends, and improve their social and



communicative skills (Parrett, 2003).” Even though we see scandals and questionable ethical choices by a few, these parents overwhelmingly are in support of this extracurricular activity and have made this activity a family activity that each family member plays a role in.

**Research Question 1: What benefits of showing have been seen since showing cattle?**

The parents in this study provided a wide assortment of benefits that this program has given their children. Some of these benefits could also be classified as a positive effect from showing cattle, but we will separate the two subject matters. Going through the interviews a consistent benefit was family togetherness. This project was a time-consuming endeavor and all 10 families mentioned that they appreciate that showing cattle and raising livestock allows them to have family time. Also, being at the show was another aspect that the parents seemed to enjoy. Like our father from Family #2 stated: “When you get up early and work your tails off and freeze to death like they have in past shows in Fort Worth it’s all worth it.” The social atmosphere is what many seemed to enjoy the most. While we cannot be sure how much of this stems from the COVID-19 lock downs and other pandemic induced restrictions, all of the cattle barns seemed to be extremely busy with activity and people enjoying being out and seeing others. The second major benefit that came to light was character building. This trait was exhibited in many ways from simply getting up and getting cattle fed to doing the right thing when no one was looking. All of the parents stressed that they are teaching their children that cheating in the showing is not acceptable for their family. From my analysis of data, I found that the parents reported that they would rather lose doing the right thing than win doing the wrong thing. This hopefully is where the ethics training that has been enacted over the last 10 years could be having a major impact on parents and exhibitors not continuing past infractions that have plagued the showing. The third most emergent benefit was simply the families found an

activity that their children like to do. Even though Families #4 and #6 were already heavily invested in the show cattle world because of prior experiences, their children also wanted to show. For several of these families, raising and showing livestock has filled the gap over other extracurricular activities. The findings from our ten families coincide with the finding from Holmgren and Reid (2007) that values and life skills were gained. In their study the highest-ranking skill gained was “to accept responsibility for doing a job.” This is also consistent with Boleman et al. (2004) research in which they found that responsibility was the highest rated development skill. The benefits that these parents see in their children come to be associated with our theoretical framework that Schultz (1959) says, “people invest in themselves.” Without these parents investing in their children, they might not have learned these life lesson of responsibility, and character building

### **Research Question 2: What positive effects have been seen from showing cattle?**

When talking with these parents about the positive effects that parents saw of their children showing cattle were numerous. The feeling from these families seemed that being involved in this type of agricultural experience “[wa]s priceless.” The families repeatedly said that their children were either learning how to work hard or know how to work hard and that they can take full responsibility for the day-to-day care of their show cattle. Most of the parents said that their children have an idea of what they want to do with their lives after high school. Looking through the interviews most children see themselves staying in agriculture. This was good news since according to recent reports there are many opportunities in the field of agriculture for college graduates (Fernandez et. al, 2020, p.2). If these families did not see any positive effects from this extracurricular program the program would have not continued the popularity it has seen over the years. As one set of senior exhibitors graduate another set of new

parents and children enter onto the stage of livestock showing and the pattern repeats itself. By these parents investing in the lives of their children, their children have a set goal of becoming professionals in the field of their choice and not have to dwell in the manual labor of the uneducated. (See Table 5.2)

Table 5.2. Future Job Interest of the Junior Exhibitors.

Job	Teacher	Vet	Ag Business	Ag. Engineering	Game Warden	Not Sure
# Of kids interested	3	2	3	1	1	1

**Research Question 3: What negative effects have been seen from showing cattle?**

None of the case study families mentioned any personal issues that involved their children, or that they had witnessed anything negative through their show experiences. There were a few general comments that mentioned cheating or that could be deemed negative in nature. The following comments were the only ones that this researcher deemed negative:

- “I think the negative experience is not about the showing aspect of it, I think it’s simply about the kids and the age that they are.” – Family 1
- “Of course, there is a little bit of unethical stuff that goes on at the show.” - Family 2
- I can say I’ve seen some people that are in this industry, and it’s like I tell my kids, that there are people out there that have nefarious intentions and they don’t like people who are successful if they’re not. – Family 5
- “Money and politics, it’s all on who you are.” – Family 3

The father of Family #2 also had this to say about what he is trying to teach his son, “There’s some cheating that goes on, and if we don’t do that as a family, we don’t want him to be that way away from home.” With the negative views that have been mentioned in this paper, this researcher did not view the parents as having an overall negative feeling about their children's career or about the agriculture industry, which leads to the conclusion that the experience of

showing cattle is one that yields positive results in the eyes of the parents. The level of contentment from these families could be in large part of the Quality Counts program that has been instituted for a number of years and the positive effects are being seen today. These efforts focus on education as a means of addressing ethical issues (Goodwin, 2001).

