

How Do Leadership Skills Gained
In 4-H Carry Through
Adulthood?

By

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ABSTRACT

This research project focused on the life skill of leadership and how the leadership skills gained in 4-H Youth Development carried into adulthood life skills. It is important to understand what effects of belonging to 4-H had on its' alumni. Positive findings regarding the carryover of learned leadership skills can be an excellent marketing tool for the 4-H program and impact future leadership development programs.

There were two purposes of this study. The first was to determine if the leadership skills gained in 4-H carried into adulthood and to what extent these skills helped the 4-H alumni gain and maintain life skills. Secondly, this research project looked at how life skills guided leadership development and how these skills have changed over time. Wisconsin 4-H alumni from the following counties were mailed the research survey: Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Jackson, LaCrosse Monroe, Pierce, and Polk counties. The participants' ages ranged

from 19-72 and the mean age was 34.7 years old. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents were male and 72% were female. The respondents involvement in the 4-H program ranged from 3 years to 13 years as members.

The research found that there is a strong correlation between leadership skills viewed as a 4-H member and leadership skills viewed as an adult. The findings show that there is not a strong correlation between the number of activities members participate in and their leadership capabilities.

In conclusion of this study, there are many more research projects that could be completed in regards to leadership skills gained as the result of 4-H membership. The conclusion is that members gain leadership skills as a result of participating in the 4-H program.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The 4-H Youth Development program focuses on teaching life skills to its members. Some of the life skills focused on include: leadership skills, working with others, relating to others, and public speaking. Youth learn important skills in 4-H, but it's not certain how or if these skills carry through adulthood or to what extent they carry through. Also, as budget times get more restrictive at the county, state and federal level, this research may become a necessary tool to promote the 4-H Youth Development Program and UW-Extension.

This research project focused on the life skill of leadership and how the leadership skills gained in 4-H Youth Development carried into adulthood life skills. It is important to understand the effects of belonging to 4-H had on its' alumni. Positive findings regarding the carryover of learned leadership skills can be an excellent marketing tool for the 4-H program.

There were two purposes of this study. The first was to determine if the leadership skills gained in 4-H carried into adulthood and to what extent these skills helped the 4-H alumni gain and maintain life skills. Secondly, this research project looked at how life skills guided leadership development and how these skills have changed over time.

The assumption was that leadership skills learned in 4-H do carry through to adulthood. The extent that life skills carry through adulthood depends on the individual and the amount of leadership activity involvement. This study also compared personal characteristics including age, gender, and level of involvement in 4-H.

Leadership is defined as “helping people transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group, organization or society. The developing leader considers their long-term need to develop themselves, rather than immediate needs, (Van Linden, Fertman, 1998).

The Western District 4-H Alumni were involved with this study. They were mailed a survey to complete and return. There were 188 surveys mailed out to alumni.

Chapter II: Literature Review: Youth Leadership Skills

This section involves the literature on leadership skill development. There were several areas examined, including how youth gained leadership skills, and how being involved with a 4-H club helped members gain leadership skills. Using the research found in these articles assisted me with my research, "How do the leadership skills gained in 4-H carry through adulthood?"

As the 21st century began, there were many changes in the family structure. It is estimated that 25% of youth in this country were engaged in high-risk behaviors, which included: alcohol, tobacco, drugs, delinquency and poor school attendance, (Boyd, Herring, Briers, 1992). The time period of being a kid can be either great or horrible for a person. What does 4-H have to do with these issues? How do youth that participated in 4-H benefit? The land grant universities endorse youth development is an important program area and utilize the 4-H Youth Development program to outreach to youth. One of the biggest challenges the 4-H program addressed with youth was helping youth learn how to develop positive relationships with adults and peers to become contributing citizens in their communities, country and the world.

Family Involvement Programs

Are programs that involve the family important in today's society? The study done by Harvard Family Research Project; a study completed by Caspe, Traub, and Little, 2002; found that families that participated in activities together enriched their educational development. Adults benefited from participating in activities with their children. Families that participated in activities together had

stronger ties in both the community and school. They found three relevant dimensions of family programs.

The first dimension was adult development, which focused on parental development while providing tools and education for parents to enhance their child's learning. This was based on the theory that the parent is the first educator in a child's life. This dimension may have offered peer groups and networking opportunities for adults, which helped parents enrich their language and literacy skills, leading to an increase in self confidence.

The second dimension was sharing out-of-school-time experience. This dimension mentioned that parents, families and school-based programs came together to share meaningful out-of-school-time experiences. These types of experiences included family activity nights, family volunteering, family field trips and youth performances. Communication between families and out of school program staff contributed to the success of these programs.

The final dimension was governance and leadership. Family involvement in governance and decision-making was important for parents involved in this type of programming. The out-of-school programming was more responsive to family needs if the family served on the governance leadership portion of the program.

How does this relate to leadership gained in the 4-H program? The 4-H program focuses on the whole family. There are leadership development programs offered for both the parents and the youth. The emphasis is

programming for youth but the 4-H program understands the importance of having trained and knowledgeable volunteers.

Positive Youth Development Programs

The goal of Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development is to facilitate positive youth development to all youth across the state, (Zeldin, Day, Matysik, 1999). What is effective youth development programming? The research found two answers; the first was, it needed to focus on positive youth outcomes and not the prevention of problems. Research supported that youth development programming was the most effective prevention for the long term well being of young people. Secondly, after young people met the basic needs of emotional health, such as feeling secure, they acquired many competencies, both social and civic. Research has shown that youth that acquire social and civic competencies are more likely to do well in school and contribute to society and families. The emotional health is directly related to leadership development because youth that are successful leaders have confidence in themselves and exert themselves as leaders in activities and programs in the community.

The 4-H Youth Development program had several objectives, including teaching youth to learn how to make positive, healthy decisions now and in the future as adults. It has been found that positive youth development can occur anywhere including home, school, church, extracurricular activities and 4-H clubs (Zeldin, et al 1999).

