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4-H Leaders: Factors that Affect Their Persistence in the 4-H Youth Development Program

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4-H LEADERS: FACTORS THAT AFFECT THEIR PERSISTENCE IN THE 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

by

Regina Schinker

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology
Advisor: Van Cooley, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 2010
For over one hundred years, the 4-H youth development program has educated millions of children across the country in a variety of programs; from livestock husbandry to leadership skills. Like all programs that have endured, 4-H has had to adjust its focus as society has changed. One area in the 4-H program that has not changed is the heavy reliance on adult volunteer leaders to deliver the educational programs to 4-H youth. Because of the reliance on volunteer 4-H leaders, 4-H professionals and extension office staff are concerned about issues of retention.

The case study examines two related issues: First, the study explores the factors that influence the retention of 4-H volunteer leaders in the St. Joseph County 4-H youth development program and, second, the study explores if the relationship between 4-H volunteer leaders and Extension office staff influences the decision of 4-H volunteer leaders to persist with the organization.

This study takes place in St. Joseph County, Michigan, through the Michigan State University Extension office. Four focus group interviews were conducted at the Michigan State University Extension office in Centreville, Michigan. The participants of the focus groups were former 4-H volunteer leaders current 4-H volunteer leaders. In-depth interviews with former leaders, current leaders, and the four previous 4-H youth development agents were
conducted. 4-H youth development artifacts were examined and observational data was collected.

Themes and emerging themes were determined from the data to consider factors that led to the termination of service by 4-H volunteer leaders and to determine if there is a connection between extension staff and volunteer relationships and the turnover of 4-H volunteer leaders. Additionally, this study applies qualitative data to the Volunteer Process Model; a model that has traditionally been used with quantitative data only.

Four themes and one emerging theme materialized from the data. Practical applications, recommendations, and limitations of the study are also discussed.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Dr. Van Cooley for your endurance and guidance.

To my parents, Arne and Norma Switalski: Your support has been transformational.

Thank you.

Thank you to my beloved husband, Chris, and my adored children, Loryn, Luke, and Lila.

Your patience and encouragement was critical to my success.

And finally, to my dear Loryn. I dedicate this dissertation to you. You have been on this journey with me the longest and your love of 4-H is truly inspirational.

Regina Schinker
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

4-H is the largest youth organization in America (About 4-H: Who We Are, 2010). The 4-H youth development program is over a century old. Once considered a rural, farming club, 4-H has transformed into a program that educates children from farms and cities; including children from all different ages and ethnicities. 4-H will prepare 1 million new young people to excel in science, engineering, and technology by 2013 through its project areas. 4-H programs reach more than 6 million youth with hands-on learning experiences to encourage young minds (About 4-H: Who We Are, 2010). Like other programs that have endured, 4-H has had to adjust its focus as society has changed. Membership demographics, funding, and a changing volunteer base are the areas in the 4-H program with the most significant changes through the decades. One factor that has not changed is that 4-H relies heavily on the volunteer educators that donate their time and expertise to help youth “learn by doing” in a variety of project areas. The responsibilities of 4-H leaders are diverse. Primarily, a leader should provide quality educational programs and experiences for youth in a club, project area, or species (Volunteer Resources, 2010). Volunteer 4-H leaders provide local expertise in subject areas offered by the 4-H program (Van Horn, Flanagan, & Thomson, 1999).

The 4-H youth development program relies heavily on adult volunteers (Cleveland & Thompson, 2007; Fritz, Karmazin, Barbutate, & Burrow, 2003; Whitson, 2008). Volunteers are
essential to the delivery of programs that 4-H offers the youth in our country (Boyd, 2004; Hutchins, Seevers, & Van Leeuwen, 2002; Kaslon, Lodl, & Greve, 2005; Rusk, Kerr, Talbert, & Russell, 2001; Sinasky & Bruce, 2007; Smith, 2008; Smith & Bigler, 1985; Smith & Finley, 2004; VanWinkle, Busler, Bowman, & Manoogian, 2002; White & Arnold, 2003). One of the most significant challenges that 4-H has faced in recent years has been the decline of its volunteer base (VanHorn et al., 1999). Because of the reliance on volunteers, 4-H professionals and extension staff are concerned about the recruitment and retention challenges of volunteer management (Whitson, 2008). While volunteerism in this country is on the rise, people are volunteering in shorter durations, “episodic” duration (Omoto & Snyder, 2008), resulting in higher turnover (Smith & Finley, 2004). Turnover typically puts a strain on the organization as organizational members must continuously recruit, re-train, and make efforts to retain new volunteers (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001). Turnover may also have a negative effect on the children the organization serves (Gidron, 1985). It is reasonable to conclude that the overall success of 4-H youth development programming depends, at least in part, on the ability of the program to retain its volunteer leaders, the “teachers” of the project areas. But the question remains, why are volunteer leaders leaving the 4-H program? Is the relationship between extension staff professionals and the volunteer leaders a factor in the decision to terminate volunteer service?

In addition, this study utilizes Omoto and Snyder’s (1995) Volunteer Process Model to consider factors that lead to the termination of service by 4-H volunteers and to determine if there is a connection between extension staff and volunteer relationships and the turnover of 4-H volunteer educators in one southwest Michigan county. Additionally, this study applies qualitative data to Omoto and Snyder’s Volunteer Process Model. Traditionally, the model has
been utilized using quantitative data, thus adding to the field of volunteer research in a new way.

**Problem Statement**

For years, 4-H has struggled with the complex problem of volunteer leader recruitment and retention. With 3,500 staff and 518,000 volunteers nationwide, 4-H clearly cannot accomplish its mission without the assistance of its thousands of volunteers. In St. Joseph County, Michigan, in 2009, there were 1,030 children enrolled in the 4-H youth development program. Those children were supported by 305 volunteer 4-H leaders and two extension staff members. 4-H leaders are critical to the delivery of programs in the 4-H county program. In fact, there are many project areas without a designated 4-H leader. Without a designated leader, members are often left to seek out alternative ways to complete the project (4-H Agent, personal communication, December 8, 2009). Or the members simply do not complete the project. 4-H leaders are critical to the program because of the educational opportunities they provide to members. However, little research has been conducted concerning why 4-H leaders choose to leave the program and what influence the extension staff relationship has on the decision to leave. Therefore, the research questions proposed below seem necessary to further investigate the factors that affect the persistence of volunteer leaders in a 4-H program.

**Research Questions**

In order to assist in understanding ways in which to increase retention of 4-H leaders and in understanding the influence of the relationship between extension office staff and 4-H
leaders has on the decision to persist, the following research questions were developed as the foundation to exploring this phenomenon.

1. Why do volunteer leaders choose not to re-enroll in the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development Program?
2. What are the barriers to leader participation in the 4-H program for St. Joseph County volunteer leaders?
3. What conditions would facilitate volunteer leader participation in the St. Joseph County 4-H program?
4. To what degree are volunteer and extension staff relations a factor in the decision to re-enroll as volunteer leaders?

**Rationale for the Study**

As the largest youth development program in the country, 4-H reaches millions of children aged 5 to 19 years. Research has shown that children who are involved in 4-H have better relationships with adults (Goodwin, Carroll, & Oliver, 2007), are better students (Astroth & Haynes, 2002), and are better prepared to be leaders (Lewis, Murphy, & Baker, 2009). Critical to the 4-H youth program are the volunteer 4-H leaders that deliver the “hands-on” learning activities to the enrolled members. Without the 518,000 nation-wide 4-H leaders, the 3,500 paid staff would not be able to deliver these programs. The relationship between the 4-H leaders and extension staff and the persistence of 4-H leaders is of paramount importance. This study is significant because it assist 4-H professionals in understanding factors that influence 4-H leaders to end their service. Therefore, 4-H professionals may will be able to develop strategies to increase volunteer retention, which will ultimately benefit the children enrolled in
4-H in St. Joseph County. While the case study is limited to St. Joseph County, Michigan, the results may help all 4-H professionals understand the issue of 4-H leader retention to a greater extent. Other 4-H professionals may be able to glean information from this study to apply to their own counties.

In addition, while some quantitative research has been conducted on retention by extension researchers, there is a lack of qualitative research on the subject (Gregoire, 2004). This study provides a “voice” to 4-H leaders who are or have been directly involved with the program and have made decisions about their persistence with the program. Narrative accounts of adult experiences enrich our understanding of retention issues (Gregoire, 2004). Qualitative research has also been scant in general volunteer retention studies. This study will enrich the existing literature by using the qualitative lens to add to the knowledge about general volunteerism.

**Methodology Overview**

A qualitative case study analysis was used to explore factors related to volunteer leaders continuing or discontinuing their involvement with St. Joseph County 4-H. Focus groups, personal interviews, observation, and document analysis were used to gather data to answer the research questions. Participants for this study consisted of current St. Joseph County 4-H leaders, former St. Joseph County 4-H leaders, and the current/past four 4-H Youth Agents. 4-H leaders can consist of leaders in any 4-H project area from livestock to “still” projects. Once volunteers have reached adulthood, they are eligible to be a 4-H leader. The current study operates under the assumption that all 4-H leaders are adults.
Focus groups, consisting of 6 to 10 participants, took place at the extension office. The study consisted of four different focus group discussions; two focus groups consisted of current 4-H leaders (having 6 and 8 members, respectively) and two focus groups consisted of former 4-H leaders (having 7 and 6 members, respectively). Personal interviews were held with the current and previous three 4-H Agents who cover a time period in access of 35 years. All questions were structured as open-ended questions. All questions were reviewed to determine appropriate content, structure, and validity through a field test at a neighboring extension office.

Audio tapes were transcribed verbatim. Qualitative data were analyzed and applied to the Volunteer Process Model (Omoto & Snyder, 1995). After analysis, explanation of the findings and recommendations were made to the St. Joseph County 4-H program in an effort to improve the quality of their retention efforts.

**Definition of Terms**

*4-H Leader* – an adult who volunteers to lead a community, species, or still project group of youth in the county 4-H youth development program. 

*Retention* – the number of volunteers who successfully complete their initial commitment to an agency, including those who renew and continue serving the organization (Stepputat, 1995).

*Volunteer* – Those individuals who labor, unpaid, in an organization with the intention of furthering the organization’s purposes for the benefit of others and/or society (Ashcroft & Kedrowicz, 2002; Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007).
Still Project – A non-animal project. Still projects are described in their own section under their own department within one of the main project headings: career-related project; clothing, personal appearance and modeling projects; collections; communication skills; crafts; creative arts; crop science; folk arts; food, nutrition, and fitness; general/promotional/miscellaneous; health and safety; home and family; horticulture; leadership/citizenship; leisure education and sports; natural resources; needlecraft; performing arts; technology/industrial arts; visual arts; other projects. 4-Hers can complete more than one still project, but can exhibit only one still project per section at the fair (4-H – FFA and Other Youth Fair Premium Book, 2009).

Livestock Projects – Animal Science, Herdsmanship, Aquatic Science, Cats and Cat Care, Dog Care and Training, and Pocket Pets, Horses and Ponies, Beef Cattle, Dairy Beef, Dairy Cattle, Goats, Poultry, Rabbits, Sheep, and Swine. Each livestock area has its own rules and regulations and identifies how many entries and classes a 4-H member can exhibit (4-H – FFA and Other Youth Fair Premium Book, 2009).

Limitations and Delimitations

The study took place in one bounded system. While there are similarities in the 4-H program across counties in the stage and the United States, there are clearly cultural, demographic, and geographic differences as well. Therefore, generalizability of this study may be limited.

Another limitation is that the researcher acted as the focus group moderator. The researcher is an active 4-H leader in St. Joseph County and has a working relationship with some of the participants of the study. Some participants may have been hesitant to share accurate
thoughts about the topic because of this relationship. It is impossible to determine if this were the case. However, it is worth noting. Regardless, the researcher assured the participants total anonymity.

In addition, there is a chance of bias by the researcher as the researcher has been an active participant in St. Joseph County’s 4-H program as a member, as a parent, and as a leader. The researcher comes to the study with 30 years of diverse experiences in the program. Every effort was made by the researcher to reduce bias.

Emotion and satisfaction are difficult to operationalize. Assumptions must be made to meaning and those meanings are apt to change. This study catches a snapshot at one moment in time in one county regarding factors that affect persistence. Caution should be taken on all findings and suggestions because of the fluidity of the environment.

Finally, it is important to discuss that it is difficult to harness an understanding of the deep variations in why people volunteer, why they leave, and whether or not they are or should be considered a good leader. Different leadership styles may work well with different children. The gregarious outgoing leader may seem effective, but may not be as effective as the quiet unassuming leader who can relate to a child on a one-on-one basis and, therefore, influence leader satisfaction. Many factors influence the decision to remain and the decision to leave as a 4-H volunteer. Many of these factors may be too personal and private to share in a focus group or interview setting.

Conclusion

It was the intent of the researcher to obtain a clearer understanding of the factors that influence the retention of 4-H leaders in St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development Program
and if the relationship between the Extension office and volunteer leader influences the
decision to persist with the organization. This study was deemed important based on the critical
reliance the 4-H youth development program has on its volunteers and the lack of qualitative
research on the subject.

Organization of the Study

The following chapters include a review of related literature (Chapter II), a discussion
regarding the methodology that was used (Chapter III), the research findings (Chapter IV), and
conclusions, observations, recommendations, and a discussion of future research opportunities
(Chapter V).
CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the factors that influence 4-H leader retention and the effect on the relationship between the extension office and 4-H leaders. The chapter is comprised of three main sections: volunteer retention, volunteer and staff relations, and 4-H. The section on volunteer retention includes a chronological review of research articles on volunteer retention, a section of managerial implications derived from the review, and a summary of the volunteer retention section. The section on paid staff and volunteer relations includes a chronological review of articles on paid staff and volunteer relationships, a section of managerial implications derived from the review, and a summary of the volunteer and staff relations section. The 4-H section includes 4-H then and now, the socioeconomic status of St. Joseph County, 4-H impact studies, a chronological review of the literature, and a summary of the 4-H literature.

Volunteer Retention

Volunteerism has become embedded into the American lifestyle (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). Volunteers are important to the organizations they serve (Dailey, 1986; Davis, Hall, & Meyer, 2003; Miller, Powell, & Seltzer, 1990). Many organizations would not be able to complete their missions without the generous donation of volunteer time. Some organizations use a few volunteers at sporadic times to complete one-time events. Other organizations use thousands of volunteers regularly to deliver essential programs and direct long-term projects.
Many organizations use some combination of both approaches. Among other important benefits, such as positive community relations and feelings of self-worth by the volunteers (Omoto & Snyder, 2008), volunteers save the organization money (Liao-Troth, 2001).

While volunteerism is on the rise (Skoglund, 2006), the competition for volunteers is acute (Hustinx & Handy, 2009). Volunteers are those individuals who labor, unpaid, in an organization with the intention of furthering the organization’s purposes for the benefit of others and/or society (Ashcroft & Kedrowicz, 2002; Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007). Penner (2002) defined volunteerism as a long-term, planned, prosocial behavior that benefits strangers and occurs within an organizational setting. Omoto and Snyder (2008) defined volunteerism as a freely chosen and deliberate helping activity that extends over time, is engaged without expectation of reward or other compensation, is often through formal organizations, and is performed on behalf of causes or individuals who desire assistance. Volunteers fill an important service gap in many organizations (Netting, Nelson, Borders, & Huber, 2004; Omoto & Snyder, 2008). To say that volunteers’ time and commitment to an organization is important is an understatement. Voluntary workers are the main human resources of social services and non-profit organizations (Yiu, Au, & Tang, 2001).

The literature review section examines retention of the volunteer workforce. The literature review on volunteerism provides an overview of cover research as it relates to issues of retention only. An outline of the section on volunteer retention research is as follows:

1. Chronological review of research on volunteer retention
2. Managerial implications
3. Summary of volunteer retention discussion
**Chronological Review of the Literature**

Gidron’s (1985) study is a seminal study on the issue of volunteer retention. The study acts as an important springboard for much of the remaining research done on issues of volunteer retention. Gidron found that variables leading to turnover were not necessarily the opposite of those leading to retention. The study also established that it was easier to predict retention than turnover. Gidron reported attitudinal variables were the best predictors of retention, followed by organizational variables to a lesser extent. More specifically, Gidron asserted that the content of work (task achievement, task preparation, and relationships with other volunteers) is the most critical. Drawing a profile of a volunteer who persists, Gidron suggested that participants reported they were well prepared for their job, given a task they considered interesting and challenging, the job was well-suited to their skills and knowledge, they derived a sense of accomplishment from the work, and they performed in an environment of meaningful interaction with peers. The major predictors of retention in volunteer work, according to Gidron’s study, include good preparation for the particular task, placement in a job in which volunteers can find self-expression and where they feel their work can produce results, and all of this within an environment with positive peer interaction. Gidron noted that organizational arrangements for the volunteer are a key factor in the decision to stay on the job.

Early research continues with a study by Dailey (1986) when research on volunteering was scant. Dailey’s study explored the important process of organizational attachment for volunteers. He argued that volunteer managers have taken a passive and reactive management approach, missing the variable that addresses the psychology of volunteerism. Dailey found that
job satisfaction played a critical role in understanding commitment of volunteers. Dailey highlights the importance of job design and task characteristics that keep volunteers motivated through job satisfaction which may lead to organizational commitment. Dailey suggested that future research should include longitudinal studies that emphasize work and organizational constructs in commitment research on volunteers.

In 1990, Miller, Powell, and Seltzer examined determinants of turnover among volunteers based on models of turnover among paid employees. This study underscores the importance of understanding how individual characteristics such as age, attitude, and situation influence turnover. Generally speaking, the researchers found turnover difficult to predict. The results also suggest that age plays an important role in persistence as older volunteers are more likely to view volunteering convenient to their schedules (Miller et al., 1990). In their study, age and convenience of schedule had a direct effect on volunteer turnover (Miller et al., 1990).

In 1995, Omoto and Snyder introduced a conceptual framework that continues to be used and discussed today. The model is the Volunteer Process Model (Figure 1). Volunteer Process Model (VPM) has three sequential stages: the antecedent stage (personality factors, motivation for volunteering factors, degree of social support factors), the volunteer experiences stage (satisfaction with volunteer activities and integration into the volunteer organization) and the consequences stage (persistence in the volunteer activity over time).

Omoto and Snyder (1995) found that a helping disposition did not directly lead to volunteer persistence; however, a helping disposition did lead to satisfaction. Satisfaction led to persistence. They also observed that greater satisfaction, but not integration, was positively associated with longer persistence. Furthermore, it is important to note that Omoto and Snyder reported that self-oriented motivations, not altruistic motivations, lead to volunteer
persistence. Omoto and Snyder suggested that satisfaction, positive feelings, and motives (ego not altruistic) all had a direct and significant effect on length of service. Others have extended the model and have found general support for the model. Those studies are addressed later in the chapter.

Figure 1. The Volunteer Process Model (Omoto & Snyder, 1995)

Penner and Finkelstein (1998) used the Volunteer Process Model and Role Identity Theory as lenses to examine dispositional and structural variables that affect volunteerism. An important focus for this study was whether personality variables play a role in volunteer behavior; one of which was length of service. The authors expected that length of service would be significantly related to organizational commitment, but this was not the case. Yet, the affective measure of satisfaction did specifically and positively correlate with length of service (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). The authors cautioned readers that it is not known whether satisfaction leads to length of service or if length of service leads to satisfaction.

In addition, Penner and Finkelstein (1998) found that altruistic motives and two dimensions of prosocial personality were associated with length of service. The finding on
altruistic motives differed from the Omoto and Snyder (1995) study that only found self-oriented motives to be associated with length of service. However, Penner and Finkelstein did not attempt to reject the previous researchers’ position as there were substantial differences in which aspects of volunteer behavior were measured. Penner and Finkelstein discussed that volunteering means different things to different people. Generally speaking, their research supports the research findings by Omoto and Snyder and the Volunteer Process Model. Subsequently, Penner and Finkelstein also identified support for using the Role Identity Theory. Their results suggested that volunteer role identity may play a critical role in long-term volunteer efforts. Penner and Finkelstein concluded by stating that a comprehensive model that includes the motivation variables suggested by the Volunteer Process Model, the structural variables of the Role Identity, and the personality variables suggested by the findings of their study would enable researchers to better understand long-term actions by volunteers.

Clary et al. (1998) studied the prosocial behavior of volunteerism. Of their six investigations in this study, one study focused on sustained involvement of volunteer activities. In addition, the authors sought to develop a reliable and valid measure of the functions served by volunteer activity—the Volunteer Functions Inventory. Overall, the study established that volunteers who received benefits matching with personality important functions had greater satisfaction and intentions to continue to volunteer in the future (Clary et al., 1998). The authors emphasized that sustained volunteerism is influenced by dispositional and situational forces. This study supported the idea that the person-situation fit is important to keep volunteers satisfied and lessen the rate of turnover.

Farmer and Fedor (1999) introduced the psychological contract approach to understanding volunteer behavior in nonprofit organizations in their publication. The
psychological contract is an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that person and another party (Rousseau, 1989). Overall, the results supported the idea that psychological contract fulfillment or violation influences the level of volunteer participation (Farmer & Fedor, 1999). More specifically, perceived organizational support influenced volunteer withdrawal intentions, but met expectations did not (Farmer & Fedor, 1999). Volunteers who perceived that they were valued and that their efforts were appreciated had lower withdrawal intentions (Farmer & Fedor, 1999). The authors of this study echoed previous researchers in recognizing that the varying motives and needs of volunteers result in different psychological contracts. Managers must be aware of volunteers’ psychological contracts in an effort to avoid violating the contract (Farmer & Fedor, 1999). Farmer and Fedor suggested symbolic support is important to volunteer satisfaction as the typical monetary recognition is unavailable.

The discussion regarding volunteer psychological contracts continues, in part, with a study by Liao-Troth (2001). Liao-Troth compared volunteers and paid staff and examined their job attitudes along the dimensions of the psychological contract, organizational commitment, and organizational justice. Liao-Troth found that volunteers and paid employees in the same situation have job attitudes that were similar along all three dimensions. The author suggested that managers be aware of the importance of psychological contracts and organizational justice to reduce the effect of people planning to leave the organization.

Grube and Piliavin (2000) proposed identity theory can add insight for understanding the participation and retention of volunteers in organizational settings. They found that role identity is the most important factor in predicting amount of time given and intent to leave the organization. However, the authors caution that volunteers who experience conflict based on
volunteering for multiple organizations may cope by simply leaving one or both organizations. The authors also discovered a strong relationship between perceived pressure to volunteer and intent to quit. Grube and Piliavin stated that there is a fragile bond between the volunteer and their organization. Overall, their results indicated that specific role identity is far more useful in predicting volunteer outcomes (like persistence) than is the concept of organizational commitment.

Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001) sought to propose and test a multi-faceted measure of job satisfaction specifically applicable to volunteers. Overall, the results of the study were supportive of their Volunteer Satisfaction Index. However, the predictive validity of the index of intent to remain received only partial support. Previously, organizational support has been an important variable in intent to remain. However, for this study, organizational support did not emerge as a predictor of volunteers’ intent to remain. The authors questioned if this result was based on the fact that the majority of the volunteers were involved because of their child’s involvement in the organization. Conversely, participation efficacy did surface as a predictor of intent to remain (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001). Volunteers who felt they were able to make a difference were less likely to disassociate with the organization (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001). Finally, group integration also emerged as a significant predictor of volunteers’ intent to remain. It is important to note that this study introduced the idea of volunteer empowerment as a variable that, while did not predict intent to remain, emerged as important to the volunteer experience.

Yui et al. (2001) extended Omoto and Snyder’s (1995) model to Chinese voluntary workers to identify psychological and organizational factors that contributed to the continuation of volunteer involvement. They found that different spans of expected length of
service were related to different sets of predictors. Specifically, lack of personal accomplishment would predict a shorter duration of service and emotional exhaustion/depersonalization would predict an expected longer duration of service (Yui et al., 2001). Volunteer workers are likely to survive the early years of volunteerism in an organization if they feel that they have been effective and see their achievements (Yui et al., 2001). Overall results supported Omoto and Snyder’s model finding that work satisfaction, organizational integration, and burnout were related to duration of service (Yui et al., 2001). Yui et al. concluded that work satisfaction was the most significant predictor for volunteers’ short-term and long-term expected duration of service. Unlike Omoto and Snyder, Yui and colleagues reported that organizational integration predicted overall intent to remain, but the effect was limited to an integration unique to their study.

Penner (2002) attempted to identify how dispositional and organizational variables independently and effectively influenced sustained volunteerism through a conceptual model. Penner began by discussing volunteerism’s place as a sustained prosocial behavior. Next, Penner discussed the four salient attributes of volunteerism: longevity, planfulness, nonobligatory helping, and its existence in an organizational context. Penner’s research on the variables of the conceptual model was based on these salient attributes. Penner found that dispositional and organizational correlates of volunteerism were not independent of each other. As Penner stated, consistent with the interactionist theme that he follows, organizational and dispositional variables influence each other and this influence affects sustained prosocial (volunteerism) actions.

The idea that volunteer satisfaction leads to persistence is, by now, an accepted relationship. The following study is important to the issue of volunteer retention because
Kiviniemi, Snyder, and Omoto (2002) revealed that volunteers with multiple motivations for volunteering have decreased satisfaction. Their study found that the variable of multiple motivations was meaningful and not related to other characteristics of the sample. The researchers noted that volunteers who reported multiple motivations for volunteering had significantly more stress and perceived personal costs. Follow-up analysis found that multiply motivated volunteers experienced less fulfillment of their personally important motives, and the volunteers reported lower feelings of satisfaction (Kiviniemi et al., 2002). The researchers suggested the findings in this study have important implications to organizations that rely on long-term relationships with volunteers.

Davis, Hall, and Meyer (2003) tested an elaborated form of the Volunteer Process Model in their study on first-year volunteers. An important contribution was the inclusion of the emotional toll volunteering can take on an individual and the effect it has on persistence in the volunteer role. While the elaborated model was generally supported in some areas, one clear failure of the elaborated model was its inability to successfully predict volunteer persistence (Davis et al., 2003). Theoretically, the authors argued the Volunteer Process Model should expand the experiences stage of the model to include emotional variables. Davis et al. concluded the volunteer experience is heavily shaped by the amount of distress that the volunteer experiences.

Martinez and McMullin (2004) sought to identity effective and efficient methods for the recruitment and retention of Appalachian Trail Conference volunteers in their study. The researchers compared active versus non-active volunteers to determine the likelihood of participation in volunteer activities with the association (Martinez & McMullin, 2004). The study revealed that both groups felt making a difference (efficacy) was important to their decision to
volunteer (Martinez & McMullin, 2004). Furthermore, non-active members were more likely to let concerns for competing commitment prevent them from volunteering (Martinez & McMullin, 2004). It is suggested that the forming of friendships and the feeling of accomplishment aids in the forming of ties and commitment of volunteers to the organization (Martinez & McMullin, 2004).

Hellman and House (2006) investigated factors influencing continued service of rape crisis volunteers through the variable of victim blaming. The researchers found volunteers with higher levels of overall satisfaction with their volunteer experiences reported higher levels of affective commitment and higher levels of intent to remain. Higher levels of victim blaming experiences resulted in lower reported satisfaction. Satisfaction and commitment were positive correlates with intent to remain. Additionally, monthly meetings and monthly training were positively related to overall satisfaction, overall commitment, and intent to remain (Hellman & House, 2006). The authors recommended careful attention to ongoing training issues for volunteers in high stress positions.

Cheung, Tang, and Yan (2006) extended the Volunteer Process Model (Snyder & Omoto, 1995) to identify factors influencing the persistence of volunteer efforts in older Chinese. Overall results showed that participants’ intention to persist was significantly correlated with the factors of high educational attainment, low psychological distress, high social support, fulfillment of altruistic and self-oriented motives, volunteer integration into volunteer group, and satisfaction with volunteer activities (Cheung et al., 2006). Like the original Omoto and Snyder (1995) study, it was discovered that fulfillment of self-oriented motives was the most important factor in predicting persistence of older Chinese volunteers. It is important to note that when considering the three stages of the Volunteer Process Model, volunteer experiences
were not a more important predictor than antecedent factors in influencing the tenure of volunteer service (Cheung et al., 2006). Additionally, the researchers reported mental health of older volunteers may influence persistence (Cheung et al., 2006), a factor that had not been discussed in previous research. Overall, the study provided support to the cross-cultural application of the Volunteer Process Model (Cheung et al., 2006).

Chacon, Vecina, and Davila (2007) aimed to overcome some historical contradictions between the Functional Model and Role Identity Model in their research with the Three Stage Model of Volunteer’s Duration. The authors stated the best predictor of service duration of volunteers is behavioral intention (Chacon et al., 2007). Chacon et al. supported Penner’s (2002) idea of combining the functional and role identity approaches to explain the processes underlying helping behavior. By integrating variables from both approaches, such as satisfaction, organizational commitment, and role identity, the model succeeds in predicting volunteer service duration (Chacon et al., 2007). This influence is mediated by intent to remain (Chacon et al., 2007). Furthermore, the authors reported satisfaction was more likely to predict short-term duration of service and organizational commitment, and role identity was more likely to predict medium- and long-term duration of service. Chacon et al. argued their model reconciles the contradictory findings in previous research by stating that satisfaction is not directly related to duration of service but is related to behavior intention to remain (Chacon et al., 2007). This variable of behavioral intention to remain is the variable that most influences actual duration of service (Chacon et al., 2007).

It is worth noting that Chacon et al. (2007) also spent some time in their discussion section questioning how the variable of satisfaction has been measured through the years. Their first concern about measuring satisfaction is that it has been assessed in a variety of ways
through the years without much consistency (Chacon et al., 2007). For example, role identity and commitment variables have been assessed in similar ways in prior research. However, the way in which volunteer satisfaction has been assessed varies considerably. Chacon and colleagues questioned whether this significant variance is what explains disparity in the findings on volunteer satisfaction in previous research (Chacon et al., 2007).

Secondly, Chacon et al. (2007) suggested research data on volunteer duration should look more carefully at the variable dispersion in data. They stated that satisfaction is important to those volunteers who remain. However, the variability of satisfaction decreased as length of time with the organization increased (Chacon et al., 2007). As volunteers give up and leave, this action reduced the predictive power of satisfaction (Chacon et al., 2007). Chacon et al. reported satisfaction was a preferred criterion predicting short-term durations of volunteerism than it is medium- and/or long-term durations of volunteerism.

In the same year, Davila and Chacon (2007) presented a basic model for predicting permanence in volunteerism. The model included satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to continue serving, and real permanence duration and the relationships among them (Davila & Chacon, 2007). Davila and Chacon commented if organizations wish to predict permanence, they should simply ask the volunteer their intentions. The idea is that once individuals say what they are going to do, they will strive to meet that commitment. Yet, the authors emphasized that knowing the intentions is not enough. Such variables as organizational commitment and satisfaction with work may influence their intent (Davila & Chacon, 2007). The authors were careful to note that the results indicate that researchers need to be sensitive to the different types of volunteering (episodic, long-term, caring for people with illness, working with children, etc.) which may influence the permanence of volunteers.
In 2007, Boezeman and Ellemers published the first of three articles on volunteerism discussed in this literature review. The first explored the commitment and cooperative intent among fundraising volunteers. This article included two studies. The first study found pride and volunteer organizational respect had a direct and positive association with organizational commitment. It was also discovered that pride and volunteer organizational respect had a positive and indirect association with cooperative intent. Based on the findings, Boezeman and Ellemers concluded that pride and respect are relevant to behavioral intent of volunteer and volunteer commitment behavior (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007).

