A Study of Life Skills from Traditional and Afterschool 4-H Participants

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A STUDY OF LIFE SKILLS FROM TRADITIONAL AND AFTERSCHOOL 4-H PARTICIPANTS

By

Julia M. Kreikemeier

A THESIS

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A STUDY OF LIFE SKILLS FROM TRADITIONAL AND AFTERSCHOOL 4-H PARTICIPANTS

Julia M. Kreikemeier, M.S
University of Nebraska, 2015

Advisor: Yan Xia

Cooperative Extension has been serving youth and their families for over one hundred years. The total impact of this service has been measured on several occasions by many researchers, most notably in the research of youth development by Dr. Richard Learner; however, his research only took into account those who participated in traditional 4-H clubs. The purpose of this quantitative study was designed to examine which life skills youth participants in traditional and afterschool 4-H programs reported. Quantitative methodology was used to collect post-program survey data of youth participants. Qualitative informal interviews were conducted of Extension Educators and afterschool 4-H program directors to help explain the findings of the quantitative survey data. To help answer the question of reported life skills, 89 youth, participating in afterschool and traditional programs, were surveyed in the Northeast 4-H district of Nebraska. Results suggest youth in afterschool and traditional 4-H programs are developing the same life skills.
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Thank you to my friends. Who listened to me discuss theories and research when you didn’t have any clue as to what I was saying. Thank you for supporting and encouraging me when I just wanted to quit. For celebrating the little victories with me.
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A Study of Life Skills from Traditional and Afterschool 4-H Participants

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University of Nebraska, 2015

4-H Pledge

I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty,
My hands to larger service, and my health to better living
For my club, my community, my country, and my world.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

4-H is an organization focused on serving youth, through land grant universities, the cooperative Extension system, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (USDA, 2015). 4-H serves youth from 8 to 18 years old, through citizenship, healthy living, mentoring and science (Council, 2015). 4-H is found in a variety of settings, including participant homes, afterschool programs, school enrichment, county and state fairs, and camp experiences.

4-H is an organization which has served youth for over 100 years (Council, 2013). In 1902, A.B Graham of Ohio, started the first 4-H club through promotion of vocational agriculture in afterschool clubs (Council, 2013). Graham’s clubs included boys and girls as members, who elected officers, held meetings, kept records of their actions, and completed projects together (Council, 2014). As word spread of Graham’s ‘agriculture club’, other clubs began to organize in neighboring Ohio counties. By the end of 1904,
thirteen clubs were holding regular meetings; these meetings were led by school superintendents and took place after youth finished class for the day.

In 1904 Will B. Otwell of Illinois began offering a one dollar prize for the best corn yields gained from corn seeds he provided. The contest had an overwhelming response and soon the top prize earned by winners were in the form of farm equipment such as plows and cultivators (Council, 2014). The practice of corn contests expanded during 1904 to Iowa where youth exhibits and projects were showcased at state corn contests. Soon this practice began to spread to several states. Superintendent leaders figured out that the more they involved youth in programs and new farm practices, the more their parents would be interested and involved. (Council, 2014).

In 1905, Jasper L. McBrien of Nebraska, expanded corn-growing projects to include sewing and baking projects, leading to the creation of the Nebraska Boys’ Agricultural Association and Nebraska Girls’ Domestic Science Association (Orr, n.d.). The purpose statements of McBrien’s boys and girls associations laid a path for the development of future programs through “development of hand, head and heart.” (Wessel, 1982, p. 7).

As time went on, other states were duplicated the work being done in Ohio and Illinois where work continued to expand and youth were celebrated for their efforts. Between 1907 and 1908, corn clubs had spread throughout the southern part of the United States. In 1909, Oscar B. Martin worked with the federal government, land grant colleges, and local officials to secure agreements of state agriculture agents/leaders for
the corn clubs. With those agreements, the first Extension agent positions were created in the southern part of the U.S (Council, 2014).

A shift of program emphasis happened in 1910 when more emphasis was put on girls’ clubs. Previously, these clubs received less attention compared to boys clubs which focused on ways to improve agriculture techniques. In southern states, girls clubs focused on tomato canning. It was at this point that Seaman A. Knapp discovered these clubs were teaching girls to develop self-confidence and responsibility, not just how to can and sew (Wessel, 1982). Wessel states the USDA provided project materials, for both boys and girls clubs, which were reached youth all across the southern United States.

By 1911, Seaman A. Knapp adapted the three leaf, 3-H clover idea. The clover symbol which started in Iowa in 1909, was converted by Knapp to a four leaf, 4-H clover when he moved to Washington DC. He gave the ‘corn club’ movement an emblem of representation. Nationwide, club enrollment continued to rise as time went on; by 1912 there were 73,000 boys and 23,000 girls participating (Wessel, 1982, p.19). Due to large enrollments and the need to keep track of crops and club work, Bradford Knapp worked to create a system for tracking results. His work formalized programs at county, state, and federal levels and helped generalize the creating of Cooperative Extension Services in 1914 (Wessel, 1982).

The passing of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, under the USDA, allowed 4-H to become a national organization through Cooperative Extension. After becoming a national organization, official 4-H clubs started organizing across the country. Today, 4-H reaches over six million youth in all 3,007 counties in the United States (Council,
2015). 4-H is focused on the personal growth of its members by helping build skills that will help them throughout their life by offering opportunities in communication, career development, animal science, leadership, healthy living, and science to youth, who range in age from eight to eighteen years old (Council, 2013).

In 2013, the Nebraska 4-H program reached about 140,000 youth (Extension, 2013). Participants are between the ages of eight and eighteen, according to their age on January 1 of every year. Traditional 4-H programming is a group of three to five youth from different families that meet regularly with adults for long term educational experiences often associated with rural communities (USDA, 2011). The traditional clubs are run by volunteers. Youth members hold officer positions, meet regularly, and participate in organized projects focusing on citizenship, healthy living, science, and mentoring (USDA, 2011; Council, 2015). In 2013, over 32,000 Nebraska youth participated in traditional 4-H clubs and almost 65,000 youth participated in 4-H programs through afterschool 4-H school programs (Extension, 2013). Due to cultural and population shifts, 4-H programming continues to change and expand. 4-H is reaching youth through quality afterschool programs. Dr. Richard Lerner’s research on traditional 4-H clubs shows the impact of 4-H club programming; what is yet to be discovered is if participants in afterschool programs are gaining the same experiential and life skills as those who participate in traditional 4-H clubs.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine which life skills youth participants reported to have in traditional 4-H and afterschool 4-H programs respectively. A
quantitative research design was used to collect survey data on the experiential and life
skill outcomes of Nebraska 4-H youth.

Key Terms

Afterschool Time

The Partnership for After School Education defines afterschool as, “…safe spaces
that support healthy, social and emotional development, teach crucial 21st Century skills,
and promote academic success.” (P.A.S.E, 2015, para. 1). In Nebraska, during the
2013/2014 school year, 17,120 youth were served by 21st Century Community Learning
Centers (21CCLC) through over 100 sites (NDE, 2015). Typically youth are engaged in
programs during the critical hours of 3 and 6 p.m., which means youth have a safe,
educational, and engaging environment to partake in while their parents or families are at
work. Quality afterschool programs provide safe spaces for youth to build positive
relationships with other youth and adults and provide input for the lessons of the
programs (Kunz, Chumney, Sparr, Sheridan, 2008). For the context of this thesis, quality
afterschool time referred to the time you spent in a safe, informal educational
environment outside of formal education hours.

Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development (PYD) assumes that if youth have strong partnerships
with adults and others in their social world, they will be able to have a future where they
can make positive contributions to themselves, family members, communities, and
society as a whole that are sustained over time (Lerner, Theokas Almerigi, & Lerner,
2005). According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services,
positive youth development is defined as: “an approach toward all youth that builds on their assets and their potential and helps counter the problems that may affect them.” (USDHHS, 2002, para. 3). This thesis study focused on the context of PYD, specifically on the partnerships youth are building with adults and their interactions in afterschool 4-H and traditional 4-H programs.

Experiential Learning

Dr. Patricia Hendricks (1998) defines skills as an ability learned to do something well. When related to the use of knowledge and skills it simply means being able to use what you know. Experiential learning is a vital part to learning in 4-H. Many skills taught through 4-H are experiential skills, which are the skills youth learn through experiences and practice until the skills are a force of habit (Hendricks, 1998). Through over 150 4-H projects, Nebraska youth learn skills in: nutrition for animals and humans, fitness, care of clothing, first aid, and many more (Nebraska, 2013). In this thesis, experiential skills are referred to as the hands-on skills that Nebraska youth are gaining through afterschool and traditional 4-H programs.

Life Skills

According to Hendricks, life skills are tools used to apply information learned from real life experiences (Hendricks, 1998). Youth gain the knowledge and use of critical thinking, communication, public speaking, respect, problem solving, management of challenges, and many other life skills through 4-H programs (4-H, 2013). In this study, life skills are referred to as the sets of skills youth are gaining through afterschool 4-H
programs and traditional 4-H club experiences. Specifically, they are decision-making, communication, goal setting, critical thinking, and problem solving.

**Significance of Study**

Since the beginning, 4-H youth development professionals have been “creating opportunities for youth to learn about the natural world, technology, themselves, and communities.” (Kress, 2006). Whether 4-H programs are taught in the traditional rural setting or in afterschool programs, the goal of 4-H is to enhance the lives of youth in a positive way by developing life skills. Limited research has been done to examine whether youth participating in traditional clubs and afterschool programs learn similar life skills. The existing literature has documented youth experiences of life skill development through traditional programs, but revealed limited information in afterschool programs. The lack of research in afterschool 4-H programs is the rationale for this study. This study will be important to 4-H Extension faculty and staff that develop, deliver, and implement 4-H programs in the traditional and afterschool setting.

**Knowing Thy-Self**

The framework of this study is based on the researcher’s experiences. Until 2013, the researcher had little experience with afterschool 4-H programs through her graduate assistantship. The researcher’s experience up to 2013 had been in the traditional 4-H club setting as a participant herself, and as an Extension Program Intern. From her own experience, the researcher noticed the differences in the programing and the youth involved. The researcher has a bias, based off her experiences and observations that participation in traditional 4-H programs leads to youth learning more life skills than
those who participate in afterschool 4-H programs. This study stems from the noticed
differences between the two programs.