A study was done in 1993-1995 to see what experiences need to occur for a young person to move successfully from adolescence to adulthood. The

findings of this study were that children need safe places, challenging experiences and caring people on a daily basis, (Zeldin, et al 1999).

Early Involvement in the 4-H Program

The development of life skills begins early in the life of a 4-H member. A study by Wright, Amos, Brow, Junge, Krug, LaFontaine, Natale, Peterson, Silm, and Sutton (n.d.) concerning the Philosophy of the National 4-H K-3 program, found that 23% of all youth enrolled in the 4-H program in the United States are in grades K-3. The objectives for the Cloverbud program (4-H participants in grades K-3) included: to develop competencies for self-understanding, learning to learn, mastering physical skills, decision-making, and social interaction; gaining knowledge in the sciences, literature and the arts through experiential learning; developing positive attitudes about learning; develop ongoing relationships with caring adults and older youth; exploring community and family relationships; and understanding and appreciating social and cultural diversity.

4-H is based on the experiential learning model which includes the following five steps: experience (do an activity), share (tell group or an individual about an experience), process (discuss questions that came up while doing the activity), generalize (find the important points that apply to the real world), apply (talk about how the information gained in the real world or in other situations), Hendricks (2006). The steps in this model are related to the development of quality leadership skills.

Competition is used as a way to motivate youth to learn. Another learning tool used in the 4-H program for people to learn include individualistic goals,

meaning that a 4-H member's work is critiqued against an established criterion to show what they have achieved, or not comparing their results with others. The third learning style used is cooperative, in which the participants work together to accomplish a goal. The theory is that if the project is a success it is because of everyone that worked on the project. The ability to cooperate is strongly related to life long skills in leadership. Research found that competition for youth in grades K-3 is not appropriate because this is the age when they are establishing their self esteem (Wright, et al, n.d.). It is important when working with this age group to focus on cooperative learning because this helps them experience socialization.

Life skills are defined as "abilities, knowledge, attitudes and behavior that must be learned for success and happiness. Life skills enable people to adapt to and master their life situations. They give individuals a frame of reference for perceiving and responding to life situations and enable them to achieve an inner satisfaction and happiness," (Wright, et al, n.d.).

Life skills have helped children learn how to live with others, express feelings, love life, and welcome new experiences. The life skills that are important for children in grades K-3 include understanding self, interaction skills, and decision making skills, learning-to-learn skills, and mastering physical skills, (Wright, et al, n.d.). It is important for children to understand themselves and realize that they are their own being. It is important for children to try new things to figure out what they like and don't like. This helps them gain skills to master

other life skills. Between the grades of K-3, children began to realize the world doesn't revolve around them and they crave other peer's attention.

Social interaction skills have helped children develop meaningful relationships with caring adults and older youth. This is the time period when children develop an appreciation for social and cultural diversity. This development stage is the time for youth to develop communication and listening, cooperation and conflict resolution skills.

Decision-making skills are important to master because children and adults are faced with this every day. Children learn the step-by-step process of making decisions during this age. This gives children the opportunity to figure out what they believe in. It is also important for children to learn how to make good decisions, such as not using drugs.

It is important for children at this time to establish a good attitude about learning and education. Children who have mastered the learning-to-learn skill will be more willing to ask questions, and to think critically, (Wright, et al, n.d.).

Children have a need to be very physically active during this age group. This time period is when children are outside playing the most. Children are developing their large muscles at this time. This is also the time when they are refining their motor skills.

A study by Ferrari, Hogue and Scheer (2004) looked at parent's perceptions of life skill development in their Cloverbuds. This study was done to help those that work with the Cloverbud program understand the program's strengths and weaknesses. Because the youth in the 5-8 year old age group

may have difficulty answering the questions and understanding what the survey means, this study took the parent's perceptions of the forty-two Cloverbud parents that were contacted twenty-five parents were interested in participating in the survey. Out of the group that was interested, twelve adults participated, with nine being female, four served as club leaders, in addition to having a child participate in the Cloverbud program. This study was conducted by having three focus groups.

One of the purposes of this study was to find out what the parent's perceptions and definitions of life skills were.

Only half of the parents that participated had ever heard of "life skills." Even though many of the parents hadn't heard the term "life skills," they had the same understanding as the other parents as to what their child gained by participating in the Cloverbud program. Cloverbud parents felt their children gained life skills and they valued that about the 4-H program. The life skills parents thought that their children gained from the Cloverbud program included: social interaction, learning to learn, self-confidence, self-care, and self direction. Parents felt that the Cloverbud program met the needs of their children by fitting their needs and helping them feel comfortable in their own group. Parents valued the fact that their Cloverbud was gaining public speaking skills and that the children became confident with that skill.

The second purpose of this study was to find out what the parents thought about the activities. Parents valued the meetings because they taught structure and punctuality. They also supported the noncompetitive approach 4-H uses

when working with youth in this age group. There were mixed opinions about the use of craft activities in the 4-H program. Some parents saw how “doing crafts” fit into the curriculum for this age group, and others didn’t understand that importance.

Some downfalls to the program that parents identified were that these were not familiar with the 4-H program, in particular the Cloverbud program, may not be aware of the opportunities that were available for youth. Another parent was concerned about the lack of organization in the club her child participated in. Other parents expressed a concern for the lack of diversity that occurred in the Cloverbud program. The final concern this program addressed is the lack of “health” that is being taught through the Cloverbud program.

Overall, the parents felt the Cloverbud program is influential in life skill development of their children. They felt it is important that children are able to have fun in 4-H but they are also learning life skills that will shape who the children are today and tomorrow. The Cloverbud program is where the youth are first exposed and the foundation to leadership development within the 4-H program.