Next, in the second study in this article, Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) perceived importance of volunteer work is associated with pride, perceived organizational support is associated with respect, and these antecedents would be indirectly and positively associated with organizational commitment through pride and respect. Overall, the authors summarized the model of cooperation is a promising perspective to exploring the behaviors of volunteers. They also argued for future researchers to consider pride and respect to be important motivators of volunteer work.

The next year, Boezeman and Ellemers (2008) examined organizational commitment as an indicator of work motivation among volunteers. They argued that the existence of pride and respect predicts organizational commitment among volunteers. Boezeman and Ellemers reported the perceived importance of volunteer work is an antecedent of pride and perceived organizational support is an antecedent of respect, and that pride and respect were directly and positively related to organizational commitment.

In 2008, Stukas, Worth, Clary, and Snyder introduced an index for calculating a volunteer’s total number of matches across six motivational categories to predict outcomes
such as satisfaction and intent to remain. The authors believed this index also predicted experiences of both positive and negative emotion in volunteer organizations. Stukas et al. argued that multiple motives effect different outcomes. They argue that motivation and the ability to meet one’s goals and purposes are of key importance to understanding volunteer outcomes.

In 2008, Snyder and Omoto published an important analytic review on volunteerism using their Volunteer Process Model (1995) as a lens and further discuss volunteerism’s place amongst social issues and social policies. First, Snyder and Omoto reviewed volunteerism’s characteristics. They listed six defining and characteristic features of volunteerism; volunteerism is voluntary and free from preexisting relationships, includes deliberative decision-making to commit, exhibits longevity, is based on a person’s own goals with no expectation of reward or payment, serves people who desire help, and is commonly done within an organizational context. As Snyder and Omoto stated, volunteerism is a curious phenomenon that should not occur. Volunteerism is not bounded by obligation, is effortful, is time consuming, and presents personal costs to volunteers (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). Yet, people seek out opportunities to volunteer (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). The review by Omoto and Snyder has been guided by their Volunteer Process Model. Their model focuses on volunteerism as a process that unfolds over time (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). As previously discussed in this chapter review, the Volunteer Process Model has three stages—antecedents, experiences, and consequences. New to the model in this review, as exhibited in Table 1, is the level of analysis—individual, interpersonal/social group, agency/organization, and societal/cultural context (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). In this paper, Omoto and Snyder presented a schematic of the volunteer process model.
Table 1

*Schematic of the Volunteer Process Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Analysis</th>
<th>Stages of the Volunteer Process</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Antecedents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Personality, motivation, life circumstances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal/Social Group</td>
<td>Group memberships, norms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agency/Organizational</td>
<td>Recruitment strategies, training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal/Cultural Context</td>
<td>Ideology, service programs and institutions</td>
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(Omoto & Snyder, 2008)

Omoto and Snyder suggested that the model builds bridges between several levels of analysis. The authors examined examples in research that have used the Volunteer Process Model and describe how the model is interactive.

While this literature review focused on the retention of volunteers, Omoto and Snyder (2008) stated that the different stages overlap and/or have a reciprocal relationship. To discuss the antecedent stage briefly, researchers have attempted to find out why people volunteer and often look to motivations as the factor. Research has supported that motivations are what brings people to volunteerism and that is what also sustains their involvement (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). People volunteer to meet personal and specific needs and those needs can differ
between people (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). It is the satisfaction of those personal needs that encourages persistence. Omoto and Snyder also recognized that the development of identity considerations was often an important antecedent to volunteering. As Omoto and Snyder acknowledged, other researchers have supported the proposition that the more individuals identify with their role, the more they give in terms of time and the greater their persistence. Role identity is related to sustained volunteerism (Omoto & Snyder, 2008).

The experiences stage of the Volunteer Process Model can vary quite a bit in actual length (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). The more volunteers’ experiences match their initial motivations, the more satisfaction they enjoy (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). Omoto and Snyder reported that satisfaction was one a predictor of intent to remain. Volunteers’ experiences may include both positive and negative feelings (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). For example, on the positive side, volunteers may experience empathy and/or liking of those receiving their services, which encourages them to persist (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). Negatively, volunteers may meet with lack of support from social group or a discomfort from attached stigmatism based on who they are serving, which may cause them to terminate their volunteer association early (Omoto & Snyder, 2008).

The consequences stage of the Volunteer Process Model focuses on changes in attitudes, knowledge, and behavior of volunteers as well as their ultimate longevity of service (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). Longevity is a key feature of the consequences stage and is related to satisfaction with work, amount of support they perceive from their social network, and the motivations for becoming volunteers (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). Omoto and Snyder reported that volunteers who can and did get something back from their experience were likely to stay involved longer. Individuals who volunteer for personal reasons tend to volunteer longer
Omoto and Snyder also discussed that a sense of community benefits both the volunteer and the recipient of services—building connections and increasing other forms of community contributions such as monetary donations.

At this point in the article, Omoto and Snyder (2008) shifted to a broader perspective on volunteerism. In reference to age as a context for volunteerism, the authors discuss that motivations for volunteering make important shifts over the life course (Omoto & Snyder). For example, young adults may volunteer to obtain or improve certain skills for career enhancement. Older adults may volunteer to improve their quality of life. In references to culture as a context for volunteerism, as expected, variances exist among those who give and their rationale.

Omoto and Snyder (2008) summarized the Volunteer Process Model:

Guided by the Volunteer Process Model, our review of the scientific literature indicates that the dynamics of volunteerism have been observed in studies of diverse populations of volunteers serving in a variety of volunteer roles and working on behalf of a wide range of volunteer causes. Specifically, it has been possible to develop measures of motivations for use with current volunteers and prospective volunteers, to demonstrate that persuasive messages designed to motivate people to volunteer are effective to the extent that they target the motivations of individual prospective volunteers, to document that the satisfaction experienced by volunteers is predicted by the match between their motivations and the benefits that they derive from volunteering, to observe that volunteers’ intentions to continue volunteering (both in immediate and longer terms) are predicted by the match between their motivations and the benefits that they perceive to accrue to them as volunteers, and to reveal that volunteering and other forms of social action are promoted by psychological connections to community and, in turn that they build bonds of community. (p. 21)

Based on the above summary, Omoto and Snyder (2008) next discussed volunteerisms’ effect on social change. Volunteerism can encourage political change through grassroots efforts that grow to major movements, but it can, in turn, be affected by political and cultural changes.
Volunteerism is a powerful force that has been known to transform causes and communities (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). As this is a dissertation about volunteer retention, I will only mention that Omoto and Snyder emphasized that many societies support the operation of volunteer centers or clearinghouses that match prospective individuals to volunteer opportunities. However, these organizations seemed to focus on type of and proximity to volunteer opportunities. Omoto and Snyder stated that these organizations would increase retention by attending not only to motivations, but also to some of the other featured items described as important at the antecedent, experiences, and consequences stages of the volunteer process. By utilizing social science research, organizations such as these could create policies and programs that would target issues of volunteer retention (Omoto & Snyder, 2008). The authors concluded the review by offering that volunteerism is one form of a broader class of social action behaviors in which individuals engage as they attempt to individually and collectively address the problems of society (Omoto & Snyder, 2008).

In the same year, Musick and Wilson (2008) published their book on volunteerism. In it they suggested that volunteers will quit if they feel “used.” The authors also suggested that inadequate support from paid staff in the form of training and answers to questions will also reduce persistence in volunteers. Musick and Wilson indicated that recognition and continual incentives will keep volunteers active and happy. Finally, volunteer managers and their organizations must strike a balance between too much and too little bureaucracy (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Too much bureaucracy dampens volunteers’ enthusiasm and spirit. Too little bureaucracy creates a feeling of alienation and ambiguity.
In the final Boezeman and Ellemers (2009) article in this literature review, the authors considered a needs approach to job satisfaction. Specifically, they distinguished between autonomy, competence, and related needs to assess how satisfaction of each of these distinct needs contributes to volunteers’ job satisfaction as a predictor of persistence with the organization (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009). The authors then compared responses to those of paid workers to extend the research on similarities and differences between volunteer and paid workers. The study revealed that satisfaction of autonomy needs and relatedness needs are more relevant to the volunteers’ job satisfaction and their intention to remain a volunteer than satisfaction of competence needs (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009).

In a recent study, Hustinx and Handy (2009) explored whether volunteer attachment is directed at the whole organization or with local branches. The analysis of the data did not provide straightforward confirmation or rejection of the hypotheses (Hustinx & Handy, 2009). There seem to be multiple mechanisms at work when considering volunteer attachment in a large multi-chapter organization (Hustinx & Handy, 2009). An important observation of the study was attachments are primarily built at the local level, not larger organizational level (Hustinx & Handy, 2009). Loyalty and satisfaction were strongly interwoven with the local volunteer experience (Hustinx & Handy, 2009). The authors argued that retaining volunteers requires building attachments to the host organization, focusing on the local affiliation. This importance of localism was also supported by Musick and Wilson (2008). The analysis showed, above all, physical locality mattered to organizational commitment.

Researchers Hidalgo and Moreno (2009) recognized identifying factors affecting the retention of volunteers is a main objective for researchers and volunteer managers. While many variables have been determined, Hidalgo and Moreno reported there are other variables that
are yet unexplored. Their statistical analysis showed that good social relationships inside the organization, support from the organization staff, positive evaluation of the job they perform, and training they receive contribute positively to their intention to remain with the organization in which they volunteer (Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009). Hidalgo and Moreno stated that these factors have rarely been tested in research on volunteerism. Their results demonstrated that social networks are very important to the retention of volunteers as volunteers are reluctant to break their social bonds (Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009).

Finally, in another recent study by Hartenian and Lilly (2009), the authors examined whether the antecedent egoism was, like altruism, multidimensional. They reported that egoism was composed of three different dimensions (outward, inward, experiential) that relate differently to each of the three dimensions of commitment (compliance, identification, internalization) (Hartenian & Lilly, 2009). The authors demonstrated that positive correlations exist between egoism and commitment. The study supported the finding by Omoto and Snyder (1995) that self-oriented motivations rather than altruistic intentions lead to persistence. Based on their findings, the authors argued that future research should include egoism along with altruism to investigate volunteer behavior, context-specific dimensions of egoism should be developed, and given the strong relationship between commitment and staff retention, a path analysis from egoism and altruism through commitment to length of service as a volunteer should be explored. Egoism in volunteers can be beneficial to the organization by providing the organization with important skill sets in spite of a lack of volunteer altruism (Hartenian & Lilly, 2009) and intention to remain.
Managerial Implications

Retention of volunteers is a critical concern in volunteer management. Losing volunteers, for whatever reason, means a loss of experience, a loss of people with a familiarity with the organization and its programs, and a serious strain on the organization. Turnover of volunteers is difficult to predict (Miller et al., 1990). While turnover can be beneficial by bringing in fresh ideas and allowing other volunteers to move into different roles (Bradner, 1995), turnover typically has a negative effect on the organization. For example, turnover in organizations that service children may disrupt learning and may lead to children feeling abandoned (Gidron, 1985; Skoglund, 2006). Turnover can be financially draining to the organization (Skoglund, 2006) as more effort is needed to recruit, train, and retain again (Miller et al., 1990). “Maintaining a low turnover rate and a stable team of experienced volunteers can reduce human and monetary resources spent on recruiting and training new volunteers” (Yui et al., 2001, p. 103). High turnover of volunteers is a concern of most organizations (Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009). We are still learning there are many variables that lead to turnover. Money and job security are irrelevant to volunteers (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). As Skoglund (2006) suggested, since money is not a viable motivator for volunteers, organizations must focus on other ways to support volunteer persistence. The authors offer managerial implications from their research findings.

Skoglund (2006) reported the first 6 months for the volunteer are the most critical to their long-term commitment. Yui et al. (2001) state the first year is critical. McCurley and Lynch (2007) observed there are points along the volunteer’s first year in service that are critical to his or her retention. From their studies, researchers have offered a variety of suggestions to
increase retention. Hildalgo and Moreno (2009) encouraged a friendly environment and organizational support with adequate training and supervision. Hustinx and Handy (2009) observed the organization should build loyalties and cultivate a sense of belonging. Skoglund indicated that volunteer retention is about the volunteers feeling good and that organizations should orient, train, and monitor to retain. Yanagisawa and Kakakibara (2008) found that regular meetings are critical so that volunteers can share their ideas. Cheung et al. (2006) suggested managers use intrinsic motivators such as training to learn new skills, opportunities for volunteers to make new friends, and emphasizing that volunteering is a way to stay active to increase retention. Davila and Chacon (2007) indicated managers implement a series of strategies to increase satisfaction with the activity, which would lead to higher commitment and intention to continue. Davila and Chacon stated that intention to continue directly predicts permanence. Liao-Troth (2001) recommended the intent should be communicated to potential volunteers that volunteering keeps depression at bay for older volunteers. Volunteering provides older volunteers with challenging, exciting, and important volunteer positions (Rouse & Clawson, 1992). Culp (2009) reported baby boomers will seek opportunities that will use their skills, fulfill their interests, and fit their retirement schedule. Yui et al.’s (2001) findings suggested that to keep volunteers, organizations need to adopt different strategies at different time points during volunteers’ service.

Bradner’s (1995) chapter in the Volunteer Management Handbook suggested ideas to increase retention as well. Bradner revealed that 100% of retention of volunteers is an unrealistic goal. After all, there are situations where it is important for the organization to replace an ineffective volunteer. However, Bradner argued that volunteer managers must take steps to encourage volunteers to stay with the organization. Bradner offered a variety of
suggestions to keep volunteers interested in their job. Bradner advised volunteer managers to provide volunteers with an opportunity for evaluation. He suggested that managers provide volunteers with the opportunity to take “vacations,” or leaves of absences, from their tasks and be warmly welcomed back to the organization when they are ready to return. Bradner also encouraged volunteer promotions, in-service training, staff meetings, and presentations by volunteers, advocacy opportunities, expense reimbursement, benefits, interesting tasks, volunteer socialization, and staff appreciation as ideas to keep volunteers committed. Time and time again, the authors recommended the importance of the relationship (communication, support, recognition) between the volunteer organization and the volunteer.

McCurley and Lynch’s (2007) book on keeping volunteers offered critical points of involvement between volunteers and the organization and tips to volunteer longevity. They noted that the time frames are highly variable depending on individual settings. In the first month, the manager should recognize that the volunteer is learning about the job he or she has been given and should view “this initial matching as a hopeful but occasionally incorrect experiment” (p. 108). A critical consideration during this time is volunteer comfort; do they feel capable of doing the job (McCurley & Lynch, 2007)? The managers should re-interview the volunteer to ensure correct placement after the first 30 days (McCurley & Lynch, 2007).

After the first 6 months, McCurley and Lynch (2007) suggested volunteers stop to consider such elements as reality versus expectation, assignment fit, life fit, and social fit. The authors reported that during this phase managers create a buddy system for volunteers, make efforts to increase communication with volunteers, schedule a 6-month review, and give the volunteers symbols of belonging to the organization (email, voicemail, business cards, etc.).
McCurley and Lynch (2007) indicated that one of the most critical incident points along the volunteer time commitment is the 1-year anniversary. Volunteers may feel they have “done their time.” The authors suggested that the key factors for the volunteer at this time are whether or not volunteers have bonded with others in the organization, whether or not they feel they have accomplished something, and/or whether or not there is opportunity for growth for them in the organization. McCurley and Lynch recommended management develop a “volunteer growth plan” for each volunteer, celebrate volunteers’ terms of service, make sure volunteers see the results of their work and overall contribution to the organization, provide them with symbolic tokens, speak frankly with the volunteers to see if they are still enjoying their work, and be prepared with a number of options for volunteers to re-kindle the excitement they once had if it is waning.

Long-term involvement of volunteers who do a good job for the organization is always the goal for organizations. Long-term involvement of volunteers often coincides with many changes in the personal lives of volunteers (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). All volunteers will face critical incident points during their service, occurring at different times for different volunteers (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). The authors suggested the volunteer manager should stay attuned to what is happening in the life of the volunteer. McCurley and Lynch emphasized that two strategies are crucial to ensuring that volunteers remain during these life changes: (1) giving volunteers a sense of empowerment in shaping their volunteer role when their personal life requires an adjustment in their volunteer role, and (2) making the volunteer a “true believer” in the mission of the organization.
As McCurley and Lynch (2007) reported, all of these suggestions are additional work for those who manage volunteers, but they are designed to concentrate on an essential task—retaining good volunteers.

**Summary of Research on Volunteer Retention**

The search for understanding volunteer retention has followed many paths during the last three decades. The research focused on individuals and what motivates them and keeps their motivations inspired. And the research has looked to the relationship volunteers have with each other and paid staff. Some researchers have tried to find their answers by comparing characteristics of volunteers to paid workers in various forms (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009; Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001; Miller et al., 1990). Some introduced new models or indexes (Davis et al., 2003; Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Penner, 2002; Stukas et al., 2008). Some researchers have looked to the importance of localism (Hustinx & Handy, 2009; Musick & Wilson, 2008). And others have looked at numerous variables such as job satisfaction (Dailey, 1986; Yui et al., 2001), psychological contracts (Farmer & Fedor, 1999; Liao-Troth, 2000), group integration/social networks (Galiando-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001; Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009), and so on. All but one study appeared to use participants who served other adults. All of the studies in this literature review were quantitative. Fundamentally, it appears volunteerism is considered a process and retention of volunteers is a desired end result of that process.

The current dissertation fills the gap in the literature by addressing retention of youth development program volunteers and by utilizing a qualitative methodology to further explore the phenomenon of volunteer retention. In support of this approach, Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley
(2001) suggested research on the subject of volunteer retention be done qualitatively so to address the holes that may exist in research.

**Research on Volunteer and Staff Relations**

There are three commonly held assumptions about volunteerism: volunteers provide a cost savings to the organization, volunteers help expand service to the client base, and there is a negative impact on paid staff because of volunteers’ presence and perceived threat (Netting et al., 2004). Staff resistance and staff predisposal to relationship conflict with volunteers is a concern for organizations (Netting et al., 2004). The focus on the next section will be on the research related to the relationship between volunteers and paid staff:

1. Chronological review of research on volunteer and staff relations
2. Managerial implications
3. Summary of research on volunteer and staff relations

**Chronological Review of the Literature**

Brudney and Gazley (2002) tested the conventional wisdom that volunteer programs save organizational money, raise the level of service provided, and threaten paid positions. In terms of the relationship between staff and volunteers, the authors stated two historical assumptions: staff will resist the introduction of volunteers, and volunteers will replace paid staff. The pessimism is prevalent, fueled by a common adage that volunteers have replaced rather than supported staff (Brudney & Gazley, 2002). Brudney and Gazley questioned whether this assumed conflict has been overstated. In their study, they found no evidence of antagonism or competitiveness between staff and volunteers. In fact, volunteers were readily accepted into
the organization (Brudney & Gazley, 2002). In sum, this study undermined the stereotypes of adversarial relationships between volunteers and paid staff (Brudney & Gazley, 2002).

Netting, Nelson, Borders, and Huber (2004) examined the theoretical perspectives and studies on volunteer and paid staff relationships in their article to determine what managers in social work can gain from the research. Improving skills in helping to manage volunteer and staff relationships is frequently requested by management of organizations that utilize volunteers (Netting et al., 2004). The ongoing theme in the literature is that volunteers threaten the positions of paid staff and paid staff opposes the introduction of volunteers to their organization (Netting et al., 2004). The relationship between paid staff and volunteers is, perhaps, a complex one that requires time and attention (Netting et al., 2004). “Resistance of staff to volunteers is not a foregone conclusion” (Netting et al., 2004, p. 86). The authors stated that some of the level of resistance will vary depending on organizational cultural norms. While conflict may trigger research into this phenomenon, it should also be about best practices and quality volunteer management.

Musick and Wilson (2008), in contrast to the previous researchers, offered a somewhat more negative view on the relationship between paid staff and volunteers. They state there are inherent problems built into the relationship. From the paid staff perspective, Musick and Wilson argued that paid staff are typically very committed to their organization and its cause and become agitated by the volunteers’ reluctance to be career activists. Paid staff may resent volunteers because of their freedom to choose their work schedules and perceived lack of commitment (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Paid staff may view volunteers as competitors or those who depress their wages by working for free (Musick & Wilson, 2008). On the other hand, volunteers occupy a place of spoken and unspoken subordination and may resent feeling
denigrated and dismissed by paid staff (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Again, there is a fine line between the two, defining the role of the volunteer so that rights and responsibilities are clear without hampering enthusiasm (Musick & Wilson, 2008). As Musick and Wilson noted, the problem lies in the fact that paid staff and volunteers have roots in different goals for themselves and for the organization.

**Managerial Implications**

Netting et al. (2004) advocated that volunteers require commitments of time and resources from the organization if organizations wish to have quality programs. A new focus for volunteer managers may be to consider the psychological contract of volunteers embedded in the organizational culture (Netting et al., 2004). Managers must understand the organizational norms associated with volunteerism within their settings (Netting et al., 2004). Managers need to explain the important contributions volunteers make to the organization, carefully defining roles played by volunteers (Musick & Wilson, 2008; Netting et al., 2004). Role conflict continues to be a persistent concern between paid staff and volunteers (Netting et al., 2004). As Netting et al. recognized, even if prevailing organizational culture supports volunteerism, relationships can be tense if roles are not clarified. The authors proposed a series of questions to guide a volunteer manager in assessing the organization’s paid staff/volunteer roles and relationships and some of those questions have been integrated into the methodology of this study.

In addition, MacDuff (1995) wrote a chapter in the *Volunteer Management Handbook* that provides suggestions for managers to cultivate positive paid staff/volunteer relationship. Macduff stated that there is little information for volunteer managers on characteristics of a successful staff/volunteer relationship, symptoms of poor relations, how to survey the
relationship, and how to improve a bad situation. MacDuff urged managers to consider the volunteer and paid staff relationship as a “team.” Some of the characteristics of an effective volunteer/paid staff team include the following: teams are a manageable size; people are appropriately selected to serve on the team; team leaders are trained, the team is supported by administration, teams have goals and objectives, the team supports and trusts one another, communication on the team is both vertical and horizontal, the team has real responsibilities, the team has fun while accomplishing its task, staff and volunteers publicly recognize each other’s contributions, teams celebrate their success, and the entire organization sees itself as encouraging the relationship of volunteer and staff teams (MacDuff, 1995).

MacDuff (1995) also discussed the symptoms of poor volunteer and staff relationships. Some of the symptoms include “us” versus “them” language, uncertainty about roles and responsibilities, lack of cooperation when asked to work on joint projects, and indirect communication. MacDuff reported that when the team has poor relations there is little information sharing, and information is power.

MacDuff (1995) offered a sequential process to build the volunteer/staff team.

1. Allow members to develop their own goals and objectives.
2. Internal role expectations should be clarified.
3. External role expectations should be clarified.
4. Communication between volunteers and staff is critical.
5. Decisions made by the team should be made uniformly.
6. Leaders of volunteers and staff must be skilled.
7. Organizational norms should encourage positive relationship between staff and volunteers.
Next, MacDuff (1995) offered tips to enhance volunteer and staff relations; including management delegating tasks; training on team building; constantly monitoring types, forms, and frequency of communication; consistent evaluating performed on all team members; monitoring how frequently volunteers are included in planning for new projects; and mutually defining roles and responsibilities. As MacDuff states, every volunteer program faces its own unique challenges in building an effective team between paid staff and volunteers. Yet, teams have practical and powerful payoffs in delivering results efficiently when members work together (MacDuff, 1995).

In their book, McCurley and Lynch (2007) found that volunteers who feel a positive sense of connection with staff will tend to feel good about the volunteer experience. Unfortunately, some organizations inadvertently act in ways that dilute the connections that volunteers feel and have an effect on making volunteers feel different to paid staff (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). In short, the authors list disconnecting factors for volunteers that include differences in resources (lack of work space, storage space, computer access); access to information (management rarely informs volunteers, volunteers often hear of new things in the media); status (lack of identifying information, training, and/or inclusion to meetings); authority (little freedom to make decisions); rules (volunteers should be careful not to abuse their perceived freedoms); expectations (little or no work to do); and regard (referring to them as “just volunteers”).

McCurley and Lynch (2007) offered ways to create a positive sense of connection for volunteers and staff. First, they recommended creating a welcoming atmosphere for new volunteers. First impressions are important. They suggested having a welcoming ceremony, which may include a symbolic gift such as a t-shirt or e-mail address. This communicates the
volunteer has joined the team (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). Next, organizations should seek input and participation from the volunteer (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). Oftentimes, new volunteers have a unique, fresh perspective of the organization and may provide helpful suggestions overlooked by tenured staff. Volunteers should also be included in work-related and social functions (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). “Invitations are a great connector. They communicate esteem and respect. They also reinforce the importance of the volunteer’s role in the agency” (McCurley & Lynch, 2007, p. 38). Third, the organization should also communicate volunteer contributions (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). Intrinsic and extrinsic recognition is important. The organization should also identify volunteers by name, title, and dress (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). Knowing names of volunteers is of critical importance; providing titles to the volunteers cements their status; and inferring a similar dress code of staff and volunteers establishes a sense of shared identity (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). Next, McCurley and Lynch suggested that organizations encourage volunteer creativity. Volunteers should have the same input as paid staff and managers should be encouraged to use good ideas gleaned from volunteers (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). Organizations should establish high standards for volunteers (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). The authors stated volunteers should not have lower standards than those of paid staff because, if expectations are too easily met, volunteers will not feel special about their contribution. The eighth suggestion from the authors was that managers should monitor volunteer regard. They should be cognizant of how often and in what manner volunteers are included in organization activities. Managers should also scrutinize the view of paid staff towards volunteers (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). Next, the organization should create a culture where volunteers have ownership in the mission. “Only when there is ownership can people be proud of their work” (McCurley & Lynch, 2007, p. 43). Managers must allow volunteers to
“own” a piece or pieces of a project. The ninth suggestion from the authors is to offer sincere and consistent recognition. In particular, when recognition is given to members of a team that includes both paid staff and volunteers, the sense of connection is very powerful (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). Next, McCurley and Lynch promote interaction. When the opportunities do not naturally present themselves, managers should make an effort to bring people together. And finally, the authors suggested listening and learning. Everyone in the organization should take time to listen to the volunteers. Volunteers feel more connected to the organization when they believe others are interested in what they have to say or share (McCurley & Lynch, 2007).

In the end, organizational staff are co-workers of volunteers and fellow members of the team (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). The authors emphasized respect of co-workers has been recognized as a significant factor in building organizational commitment of volunteers. It is important for all volunteers to form a positive relationship with all staff members of the organization when possible.

Summary of Research on Paid/Volunteer Relationships

While there have been a few studies conducted on the relationship between paid staff and volunteers, overall, this appears to be a research area that has been largely ignored. Given the effect the relationship may have on volunteers’ decision to persist, it seems this is an area ripe for study. There have been worthwhile and solid suggestions for managers who have to negotiate the relationship between paid staff and volunteers; however, new information may emerge from future studies on the subject. The current study intended to explore, in part, the nuances of the paid staff and volunteer relationship in a youth development program in Michigan.
4-H and 4-H Club Work

For over 100 years, the 4-H youth development program has been educating children through its philosophy of “learning by doing.” As society has changed, 4-H has had to adjust its goals and approaches to remain relevant. 4-H is the largest youth develop program in the country. The program has and continues to rely heavily on the time, expertise, and commitment of its volunteers. The adult 4-H volunteers are individuals that deliver the diverse educational programs to the 4-H participants. One of the primary goals of the local extension office, where the 4-H program resides, is keeping volunteers committed and active participants in the 4-H program. An overview of the 4-H experience will include these four areas.

1. 4-H, then and now
2. Socioeconomic status of St. Joseph County, Michigan
3. 4-H impact studies
4. Studies involving the retention of 4-H volunteers

4-H, Then and Now

The 4-H youth development program began in Ohio in 1902. The intent behind the new group was to improve the quality of life for youth in rural America (Usinger, Breazeale, & Smith, 2005). 4-H sought to teach rural children new farming technology in hopes they would share it with their parents (Usinger et al., 2005). 4-H is no longer only for members of the farming community, but extends into the suburbs and inner cities all over America (Albright, 2008).

4-H has grown into a community of 6 million young people across America learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. 4-H can be found in every county in every state, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and over 80 countries around the world. The 4-H community also includes 3,500 staff, 518,000 volunteers and 60 million alumni.
4-H’ers participate in fun, hands-on learning activities, supported by the latest research of land-grant universities, that are focused on three areas called Mission Mandates:

- Science, Engineering and Technology
- Healthy Living
- Citizenship

The 106 land-grant universities across the country deliver research driven programs through Extension agents in each of the more than 3,000 counties. The 4-H leadership builds on the strength of our state and local professionals in partnership with the National 4-H Headquarters. (About 4-H: History, 2010)

In St. Joseph County, the 4-H youth development program is considered a non-formal youth educational component of the Michigan State University Extension (4-H – FFA and Other Youth Fair Premium Book, 2009). It is jointly funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, Michigan State University, St. Joseph County Grange Fair Association, and the St. Joseph County Board of Commissioners (4-H – FFA and Other Youth Fair Premium Book, 2009). In addition, many St. Joseph County businesses, civic organizations, and private individuals provide materials and financial support for the 4-H program (4-H – FFA and Other Youth Fair Premium Book, 2009).

The description of the 4-H program in St. Joseph County is as follows:

4-H clubs are comprised of groups of five or more young people between the ages of 6 and 19 years in urban, suburban, small town and rural settings. 4-H clubs carry out a wide variety of educational projects in civic and community service, agriculture, home economics and other areas. Volunteer adult leaders and older 4-H members enrolled in the 4-H Teen Leadership project give 4-H members direction and leadership.

4-H clubs function democratically. 4-H members run their own clubs with the guidance of adult leaders, elect officers, help plan and hold meetings and select educational projects. Each club drafts its programs to suit its members and the localities in which they live. (4-H – FFA and Other Youth Fair Premium Book, 2009)

Like other programs that have endured, 4-H has had to adjust its focus and goals as society has changed. VanHorn, Flanagan, and Thomson (1999) discussed the primary changes and challenges facing the 4-H youth program. Fundamentally, the most overwhelming change in
society has been the drastic decline in the number of family-owned farms (VanHorn et al., 1999). “As the number of family farms drops, so does the prime potential of traditional membership” (VanHorn et al., 1999, p. 1). To reach youth to fulfill its mission, 4-H has shifted from its rural, agricultural roots to a focus on urban youth. 4-H has been somewhat successful in this attempt, but there is still a need for improvement if the program wishes to keep its enrollment numbers high.

Along with the shift from a primarily rural youth development to one that embraces urban youth, a second important way that 4-H has changed over the decades is in the integration of the clubs (Van Horn et al., 1999). 4-H is often stereotyped as an organization that holds white, rural youth as its members (Van Horn et al., 1999). Based on its move to the urban areas and its implementation of 4-H programs in the school setting, 4-H is slowly overcoming this historical homogeneity. The shift to a more diverse youth program has been difficult. 4-H continues to find ways to reach out to a variety of groups to add breadth to its public image and youth base (Van Horn et al., 1999).