**Delimitation**

The delimitation of this study is of interest to the researcher professionally. The
boundaries of the current study include recruiting participants involved in traditional 4-H
clubs and afterschool 4-H programs within the Northeast region of Nebraska.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development is defined as: “an approach toward all youth that builds on their assets and their potential and helps counter the problems that may affect them.” (USDHHS, 2002, para. 3). Positive youth development (PYD) is the “individual and environmental characteristics that promote and enhance youth’s development toward becoming successful adults.” (Villarruel, Borden, Perkins, 2001, p. 45). PYD’s main focus is youth building positive partnerships with caring adults in their social world and work towards a future where they can contribute to their families, community and society as a whole (Lerner, Theokas Almerigi, & Lerner, 2005).

PYD views youth to be a resource of development instead of a problem to be managed (Lerner, Theokas Almerigi, & Lerner, 2005). Further findings of the Tufts study specifically identified aspects of PYD, specifically the ‘Five Cs of Positive Youth Development’. The Five Cs of Positive Youth Development are defined as: “Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring”, with a sixth C of Contribution being added by researchers when the study research showed those who exhibit the Five Cs almost always display ‘Contribution’ as well (Lerner, Lerner, & Phelps, 2008). The Five Cs of PYD aid in understanding goals and outcomes of community programs working to enhance youth development. Villarruel, Perkins, & Borden (2003, p.50) define the Five Cs of PYD as “Competence in academics, social, emotional, and vocational areas, confidence in who one is becoming (identity),
connection to self and others, character that comes from positive values, integrity, and a strong sense of morals, and caring and compassion.” The Five Cs were also heavily studied by Karen Pittman through her work with The Forum for Youth Investment. Pittman and colleagues defined the Five Cs as: confidence, character, connection, competence, and contribution (Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2003).

Theories of Positive Youth Development

Eight Essential Elements

The theoretical model followed and supported by the USDA and 4-H Headquarters is The Eight Essential Elements. 4-H supports PYD through providing youth chances to get involved in many areas and develop to their highest potential. The Eight Essential Elements are as follows:

1.) Positive relations with caring adults
2.) Opportunities for self-determination
3.) An inclusive environment
4.) Opportunities to value and practice service for others
5.) A safe environment for learning and growing
6.) Opportunities for mastery
7.) Engagement in learning
8.) Opportunities to see oneself as an active participant in the future.

(USDA, 2014)

The Essential Elements were created in 1999 by a group of evaluators forming the National 4-H Impact Design Implementation Team. Evaluators were challenged to
ascertain the vital elements of a 4-H experience. Once the Elements were identified, Cathann Kress divided them into four key concept areas (Martz, J., Mincemoyer, C., McNeely, N. N., et al., 2009). The Essential Elements are typically split into the four concept areas: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. Each concept area has at least one of the Elements under it. Belonging supports the three Elements of: positive relationships with a caring adult, an inclusive environment, and a safe environment. The area of mastery supports engagement in learning and opportunity for mastery. The concept of independence has the two elements: opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future and opportunity for self-determination. Generosity supports only one element: opportunity to value and practice service for others (Martz, J., Mincemoyer, C., McNeely, N. N., et al., 2009).

Astroth and Haynes (2002) reported that 4-H clubs were designed to include the eight Essential Elements of positive youth development. The eight Elements helped prepare youth for entering the next stage of development by allowing them to be more prepared for their future (Astroth & Haynes, 2002). The Essential Elements prepare youth by aiding them in sustaining youth/adult relationships and developing a mastery of skills to use throughout life (USDA, 2014).

40 Developmental Assets

In 1990 the Search Institute created a list of 40 Developmental Assets which identify “a set of skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults.” (Search Institute, 2014, para.1). The 40 Developmental Assets are all important to developing youth. Benson
(2006) describes the assets as “building blocks” (p. 23) which empower families, schools, congregations, communities, youth organizations, youth, and others to bond over a common goal of developing healthy adolescents. The 40 Developmental Assets are divided into two groups of twenty assets: external and internal. External assets are those which focus on environmental factors (community, family, neighborhood, school) of development. Internal assets focus on development of skills, competencies, and commitments (achievement, honesty, integrity, responsibility) which focus on positive outcomes of development. Each set of assets is then broken down further into four categories (Benson, 2006).

The average number of assets youth possess is 18.6, which is just less than half of the total assets (Benson, 2006). Benson’s (2006) research suggest that many youth don’t have enough assets. His research suggests the more assets youth have, the less chance they have to participate in risky behaviors. Benson’s research shows youth with zero to ten assets fall into the at-risk of development area, youth with 11 to 20 assets fall into the vulnerable development area, youth with 21 to 30 assets into the adequate development area, and youth who have 31 to 40 assets into the optimal development area. Ideally, youth would fall into the optimal development stage (Benson, 2006) and decrease the risk of partaking in risky behaviors. This relationship between the developmental assets and the positive outcomes of youth has been highly reliable (Scales, Benson, & Leffert, 2000). Part of possessing at least 18 of the Developmental Assets enables youth to enhance their growth and development. The following chart shows alignment of the 40 Developmental Assets with the C’s of Positive Youth Development the Eight Essential Elements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C of Positive Youth Development (Lerner, et al., 2008; Pittman et al., 2003)</th>
<th>40 Developmental Assets (Search, 1990)</th>
<th>4-H 8 Essential Elements (USDA, 2014)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Homework, Planning, Decision Making, Interpersonal Competence, Cultural Competence</td>
<td>Opportunity for Mastery Engagement in Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Community Values Youth, Safety, High Expectations, Creative Activities, Achievement Motivation, Personal Power</td>
<td>Safe Emotional and Physical Environment Opportunity for Self Determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Family Support, Positive Family Communication, Other Adult Relations, Caring Neighborhood, Parental Involvement in School, Family Boundaries, School Boundaries, Neighborhood Boundaries, Adult Role Models, Time at Home</td>
<td>In Inclusive Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Positive Peer Influence, Bonding to School, Reading for Pleasure, Equality &amp; Social Justice, Integrity, Honesty, Responsibility, Restraint, Resistance Skills, Peaceful Conflict Resolution, Self Esteem, Sense of Purpose, Positive View of Personal Future</td>
<td>Positive Relationship with Caring Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Caring School Climate, Caring School Climate</td>
<td>Opportunity to Value and Practice Service to Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>Youth as Resources, Service to Others, Youth Programs, Religious Community, School Engagement</td>
<td>Opportunity to see oneself as an Active Participant in the Future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Comparison of 40 Developmental Assets to the 6 Cs of Positive Youth Development and 4-H’s 8 Essential Elements. (Lerner, Lerner, & Phelps, 2008) (Benson, 2006) (USDA, 2014)
As the comparison chart shows, the 40 Developmental Assets can be easily broken into the categories of the 5 Cs, plus contribution, of PYD and easily transferred into the Eight Essential Elements. The overlap of Developmental Assets and Cs of PYD allow youth development professionals to “use either list with confidence.” while working with youth (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004). The combination of the Developmental Assets, the Cs of PYD, and the Essential Elements shows the strength and positive impact of youth development. These three aspects of PYD are theories that lead to the guiding principles of 4-H programs.

According to Bartly et al. (2012), 4-H programs have four principles which guide the work of its programs. The four principles are: focus on PYD, focus on partnerships, focus on intentional learning experiences, and focus on developing youth potential. A focus of PYD allows 4-H to create content supporting the Essential Elements of high quality PYD, which helps youth see themselves as unique learners who control their future and enhance themselves through the development of the Five Cs.

4-H focuses on two main types of partnerships. The first is between the government entities, land grant universities, and state and local governments that allow 4-H programs to operate. The second partnership focus is connecting youth to caring adults, staff, and volunteers who can help youth through their developmental stages in positive ways. By getting the community involved to support and challenge youth, 4-H has a focus of intentional learning experiences. Through formal and informal learning environments, 4-H boosts the development of life skills and meets the needs and interests of youth and adults. A final focus of developing youth potential allows 4-H to see youth
as people being developed to their highest potential, not just one area of their development (Bartly, C., Martz, J., Morris, C., Rennekamp, R., Sawnson, D., Lauxman, L., 2012).

**Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning (EL) is a learning model used in 4-H, and many other programs. This learning approach happens when youth participate in activities, are able to reflect on the activity, determine why the activity was important, what they need to remember, and how to use the newly learned information to help with future activities. It is a hands-on learning approach to aid in the development of life skills and new areas of learning. EL creates an environment where learners “learn how to learn” (Kolb & Kolb, 2009, p.297). Simply doing an activity with youth does not create an EL environment. Reflections of the activity experience and finding ways to apply the lessons in future activities creates the EL. This method of learning is often referred to as “learn by doing” approach (USDA, 2014).
Originally created by Kolb, the EL model (above in Figure 2) shows the learning experience. EL is a cyclical process of learning where learners experience all four areas of the process. Learners are able to experience, reflect, think, and act on a topic or experience and gain suggestions to guide actions in new experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2009).

More recent models of EL models show five steps to the learning process (see Figure 3 below). The five steps of the EL model can be broken into a three steps of: Do, Reflect, and Apply (Norman & Jordan, 2006). The Do area is the first step of the EL model, experience. Youth have the opportunity to experience, or do, a new activity or skill. Next, youth move into the Reflect area through the sharing and processing aspects of the EL model. Through sharing what they completed during the activity, youth are able to explore what they learned and understand their performance of the activity. Finally, through Apply, youth use the steps of generalization and application of the EL model to
explain to others what they accomplished and how they can apply what they learned to future life experiences (USDA, 2014).

The Experiential Learning model is a guiding factor in 4-H programs. 4-H strives to incorporate the five steps of the EL model through the Do, Reflect, and Apply principles in all programs, curriculums, and lessons. This ensures youth have the opportunity to learn, grow, and develop life skills.

**4-H Life Skill Development**

4-H programs everywhere seek to enhance the growth of life skills in all participants. A focus of 4-H is to incorporate healthy and productive life skills into its programs, to benefit the youth and communities involved (Norman & Jordan, 2006).

Through Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Patricia Hendricks developed the Targeting Life Skills Model (TLS) (Figure 4 below). The TLS model is aimed to be all-encompassing of life skills. The generic language used in the model
ensures the ease of incorporating of life skills into developing curriculums. The model’s main purpose is to simplify the management of life skill development with the developmental stage of curriculum participants (Hendricks, 1998). The TLS model categorizes essential life skills into four main categories of Head, Heart, Health, and Hands. Each main H category is divided into two sub categories of skills which relate to the 4-H Pledge (Norman & Jordan, 2006). Each of the sub categories are divided into specific skills (See Figure 4). Originally developed to help Extension professionals develop programs for youth, the model can be easily applied to many different programming forms. (Outreach, 2014).