Older youth involvement

A study by Boyd, Herring and Briers (1992) looked at the life skills youth gain while participating in the 4-H Youth Development Program. A survey was sent out to 500 4-H members ages 13-19 in Texas. The study found that youth who were enrolled in 4-H had higher scores than non-4-H members, in working with groups, understanding self, communicating, making decisions and

leadership. The study found that 4-H is accomplishing its goal of youth gaining leadership skills.

A study examined the life skills gained from youth that participated in animal science projects, from a 4-H alumni perspective, (Ward, 1996). The goal of this study was to determine whether the life skills gained while participating in the animal science projects had any effect on alumni and if it impacted their career choice. The study found that on a scale of one to five (one being no influence, five being a great deal of influence) that the spirit of inquiry, decision making, ability to relate to others, maintain records and public speaking, give you a positive self esteem, and help you accept responsibility, the average was 4.2. The second set of questions focused on activities to obtain those skills including quiz bowls, judging events, shows, skillathons, received an average of 3.8 (one being not effective and five being a great deal of effect). In response to the next question, 37% of respondents indicated that participation in the animal science projects did impact their career choice. A stronger response reported that participating in the animal science projects helped alumni develop a career, with 46% indicating this to be true. The study concluded that participating in the animal science project does have a positive impact on life skill development. The survey results indicate that even though there are not high percentages that have a career in the animal science field, many 4-H alumni have hobbies associated with animal science. Involvement in the animal science projects teaches responsibility and follow-through, directly related to quality leadership skill development.

A study by Boleman, Cummings, and Briers, (2004) looked at the parent's perception of their children participating in the beef project. A survey was sent to five percent of the beef project members in the state of Texas, with a basis of 6,347 families eligible for this study. The life skills that the study focused on included decision-making, relating to others, developing and maintaining records, accepting responsibility, building positive self-esteem, self motivation, knowledge of animal science industry, organizational skills, problem solving, communication skills, goal setting, self-discipline and team work. The researchers mailed the study out to 317 homes and 133 surveys were returned. The study found that the top five skills parents felt their children gained by participating in the beef project were: accepting responsibility, setting goals, development of self discipline, self motivation and knowledge of the livestock industry. The skills that parents acknowledged their children gained are directly related to leadership development. The study also noted that the results of relating to others were not consistent throughout the study. The conclusions from this study were that parents felt the life skills gained in 4-H were enhanced by participating in the beef project. These studies also found the longer a child participates in this program, the more the skills are going to be engrained in that child, which will hopefully help them to develop into a productive adult.

Leadership Development in Other Youth Organizations

These studies have focused on developing life skills in youth through 4-H programming. The next portion of the literature review will examine leadership developing in youth participating in other youth organizations such as FFA, FHA-

HERO, DECA, VICA, FBLA. Wigenback and Kahler (1997) completed a study that looked at leadership skills of Iowa FFA members. This study looked at the development of agricultural leadership skills. Skills FFA focused on enhancing in its members included communication skills, human relations, social abilities, citizenship, cooperation and resource management. The students participated in a study which determined if the participants felt they gained leadership skills because of participating in the Iowa FFA Association. Members indicated whether they participated in local, district state, regional or national FFA programs. The researchers sent out 400 surveys and received 282 (70.5%) usable surveys. The study concluded youth leadership and life skill development is the result of a student's background, attitude and experiences. This study defined leadership and life skill development as skills in working with groups, learning, communication, decision making, interpersonal relationships, understanding self and working with groups. This study also concluded that students could increase their life skills by participating in youth leadership organizations in school and the community.

A study that was completed at an earlier time by Townsend and Carter (1983) found that FFA participation had a positive effect on the leadership traits, citizenship and cooperation. The study found that leadership was enhanced through FFA participation but cooperation and citizenship were not related to FFA participation. A study done by Wingeback and Kahler in 1997 sited several studies conducted that have found a positive correlation between interpersonal relations, administration, self management and communication skills youth

gained through participation in activities such as National Honor Society, FFA, student council, 4-H, athletics, departmental clubs (i.e. Spanish Club), church groups and livestock associations, (Wingenbach et.al, 1997). The purpose of this study was to look if a relationship existed between FFA participants and their leadership skills.

Youth leadership skills in 4-H

Seevers and Domady (1995) examined how many youth in Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico were involved in planning, implementing and evaluating 4-H activities. They conducted this study by using a mailed survey to 400 randomly selected youth in three states. The researchers obtained a 59% response rate to the survey. The study found that youth are the most involved in the implementation portion of participating in leadership programming. They indicated that their strongest leadership strengthening activities were serving as officers and working with younger 4-H members. The study also concluded that most adults do not provide the opportunity for youth to be a part of the total leadership process and are missing the key components of planning and implementing.

Research by Fox, Schroeder and Lodl (2003) parallels this research project. The purpose of this article was to find what life skills 4-H alumni gained while being a member of the 4-H program. They looked at five areas of life skills including technical skills, life skills, communication skills, personal/social skills and leadership skills. Participants shared what they gained while participating in the 4-H program. This study was conducted in 17 southeast counties in

Nebraska. The alumni were 4-H members between the years of 1982-1988. The researchers had a successful response rate of 74% or 196 respondents. The participants were asked survey questions and also to relay personal stories about their involvement in the 4-H program. Results indicated that 4-H alumni believe their life skills development was enhanced because of being involved with 4-H. The authors concluded that 4-H is a tool for Cooperative Extension to outreach to youth and to give members the tools to develop life skills.

The study by Boyd, Herring and Briers (1992) also looked at the leadership development that occurred in relationship to how many years the member participated in 4-H. This study also considered the relationship of leadership development in 4-H members versus non 4-H members. A survey was sent out to 500 club members and 558 non 4-H members that were randomly selected from 19 counties in Texas. The researchers received a 62% response rate from 4-H members but does not indicate how many surveys were returned from non-4-H members. The researchers found that the 4-H program is positively related to the perceived leadership skill development in members. This study also concluded that as 4-H members increased their participation levels, their leadership skill development also increased.