The continued funding of programs such as 4-H is always a concern for those involved. The financial support through a combination of private and public funding has ebbed and flowed through the years (Van Horn et al., 1999). Government funding of 4-H continues. However, 4-H alum and private sources’ donations are also important to the county and state programs (Van Horn et al., 1999) and will continue to be critical. In fact, as recently as October 2009, 4-H in Michigan was in jeopardy of having its funding cut by a line-item veto by Governor Jennifer Granholm (4-H Agent, personal communication, October 23, 2009; County Extension Director, personal communication, October 23, 2009). At the last minute, an agreement was reached by the Governor’s office and Michigan State University to continue funding of
extension programs, including 4-H, with the agreement of a restructuring of the program (Michigan House Democrats, 2009). As of this writing, the final changes have not be shared publicly or implemented.

One of the most significant challenges and changes through the years in the 4-H program has been the decline in the volunteer base (Van Horn et al., 1999). Efforts to increase 4-H volunteer tenure have been a research focus for decades (Freeman, 1978). Just as households across the country have changed as a result of dual-earner homes, single-parent homes, and jobs that require frequent traveling, the time available for adults to volunteer in their children’s activities has changed. Replacing volunteer staff with paid staff would be an overwhelming financial burden. Continued volunteerism in 4-H is vital to its continuation. As Van Horn et al. explained, just as 4-H needs to increase the diversity of its youth members, it also must broaden the volunteer base.

The last two changes in the 4-H program through the years discussed by Van Horn et al. (1999) are program staff and new educational tools. Today, many land-grant universities offer degrees and course work in youth programming leading to careers in extension education (Van Horn et al., 1999). These extension professionals also have a plethora of new technology available to them to help their county 4-H programs with the mission of “learning by doing.” Through the years, with the advent of such technology as television and video tapes, 4-H has embraced the technology. Now, 4-H has the Internet to utilize. 4-H has welcomed new technologies through the years to reach youth and further its mission.

Van Horn et al. (1999) summarized the dilemma that 4-H leaders encounter. “If the 4-H program wants to be a force in the future, it needs to be progressive and adaptive to new
trends and ideas, reaching youth from all cultures, races, ethnic groups, and income levels” (p. 4). 4-H has always had an impact on a great number of youth in our country.

In 2006, 45% of youth reached by 4-H were from rural areas and small towns, while 55% were from the suburbs and large inner cities (Kress, 2006). 4-H is a youth development program that serves 6.5 million youth and utilizes the services of 538,000 adult volunteers (4-H, 2009). There are more youth involved in 4-H than Boys and Girls Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and FFA (4-H, 2009). While youth development programs such as 4-H are designed to develop skills, competencies, and knowledge, the programs are intended to prevent problem behaviors by reducing risk and risk-related factors (Albright, 2008).

**Socioeconomic Status of St. Joseph County, Michigan**

To discuss 4-H in St. Joseph County, it is important to understand the socioeconomic environment. St. Joseph County is located in southwest Michigan. The 2006 St. Joseph County socioeconomic profile indicates that population growth in the county has been slow and steady since 1980. An overwhelming percentage of the race in St. Joseph County is white (98.5%). The Hispanic/Latino segment of the population is expected to grow the most by 2015. Looking forward, population growth is expected to continue but at a slower rate than what it has already experienced. St. Joseph County is following the national trend towards smaller households and fewer households with children. Almost half of the households with children in 2005 were single-parent households; there were 9,534 married couple families and 7,497 single-parent families. In St. Joseph County, as expected, the percentage of school age children is decreasing, while the percentage of “empty nesters” is projected to marginally increase.
The majority of the labor force in St. Joseph County (12,573) is primarily employed in manufacturing. After manufacturing, retail trade employs 3,028 St. Joseph County residents. Following manufacturing and retail is construction (1,517), professional services (1,086); finance, insurance, and real estate (901); and agriculture (743). While farming has seen a decrease in the number of persons in this profession, it has seen an increase in production, which reflects ever higher productivity from the agricultural sector.

Agriculture, which has historically been the largest category of land use in the county, will remain so in the future. There will be pressure to convert agricultural land to other uses, primarily residential, as the population and number of households increase. (St. Joseph County, Michigan, 2009, p. 10)

All children ages 5–19 are eligible to enroll in the 4-H program in Michigan. Of the approximately 12,000 school-aged children in St. Joseph County, 1,030 were enrolled in the St. Joseph County 4-H program in 2009. Enrollment included children from 35 different towns and cities.

There were over 300 registered leaders in the St. Joseph 4-H Youth Program in 2009. Enrollment included leaders from 24 different towns and cities. To become a leader in the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Program, an adult must complete and pass a background check and go through an interview process. Once accepted as a 4-H leader in the county, the responsibilities of 4-H leaders are diverse.

The roles and responsibilities of the 4-H leader are varied and usually self-determined. Their primary task is to organize learning activities for the children enrolled in the project area in which they serve, with learning activities open for interpretation by individual project leaders. For example, the 4-H leader of the photography project area may conduct one or two meetings to teach the children the basics about taking pictures. Some project leaders may hold multiple
meetings throughout the year. Yet, there are some still project areas within a community 4-H group that do not have any 4-H leader assigned at all. Therefore, the child and his/her parent simply collect an information sheet from the extension office and complete the project without formal guidance. Often, project areas without a designated 4-H leader have few completed projects. (4-H Agent, personal communication, December 8, 2009; County Extension Director, personal communication, December 9, 2009).

Responsibilities of 4-H leaders vary within the county. Project leaders in other areas of 4-H may have much more responsibility than their counterparts. This is typically the case for project areas that require an animal. For example, the horse/pony project leaders would typically hold meetings throughout the winter for the children signed up with their club. Then during the summer months, they are additionally tasked with holding “workouts” in which the members bring their animals to practice. Along with these added responsibilities, 4-H club leaders that govern project areas with animals are also required to fill out extra forms, ensure proper health papers are up to date, and assist members with multiple class entries at 4-H sponsored shows and at the fair (4-H Agent, personal communication, December 8, 2009; County Extension Director, personal communication, December 9, 2009).

4-H leaders are often categorized into varying leadership levels. In St. Joseph County, the organizational leader is the primary leader of the club. The organizational leader(s) is the individual that the extension office communicates with for all issues. It is the organizational leader’s responsibility to make sure all paperwork is in and children are informed of all county-wide 4-H events and news. Project leaders are in the same club and support the organizational leader. Typically project leaders may run special meetings and/or help with certain areas of the project. Resource leaders are 4-H volunteers who are not assigned to a specific club but are a
specialist for a particular aspect of that project area. For example, within the horse project area, there is a specific resource leader for the driving, jumping, dressage, and gymkhana interest areas. The children are members of their own specific clubs, but attend special workouts to focus on these specialty areas with resource leaders (4-H Agent, personal communication, December 8, 2009; County Extension Director, personal communication, December 9, 2009).

Regardless of the type of 4-H leader a volunteer may be, all leaders are responsible to participate in the initial volunteer application and interview process; attend county-wide leader meetings when offered; promote 4-H and recruit members regardless of sex, race, or disability; uphold county 4-H policies and procedures; submit required reports to the 4-H office in a timely manner; and oversee club meetings (4-H Volunteers, 2007). As stated by the Arizona Extension office, volunteering is a privilege and all that is needed is a desire to provide quality educational programs and experiences for youth (Volunteer Resources, 2010). Volunteers have been a significant part of the 4-H program’s success since its inception.

4-H Impact Studies

Astroth and Haynes’ (2002) seminal study on the impact of 4-H on youth in Montana found that 4-H is a powerful, proven program that makes a positive difference for all those who participate. What children do in the out-of-school hours can affect their development in both positive and negative ways (Astroth & Haynes, 2002). Astroth and Haynes discovered significant research results that prove the worth of sustained, continuous 4-H participation. Their research revealed that 4-H participants are more likely than other students to succeed in school (earning more A’s than other students), to be involved as leaders in their school and community, to be looked up to as role models by other classmates, and to help others in the community. They
reported that 4-H clubs are intentionally designed to include the eight critical elements necessary for positive youth development:

- Positive relationships with caring adults
- Opportunities for self-determination
- An accepting and inclusive environment
- Opportunities to contribute through community service
- A safe environment for learning and growing
- Opportunities to develop skills and mastery
- Engagement in learning
- Opportunities to be an active participant in life—now and in the future

Furthermore, this research conducted in Montana by Astroth and Haynes indicated that 4-H youth feel more socially competent and self-assured than other youth. They have an increased ability to meet and greet new people easily, feel comfortable in new situations, and volunteer to lead activities in school classes (Astroth & Haynes, 2002).

In 2005, Goodwin, Barnett, Pike, Peutz, Lanting, and Ward replicated the Astroth and Haynes (2002) study in Idaho. The Goodwin et al. study supported the findings of the initial study. Researchers of the Idaho study encouraged other states to replicate the study as well, building a much larger and stronger research project to benefit 4-H nationwide. Additionally, the authors recommended communicating the results in a systematic and effective manner to elected officials, opinion leaders, school officials, and citizens to increase awareness and support of 4-H. They suggested, among other ideas, that this communication could potentially lead to enhanced volunteer leader retention.
Goodwin, Carroll, and Oliver also patterned their 2007 study after the Montana and Idaho study. Results confirmed the findings of the previous studies. 4-H youth had higher grades, were more likely to help others, had better relationships with adults, were glad to be who they are, and had a significantly more positive outlook on life and the world around them compared to their non-4-H peers.

In June 2009, the study was replicated and the findings were similar (Lewis, Murphy, & Baker, 2009). The researchers found that youth involved in 4-H are more likely to engage in other organized activities in and out of school, participate in more school leadership roles, care and contribute to the well-being of more people in need, and have higher self-confidence, character, and empowerment than youth who have never been involved in 4-H. (p. 3)

Finally, Lewis et al. emphasized the criticalness of informing community decision-makers of how 4-H programming investments pay long-term dividends in the growth and development of youth.

It is clear that youth development programs such as 4-H are important contributors to healthy youth development and positive outcomes (Albright, 2008). 4-H provides an opportunity for youth and their parents to work together (Usinger et al., 2005). However, ensuring participation in these programs, both by youth and the volunteers that teach the youth, is an ongoing challenge.

Studies Involving the Retention of 4-H Volunteers

Adult 4-H volunteers donate their time to help children and adults in the design and implementation of a variety of diverse educational programs. They may serve on committees, boards, run shows, participate in fair set-up, fundraising efforts, etc. Adult volunteers become
involved in 4-H for a number of reasons that include: their children were in 4-H (Rusk et al., 2001); their children are currently in 4-H (Byrne & Caskey, 1985; Fritz et al., 2003, Hutchens et al., 2002; Rusk et al., 2001; White & Arnold, 2003); they enjoy working with children (Byrne & Caskey, 1985; Hutchins et al., 2002; Rusk et al., 2001; White & Arnold, 2003); they enjoy 4-H as a social outlet (Byrne & Caskey, 1985); they are 4-H alumni (Fritz et al., 2003; Hutchins et al., 2002); and/or they think 4-H is a good program (Hutchins et al., 2002).

Smith and Bigler (1985) recognized the strength of a successful 4-H program is the workforce of volunteer club leaders. They also indicated that turnover of club leaders affects the members, the club, and the county. The study revealed that the number of children the volunteer leader had at home, the number of their own children that were involved in 4-H, and the number of years they had served as a 4-H leader all influenced their persistence. Smith and Bigler also reported that orientation, continual training, and recognition were important variables between volunteers who continued and those who did not continue service. The suggestion that continual training opportunities for volunteers is important is not new. Wessel and Wessel (1982) shared that, historically, extension leaders recognized the need for expanded training of 4-H agents and they were equally concerned about the training of volunteer leaders. Extension leaders noted it was not necessary to train every volunteer individually or to expect every volunteer to receive training in every subject. But training opportunities over the years would eventually provide a county with a large group of excellent leaders (Wessel & Wessel, 1982). Additionally, they concluded that extension leaders found it ironic that that an organization that used the slogan “learn by doing” used little of the technique in its own volunteer leader training (Wessel & Wessel, 1982).
Additionally, Byrne and Caskey (1985) reported volunteers they studied participated in 4-H because their own children were involved in 4-H and they, themselves, were 4-Hers. Additionally, participants in this study reported they volunteered in 4-H because they enjoyed working with children, liked the social aspect of volunteering, and liked opportunities to be challenged. Byrne and Caskey’s study also focused on preferred incentives of 4-H volunteers. These respondents also reported that an expression of appreciation by a 4-H member, a note from extension staff, recognition in the media, and, most importantly, knowing intrinsically that they were a part of something important were all significant incentives to volunteers in 4-H.

Two studies on the retention of 4-H leaders provide additional explanation on 4-H volunteerism. First, Penrod (1991) used the systems framework to introduce the LOOP principle: Locate, Orient, Operate, and Perpetuate. This theory focuses on the idea that the extension office should link volunteers with the organizational mission and project goals through the personal interests of the volunteers, significant accomplishments of the volunteers, and recognition of the volunteers. Penrod argued that this approach enhanced program success and volunteer growth through systematic organization of volunteer efforts.

Rouse and Clawson (1992) explored the motives and incentives of older adult volunteers in the 4-H program. They suggested that recruiting older adults to become volunteers is imperative. The authors suggested older adults be given an opportunity to make a contribution and be assisted in gaining the feeling they’re contributing to some purpose. Rouse and Clawson argued that satisfying motives and rewarding older adults with meaningful incentives will be critical in retaining older adult 4-H volunteers.

Later in this decade, the research focus continued on motivation and recognition of 4-H volunteers. Culp and Schwartz (1998) commented that there continues to be an open debate of
what volunteer work and accomplishments should be recognized and if that recognition should be intrinsic or extrinsic. They found informal (intrinsic) recognition was overlooked for the formal recognition. Yet it is the informal recognition that is often more effective. In fact, volunteers surveyed ranked informal, intrinsic recognition more important than formal, extrinsic recognition. Furthermore, the most meaningful source of recognition was from the 4-H members themselves and at a local level. In fact, 20% of volunteers did not seek formal recognition. Culp and Schwartz encouraged 4-Hers to send thank you notes to their leaders. They also encouraged extension staff to foster informal, intrinsic recognition along with formal efforts.

Culp and Schwartz (1999) noted the relationship between the 4-H volunteer and the organization was dictated by two elements: volunteer motivations and organizational needs. The actual volunteer experience is the critical link between these two elements. Culp and Schwartz stated that affiliation is the strongest motivator for 4-H volunteers. Receiving recognition was the lowest motivator for 4-H volunteers. Clearly, the relationship between the 4-H volunteer and those the volunteer comes into contact with (other volunteers, extension staff, parents, etc.) is of critical importance to the volunteer experience and may affect persistence. Unfulfilled affiliation motives are the primary impetus for eventual discontinuation of 4-H volunteers (Culp & Schwartz, 1999). As Hiller (1998) explained, recognition of 4-H volunteers is a relationship, not an event.

Research conducted since 2000 has continued to investigate the areas of 4-H leader motivation/recognition and recruitment areas. In 2003, Fritz, Karmazin, Barbuto, and Burrow stated the retention of 4-H volunteers is of paramount concern to the entire 4-H program.
White and Arnold (2003) examined the factors that motivated an individual to become a 4-H leader and factors that caused a 4-H leader to leave. White and Arnold identified the 4-H youth agent as critical to the recruitment and retention of the 4-H volunteer. They reported that adults typically become a 4-H leader because they want to make a difference in the lives of youth, they receive satisfaction by helping others, and/or their own children are involved in 4-H. White and Arnold further suggested leaders typically leave their volunteer position because of time constraints and the fact that their children are no longer involved. Lobley (2008), in her study on 4-H volunteers in Maine, stated it makes sense that 4-H leaders stay involved to benefit their children. One question she poses is, how do we keep these volunteers involved after their children are gone? In her study, less than 5% stayed because they thought the 4-H program was fun, family-oriented, and rewarding. Lobley focused on the lack of fun and lack of volunteer recognition as a reason why Maine’s volunteer base has dwindled in recent years. She suggested extension staff should focus their efforts on retention: fun leadership development opportunities and strong recognition programs.

Whitson (2008) developed a model, primarily for 4-H, that assists the extension office in servicing their volunteers more effectively by identifying and providing for their needs. Culp (2009) emphasized if volunteer involvement is a priority of the extension office in the future, administrators need to be acknowledged and rewarded for effectively managing volunteer programs. Whitson suggested that extension professionals collaborated and cooperated with 4-H volunteers more than management. Whitson’s model is a 5-step process: strategize/search, education/energizes, recruit/resource, volunteer/volunteer administration, and evaluate. While this model is a nice guide to approach the relationship between the volunteer administrators and volunteers, it lacks the research required for it to become solid theoretical tool. Regardless,
Whitson stated that care, education, and support of 4-H volunteers must be provided to ensure volunteer leader success. We must strive to understand the factors that motivate and discourage 4-H leaders (Whitson, 2008).

Looking forward, it is important to explore what encourages persistence in 4-H volunteers. As White and Arnold (2003) observed, there has been little research on the volunteers’ experience and that the relationship between the extension office and the 4-H leader may be a promising avenue to pursue to better understand the factors that cause a leader to persist. White and Arnold also indicated it behooves us to look more closely at how the extension office interacts with, educates, and supports its volunteers (White & Arnold, 2003).

**4-H Literature Review Summary**

4-H is an important youth development program that has moved from being a historically rural-focused entity to an organization that helps children from farms, town, and cities across the country and the world today develop skills through learning-by-doing. 4-H continues to transform itself to remain current to today’s society. Research has shown that 4-H has made a positive impact on the lives of children. That impact would not be possible without the dedication of the tens of thousands of adult volunteer leaders who donate their time and expertise in support of the 4-H mission. The retention of 4-H leaders is critical to the overall program, the county, and the children that benefit from their commitment.
Volunteers are important to the organizations that they serve (Dailey, 1986; Davis et al., 2003; Miller et al., 1990). Retention of volunteers is a critical concern for volunteer managers. Losing volunteer service means the loss of experience, loss of familiarity with the organization, and a cost burden to the organization that has to recruit, retrain, and make additional efforts to retain new volunteers (Hellman & House, 2006). Typically, turnover has a negative effect on the organization. Children may also feel abandoned by volunteers who leave the organization.

There are three commonly held assumptions about volunteers: volunteers provide a cost savings to the organization, volunteers help expand service to the client base, and there is a negative relationship between volunteers and paid staff because paid staff feels threatened by volunteers. Volunteers are the main human resource of social services and non-profit organizations (Yui et al., 2001). There appears to be many factors that influence volunteers’ persistence in an organization. Hartenian and Lilly (2009) stated:

The importance of volunteers to many agencies underscores the need to explore how personal characteristics, situational characteristics, and agency characteristics promote long-term volunteering. Working to understand the role that each may play and the dynamics between them benefits theoretical and practical agendas. (pp. 113-114)

One of the factors that influence volunteers’ persistence in the organization is the relationship between the volunteer and the paid staff in the organization, although we do not have a thorough understanding of how the relationship between paid staff and volunteers influences volunteer persistence. Volunteers are more important than ever. Volunteer and paid staff relations are an area begging for more research (MacDuff, 1995).

The most well-known theory is the Process Model Theory by Omoto and Snyder (1995) (Davila & Chacon, 2007; Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009). The volunteer process model has three
sequential stages: antecedent stage, volunteer experiences stage, and the consequences stage. The model has been generally supported by subsequent quantitative research. This study uses the model with qualitative data gathered from the 4-H development program, thus adding to the literature.

Of the approximately 12,000 school-aged children in St. Joseph County, 1,030 were enrolled in the St. Joseph County 4-H program in 2009. There were 305 registered 4-H leaders in the program in 2009 as well. The role and responsibilities of the 4-H leader are varied and usually self-determined. Volunteers have played a significant role in 4-H’s success since its inception over a hundred years ago.

Like other programs that have endured, 4-H has had to adjust its focus and goals as society has changed. The traditional base of rural membership has shifted to an urban focus. Integration has changed the demographics of club membership. Funding has shifted between government support and private section support. And one of the most significant challenges and changes through the years in the 4-H program has been the decline of the volunteer base (Van Horn et al., 1999).

4-H is a powerful, proven program that makes a positive difference for all those who participate (Astroth & Haynes, 2002). What children do in the out-of-school hours can affect their development in positive and negative ways (Astroth & Haynes, 2002). Astroth and Haynes found significant research results that prove the worth of sustained, continuous 4-H participation. Yet, the decline in the volunteer base of the 4-H leaders presents a concern for 4-H professionals. Ensuring participation in these programs, by youth and the volunteers that teach the youth, is a continual challenge. Retention of 4-H leaders is a paramount concern for the entire 4-H program (Fritz et al., 2003).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that affect retention of 4-H adult volunteers in St. Joseph County and to explore if the relationship between 4-H leaders and extension office staff. The investigation focused on reasons why 4-H leaders chose not to re-enroll, the barriers to participation, conditions that would facilitate participation in the program, and the role the relationship between extension staff and 4-H leaders plays in re-enrollment decisions by 4-H volunteers. A qualitative case study methodology was utilized to closely examine the 4-H leader experience. Data were collected from focus group discussion, personal interviews, document analysis, and observation.

This chapter is organized into the following 10 sections: problem statement and research questions, research design, sample selection, instrumentation, data collection, analysis, validation of data, ethical considerations, researcher background, and summary of methodology.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

For years, 4-H has struggled with the complex problem of volunteer leader recruitment and retention. 4-H cannot accomplish its mission without the assistance of its thousands of volunteers. 4-H leaders are critical to the delivery of programs in the 4-H program. In fact, there are many project areas without a designated 4-H leader. Without a designated leader, members are often left to seek alternative ways to complete the project. Or the members simply do not
complete the project. 4-H leaders are critical to the program because of the diverse educational opportunities they provide to members. However, little research has been conducted concerning why 4-H leaders choose to leave the program and what influence the extension staff relationship has on the decision to leave. Therefore, the research questions focus on factors that affect the persistence of volunteer leaders in a 4-H program.

Research Questions

The research questions were influenced, in part, by the Albright (2008) study, which explored factors that affected the retention of older 4-H youth. In order to assist the St. Joseph County 4-H program in understanding ways in which to increase retention of 4-H leaders and in understanding the influence the relationship between extension office staff and 4-H leaders has on the decision to persist, the following research questions were developed as the foundation to exploring the phenomenon.

1. Why do volunteer leaders choose not to re-enroll in the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development Program?
2. What are the barriers to participation in the 4-H program for St. Joseph County volunteer leaders?
3. What conditions would facilitate volunteer leader participation in the St. Joseph County 4-H program?
4. To what degree are volunteer and staff relations a factor in the decision to re-enroll by volunteer leaders?
Research Design

Research can be conducted either quantitatively or qualitatively. A quantitative method of inquiry is deductive and statistical, often thought of in terms of numeric data (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2000; Schwandt, 2007). A qualitative method of inquiry is inductive and interpretive, or data in the form of words rather than numbers (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rubin et al., 2000; Schwandt, 2007). Quantitative data are useful when the intent is to speak in terms of quantity or amount (Schwandt, 2007). A qualitative approach is the best approach for this study because the goal is to look deeply at the issue of the 4-H leader experience, to understand the meaning of the human action (Schwandt, 2007). A qualitative approach provides a well grounded, richly descriptive, and deeply explained lens (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to investigate the phenomenon of retention issues of 4-H leaders. The researcher seeks to examine this naturally occurring event in its usual setting so we know what “real life” is like in the 4-H program in St. Joseph County. In qualitative research it is paramount to be a good listener (Creswell, 2007; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). It is a goal of this study to give a “voice” to those being studied.

A Case Study Approach

Within the qualitative paradigm, the retention issue in the St. Joseph County 4-H program can be best addressed using a case study approach as the research design. Case study research involves the investigation of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007). Case studies are preferred when the investigator has little control over events, when the focus is on a contemporary issue within some real life context, and when it is desirable to use multiple sources of evidence (Schwandt, 2007; Yin, 2003). A case
study approach arises out of a desire to understand, in depth, a complex social phenomenon and retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). More specifically, this study used a single case intrinsic case study, which focuses on the case itself. In this case, the intrinsic focus is on the factors that affect persistence of 4-H leaders in the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Program. Overall, single case studies are the emphasis of much qualitative research and can be very vivid and illuminating (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is these illuminations that will assist the researcher in adding to the current literature on volunteerism, the importance of the relationship between paid staff and volunteers, and to the general topic of 4-H leader retention.

Because of the rich comprehensive data that qualitative inquiry provides, it is the desired approach of this study to most effectively answer the research questions. In addition, the research on volunteerism, the relationship between paid staff and volunteers and 4-H has been done, primarily, in the quantitative realm. Because of the void of qualitative methodologies, this study adds to the literature in a meaningful way. Furthermore, qualitative data were applied to the Volunteer Process Model in what, it appears, is the first time. The Volunteer Process Model is the most widely used model on volunteerism (Hildalgo & Moreno, 2009). To date, qualitative data have not been applied to the Volunteer Process Model.

Sample Selection

Purposeful sampling means that the researcher seeks certain individuals because they can purposefully inform the research questions (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). There are many types of purposeful sampling strategies. Patton (1990) recognized 16 different types of purposeful sampling strategies. This study used criterion sampling. Criterion sampling is
when participants meet some type of predetermined criteria (Creswell, 2007). These individuals’ credentials are their experiential relevance (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

**Focus Group Sample Selection**

Focus groups were used to gather qualitative data to address the research questions. Participants for the focus group phase consisted of current and former St. Joseph County 4-H leaders. 4-H leaders can consist of leaders in any 4-H project area, livestock projects to still projects. There are no age restrictions for volunteer leaders, once they reach adulthood, so there were no age restrictions for this study’s participants.

**4-H Agent Sample Selection**

Interview participants were individuals that previously held or hold the position of 4-H Youth Agent in St. Joseph County, Michigan. Three of the four previous 4-H Youth Agents were local and the fourth was regional.

**Document Analysis**

There were no direct human participants in this portion of the data collection. The researcher studied the communication from the extension office during an approximate 4-week time period.

**Access**

The current 4-H agent at the Michigan State University extension office provided the researcher with a list of all current 4-H leaders. The researcher randomly selected 35 names
from the list. Those potential participants were mailed a letter describing the study and asking for their participation (see Appendix A). The recruitment letter provided a date and method by which to RSVP their interest in participating in the focus group. Three days before the deadline, postcards were sent to the potential participants to remind them of the deadline. Individuals who responded and were interested in participating in the focus group discussion were placed into one of two focus groups. Focus group #1 consisted of six participants. Focus group #2 consisted of eight participants. Three participants whose schedule did not permit focus group participation were interviewed individually at a time and place that was convenient to them.

The 4-H agent also provided the researcher with a list of former 4-H leaders. The researcher randomly selected 35 names from the list. Those potential participants were mailed a letter describing the study and asking for their participation (see Appendix B). The recruitment letter provided a date and method by which to RSVP their interest in participating in the focus group. Three days before the deadline, postcards were sent to the potential participants to remind them of the deadline. Individuals who responded and were interested in participating in the focus group discussion were placed into one of two focus groups. Focus group #3 consisted of seven participants. Focus group #4 consisted of six participants. Three participants whose schedule did not permit focus group participation were interviewed individually at a time and place that was convenient to them.

The 4-H agent also provided contact information for the three previous 4-H Youth Agents (see Appendix C). Because of her involvement with the planning procedures, the current 4-H Youth Agent was aware of and supportive of the study. The County Extension Director was also aware of and supportive of the study.
The researcher gathered contact information from participants. Two days before the focus group session, the researcher confirmed 4-H leader participation via the contact information provided by the participant.

Instrumentation

Instrument Development

Instrumentation refers to specific methods for collecting data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The instrument of choice for the qualitative researcher is the human observer (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). This study also used other traditional instruments: focus groups, interviews, document analysis, and observation. The research materials were reviewed by a Kalamazoo County 4-H Youth Agent as a field test. The development of the instrument is described in subsequent sections.

Field Test

Before data collection began, the researcher conducted a field test of the interview instrument. The interview instrument was developed by the researcher and informed, in part, from two sources: Albright’s (2008) dissertation, which explored why older 4-Hers leave the 4-H program, and Netting et al.’s (2004) study, which explored the relationship between volunteers and paid staff.

Albright’s (2008) interview questions informed this study’s interview instrument in regards to general impressions about the leaders’ experience(s) in the 4-H program—the first three research questions of this study. Additionally, in their study, Netting et al. (2004) proposed questions to guide volunteer managers in assessing the relationship between
volunteers and paid staff. These proposed questions informed this study’s interview instrument in regards to research question 4, the relationship between 4-H leaders and Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) staff.

To conduct the field test, the researcher met with the 4-H agent in a neighboring county. The meeting lasted approximately one hour. The project was described to the 4-H agent. The agent was positive about the value of the project and anticipated that the results would be helpful to St. Joseph County and other MSUEs. Next, the researcher and the agent conducted a “think aloud” interview session. A think-aloud is a one-on-one session in which the interviewer asks the respondent what thoughts he has as the questions are read to him (Czaja & Blair, 1996). Understanding the cognitive processes that respondents use in answering questions helped the researcher determine appropriateness of the questions and collect better data. Based on this interview session, five questions were removed as they were deemed insignificant to the study. Five questions were combined to two as they were deemed redundant to a neighboring question.

Next, the researcher asked that the interview questions be e-mailed to approximately six volunteer 4-H leaders in the same neighboring county. The 4-H agent was willing to assist in this manner. Responses from the 4-H leaders were sent back to the 4-H agent. The agent printed the responses and mailed them to the researcher. One responder sent the document directly to the researcher via e-mail. This step in the pretest was used to ensure that the 4-H leaders were able to understand and respond to the questions being asked of them and that what the researcher was trying to achieve was working at least on a miniature scale (Czaja & Blair, 1996). Five 4-H leaders responded to the request. This portion of the pretest found one significant issue. The question “What are the current assumptions about the relationship
between paid staff and volunteers?” seemed to be problematic for all participants. In fact, one responder commented that he/she wasn’t sure what this question was “getting at.” No responders were able to answer the question in the manner that it was intended, so the researcher deemed the question to be unclear and the question was stricken from the future interview protocol.

Prior to data collection, consent was obtained in conjunction with Western Michigan University’s Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) guidelines. These guidelines were followed. During the focus group and interview portion of the data collection, the researcher stayed within the agreed upon time frame, was respectful and courteous, and offered no advice (Creswell, 2007).

**Data Collection**

Evidence for case studies may emerge from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, participant observation, direct observations, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2003). For this study, the researcher used interviews (one-on-one and focus group), participant observation, and document analysis. A more detailed description of the data collection process appears in the next section.

Focus group and interviews were recorded using a tape recorder as recommended by Rudestam and Newton (2007). Throughout the study, the researcher also kept a journal to record impressions, reactions, and other significant events that occurred as a useful source of supplementary information (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). The researcher recorded data in a systematic manner—labeling audiotapes and keeping materials in color-coded folders with names, dates, descriptions of settings, and so on—and found quiet places to take notes and
record impressions throughout the data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Marshall and Rossman indicated these practices are beneficial, resulting in data that are intact, complete, organized, and accessible during the analysis phase. Contact summary sheets were used throughout the study as well. Contact summary sheets were used to describe impressions of meetings of those involved with all aspects of the study.