Figure 4: The Targeting Life Skills Model (Hendricks, 1998)
A similar life skill model, created by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2010, reports a “growing recognition of and evidence for the role of psychosocial and interpersonal skills in the development of young people, form their earliest years through childhood, adolescence, and into young adulthood…” (Hesbin, 2014). The WHO model focuses on four main areas of development: healthy, mental, emotional, and physical. Each area contains a list of life skills which relate to the overall topic.

![World Health Organization Life Skill Model](Hesbin, 2014)

When comparing the World Health Organization Life Skill model to the Targeting Life Skills model, it is easy to see the importance of specific life skills through the overlap of the life skill from each model. Out of 34 total life skill items from the TLS
and WHO models, there is a difference of only four life skill qualities. The following chart shows the breakdown of similarities and differences between the TLS and the WHO life skill models:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Head (TLS)-Physical (WHO)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to Learn</td>
<td>Service Learning (TLS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning/Organizing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wise use of Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record Keeping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heart (TLS)-Emotional (WHO)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting Differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing Relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health (TLS)-Health (WHO)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>Personal Safety (TLS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Discipline</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy Lifestyle Choices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress Management</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Disease Prevention</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hands (TLS)-Physical (WHO)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service/Volunteering</td>
<td>Responsible Citizenship (TLS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Contribution to Group Efforts (TLS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketable Skills</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Similarities & Differences between the TLS and WHO life skills models
4-H Life Skill Development

A study conducted by Diem (2001), focused on the way 4-H school enrichment programs were offered; the author found 4-H clubs have proven to help youth develop life skills. Participation in 4-H clubs has shown youth are more likely to learn self-confidence, competence in social skills, and take on leadership roles in their community (Astroth & Haynes, 2002). Through their study of Montana students and their out of school time activities, Astroth & Haynes (2002) found 4-H youth are also less likely to steal, smoke, damage property, and ride in a vehicle with someone who has been drinking. There have been many studies conducted on the development of life skills of youth through specific 4-H projects and activities. Carol Knowlton Ward (1996) surveyed New Jersey 4-H youth who were involved in swine projects. Ward used a five point Likert scale to determine the effect the 4-H swine project had on the youth’s development of life skills. Fifty-two youth participants, who had been in 4-H for an average of 8.4 years, contributed to the study. Findings showed a positive association between the 4-H animal science projects and the development of life skills; for example showing animals and judging events related to improved communication skills and job interview skills (Ward, 1996). In a retrospective survey by Fitzpatrick, Gagne, Jones, Lobley, and Phleps (2005), the authors surveyed 63 4-H alumni and 43 adult 4-H volunteers to gather findings on the use of developed 4-H life skills. Findings revealed that over 75% of adults believed youth develop the skills of community service, decision making, record keeping, communication, making healthy choices, and learning job skills through their participation in 4-H programs. 4-H alumni participants reported the skills of accepting
people who are different, community service, making healthy choices, and learning job
skills were developed during their participating in 4-H (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2005). Life
skill development is an integral part of 4-H programs. Seever and Dormody (1995)
found life skills pertaining to leadership were common at the club level of 4-H
participation, but they were also highly demonstrated at the county and state levels.

Research shows how specific projects and participation in other 4-H programs can
promote the development of life skills. Asher (1983) stated that life skills are affected by
the types of activities and groups youth are involved in; background also play a part in
the types of activities in which youth were involved. Youth can learn, and use, life skills
to navigate stressful life events. In an study on stress management education by Hayes
and Eddy (1985), the authors discuss the importance of youth developing decision making
skills, clarification, and communication skills as necessary tools to help aid in youth’s
development and daily interactions. Ladewig and Thomas (1987) found the development
of life skills greatly depends on the number of years youth participate in 4-H. Participants
who joined at an early age tended to report more satisfaction with challenges and
responsibilities they gained during their 4-H involvement.

4-H Study of Positive Youth Development

In a study by Tufts University, supported by National 4-H Council through
funds from Phillip Morris USA, an Altria Company (Lerner, Lerner, & Phelps, 2008),
researchers found that 4-H is a strong program with strong leadership in providing
positive youth development (Lerner & Lerner, 2013). Dr. Richard Lerner, lead researcher
of the Tufts University study, and his colleagues began the longitudinal, sequentially
designed research study in 2002 and continued to repeat the study for the next eight years. Over 7,000 participants were chosen based on their participation in 4-H programs and out of school time programs that mirrored 4-H. The study was very specific in that it surveyed youth who were enrolled in traditional 4-H programs and youth who were not enrolled in traditional 4-H programs. The group of traditional 4-H participants were used as the control group for this longitudinal study. Participants stemmed from forty-two different states, diverse backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities; were of both genders, and participated in 4-H for at least one wave of the study. Nearly 3,000 participants completed two or more years of the study. Data was collected through a series of questionnaires for parents and youth and school and government officials. Questionnaires were gathered in waves with one wave happening every year. The questionnaires measured career goals in the areas of science, technology and engineering; school achievement and engagement; civic engagement of youth, sexual engagement, involvement in risky behaviors such as smoking and drinking, and participation in exercise and healthy eating habits (Lerner & Lerner, 2013).

This longitudinal study followed youth from grade five to grade 12 over eight years. The first wave of questionnaires were delivered to youth in the fifth grade during the 2002-2003 school year. Youth were then asked to complete the questionnaire every year for eight years with the last questionnaire being completed during the youth’s 12th grade year.

The study showed participation in structured learning activities in out of school time, leadership experiences, and consistent adult mentoring is fundamental in helping
youth achieve success. Study findings showed youth involved in 4-H excel in the areas of contributing to their communities and civic duties, have higher academic achievement, and tend to make healthier life choices than youth who are not involved in 4-H programming. There were no significant differences found for involvement in risky behaviors between the two studied groups. Female youth were found to be ranked higher in the surveyed areas than male youth participants, with an advantage to females who were 4-H participants.

*Traditional 4-H Clubs*

*Impact:*

Tufts University began a longitudinal study of youth who participate in traditional 4-H programs. Findings suggest participation in traditional 4-H programs sets youth up for future success through the development of PYD aspects and life skills (Lerner & Lerner, 2013). The study by Tufts University shows how 4-H can play a vital role in the life of a youth. Traditional clubs provide a key aspect of PYD for youth. Youth enrolled in traditional 4-H programs are typically involved in 4-H clubs. Since the beginning of 4-H, clubs have been the traditional model of meeting for youth. Usually, a meeting of three to five youth and adult volunteers, clubs promote PYD, community engagement, and learning experiences which will enhance future quality of life. Youth can enroll in 4-H clubs at age eight and participate until they are 19 years old. Club members select officer positions such as: president, vice president, treasurer; to provide leadership for the club and club activities. Participants work together to complete projects, as a group and individually, to enter into 4-H fairs or other contests (USDA, 2011).
Participating in traditional clubs allows youth the opportunity to engage in long
term, positive adult relationships (Davis, 2013). These relationships allow youth to
develop both practical and life skills while completing projects in an individual or group
setting, civic engagement activities, volunteering in their communities, and working with
others. Not only are positive, adult-youth relationships being formed, but the whole
family is involved. In a study by Cornell Cooperative Extension, participants found 4-H
to be an integral part of their family dynamic. 4-H programs provide ways for parents to
be involved with their children and to strengthen intergenerational relationships
(Gregorie, 2004). Davis reiterates this finding by saying “4-H is something you do with
your child” (Davis, 2013, pg. 2, para 5). 4-H clubs are not just empowering youth, they
are strengthening the whole family through working together. With a heavy emphasis on
family activities it is no surprise to find out many adults who have youth in 4-H are 4-H
alumni themselves (Van Horn, Flanagan, & Thomson, 1998). Bringing the family
together allows for members to work alongside each other in a variety of activities.
Seevers and Dormody (1994) note 4-H participants have a higher predictability and
positive relationship between community involvement, participation in 4-H leadership
activities, and the development of life skills, in their study of leadership life skill
development. Ferrari, Hogue, and Scheer (2004) discuss the overall goal of 4-H is
promoting healthy development of children and advancing life skills. Including youth, at
a young age, in a positive learning experience helps youth build the groundwork for a
sense of self, mastery, and optimism for their futures (Ferrari, Hogue, & Scheer, 2004).
Content:

Astroth’s (1996) study of adult leadership styles in 4-H programs shows how 4-H is critical in helping youth learn life skills like decision-making, responsibility, service ethics, social and interpersonal skills, and speaking skills with the addition of developing practical and technical skills. However, do youth who have participated in the 4-H program feel they have gained these and other attributes? According to a 2003 article by Fox, Lodl, and Schroeder and 4-H alumni, the answer is yes. 4-H alumni reported that “4-H Club experience does affect the development of life skills.” (para. 23). Life skills, or the abilities people learn to help alumni be successful in life, are a starting foundation for 4-H programs (Fox, Schroeder, & Lodl, 2003). These life skills lead to the development of technical skills for the participants of 4-H. These technical skills ranged in areas from animal science to environmental education, with skills being described as ‘improving on mistakes’ and ‘cost comparisons’. The same study of 4-H alumni states involvement in 4-H clubs has the greatest influence on responsibility and leadership development of life and technical skills for participants of their study (Fox, Schroeder, & Lodl, 2003). 4-H clubs also work to provide participants the opportunity to learn about organization forming and decision-making groups though the ability to hold leadership positions. Leadership positions come in the form of elected officers and committee chairs within the club. Holding these positions allow youth to learn and apply many life skills such as communication and leadership (Van Horn, Flanagan, & Thomson, 1998). These skills show how 4-H youth are able to take responsibility for what they learn by taking part in the many projects that 4-H programs have to offer. Enfield (2001) describes this
responsibility as 4-Her’s being “self-directed learners” (p. 4). Allowing them to gain essential life skills which can help them in their current and future life endeavors (Enfield, 2001).

Approach

From the beginning, 4-H youth development programs have used a learn-by-doing method to engage youth in developing the skills and knowledge they need to become a beneficial contributor to society. The goal of this method of programming is to “encourage responsibility, community awareness, and character development in youth…” (Kinsey, 2013, p. 62). This is done through projects which allow 4-H youth to build and develop their skills through the years of their participation (Van Horn, Flanagan, & Thomson, 1998). Not only are 4-H programs and learn-by-doing methods encouraging awareness and character in youth, they are nurturing positive youth-adult relationship building as well as relationships with their peers (Kinsey, 2013). These relationships allow youth to focus on achieving their goals in both 4-H projects and life, with the knowledge of knowing they will have someone they can go to for help or confide in during development.