Kleon and Rinehart (1998) examined the value of the 4-H Teen Community Leadership College in Ohio for the participants in the program. A survey was sent out to 95 youth that participated in the program in 1989 and 1994. High school principals, Extension Agents and school guidance counselors, selected youth that took part in this program. The participants in this study

exhibited above average leadership skills. The study found that the Teen Community Leadership College had a positive impact on participants in developing their leadership skills. The study found there needs to be more work done in teaching and training youth leaders in initiative, assertiveness and objectivity.

A study by Groff (1992) focused on Teens Reaching Youth (TRY). The 4-H Youth Development Program relies on adults to help deliver the program. This study looks at volunteers under the age of 25. There are two major benefits to people who volunteer. The first benefit is that volunteering reinforces learning for the volunteer. The second benefit is on Extension, as it increases the number of clients that will benefit from Extension programming. It is important for Extension Professionals to tap into that teen resource as volunteers for different programs. It is even more critical as the number of adult volunteers decreases. It has been found that teens are very competent to coordinate programs for other teens or youth and receive very positive feedback from the program participants.

This study found that 62% of teen participants were between the ages of 13 and 15 and the majority of volunteers were female. Also, 43% of participants were new to 4-H. The study found that leadership skills in both youth and adults improved through the TRY program. This program was experimental in North Carolina from 1986-1991. Nearly 2,000 4-H youth have completed the program. Those youth that have completed the program have moved on to other leadership roles in their schools and communities. The TRY program has given

teen leaders meaning in their leadership skills and helped gain confidence in working with other programs.

Evaluation tools used to determine youth leadership skills in 4-H

Seevers, Dormody, and Clason (1995) completed a study on leadership development in 4-H and FFA members. The study was done to demonstrate the effectiveness of leadership development in 4-H and FFA members. As resources become more limited, it is important for programs to validate their effectiveness to stakeholders. Many Cooperative Extension Personnel, Agricultural Education Instructors, FFA, and 4-H Alumni feel that the programs are effective in developing leaders but there isn't a lot of research to support them. The purpose of this study was to develop a reliable instrument to measure leadership skills. The following steps were taken to develop this scale: define and implement youth leadership skill development, assess validity, assess reliability, and measure youth leadership skill development. There were 400 4-H and FFA members that participated in this study. Questions on the survey included topics of youth leadership life skill development, self-esteem, year in 4-H or FFA, and size of community. There were four mailings sent out participants and one mailing to the respective 4-H Youth Development Agent or FFA Advisor. The researchers had a final response rate of 262 youth participants or 66%. The youth leadership life skill development fell under the following domains: communication skills, decision making skills, skills in getting along with others,

learning skills, management skills, skills in understanding yourself, and skills in working with group.

Data was collected in September and October through a survey sent in the mail. There were three mailings: the survey, a two week postcard and a four week postcard. There were incentives mailed with the postcard to increase the response rate. After seven weeks, a mailing was sent to agriculture education instructors and 4-H Youth Development Agents, which included names of individuals who did not respond to the survey. There was a 60% response rate and 59% of the responses were usable. Fifteen youth who did not respond to the survey were asked to answer the questions over the phone. Their responses were pooled with those who responded to the survey and it was found that there were not any differences in their responses in comparison to those who responded earlier. It was determined that it represented the target population. The survey used a four-point scale to determine the amount of the skill the youth gained. A sample question from the survey includes "As a result of my 4-H (FFA) experience, I can speak before a group (no gain, slight gain, moderate gain, a lot of gain)."

It has been determined this scale is valid and reliable. The survey was assessed by seven experts for face and content validity. The seven experts included two from Cooperative Extension Service administrators, a faculty member in educational administration, two members from vocational education, and two faculty members from research methods and statistics. Their survey collected information on: communication skills, decision-making skills, skills in

getting along with others, learning skills, management skills, skills in understanding self and working with others.

The validity of the survey was measured several times. The first test that occurred was dropping indicators that correlated below .25 with the respondent's total score for the scale, (Seevers, et al 1995). Next, an item that had a low association with single indicator in the scale was eliminated (measured by Spearman rho coefficients). Based on these criteria there were 26 indicators eliminated with 36 indicators remaining. Indicators were next evaluated to have relationships with youth leadership life skills. These areas of validity were looked at: self-esteem, years in 4-H or FFA, and size of home community (including if they live on a farm/ranch, town, suburb or urban area). There were six indicators linked to years in 4-H or FFA that had a low association and were eliminated, leaving 30 indicators left in the survey. The indicator skills that remained included: communication, decision-making, getting along with others, learning, management, understanding self, and working with groups. Sample questions include: Can listen effectively, consider input from all group members, can solve problems, recognize the worth of others, have a positive self concept, respect others. The statements are rated circling the corresponding number for no gain, slight gain, moderate gain or a lot of gain.

Using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, a final reliability test was given and the 30 indicators passed the test and were used in the survey. The Cronbach alpha had a coefficient of .98.

Leadership in the 4-H program is used in many different programs and comes in many forms. There are a variety of leadership development opportunities for 4-H members as well as volunteer training for the parents. As the literature review states, leadership begins in the beginning 4-H program, Cloverbuds, and continues throughout the 4-H program, including the animal sciences projects.

Chapter III: Methodology

4-H Youth Development focuses on teaching life skills to its members.

Some of the life skills that are focused on include: working with others, leadership skills, relating to others, and public speaking. Youth learn important skills in 4-H, but it's not certain how or if these skills carry through adulthood and to the extent they carry through. The life skill that this research project focused on is leadership skills and assessed how leadership skills gained in 4-H Youth Development carry into adulthood.

The following counties in the Wisconsin Western District were included in the sample: Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, LaCrosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, St. Croix, and Trempealeau Counties. 4-H Youth Development Staff was asked to randomly select 15 alumni who have been away from the program for 1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years and more than 16 years.