**Research Question 4: Have parents of youth exhibitors noticed better interpersonal skills?**

By all accounts of the parents interviewed the answer is a resounding *yes*. As seen in (Boleman et al., 2004) the study ranked the top five mean scores for these skills. According to their research, accepting responsibility, setting goals, developing self-discipline, self-motivation, and knowledge of the livestock industry were the highest ranked skills out of the 13 skills that parents said that they noticed in their children. We see similar results in another study (Boleman et al., 2004) where responsibility ranked first among participants in this study. The ten families also concurred by listing setting goals, knowledge of the livestock industry, building positive self-esteem, and developing oral communications skills. The research families also added skills their children are developing besides the ones mentioned including time management, self-character, sportsmanship, and dedication. One definition of interpersonal skills given by the CFI (2022) is that interpersonal skills are the skills required to effectively communicate, interact, and work with individuals and groups. Those with good interpersonal skills are strong verbal and non-verbal communicators and are often considered to be “good with people.” Whether they’re used in your career or personal life, these skills are important for success.

After interacting with the parents and observing the show with regards to the number of different kinds of people these exhibitors interacted with during the project, this project forces these exhibitors to develop the needed skills that are being asked in the job market. From buying the calf at the farm to answering the judge’s questions about their heifer, this author has

estimated that each exhibitor comes into contact with 14 different people by going to one major show.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study illustrate the support for the theory of human capital and the ability of investing in themselves. The data supporting this theory is that the junior show exhibitors are learning much more than how to show cattle, but learning lifelong skills that will take them well into their future career. As explained by their parents these junior exhibitors are learning, responsibility, work ethic, patience, time management, interpersonal skills, and self-worth. As Schultz (1959) wrote, people that invest in themselves as individuals and as families better their national and local communities. This is no greater witnessed than at the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo where generations of families coming together showing a single heifer and being at the showgrounds for three days for those five minutes in the ring with the judge. These children and families know what hard, manual work looks like and try to stay out of poverty while being involved in the agricultural industry. These parents are looking for programs to teach their children but all children that are entrusted to them. Take our mom and FFA advisor from Family 6. Not only is she trying to teach her daughters the lessons that she learned growing up showing cattle but she is also trying to teach others at her local school and community. By parents investing in their children's future, we see 91% of the family's junior exhibitors have an idea of what they want to be after high school. Further, the skills learned through participation in showing cattle should lead to increased productivity in the workplace as these junior exhibitors enter their future employment as they have been taught the value of hard work and better interpersonal skills. But the tacks it presents are much narrower and the ethos fundamentally celebrates winning. This can be said also about livestock showing where the parents from Family

Four said, “you can’t always win, but it is worth every dollar.” Looking at the literature and interviews of the families in this study, these parents are looking for an activity that encourages “having a faithful life and feeling loved, to interpersonal and social skills” (Dunn et al, 2003, p. 1371).

### **Future Research Recommendations**

Even though this study touched on many positive and negative aspects of children showing cattle and what type of life lesson can be learned from it, I maintain that more research should be conducted to measure if other programs could have the same results as livestock showing. Many of our parents said that raising cattle has taught their children more than sports could or extracurricular activities. Conducting similar studies like the one written about to other popular programs like athletics, Boy and Girl Scouts programs, competitive cheerleading, educational competitions, and social societies like National Charity League.

Another aspect of the livestock world that could be explored is the prevalence of the family member who attends their children to livestock shows. In this study we had an equal number of dads versus moms that were interviewed for this research paper. A more in depth look of this trend would hold up to a larger portion of the population and if this type of split all year or just for the major shows versus the weekend shows.

The last potential research project would be to see if the livestock show industry thinks that judges are corrupt as in the opinion piece of Rachel Cutrer from her RHD Blog on April 14, 2022. Her notion is that half the time show placings come down to who you know and how much you’ve spent. If this is truly the case, why show at all? This author would like to see a quantitative study on this topic and getting the view points from questions asked of exhibitors, family members, livestock show professional, agricultural educators, and judges from across the

nation to see what the sentiment is on this issue and what can be done to clean up this portion of the show ring ethics.