Afterschool 4-H Programs

Impact:

Between the hours of 3 and 6 p.m. during the academic school year can be the most exciting, yet scary hours for youth and their families. The hours from afterschool, until parents or families pick up their children, is the single biggest block of free time for a youth each day. Activities which occur in these hours have an enormous impact on the
development of youth in negative and positive ways (Astroth & Haynes, 2002).

According to the Afterschool Alliance there are about 8.4 million children who participate in afterschool programs in the United States, and another 18.5 million youth who would participate if the resources were available to them (Alliance, 2014).

Research by Lowe Vandell, Reisner, and Pierce on the outcomes of high quality afterschool programs for low-income students shows regular attendance to high-quality afterschool programs relates to higher gains in standardized testing scores. These high-quality programs also lead to a change in work habits and behavioral changes of youth who participate (Lowe Vandell, Reisner & Pierce, 2007). Quality afterschool programs have eight characteristics which provide youth with a place to build safe and supportive relationships and a positive environment. These eight characteristics are: 1. having prepared staff, 2. intentional programming for participants, 3. lessons that mirror the school day, 4. promoting different ways for youth to engage with each other, 5. and having strong partnerships with community organizations, 6. space that allows for youth to be safe and practice healthy activities, 7. continued youth participation, and 8. a continued process for evaluation and growth (Afterschool, 2011).

Two key elements of quality afterschool hours are having administrative and programmatic specific goals for the program. Administrative goals include ensuring the safety of environments for youth to learn and connect with one another, spaces for self-reflection and understanding of learning, and organization of the program in general. When combined together, these goals provide safe spaces for youth to learn, develop, bond, and encourage repeat attendance. Programmatic goals are more focused on the
activities of the program, involvement of families, communities, and community partners, mentoring, and greater opportunities for participation. Youth voice plays a key part in program goals in selection of activities and lessons. Together administrative and programmatic goals work to build quality afterschool programs for youth to attend (Kunz, Chumney, Sparr, Sheridan, 2008). The youth who participate in afterschool activities and programs have been found to be less likely to be involved in at-risk activities and behaviors when compared to those who are not involved in afterschool activities (Astroth & Haynes, 2002).

Youth who attend afterschool time activities on a weekly basis tend to score higher on positive youth development and contributions scales (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). According to the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S Department of Justice (1998), youth who are unsupervised during the afterschool hours are more likely to suffer from stress, have low grades, experiment with sex and other substances, be victim of violent crimes, and be at a higher risk of truancy. Afterschool programs are a way to engage youth in academic settings and activities while keeping them off the streets and away from possible dangerous situations, such as alcohol use, drug use, violence, and other behaviors (Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs, 2002).

Young people benefit from time when they are engaged in structured activities where they have positive interactions with adults and peers (Durlak, Weissberg, & Collaborative for Academic, 2007). Vandell (2014, p. 2) states, “more time spent expanding learning in afterschool equal greater benefits for youth.” Opportunities to attend afterschool programs lead to higher GPA, increased attendance, and better work.
habits. Only 5% of learning actually takes place in the classroom during the lifespan of a person. This means that 95% of learning is done in the out-of-school settings like organized programs, hobbies, and other sources (Worker & Mahacek, 2013).

Recent research of Massachusetts afterschool programs show afterschool programs can affect youth positively in many ways like motivation, teamwork, social competence, behavior, leadership skills, and success expectations (Miller & NOIST, 2005). These findings are reiterated by Durlak, Weissberg, & the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2007) which found that afterschool programs improve three major areas for youth. Including feelings, attitudes, and indicators of behavioral adjustment and school performance. Specifically, the authors found increases in feelings of self-confidence, self-esteem, bonding to school, social behaviors, grades, and test scores. The authors reported, “…after-school programs produced multiple benefits that pertain to youth’s personal, social, and academic life.” (Durlak, Weissberg, & CASEL, 2007, p. 7). One of these benefits is the connection participants are able to make between their “values, attitudes, and norms of students’ cultural communities with those of the school culture” (Miller, 2003, p. 8-9). By making these connections, youth are able to see the importance of doing well in all areas of their life.

Ferrari and Turner (2006) discussed how afterschool programming contributed to academic success by increasing youth engagement in learning through their study of youth motivation for joining and continuing participation in 4-H programs. 4-H youth development programs exemplify the role of out-of-school time by engaging youth to reach their highest potential (Worker & Mahacek, 2013). Many youth have participated
in afterschool 4-H activities since the early 1900’s (Van Horn, Flanagan, & Thomson, 1998).

In a thesis by Simmons (2008, pg. 14), school enrichment is defined as: “a program in which youth development professionals, usually 4-H Extension assistants and associates, deliver materials, often science curriculum, to elementary and middle school students in classrooms.” Extension educators devote time and effort to school enrichment and afterschool programs because they are able to reach a wide, diverse audience and help develop their formal education experiences (Diem, 2001). Even though 4-H enrichment activities happen during the school day, and afterschool activities occur once the school day ends, the reason given by Diem still stands.

4-H Educators are working collaboratively with community-based organizations and schools to address community needs (Council, 2004). Along with developing formal education experiences, Educators work to develop life skills, a higher sense of self-worth, expressions of emotions, problem solving, and competence to work with others (Junge, Manglallan, & Raskauskas, 2003). Afterschool 4-H programs are more uniform for larger groups of youth than a traditional project club (Van Horn, Flanagan, & Thomson, 1998). These programs are usually based on 4-H curriculums, which emphasize experiential learning. The approach allows youth to learn concepts and how to apply them to their real life situations (Junge, Manglallan, & Raskauskas, 2003). Afterschool 4-H programs are teaching youth to learn new concepts they can quickly apply to meet their developmental needs. Programs developed for afterschool 4-H programs, as well as all 4-H programs, are researched based, allowing participants to learn the most recent knowledge available.
The recent knowledge base allows youth, and other participants, to meet their basic needs. This allows them to focus on other more important aspects of their school day (Ferrari, Linville Metzger, & Valentine, 2003).

School days are filled for students with simply class and homework; due to standardized testing during the school day, providing recreational activities, arts, and enrichment activities in the afterschool setting. Through these activities, youth are able to nurture positive interpersonal relationships with their peers. (Lowe Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce, 2007). Through positive self-identity, social competence, connections between peers and other generations, and wanting to help others, the main principles of PYD are still evident in afterschool 4-H programs (Astroth & Haynes, 2002). Quality afterschool programs allow youth to connect with peers in a safe, fun, and relaxing environment away from the stress of the school day.

Approach:

Richard Sauer, former president of National 4-H Council, says 4-H is more diverse and in more places than many think (Walters, 1997). The diversity discussed by Sauer, refers to the various forms of 4-H programs outside of the traditional club setting. These diverse programs includes school enrichment programs, afterschool 4-H programs, and programs being conducted in the inner cities. The activities of afterschool 4-H programs are described as “What goes on in these programs bears almost no resemblance to traditional 4-H.” (Walters, 1997, para. 21). Many afterschool 4-H programs are designed to enhance academic learning and career development. STEM, one particular area of interest for afterschool and 4-H programs, works to enhance students’ learning of
science, technology, engineering, and math skills. All of which are aspects of traditional 4-H programming, but they are presented and taught differently in the afterschool setting. Afterschool 4-H programs have a goal of reaching youth through different delivery methods than are traditionally taught in the classroom (Diem, 2001). Afterschool 4-H programs are taught in a more experiential learning style, where youth are active in the discovery and learning process.

School programs allow Extension professionals to reach more youth, including those with physical and other learning disabilities, and let them feel welcome to participate in 4-H programs (Van Horn, Flanagan, & Thomson, 1999). For example, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs can be taught through robotics activities where youth build, program, and run their robots against others participant’s creations. The experiential learn-by-doing approach of 4-H provides youth a higher retention rate of information than those who sit and listen to lectures (Van Horn, Flanagan, & Thomson, 1999). Afterschool 4-H allows youth to look at regular academic lessons in a new way, which can enhance their learning opportunities, both academically and outside of school.

With a new view on regular academic lessons, youth are more receptive to learning and being engaged in activities. This afterschool engagement allows for youth to create relationships with staff members. Positive relationships, which allow for trust building, help youth avoid risky behaviors, avoid and/or recover from negative experiences, and have an encouraging reminder to engage in positive experiences (Kahne, Nagaoka, Brown, O’Brien, Quinn, & Thiede, 2001).
Summary

Few studies report the life skill development on youth participants in afterschool settings. Even fewer studies examine the differences in experiences and outcomes of traditional 4-H participants and 4-H afterschool participants. This study will look at the life skill development and experiences youth in afterschool 4-H and traditional 4-H programs are attaining.

The Purposes and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to examine which of the life skills of critical thinking, decision making, communication, goal setting and problem solving youth participants possessed in traditional 4-H and afterschool 4-H programs respectively. The study asked the following research question: Which of these life skills did youth participants in both afterschool and traditional 4-H programs report at the end of programming? How would program directors or 4-H Extension Educators explain youth acquisition of life skills in the 4-H programs?
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Study Design:

The focus of this study is on the development of life skills among youth who participated in traditional 4-H club and in afterschool 4-H programs in Nebraska. The researcher used a quantitative survey design to assess which life skills youth attained by participating in traditional 4-H and afterschool 4-H programs in the state of Nebraska.

Creswell defines the quantitative study approach as when researchers use a post-positivist claim of developing knowledge. The post-positivist approach is conducted through experiments or surveys that yield statistical data (Creswell, 2003). Hoy (2010) describes qualitative research as an understanding of social and human behavior and why it happens. The researcher of this thesis used a quantitative design to assess the presence of five life skills of 4-H participants. Creswell and Clark (2007) share that a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods provide a better understanding of the research question than each method could do individually. Creswell (2003) also states that collecting various forms of data give the best understanding of research problems. Although it was ideal to conduct a study with a mixed method design, it was beyond this study in terms of time constraints and other resources. However, the researcher used informal interviews with Extension Educators and program directors for checking the relevance of the statistical results of this study, and in an effort to enhance the validity in an the understanding of the findings.

Using a post-survey design, youth self-reported survey gathered data on how they believed they exhibited the measured life skills. This design allowed the researcher to
answer her research question of which life skills youth participants, in both afterschool and traditional 4-H clubs, reported at the end of programs.