The first part of the survey, (Appendix A) which looks at life skills, was developed based on the curriculum titled, "Targeting Life Skills Model, Incorporating Developmentally Appropriate Learning Opportunities to Assess Impact of Life Skill Development (Hendricks, 2006)." The second half of the survey was adapted from an existing evaluation tool developed by Dormody, Seevers, and Clason (n.d.) for evaluation of youth organizations. The survey asked a variety of questions linked to 4-H life skills. The respondents were asked to think about their responses as a 4-H member and ranked the most helpful life skills they gained while in the 4-H program. Next, they were asked to

rank the most useful life skill as an adult. The life skills categories were: Giving, Working, Being, Living, Thinking, Managing, Relating, and Caring. Part three of the survey asked the respondents to determine how much gain they experienced out of several statements. An example statement is "Can determine needs." The Chronbach alpha reliability for this portion of the survey was .907, which is similar to the reliability of the original instrument.

There were 188 surveys mailed to alumni from Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Jackson, LaCrosse Monroe, Pierce, and Polk counties. The 32 question survey was mailed out to the alumni names from the participating counties on January 22, 2007 with a return deadline of February 9, 2007. There were 87 surveys returned by mail with 50 of the surveys that were usable.

Demographic Data

The average age for the survey participants was 34.7 years old and respondents had been a member of the 4-H program for 9.92 years. The respondents age ranged from 19-72 years old. (Table 3.2). The average survey respondent has been a 4-H leader for 6.78 years. Fourteen (28%) of the survey participants were male and 36 (72%) were female. (Table 3.1). Seven respondents have a high school education, 11 have gone on and received an associate degree from a technical college, 22 have a bachelor's degree and 10 have completed and advanced degree. (Table 3.3). There are 45 participants that were a member of the 4-H program for 8 or more years. Table 3.4). Thirty three of the survey participants currently serve as a leader in the 4-H organization. (Table 3.5). Over one half (n=33) of the survey respondents have

served as a club president during their 4-H career. Nearly 80% (n=38) have led a club activity as a 4-H member. The participants' ages ranged from 19-72 and the mean age was 34.7 years old. The respondents involvement in the 4-H program ranged from 3 years to 13 years as members. Today, 37% of respondents are 4-H leaders. The respondents have served as a leader from a range of 0 to 47 years. One question asked was if they served as President of their 4-H club in which 64% responded they had.

Table 3.1

Demographic Data

Gender	Frequency (N=50)	Percentage
Male	14	28%
Female	36	72%

Table 3.2

Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency (N=50)	Percentage
19	3	6%
20	3	6%
21	5	10%
23	3	6%
24	1	2%
25	1	2%
27	2	4%
29	2	4%
30	2	4%
32	2	4%
34	2	4%
35	1	2%
36	1	2%
38	1	2%
39	2	4%
40	1	2%
41	1	2%
42	2	4%
43	2	4%
44	2	4%
45	3	6%
46	2	4%
47	1	2%
52	1	2%
55	1	2%
56	2	4%
72	1	2%

Table 3.3

Education of Respondents

Education	Frequency (N=50)	Percentage
Less than high school	0	0%
High School/G.E.D.	7	14%
Vocational/Technical	11	22%
Coursework/Degree		
Bachelor's Degree	22	44%
Advanced Degree	10	20%

Table 3.4

Years in 4-H Program

Years in 4-H	Frequency (N=50)	Percentage
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	1	2%
4	1	2%
5	0	0%
6	1	2%
7	2	4%
8	4	8%
9	5	10%
10	21	42%
11	7	14%
12	4	8%
13	4	8%

Table 3.5

Years as a Leader

Leader Years	Frequency (N=50)	Percentage
0	17	34%
1	1	2%
2	5	10%
3	4	8%
4	1	2%
5	2	4%
6	2	4%
7	1	2%
8	2	4%
9	2	4%
10	5	10%
15	1	2%
18	1	2%
25	2	4%
26	2	4%
28	1	2%
47	1	2%

Chapter IV: Results

There were two purposes of this study. The first was to determine if the leadership skills gained in 4-H carried into adulthood and to what extent these skills helped the 4-H alumni gain and maintain life skills. Secondly, this research project looked at how life skills guided leadership development and how these skills have changed over time. Wisconsin 4-H alumni from the following counties were mailed the research survey: Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Jackson, LaCrosse Monroe, Pierce, and Polk counties.

Leadership Skills Gained In 4-H Carry Through Adulthood

The survey asked participants to rank the most important life skill subsets. The life skills included giving, working being, living, thinking, managing, relating and caring. Under each skill there were three to five specific life skill subsets, which related to the above life skills. Respondents were asked to rank each life skill subsets from one through the number of subsets. See Appendix A.

The life skill that adults found the most useful is concern for others. This is based upon the frequency of the subset skills being ranked number 1. The top five skills ranked by adults as currently being the most useful are: communication, concern for others, self-motivation, healthy lifestyle choices, and leadership. (Table 4.1). Adults also ranked subset skills as to which ones were the most helpful that they gained while being a member of the 4-H program and they ranked concern for others as the top skill. The top five skills ranked by adults as most helpful skills gained as a youth are: concern for others, communication, healthy lifestyle changes, teamwork, and leadership. (Table 4.2).

On the contrary, the least useful skills adults rated were: marketable skills, disease prevention, service learning, managing feelings, and resiliency. (Table 4.3). The least helpful life skills while participating in 4-H were: managing feelings, disease prevention, resiliency, nurturing relationships, and service learning. (Table 4.4). These results are based upon the per-cent frequencies.