**Focus Group Sessions**

Focus group sessions encourage reluctant people to speak in a relaxed environment (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). Creswell (2007) described steps to follow when using this type of interviewing as a data collection method. The planning for the focus group and one-on-one interviews began with identifying the populations. Next, it was decided that focus groups should be composed of 7 to 10 people (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), although Marshall and Rossman indicated that focus groups can range from as small as 4 to as large as 12 participants.

A conference room at the Michigan State University Extension in Centreville, Michigan, was secured as the location to hold the focus group discussions. The extension office was chosen because of its centrality in the county and availability to the researcher. The conference room was arranged so that participants were able to face each other around the table. The door to the conference room was closed to the rest of the office to reduce distractions and provide privacy. However, since the focus groups were held in the evenings, the remainder of the office was vacant.

The researcher served as the moderator for the four focus groups. After consent was obtained (see Appendix D), the moderator led discussion by asking questions and directing the flow of conversation. The moderator took careful notes of the discussion and operated the
recording equipment. The focus groups were recorded with a recorder placed in the middle of the table in order to record responses to the questions and ensure accuracy.

All questions for the focus groups and one-on-one interviews were structured as open-ended questions. All questions were previously reviewed by a 4-H agent in Kalamazoo County to determine appropriate content, structure, and face validity. All focus group participants were given the questions in advance of the sessions (see Appendices F and G). Questions were sent ahead of time so the participants were able to give forethought to the questions.

Subway sandwiches, chips, and drinks were provided during the focus group meeting and participants were welcomed to stand up and move around throughout the focus group session. The researcher intended for the atmosphere to be relaxed (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The food and beverage provided an incentive for participants to attend the focus group sessions. In addition, an $8 Meijer gift card or a 2010 St. Joseph County Grange Fair car/driver pass (an $8 value) was offered to each participant as another incentive to attend the focus group session.

**Interviews**

Three former and three current 4-H leaders who expressed interest in the study but who were unable to attend one of the focus group sessions were interviewed individually at a time and location of their convenience. Their consent was obtained (see Appendix D). There were six individual interviews of current or former 4-H leaders. All interview participants were given a copy of the interview questions in advance (see Appendix F, G, or H). Questions were sent ahead of time so the participants were able to give forethought to the questions.
Three former 4-H agents and the current 4-H agent were invited to participate in the study through personal interview. The four 4-H Youth Agents were mailed an introductory letter. The letter was followed by a telephone call contacting the 4-H Youth Agent to confirm interest in the study and to schedule an interview time and location. The locations of these interviews were determined by the interviewees to add to their convenience, and consent was obtained before each interview (see Appendix E). Interview questions were sent to the 4-H Youth Agents 1 week prior to the interview. Questions were sent ahead of time so the 4-H Youth Agents were able to give forethought to the questions. The researcher developed a crosswalk between interview questions and researcher questions as displayed in Table 2 and Table 3.

**Document Analysis**

During the 4-week data collection time period, one document of relevance, sent from the extension office, was obtained by the researcher. This document was a letter from the County Extension Director announcing the retirement of one of the species superintendents/4-H leaders. The document is described in Chapter V.

**Direct Observations**

Observations are a tool used by the researcher to gain a greater understanding of the case (Stake, 1995). Like interviewing, Creswell (2007) sees observing as a series of steps. The researcher selected who or what should be observed. For this study, the researcher observed the extension office as a complete participant (Lindlof, 1995). Because of her position as a 4-H
leader in two species, the researcher was a fully functioning member of the scene(s) (Lindlof, 1995). The researcher was known only as her real self (Lindlof, 1995).

Table 2

*Focus Group Interviews – Crosswalk Between Research Questions and Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1 – Why do leaders choose not to re-enroll in the St. Joe County Youth Development Program?</th>
<th>RQ2 – What are the barriers to leader participation in the SJC 4-H YD Program?</th>
<th>RQ3 – What conditions would facilitate leader participation in the SJC 4-H YD Program?</th>
<th>RQ4 – To what degree are volunteer and extension staff relations a factor in the decision to re-enroll by volunteer leaders?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>What do you/did you enjoy about 4-H?</em></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you/did you enjoy about being a 4-H leader?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What barriers, obstacles, or challenges do you/did you face as a 4-H volunteer?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advice would you give someone considering becoming a 4-H volunteer?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your experiences with extension office staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you/did you find extension office staff supportive?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do volunteers have staff support that they need to do their jobs?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the source of any conflict between paid staff and volunteers and how is it addressed?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you provide me with specific examples of situations in which the extension office supported you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>RQ1 – Why do leaders choose not to re-enroll in the St. Joe County Youth Development Program?</th>
<th>RQ2 – What are the barriers to leader participation in the SJC 4-H YD Program?</th>
<th>RQ3 – What conditions would facilitate leader participation in the SJC 4-H YD Program?</th>
<th>RQ4 – To what degree are volunteer and extension staff relations a factor in the decision to re-enroll by volunteer leaders?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you provide me with specific examples of situations in which the extension office did not support you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your responsibilities as a 4-H leader.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the most important responsibility of a 4-H leader?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Tell me about your decision-making process to re-enroll/not re-enroll as a 4-H leader.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What causes 4-H leaders to re-enroll?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What causes 4-H leaders to not re-enroll?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will it take to keep you as a 4-H leader?/What would it take to recruit you again as a 4-H leader?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Is there anything else that you think is important to share in regards to keeping 4-H leaders involved in St. Joseph County 4-H?</td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>(X)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Questions were phrased differently based on the focus group participants (those who re-enrolled vs. those who do not re-enroll).
*Questions were framed from the Albright (2008) study.
**Questions were framed from the Netting et al. (2004) studies.
Table 3

4-H Agent Interview – Crosswalk Between Research Questions and Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1 – Why do leaders choose not to re-enroll in the St. Joe County Youth Development Program?</th>
<th>RQ2 – What are the barriers to leader participation in the SJC 4-H YD Program?</th>
<th>RQ3 – What conditions would facilitate leader participation in the SJC 4-H YD Program?</th>
<th>RQ4 – To what degree are volunteer and extension staff relations a factor in the decision to re-enroll by volunteer leaders?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*What do 4-H leaders enjoy about 4-H?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do 4-H leaders enjoy about being a 4-H leader?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What barriers, obstacles, or challenges do 4-H leaders face as a 4-H leader?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advice would you give someone considering becoming a 4-H volunteer?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about how extension office leadership influences positive relationships between office staff and 4-H leaders.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Is the extension office staff supportive of 4-H leaders?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Do volunteers have staff support that they need to do their jobs?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**What is the source of any conflict between paid staff and volunteers and how is it addressed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about a 4-H leader’s responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a 4-H leader’s most important responsibility?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Tell me about your decision-making process to re-enroll/not re-enroll as a 4-H leader.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 – Why do leaders choose not to re-enroll in the St. Joe County Youth Development Program?</td>
<td>RQ2 – What are the barriers to leader participation in the SJC 4-H YD Program?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What causes 4-H leaders to re-enroll?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What causes 4-H leaders to not re-enroll?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is it going to take to keep 4-H leaders?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Is there anything else that you think is important to share in regards to keeping 4-H leaders involved in St. Joseph County 4-H?</td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>(X)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Questions were framed from the Albright (2008) study.
**Questions were framed from the Netting et al. (2004) studies.

The researcher considered the actors, scene set-up, physical setting, location of congregation, interactions, and so on (Frey et al., 2000; Lindlof, 1995). The researcher kept a journal explaining, in as much detail as possible, any impressions that came to the researcher as interpretations were crystallized. Specifically, some of the factors that were considered were condition of the building, meeting room comfort, demeanor of staff, physical location to community, abundance or dearth of communal spaces, atmosphere, and what types of materials were available to the public. All important observations were recorded by the researcher as they happened throughout the entire study to increase validity (Frey et al., 2000).
Analysis

Early analysis is strongly recommended (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as it greatly increases the efficiency of future analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). “In qualitative studies, data collection and analysis typically go hand in hand to build a coherent interpretation” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 155). Miles and Huberman stated that qualitative research depends heavily on ongoing analysis, and coding should not be put off to the end of data gathering. Lack of immediate reflection and note-taking ignores the researcher’s contextual memory and factors that affect interpretive voices (Lindlof, 1995). Stake (1995) highlighted the importance of providing time for interpretive commentary throughout the study.

Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about the relationships and underlying themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Data were analyzed using the steps of grounded theory research and constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher read through the transcripts in their entirety and noted recurring themes. The themes were constantly compared, revised, and reduced as data were examined and the researcher’s perceptions were altered. The researcher identified salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of beliefs (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Previous to data collection and analysis, the researcher identified potential categories based on the Volunteer Process Model. Although qualitative methodology is often exploratory, a general framework for analysis can be specified in advance (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Generating categories of data in advance was an important focusing activity and the researcher was careful not to lose design flexibility so as not to lose the unusual or the serendipitous (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The categories were (1) Helping personality, (2) Motivations,
(3) Social Support, (4) Satisfaction, (5) Integration, and (6) Duration. It is important to operationally define these categories. The categories were defined using Omoto and Snyder’s (1995) table 4 that highlighted indicators of the categories.

1. Helping personality: phrases of nurturance, empathetic concern, and/or social responsibility
2. Motivations: phrases of values, understanding, personal development, community concern, and/or esteem enhancement
3. Social Support: phrases of social support availability and/or social network
4. Satisfaction: phrases of satisfaction adjectives and/or satisfaction statements
5. Integration: phrases of attendance, social and organizational acceptance, and/or additional involvement
6. Duration: phrases indicated duration of service

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested the creation of a list of codes prior to fieldwork. The creation of codes beforehand forces the researcher to tie conceptual interests directly to the data. The predetermined categories were internally consistent and distinct from one another (Marshall & Rosman, 2006). The data were initially coded into these categories to determine fit. The codes were developed to reflect previously determined general categories. These categories have a specific location on the Volunteer Process Model and the codes were developed to reflect that. For example, “motivations” is located on the first level and “satisfaction” is located on the second level of the Volunteer Process Model, so the codes for the two categories would be “M1” and “S2,” respectively. The codes were as follows: (1) HP1, Helping Personality; (2) M1, Motivations; (3) SS1, Social Support; (4) S2, Satisfaction; (5) I2, Integration; and (6) D3, Duration. Outliers that did not fit into the Volunteer Process Model
were highlighted and are discussed in the Results section. Outliers, a traditionally quantitative data term, are data that are very unusual in the sense that they are very different than the rest of the data (Triola, 2005).

Throughout the data analysis phase, Marshall and Rossman (2006) strongly encourage the researcher to write notes, reflective memos, thoughts, and insights. This type of writing throughout the analysis phase allowed the researcher to summarize key ideas and preliminary findings. Analysis was sufficient when critical categories were defined, relationships between the categories were established, and categories were integrated into a credible interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

**Validation of Data**

Validating research means showing the research is well-founded and sound and maintaining the capacity to be generalized to a larger group (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Creswell (2007) recommended a variety of validation strategies. To increase the validity of this study, the researcher built trust with the participants, used triangulation, clarified researcher bias, utilized member checking when possible, and made decisions regarding transferability.

The 4-H youth development program is unique in that all people work together to teach children life skills and then the children compete against each other at the end of the project year at the county fair in that project area. Parents, leaders, and children are very passionate about their involvement in the 4-H program, the learning, and the competition. Building trust with participants of this study was critical. Although bias was a risk on behalf of the researcher since the researcher has been involved in St. Joseph County 4-H for 30 years as a member, parent, and 4-H leader, the researcher’s long-term involvement was a positive in this aspect.
because the participants understood that the researcher values the program and was looking to improve the program. The desire to improve the program, not question the program, was communicated to the participants. It was anticipated that the participants would be comfortable talking openly about their experiences since they understood the researcher had sincere intentions towards the 4-H youth development program in St. Joseph County.

The researcher collected data from four focus groups with participants with two different perspectives (two groups of participants who remain a 4-H leader, and two groups of participants who chose to terminate as a 4-H leader), from four in-depth interviews with current and previous 4-H agents, from document analysis, and from observation. The use of multiple forms of sources is called triangulation (Creswell, 2007). Thus, any finding or conclusion in this case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if based on several sources of information.

Utilizing member checking is another data validation strategy. Member checking involves taking interpretations and conclusions back to the participants so they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account (Creswell, 2007). For this study, the researcher utilized the member checking strategy by participating in follow-up discussions with participants and submitting specific follow-up questions to 12 participants.

Determining transferability of the findings to other settings can be done by the reader based on the rich, thick description of the current case (Creswell, 2007). However, a limitation of this study is the transferability. Because of the case study approach, the researcher’s aim was to explore the issue of volunteer leader retention in one youth development program in one county in Michigan, hoping to inform and improve the program itself. While there is an opportunity for other 4-H youth programs with similar characteristics to glean information and
strategies from this current study, those opportunities may be limited based on similarity or lack of similarity of the programs.

**Ethical Considerations**

It is the goal of this study to explore the factors that influence retention of 4-H leaders in St. Joseph County. The individuals willing to share their experiences and time are central informants to this goal. The researcher considers the participants as partners in this research process. Researchers looked to the participants as informants rather than responders (Yin, 2003). “Key informants are often critical to the success of a case study” (Yin, 2003, p. 90). With the willingness of participants is an equal responsibility to their rights and needs by the researcher.

Attention was give to all guidelines put forth by the HSIRB at Western Michigan University (WMU). First, the researcher obtained written permission from the HSIRB to conduct the study. Before the data collection began, participants were notified both verbally and in writing as to the intentions of the study. Participants were told that the protection of their anonymity was of the highest priority of the researcher. Participants were asked to sign a form indicating they were interested in participating in the study. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The 4-H agents were told they would have an opportunity to review the transcripts from their interview and make any clarifications, additions, or changes. Additionally, participants were informed about the data collection and storage procedures of this study. All materials were stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher’s home office. At the completion of the study, as pursuant to HSIRB requirements, all audio tapes were destroyed.
Researcher Background

The researcher has been involved with the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development Program for 30 years as a member, parent, and leader. She serves as the co-organizational leader of Tumbleweed Saddle Club and serves as Vice President on the 4-H Horse Council. She is also a poultry project leader in Mendon Green Clover.

Bias

Creswell (2007) posited that clarifying researcher bias at the outset of the study is important so that the reader understands the researcher’s relationship with the case being studied and any biases or assumptions that may impact the study. The researcher supports the 4-H program and its mission.

For years, the researcher has been aware of the retention issues facing the 4-H youth development program. And it can be assumed that the researcher has personal theories as to why this is an issue and ideas to combat the problem. In spite of the tacit theory of factors that affect 4-H leader persistence in St. Joseph County, the systematic inquiry previously described combats any bias. In addition, the quest to thoroughly understand the issue of retention, in depth, helped in combating bias. The researcher also used a critical friend to thoughtfully question the researcher’s analyses. In addition, data was checked and rechecked for possible alternative explanations (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Finally, the researcher obtained feedback from participants for accuracy of data.
Summary of Methodology

The goal of this study was to determine factors that influenced the retention of 4-H leaders and determine if the relationship between extension office staff and 4-H leaders influenced persistence. It was determined that an in-depth, thickly described analysis of the situation was desired. Therefore, the researcher deemed a qualitative study the most appropriate methodology. Furthermore, a case study approach was utilized. The researcher gathered data from focus groups, personal interview, document analysis, and observation. The researcher was sensitive to ethical considerations and used appropriate data validation strategies.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of factors that influence 4-H leader retention and the effect of the relationship between the extension office and 4-H leaders. The investigation focused on reasons why 4-H leaders chose not to re-enroll, barriers to participation, conditions that would facilitate participation in the program, and the role the relationship between extension staff and 4-H leaders plays in re-enrollment decisions by 4-H volunteers. A qualitative case study methodology was utilized to deeply examine the issues of the 4-H leader experience.

This chapter includes the results of the research findings and an analysis of the data resulting from focus group discussion, personal interviews, observation, and document analysis. Results include observational data, document data, themes from current 4-H leaders derived from focus group data, themes from former 4-H leaders derived from focus group data, current and former 4-H leader personal interview data, and 4-H agent data. Data collected from observations, documents, and personal interviews were used to support focus group themes. Finally, themes are discussed through the lens of the Volunteer Process Model. Data were collected from February 18, 2010 through March 18, 2010. Focus groups were conducted, interviews were held, observations made, and relevant documents collected during this period.

For the interview and focus group sessions, 16 questions were asked of the participants. Questions were open-ended to allow for in-depth responses. Some responses led to clarification questions. Additional questions enabled the respondents to elaborate further on
their answers. Additionally, the researcher followed up with 12 of the participants after the focus group and interview sessions to clarify an unanticipated finding. Eight of those participants were available and willing to contribute in the individual follow-up discussion.

**Observational Data**

**The Extension Office**

The 4-H youth development program in St. Joseph County resides in the Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) office in Centreville, Michigan. Centreville is the county seat of St. Joseph County. The rectangular pole building that is MSUE is located on M-86, the main road that goes through Centreville. MSUE sits adjacent to the St. Joseph County Fairgrounds. The fairgrounds are where the 4-H members submit their final project, both still and animal, at the annual fair in mid-September of every year. The building itself is light tan in color and is identified by the difficult-to-read brown sign in front. Visitors can park on either side of the office, the long sides of the rectangle. Culturally, the cars in the parking lot represent the variety of American made vehicles, family cars and 4-wheel drive trucks.

The front of the building, which faces M-86, is where visitors enter. The doors are heavy and there is a small foyer between the doors. The second set of doors has a bell hanging on it, to notify the staff that someone has come through the door. The large meeting room that is connected to the work room forms a rectangle inside the rectangle that is the building itself. Offices are scattered around the outside rectangle with a hallway that goes all the way around, separating the offices from the large meeting room/work room. Small conference rooms are located between offices around the outside rectangle. The front of the building, where one
enters, has an open area to the left with three desks lined up side-by-side. This is where support staff are located. Separating the entry area and the support staff area is a large, chest-high L-shaped counter. The offices and workspaces, while tidy, are not decorated with vigor. The nonverbal approach of individualizing one’s workspace or office is not embraced.

As a 4-H leader in the county, the researcher was a fully functioning member of the scene during observations. While the office was aware of the ongoing research project, the researcher was known as her real self and revealed no other purpose than the one that was understood in the scene itself (Lindlof, 1995). This approach was done to ensure that observations were done in a natural setting. The experience was authentic (Lindlof, 1995).

**Leader Interaction**

It was observed that 4-H leaders are generally a close-knit group in their project areas. It was brought to the attention of the researcher that leaders in a specific species conduct a “meeting after the meeting”; they go for ice cream at the local McDonald’s. In addition, the leaders were often involved in their peers’ personal lives, giving baby gifts, bringing birthday cakes to meetings, communicating on social networking sites like Facebook, and so on. This observation supported the research by Hidalgo and Moreno (2009), Hustinx and Handy (2009), and Musick and Wilson (2008).

While many project areas had leaders that were a tight-knit group, it was interesting to note that across-project-area fraternizing was not the norm. In instances where the researcher was able to observe leader mingling, it was noted that species leaders tended to associate only with their own group membership. This observation was supported by verbal messages during the interview and focus group sessions. For example, during the discussion regarding county-
wide mandatory meetings, one leader simply stated, “I don’t care to meet the [different species] people.”

**Documents**

During the period of data collection, the researcher obtained one document of relevance. The researcher, along with the other current 4-H leaders in the specific project area, received notification of the resignation of one of the species superintendents. This notification provided a unique glimpse into the communication to and about 4-H leaders.

In the document, which was sent only to leaders in this specific project area, the County Education Director referenced the duration of the leader’s tenure, provided specific examples of the leader’s activities, and indicated deep appreciation for the service of the leader.

**Interview and Focus Group Sessions**

The researcher followed the process outlined by Creswell (2007) for data analysis of the interview and focus group sessions, which includes reducing the data into themes through the process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in a table and discussion. The researcher was careful to preserve the unusual and serendipitous and these are addressed after the interview and focus group summary section. Any unnecessary data were eliminated from further consideration and analysis. With an intrinsic case study such as this, the goal is to thoroughly understand the central issue of factors that affect the retention of 4-H volunteers in St. Joseph County. After the data collection, the data were analyzed to answer the research questions and provide a greater understanding of the issue. As Stake (1995) observed, the search for meaning is often a search for patterns in the data. Audio tapes were transcribed
verbatim by the researcher. Major themes, minor themes, and unique responses were identified and coded.

Themes were determined when the researcher identified the salient, grounded categories (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) that were dominant in the discussions. It has been discussed that all qualitative data can be coded quantitatively and can be assigned meaningful numerical values (The Qualitative Debate, 2010). This type of quantitative coding of qualitative data provided the researcher with a clearer understanding of the data. The approach involved turning words into numbers. The researcher was able to pinpoint emerging themes or themes based on immediate percentages. True scores are difficult to determine in qualitative data. However, focus group themes were determined by a 60% occurrence in the data. Focus group emerging themes were determined by a 50–60% occurrence in the data.

Research Question 1

The first research question explored factors as to why 4-H leaders chose not to re-enroll in the 4-H program. Three specific interview questions were posed to participants to explore this research question.

Current 4-H leaders. For current leaders, deciding whether to remain a 4-H leader was often an automatic decision. As current leader Connie said, “For me, at this point, I just do [re-enroll]. I want to get better.”

Others felt they had created a good project area and wanted to see it continue down the same successful path. As current leader Heather explained, “I always thought that as soon as [my daughter] is done, I’m out of here. I’m completely out of here. Well, stupid me thought about it, and now I’m not ready to hand it over.” Current leader Tanya assured the group, “As
long as I can walk, I will be here. In some way.” Two leaders said, “As long as my [spouse] is doing it, I’m doing it.”

During the focus group discussion, two current leaders shared they were considering terminating their 4-H leader role. Current leader Ed stated:

When I became a leader, you carry those first kids to the next 5 or 10 years. That when they’re gone, you’re kind of burned out. You have empty-nest syndrome when your first kids leave. I’m burned out. I’m ready to give up. With complications with other things that are going on. Politics with other leaders. I’m ready to give up.

The other leader simply stated that her last child will soon be aging out of 4-H: “I’m quitting soon because now it is time for my husband.”

Thirty-three percent of current leaders speculated that other leaders quit because those leaders did not feel they had support from MSUE. Data showed “support” came in various forms; efforts to re-enroll, acceptance of new ideas, and difficult situations were the most commonly referred to issues of support. For example, regarding efforts for leaders to re-enroll after being gone for at least one year, current leader Leslie explained:

If you have a year, just a year’s lapse of not being a leader, you have to re-apply. [You have to] go through the background check [again]. [You have to] go through the interview [again]. And as a council member, I interviewed some of those leaders that had come back and [the former leader complained] “I was a leader for 25 years. Now my grandkids are doing it. Why do I have to go through all of this?” A lot of them resent...having to go through the whole process again. And even now if someone was a leader for 30 years and decided to take some time off, they have to go through the whole [application] process again. A lot of them resent it.

Current leaders also reported that leaders left because they did not feel as though their new ideas were welcomed or accepted by MSUE. As one current leader shares:

It seems like things fall on deaf ears. [Leaders’] issues are valid. They won’t take action. Sometimes...leadership seems to have no value to them. It makes it tough to come back. It makes it hard to come back when you feel your opinion doesn’t matter to them.
Finally, current leaders also felt that MSUE did not support them during difficult times. One current leader revealed her species area had a bad experience and the leaders in the area tried to develop a guideline of disciplinary procedures to be used against leaders when necessary. She shared, “It’s like when we tried to put that disciplinary thing in. There has to be consequences. And the office said, ‘We don’t care if you vote that in or not. We’re not going to back you up on it.’”

Current leader Jerry commented:

We have a [species] council that sits up here and runs their own program. *Until* there is a conflict...we have a [staff member] who is not involved in it [and] comes in and says, “Okay, it is going to be this way.” Now we have one opinion instead of 30 that are in the room and it was a vote. Majority rules. We can run our program. We aren’t idiots. And they allow us to do it any other time. But if they feel that we are stepping over the line, then they just dictate how we are going to run our program. I don’t get paid for this crap.

In addition to perceived lack of support, 27% of current leaders indicated the mandatory meetings had caused other leaders to quit. Current leader Leslie said, “They are in it and it is too many rules. Leave them alone. They want to make so many things mandatory. Are they trying to encourage or discourage?”

A unique twist to this finding was that causing some volunteers to quit was not always considered a negative. For example, current leader Polly shared:

There are a lot of leaders that we really need to get rid of. Maybe [the 4-H agent] holding these mandatory meetings will help. There are a lot that aren’t donating their time. They are just getting their free pass [to the fair].

Finally, 27% of current leaders also assumed that former leaders’ relationships with parents caused them to not re-enroll. Current leader Ed stated:

The only reason some of these kids are showing is because mom and dad are purchasing the winner. They are expecting the winner. That’s why [leaders] are tired. They are so tired. [The parents] don’t understand that you have to work for it.
While current leaders shared their assumptions regarding why other leaders chose to leave the 4-H program, they also shared why they chose to stay. The most common reason provided by current leaders was because of the kids (39%). As current leader Ed explained, “Every set of eyes and ears of those kids looking at me for advice. And then at the end, and this is what keeps you going, it’s when the kids say, ‘thank you.’”

Thirty-three percent of current leaders also said they stayed because of the social aspect for adults. Current leader Mary Lou said, “I love my peers. Right down the gamut from the youngest ones to the oldest ones…and what people would you rather be with? The animal people.”

Table 4 provides a summary of responses from focus group participants as to why current leaders believe former leaders chose not to re-enroll. These reasons range from lack of support, to frustration with rules, and relationship issues with other leaders and parents.

Personal interviews were conducted with three current leaders to support the findings from the focus groups. When asked why they believed former leaders left 4-H, the interviewees stated that they believed the reason was either former leaders’ own children had aged-out of 4-H or former leaders did not want to attend mandatory meetings. One of the interviewees’ data were consistent with the focus group findings; leaders left because of mandatory meetings.

Table 5 outlines the perspectives of current leaders as to reasons why current leaders believe former leaders chose not to re-enroll in the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development Program. Meeting attendance rules and their children aging out of the program were the major reasons for their discontinuation.
Table 4

*Why Current Leaders Believe Former Leaders Chose Not to Re-enroll*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Participants</th>
<th>Lack of MSUE Support</th>
<th>Rules to Remain a Leader/Mandatory Meetings</th>
<th>Rx With Other Leaders</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FG1 M1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG2 M1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>M5</td>
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<td>M6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M8</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| FG1 M1                    | 33%                  | 27%                                         | 7%                    | 27%     |

Table 5

*Reasons Former Leaders Chose Not to Re-enroll*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Leaders</th>
<th>Own Kids Are Gone</th>
<th>Rules to Remain a Leader/Mandatory Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CL-PI1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL-PI2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL-PI3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Former 4-H leaders.** Whereas current leaders often considered re-enrolling each year an automatic decision, some former leaders discussed years of agonizing over the decision.

Former leader Lucy shared:

> I was so invested in 4H. It was a part of me. I felt very strongly about it. And I kept getting tired and tired and tired. And I had to go out and get a job. And I didn’t have the time to put into it. And that’s the one thing that 4H leaders need is time and energy. And I didn’t have the energy and the time, anymore, to do it properly. And after 27 years of putting your all into this matter of growing children… it was my life… 27 years of my life.

Several former leaders indicated it was a gradual process and that they simply “ran out of kids.”

Many former leaders simply stated that they were in it for their own children, or children in their extended family, and once those children aged out, they felt it was time for someone else to “step up.” Other former leaders shared reasons like, “I left because of the parents,” “I left because of the mandatory meetings,” and “I left because of the time commitment.”

Reasons why 4-H leaders quit their role as a volunteer varied. Thirty-eight percent stated it was because of the rules to remain a leader/mandatory meetings. For example, during one focus group, this exchange occurred:

“I got too career busy and there were rules that meant that a leader had to attend meetings to stay a leader. Someone said, ‘You’ll have to attend a couple of meetings’ and I thought, I hate meetings,” said Joseph.

Maurice replied, “I’m not a leader because of the recent mandatory leader meetings. I’m a volunteer, they can’t make ya do anything!”

“Right! That’s exactly right!” responded Kendra.

Kasey added, “Back in my day, there wasn’t anything like [mandatory meetings].”

Maurice replied, “Recently, I started getting letters from MSUE that I have to go to these mandatory meetings. What a waste of time. I’ve talked to people who said they are a waste of time. I’m not doing it. I can do what I’m doing anyway without being called a leader.”
In addition to the rules to remain a leader/mandatory meetings, 23% of former leaders shared that they felt it was time for other parents to step in and get involved. Sadie shared, “My kids were gone and I got busy with other things in my life. And there was a lot of paperwork. I thought maybe other parents would want to step in.”

Former leader Stacey commented, “[I was] just slowly getting upset with the way things were going and [then started] thinking, ‘Well, maybe somebody who is younger would be better off doing it.’”

Twenty-three percent of former leaders also shared that working with parents was the reason they did not re-enroll. Former leader Bonita shared, “You need to the support of the parents. And that seems to have dwindled.”

Thirty-one percent of the 4-H leaders who quit shared that one way to bring them back is if their grandkids ask them to come back. However, it is important to note that 6 of the 16 former leaders, or 38%, specifically indicated they were already acting as 4-H leaders without being officially recognized 4-H leaders. This “Leader Without Being a Leader,” or LWBL, phenomenon is discussed in Chapter V.

Table 6 includes focus group responses on the reasons why former leaders chose not to re-enroll in the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development Program. Five major reasons were mentioned with rules and mandatory meetings, difficulties with other parents, and sharing the leadership responsibility given as the major reasons for discontinuing volunteer activities.

Personal interviews were conducted with three former leaders to support the findings from the focus groups (Table 7). When asked why they left 4-H, the two most common responses were their own kids had aged-out and they thought it was somebody else’s turn to do the work. Two of the interviewees’ data were consistent with a finding from the focus group
that indicated former leaders thought it was time for somebody else to step in and do the work.

Two of the interviewees indicated they resigned when their own children had aged-out. This personal interview finding had not been discussed in the focus group.

Table 6

*Former Leaders’ Reasons Not to Re-enroll*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Leaders</th>
<th>Rules to Remain a Leader/Mandatory Meetings</th>
<th>Relationship With Other Leaders</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Ran Out of Kids (Not Their Own)</th>
<th>Somebody Younger Than Me Should Do It/Someone Else’s Turn</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FG3 M1</td>
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<td>M6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

|                | 38% | 8% | 23% | 15% | 23% |
Table 7

Former Leaders’ Reasons for Discontinuing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Interviews Former Leaders</th>
<th>Lack of MSUE Support</th>
<th>Own Kids Are Gone</th>
<th>Somebody Younger Than Me Should Do It/ Somebody Else’s Turn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FL-PI1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>FL-PI3</td>
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</table>

4-H Agents. 4-H agents identified a variety of reasons of why 4-H leaders ceased their relationship with the program (Table 8). The most common reasons were their own children had aged out, lack of MSUE support, difficulties with other leaders, or the feeling that leaders had “done their time. They’d given back. Let somebody else step in.”