**Participants**

Participants of the study were youth who participated in traditional 4-H clubs and/or afterschool 4-H programs in the Northeast Nebraska Extension district; youth participants were between the ages of 10-14 years of old. Participants of traditional 4-H programs and afterschool 4-H programs were chosen from youth who live in rural and urban areas of the Northeast part of Nebraska. Youth were from five Nebraska counties: Antelope, Cuming, Madison, Platte, and Thurston. The counties are in close geographic proximity to each other. The following describes the population characteristics of the five surveyed counties. Based on 2013 U.S. Census population estimates total population for the five surveyed counties is 90,130 people (2015). Two of the five counties have a city population of 10,000-49,999. While three of the counties have city population of less than 10,000 (Kids Count, 2014). An average of 46.9% of the total population of youth is between the ages of 10 and 17 years old based on data from 2008-2013. Sixty-seven and a half percent of youth population is of White Not Hispanic Ethnicity based on 2013 population estimates. Fifteen percent of the youth population is of Hispanic Ethnicity based on 2013 population estimates. Race demographics for participating counties are as follows: one percent Black/African American, 15 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native, less than one percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and two and half percent are of two or more races based on 2013 population estimates. An average of 21.3 percent of youth under the age of 17 are in poverty based on 2008-2012 census data. An average of 38.5
percent are enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP programs based on 2013 Department of Health and Human Services data. Over 51% of the youth population qualify for free and reduced lunches based on the Nebraska Department of Education 2012-2013 school year (Kids Count, 2014). Average high school graduation rate of the five counties is 88.3%. The average median income of the five counties is $46,039 compared to the state of Nebraska median income of $51,672 based off of 2013 population estimates (US Census Bureau, 2015).

The total number of Nebraska youth surveyed was 89 youth; 19 (%) percent from afterschool 4-H programs and 81 (%) percent from traditional 4-H programs. Participants were primarily female with 67 (%) percent and 33 (%) percent male. Youth participants were recruited through a collaboration between Nebraska Extension county Educators and the primary researcher by contacting youth and attending afterschool 4-H programs. Youth participating in the study were of a variety of backgrounds, races, ethnicities, ages, and of both genders. Participants had varying amounts of exposure to 4-H programs, years of participation, and a variety of ways to be involved in 4-H programs. The detailed sample description and recruitment is presented below.

*Traditional Program Participant Description*

Eighty-three percent of traditional participants have been enrolled in 4-H programs for three or more years (60 youth); 14 percent of youth for at least two years (10 youth); and three percent of youth have been in 4-H for one year (2 youth). Thirty-three percent of traditional participants experience 4-H at times of one hour or less (24 youth), 60 percent of youth have between one and three hours of 4-H programs at one
time (43 youth), and six percent of youth reported three or more hours of exposure in one sitting (4 youth). Involvement of traditional 4-H youth was high in club settings with 90 percent participation (65 youth), local fairs and events with 86 percent participation (62 youth), working on projects at home with 84 percent participation (61 youth), and community service projects 58 percent participation (42 youth). Other reported areas for traditional participants was afterschool with 11 percent participation (8 youth) and in school enrichment programs through nine percent participation (7 youth). See table 1 below:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposure of Traditional 4-H Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years in 4-H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours of Exposure (one sitting)</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1 hour</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 hours</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ hours</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>98.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clubs</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>90.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camps</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afterschool</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local fairs &amp; Events</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>86.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service Projects</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects at home</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth ranged in age from 10 to 14 years and range in school from grade 4 to grade 9. Seventy-two participants were female (52 youth) and 28 participants were male.
(20 youth). Surveyed youth were ninety-seven percent Caucasian (70 youth), one percent American Indian or Alaskan Native (1 youth), and one percent Asian (1 youth). Youth participants were 96 percent not Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (69 youth) and three percent Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (2 youth). Forty percent of participants reside on a farm (29 youth), 33 percent in a rural area (24 youth), and 24 percent reside in a town or city with a population between 10,000-50,000 people (17 youth). One percent reported living in a city with the population of more than 50,000 people (1 youth). See table 2 below:
Table 2

Demographics of Traditional 4-H Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
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<td>Totals</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>97.5</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>72.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>72</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>98.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Residency</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural (non farm, pop &lt;10,000)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town or City (pop. 10,000-50,000)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburb of City (population &gt; 50,000)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City (population &gt; 50,000)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>98.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Afterschool 4-H Participants

Afterschool 4-H participants were recruited through Extension Educators who conduct 4-H programs in the afterschool setting. Youth participants were enrolled in afterschool 4-H programs from two rural Northeast district counties: Platte and Madison. Surveys were completed during the weekly, regular afterschool program time the youth attend. The primary researcher attended the afterschool programs to administer the surveys to participants. Youth were given a piece of candy as a thank you gesture for taking the survey.

Afterschool Participant Description

Forty-seven percent of youth respondents of afterschool 4-H programs mainly reported this being their first year in 4-H (8 youth). Twelve percent of youth reported their participation in 4-H as two years in afterschool programs (2 youth) and 41 percent of youth reported being in afterschool 4-H programs for three or more years (7 youth). Eighteen percent of youth reported less than one hour of exposure to programs (3 youth), 76 percent of afterschool participants have between one and three hours at one time of exposure (13 youth), and six percent of youth reporting three or more hours of participation at one time (1 youth). All youth respondents reported their involvement in afterschool programs as their main involvement area of 4-H (100 percent). Other areas of involvement included: clubs, local fairs and events, and projects at home with 29 percent respectively (5 responses each); 18 percent participate in camps (3 youth), 12 percent in community service projects (2 youth), and six percent in school enrichment program exposure (1 youth). See table 3 below:
Respondents ranged in age from 10 to 14 years old and range in school from grade 3 to grade 8. The 53 percent of male respondents (9 youth) outnumbered the 47 percent of female respondents (8 youth). Surveys reported a 76 percent Caucasian (13 youth) participant group with 12 percent (2 youth) identifying as American Indian or Alaskan Native and twelve percent (2 youth) identifying as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Seventy percent of youth identified as not Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (12 youth) and twenty-four youth as Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (4 youth). Seventy-six percent of youth participants primarily live in a town or city (13 youth) with a population between 10,000-15,000 people, twelve percent in a rural area (2 youth), and six percent of youth reported living on a farm (1 youth). See table 4 below:
Table 4

Demographics of Afterschool 4-H Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>94.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residency</th>
<th>Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural (non farm, pop &lt;10,000)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town or City (pop. 10,000-50,000)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburb of City (population &gt; 50,000)</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City (population &gt; 50,000)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>94.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recruitment and Data Collection Procedures

Different recruitment strategies were used to solicit participants in traditional and afterschool 4-H programs. Permission to conduct this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Nebraska—Lincoln (UNL); see approval letter in Appendix A. The parental/guardian consent forms were waived for this study. When enrolling youth in 4-H programs parents/guardians give consent for their child/ren to participate in research studies related to youth experiences. Parents/guardians enrolling youth in afterschool programs sign similar consent forms which allow their youth to participate in programs facilitated by community partners; 4-H is usually a community partner to local afterschool programs. Participation in this study was completely voluntary and confidential. Only group data was reported.

Recruitment of participants was conducted through the primary researcher contacting Extension Educators in the Nebraska Northeast 4-H district. Connections with Educators were made with the help of the Northeast District 4-H Youth Coordinator. Once contact was made with county Educators, via email or phone calls, dates, times, and locations were established for research opportunities. The researcher recruited participants in elementary and middle schools in rural counties. Traditional 4-H club participants were recruited through contacting Educators for their recommendations of participants in their counties and events. Afterschool participants were recruited through Extension Educators and their connections to afterschool programs and program directors. The researcher could then attend these events to gather data.
Traditional 4-H Participants

Traditional 4-H participants were recruited through county Extension Educators. Surveys were completed at 4-H program end of year celebrations, by emailing the surveys to parent/guardians emails, where they had their children complete the surveys with paper and pencil or through the computer, and through traditional mail services.

Surveys file formats were converted from .pdf files to Microsoft Word documents for ease of completion by youth (see appendix B). Files were converted so the surveys could be completed on the computer, saved, and returned via email, or be printed out and completed with pencil and returned to the county Extension office. The surveys were sent to the parents of youth, who have 4-H participants between 10-14 years old, by the county Educator. The survey email was sent by the Educator to ensure delivery to inboxes, instead of spam folders, and for recognition of importance and credibility of the survey and information on the study. Youth were able to digitally complete the survey by highlighting or bolding their answer choices or print the survey off, completing it, and then scanning, emailing, or dropping the completed forms off at the county Extension office. Some youth participants received gift certificates to local businesses or were entered into prize drawings by county Extension staff for completing the survey.

Surveys sent by email to possible participant families were accompanied by the IRB approval form and directions on how to complete the survey (Appendix C). The email also contained an introduction of the researcher along with an introduction of the study and an explanation of the email attachments (Appendix D).
Afterschool Participants

Afterschool 4-H participants were recruited through afterschool programs in Madison and Platte counties in Nebraska. The participants were recruited through connections with Extension Educators and afterschool program directors. The afterschool programs were school based afterschool programs in both communities. School based afterschool programs are more academically focused compared to non-school based afterschool programs. School based programs give alignment of programming, maximize resources, continuation of services, share information to help all involved, and provide a range of learning activities (Utah Afterschool, n.d.).

The researcher was attended the afterschool programs during their regular meeting times to gather survey data.

Measurement

Measure of life skills

The measurement used for the survey in this study was the “Skills for Everyday Living” (see Appendix B) by Perkins-Mincemoyer, (Mincemoyer & Perkins, 2003). The “Skills for Everyday Living” instrument by Perkins & Mincemoyer is a 26 item survey on a 5 point Likert scale, which has five points from 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often), and 5 (always). The survey took participants of ages 10-14 approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. As a whole, the “Skills for Everyday Living” instrument has a Cronbach’s Alpha of .91 (Mincemoyer & Perkins, 2003). Subscales and related question examples in the survey are as follows:
Critical thinking. Exhibiting the skill of critical thinking shows youth are able to take in information, analyze it, and come to a conclusion based on facts. There are five questions dedicated to critical thinking on the measurement and are ranked on a five point Likert type scale. Examples are: “I compare ideas when thinking about a topic.” and “I am able to tell the best way of handling a problem.” This section of the measurement has a Cronbach’s Alpha of .72 (Mincemoyer & Perkins, 2003).

Decision making. Possessing decision making skills allow for ease when deciding the best options to choose in a situation. The measurement has five questions representing decision making skills and are measured on a five point Likert scale. Question examples are: “I think before making a choice.” and “I think of past choices when making new decisions.” Decision making has a Cronbach’s Alpha of .60 (Mincemoyer & Perkins, 2003).