Table 4.1

Top Ranked Life Skills Deemed Most Useful Currently as an Adult

Rank	Skill	Percent Frequency
1	Communication	72%
2	Concern for Others	66%
3	Self-Motivation	58%
4	Healthy Lifestyle Choices	44%
5	Leadership	44%

Table 4.2

Top Ranked Life Skills Deemed Most Helpful Gained While Participating in 4-H

Rank	Skill	Percent Frequency
1	Concern for Others	68%
2	Communication	52%
3	Healthy Lifestyle Choices	48%
4	Teamwork	48%
5	Leadership	48%

Table 4.3

Top Ranked Life Skills Ranked Least Useful Currently as an Adult

Rank	Skill	Percent Frequency
1	Marketable Skills	74%
2	Disease Prevention	64%
3	Service Learning	64%
4	Managing Feelings	62%
5	Resiliency	54%

Table 4.4

Top Ranked Life Skills Deemed Least Helpful While Participating in 4-H

Rank	Skill	Percent Frequency
1	Managing Feelings	70%
2	Disease Prevention	66%
3	Resiliency	62%
4	Nurturing Relationships	48%
5	Service Learning	42%

Next, the means were compared for each life skill subset. As the means are compared for the life skills subsets, it appears that the life skills as an adult and the life skills as a youth have the same value. For example, under the life skill “giving” the number one subset is leadership for both adults and youth. The first ranked subsets for each life skill were: giving, leadership; working, self-motivation; being, self-responsibility; living, healthy lifestyle choices; thinking, decision making; managing, planning and organizing; relating, communication; and caring, concern for others. (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Number 1 Life Skill Subsets Ranked Useful Currently as an Adult and Helpful while Participating in the 4-H Program

Life Skill	1 st Ranked Subset
Giving	Leadership
Working	Self-Motivation
Being	Self-Responsibility
Living	Healthy Lifestyle Choices
Thinking	Decision Making
Managing	Planning and Organizing
Relating	Communication
Caring	Concern for Others

The data, using item 31 and 32, shows a strong correlation between leadership as a 4-H member and leadership as an adult ($r=.611$, $p<.001$). The correlation of years as a 4-H member and leadership as a 4-H member was not significant ($r=.107$, $p=.460$) The correlation of years as a 4-H member and leadership as an adult was also not significant ($r=.029$, $p=.839$).

It appears that respondents who have been a member of the 4-H program gained leadership skills. It has no relation to the number of leadership roles possessed as a 4-H member.

Using the paired sample t-test between life skill subsets ranked helpful while participating in 4-H and useful currently as an adult, there are several life skill subsets that are significantly different. The life skills that were significantly different were self-esteem, character, stress management, personal safety, problem solving, critical thinking, service learning, communication, and sharing. For example, self-esteem received a t-test score of -3.29 , meaning that it is more significant to adults. It is comparing the mean of youth to the mean of adults. The t-test score will be positive if the life skill is more significant to youth. (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

T-Test of Life skills Subsets Significantly Different Between Helpful While Participating in 4-H and Useful Currently as an Adult

Life Skill	Mean 1	Mean 2	t-score	Sig.
Self-Esteem	2.52	3.10	-3.29	.003
Character	3.04	2.54	2.38	.021
Stress Management	2.44	1.96	3.05	.004
Personal Safety	2.24	2.68	-2.67	.010
Problem Solving	2.56	2.24	2.18	.034
Critical Thinking	3.22	2.64	2.87	.006
Service Learning	3.78	4.5	-3.28	.002
Communication	1.90	1.52	2.22	.031
Sharing	2.40	2.78	-2.03	.048

Mean 1= helpful while participating in 4-H

Mean 2= useful currently as an adult

1= most important

5= least important

Leadership Development over Time

In part three of the survey respondents were asked to rate several skills as a result of their 4-H experience. They were asked to rank as to no gain, slight gain, moderate gain, and a lot of gain. The top skill that was rated was overwhelmingly by 70 per-cent of respondents is "show a responsible attitude." The results are based on per-cent frequency. The remaining top skills as a result of 4-H experience are: can set goals, can delegate responsibility, have a positive self-concept, and have a friendly personality. (Table 4.7). The bottom skills rated by respondents were in a tie at eighteen per-cent which were "am open minded" and "can listen effectively." The other low ranked skills included: can handle mistakes, can clarify my values and have a friendly personality. (Table 4.8).

Correlations shows that leadership involvement today and the number of leadership positions held as a 4-H member are not statistically significant, $r=.219$, $p=.127$. The direction of the relationship is as expected, the more leadership positions in 4-H, the higher the ranking on leadership involvement today. The mean is 8.38 with the range being from zero to eighteen.

The data shows that there is significant leadership development through the 4-H program that is carried through adulthood with some of the life skills. The number one life skill that continually was determined most important throughout the different analyses was communication. This appeared throughout the research as being very important by both youth and adults.

Table 4.7

Top ranked skills gained as a result of 4-H Experience

Rank	Skill	Percent Frequency
1	Show a Responsible Attitude	70%
2	Can Set Goals	62%
3	Can Delegate Responsibility	58%
4	Have a Positive Self Concept	54%
5	Have a Friendly Personality	50%

Table 4.8

Lowest ranked skills gained as a result of 4-H Experience

Rank	Skill	Percent Frequency
1	Can Handle Mistakes	22%
2	Can Clarify My Values	22%
3	Have a Friendly Personality	20%
4	Am Open Minded	18%
5	Can Listen Effectively	18%

Chapter V: Conclusions

There were two purposes of this study. The first was to determine if the leadership skills gained in 4-H carried into adulthood and to what extent these skills helped the 4-H alumni gain and maintain life skills. Secondly, this research project looked at how life skills guided leadership development and how these skills have changed over time. Wisconsin 4-H alumni from the following counties were mailed the research survey: Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Jackson, LaCrosse Monroe, Pierce, and Polk counties

Discussion

The life skill that appears to be very valued is communication. This life skill appeared in the top five life skills ranked by both youth and adults. Many of the life skills that were recognized as important while participating in 4-H continue to be important as adults. The research found life skills that were determined helpful while participating in 4-H were many times determined useful currently as adults. The overall, responses from participants show a positive experience from participating in 4-H. The research has shown that as long as a youth is a member of the 4-H program, they will gain leadership, and that leadership is not dependent on how active an individual is in the program.