Table 8

Agents’ Perspectives Why Former 4-H Leaders Chose Not to Re-enroll

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current and Former Agents</th>
<th>Perceived Lack of Support from MSUE</th>
<th>Own Kids Are Gone</th>
<th>Rx With Other Leaders</th>
<th>Somebody Younger Than Me Should Do It/ Somebody Else’s Turn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>A-Mary*</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>A-Linda*</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>A-Patricia*</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Barbara*</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pseudonyms were used and agents have been placed in random order.
Half the agents also shared they thought the leaders didn’t have the proper training opportunities to continue with their leadership role. They referred to the need to provide leaders with the tools they need to be successful leaders.

Agent Linda had given this subject serious consideration and she shared this:

I think when they joined 4H they thought there would be a lot of stuff going on with support and their ideas would be greeted well. And I think they just got discouraged because they had good ideas and there wasn’t enough of an outlet for them. So I think that was one reason. They couldn’t figure out how to make more of a job for themselves. The other reason is for people who quit because it was too much. They maybe weren’t great leaders in the first place and when they realized the level of responsibility—they are like, “Oh, that is too much, too much effort.” And the third reason is conflict with other leaders. That would probably be a big one, conflicts with other leaders or being involved in some other big thing. For example there was [a leader]...and I only know a little bit about that situation...but she was involved in some situation—some scandalous [species] thing, she was kind of on the periphery of it. But it just kind of broke her spirit to be a leader. It was some complicated thing. Just knowing her, you’d think, “Oh, this person would be a great leader.” But it’s just like [for her], “I don’t want to get involved in those politics; I don’t want to get involved in that drama.” So I think that is a reason for some of them leaving.

Three of four 4-H youth agents presumed former 4-H leaders left because their kids had aged-out. Agent Barbara shared, “[The 4-H leaders’] kids grow up and out. And [the 4-H leaders think they’ve] done their duty and it’s time for others to step in.”

When asked why they thought 4-H leaders chose to re-enroll, half the agents shared that 4-H leaders feeling valued and appreciated most likely kept them coming back. Again, Agent Barbara offered the following perspective:

I think it has so much to do with if they feel valued. Do they feel that what they attempted to do made a difference. And if they feel supported by extension staff. That is a critical component. That you feel like you have support from the structural component of 4-H. I think [they need to] feel valued by the 4-H program.

Based on the criteria set forth to determine themes, no themes were confirmed for this research question.
Personal interviews with current and former 4-H agents found agreement with current leader focus groups’ speculation of lack of MSUE support and former leader focus groups that leaders leave because they feel it is time for someone else to volunteer their time.

Research Question 2

The second research question explored barriers to participation in the 4-H program for 4-H volunteer leaders. Three specific interview questions were posed to participants to explore this research question.

Current 4-H leaders. The most commonly reported barrier to participation in the 4-H youth development program for current leaders was parents (73%). For current leaders, difficulties with parents fell into one of two categories: parental over-involvement or parental under-involvement.

Perhaps it is the very nature of the situation, but current leaders reported rarely feeling support of the 4-H members’ parents. When the researcher asked one focus group about the obstacles, challenges, and barriers faced by 4-H volunteers, all group participants responded “parents” in chorus. A few leaders mentioned the lack of support at home. Current leader Tanya explained, “There are the kids with such potential and they aren’t getting the encouragement from home. It is so frustrating that no matter how much help and how much encouragement you give, they’ll never get there.”

While the under-involved parent does present unique challenges to the 4-H leader, the overwhelming concern was about over-involved parents. The leaders often expressed their desire to work with the child and to teach the child, but oftentimes the child’s parent “got in the way.” The paradox can be frustrating for leaders. Current leader Heather stated:
You have a hard enough time just getting the parents to bring the kids to participate. Then, once they are there, you have to try to get [the parents] to stay out of it. You have a new child that is trying to learn and it’s hard for mom and dad to let go and trust that it will be okay.”

“Letting go” was also a common sentiment from many 4-H leaders in the respect that parents had a difficult time letting go of their own dreams for 4-H success. The concept of the over-involved parent(s) is made evident in the following excerpts from focus group discussions:

“Parents want to try to help the kids, but they end up finishing the project themselves. That’s really hard!” exclaimed a current leader.

“Yup, you see beautiful handwriting on a 9-year-old’s scrapbook,” added current leader Sadie. Another current leader added, “In a photography project, there was a picture—it was the child’s project—but the child was in one of the pictures!”

And in the livestock area, Dan shared, “Now I’m standing at the entry gate and I have to fight back the parents that are sitting there trying to show the animals. They are doing illegal things and if it’s brought up.”

“He’s telling the truth. Because I run the back side of it and there are always parents coaching and they were saying to me, ‘Get out of the way!’’’ added current leader Ginger.

“And it’s gotten worse over the years,” replied Dan.

Multiple 4-H leaders expressed that they wished they could “control the parents.” 4-H leaders voiced concern over parents putting too much pressure on the children during shows, the lack of fun and friendships across all project areas, and the perception that parents have the capability of sabotaging other children’s efforts. The capability of sabotage is evident in this exchange between current leaders:

One year, a young lady brought in one too many [animals]. By the time she was [participating in an aspect of the show], she had brought in too many [animals]. Well, ya know what. It was never caught in the office. And she won the whole day. And somebody said, “Well, that is one too many [animals]!” And she was stripped of all her awards, everything.
Current leader Polly responded, “Whose agenda was that? What parent?”

Current leader Heather added, “Exactly, ‘what parent?’ We see this all too often with parents.”

It appeared the leader and parent were unsure where one adult’s role ends and where the other role begins. Current leader Julia stated, “[You have] parents wanting to help their kids, but then end up finishing the project themselves. That’s really hard.”

Another current leader also explained: “...you have the parent decide to do the project because the kid isn’t doing such a good job of it.”

Current leader Cade shared:

I think a lot of the conflict, it tends to quite honestly...[the conflict] generally starts with a parent trying to live vicariously through their children. That becomes very difficult. Particularly when you have two sets of parents trying that.

The following exchange occurred in one of the current leader focus groups:

Julia stated, “[Parents] put pressure on the kids to show more. Do more of this do more of that. And you try to tell the parents to back off a little bit.”

Dan responded, “And that goes over well!”

Laughter erupted from the entire group. Dan continued, “We often say that we should close down the fair for the week of fair and only let the kids in with their projects. Then they could show their project without a single parent on the grounds.”

While dealing with parents proved to be a mighty hurdle for many leaders, half of the current leaders stated that it was “the kids” that kept them regardless of issues with parents. As Dan explained, “[I stay because] my group of kids wants to be there and they want to learn. That’s what keeps me going. I’m all about the kids. As long as the kids want to be there and want to learn, I’ll keep doing it too.”
In addition to difficulties with parents, 27% of current leaders also shared disappointment with the inability of 4-H leaders to be able to make changes to the program. This frustration was evident in the following exchange:

“What discourages me a little bit is the lack of open-mindedness from other leaders. Or the willingness to look for changes or say, ‘Hey let’s see what your idea is.’ As a younger leader you run into that road block,” shared current leader Connie.

Current leader Laura added, “The first response you always when you want to make change is ‘It’s always been done this way!’”

Current leader Dan continued, “You get the brick wall.”

Current leader Connie replied, “Change is supposed to be good.”

Personal interviews were conducted with three current leaders to support the findings from the focus groups (Table 9). When asked about the barriers for leader participation in the 4-H youth development program in St. Joseph County, the most common response was the availability of kids and working around kids’ schedules.

Current leader interviews did not support the focus group finding that the relationship between leaders and parents was a barrier to participation (Table 10). Only one interviewee indicated this barrier.

Former leaders. The most commonly reported barrier to participation in the 4-H youth development program for current leaders was parents (69%) (Table 11). Difficulties with parents tended to fall into one of three categories: parental over-involvement, parental under-involvement, or parental attitude.

Like current leaders, former leaders reported a wide range of parental involvement. As former leader Bonita stated, “There is such an extreme; the parent who does nothing and the parent who says ‘don’t listen to the leader, and do this!’”
### Table 9

**Focus Group Responses of Current Leaders Regarding the Barriers to Leader Participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Availability of Kids/Kids Schedules</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Other 4-H Leaders</th>
<th>4-H Unable to Change</th>
<th>Rules/Mandatory Meetings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FG1 M1</td>
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|                | 20% | 20% | 73% | 6% | 27% | 20% |

### Table 10

**Current Leader: Barriers to 4-H Participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Leaders</th>
<th>Availability of Kids/Kids Schedules</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Rules/Mandatory Meetings</th>
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</table>
Table 11

*Former Leader Perspectives on Barriers to Participation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Leaders</th>
<th>Availability of Kids/Kids Schedules</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Other 4-H Leaders</th>
<th>Rules/Mandatory Meetings</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>46%</td>
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</table>

The parent that is apathetic is a significant challenge to the 4-H leader. Former leader Stacey stated:

I called one lady one time because I needed to complete her daughter’s enrollment form. I asked her what projects her daughter had completed so that she could take them to the fair. The mother said, “What projects did she enroll for?” I thought, well she isn’t going to have anything ready for the fair! The mother didn’t even know what projects the girl signed up for. That was bad. [It was] disinterest in her daughter’s 4-H career.

Former leader Henrietta stated:
Sometimes you feel like a babysitter. But with [animal species] it is a little bit different than, say, with a still project. Livestock require so much more hands on and so much more time and [animals species] are more difficult. [It is] probably one of the most difficult projects that you can do. And you need to have that parent there. And there are cases where the parent isn’t there and it just crimps your style very badly. It is really, really hard when the parent does not help in the [animal species] project area.

Other leaders mentioned concerns such as parents that do not take time to do 4-H with their children any more, parents are not cooperative with getting their children to meetings, or they will not help with club responsibilities when asked. Former leader Henrietta shared, “You ask them to step up and help and they won’t. All year long you help their kid and you ask them for a little bit of help and you get nothing.”

Like current leaders, former leaders also expressed frustration over the parent who is overly involved. Former leader Joseph said: “...it’s almost like parents get in the way” and former leader Henrietta shared, “And you end up on one end of the spectrum when the parents are trying to re-live their 4-H experience!” Again, leaders mentioned the parent-to-parent conflict. “Sure, the kids are winning, but behind the scenes their parents were nasty. It was so competitive. Or worse than competitive,” explained Dan. Former leader Henrietta said, “I really enjoyed being a 4-H leader. But those last couple of years... so much parent conflict. You couldn’t represent the kids anymore.”

Finally, leaders shared their concerns about parental attitude. As a former leader shared, “Parents were the biggest obstacles that I faced and it wasn’t because of scheduling. It was an attitude.” Former leader Laura shared, “Conflict between parent to parent. You talk to the kids and sure the kids are winning, but behind the scene their parents were nasty. It was so competitive. Or worse than competitive.”
4-H leaders, regardless of their status as current or former, continue to express frustrations with the varying levels of parental involvement in 4-H. Parents who are over-involved in their children’s 4-H projects can be just as challenging to leaders as parents who are apathetic. Yet, it is important to mention that some leaders express primarily positive experiences with parents and 4-H members. Former leader Jill stated, “[I enjoyed] the kids. And the parents would come right after that.”

Finally, 46% of former leaders stated that mandatory meetings were a barrier to their participation in the St. Joseph County Youth Development Program. As one former leader shared, “I tried [to come back]. And I would have had to take classes…I couldn’t see myself doing [classes].”

Personal interviews were conducted with three former leaders to support the findings from the focus groups (Table 12). When asked about the barriers to participation in the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development Program, the most common response was leaders need more education. Former leader interviews did not support the focus group finding that the relationship between leaders and parents was a barrier to participation. Only one interviewee indicated this was a barrier.

Table 12

*Former Leader Perspectives on Barriers to Leader Participation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Leaders</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>4-H Unable to Change</th>
<th>Leaders Need More Education</th>
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<tr>
<td>FL-PI3</td>
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</table>
4-H Agents. From the 4-H agent perspective, half of the 4-H agents assumed it was kids’ lack of time and busy schedules, problems with other 4-H leaders, and instances where leaders felt overwhelmed with or unsure of their responsibilities that were the barriers to 4-H leader participation.

4-H Agent Linda shared her experience regarding leader-to-leader barriers:

I think [a leader’s] major obstacle is the other leaders. [This is] unfortunate. Because if a new leader came in, the older leader had a way of doing things and it was very hard for a new leader to introduce new ideas. So there was all of this kind of initiation period and it is very hard to deal with navigating the rules and figuring out what was okay to do and what wasn’t. What was a matter of trying to convince youth council and what was something that no 4-H leader can do. I think it was hard for them to figure out how much they could do. And if they wanted to do something, could they push... I think that was confusing to them. I mean it was even confusing to me, trying to figure out, okay what is something that can be changed and something that can’t. And if this could be changed, how do we change it. The norms, I think people are definitely resistant to change. At least some of the leaders were. There are leaders that have been there for years and years and leaders that just came on. I think there was always a conflict between senior leaders and junior leaders basically.

She continued:

It is easy for the staff person to want to just agree with the person that is the most forceful and in your face because they bug you so much and it is hard to stand up to them. Sometimes what they are doing is pushing aside people that have good ideas. And sometimes, as a staff person, you have to tell those assertive leaders, those senior leaders, hey, you have to back off. This is coming. I think that would be a big thing.

However, 75% of agents assumed that appreciation received from 4-H members is what keeps the leaders involved. The concern that 4-H leader barriers are a result of feeling overwhelmed or unsure of their duties was expressed by 4-H leader Patricia:

...for the brand new leader, [a barrier] is just understanding what’s going on and having the right training tools. Knowing what they’re doing. Because I think a lot of people do start as new leaders thinking “What can I do to make this program better? I want to be a chicken leader, what do I do?” and then they look and then don’t know.

4-H Agent Barbara shared a similar sentiment:
I think oftentimes particularly in 4-H exhibits leaders, parents are asked to be leaders. Maybe they don’t already have a skill in that area but the club needs a leader. So the new leader has to learn, perhaps right along with the kids. That’s kind of a challenging obstacle.

The challenging relationship between 4-H leaders and parents was found to be a theme for this research question for both current leaders and former leaders. However, personal interviews with current leaders did not support this theme. The personal interviews with 4-H Agents also indicted they do not recognize parents as a barrier to 4-H leader participation (Table 13).

Table 13

*Interview Responses of 4-H Agents Regarding Barriers to Leader Participation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current and Former Agents</th>
<th>Availability of Kids/Kids Schedules</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Other 4-H Leaders</th>
<th>Leaders Need More Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-Mary*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Linda*</td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Patricia*</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Barbara*</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pseudonyms were used and agents have been placed in random order.

Research Question 3

The third research question explored conditions that would facilitate leader participation in the St. Joseph County 4-H program. Six specific interview questions were posed to participants to explore this research question.

Current 4-H leaders. Leaders become leaders and remained leaders for a variety of reasons. For example, many leaders reported becoming a leader because their own child is
involved in a project area. Others are asked by another adult for assistance. Others become leaders because they are passionate about the project area and it is their hobby. Some leaders are more deeply involved in the 4-H organization than others. Some leaders teach children about the project in a meeting or two and that is their commitment for the year. Other leaders become deeply involved with everything from their own project area to helping with the fair set-up, to office work, to running shows, to attending clinics, to chaperoning trips and camps, and so on. The opportunity for volunteer involvement in the 4-H program is seemingly endless. Some leaders are more motivated than others to become deeply involved in the program.

Many facilitating factors shared by leaders were in reference to personal development. Forty percent of current leaders shared that they enjoyed meeting new people and making friends. Current leader Polly shared, “It’s social. It is social for the leaders as well as the kids.”

Current leader Cade shared: “The families [are] intertwined. Bob and I were the Best Man at each other’s wedding! Those are some lifetime relationships.”

And, finally, current leader Tanya repeated herself throughout the focus group, “I love my peers. From the youngest ones to the oldest ones.”

Forty percent of the current leaders shared that helping kids and sharing their knowledge facilitated their participation in the 4-H program. As one current leader shared, “(I enjoy) watching them grow. They come in as a naïve 9-year-old and leave a good strong person with good leadership.” Many current leaders shared the same sentiment.

Thirteen percent of leaders said they enjoyed learning along with the members. One leader stated, “I learn every year just like the members do.” Other leaders expressed the same sentiment: “You start learning when the kids start learning. It isn’t all teaching. Some parts of it you learn together,” and “4-H has taught my daughter stuff and it has taught me stuff.”
It also appears leaders learn from each other. Current leader Julia shared, “I saw as a parent how my kid was inspired by another leader and I thought, hmmm... I hope my kids in my club leave my meetings with that type of desire to learn.”

And in another example, current leader Fred reported:

When I started as a leader I saw all of these [types of animals] winning and I didn’t get it. But then I realized to win you have to learn from others. And those [types of animals] motivated that. And for me it motivated me as a leader to get better as a leader and an exhibitor.

Table 14 provides a summary of focus group responses on the conditions that would facilitate the volunteer leader participation. The variety of responses is indicative that each volunteer may have different needs from the volunteer experience or are hoping for different outcomes than their peers.

Personal interviews were conducted with three current leaders to support the findings from the focus groups. When asked about the conditions that would facilitate participation in the St. Joseph County Youth Development Program, all interviewees stated that leaders should be prepared for the tasks and the amount of work that goes into being a leader (Table 15). This finding supported a concern shared in the focus group discussion.

**Former 4-H leaders.** Fifty-four percent of former leaders shared that the facilitating factor for their previous involvement in 4-H was the ability share their knowledge of a project area and help children learn (Table 16). As former leader Rose shared:

My first 26 years I was... involved in cooking and sewing and knitting. Those things, yes. The kids’ basic knowledge of those areas. And I don’t see those things in our county anymore and it breaks my heart. I still have, well I taught a knitting [club] for three or four years, and I still have those that are mothers now themselves say that they... they still knit! And they say, “I taught my own kids to knit because it was always such a fun thing to do.” I’m happy they are sharing what they learned from me all of those years ago.
Table 14

Current Leaders’ Perspectives of Conditions Facilitating Volunteer Leader Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Leaders</th>
<th>Help Kids/ Share My Knowledge</th>
<th>I Have an Opportunity to Learn</th>
<th>Have Fun With Kids</th>
<th>Do Your Homework/ Realize It’s a Lot of Responsibility</th>
<th>Have a Passion for Project Area</th>
<th>Teach Safety</th>
<th>Make Adult Friends</th>
<th>Opportunity to Be a Role Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FG1 M1</td>
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</table>

Table 15

Interview Responses of Current Leader Perspectives on Conditions Facilitating Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Leaders</th>
<th>Help Kids/ Share My Knowledge</th>
<th>I Have an Opportunity to Learn</th>
<th>Have Fun With Kids</th>
<th>Do Your Homework/ Realize It’s a Lot of Responsibility</th>
<th>Have a Passion for Project Area</th>
<th>Teach Safety</th>
<th>Make Adult Friends</th>
</tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16

Focus Group Responses of Former Leaders as to Conditions Facilitating Leader Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Leaders</th>
<th>Help Kids/Share My Knowledge</th>
<th>I Have an Opportunity to Learn</th>
<th>Have Fun With Kids</th>
<th>Have a Passion for Project Area</th>
<th>Teach Safety</th>
<th>Make Adult Friends</th>
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<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Another former leader (Jill) shared, “Our main focus in our club was to teach basic [species] ownership so that the 35- or 40-year-old person could have a [species] in their backyard and be able to maintain it properly.”

Passing on traits such as responsibility and commitment were important to leaders as well. As former leader Bob explained:

That’s one of the things leaders have to do. It’s okay to be a kid. But today is the day we do chores and the time and those things. And then go play. But you have to take care of this. This is your main responsibility.
Other facilitating factors alluded to by former leaders were in reference to personal development and community concern. For example, former leader Henrietta shared, “I enjoyed organizing, making things run in an orderly fashion that made sense for everybody so it wasn’t a free for all.”

Two leaders had this exchange:

You start learning when the kids start learning. It isn’t all teaching. Some part of it, you learn together, and, at the end, you both....

But a big part of teaching is the continuing learning that you do. I know that worked for me, especially when my daughter got involved. I’ve done [species] all of my life, and when I was a 4-H leader, she was not in 4-H. Both of my children were too young and so I worked with other young kids, and it was challenging to me, and what I liked about the challenge was that I got to learn new stuff too. New breeds. Different ways that different breed showed. It was a lot of fun for me to learn.

Thirty-one percent of the former leaders also shared it was important to have fun with the 4-H members. As former leader Bonita noted:

[It is important] to have fun with the kids. You want them to learn. You don’t want it so structured that nobody has a chance to smile. You want them to go out of there and think, “I want to come back!”

Personal interviews were conducted with three former leaders to support the findings from the focus groups (Table 17). When asked about the conditions that would facilitate participation in the St. Joseph County Youth Development Program, two of the leaders indicated that the opportunity to help children and share their knowledge of the project area would facilitate their participation. This was consistent with focus group findings. The opportunity to teach safety was also a topic discussed in the focus group sessions and supported by personal interview data.

**4-H Agents.** All of the 4-H agents predicted that helping kids and sharing knowledge facilitated leader participation in the 4-H program (Table 18). 4-H Agent Mary shared, “[Leaders
enjoy] helping kids. Start to finish on a project. Some of them are not only 4-H leaders, but mentors as well.”

Table 17

*Focus Group Responses of Former Leaders’ Perspectives of Conditions Facilitating Leader Participation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Leaders</th>
<th>Help Kids/Share My Knowledge</th>
<th>Teach Safety</th>
<th>Make Adult Friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FL-PI1</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL-PI2</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FL-PI3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 18

Interview Responses of 4-H Agents as to the Conditions Facilitating Leader Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current and Former Agents</th>
<th>Help Kids/Share My Knowledge</th>
<th>Have a Passion for Project Area</th>
<th>Teach Safety</th>
<th>Make Adult Friends</th>
<th>Opportunity to Be a Role Model</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-Mary*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-Linda*</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-Patricia*</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-Barbara*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Pseudonyms were used and agents have been placed in random order

4-H Agent Barbara commented:

I believe [being a 4-H leader] affords an opportunity to pass on skills that you’ve developed. And perhaps also because they can share skills that don’t pertain to their careers and so on. But [the project area is] something they enjoy doing, like photography or cooking. And they have that opportunity to pass that sill on. Number one, they have to love working with kids and its an opportunity to pass on a skill. I think there is such a history with families and I think that one of the strongest things that
come out of leaders, particularly leaders that have a long history in their family, or who have had a very good experience in 4-H.

Additionally, 4-H agents thought that having a passion for the topic area was important (75%). Finally, three agents also indicated that 4-H leaders felt responsible to be a role model to members and that sense of responsibility facilitated their involvement.

An emerging theme from the focus group data was former leaders found helping kids and sharing their knowledge to be a facilitator of their participation in the 4-H program. 4-H Agent personal interview data supported this emerging theme.

**Research Question 4**

The fourth research question explored whether the relationship between 4-H leaders and MSUE staff was a factor in the re-enrollment decisions for leaders. Eight specific interview questions were posed to participants to explore this research question.

**Current 4-H leaders.** There were participants who indicated that they had a positive working relationship with MSUE. However, 87% of current leaders expressed dissatisfaction with the level of friendliness of the MSUE staff (Table 19).

Leaders often described a feeling of being the recipient of poor customer service when they contact or visit the extension office. This lack of customer service was exhibited when they ask for materials and how they were treated by MSUE staff. During one focus group, a few leaders had this exchange:

Sadie explained, “It doesn’t feel very warm when you walk into the office.”

“And you want it to be appealing because—parents and kids spend a lot of time together when they are involved in 4-H. And you know, not with football and basketball—you drop the kid off and with 4-H you’re with them. And this, the atmosphere at the extension office should be very important,” Katrina added.
Focus Group Responses of Current Leaders as to Degree Volunteer and Extension Staff Relations Are a Factor in the Re-enrollment Decision-Making Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Leaders</th>
<th>Lack of MSUE Support</th>
<th>Lack of Friendliness in Current MSUE Office</th>
<th>Difficulty of Obtaining Info from Current MSUE</th>
<th>MSUE Allows Issues to Fester</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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|    | 60% | 87% | 27% | 27% |

“And it isn’t very welcoming,” responded Jane.

Many leaders expressed the importance of calling in advance to the extension office if they wanted something. One leader said she found the office supportive:
...as long as you know what you want and what you need. If you don’t have a clue as to what you are coming in here for, they’re not a lot of positive support. They don’t ask questions to help you figure out what you need.

In addition, 60% of the current leaders expressed disappointment or frustration over the perceived lack of support from the current staff. Specifically, it seemed that leaders were looking for control and autonomy that they did not have. Many leaders were angry over the fact that they had to attend mandatory meetings.

As one leader observed, “I don’t need to give up one more night. We meet all of the time. I don’t need a motivational speech.”

Current leader Leslie expressed frustration with the mandatory meetings:

There are no other counties in the area that are making these meetings mandatory. I’m not happy with it. We are volunteers. We do not get paid for the hundreds of hours we give and the gas we spend. As far as mandatory for the leaders and them not exempting anybody, that’s the problem that I’m having right now.

Another example of leaders expressing a desire for control and autonomy is evident in their accounts about lack of control of their specific project area meetings. Current leader Leslie reported a situation within the project area in which the leaders were trying to decide if they needed to make 4-H members attend two events or one for one of their competitions. The leader shared that the project area leaders had a tie vote and decided to table the discussion until the remaining leaders could be at the next meeting. However, when they arrived at the next meeting, they were told that their decision had been made for them by the office. Leslie explained:

We got there. No vote. And that’s not the way it should be. The [other species]—everybody got to vote and theirs went one way or the other. And when we got to our meeting, no vote. “You will attend both or you don’t do it.” No discussion. Done. And I said, is this a democracy or a dictatorship?
Furthermore, current leader Polly mentioned she tried to put in disciplinary procedures for her project area, “…there has to be consequences. And the office said, ‘We don’t care if you vote that in or not. We’re not going to back you up on it.’”

In another example of a leader feeling stripped of her authority, Tanya explained:

[The 4-H agent] had the little girl in tears. [The 4-H agent] should have come to me first. That was the big issue that I had. They needed to come to me. And let me know. It seems they didn’t trust my ability.

This sentiment echoes Musick and Wilson (2008) when they suggested volunteers may resent feeling denigrated and dismissed by paid staff. Another leader simply stated, “We should be able to fire bad leaders.”

The perception that the 4-H leaders do not possess the control and autonomy that they desire was a very common theme. The study by Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2000) found volunteer empowerment was important to the volunteer experience. However, there were other concerns voiced about their relationship with the 4-H office.

Other leaders echoed this experience regarding the inability to receive the materials they need. “I think they forget one thing—we all do this because we love it and we’re volunteers and we don’t get paid for it. And they do. They are here to support us and they forget that sometimes.”

In some cases, leaders shared specific instances where they felt they did not receive the support they deserved handling sensitive issues: project area concerns, internal club problems, and so on. Many participants revealed the office tended to avoid handling political issues which some felt might allow minor problems to fester into major problems.

While leaders shared many concerns from lack of autonomy to frustrations with the customer service at the extension office, when pressed, many of the same leaders had positive
things to say about their relationship with extension office staff. For example, current leader Jane said, “As much as I want to dog on [staff member], [the staff member] is very helpful and I have always had support from [the other staff] when we needed it. I think they’ve gone above and beyond many times—for all of us.”

Another leader indicated:

I’ve always, in recent history, gotten along with the staff at the extension office just fine. The core group that is in there has been there quite a while and they are very accommodating. And they do, they tend to do dual purpose, whether it’s [staff member], but a lot of the time [staff member] can cover the desk and do a very adequate job taking care of folks that come through the door.

Many leaders recognized the office staff has a lot of interruptions throughout the day with leaders, parents, and members walking through the door. They also acknowledge the workload of the staff can be overwhelming. Many expressed satisfaction with their relationship with the office when one considers the diverse challenges the office staff faces on a daily basis.

Although, sometimes, that expressed satisfaction was tempered with a nod to the frustrations faced by other leaders. One leader shared, “I’ve always had a good report with them. I know some people don’t. Me, personally, yes.” And from another leader, “Current staff, I think, do as much as they possibly can. You do run into roadblocks with some of the staff.”

Finally, current leader Betsy observed:

I am probably unique. I was just in yesterday and my kids are young. As a 4-H mom and a leader, I’ve never had a bad experience. I’ve asked a lot of [staff member] and I’ve asked a tremendous amount from [staff member]. I was given respect and they were efficient. I am probably the golden goose here. I have yet to have a bad experience. I try to go in with an open mind. Most of the time my expectations are met.

The relationship between 4-H leaders and office can be tumultuous. Leaders were often frustrated by their inability to do their own thing with their 4-H project area and seemed to resent extension office staff stepping in and tell them what needs to be done. In addition, the
lack of warmth and friendliness of the office was a common complaint. With that said, many 4-H leaders ultimately felt their relationship with the extension office was acceptable and they received the support they needed. As one leader explained, “Anytime I ask for anything, it was readily available.” Another said, “The staff has always been very accommodating.”

Further exploring this topic, the following exchange occurred between two current leaders:

When asked if the group found MSUE to be supportive, Sadie replied, “...it depends on who is in the office at the time and what they’re telling you.”

Jerry added, “And to be honest, if we didn’t love our kids that we work with more than... none of would be here!”

Jane confirmed: “We’d all be gone!”

While some current leaders expressed concern that the relationship with MSUE may influence the decision by leader to re-enroll, very few confirmed this was a deciding factor. As current leader Cade said, “I’m sure [the relationship between MSUE and leaders matters in re-enrollment decisions]. Because if they aren’t feeling support and encouragement [they might leave].” Yet, as was found in the previous quote by Jerry, many leaders remain regardless of their relationship with MSUE. Only one current leader, Dan, indicated that his relationship with MSUE was causing him to consider leaving 4-H.

I am about ready to give up. With complications with other things that are going on. Politics. That’s why I’m not on youth council anymore (because of the list of times MSUE did not support me). The list is too long.

Personal interviews were conducted with three current leaders to support the findings from the focus groups (Table 20). When asked whether the relationship between 4-H leaders and MSUE staff was a factor in the re-enrollment decisions for leaders, two-thirds of the
interviewees echoed the focus group findings that the extension office was not friendly and they did not feel as though they had office support.

Table 20

*Interview Responses of Current Leaders as to the Degree Volunteer and Extension Staff Relations Are a Factor in the Re-enrollment Decision-Making Process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Leaders</th>
<th>Mandatory Meetings</th>
<th>Lack of MSUE Support</th>
<th>Lack of Friendliness in Current MSUE Office</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CL-PI1</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>CL-PI2</td>
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**Former 4-H leaders.** Former leaders shared similar concerns. However, there were participants who indicated they had a good working relationship with extension, particularly leaders who had ended their leadership roles a quite some time ago (Table 21). The perception of some of the leaders was the office support has changed to the negative over the years. Former leader Bonita shared, “They used to offer good [customer service]. But not now. They used to, but not now.”

For the leaders who expressed satisfaction with their relationship with the extension office staff, most of those who expressed satisfaction were leaders who had left 4-H as leaders 10 or more years ago. These same leaders have been disconnected from the extension office in recent years and reference only their experience from years past. For example, one focus group had the following discussion:

*Years ago, I thought the extension office was very good as supporting us as leaders.*

*Yes, excellent.*
We were a family. No matter what my name was. We all got the same treatment. From what I hear, [the leaders] don’t get that now.

They would even call you and see how you are getting along!