Communication. Communication is a necessary practice to interacting with others. There are six questions dedicated to measuring communication skills and are measured on a five point Likert scale. Examples of questions are: “I try to keep eye contact.” and “I organize thoughts in my head before speaking.” The communication section of the measurement has a Cronbach’s Alpha of .70 (Mincemoyer & Perkins, 2003).

Goal setting. There are four questions on the measurement which measure goal setting on a five point Likert scale. Examples of questions are: “I look at the steps needed to achieve the goal.” and “I think about how and when I want to achieve it.” The Cronbach’s Alpha for the goal setting is .73 (Mincemoyer & Perkins, 2003).
Problem solving. Problem solving is represented by six questions on the measurement scored on a five point Likert scale. Examples of problem solving questions are: “I try to determine what caused it.” And I do what I have done in the past to solve it.” Problem solving has a Cronbach’s Alpha of .76 (Mincemoyer & Perkins, 2003).

A combination of these five life skills are important for youth to address challenges effectively and become successful. Youth participants were measured on the life skills of critical thinking, decision making, communication, goal setting, and problem solving. The five life skills were chosen by the researcher based on the “Skills for Everyday Living” instrument and its selection of life skills.

Results

The survey questionnaire showed Cronbach’s Alpha’s range from .51 to .83 among the two 4-H samples. Cronbach’s Alphas were .75 or higher, indicating a good level of reliability when it was used with the traditional 4-H sample. Group 2 (afterschool 4-H participant) results showed low Cronbach Alphas in decision making: .69; communication: .59, and goal setting: .51. These numbers suggest a low consistency and reliability of results. Communication and goal setting have very low reliability to the overall study results. Below is a table of the study’s Cronbach Alpha breakdown:
Table 5

*Cronbach Alphas*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Afterschool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making:</td>
<td>.797</td>
<td>.691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking:</td>
<td>.758</td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication:</td>
<td>.758</td>
<td>.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting:</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td>.516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving:</td>
<td>.769</td>
<td>.834</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographic and program variables

Participants also completed part of the 4-H Common Measures 8-12th grade Universal Item questionnaire developed by National 4-H Council, 4-H National Headquarters, and representatives from Land Grant Universities. The Common Measures were developed to identify common core outcomes for 4-H programs and provide a universal measure of those core outcomes (2012). Nine questions were taken from the 4-H Common Measure Universal Items to gather demographic data and the amount of exposure youth participants have to 4-H programs. The nine questions relate to the number of years in 4-H, the amount of hours youth spend in their 4-H programs, ways they participate in 4-H (fairs, clubs, community involvement), and demographic data (Appendix E).

Informal interview questions for program characteristics

One program director and two Extension Educators were asked questions detailing life skills taught in their programs in an informal interview. Extension Educators and the program director were asked five questions: about curriculum use, consistency of attendance and program exposure, focus of curriculum lessons, reasons for similarities or differences in participant groups, and subjects and objectives of lessons.
Data Analysis

The researcher was investigating which major life skills were reported by youth in traditional 4-H and afterschool 4-H programs. Data from the survey was analyzed using SPSS analytic software system. Descriptive analysis first yielded the results of means and frequencies of different life skills 4-H participants reported to possess. One set hypothesis were tested using independent t-test to examine group differences in life skills reported by youth. Specifically,

1. There would be no significant difference in critical thinking skills reported by youth participants in traditional 4-H and 4-H afterschool programs.

2. There would be no significant difference in decision making skills reported by youth participants in traditional 4-H and afterschool 4-H programs.

3. There would be no significant difference in communication skills reported by youth participants in traditional 4-H and afterschool 4-H programs.

4. There would be no significant difference in goal setting skills reported by youth participants in traditional 4-H and afterschool 4-H programs.

5. There would be no significant difference in problem solving skills reported by youth participants in traditional 4-H and afterschool 4-H programs.

Methods for Verification

This study investigated which life skills were reported by youth from traditional 4-H and afterschool 4-H programs. The researcher examined if the findings were relevant by checking with one 4-H afterschool program director and two Extension Educators.
The researcher also sought their insight about interpreting the results. For example, how such program characteristics as curriculum, subjects, and program objectives contributed to similarities and differences.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine which life skills youth participants reported to possess in traditional 4-H and afterschool 4-H programs respectively. The study examined the purpose by surveying Nebraska 4-H participants who participate in traditional and afterschool 4-H programs. A total survey response of 89 participants led to the results of this study. Because of low response numbers, all surveys were counted regardless of missing survey responses.

Results of Research Question

Which life skills did youth participants in both afterschool and traditional 4-H clubs have?

Youth participants were measured on the life skills of critical thinking, communication, decision making, goal setting, and problem solving. Participants self-reported their level of each life skill during post-program surveys. Scores for individual responses were determined by the sums of student responses. No surveys were omitted for missing data if participants chose not to answer every question. The majority of 4-H youth participants in both programs reported having each of the life skills being measured.

Decision making. Youth participants in traditional and afterschool 4-H programs reported they ‘often’ or ‘always’ have the skills needed to make the right decision. Participants in traditional 4-H programs felt they ‘rarely’ have the necessary skills to make decisions more often than afterschool 4-H participants. The following tables (tables 6 & 7) show response percentages to each decision making question.
**Table 6**

**Decision Making Response Percentage (%) - Afterschool 4-H**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question:</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I look for information to help me understand the problem.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think before making a choice.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider the risks of a choice before making a decision.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about all the information I have about the different choices.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think of past choices when making new decisions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=17. Not all participants chose to answer every question leading to responses of less than 100% total.

**Table 7**

**Decision Making Response Percentage (%) - Traditional 4-H**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question:</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I look for information to help me understand the problem.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think before making a choice.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider the risks of a choice before making a decision.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about all the information I have about the different choices.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think of past choices when making new decisions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=72. Not all participants chose to answer every question leading to responses of less than 100% total.

**Critical thinking.** Youth participants felt they could ‘often’ or ‘always’ use critical thinking skills to help find answers to problems with most answer falling into those
categories. Other responses fell heavily into the ‘sometimes’ category. Many youth of
both participant groups answered in the ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ categories for having the
necessary critical thinking skills. The following tables (tables 8 & 9) show the response
percentages for each critical thinking question.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Thinking Response Percentage (%) - Afterschool 4-H</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can easily express my thoughts on a problem.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually have more than one source of information before making a decision.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I compare ideas when thinking about a topic.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I keep my mind open to different ideas when planning to make a decision.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to tell the best way of handling a problem.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N=17. Not all participants chose to answer every question leading to responses of less than 100% total.
Table 9

Critical Thinking Response Percentage (%) - Traditional 4-H

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can easily express my thoughts on a problem.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually have more than one source of information before making a decision.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I compare ideas when thinking about a topic.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I keep my mind open to different ideas when planning to make a decision.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to tell the best way of handling a problem.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=72. Not all participants chose to answer every question leading to responses of less than 100% total.

Communication. Youth surveyed reported they ‘often’ have the necessary skills to communicate with others for both traditional and afterschool 4-H participants. High response rates were also given to ‘always’ being able to use communication skills for both groups. Twenty-four percent of afterschool 4-H participants reported feeling ‘never’ having the skills needed for communication, where zero percent of traditional 4-H participants responded with ‘never’. The response of ‘rarely’ was also chosen more by afterschool participants than traditional 4-H participants, but only by a five percent margin. The following tables (tables 10 & 11) show the response percentages for each communication question.
Table 10

*Communication Response Percentage (%) - Afterschool 4-H*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I try to keep eye contact.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recognize when two people are trying to say the same thing, but in different ways.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to see the other person’s point of view.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I change the way I talk to someone based on my relationship with them.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I organize thoughts in my head before speaking.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make sure I understand what another person is saying before I respond.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=17. Not all participants chose to answer every question leading to responses of less than 100% total.*
Table 11

*Communication Response Percentage (%) - Traditional 4-H*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I try to keep eye contact.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recognize when two people are trying to say the same thing, but in</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different ways.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to see the other person’s point of view.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I change the way I talk to someone based on my relationship with them.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I organize thoughts in my head before speaking.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make sure I understand what another person is saying before I respond.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=72. Not all participants chose to answer every question leading to responses of less than 100% total.

Table 11

*Goal setting.* Youth participants in afterschool 4-H programs reported ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ having the skills needed to set and achieve their goals more often than traditional 4-H participants. A difference of 31 percentage points for responses of ‘never’ and ‘rarely’ separate the two groups of participants. Traditional 4-H participants reported being able to use goal setting skills ‘often’ more frequently than any other response. Afterschool 4-H participants stated ‘always’ more than any other response, even with more responses of ‘never’ or ‘rarely’. The following tables (tables 12 & 13) show the response percentages for each goal setting question.
Table 12

**Goal Setting Response Percentage (%) - Afterschool 4-H**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question:</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I look at the steps needed to achieve the goal.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about how and when I want to achieve it.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After setting a goal, I break goals down into steps so I can check my progress.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both positive and negative feedback helps me work towards my goal.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=17. Not all participants chose to answer every question leading to responses of less than 100% total.

Table 12

---

Table 13

**Goal Setting Response Percentage (%) - Traditional 4-H**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question:</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I look at the steps needed to achieve the goal.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about how and when I want to achieve it.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After setting a goal, I break goals down into steps so I can check my progress.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both positive and negative feedback helps me work towards my goal.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=72. Not all participants chose to answer every question leading to responses of less than 100% total.

Table 13

---

**Problem solving.** Only one percent of traditional 4-H participants feel they ‘never’ have the skills to easily solve problems. The highest responses were in ‘often’ and
‘always’. This shows youth in afterschool and traditional 4-H programs feel they have the skills to solve problems when they need them. Problem solving responses did show a higher percentage of ‘rarely’ replies for afterschool 4-H participants than the other life skills measured with a response rate of seventy-two percent. The following tables (table 14 & 15) show the response percentages for problem solving questions.

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I first figure out exactly what the problem is.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to determine what caused it.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do what I have done in the past to solve it.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I compare each possible solution with others to find the best one.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After selecting a solution, I think about it for a while before putting it into action.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once I have solved a problem, I think about how my solution worked.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=17. Not all participants chose to answer every question leading to responses of less than 100% total.
Table 15

Problem Solving Response Percentage (%)—Traditional 4-H

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I first figure out exactly what the problem is.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to determine what caused it.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do what I have done in the past to solve it.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I compare each possible solution with others to find the best one.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After selecting a solution, I think about it for a while before putting it into action.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once I have solved a problem, I think about how my solution worked.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=72. Not all participants chose to answer every question leading to responses of less than 100% total.