It appears that the 4-H alumni continue to have strong ties to the program and believe in it. I believe the some studies that could be done in the future would be to send a survey similar to the survey I sent to adults that were not 4-H Members and compare the results of non 4-H alumni with 4-H alumni. It appears that the leadership opportunities 4-H offers has an effect on its alumni. This

study has found it does not matter what you participate in as a 4-H member but rather that you are a member of the program.

A letter attached to a survey that was returned, but the data was not usable is from a 90 year old lady. It speaks to the value of the 4-H leadership experience.

The letter states, "Dear Jackie Johnson, I filled this questionnaire as an adult leader, not as a 4-H member. I did belong to a "get-together" club, but never a 4-H club. As we did not have one where I lived. Since I married, had three daughters, I have been very active in 4-H. First as Foods Leader, next Sewing Leader, then General Leader of a club of 54 members. Children from the Farm and Town of Norwalk. After our first daughter was 9 years old my life changed. I was very busy in 4-H and on a farm, my husband was also a leader in sheep and beef. Now I still love 4-H but can't get around so well, but help out whenever I can. To me, I believe 4-H is the greatest organization for every young person in the world. As an adult, it has helped me in many ways. One of my daughters is the manager of 128 Post Offices in Minnesota which means giving speeches to 200-300 postal workers almost every week-I asked her why were you appointed to the job? The reply, 'My start, to speaking and take on responsibilities started in 4-H.'"

Recommendations for Future Research

A way this project could be improved in the future would be to have the state randomly select 4-H alumni rather than the 4-H agents in the counties. The reason that I feel this may be better is because most of the participants had 8 plus years in the program and had strong ties to it. Alumni who are going to be remembered by agents 15 plus years out of the program tend to be alumni who are very active in the program.

The limitations of this research project include the lack of knowledge of how 4-H Youth Development Agents selected the names of the participants. Another limitation is that it may be difficult to gauge how well the respondents were able to rate life skills gained as a 4-H member.

Another idea for future research is to send the same survey to alumni and current older 4-H youth. It would be very interesting to compare what youth view as important as to what adults feel is important.

If this research instrument would be used in the future, I would recommend that the life skills section use a Likert scale rather than ranking. It was very difficult to analyze the results using a ranking scale. Also, I had a few comments from respondents that they felt some of the life skills were difficult to rank because they had a lot of value in the 3-5 subset skills that were listed under that life skill.

I also believe that it is important for people to separate out what leadership skills they gained in 4-H because the leadership process is ongoing. It may have been a challenge for people to think back to what they learned as a 4-H member.

This project has only confirmed my beliefs in the 4-H program and the impact it has on people's lives. I had a few people who wrote a comments to me about the importance 4-H has had on their life.

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January 23, 2007

Dear 4-H Alumni,

My name is Jackie Johnson and I am the 4-H Youth Development Educator for Chippewa County. I received your name from the 4-H Youth Development Agent from your county. Currently, I'm attending UW-Stout to obtain my Master's Degree in Family Studies and Human Development. As part of my required research for my thesis I'm conducting a survey titled, "How do leadership skills gained in 4-H carry through adulthood?"

Enclosed you will find a consent form, survey, and a self addressed stamped envelope. Please take the time to read the consent form, sign it and fill out the survey and return to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope by Friday, February 9th.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (715) 726-7950 or jackie.johnson@ces.uwex.edu

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jackie Johnson
4-H Youth Development Educator

Enclosures

Consent Form for Participating in the 4-H Leadership Skills Survey

Title: “How do leadership skills gained in 4-H carry through adulthood?”

Investigator: Jackie Johnson, 4-H Youth Development Educator, Chippewa County UW-Extension, Courthouse Room 13, 711 North Bridge Street, Chippewa Falls WI 54729, (715) 726-7950 jjohnson@co.chippewa.wi.us

Research Sponsor: Dr. Judy Rommel, 406 Parkview Lane, River Falls WI 54022, (715) 425-2726 rommelj@uwstout.edu

Description: I am interested in learning what leadership skills you gained in 4-H and how they carried through adulthood and how they have impacted your life and career choice. I am also interested in learning if the number of years involved with 4-H impact the leadership skills you have learned.

Risks and Benefits: The risk is that your name and address appeared in a mailing list and the survey was sent through the mail. All reasonable measures have been and will continue to be taken to keep your identity anonymous. The number found on the survey is not linked to your name. Responses to the survey will be pooled and your answers will not be individually identified on any report prepared. The benefits include that the information will be shared with the respondents, stakeholders and others involved in youth development programming.

Time commitment: It will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey.

Confidentiality: All surveys will be assigned a number and the responses will be combined to tell the story. Participants will not be individually identified on any report prepared.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. Should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, you may discontinue your participation at this time without incurring adverse consequences.

IRB Approval: This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Wisconsin-Stout’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

Investigator: Jackie Johnson (715) 726-7950 jackie.johnson@ces.uwex.edu

Research Sponsor: Dr. Judy Rommel, (715) 425-2726 rommelj@uwstout.edu

IRB Administrator: Sue Foxwell, Director, Research Services 152 Vocational Rehabilitation Bldg. UW-Stout Menomonie WI 54751 (715) 232-2477 foxwells@uwstout.edu

Statement of Consent: By signing this consent form you agree to participate in the project entitled, “How do leadership skills gained in 4-H carry through adulthood?”

Signature _____ Date _____

(OVER)

How do leadership skills gained in 4-H carry through adulthood?