Table 21

*Focus Group Responses of Former Leaders as to the Degree Volunteer and Extension Staff Relations Are a Factor in the Re-enrollment Decision-Making Process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Leaders</th>
<th>Mandatory Meetings</th>
<th>Lack of MSUE Support</th>
<th>Lack of Friendliness in Current MSUE Office</th>
<th>Difficulty of Obtaining Info from Current MSUE</th>
<th>MSUE Allows Issues to Fester</th>
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| FG3 M1              |                    | X                    | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M2                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             | X                           |
| M3                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |
| M4                  |                    |                      | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M5                  |                    |                      |                                            | X                                             |                             |
| M6                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |

| FG4 M1              |                    | X                    | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M2                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             | X                           |
| M3                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |
| M4                  |                    |                      | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M5                  |                    |                      |                                            | X                                             |                             |
| M6                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |

| FG3 M1              |                    | X                    | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M2                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             | X                           |
| M3                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |
| M4                  |                    |                      | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M5                  |                    |                      |                                            | X                                             |                             |
| M6                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |

| FG4 M1              |                    | X                    | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M2                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             | X                           |
| M3                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |
| M4                  |                    |                      | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M5                  |                    |                      |                                            | X                                             |                             |
| M6                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |

| FG3 M1              |                    | X                    | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M2                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             | X                           |
| M3                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |
| M4                  |                    |                      | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M5                  |                    |                      |                                            | X                                             |                             |
| M6                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |

| FG4 M1              |                    | X                    | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M2                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             | X                           |
| M3                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |
| M4                  |                    |                      | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M5                  |                    |                      |                                            | X                                             |                             |
| M6                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |

| FG3 M1              |                    | X                    | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M2                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             | X                           |
| M3                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |
| M4                  |                    |                      | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M5                  |                    |                      |                                            | X                                             |                             |
| M6                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |

| FG4 M1              |                    | X                    | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M2                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             | X                           |
| M3                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |
| M4                  |                    |                      | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M5                  |                    |                      |                                            | X                                             |                             |
| M6                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |

| FG3 M1              |                    | X                    | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M2                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             | X                           |
| M3                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |
| M4                  |                    |                      | X                                          |                                               |                             |
| M5                  |                    |                      |                                            | X                                             |                             |
| M6                  |                    | X                    | X                                          | X                                             |                             |
Another leader explained:

[When I was a leader] you could go in there and look for your own stuff. We had access to the office. “Come on in” and if they were busy, “That’s where all of the books are and stuff and if you need help, we'll give it otherwise go get it.” We felt we were welcomed as being a 4-H leader. And our materials were freely given to us and any support that we needed.

This group of leaders who had been gone from 4-H 10 or more years shared many examples of receiving adequate help and appropriate customer service. Said one former leader, “The office staff was supportive of any help I needed. The staff was always cooperative.”

However, satisfaction seems to shift to the negative with former leaders who quit within the last decade. Forty-six percent of former leader indicated dissatisfaction in the friendliness of the 4-H office. Former leader Fred explained it this way:

The first 15 or 20 years it seems like I was an apologist for the 4-H office. I saw how busy they were and how committed they were. I would tell people, “They’re doing the best they can.” I would explain that the office has all of these people; all of these kids and all of these leaders and they are doing the best they can. But the last five or six years, it has been pulling teeth to get anything. [Some of the staff are] a problem. Just like leaders. Some leaders tend to lose their enthusiasm over time and I think they make up for it by their knowledge. I think the same thing happens to the staff. The longer they are here the less cooperative they become.

Even a 4-H leader, Wanda, who had resigned years ago, but still accesses the extension office on occasion, said:

Nowadays you get nothing. We always felt that they supported us. And they really went through the procedures that should be done. It is a strange place over there now. I want to say, “Ya know, if we weren’t here, you wouldn’t have your program!” Sure the 4-Hers make the program. But so do the leaders...and the way they greet us now in 4-H, it’s bad.

Two leaders added, “You don’t feel like you belong there.”

Former 4-H leaders, who have been away about 10 years or more, expressed satisfaction with their recollection of experiences with the 4-H office. Those who resigned
within the last decade expressed similar frustrations as current leaders. It is difficult to determine if the change is a result of time and fading memories, or if the recent staff is more disappointing than the extension staff 10 years or more ago. Twenty-year-plus leaders are positive.

Forty-six percent of former 4-H leaders said that the MSUE of “long ago” was supportive and felt like home like home. For example, this exchange occurred in the third focus group.

Betty explained, “Nowadays you get nothing (from MSUE staff). They are very...when you go over and ask them a question, they all look at each and...

Wanda said, “Years ago I thought they were very good.”

“Yes, excellent,” said another former leader.

Betty concluded, “We were a family. No matter what my name was. We all got the same treatment. You don’t get that now.”

Forty-four percent said today’s MSUE is not supportive. Another 38% stated they were not familiar enough with today’s MSUE to have an opinion.

Current leaders and former leaders both indicated retrieving information from MSUE was a challenge. For example, current leader Leslie shared, “They’re a little owie especially around fair week...and you say, ‘I need one more of these [forms]’ and [the response] in an ugly voice is ‘Why do you need one of these?!’

Personal interviews were conducted with three former leaders to support the findings from the focus groups (Table 22). When asked whether the relationship between 4-H leaders and MSUE staff was a factor in the re-enrollment decisions for leaders, only one of the current leaders indicated that lack of friendliness and lack of support, as reported by the focus groups, was a factor in their decision to not re-enroll. This leader had resigned within the last 10 years. The other two interviewees had resigned more than 10 years ago.
Table 22

*Personal Interview Responses of Former Leaders as to the Degree Volunteer and Extension Staff Relations Are a Factor in the Decision for Leaders to Re-enroll*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Leaders</th>
<th>Lack of MSUE Support</th>
<th>Lack of Friendliness in Current MSUE Office</th>
<th>MSUE Allows Issues to Fester</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FL-PI1</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>FL-PI2</td>
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<td>FL-PI3</td>
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4-H Agents. The most striking result is the disparity between 4-H leader perceptions and extension office perceptions regarding whether the relationship between 4-H leaders and MSUE staff was a factor in the re-enrollment decisions for leaders. As previously stated, current and former leaders were overwhelmingly disappointed in the perceived lack of friendliness and support from the extension office. Yet, the majority of the 4-H agents interviewed felt that the support they provided was sufficient to good. However, half of the agents interviewed suggested extension office fell short, in some instances, and could do a better job of supporting leaders. For example agent Linda shared:

I always thought it was really bad when [species council] made a decision, we talked about it, and [the office] changed our minds. That took away the power from the leader. So you really want to... I really tried to give good support and not contradict [species] council, or the people in power. I didn’t want to seem like I was the grand boss. Here is the rule, [the leader] was correct in making this judgment, and I backed him up. That was my job.

A description from agent Mary exemplified the struggle the 4-H office had in finding the correct balance in providing leader support:

We [were there for the leaders]. We weren’t going to hand-hold. That wasn’t our job. If they needed help we were there. But they had to ask for it. We were not going to go
seeking, “Do you need help?” [The info] was there but they had to be willing to ask for it too. We made it available. But they had to ask for it. Our staff needed to be more accommodating. But I also think that the leaders needed to...if they needed help, we couldn’t read their minds. We couldn’t always foresee their needs no matter how hard we tried. It was there. The help was there. But they had to be willing to ask for it. They couldn’t assume that we knew what they needed. When they came in for info, we needed to be more willing to distribute it. I needed to make myself more available to them if they had a need arise. I really think the office, as a whole, could have been more accommodating.

Agent Patricia echoed a similar sentiment: “I think sometimes staff doesn’t know exactly what [the leaders] need. I think making their needs known is part of it. I think in general their needs would be met.” This struggle of deciphering how much support and/or guidance to provide echoes the discussion from Musick and Wilson (2008). They said that volunteer managers and their organizations must strike a balance between too much and too little bureaucracy. They argue, too much bureaucracy dampers volunteers’ enthusiasm and spirit, yet too little bureaucracy creates a feeling of alienation and ambiguity.

Along a different vein, Agent Barbara described how the demands of the 4-H agent job led to a perception of lack of support by leaders:

I think overall [we were supportive of leaders]. Yes. I think sometimes leaders get frustrated with staff because staff isn’t able to be back with them quickly as they’d like. And that was always a challenge. As an agent, you have so many balls in the air at one time and you’re busy putting out a fire where you’d really like to get back and spend time with this person or question; but the fire was still burning over here.

In addition, three of the four agents made reference to various internal staff problems that 4-H leaders, by and large, were not aware of. “There was a lot of tension,” one agent explained. Another shared, “I was absolutely not supported [by staff member]. That was probably the worst part of the job.” While leaders perceived that the office did not provide sufficient support to them, they were probably unaware that the office, itself, had its own internal struggles which may have had an effect on service they were able to provide.
Three of the four agents also referenced the need for the extension office to implement some type of new leader training initiative to help leaders understand what they need and what their job would entail. Agent Barbara indicated:

Another barrier, just for the brand new leader, is understanding what’s going on and having the right training tools. Knowing what they’re doing. Because I think a lot of people do start as new leaders thinking “What can I do to make this program better? I want to be a chicken leader, what do I do?” and then they look and then don’t know.

Agent Barbara described such a training program:

I think that leader training is such a huge need, as I look back. There needs to be more training of “What is 4-H?” “What are its value systems?” “How do you work within the system?” “What are your resources?” And there are some surrounding counties that have pretty effective new leader training. And probably that is one of the biggest things that would help with retention is working on new leader training. And helping them understand 4-H if they’re new to 4-H and where the resources are, what the expectations are, what the time commitments are, and even what are your responsibilities at the fair, and so forth.

She continued:

I think they can often feel just that just don’t have enough support or information. Or knowledge of the program that really keeps them hooked in there. I think if there is anything that could be critical to keeping 4-H leaders going forward is that new leader training and also more work on skills training in various project areas and sort of refresher workshops with helping leaders understand mindsets of kids. Developmental stages of kids. What are 6- to 9-year-olds geared into? What are pre-teens geared into? What’s their thinking? What’s the developmental stages? To better understand how to work with those kids.

The same agent elaborated, “I just see the leader as the absolute most vital component of effective 4-H youth work. It is so important to make leaders feel valued in what they do and recognize their abilities. Give them some creative opportunities.” This agent’s perspective aligns itself to the findings by Farmer and Fedor (1999) in that volunteers who perceive that they are valued and that their efforts are appreciated will have lower withdrawal intentions.
All of the 4-H agents stated they felt MSUE was supportive of the 4-H leaders. However, 75% of the agents indicated that there is difficulty in figuring out what a leader actually needs. Three of the four agents also stated that they struggled with internal staffing issues.

From the data, two themes emerged from the fourth research question: current 4-H leaders perceive they do not have support from MSUE and current 4-H leaders do not feel that the MSUE staff is friendly. Personal interviews with current and former 4-H agents indicate the extension office is not aware of the perception there is lack of support and lack of friendliness from extension office staff (Table 23).

Table 23

| Personal Interview Responses of Current and Former 4-H Agents as to the Degree Volunteer and Extension Staff Relations Are a Factor in the Decision for Leaders to Re-enroll |
|---|---|---|---|
| Current and Former Agents | MSUE Supports Leaders | Office Warmth Can Be a Concern | It’s Difficult to Know What Leaders Need/Want |
| A-Mary* | X | | X |
| A-Linda* | X | X | X |
| A-Patricia* | X | X | |
| A-Barbara* | X | X | X |

*Pseudonyms were used and agents have been placed in random order.

**Summary: Themes and Emerging Themes**

The study identified four themes and one emerging theme (Table 24). Overall, current and former leaders agree parental involvement was the most challenging aspect of their role as
a 4-H leader. Additionally, it appeared the relationship between current leaders and the extension office is a concern for current 4-H leaders.

Table 24

*Themes/Emerging Theme*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Theme and Percentage of Respondents</th>
<th>Emerging Theme and Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why do leaders choose not to re-enroll in the SJC 4-H Youth Development Program?</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the barriers to leader participation in the SJC 4-H Youth Development Program?</td>
<td>Current leaders find their relationship with parents challenging. (73%) Former leaders found their relationship with parents challenging. (69%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What conditions would facilitate leader participation in the SJC 4-H Youth Development Program?</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Former leaders helping kids and sharing their knowledge to be a facilitator of their participation in the 4-H program (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what degree are volunteer and staff relations a factor in the decision to re-enroll by volunteer leaders?</td>
<td>Current leaders perceive they do not have support from MSUE. (60%) Current leaders do not feel that the MSUE staff is friendly. (87%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Volunteer Process Model**

The frame of the Volunteer Process Model and its six categories were also applied to the data. The categories were (1) Helping personality, (2) Motivations, (3) Social Support,
(4) Satisfaction, (5) Integration, and (6) Duration. It is important to operationally define these categories. The categories were operationally defined using Omoto and Snyder’s (1995) table 4 that highlighted indicators of the categories.

1. Helping personality: phrases of nurturance, empathetic concern, and/or social responsibility
2. Motivations: phrases of values, understanding, personal development, community concern, and/or esteem enhancement
3. Social Support: phrases of social support availability and/or social network
4. Satisfaction: phrases of satisfaction adjectives and/or satisfaction statements
5. Integration: phrases of attendance, social and organizational acceptance, and/or additional involvement
6. Duration: phrases indicated duration of service

In this study, three of Omoto and Snyder’s (1995) six categories were found to have important subcategories.

Application of the data to the Volunteer Process Model follows and is divided by current leaders, former leaders, and 4-H Agents.

Current Leaders and the Volunteer Process Model

Stage 1: Antecedents of Helping Personality, Motivations, and Social Support

The antecedents of volunteerism are considered by Omoto and Snyder (1995) to be a helping personality, motivation, and social support. All three antecedents of the Volunteer Process Model were evident in discussions with current leaders. However, it is important to
note that, unlike the current Volunteer Process Model, two of the categories had obvious subcategories and those will be addressed.

**Helping Personality.** A helping personality was operationalized through phrases of nurturance, empathic concern, and/or social responsibility. By nature, 4-H leaders tended to be nurturing individuals. All but two of the participants were parents; some participants were even grandparents. Leaders often referred to the children in their club as “my kids” regardless of true familial ties. As one leader shared, “It doesn’t matter who, which kid, wins. I know that they’ve worked their little tail off and I’m sitting there crying and my [co-leader] is looking at me—and it’s like, ‘they’re my kids, they’re my kids!’” Another leader said, “All of them are our children.” One woman explained that as their 4-H leader, “you become their parent, their sister, their mother.”

In addition to the strong familial-like ties that leaders often feel towards the children in their club, leaders often speak in terms of the joy of watching the children mature. Some leaders referred to growth in responsibility of taking care of their project animals, in the ability to go from an unsure first-year member to a confident teen-leader or in their understanding about respect and commitment of their peers.

**Motivations.** Motivation was operationalized as phrases of values, understanding, personal development, community concern, and/or esteem enhancement. This study found evidence the category of motivation for current leaders should be broken into two subcategories: motivation of leaders and motivation of 4-H members.

**Motivations of 4-H leaders.** As discussed in the results of Research Question 3, leaders become leaders and remain leaders for a variety of reasons. They may become leaders because their own child is involved in a project area, they are asked by another adult for assistance, or
they are passionate about the project area and it is their hobby. Some leaders are more deeply involved in the 4-H organization than others.

**Motivations of 4-H members.** The motivating factors of children in 4-H is probably much different than the motivating factors of adults, and the motivation of 4-H members is not the focus of this study. However, it is important to note 4-H leaders mentioned only the motivation of competition when referencing 4-H members. This type of motivation for the child would fall under the categories of personal development and esteem enhancement of the child—the child challenging herself, testing her skills, and feeling better about herself through success. “It is great that such a great majority of the kids can walk away with a trophy in the still projects. That they have a great feeling of self-esteem when that happens.”

Many leaders often referenced how hard work usually paid off for children who typically would not have done well in competition because their animal did not have as a high of purchase price as some of the other members. For example, Jerry stated:

> I think the best thing about 4-H is the versatility between the kid that has the [cheap animal] and the kid that has the [circuit animal]. And the ability to watch each other work. If the kid who has the [circuit animal] doesn’t work and the kid that has the [cheap animal] does work, the kid with the [cheap animal] wins. Some kids are motivated because we have numerous disciplines in our program. So they not excel in one, but they can try and learn a little bit. And maybe take those things on to the next [discipline].

While motivation of 4-H members in the 4-H program was not the focus of this study, current leaders perceived the potential of success for hardworking 4-Hers to be the child’s primary motivation. Subsequently, 4-H leaders are inspired to help 4-H members fulfill their goals.

**Social Support.** Social support was operationalized as phrases of social support availability and/or social network. The reference to varying types of social support was found to
be the most discussed of the six categories. There was evidence of positive social support and negative social support in this study. While there were leaders who experienced appropriate parental involvement, expressed satisfaction with the extension office, and cherished deep friendships with other 4-H leaders, overall, current 4-H leaders felt as though they are lacking social support in these three areas. Subcategories to the category of social support were evidenced in leader relationships with parents, the extension office, and other leaders.

**Support from parents.** As discussed in Research Question 2, perhaps it is the very nature of the situation that leaders rarely felt support of the 4-H members’ parents. When the researcher asked one focus group about the obstacles, challenges, and barriers faced by 4-H volunteers, all group participants responded “parents” in chorus. This commonly perceived barrier emerged as a theme of the study.

**Support from the extension office.** The second subcategory for 4-H leaders regarding social support is the amount of support they perceive they receive from the extension office. Again, there were participants who indicated that they had a positive working relationship with extension. However, the majority of participants expressed disappointment or frustration over the perceived lack of support from the current staff. Specifically, it seemed leaders were looking for control and autonomy they did not have. This finding also emerged as a theme in the study.

**Support from other leaders.** The final subcategory under social support is support from other leaders. Typically, 4-H leaders primarily associate with other 4-H leaders in their specific project area. However, it was not uncommon for leaders from all disciplines to consult on other projects in 4-H: youth council, county-wide fundraisers, as simply a “parent” in another project area, and so forth. In many cases, the participants were quick to point out the importance of adult friendships. As Tanya stated, “A big part of getting leaders coming back are the
friendships, the adults friendships.” Seminal work by Gidron (1985) found relationships with other volunteers to be a critical predictor of retention. This sentiment also echoes Hidalgo and Moreno’s (2009) finding that social networks are very important to the retention of volunteers as volunteers are reluctant to break their social bonds.

However, some leaders expressed disappointment working with the other adult leaders. Leslie shared this frustration:

> What discourages me a little bit is the lack of open-mindedness from other leaders. Or the willingness to look for change or say, “Hey, let’s see what your idea is.” As a younger leader you run into that kind of roadblock.

Colleen observed:

> There are politics among the families that we work with, but there are also politics among the 4-H leaders. It makes it hard to feel good at the end of the day—people’s perceptions of other people, how things are handled. I didn’t know this exactly. But now as a leader, I try to keep the peace, but it is difficult.

**Stage 2: Experiences of Satisfaction and Integration**

While stage 1 of the Volunteer Process Model reflects on the antecedents of volunteerism, stage 2 of the model concerns the experiences of volunteers, particularly as those experiences may promote or deter continuing involvement (Omoto & Snyder, 1995). Satisfaction and integration of the volunteers may play an important role in their subsequent duration.

**Satisfaction.** Satisfaction was operationalized by Omoto and Snyder (1995) through phrases of satisfaction adjectives and/or satisfaction statements. More specifically, satisfaction is likely to mean volunteers enjoy their work and believe in its importance and will stick to it even in hard times (Omoto & Snyder, 1995). One leader insisted that 4-H leaders must have a
passion for their project area. Because much of the leader’s work is autonomous, the passion for the project area will keep the leader going. An example of this type of satisfaction included:

We came through those hard times and struggles and we have one heck of a program. And it is exciting now. To see where we were and where we are now and where we can go and I am really not ready to let it go either, because I don’t want anybody to mess it up.

In addition to liking their project area, many leaders recognized how important their work is to the youth they help. Ed shared, “I think sometimes it is overlooked at how efficient this system is. From the standpoint of keeping those kids—giving them something positive to do so they don’t create a ruckus in the community.” Colleen relished the opportunity to make a difference, stating, “There are so many kids out there that don’t have positive adult role models,” and a peer added, “They need to see us walk the walk and talk the talk.”

**Integration.** Integration was operationalized through phrases of attendance, social and organizational acceptance, and/or additional involvement. In this study, there was evidence of two subcategories: leader integration and member integration.

**4-H leader integration.** When discussing their personal involvement in 4-H, leaders shared positive experiences about each other and with the office. Many leaders discussed, with evident pride, their deep involvement in multiple project areas within 4-H. They spoke in terms of being relied upon by the office to complete tasks or help handle difficult situations. Leaders often referenced how they remain in 4-H waiting for their grandchildren to come of age or that they came back to 4-H to be with their grandchildren. Pride in continuing the family tradition of 4-H involvement was an important issue for many of the leaders. Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001) found that integration emerged as a significant predictor of volunteers’ intent to remain. As Ed shared:
I’ve been a leader for over 30 years...of course my kids have always been involved, and my nephews prior to us having kids of age. It’s a family tradition. I grew up in the game. I’m probably, what do you call it, it’s just a family tradition. Ya know, my mother was an organization leader. Dad was in 4-H. I got some grandsons coming up. It’s just that these are good families that bring their kids out. They were leaders. Their kids are leaders and the grandkids are leaders. It’s like 4th generation.

Integration, or feeling a sense of belongingness, was an important factor for 4-H leaders. Leaders knew each other’s names, the names of spouses, children, and project animals. Leaders often referred to each other as family. A few leaders mentioned “the meetings after meetings” where leaders go for ice cream together. They were friends on such social networking websites as Facebook and they remember birthdays with homemade cakes. Those who appear to be socially accepted were often the leaders who work harder and get more involved in the overall 4-H interworking as they are included in the latest news and event information.

*4-H member integration.* While the leaders focused on family history and deep assimilation in the integration category for themselves, when they referenced the 4-H members, they touched on issues of attendance and availability. Leaders frequently discussed the challenges of children’s schedules and their over-involvement in many extra-curricular activities—both in school and with other community organizations.

Not only do leaders feel that children were pressed for time, they also acknowledge they have so many other available outlets now. “I think a lot of times, in today’s world, it’s the time. Ya know—how on earth do you get all of the kids rounded up at one time. How do you get them all headed in one direction on the same day?”

Leaders believe that 4-H members were increasingly more involved in a variety of organizations and have less time to “fit” 4-H in to their busy lifestyles.
Stage 3: Consequences of Volunteerism

The final stage of the Volunteer Process Model deals with the category of duration. This was operationalized through phrases indicating duration of service to the organization.

Duration. For current leaders, deciding whether to remain a 4-H leader is often an automatic process. Others felt they had created a good project area and wanted to see it continue down the same successful path.

Former 4-H Leader and the Volunteer Process Model

Stage 1: Antecedents of Helping Personality, Motivations, and Social Support

The antecedents of volunteerism considered by Omoto and Snyder (1995) included to be a helping personality, motivations, and social support. All three antecedents of the Volunteer Process Model were evident in discussions with former 4-H leaders. However, it is important to note that the antecedent social support had sub categories and these subcategories will be addressed.

Helping Personality. A helping personality was operationalized through phrases of nurturance, empathic concern, and/or social responsibility. As previously discussed, 4-H leaders tend to be nurturing individuals. All of the participants were parents; some participants were even grandparents and great-grandparents. Former leader Henrietta said, “I considered every kid on my club one of ‘my’ kids.” Jeff shared, “I think you have to give up a lot and part of yourself for those kids. You are there for them. And they don’t always say ‘thank you.’ But you know from their growth. Their growth.” Helping children was identified as an emerging theme in the data from former 4-H leaders.
**Motivations.** Motivation was operationalized as phrases of values, understanding, personal development, community concern, and/or esteem enhancement. Unlike current 4-H leaders, former 4-H leaders referenced only themselves in terms of motivation, not with 4-H members.

Most of the motivational factors alluded to by former leaders were in reference to personal development and community concern. As Omoto and Snyder (1995) described, personal development could be identified by statements about the participant challenging himself and testing his skills and/or learning about himself.

**Social Support.** Social support was operationalized as phrases of social support availability and/or social network. Like current leaders, the issue of social support was found to be the most discussed of the six categories with former leaders. There was evidence of positive social support and negative social support with former leaders. While there were leaders who experienced appropriate parental involvement, expressed satisfaction with the extension office, and cherished deep friendships with other 4-H leaders, overall, former 4-H leaders feel as though they were lacking social support from these three areas. Like current leader data, subcategories to this general category emerged in relation to leader relationships with parents, the extension office, and other leaders.

**Support from parents.** Similar to concerns current leaders had with parents, former leaders cited such issues as lack of cooperation, attitude of parents, and concerns about dealing with parent-to-parent conflict. Former leaders also recognized the wide range of parental involvement.

**Support from extension office.** The second subcategory of former 4-H leaders regarding social support is the amount of perceived support from the extension office. There were
participants who indicated that they had a good working relationship with extension; particularly leaders who had ended their leadership roles a quite some time ago. The perception of some of the leaders is that the support from the office has changed to the negative over the years. Wanda shared: “They used to offer good [customer service]. But not now. They used to, but not now.”

**Support from other leaders.** During the discussions regarding peer support, leaders expressed frustration at the lack of work ethic among peer leaders. “We had a rotating [assignment] sheet, but no one showed up to help with the fundraiser. There were never any hard structures and any expectations laid out [for leaders].”

Generally speaking, evidence from focus group and interview sessions indicate that former leader do not have as many conflicts with peer leaders as current leaders do. Again, this may be a factor of time passing and the leaders do not recall conflict. A few leaders recognized the importance of camaraderie between adult leaders. “A big part of getting leaders coming back was the friendships, the adult friendships,” explained Lucy. Many former leaders acknowledged they are friendly with and still socialize with other leaders from their tenure. 4-H provides an opportunity for adults to form significant and lasting friendships.

**Stage 2: Experiences of Satisfaction and Integration**

While stage 1 of the Volunteer Process Model reflects on the antecedents of volunteerism, stage 2 of the model concerns the experiences of volunteers, particularly as those experiences may promote or deter continuing involvement (Omoto & Snyder, 1995). Satisfaction and integration of the volunteers may have played an important role in their subsequent duration.
**Satisfaction.** Satisfaction was operationalized by Omoto and Snyder (1995) as phrases of satisfaction adjectives’ and/or satisfaction statement. More specifically, satisfaction is likely to mean volunteers enjoy their work and believe in its importance and who will stick to it even in hard times (Omoto & Snyder, 1995). Data from the interview and focus group discussions of leaders who had resigned more than a decade ago had greater satisfaction than more recent quitters.

**Integration.** Integration was operationalized through phrases of attendance, social and organizational acceptance, and/or additional involvement. Like current leader data, this category was found to be best explained in sub categories: leader integration and member integration.

**Leader integration.** Former leaders consistently referenced personal relationships throughout their interviews. One leader frequently commented how the 4-H agent would turn to him in times of problems to look for assistance on how to handle the situation. Another indicated her very best friend was met through 4-H leadership. And another former leader shared that even the county agricultural agent would come to their house for a social call in earlier years.

Bob shared: “I’ve known [staff member] for—since I was in my 20s. My father and brother knew [staff member] too. If [staff member] and I sat down, we’d probably have the same beliefs on things.”

Similar to current leaders, it is not uncommon for leaders who felt highly integrated to be deeply involved in many aspects of the 4-H program. This type of willingness to help was evidenced through Rose’s recollection.
[The 4-H Agent] always knew we would help with whatever she needed help with. She knew she didn’t even need to ask. She could just point in the right direction and we were there. We still meet once a month. We talk about the old days.

**Integration of children.** In the discussion with current leaders, one of their challenges to leadership was the feeling that 4-H members are over-scheduled and over-involved with too many school and after-school activities. It was the assumption by current leaders that this is a new phenomenon. However, this same concern was also highlighted by former leaders as well. As Stacey suggested: “One of the biggest challenges was kids were so involved in extra-curriculars [at school] that it was hard for them to prioritize 4-H sometimes.” When discussing today’s 4-H members, leaders often used phrases like “pressed for time,” “too many things going on,” “kids are too busy,” “kids’ schedules are challenging,” and “kids are overscheduled.”

**Stage 3: Consequences of Volunteerism**

The final stage of the Volunteer Process Model deals with the category of duration. This was operationalized through phrases indicating duration of service to the organization.

**Duration.** Whereas current leaders often considered re-enrolling each year as an automatic process, some former leaders discuss years agonizing over the decision.

As anticipated, former leaders had a variety of reasons for ending their leadership role with 4-H. The most common response was that their children had aged out. Many reported being “tired” and “no longer having the energy and time” needed to do the job necessary. Some leaders thought that the job was “better handled by someone younger.” Many former leaders thought it was time for “someone else to step up” who had younger children coming through.
Current and Previous 4-H Agents and the Volunteer Process Model

Stage 1: Antecedents of Helping Personality, Motivation, and Social Support

The antecedents of volunteerism identified by Omoto and Snyder (1995) were a helping personality, motivation, and social support. All three antecedents of the Volunteer Process Model were evident in discussions with current and former 4-H Agents. Quotes have been translated into the past tense, if necessary, to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Helping Personality. A helping personality was operationalized through phrases of nurturance, empathic concern, and/or social responsibility. All of the 4-H agents perceive that 4-H leaders have a true desire for and enjoyment of working with children. As one agent stated, “[4-H leaders enjoy] helping kids. Start to finish on a project. Some of them are not only 4-H leaders, but mentors as well. In the personal setting as well as the 4-H setting.”

Motivation. Motivation was operationalized through phrases of values, understanding, personal development, community concern, and/or esteem enhancement.

4-H agents perceived that leaders liked the subject matter they were teaching, enjoyed working with their own children, considered 4-H a good outlet for passing on a skill, and typically embraced the opportunity to learn right along with the 4-Hers. One agent described that they believe one motivator for leaders is to provide a good program for their own children. Heather said, “I think they just have to be motivated. It is their responsibility to be their motivator for the group.”

Two 4-H agents spoke in terms of the leader’s role in giving back to the community. As Barbara elaborated:
In the process of teaching project skills, they are also teaching life skills. And that they’re teaching about responsibility, honesty, integrity, hard work. I don’t know that leaders necessarily comprehend that they are transferring their skills but it is beautiful when it happens.

**Social Support.** Social support was operationalized through phrases of availability and/or social network. Similar to both current and former 4-H leader results, the category that received the most attention by 4-H agents was social support. One agent addressed that one of the most significant barriers to being a 4-H leader was the “parents themselves.” However, every 4-H agent referred to and discussed at length the relationship between the extension office and the 4-H leaders.

**Support from extension office.** The most striking result was the disparity between 4-H leader perceptions and extension office perceptions. As previously stated, current and former leaders were disappointed in the lack of support from the extension office. Yet, the majority of the 4-H agents interviewed felt that the support they provided was sufficient to good. However, half of the agents interviewed did suggest that the extension office fell short, in some instances, and could do a better job of supporting leaders.