Table 15

Youth in traditional and afterschool 4-H programs reported having the five measured life skills of decision making, critical thinking, communication, goal setting, and problem solving. Participants reported learning the same life skills, but the rate at which youth felt they could use the life skills differed. While most responses fell into the categories of ‘sometimes’, ‘often’, and ‘always’, there were several responses for each life skill that fell into the ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ categories.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine which life skills youth participants reported to have in traditional 4-H and afterschool 4-H programs respectively. The study focused on the life skills of decision making, critical thinking, communication, goal setting, and problem solving.

How does the current study contribute to the current knowledge about 4-H programs? How would program directors or 4-H Extension Educators explain youth acquisition of life skills in the 4-H programs?

The current study contributes to the current knowledge of 4-H programs through evidence in the development of life skills and the Five C’s of PYD. Youth gave high reports of decision making, communication, goal setting and problem solving. High reports consisted of most survey answers falling into the range of ‘often’ or ‘always’ being able to use the skills of decision making, communication, goal setting, and problem solving. Youth reported low scores of critical thinking skills with most answers falling into the ‘rarely’, ‘sometimes’, or ‘often’ categories.

High reports of decision making, communication, goal setting, and problem solving can be attributed to many reasons. Informal interviews of program staff and Extension Educators were conducted to assess if program characteristics contributed to the findings expressed in the survey results. Educators and program directors were chosen because of their involvement with the study participants. Through discussions, the researcher was able to find overlap in curriculum topics being used to enhance life
skills of participants in both survey groups. Exposure to the curriculum topics and lessons revealed to be different between the study groups. Youth in traditional programs have longer exposure time to lessons in one setting than participants of afterschool programs. Participants of traditional programs focus on curriculums and lessons during meeting time and then continue the focus on projects at home on their own time. This process can last for several meeting times. Continuation of working on projects at home allows youth to set goals towards completion of their project, enhancing their goal setting skills.

Educators and program directors revealed this method of programming does not happen in the afterschool setting. Participants of afterschool 4-H programs are exposed to topics one time for about a one hour time frame. Discussions revealed afterschool participants are rarely able to continue lessons outside of the afterschool program setting. This format can still enhance goal setting skills, as youth must work to finish programs within the short time frame.

In conversations with Extension Educators who run the traditional programs of surveyed youth, one Educator believes having larger 4-H clubs (fifteen or more youth) makes it difficult for curriculum to work effectively; small club size (fifteen youth or less) allows for greater ease with group projects or activities completed during club meetings. Youth in these clubs tend to gain more knowledge of skills which are retained for many years. The Educator explained this is because of the expense of buying curriculums and project materials, used to complete club or individual activities, can be costly for today’s families. This is concerning for the Extension Educator because they feel youth are losing out on the educational component of project curriculums and
lessons. Losing out on the educational component relates to decision making and problem solving skills. Youth and their families work together to make decisions on how to solve the problem of buying curriculums and project materials.

According to one Educator, youth in traditional programs have a higher chance of replicating projects or activities because they are utilizing family time, help, and input. Replication of the same projects or activities allows for youth to gain independence as they age because parents and grandparents slowly step aside and let them work on their own. The Educator feels this is a major difference from afterschool programs because things can be replicated several times, instead of doing the activity or lesson just once. Replication of projects with family members, or others, can lead to the enhancement of communication skills for all involved.

One of the Educators also discussed how one can tell which youth have had more exposure to programs. She expressed that those who are more involved in 4-H programs are more likely to exhibit the life skills they are learning on a regular basis than those who have little or very infrequent exposure to 4-H programs. Major differences she sees between afterschool 4-H programs and traditional 4-H programs is duration. “Afterschool participants are enrolled eight weeks to a semester and are only expected to show up. Traditional meet once a month as a group, at a minimum, and then continue to work on things at home. The level of involvement is much different” she said. The Educator expressed the differences in setting by describing the afterschool environment as an extension of the school day where programs extend what youth are doing in school.
Traditional 4-H meetings and programs are used to enrich what youth are already working on to make it better.

The program director, of one of the surveyed afterschool programs, was very adamant in attendance and consistency of programming making a difference in life skill development. The youth in her programs are required to attend a minimum of three times a week for at least an hour. The program director believes the more youth attend programs, the more they will understand the material and enhance their development. Even though the amount of program exposure differed for participant groups, it is described as an integral part of all life skill development by Educators and the program director.

Discussions gave two strong ideas for possible explanations as to why youth report different levels of measured life skills. The first replicated idea by Educators and the program director was topics of lessons and programs. Afterschool 4-H participants partake in programs that are structured very closely to the school day. Programs and lessons that traditional 4-H youth participate in are aimed at enhancing projects and activities youth are currently working on. This is a possible explanation as to why afterschool 4-H participants more often responded with ‘often’ or ‘always’ in the area of critical thinking. Afterschool participants partook in lessons which mimic the same thinking process as the school day and the continuation of life skill development.

The second repeated idea was the amount of exposure youth have to programs. According to interview responses, traditional 4-H youth meet about two hours a month and are then expected to continue projects on their own. Whereas afterschool youth are
expected to show up and participate at least three hours a week or twelve hours a month. Youth in afterschool 4-H programs have more consistent exposure to programs and lessons, by meeting more frequently than traditional 4-H youth. More exposure can lead to higher participation and retention of skills.

Survey data led to findings of a significant difference in one area, critical thinking. Overall, youth of afterschool and traditional 4-H programs reported the ability to use critical thinking skills in any situation. Youth participating in afterschool 4-H programs reported more confidence in having and using critical thinking skills than those who participate in traditional programs, through higher scores. Confidence, as one of the Five C’s of PYD, is knowing your own identity and understanding who one is as a person (Villarruel, Perkins, & Borden, 2003). Participants of traditional 4-H programs exhibited a higher amount of lower rankings for critical thinking, meaning they have more confidence in reporting their use of critical thinking skills.

During a discussion with an Extension Educator, the researcher learned that teaching life skills doesn’t come from a specific curriculum. The life skills come from lessons and objectives of other curriculums. As an example, participation on a robotics team teaches youth how to interact with others and become team player; whereas having livestock can teach youth responsibility. The curriculum lessons don’t focus specifically on teaching life skills, but they are attained by participants as a result of using the lessons and completing the programs.

The program director of an afterschool 4-H program described differences in the focus of afterschool 4-H programming. The director interviewed shared how programs
don’t have specific life skills curriculums or programs. The afterschool programs have monthly themes and the activities that come out of those programs lead to life skill development. Her afterschool programs work to enhance science through an academic focus and expansion of social skills. The program director works very closely with the school to ensure the academic focus. Programs have built in homework time where youth must work on homework before they can attend the 4-H programs. She found this to be a major difference to the way life skills are attained by youth in afterschool and traditional 4-H programs. Her afterschool programs are extremely academically focused whereas traditional 4-H programs are not. This is typical of school based afterschool programs according to studies of Utah afterschool programs.

With curriculums not directly teaching life skills, youth are able to develop critical thinking skills by working together and with other adults by helping with lessons and activities. Youth are also able to develop problem solving skills through critical thinking and by working through problems. This can be a leading cause to the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills and confidence of youth, as they work individually, or together, to solve problems.

The results of this study support the purpose of this study, to see which life skills participants developed in traditional and afterschool 4-H programs. The study results match with current research that 4-H teach youth life skills. The study expanded the area of research by adding a focus of afterschool 4-H programs, found to be lacking in current research. These findings support the research of participation in positive youth development programs, like 4-H, positively affect the development of life skills and the 5
C’s plus contribution of Youth Development (Lerner, Lerner, & Phelps, 2008; Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2003; Villarruel, Perkens, & Borden, 2003). Youth were able to express their self-knowledge and awareness about their life skills confidently (confidence as a Five C of PYD); as many ranked themselves high on the Likert scale.

Participating Extension Educators and afterschool program directors were very adamant on setting and expectations making a difference in the way their programs, lessons, and objectives of programs are handled. Afterschool programs were described as extensions of the school day with specific focus on homework and academics from the school day by those interviewed. Traditional clubs were discussed as enhancing projects or activities in which youth are already participating, in hopes of advancing skills to the next level. Clubs settings were also described as less structured with more family involvement as discussed in the literature leading to a higher rate of activity replication and creating healthy youth/adult partnerships.

**Implications for Future Research**

Focus of future research can be on a number of issues. First, survey data should be collected both pre and post programming participation to track the growth of life skills because of the programs. Second, qualitative interview data should be collected from the youth participants for a better understanding of life skill development. A third area of future research would be to conduct more in-depth interviews with more Extension Educators and program directors to ensure a broader understanding of 4-H programming practices. A final area of future research could be to focus on how demographics relate to the participation in programs. The current study participants were 93% Caucasian and
91% Not Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. A different population of youth may lead to different results based on family values and traditions, community interactions, and other uncontrollable factors. Research on the youth participants themselves, will shed light on the importance of how and where life skills are attained for youth.

Implications for Practice

Implications from the study are evident to the work of Extension and out of school time professionals. Current studies have strong focuses only on participants of traditional 4-H programs. Findings of this study support current literature by showing youth in traditional programs are learning life skills through 4-H. The current study also shows that participants of afterschool 4-H programs are developing the same life skills as those in traditional 4-H programs. The additional knowledge of afterschool 4-H participants learning life skills is not specifically supported in previous literature reviews. Afterschool programs are studied to have life skills based on the implementation of 4-H programs, but not specifically stated life skills. Out of school time professionals will benefit from the results of this study through the knowledge of programs developing life skills in participants, aligning with previously discussed programmatic goals of quality afterschool hours.

This is important to Extension and out of school time professionals implementing 4-H programs as they can guarantee the development of life skills for participants by meeting their needs. By targeting programs and lessons to fit the needs of youth, this will confirm the continued development of life skills and the Five C’s of PYD in participants.
**Limitations**

There are several limitations of this quantitative study. The biggest limitation of this study is the post only survey design. A post only survey design allows no way for the study to find an increase in life skills because of participation in 4-H programs. Second is the small convenience sample size. There was a significant difference in participant numbers between the traditional and afterschool 4-H participant groups. Third, there was low reliability of the measured skills for the afterschool 4-H participants, future studies could focus on understanding these reliabilities. Fourth is that program characteristics of the participants from the afterschool 4-H programs did not match those who participate in traditional 4-H programs. Family structure of participants will also pose a limitation as the researcher cannot control for this aspect of participants lives.