Please complete the following survey to the best of your ability. If you have any questions, please contact Jackie Johnson, Chippewa County 4-H Youth Development Educator, (715) 726-7950 or email jackie.johnson@ces.uwex.edu. Please return the survey in the enclosed self-addressed stamp envelope by February 9, 2007. Thank you!

Section 1: Demographic Data-please check the appropriate answers.

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: Male Female

3. Education: Less than high school High School Graduate/G.E.D
 Vocational or Technical Coursework/Degree
 Bachelor's Degree Advanced Degree

4. Number of Years in 4-H: _____

5. Are you involved in 4-H as a leader? Yes No
 If yes, how many years have you been a leader? _____

6. Leadership opportunities you participated in while in 4-H (please check all that apply):
 - Club Officer
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Historian
 - Reporter
 - Sunshine
 - Sergeant at Arms
 - Other (Please Specify) _____
 - Ambassador
 - Camp Counselor
 - County, District or State Speaking Contest
 - Fair Superintendent
 - Attended 4-H Youth Conference (formally 4-H Congress)
 - Attended Citizenship Washington Focus (formally Citizenship Shortcourse)
 - National Conference (formally National 4-H Camp)
 - Participated in an interstate exchange trip(s)
 - Taught younger youth a project
 - Organized a club activity
 - Served on county planning committee
 - Member of 4-H Leader's Association
 - Member of Youth Leader Council
 - Member of State 4-H Team i.e. Showcase Singers, State Drama Team etc.
 - Other (please list) _____

7. On a scale of 1-5 with one being no involvement and 5 being extremely involved, please rate your leadership involvement in your life today (community, career, etc).

1 2 3 4 5

8. Think back to your involvement and rank the most helpful "life skills" you gained while in 4-H. Please rank the most important in each subset with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important

- a. Giving
 - ___ Community Service Volunteering
 - ___ Leadership
 - ___ Responsible Citizenship
 - ___ Contributing to Group Effort
- b. Working
 - ___ Marketable Skills
 - ___ Teamwork
 - ___ Self-Motivation
- c. Being
 - ___ Self-Esteem
 - ___ Self-Responsibility
 - ___ Character
 - ___ Managing Feelings
 - ___ Self-Discipline
- d. Living
 - ___ Healthy Lifestyle Choices
 - ___ Stress Management
 - ___ Disease Prevention
 - ___ Personal Safety
- e. Thinking
 - ___ Learning to Learn
 - ___ Decision Making
 - ___ Problem Solving
 - ___ Critical Thinking
 - ___ Service Learning
- f. Managing
 - ___ Goal Setting
 - ___ Planning and Organizing
 - ___ Wise Use of Resources
 - ___ Keeping Records
 - ___ Resiliency
- g. Relating
 - ___ Communication
 - ___ Cooperation
 - ___ Social Skills
 - ___ Conflict Resolution
 - ___ Accepting Differences
- h. Caring
 - ___ Concern for Others
 - ___ Empathy
 - ___ Sharing
 - ___ Nurturing Relationships

9. Rank the most useful “life skills” currently you use as an adult. Please rank the most important in each subset with 1 being the most important and 4 being the least important.
- a. Giving
 - Community Service Volunteering
 - Leadership
 - Responsible Citizenship
 - Contributing to Group Effort
 - b. Working
 - Marketable Skills
 - Teamwork
 - Self-Motivation
 - c. Being
 - Self-Esteem
 - Self-Responsibility
 - Character
 - Managing Feelings
 - Self-Discipline
 - d. Living
 - Healthy Lifestyle Choices
 - Stress Management
 - Disease Prevention
 - Personal Safety
 - i. Thinking
 - Learning to Learn
 - Decision Making
 - Problem Solving
 - Critical Thinking
 - Service Learning
 - j. Managing
 - Goal Setting
 - Planning and Organizing
 - Wise Use of Resources
 - Keeping Records
 - Resiliency
 - k. Relating
 - Communication
 - Cooperation
 - Social Skills
 - Conflict Resolution
 - Accepting Differences
 - l. Caring
 - Concern for Others
 - Empathy
 - Sharing
 - Nurturing Relationships

As a result of my 4-H experience I: Please circle the response that you feel represents the level gained for each skill as a result of your 4-H Experience I:

1= No Gain, 2= Slight Gain, 3= Moderate Gain, 4= A lot of Gain

	No Gain	Slight Gain	Moderate Gain	A lot of Gain
1. Can determine needs	1	2	3	4
2. Have a positive self concept	1	2	3	4
3. Can express feelings	1	2	3	4
4. Can set goals	1	2	3	4
5. Can be honest with others	1	2	3	4
6. Can use information to solve problems	1	2	3	4
7. Can delegate responsibility	1	2	3	4
8. Can set priorities	1	2	3	4
9. Am sensitive to others	1	2	3	4
10. Am open-minded	1	2	3	4
11. Consider the needs of others	1	2	3	4
12. Show a responsible attitude	1	2	3	4
13. Have a friendly personality	1	2	3	4
14. Consider input from all group members	1	2	3	4
15. Can listen effectively	1	2	3	4
16. Can select alternatives	1	2	3	4
17. Recognize the worth of others	1	2	3	4
18. Create an atmosphere of acceptance	1	2	3	4
19. Can consider alternatives	1	2	3	4
20. Respect others	1	2	3	4
21. Can solve problems	1	2	3	4
22. Can handle mistakes	1	2	3	4
23. Can be tactful	1	2	3	4

	No Gain	Slight Gain	Moderate Gain	A lot of Gain
24. Can be flexible	1	2	3	4
25. Get along with others	1	2	3	4
26. Can clarify my values	1	2	3	4
27. Use rational thinking	1	2	3	4
28. Am open to change	1	2	3	4
29. Have good manners	1	2	3	4
30. Trust other people	1	2	3	4
31. Leadership as a 4-H member	1	2	3	4
32. Leadership as an adult	1	2	3	4