**Support from leaders.** Half of the agents interviewed felt that leader-to-leader relationships were a concern.

**Satisfaction.** Satisfaction was operationalized by Omoto and Snyder (1995) as phrases of satisfaction adjectives and/or satisfaction statement. More specifically, satisfaction is likely to mean volunteers enjoy their work and believe in its importance and will stick to it even in hard times (Omoto & Snyder, 1995). 4-H agents felt that having the leaders participate in a project area that they were passionate about is probably the most important step towards enjoyment.
In addition, one agent believed leaders gained satisfaction through their interaction with other adults.

**Integration.** Integration was operationalized through phrases of attendance, social and organizational acceptance, and/or involvement.

**Leader integration.** All of the agents recognize the importance of the history of 4-H involvement with many families. Barbara simply said of leaders, “It’s ingrained in them.” Mary shared, “They may have been 10-year 4-H members themselves and have that grassroots tie to 4-H. Once a 4-H member, always a 4-H member. No matter how hard you try to get away from it. You are there.” Finally, Linda revealed:

I think there is such a history with families and I think that one of the strongest things that come out of leaders, particularly leaders that have a long history in their family, or who have had a very good experience in 4-H is that it’s an opportunity to pay back or pay it forward. I think there’s a strong desire to do that. I’d be interested to see statistics to see how many leaders had parents that were leaders, or grandparents, or whatever. That’s the hook that gets you back in.

**Integration of children.** Similar to the leader data, agents expressed concern over 4-H member schedules and time restraints as an obstacle to 4-H leaders. “It is time, the 4-Hers time, competing against other extracurricular activities. Whether it be a sports activity or boy scouts/girl scouts, or whatever. I think that’s a huge [struggle for leaders].”

**Duration.** Duration was operationalized through phrases indicating duration of service. 4-H agents named a variety of reasons of why they perceive 4-H leaders cease their relationship with the program. A few of the reasons they named were their own children had aged out, time restraints, moving, loss of interest, or the feeling that leaders had “done their time. They’d given back. Let somebody else step in.”
Serendipitous to the Study and the Volunteer Process Model – Emotion

Three of the four focus groups had at least one member become emotional during group discussion. The participants in two personal interviews became emotional during the interview process. The presence of this emotion was surprising to the researcher and warranted follow-up with leaders. After the focus group and individual interviews were completed, the researcher selected participants to respond to follow-up questions regarding the level of emotion in their role.

Thirteen participants, both current and former leaders, were contacted via e-mail for response to follow-up questions regarding issues of emotion. Participants were chosen because the researcher had their e-mail addresses through prior communication regarding the study. Of the 13 contacted, 8 responded. The 8 respondents provided the researcher with a better understanding of the role emotion plays for the 4-H leader.

All respondents confirmed that the role of a 4-H leader is an emotional role. For some, the reason for the emotion stemmed from the stress of competition. For others, it was working with children, who after many struggles, finally found success. Jesse shared the following:

Being a 4-H leader is primarily an emotional role. It’s not like a job that a person needs to do to maintain a livelihood. The 4-H leader focuses on some area that he or she enjoys. The 4-H leader is the trained individual in a certain area most probably because he or she gained a lot of experience in that area over the years of enjoyment over the experience. The 4-H leader’s successes or failure in that given area probably entailed many emotions while a normal job was just something that had to be done. The 4-H experience is based on the “feeling” that he or she wants to do.

And Heather explained:

I have had my highest highs and my lowest lows during the 10 years of 4-H emotionally. Dealing with kids, parents and animals tends to be an emotional role. Seeing a child improve and grow is one of my highest highs along with seeing the pride of the parent as a child strives to meet those goals. Having a child work hard and have either an
injured animal or a loss of an animal or a show animal] having a meltdown during a workout or a show causes me to have my lowest lows.

Antecedents to volunteering have been discussed to have an important influence on the duration of the volunteer. And this may be the case for some volunteers. However, in this study, the volunteers did not realize how much they would become emotionally invested in the role when they began their tenure as a 4-H leader. Janette revealed:

...looking back I had no idea how involved I would become, but I just got “sucked” in and had no clue how much we, as a family, would get from the program and the experience. I am looking forward to my grandchildren having the same or better experience than their parents.

Polly added:

I did not think that I would become so attached to all the good things about the program. Nor did I ever think that I would spend so much time trying to make it a fun learning experience for the kids. I am surprised that I enjoy it so much that I keep doing it even now after my kids are gone.

Finally, Tanya shared:

I did not realize the impact it has been on my life and I figured that when my children were no longer involved in 4-H, then I would not be either. But I find myself still involved even though my children are now too old and no longer are involved in 4-H. I have been pleasantly surprised as I have made great friends over the years.

The influence from negative experiences on the persistence of volunteers in the 4-H program was raised again with the respondents to this series of follow-up questions. The frustration of working with the extension office continued to be evidenced by such responses as the following:

If [the leaders] are there to drop off paperwork, pick up pamphlets, or get a question answered, the encounter should always be the same: a smile and a friendly greeting, cheerful atmosphere, and CUSTOMER SERVICE...after all without the volunteers, there would be no 4-H program and no need for an office or staff.
Two respondents referenced the lack of office support and friendliness as a “disappointment” more than an influencing frustration. However, the general feeling was that the rewards of being a 4-H leader, most often, outweighed the concerns about treatment by the extension office. Janette explained:

I just make sure I get what I want from them...nicely, of course...I gave up on that expectation [of good customer service] long ago...once you work in the office and walk in their shoes...you tend to gain knowledge and look at it from a different perspective...I would strongly suggest that every leader take some time to volunteer and help out in our office...especially at fair time...it is an eye opener to say the least!

Jesse commented:

I have never felt distress from a lack of support from the 4-H office for two reasons. One, I never needed any significant office support. And two, if I needed support from the office, and didn’t get it, I would personally let the office personnel know the “mistake” they had made by not giving me certain support, and then I would fix the “mistake” by self-support. In essence, I would be a 4-H leader who did not rely on the 4-H office.

It seems to appear from the follow-up questions on emotion, that being a 4-H leader is an emotional role. Furthermore, while many leaders have expressed distress over their relationship with the extension office (and this distress can run the range from minor to severe), the emotional investment of the role may negate any influence this poor relationship may have on persistence of the leader. As Jesse explained:

Negative experiences might increase the likelihood of my quitting as a 4-H leader. But since my leadership is in an area I enjoy, it would probably take many negative experiences to outweigh the positive ones to prompt my decision to quit. In our non-perfect world, even our most positive and enjoyable experiences have some negative aspects.

Many leaders reported they left or would leave when their own children age-out. Emotion, an experiences stage (Stage 2) phenomena, plays an important role to the persistence of the 4-H leader whose children have aged-out.
Serendipitous to Study – Leaders Without Being Leaders, “LWBLs”

Becoming a leader in the St. Joseph County 4-H program includes applying, passing a background check, and passing an interview process. However, a serendipitous finding, and an important finding to the 4-H program in general, is current and former 4-H leaders are acting as leaders when they are not “official.” For example, one current animal leader said, “I helped my kids with all of their other projects [too]. We didn’t go to any other leaders for the projects. But I wasn’t an official leader [in that project area].” Nick shared:

I have a grandson that is starting [4-H this year] and I will take him out in the backyard. There are other [current] leaders that will resent that I won’t help other kids, but I want to help my grandson. I am to the point that I am going to do what I want to do.

One former leader contacted for this study was surprised that he was considered a “former” leader—even though he had not been registered as a 4-H leader with the extension office for almost 20 years. This former leader had been helping his granddaughter on a plethora of 4-H projects for about 6 years from woodworking, to photography, to entomology, to great pumpkin, and so on. Void of any official recognition from the 4-H office—no mailings, no invitation to the leader/donor banquet, no service recognition certificates—he still considered himself a 4-H leader.

This serendipitous finding led the researcher to ask other study participants if they were aware of adults acting as 4-H leaders without being officially registered at the extension office. More times than not, participants shared stories of aunts, uncles, grandparents, great-grandparents, and others who helped 4-Hers in the capacity of 4-H leader without being an “official” 4-H leader. This finding shows that 4-H reaches more people and encompasses more families than is realized.
Summary

Results of the research findings and an analysis of the data resulting from focus group discussion, personal interviews, observation, and document analysis were presented in this chapter. Observational data were collected and document analysis also occurred during the 4 weeks that the interviews and focus groups sessions transpired. The basic observation revealed the 4-H office was a clean, well-organized facility. 4-H leader access to the conference rooms and offices is not obvious, and almost seems to be discouraged.

Four themes included: (1) current leaders report their relationship with parents is challenging to their role, (2) former leaders report their relationship with parents is challenging to their role, (3) current leaders perceive they do not have support from MSUE, and (4) current leaders do not feel that the MSUE staff is friendly. The data also revealed one emerging theme: former leaders report helping 4-H members and sharing their knowledge to be a facilitator of their participation in the 4-H program.

The data were also applied to the Volunteer Process Model. All categories of the Volunteer Process Model were evident for all types of participant groups. However, some of the categories of the Volunteer Process Model required subcategories for a more thorough understanding of the data and of the organizational environment. Social support and motivations, antecedent stage categories, and integration, an experience stage category, were the elements that were broken down for further analysis.

Serendipitous to the study was the topic of emotion and the topic of leaders without being leaders, or LWBLs. It is evident that leaders were not aware of how emotional the role of 4-H leader would be when they began their responsibilities (antecedent). Only during the
experiences stage did the emotion become evident. Follow-up questions were presented to
some of the members for further examination of this surprising finding. Emotion was found to
be an influence on retention.

The topic of LWBLs was another surprising finding to the study. Both current and former
4-H leaders are acting as leaders in specific project areas when they are not recognized as
“official” 4-H leaders by the extension office. Participants either directly or inadvertently shared
stories of extended family and friends who helped 4-Hers in the capacity of 4-H leader without
being an official 4-H leader. This revelation shows that 4-H reaches more people and
encompasses more families in St. Joseph County than is realized.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH, CONCLUSIONS

Overall Summary

For over 100 years, the 4-H youth development program has educated millions of children across the country in a variety of programs, from livestock husbandry to leadership skills. Like all programs that have endured, 4-H has had to adjust its focus as society has changed. One area in the 4-H program that has not changed is the heavy reliance on adult volunteer leaders to deliver educational programs to 4-H youth. Because of the reliance on volunteer 4-H leaders, 4-H professionals and extension office staff are concerned about issues related to the retention of volunteer staff.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of factors that influence 4-H leader retention and the effect of the relationship between the extension office and 4-H leaders on retention. The investigation focused on reasons why 4-H leaders chose not to re-enroll, barriers to participation, conditions that facilitated participation in the program, and the role the relationship between extension staff and 4-H leaders played in re-enrollment decisions by 4-H volunteers. A qualitative case study methodology was utilized because the intent was to look deeply at the issue of the 4-H leader experience.
Focus groups and interview sessions were used to collect qualitative data to address the research questions. Participants and focus group sessions consisted of current and former St. Joseph County 4-H leaders. 4-H leaders can consist of leaders in any 4-H project area—livestock projects to still projects. In addition, personal interviews were conducted with the current or previous three 4-H agents. The researcher also examined communication from the extension office during the 4-week data collection time, and the researcher studied the physical characteristics of the extension office and its environment. Finally, the topic of emotion was explored through follow-up questions with participants.

Data were used to respond to the four research questions. For current leaders, three themes materialized from the data: current leaders found their relationship with parents to be challenging, current leaders perceive they do not have support from MSUE, and current leaders do not feel that MSUE staff is friendly. For former leaders, one theme and one emerging theme materialized from the data. Former leaders described their relationship with parents as challenging. In terms of the emerging theme, former leaders found helping kids and sharing their knowledge served as a motivator for their participation in the 4-H program.

The Volunteer Process Model was used, in part, as a lens to view the results. While the Volunteer Process Model has been used traditionally with quantitative data, this was the first attempt to apply qualitative data to the model. The model was appropriate for this study. All six categories of the Volunteer Process Model were evident in the data. The categories of Social Support (parents, office, and leaders), Motivations (leaders and members), and Integration (leaders and members) warranted subcategories in some participant groups. Serendipitous to the study, and to the Volunteer Process Model, was the finding of the importance of emotion in
the decision to remain for leaders. Also serendipitous to the study was the existence of Leaders Without Being Leaders (LWBLs).

The finding on the importance of emotion to retention echoed the study by Davis et al. (2003) that emotion be added to the Volunteer Process Model as a category during the experiences stage of the Volunteer Process Model. It is evident in this study that leaders were not aware of how emotional the role of 4-H leader would be when they began their responsibilities (antecedent). Only during the experiences stage did emotion become obvious. Some leaders reported emotion caused them to persist. Similar to the findings of the Davis et al. study, a recommendation of this investigation is to add emotion to the experience stage of the Volunteer Process Model. This is discussed later in this chapter.

This chapter is divided into sections. The chapter includes a discussion of the findings under each of the research questions, followed by a discussion regarding the need for more effective vertical and horizontal communication in the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development Program and a review of the use of the Volunteer Process Model as an effective organizing tool for qualitative data. Finally, practical applications, opportunities for additional research, and conclusions are presented by the researcher.

**Research Questions**

**Research Question 1**

*Cade casually strolls into the conference room for the interview. Like many men in the county, he is wearing a green ball cap emblazoned with the John Deere logo. His face is relaxed, kind, and weathered. He is wearing a well-pressed plaid, short-sleeved collared shirt and*
Wrangler jeans. His brown boots look clean and comfortable. Cade seems at ease in the extension office. Although we are there after hours, he knew which door to access. He knew where the conference rooms were and assumed, correctly, that I would be in the “green room.”

Although he seems remarkably at ease at the extension office, Cade is no longer a 4-H leader. During our hour together, Cade shares bits and pieces of his history of 4-H. He is very proud of his family’s long involvement with the 4-H program. He speaks of adult friendships, watching kids’ county-wide camaraderie blossom, and the occasional conflict. Throughout our conversation, Cade’s non-leader status comes up occasionally. Like all of our topics, Cade is open and honest about his reasoning behind no longer being a 4-H leader. He isn’t angry. He isn’t bitter. Cade says nice things about the program and the 4-H families. Yet, Cade is at peace with his departure.

“I’m tired. And I’m retired,” Cade says. “My kids are gone. And I figured it was time somebody else stepped-in.” Cade sits quietly for a minute. He smiles sheepishly and shrugs. He adds, “Besides, I can still help my nephews and grandkids in my own backyard if I want to.”

The first research question sought to explore why volunteer leaders choose not to re-enroll in the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development Program. Three interview questions were developed to answer this specific question. For some leaders, the decision-making process to leave 4-H was gradual; for others, it was quick. Leaders sometimes included spouses or children in the decision-making process; others made the choice on their own. The data revealed a variety of reasons of why 4-H leaders leave.

Leaders who quit shared a variety of reasons for discontinuing their 4-H affiliation. Five leaders stated they left because of the rules to remain a leader and mandatory meetings. Three former leaders indicated they resigned because they felt it was time for somebody else to step
into the leadership role in that project area. Three other leaders shared they left because of difficulties with parents, two leaders stated they left because they had no other children interested in their project area, and one former leader reported they left because of relationship difficulties with other leaders.

Although current leaders and current/former 4-H agents can make only assumptions about the intent of others, their responses are worth noting as they may offer a glimpse into future intent or may represent informal discussions between leaders. For current leaders, five predicted other leaders left because of the lack of MSUE support. Four current leaders postulated rules to remain a leader/mandatory meetings was the cause of leader departure. Four current leaders predicted difficulties with members’ parents to be a cause of leader departure. One leader cited difficult relationships with other leaders as the reason for leaving 4-H.

Interestingly, during the discussion, five current leaders said they were considering leaving for the following reasons: they are tired of “politics” with other leaders; they do not want to attend mandatory meetings; they feel the extension office does not value them; they are burned out; and one leader said, “It is now time for my husband since our own children [have aged-out] of 4-H.”

Current and former 4-H agents also shared their views as to why 4-H leaders may leave the program. Three of the four agents concluded that 4-H leaders left because the 4-H leaders’ children had aged-out of the program. Two agents stated leaders may leave because of the level of office support, the relationship difficulties with other leaders, and because they want to give someone else a chance to be a leader in the project area. One agent indicated she thought leaders may leave because of a bad experience.
Current leaders, former leaders, and current/former 4-H agents offered a myriad of reasons why 4-H leaders quit. Reasons 4-H leaders resigned from 4-H included issues related to the extension office and the inability of the office to provide ample support. It was convenient for leaders to provide common excuses for their departure. Some reasons, for example, included “my own kids are gone,” or “I do not want to go to mandatory meetings,” or that “problems with the extension office were difficult to reconcile.” It was revealed that deeper and more complex issues may exist.

Current leaders reported having high emotional connection to their role as a 4-H leader. Observations by the researcher during the interviews indicated that leaders (those who use strong emotional words or phrases or exhibit actual emotion, i.e., crying) were deeply invested in the program and remained regardless of their own children’s involvement or unsatisfactory experiences.

Research has demonstrated that a leader’s participation in voluntary activities often meet an individual’s egocentric need (Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Hartenian & Lilly, 2009) and the fulfillment of those self-oriented motives was an important factor in predicting persistence (Cheung et al., 2006). Those volunteers acquired personal satisfaction from their role. This study illustrated 4-H program leaders continued in spite of the fact that their own children have aged out or regardless of the fact that they have had bad experiences, the two most common excuses. The difference, it appears, was the emotional connection some leaders develop in their roles. Emotion is an egocentric need, and, therefore, the findings echo the previous research (Omoto & Snyder, 1995). Typically, emotionally attached leaders stay involved because their involvement fulfilled a personal need. It is not unrealistic that others could remain too, regardless of the reason they provided for quitting, if they have formed an emotional
attachment to their role as leader. While the generic reasons provided may be actual indicators of the reasons why leaders choose not to re-enroll, the emotional attachment leaders may develop to their role may be a negating effect on intention to quit.

**Research Question 2**

*Colleen is in her mid-30s. She has two young daughters involved in the 4-H program.*

Colleen is short, so when she is seen at 4-H events with her daughters, they look like a trio of friends instead of a mother and two daughters. Colleen was a 4-Her herself and grew up immersed in multiple still projects and market animal projects. Colleen’s daughters attend a very small, local, private school that offers few extra-curricular activities. Colleen is likeable and capable. Colleen and her husband take advantage of the plethora of 4-H project areas available to their daughters. Their girls have attended virtually every camp and every workshop available. The girls have won numerous local awards. To say that Colleen is familiar with 4-H and its offerings is an understatement. Colleen is an official 4-H leader in one project area, yet her girls participate in almost 20 project areas each. And, shockingly, they usually complete every project for which they sign up. Many times, the project area does not have an official leader. Colleen acts as their unofficial leader.

*She explains, “I try to be self-sufficient. As a leader, I try to keep the peace, but it is difficult. So as a parent, I try to be self-sufficient”* Colleen goes on to explain that she feels leaders have too high expectations of the extension office. “We, the leaders, go in to the office or the meeting with too high expectations. And the office staff has its own expectations, and boom, it all falls apart.” Colleen says that her one wish for the 4-H program is that others would
keep an open mind. Colleen shakes her head, frowns, and says, “I just think leaders’ expectations are just too high—in all areas.”

The second research question explored barriers to leader participation in the 4-H program. Three interview questions were specifically developed to answer this research question.

For those leaders who had already quit, the most important reported barrier to leader participation was difficulties with parents, reported by 11 current leaders and 9 former leaders. This was determined to be a theme for both current leaders and former leaders.

Current leaders also reported frustrations such as trying to navigate members’ busy schedules, trying to offer educational opportunities while being faced with few resources, trying to improve a program that they feel is unable/unwilling to change, and having to follow stringent rules/attend mandatory meetings.

Former leaders also reported frustrations having to follow stringent rules/attend mandatory meetings, trying to navigate members’ busy schedules, and working with other 4-H leaders.

Current and former 4-H agents indicated they perceived leader frustrations would result from trying to navigate members’ busy schedules, working with other 4-H leaders, and needing more education from MSUE as to how to function as a 4-H leader.

When current leaders were asked what would keep them involved, most leaders reported working with children and a basic desire to remain involved in 4-H as primary indicators. Additionally, one leader revealed that resolving the mandatory meeting conflict would keep them involved, and another added protecting their autonomy was of paramount importance.
When current leaders were asked what it would take to re-enroll leaders who quit, responses were limited.

One leader simply said, “Ask them.”

Another indicated their departure probably had to do with their own children leaving and the chances of them coming back were slim. And one leader blamed the departure of leaders on too many rules. The same respondent stated that until the extension reduces the number of confusing rules, there is no chance some of those leaders who quit would return.

To reduce the barriers to participation, agents discussed such things as increased communication the leaders, support from office, positive re-enforcement, efforts to make the leader feel valued, bonding opportunities for leaders with other leaders, educational opportunities for leaders, and marketing to the children whose parents may then become involved as leaders.

To bring back leaders, two of the agents indicated that the quitting leader should be asked about barriers to participation, and the office should address those concerns. Agents further stated the extension office staff should even carve out a special role for the leaders who left so they might return. Finally, 4-H agents mentioned that a simple invitation would be all that would be needed to bring leaders back.

Considering the barriers, obstacles, and challenges to 4-H leaders, both current and former, all are important to the discussion of 4-H leader retention. As the individuals who act as “front line” service providers to the target population, the children, the 4-H leaders have a unique lens with which to view their ability to complete the 4-H mission. Current and former leaders stated that difficulties with parents tended to be the main reason that their 4-H leader role added to the complexity and overall dissatisfaction of their role.
In addition, the relationship between leaders and parents was a consistent concern for 4-H leaders, yet this potentially tumultuous relationship was recognized by only one of the 4-H agents. Leaders and parents may struggle because of unclear boundaries. While the 4-H leader is the recognized educator in the project area, 4-H also provides an opportunity for youth and their parents to work together (Usinger et al., 2008). As leaders often refer to the 4-H members as “my kids,” one wonders if there is an unspoken battle over the control of the 4-Her and his or her project. Additionally, parents may be offended by the leader who acts as a parental figure to their children. Leaders should be careful of boundaries when working with someone else’s children.

During the interview with one of the 4-H agents, the researcher was surprised that Mary gave the advice to 4-H leaders to “be cautious” with 4-H members. When asked to elaborate, Mary suggested that 4-H leaders be cautious of personal space and to not get too close to the child. At the time, the researcher thought the suggestion was odd considering 4-H leaders act as mentors and often form close bonds with the members. It would seem that this close relationship would be desired. But in the evaluation of the data, the advice given by the 4-H agent may be sage. Parents who enroll their children in 4-H are, typically, involved and supportive parents. These parents may feel threatened when a 4-H leader either states or gives the impression that the leader considers the child “their kid.”

Another consideration regarding the struggle between 4-H leaders and parents may be that parents are living vicariously through their children. Simply stated, the parents may want to do the project themselves. A leader who has the 4-H program’s best interest at heart may recognize this over-eagerness and suggest that the over-involved parent step into a leadership role.
Many leaders concluded 4-H provided an opportunity to learn right along with the children. This desire to be more involved in the project area may turn parents into leaders. This would satisfy the parent’s desire to be deeply involved in the project area and it would increase the numbers of available leaders in the 4-H program.

Research Question 3

Donna, like Colleen, is a life-long “4-Her.” In fact, Donna is at least a 4th generation 4-Her. Donna’s daughter, Betsy, is in her 7th year in 4-H. Donna also has two younger children who will be starting 4-H just as Betsy is aging-out. Donna is facing 20 more years as a 4-H leader if she stays through her youngest child’s tenure. Donna’s mother, father, grandmother, aunts, uncles, and cousins were or are 4-H leaders as well. Donna is animated during our interview. She seems almost desperate to explain her drive as a leader. Donna moved quickly into a leadership position when she returned to 4-H as a parent. And Donna has moved beyond being “just a 4-H leader” into being an active fixture in the county program. Donna is detailed and hard-working. During the interview, Donna talks enthusiastically about the different project areas that her daughter has explored. Donna explains that, while leery at first, Betsy talked her into letting her raise and show an entirely different animal species than what they traditionally have shown. And, true to Donna’s nature, Donna is starting her first year as a project leader in this new area. Donna acts as an unofficial leader in most, if not all, of Betsy’s project areas. Yet, she is seeking an official leadership role in this new species area.

Donna explained her added involvement, “I guess I just saw a need. And I thought that I could fill the need. I’ve been involved in [specific animal species] for my entire life. [This new
species)—it's a learning opportunity for the whole family! I think my involvement in [this project area] will help the entire county 4-H program.”

The third research question explored conditions that facilitate leader participation in the St. Joseph County 4-H program. Six interview questions were developed to specifically answer this question. For this research question, participants were considered one group, which means that both current and former leaders’ responses were not separated.

Of the 28 participants in the focus groups, 16 specifically stated that they enjoyed 4-H “because of the kids”—with even the remaining 12 often alluding to this fact by telling heart-warming stories or sharing experiences that included positive interactions with the 4-H members. Working with children was a key facilitator of 4-H leader involvement.

Based on the responses of participants, facilitating leader participation in 4-H would also included such things as the leader having a passion for the project area, the leader having an opportunity to promote project safety, the leader having an opportunity to learn a new skill, and the leader being provided with an opportunity to develop adult friendships.

It was found the facilitation of leader involvement was also a by-product of a deep pride of 4-H family history—generations of 4-H involvement by many families. Leaders spoke not only of their contemporary family member involvement, but of involvement of their grandparents, great-grandparents, and others.

After examining the responses, the researcher determined this research question gives a nod to the importance of solid volunteer management practices. Facilitating leader participation in the program includes ideas from current and former leaders that are highly variable and specific to the needs of individuals. Miller et al. (1990) underscored the importance of understanding the importance of how individual characteristics influence turnover. The role
of the 4-H agent, the unspoken “volunteer manager,” in this program was of critical importance. It was unclear if the role of volunteer manager is included in the job description of the 4-H agent. And even if it is part of the official job description, the 4-H agent receives little direction on how to manage volunteers. While all leaders have, at some level, the basic need to feel valued and appreciated, the 4-H agent must work hard to individualize roles for hundreds of 4-H leaders. This is in addition to the other duties assigned to the 4-H agent. This may not be an easy task for the 4-H agent.

In fact, this disconnect between the need for effective volunteer management of hundreds of volunteers with diverse responsibilities and the potential challenge for the 4-H agent to provide consistent volunteer management may very well be where the leaders perceive their dissatisfaction of “extension office support” resides. Through this lens, it may be a difficult task for the extension office to provide the desired customer service to leaders, with an even more tremendous burden on the 4-H agent as she navigates her other job requirements.

Research Question 4

The final focus group is an eclectic mix of adults. All of the participants in the conference room are leaders who are no longer recognized 4-H leaders. A couple of the participants quit as long as 15 years ago. Some of the adults are experiencing their first project year as a “non-leader.” Just as the participants themselves were diverse, so too are their experiences and responses to the questions presented. It seems during one conversation, they speak of satisfaction with the extension office and the assistance they receive.
They express positivity like, “The staff was always supportive” and “Whatever I asked for, they always had it ready for me.” Then, suddenly, the conversation shifts and the participants reference deep frustrations. This wide swing of satisfaction variance continues throughout the entire focus group session. Participants extolled the virtue of 4-H and the extension office in one breath, and berated them in the next.

After the official focus group session ended and the tape recorders were turned off, one participant, Joseph, hung around to engage in casual conversation with the researcher. The researcher sensed that Joseph had more to say about his 4-H leader role. He seemed unsettled, as if he were organizing his thoughts about the discussion even as we chatted about unrelated topics. Joseph is in his 60’s and shared mostly positive examples of his time as a 4-H leader during the formal focus group.

After a few minutes of casual banter, he finally sat back down in a chair, exasperated, and said, “Okay, cool, so the extension office sucks. But it doesn’t. So now what? Do you crucify them in your report or what?”

The final research question explored to what degree the volunteer and extension staff relationship was a factor for 4-H leaders in the decision to re-enroll as volunteer leaders. Seven questions were developed to address this question.

No conclusions could be draw from the interviews, observations, or the analysis of artifacts. Of all the topics discussed during the focus groups and interviews, the issue of the relationship between 4-H leaders and the extension office garnered the most attention. When issues of extension office support were raised, or if extension office experiences were shared, more people spoke up, voices tended to rise, and speech quickened. This classic pull/push was discussed by Musick and Wilson (2008); it is the typical juggle between over-managing and
alienating. Issues of volunteer management on the part of the 4-H agent and extension office staff surfaced.

Of the 16 former leaders (see Appendix J), leaders from focus groups and personal interviews, that were asked the question, 9 indicated that they would not re-enroll as leaders. Five did not respond to the question and 2 indicated that they were undecided. Of the 9 leaders who indicated that they would not re-enroll, 6 expressed dissatisfaction with the current extension office staff and the remaining 3 indicated they did not “know” the current staff. Of those that responded to the question, a slim majority (6 of the 9 respondents) indicated they did not have a positive relationship with the extension office. Based on this information, it is surmised the relationship between extension office and volunteers had a negative effect on 4-H leaders’ decision to re-enroll. Caution should be taken with this finding as there might be other reasons why leaders decided not to continue.

Of the two former leaders who were undecided about whether they would return, both were indifferent as to their relationship with the extension office. They said they were waiting to see if their grandchildren would ask them to return or if they would be required to attend mandatory meetings. Both individuals also indicated they were currently acting as 4-H leaders to their grandchildren without being officially enrolled as leaders at the 4-H office (LWBLs).

Of the 12 current leaders (see Appendix I), leaders from focus groups and personal interviews, who responded to this line of questioning, 8 indicated they would remain a leader, 3 indicated they were undecided, and 1 shared she would most likely quit. Of the 8 who stated they would remain a leader, 3 indicated they had a positive relationship with the extension office, 1 had no opinion, and 4 expressed a conditional relationship. The conditional relationships were exemplified by phrases like, “It’s good as long as you know what you want”
and “It’s hot and cold.” None of the current leaders who expressed intent to remain expressed dissatisfaction with the extension office; therefore, the conditional relationships are not considered to have a negative bearing on the decision-making process of leaders.

The three current leaders who stated they were undecided about their intention to remain gave reasons such as frustration with the mandatory meetings, the politics with other leaders, and the feeling that their leadership did not have value to the office. Because of the reference to the extension office, these three reasons are considered in the realm of the leader relationship with extension office staff.

Finally, the leader who revealed that she will most likely quit stated the reason was that her children were aging-out of 4-H and she would now focus on activities that included her husband. This leader did not specify a positive or negative relationship with the extension office.

For the current leaders who responded to the question, based on the slim majority that 8 of 12 respondents indicated that they had, at least, an acceptable relationship with the extension office, it could be deduced that the relationship between extension office and volunteers had a positive effect on 4-H leaders’ decision to re-enroll. Caution should be taken with this finding.

The same general topic was posed to current and former 4-H agents. To keep 4-H leaders, agents reported that leaders needed constant communication, more development, support from MSUE, and to feel valued (see Appendix K).

As Joseph stood to leave, he paused.

“It seems as though I remember a volunteer or two ‘complain’ about ‘non-support’ during that time I was involved. I don’t remember the details, but I do remember that I felt as
though that complaint or two could have been readily handled by the volunteer who complained.” With that, Joseph thanked me. He left the 4-H office but he didn’t leave 4-H. Joseph will continue being an unofficial leader with the 4-H program through his grandchildren’s various projects.