Overall, the area of research that cattle shows, and specifically the reasons behind participating in them, is rich and full of future research topics and studies. For this particular paper, the idea that parents feel that their children who are participants benefit from showing cattle shows that there are benefits beyond the prizes and acknowledgements given within the competitions themselves. And these reasons and benefits can be studied and used to increase participation and success of show programs.

## **APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

The questions for the interviews were developed by thinking about what background information I would want to know about the participants in the study and possibly be useful in later discussions in how they answered the key question, why do your children show beef cattle. The questions are open-ended, general, and focused on understanding the central phenomenon in the study. (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

1. Why do your children show beef cattle?
2. What positive experiences have your children experienced by showing beef cattle?
3. What negative experiences have your children experienced by showing beef cattle?
4. How many years have your children been showing beef cattle?
5. Did you show beef cattle when you were in school?
6. How many of your children have shown beef cattle?
7. Do your children show any other species?
8. What other activities do your children participate in?
9. How much time during the week do you help your children with their beef cattle projects?
10. How much do you help your children with their beef cattle projects at the show?
11. How much money on a percentage do your children contribute to their beef cattle projects?
12. How many shows a year do your children show in a year?
13. How many calves do your children show in a year?
14. Are your children in 4-H, FFA or both?
15. Where do you house your children's beef cattle projects?



16. How often do you consult an advisor or mentor with your children's beef cattle projects?
17. How many camps or seminars do your children attend a year on showing beef cattle?
18. Do you raise your own show cattle or buy them?
19. Do your children after high school want to study agriculture in a university/college?
20. What are your children's career goals?
21. Did your child take the Quality Counts test by themselves or did you help them answer questions in order to pass the test?

## APPENDIX B. PICTURES FROM FORT WORTH STOCK SHOW AND RODEO GROUNDS



Figure B.1. Cattle Barn 1, Cattle Barn 2, and concourse at the Fort Worth Livestock Show and Rodeo (FWSS&R). This is the central hub for the livestock barns at FWSS&R. Cattle Barn 1 was fully refurbished in 2018 to modern cattle stalling area.



Figure B.2. W.R. Watt Arena during the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo. This arena seats 1,100 spectators and is fully climate controlled. Besides cattle shows this arena is used for other events like horse shows, dog agility trials, and many other events throughout the year.



Figure B.3. View of the trailer loading and unloading area, cattle tie outs and the new Dickies Arena located on the grounds of the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo. The Dickies Arena was completed in 2021. The arena can seat up to 14,000 spectators and holds a number of events throughout the year including rodeos, concerts, and sporting events.

## APPENDIX C. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



**TO:** Joey Blackburn  
LSUAG | Dept | Agricultural and Extension  
Education and Evaluation | CC00946

**FROM:** Michael Keenan  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DATE:** 10-Aug-2022

**RE:** IRBAG-22-0010

**TITLE:** Understanding parental motivations and  
perceived benefits to youth of livestock  
exhibition in Texas

**SUBMISSION TYPE:** Initial Application

**Review Type:** Exempt

**Risk Factor:** Minimal

**Review Date:** 10-Aug-2022

**Status:** Approved

**Approval Date:** 10-Aug-2022

**Approval Expiration Date:** 09-Aug-2025

**Re-review frequency:** (three years unless otherwise stated)

**Number of subjects approved:** 100

**LSU Proposal Number:**

**By:** Michael Keenan, Chair

**Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:**

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects\*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.

5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.**

*\* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents.*

Mike Keenan O 225-578-1708  
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Baton Rouge, LA 70803

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## **VITA**

Matthew Schiel born in Houston, Texas has worked in property appraisal since graduating LSU with a B.S. in Animal Science. Matthew and his wife Summer have raised three sons and have been involved in many groups including Boy Scouts, 4-H, FFA, TJLA, and church youth groups. Matthew is also a trustee for the Tomball Independent School District since 2016. By being a trustee, his interest grew in pursuing a master's degree in the Department of Agricultural Education & Extension & Evaluation at Louisiana State University.

Upon completion of his master's degree in December 2022, he will begin work on his doctorate.