This study was also limited to the Northeast part of the Nebraska, making the findings difficult to generalize statewide and for other states. Participants were not randomly sampled, instead they were selected by the researcher through afterschool 4-H programming or through Extension Educators. Participants were restricted to the Northeast part of the Nebraska (28 total counties) to ensure participant response because of population, prevalence of afterschool 4-H programs, and a personal connection of the researcher. This study was limited by geographic differences in area based on the location of traditional and afterschool 4-H programs. Traditional programs were in more rural areas and afterschool programs were urbanely located. Urban community’s small cities
with populations ranging from 22,000-24,500 people. Finally, there was the limitation of researcher bias based on the researcher’s extensive work with traditional 4-H programs.

Conclusion

This study shows youth in afterschool programs possess the same life skills as youth in traditional 4-H programs. The findings of the study are informative to 4-H programming by discovering the activities, setting, expectations, and lessons being used in afterschool and traditional 4-H programs. The findings are also informative to out of school time professionals by showing youth in their programs feel they are learning and able to report their life skills. Findings of the study will help Extension Educators, professionals, and program directors enhance their programs and lessons to ensure the continued development of life skills and positive youth development experiences for participants.
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APPENDIX

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

STUDY INFORMATION LETTER
A Comparison of Attained Life Skills from Traditional and Afterschool 4-H Participants

Purpose of Evaluation:
The purpose of this survey is to determine the life skills youth, involved in traditional 4-H clubs and afterschool 4-H programs in Nebraska, are learning. The study is being conducted to determine if youth in Nebraska 4-H programs are learning life skills at the same rate although they are in different settings. Specifically this evaluation will measure youth life skills in the areas of decision making, critical thinking, communication, goal setting, and problem solving.

Procedures:
A survey will be used to measure the life skills of decision making, critical thinking, communication, goal setting, and problem solving. The survey will be conducted during program activities and measures the amount of life skills youth gain by asking questions about attitude and behaviors at the present time. The survey consists of twenty-six questions, scored on a four point scale. It will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits:
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. If your child feels uncomfortable with some question in the survey, he or she can stop at any time. There are no direct benefits to participation in this survey project. It is the hope of the researchers that your child will see the importance in attaining the life skills of decision making, critical thinking, communication, goal setting, and problem solving.

Confidentiality:
No identifying information will be collected in this project. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet or desk of the principle investigator’s office. Only Miss Kreikemeier and Dr. Yan Xia will have access to the survey data. The results from this study will be used in writing a Masters level thesis and possible journal articles. All data files will be destroyed within three years after the project is completed.

Compensation:
There is no compensation in this survey project.

Opportunity to ask questions:
If you have any questions about the survey or questions concerning the survey procedures you can contact Miss Julia Kreikemeier through email jkreikemeier5@unl.edu or through phone (402) 380-4778. If you have questions concerning your child’s rights as a research subject that have not been answered the by the investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska- Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.

Freedom to Withdraw:
Your child may end their participation at any time without negatively affecting them or your relationship with the program leader. If they so feel, they may choose not to answer questions on the survey. Their
decision, to not participate, will not result in the loss of any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Principal Investigator: Julia Kreikemeier
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Appendix B: Skills for Everyday Living Measurement

Name ___________________________ Date ____________

Skills for Everyday Living

ABOUT ME...
1. I am _______ years old.
2. I have been in 4-H for ________ years.
3. Check one:
   _____ I am male.
   _____ I am female.
4. Birthdate (MM/DD/YY) ____________

Instructions: The following statements describe how you might communicate, solve problems, make decisions and achieve goals in everyday life. Circle the number that best fits how often you did what is described in the last 30 days. For example, if you circle 5 for a statement, that means you always do what is described in the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I have a decision to make:</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I look for information to help me understand the problem.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I think before making a choice.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I consider the risks of a choice before making a decision.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I think about all the information I have about the different choices.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I think of past choices when making new decisions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I think:</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. I can easily express my thoughts on a problem.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I usually have more than one source of information before making a decision.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I compare ideas when thinking about a topic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I keep my mind open to different ideas when planning to make a decision.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am able to tell the best way of handling a problem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OVER
When I communicate with others:

11. I try to keep eye contact. 1 2 3 4 5

12. I recognize when two people are trying to say the same thing, but in different ways. 1 2 3 4 5

13. I try to see the other person’s point of view. 1 2 3 4 5

14. I change the way I talk to someone based on my relationship with them (i.e. friend, parent, teacher, etc.) 1 2 3 4 5

15. I organize thoughts in my head before speaking. 1 2 3 4 5

16. I make sure I understand what another person is saying before I respond. 1 2 3 4 5

When setting a goal:

17. I look at the steps needed to achieve the goal. 1 2 3 4 5

18. I think about how and when I want to achieve it. 1 2 3 4 5

19. After setting a goal, I break goals down into steps so I can check my progress. 1 2 3 4 5

20. Both positive and negative feedback helps me work towards my goal. 1 2 3 4 5

When solving a problem:

21. I first figure out exactly what the problem is. 1 2 3 4 5

22. I try to determine what caused it. 1 2 3 4 5

23. I do what I have done in the past to solve it. 1 2 3 4 5

24. I compare each possible solution with the others to find the best one. 1 2 3 4 5

25. After selecting a solution, I think about it for a while before putting it into action. 1 2 3 4 5

26. Once I have solved a problem, I think about how my solution worked. 1 2 3 4 5

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY!

2/17/05
Appendix C: Participant Study Introduction Letter

Dear Participant:

My name is Julie Kreikemeier and I am a current graduate student at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. I am working on my Masters in Youth Development and I am currently gathering data to finish my final thesis project. I am studying the life skills participants’ gain from involvement in 4-H programs. As a 4-H participant between the ages of 10 and 14, you are being asked to fill out the attached surveys.

Attached to your email you will find the “Parental Information form”, the “Demographic Survey” and the “Everyday Skills Measurement”. Please fill out the Demographic Survey and the Everyday Skills Measurement.

Ways to fill out the surveys:

- You can fill each survey out electronically by highlighting or bolding, saving the document to your computer, reattaching the saved document to the original email and sending it back to your Extension Educator.
- You can print each of the surveys (4 pages total) and fill them out (hard copy) and return them to your local Extension office at: 510 N. Pearl Street, Wayne NE 68787
- You can print each of the surveys and fill them out, scan them into your computer, attach them to the original email and send them back to your Extension Educator.

Once you have completed the surveys please return them to the Extension office as soon as you can.

I sincerely Thank You for taking the time to fill out these surveys to help me further my educational goals.

Sincerely,

Julie Kreikemeier
Appendix D: Researcher and Study Introduction Letter

My name is Julie Kreikemeier and I am a 10 year 4-H alumni of Cuming County and current graduate student at UNL. I am currently working on my graduate thesis project about the life skills youth are learning from their involvement in 4-H programs. I am asking youth, ages 10-14 years old (calendar age), to complete two surveys. One is a 26 item survey about life skills and the other is about demographic information to show youths involvement in 4-H programs. I am asking to please have your child fill out the surveys and return them to the Extension office in Neligh. Below you will find information on the documents attached to this email; there are four documents, but only two need to be completed and returned.

- The Parental Information Form Documents that this research project has been approved by UNL Institution Research Board and that completing the survey will in no way harm your children.
- Survey Directions includes directions on how to complete the surveys and ways to return it back to the Extension office.
- Everyday Skills Measurement includes the 26 questions that your child is asked to respond by circling their rating on a five point scale. There are 2 pages to this form
- Demographic Survey will give Julie the information that she needs related to your child’s 4-H participation. This is also a two page form.

Please print off the Everyday Skills Measurement and Demographic Survey for each of your children ages 10 to 14 (calendar ages, not 4-H age) and ask them to complete both pages of both questionnaires. Please staple the four sheets together and drop them off or send them to Nebraska Extension in Antelope County. You are also welcome to have your children complete the information as both forms are in word documents so that you can open and complete them on your computer. Once completed you can save their answers on your computer and email them to Tessa at the Extension Office. Please put in the subject line JKrekememeier survey data.

Thank you so much for helping me in reaching my educational goals.

Julie Kreikemeier

Julie Kreikemeier
4-H Mentoring Program Coordinator
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
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Lincoln, NE 68583-0700
402-472-9020
Jkreikemeier5@unl.edu
Appendix E: 4-H Common Measure Demographics Survey

4-H Common Measures
10 to 14 year old 4-Hers Universal Items

Dear Participant:

You are being given this survey because you are part of a 4-H program or project, and we are surveying young people like you to learn about your experiences.

This survey is voluntary. If you do not want to fill out the survey, you do not need to. However, we hope you will take a few minutes to fill it out because your answers are important.

This survey is private. No one at your school, home, or 4-H program or project will see your answers. Please answer all of the questions as honestly as you can. If you are uncomfortable answering a question, you may leave it blank.

This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers, and your answers will not affect your participation or place in the program in any way.

Thank you for your help!

Section I: Tell us about your 4-H Experience

Please select the responses that best describe you.

1. How many years have you been participating in 4-H? (Mark one box ☒.)
   □ This is my first year
   □ This is my second year
   □ Three or more years

2. Which one of the following best describes how many hours you typically spend in 4-H programs/projects each week? (Mark one box ☒.)
   □ Less than one hour
   □ Between one and three hours
   □ More than three hours

3. Which of the following best describes how you are involved in 4-H? (Mark each box ☒ that applies to you.)
☐ Clubs
☐ Camps
☐ After-school programs
☐ In-school programs
☐ Local fairs/events
☐ Community service projects
☐ Working on my projects at home
☐ Other

Section II: Tell us about You

Please select the responses that best describes you.

4. **How old are you?**

   ______ Age (in years)

5. **What grade are you in?**

   ______ Grade

6. **Which of the following best describes your gender?** (Mark one box ☒.)
   - Female
   - Male

7. **Which of the following best describe your race?** (Mark each box ☒ that applies to you.)
   - American Indian or Alaskan Native
   - Asian
   - Black or African American
   - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   - White

Please select the responses that best describes you.

8. **Which of the following best describe your ethnicity?** (Mark one box ☒.)
   - Hispanic or Latino
   - Not Hispanic or Latino

9. **Which of the following best describes the primary place where you live?** (Mark one box ☒.)
   - Farm
   - Rural (non-farm residence, pop. < 10,000)
   - Town or City (pop. 10,000 – 50,000)
☐ Suburb of a City (pop. > 50,000)
☐ City (pop. > 50,000)