Discussion

There are a number of positive aspects to 4-H youth development program in St. Joseph County. The program has one of the largest 4-H contingencies of in Michigan. It consists of hard-working, passionate leaders, and a knowledgeable staff. The current 4-H agent, who is serving as an interim during the state’s extension service reorganization, is very dedicated to the job and is an ardent supporter of 4-H. It seems any frustration shared by volunteers stemmed from a history of incorrect impressions and lack of communication.

One of the most discussed topics in the interviews and focus groups was the relationship between the 4-H leaders and the extension office. This relationship is somewhat bewildering. As Netting et al. (2004) shared, the relationship between paid staff and volunteers is complex and requires time and attention. This was clearly an important issue to volunteers, and agents, as fervent discussions ensued when issues of the office were raised. 4-H volunteers were often overly accusatory in tone and 4-H agents could be overly defensive in nature. While some leaders felt invaded and controlled, other leaders felt alienated and ignored.

One of the classic struggles and a struggle documented in the literature on volunteerism is the tension between micro-managing volunteers and ignoring volunteers. As with any organization, different members “need” different management or leadership styles in which to flourish.
In the case of the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development Program, there are over 300 registered 4-H leaders who are honorably giving of their personal time and, often, money in a specific project area. Each project area requires different duties, from the still project that can be completed in one meeting to the animal species that requires endless forms, year-round care, and attention to safety around children. One 4-H agent, officially supported by one administrative assistant, must manage this overwhelmingly large and endlessly diverse volunteer community. Plus, she must complete her other job responsibilities as well.

The data revealed that customer service training may be helpful for extension office staff. Frustrations shared by 4-H leaders revealed that program shortcomings cannot be addressed by maintaining current procedures or without retraining staff. There is a correlation between training and volunteer continuation as improved communication may improve leader satisfaction and increase the retention rate of many 4-H leaders.

Improved communication, verbal and nonverbal, across the gamut, is of critical importance to this county’s 4-H program. Successful staff/volunteer relationship communication should be both vertical and horizontal (MacDuff, 1995). The 4-H program exists in a world of brief encounters between adults. While the 4-H leaders often spend measurable time with the 4-H members, the adults were typically subject to fleeting moments of communication between each other—leader to leader, leader to parent, and leader to extension office. Even more importantly, these adult interactions often occurred when a problem needed to be solved or when there was a need for conflict resolution. These situations contributed to negative feelings. In a problem or conflict situation, half of those involved may not like the outcome. More effective communication is needed.
Better communication does not always mean “more” communication. It means more effective and appropriate communication. For example, one concern and most often mentioned barrier to participation expressed by leaders was their difficulties with parents. Parent-leader conflict was determined to be a theme from the study for both current leaders and former leaders. The importance of this relationship and its inherent difficulties must not be underestimated.

Leaders and parents may struggle because of unclear boundaries concerning the 4-H member. As leaders often refer to the 4-H members as “my kids,” it was questioned earlier in this chapter if there is an unspoken battle over the control of the 4-Her and his or her project. Additionally, parents may be offended by the leader who acts as an unneeded or unsolicited parental figure to the child. Leaders should be careful of boundaries when working with other children. While there may be parents who feel honored that their child is “special” in the eyes of the 4-H leader, other parents may feel threatened. 4-H leaders should use care when discussing their emotional attachment to the 4-H member.

Better communication means positive, frequent dialogue between the leaders and the office. The researcher noted it was quite common for leaders and agents to use “us” versus “them” language. This type of exclusionary dialogue does not occur in a true team environment (MacDuff, 1995).

Additionally, Dailey (1986) warned that volunteer managers often take a passive and reactive management approach. He stated that volunteer managers often ignored the psychology of volunteerism. Individuals who manage volunteers should be proactive. Ideally, communication should not be solely in the form of problem solving or conflict resolution between the leader and the office. One of the themes from this study was that current leaders
did not feel that MSUE was supportive of them as leaders. Better communication in the form of verbal support may help alleviate this perception.

One former leader stated that he/she was pleased when the office used to call leaders just to see how they were doing. Clearly, the 4-H agent, while performing all of her other duties, cannot do this alone. Perhaps a trusted, seasoned leader(s) would be willing to volunteer additional time in the office to call first-year leaders (and beyond) to “check in” and see how the office may offer further assistance. If the calling volunteer kept basic records or a chart as to common needs and concerns that leaders have, the office may be able to head off any future problems.

*Better communication* means inclusionary communication. During the 4-week data collection time period, one document of relevance, sent from the extension office, was obtained by the researcher. This document was a letter from the County Extension Director announcing the retirement of one of the species superintendents/4-H leaders. The letter was well written and complimentary of the retiring superintendent. The letter was sent to all registered organizational leaders in the specific project area. But it may be considered a better public relations endeavor if a general letter were sent to all leaders, parents, and members.

Recognizing a retiring species superintendent who spent more than 20 years involved in 4-H, through communication sent to all involved in 4-H (leaders, families, etc.), would allow other leaders and other families to participate in the retirement. Clearly, after 20 years, the superintendent had most likely associated with a plethora of “4-Hers” (parents, leaders, children) across the entire program. Perhaps those notified of the retirement would like to have sent a card, or perhaps they would feel inclined to fill the position. Perhaps even a superintendent in another species area would feel the recognition exhibited an appreciation of
the retiring superintendent. Perhaps, they would feel appreciated, as well, vicariously. At the very least, the retiring superintendent would leave the 4-H program feeling duly recognized throughout the county for his years of service. Other leaders, and potential leaders, may take note of this community-wide recognition.

Better communication also includes making changes to the atmosphere of the extension office. The perception that the MSUE office is not friendly was a theme reported by current leaders. Again, it is easy to focus straight on the obvious verbal behaviors that would improve the perception of good customer service. Staff should greet those coming into the office with a smile, pleasant demeanor, and sincere willingness to help—no matter how mundane or trivial the request. Telephone conversations, likewise, should be comfortable and pleasant. There is no denying that these efforts are of critical importance. Yet, there are also ways in which to improve customer service through nonverbal efforts.

The extension office serves more programs than just the 4-H youth development program. However, serving youth is an important function of the office. It is understandable that the appearance of professionalism is important for the office, but so too is a youth-centered environment. Specific recommendations (i.e., displaying pictures of 4-Hers at work, displaying completed projects, painting walls in bright colors, featuring teen-leader bios, having toddler-sized seating in the waiting area, etc.) are beyond the scope of this study. However, the extension office may want to pursue efforts to better communicate, in a nonverbal manner, their youth-centered mission through décor and 4-H project-centered displays.

Additionally, the extension office should make an effort to create a welcoming environment for 4-H leaders. Symbolic support is important to volunteer involvement particularly when monetary recognition is unavailable (Farmer & Fedor, 1999). There was not a
designated place for volunteers to work, perhaps signaling exclusion and/or ostracism. A designated office or a workroom for leaders or an open invitation to use a conference room may have been seen as a positive by the 4-H leaders.

*Better communication* includes positive internal support. Three of the four agents discussed varying levels of tension between extension office staff. Interestingly, 4-H leaders were under the impression that new 4-H agents were “shown their desk with little direction.” Roles and responsibilities of extension office staff should be carefully outlined. Relationships can be tense if roles are not clarified (Netting et al., 2004). Supporting volunteers is more challenging for internal staff if internal staff is not communicating effectively and efficiently among themselves.

As previously discussed, the role of the 4-H agent is that of a 4-H agent, *and a volunteer manager to hundreds*. At the very least, the agent may need to communicate areas in which he or she needs assistance, as there may be individuals willing and able to assist in some areas. At the most, extension should recognize this potential burden on the 4-H agent and provide a structured plan to support the agent in the role of volunteer manager. Managing volunteers is the role the 4-H agent assumes every day. Attention should be given to these potential internal challenges.

*Better communication* also includes an effective orientation program for new leaders. Smith and Bigler’s (1985) study found, among other factors, orientation programs increase 4-H leader retention. Musick and Wilson (2008) indicated that inadequate training will reduce persistence in volunteers. Leaders and agents in this study mentioned the need for an orientation program for new leaders. Two of the four agents regretted not introducing an orientation program for new leaders during their tenure. In retrospect, they feel an orientation
program would be a key factor in leader retention. One agent referred to the successful new leader training that is occurring in neighboring counties and suggested that county officials look to those leader training programs as a guide to developing their own.

Additionally, an important part of the orientation program would include conflict resolution exercises. Without lack of formal training, it can be imagined that volunteers are not always equipped to handle situations of conflict or stress. Hellman and House (2006) suggested training was important for volunteers in high stress positions. Because of the competitive nature of 4-H, conflict and stress certainly arise. If leaders have the basic training during orientation on how to handle conflict and stress, along with occasional refresher classes, perhaps many of the problems that “are allowed to fester” would not occur at all.

_Better communication_ also encompasses providing continual training opportunities to 4-H leaders and explaining to leaders why that training is essential. If the reasons why training is essential are explained, training is not deemed mandatory, and if there is some type of incentive or recognition for completing training, leaders may not be so averse to participation. “Mandatory meetings” were a common ire to the 4-H leaders. These meetings, or training sessions, were important to the program for a variety of reasons and should be structured to be more appealing to the volunteer leaders. The importance of training volunteer leaders has been around since the inception of 4-H (Wessel & Wessel, 1982). The 4-H leadership might revisit successful program components.

_Better communication_ also means effective volunteer recognition. While the county’s Leader/Donor Banquet held every year in November is a public way to recognize 4-H leaders, not all volunteers desire such public recognition. Many leaders shared that a simple “thank you” from one of their 4-H members was all the recognition they needed. Like the current study,
Culp and Schwartz (1998) found the most meaningful source of recognition for 4-H leaders was intrinsic recognition and they encouraged 4-Hers to send notes of thanks to their leaders. Staff in the extension office should be aware that intrinsic recognition is just as important as extrinsic recognition and should foster this form of appreciative communication. Extension office staff should regularly (and sincerely) thank leaders when they have the opportunity to do so, and extension office staff should encourage 4-H members to thank their leaders as well. Gratitude seems to help staff and volunteers.

Finally, better communication means developing a relationship with adults who are acting as LWBLs. A key finding to this study was the fact that there are adults, former leaders and family members of 4-Hers, who are acting as 4-H leaders without being officially registered with the extension office as a 4-H leader. This poses an interesting dilemma. How does the extension office embrace this type of volunteer support? It can be assumed that the adults doing this type of volunteer work for 4-H are content. They are helping 4-Hers and the 4-H program on their own terms and continue to do so, indicating satisfaction. This scenario may represent the person-situation fit discussed by Clary et al. (1998) in which volunteers are satisfied and their actual turnover is reduced. Yet, there may be an unexplored opportunity to encourage these “unofficial leaders” to increase their involvement. The decline of the official volunteer base has been one of the most significant challenges in the 4-H program in the last few decades (Van Horn et al., 1999). Have unofficial volunteers been asked to register with the extension office? Would unofficial volunteers be willing to work with other children? Have they been asked to be an official leader? Would they mentor other leaders in the same project area? Do they have ideas for improving the project area, and therefore the 4-H program?
This lack of association may be facilitating trouble. 4-Hers who are not, inadvertently, following official guidelines or rules may end up disappointed because of a flaw in their project. 4-Hers who are not building relationships with other club members may not be developing a sense of belonging to a community club. This lack of involvement through official channels may threaten 4-H members’ long-term dedication and involvement. On the other hand, perhaps if the child were not assisted by an unofficial leader, he would not have participated in 4-H at all. The unofficial leader may actually be introducing the child to 4-H, and the child may branch out into other project areas. The repercussion(s) of such unofficial volunteerism, both positive and negative, may be difficult to determine.

Data Applied to the Volunteer Process Model

The use of the Volunteer Process Model in this qualitative research project was an effective tool for organizing the data analysis. The data organized nicely into the six main categories found in the Volunteer Process Model. However, this study suggested that emotion be added to the Volunteer Process Model. This suggestion would support the Davis et al. (2003) study that recommended the same addition. They found that the volunteer experience is heavily shaped by emotion in the experiences stage of the Volunteer Process Model. Three of the four focus groups had a member become emotional during group discussion. Two of the six interviewees became emotional during personal interviews.

An important outlier to this study is that one current leader specifically states that she will continue in her role as a 4-H leader regardless of the fact that she had already decided to resign. This leader even went so far as to hand-pick a replacement for her project area. When this leader discussed this fact, she became emotional. She revealed she was not ready to quit.
She spoke of the emotion she felt towards the role and with 4-H. Emotion, in this outlier, directly leads to duration.

This is an important finding. It leads the research to conclude that emotion, an experiences stage (Stage 2) phenomenon, plays an important role to the persistence of the 4-H leader whose children have aged-out. Therefore, emotion should be added to the Volunteer Process Model as a by-product of the volunteer experience as exhibited in Figure 2. In this study, emotion provides integration and/or satisfaction with the potential to lead to duration.

Furthermore, while the Volunteer Process Model was found to be an applicable and user friendly instrument for this qualitative study, the one category that was the most challenging for the researcher was the category of satisfaction. The difficulty warrants mention.

Operationally defining satisfaction was a challenge in this study. This difficulty was addressed in the literature review as well. Chacon et al. (2007) discussed how the variable of satisfaction has been measured through the years. Their first concern about measuring satisfaction is that it has been assessed in a variety of ways through the years without much...
consistency (Chacon et al., 2007). Role identity and commitment variables have been assessed in similar ways in prior research. However, the way in which volunteer satisfaction has been assessed varies considerably. Chacon and colleagues questioned whether this significant variance is what explains disparity in the findings on volunteer satisfaction in previous research (Chacon et al. 2007).

**Practical Applications**

There are practical applications that can be gleaned from this research that can be used to improve operational procedures. These four recommendations are connected to this study and previous research related to organizational effectiveness.

1. As a result of deep concerns regarding the customer service of this extension office, customer satisfaction surveys should be conducted on a regular basis. Results should be shared and any and all concerns should be addressed immediately. Whitson (2008) observed in order to keep volunteers active in the program, evaluation of the program and recognition of the volunteers are needed, yet evaluation is often the most overlooked activity. The St. Joseph County 4-H program should consider conducting internal and external evaluation in all areas.

2. 4-H leaders would be well-served to be cautious in their relationships with 4-H members. They should respect the role that parents already occupy. 4-H leaders should approach their relationship with parents as that of a teammate in the learning objectives of the child and refrain from referring to the member as “my kid.” This team approach, on behalf of the 4-H leader, may reduce potential conflict.
3. Former leaders should continue to receive newsletters and be invited to activities, which may motivate them to re-enroll. When volunteers approach the organization for a second time, they should be remembered, recognized, and greeted as old friends (McCurley & Lynch, 2007). While returning leaders need to go through the background check, they should not have to go through the entire new leader interview process. There is a huge prevalence of LWBLs in this county and bringing them back in an official capacity should be a welcoming, easy process.

4. The office should implement a new leader training program soon. This training should include conflict management.

**Opportunities for Future Research**

This study generated additional questions that should be explored to add to the body of research. First, the current study could be replicated in other county 4-H programs to see if the findings are consistent across cases.

The relationship between leaders and parents was a consistent concern for leaders and reflects half of the themes that were identified from the study. Future research should be conducted to identify possible boundary issues.

As leaders often refer to the 4-H members as “my kids,” one wonders if there is a tug over the control of the 4-Her and his or her project. Also, parents may want to do the project area themselves. This may be a caveat into asking parents to become leaders. It would be valuable to explore if this is an issue in other 4-H youth development programs across the state or country.
Clearly, other qualitative studies should use the Volunteer Process Model. This would add to the volunteer literature and further the value of the Volunteer Process Model. While this first attempt proved useful, further examination is necessary.

It may be helpful to apply issues of middle management to volunteerism. Volunteers are sandwiched between paid staff and those they serve. In essence, they are acting as middle managers and exploring the literature through this lens may be helpful to volunteer management practices and approaches.

Emotion was an important theme to this study. Just as Davis et al. (2003) suggested, emotion should become a part of the Volunteer Process Model and explored further with other populations of volunteers. Clearly, some volunteer roles (i.e., AIDS volunteers, homeless shelters, abused persons, etc.) have an inherent element of emotion. But for volunteer roles that do not have that inherent element, the role emotion plays on retention should be explored further.

Finally, the concept of LWBLs should be explored further. It is difficult to imagine how many adults are acting as 4-H leaders without being officially recognized leaders. Are there any risks associated with this? Are there any benefits to the program? A study examining why these adults are acting at 4-H leaders without being official and what it would take to make them official would help 4-H professionals understand this unique type of volunteer involvement.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that affect retention of 4-H adult volunteers in the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development Program and to explore if the relationship between 4-H leaders and extension office staff influences the decision by the 4-H
leaders to persist. The investigation focused on reasons why 4-H leaders chose not to re-enroll, the barriers to participation, conditions that would facilitate participation in the program, and the role the relationship between extension staff and 4-H leaders plays in re-enrollment decisions by 4-H volunteers. This study was deemed important based on the critical reliance the 4-H youth development program has on its volunteers and the lack of qualitative research on the subject. Data from personal interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis were examined.

Data were used to answer the four research questions. For current leaders, three themes materialized from the data: current leaders find their relationship with parents to be challenging, current leaders perceive they do not have support from MSUE, and current leaders do not feel that MSUE staff is friendly. For former leaders, one theme materialized from the data: former leaders found their relationship with parents to be challenging. Also for former leaders, the data had one emerging theme: former leaders found helping kids and sharing their knowledge to be a facilitator of their participation in the 4-H program.

The Volunteer Process Model was also used as a lens with which to organize data for the study. This is the first time that qualitative data have been applied to the Volunteer Process Model. The researcher determined the model was an effective tool with which to organize the data, and this organization assisted in drawing conclusions.

All of the categories identified by Omoto and Snyder (1995) were relevant to this study. However, subcategories were developed in some areas to better understand this case. These subcategories, it can be argued, are pertinent to this study only and should not be added to the general model. Yet, like Davis et al. (2003), it is suggested that the byproduct of the experiences
stage, emotion, should be added to the Volunteer Process Model. Other studies should be conducted to confirm this suggestion.

Serendipitous to the study is the topic of “leaders who are not leaders.” The benefits or negatives of this phenomenon is not fully understood and warrants further exploration in subsequent studies.

The researcher made suggestions to the organization in which this study was conducted. Most important, the suggestion of better communication was the general premise. Better communication does not mean “more” communication in every example, and better communication cannot solve every woe or every conflict that has been presented during this study, or that will arise down the road. Nor can better communication create a perfectly harmonious environment. But better communication between all adults actively involved in 4-H, the staff and the leaders (both official and unofficial), should move the organization toward a more effective existence. This study sought to capture the voices of leaders in regard to the factors that affect their persistence in the 4-H youth development program.

Fundamentally, the extension office works hard. And the volunteers work hard. They both make mistakes and are responsible for misunderstandings. Yet it is obvious that both have a passion for the county 4-H program. Both extension office staff and 4-H leaders appreciate the value of the 4-H concept and the idea that it is an integral part of what makes our American society great.

The emotion that is obvious by leaders can sometimes trouble the program, yet the emotion does make the program successful. Without committed, passionate leaders, 4-H would not be the successful organization it is today. We all struggle to do a good job for the “future of America.” And we may mess up along the way. Everyone involved who does the work does so
with the best of intentions. For adults involved in the program, better communication and a little bit of patience will help the 4-H program remain strong in St. Joseph County.


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Appendix A

Requesting Participation Letter: Current Leaders
Dear 4-H Leader,

My name is Regina Switalski Schinker and I am a 4-H leader of Tumbleweed Saddleclub and I am the poultry project leader for Mendon Green Clover in the St. Joseph County 4-H program. I am also a doctoral student at Western Michigan University in the Educational Leadership program. I am writing to ask you to be a part of a research study that looks into factors that effect 4-H leaders’ decisions to remain a 4-H leader in St. Joseph County. I am also interested in the effect the relationship 4-H leaders have with the Extension Office has on the decision to re-enroll as a 4-H leader in our county. This research is being done to complete my dissertation. I hope you will participate.

Your participation in the study will include:

You will be asked to attend a focus group discussion with other 4-H leaders in St. Joseph County that should last approximately 60-90 minutes. The focus group session will be held at the Extension office in a conference room. You can choose between the February 23, 2010 at 6pm session or the February 24, 2010 at 6pm session. Prior to this focus group, I will submit the focus group discussion questions to you for reflection. The focus group session will be tape-recorded and I will be taking notes to insure accuracy of the discussion.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or for withdrawing from the study. If you agree to participate in this study, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not appear in the study. Your responses will be referenced by a pseudo name. All transcripts will be kept in a secured office on the campus of Western Michigan University.

I will provide pizza and a beverage during the focus group session. I will also provide you with a choice of an $8 Meijer gift card or a one-day pass to the 2010 St. Joseph County fair (an $8 value) as a token of my appreciation for your participation in the focus group session.

Please contact me by Friday, February 12, 2010 to confirm interest in participating in this study. You can contact me either by telephone at 269-xxx-xxxx or by email reginaswitalski@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,

Regina Switalski Schinker
Appendix B

Requesting Participation Letter: Former Leaders
Dear Former 4-H Leader,

My name is Regina Switalski Schinker and I am a 4-H leader in the St. Joseph County 4-H program. I am also a doctoral student at Western Michigan University in the Educational Leadership program. I am writing to ask you to be a part of a research study that looks into factors that effect 4-H leaders’ decisions to remain a 4-H leader in St. Joseph County. I am also interested in the effect the relationship 4-H leaders have with the Extension Office has on the decision to re-enroll as a 4-H leader in our county. This research is being done to complete my dissertation. I hope you will participate.

Participating the study will include:

You will be asked to attend a focus group discussion with other former 4-H leaders in St. Joseph County that should last approximately 60-90 minutes. The focus group session will be held at the Extension office in a conference room. You can choose between the February 25, 2010 at 6pm session or the March 1, 2010 at 6pm session. Prior to this focus group, I will submit the focus group discussion questions to you for reflection. The focus group session will be tape-recorded and I will be taking notes to insure accuracy of the discussion.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or for withdrawing from the study. If you agree to participate in this study, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not appear in the study. Your responses will be referenced by a pseudo name. All transcripts will be kept in a secured office on the campus of Western Michigan University.

I will provide pizza and a beverage during the focus group session. I will also provide you with a choice of an $8 Meijer gift card or a one-day pass to the 2010 St. Joseph County fair (an $8 value) as a token of my appreciation for your participation in the focus group session.

Please contact me by Friday, February 12, 2010 to confirm interest in participating in this study. You can contact me either by telephone at 269-xxx-xxxx or by email reginaswitalski@yahoo.com

Sincerely,

Regina Switalski Schinker
Appendix C

Requesting Participation Letter: Current and Former 4-H Youth Agents
February 12, 2010

Dear [name of agent],

My name is Regina Switalski Schinker and I am a 4-H leader in St. Joseph County (Horses and Poultry). I am also a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Western Michigan University. I am inviting you to participate in a study that examines factors that effect the retention of 4-H volunteer leaders in St. Joseph County, Michigan. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of my PhD and I am the student investigator of the study. Dr. Van E. Cooley is the supervising professor.

You are being invited to volunteer as a participant because you are (or were the former) 4-H Youth Agent in St. Joseph County and have special insight to the study topic. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 60 to 90 minute interview session at the location of your choice where you will be asked questions about your experiences as a 4-H Youth Agent regarding issues of 4-H volunteer retention. You will be provided with a list of questions beforehand so you are able to give thought to the topic before our meeting. You will have the opportunity review the transcripts from our interview session for accuracy and make any changes/additions. You may be asked to participate in follow-up conversations if clarification of your initial interview is necessary. This can be done via email.

Keeping data confidential is the norm. All information collected will be kept confidential – that means your name or other identifying features will not be used in reporting the research. The researcher (me) will be the only person who will know your identity. Respondents will be identified using pseudonyms or in general terms (i.e. “As one 4-H Youth Agent explained...”). Any other identifying information will be masked. Your name will not appear on any papers in which information is recorded. You may choose to end the interview at any time.

I will provide you with a choice of an $8 Meijer gift card or a one-day pass to the 2010 St. Joseph County fair (an $8 value) as a token of my appreciation for your participation in the personal interview.

I will be contacting you within the next week to discuss your possible voluntary participation in this study. Please feel free to contact me at 269-496-8818 (home office) or reginaswitalski@yahoo.com if you have any questions.

Thank you for considering possible participation in this study. The results of this study may be valuable to the Extension Office leaders in our county as well as other Extension Offices as 4-H Youth Development professionals look to ways to increase 4-H volunteer leader retention.

I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Regina Switalski Schinker
Appendix D

Focus Group and Personal Interview Consent
Consent Document
Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology
Dr. Van E. Cooley, Principal Investigator
Regina Switalski Schinker, Student Investigator

4-H VOLUNTEER LEADERS:
FACTORS THAT AFFECT THEIR PERSISTENCE IN THE 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

You are invited to participate in a study examining “4-H Volunteer leaders: Factors that Affect Their Persistence in the 4-H Youth Development Program.” This study is being conducted by Regina Switalski Schinker, a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership doctoral program at Western Michigan University, under the supervision of Dr. Van E. Cooley, her dissertation chair.

The following information is being provided for you to determine if you wish to participate in the study. In addition, you are free to decide not to participate in this research or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or Western Michigan University.

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that affect retention of 4-H leaders and if the relationship between the Extension Office staff is one of those factors. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. To help you in your preparation, you will be given the interview questions ahead of time so you will be able to give careful consideration to your responses. The interview will be audio-taped to ensure the accuracy of the collected information and all focus group audio-tapes will be transcribed into transcripts. You will be able to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio recorder at any time during the interview.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating or while the research is taking place. I will be happy to share the findings with you after the completion of the study. It is important for you to know that ensuring the confidentiality of the data and your identities is the norm in research such as this. Your name will not be used; it will only be known to the researcher. Pseudonyms will be used for the participants (i.e. Leader 1, Leader 2, and so on) and universal terms will be used in reporting results (i.e. “Four of the leaders commented,...;” “According to one leader...,” etc.).

Written transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the researcher during the study. All study materials will be transported directly by the researcher and stored on the campus of Western Michigan University at the primary researcher’s office for at least three years following the completion of the study. The audio tapes will be destroyed once written transcripts have been completed. There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study.

There are several expected benefits from your participation in this study. First, results of this study will help the Extension Office staff understand the factors that influence the retention of 4-H leaders. Additionally, the results of this study will help Extension office staff have a better
understanding how their relationship with 4-H leaders affects the decision of 4-H leaders remain as a 4-H leader. These findings may also help other 4-H youth development programs in understanding these issues, thus making the 4-H youth development program stronger. Finally, this study will add a qualitative application to the Volunteer Process Model, thus adding to the scholarly literature in volunteer research.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Regina Switalski Schinker, the student investigator at (269) 496-8818 (office) or (269) 806-0181 or via email at reginaswitalski@yahoo.com. You may also contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University at (269)387-8293 or via email at hsirb@wmich.edu, or the Vice President for Research (269) 387-8298 if any questions or issues should arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for the use by the researcher for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in the study if the stamped date is older than one year.

A signed copy of this consent form will be given to you for your records.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Participant  Date

Consent obtained by:  __________________________________________
Interviewer/Student Investigator  

_________________________________________
Date

Confidentiality of Focus Group:

All information discussed in the focus group is confidential and I will not discuss the contents of the discussion or information about other participants outside of the focus group. My signature below indicates that I agree not to discuss outside of this focus group any comments made by the other participants.

(The researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality of focus group discussions.)

A signed copy of this consent form will be given to you for your records.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Participant  Date

Consent obtained by:  __________________________________________
Interviewer/Student Investigator  

_________________________________________
Date
Appendix E

4-H Agent Consent
You are invited to participate in a study examining “4-H Volunteer leaders: Factors that Affect Their Persistence in the 4-H Youth Development Program.” This study is being conducted by Regina Switalski Schinker, a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership doctoral program at Western Michigan University, under the supervision of Dr. Van E. Cooley, her dissertation chair.

The following information is being provided for you to determine if you wish to participate in the study. In addition, you are free to decide not to participate in this research or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or Western Michigan University.

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that affect retention of 4-H leaders and if the relationship between the Extension Office staff is one of those factors. If you decide to participate you will be asked to participate in an interview lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. To help you in your preparation, you will be given the interview questions ahead of time so you will be able to give careful consideration to your responses. The interview will be audio-taped to insure the accuracy of the collected information and the interview audio-tape will be transcribed into a transcript. You will be able to review the transcript and make any corrections or additions to insure accuracy. You will be able to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio recorder at any time during the interview.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating or while the research is taking place. I will be happy to share the findings with you after the completion of the study. It is important for you to know that ensuring the confidentiality of the date and your identities is the norm in research such as this. Your name will not be used; it will only be known to the researcher. Pseudonyms will be used for the participants. Because there a risk a reader may try to identify a chronological pseudonym (i.e. 4-H Agent 1, 2, 3, and 4) with the last four 4-H Agents, the interviewees will be given a generic name pseudonym (i.e. 4-H Agent Mary, Patricia, Linda, or Barbara). In addition, universal terms will be used in reporting results (i.e. “Three of the 4-H Agents commented.....," ”According to one 4-H Agent.....," etc.).

Written transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the researcher during the study. All study materials will be transported directly by the researcher and stored on the campus of Western Michigan University for at least three years following the completion of the study. The audio tapes will be destroyed once written transcripts have been completed. There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study.
There are several expected benefits from your participation in this study. First, results of this study will help the Extension Office staff understand the factors that influence the retention of 4-H leaders. Additionally, the results of this study will help Extension office staff have a better understanding how their relationship with 4-H leaders affects the decision of 4-H leaders remain as a 4-H leader. These findings may also help other 4-H youth development programs in understanding these issues, thus making the 4-H youth development program stronger. Finally, this study will add a qualitative application to the Volunteer Process Model, thus adding to the scholarly literature in volunteer research.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Regina Switalski Schinker, the student investigator at (269) 496-8818 (office) or (269) 806-0181 or via email at reginaswitalski@yahoo.com. You may also contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University at (269)387-8293 or via email at hsrbr@wmich.edu, or the Vice President for Research (269) 387-8298 if any questions or issues should arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for the use by the researcher for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in the study if the stamped date is older than one year.

A signed copy of this consent form will be given to you for your records.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Participant  Date

Consent obtained by:  __________________________________________
Interviewer/Student Investigator

_______________________  __________________________
Date  Date
Appendix F

Current Leader Focus Group and Personal Interview Protocol
## Current Leader Focus Group and Personal Interview Protocol

**Project:** 4-H Volunteer Leaders: Factors that Affect Their Persistence in the 4-H Youth Development Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Focus Group:</th>
<th>____________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time of Focus Group:</td>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewees:</td>
<td>Current 4-H Leaders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you enjoy about being a 4-H leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What barriers, obstacles, or challenges do you face as a 4-H volunteer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advice would you give someone considering becoming a 4-H volunteer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your experiences with extension office staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you find the extension office staff supportive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do volunteers have staff support that they need to do their jobs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the source of any conflict between paid staff and volunteers and how is it addressed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you provide me with specific examples of situations in which the extension office supported you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you provide me with specific examples of situations in which the extension office did not support you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your responsibilities as a 4-H leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the most important responsibility of a 4-H leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your decision-making process to re-enroll as a 4-H leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What causes 4-H leaders to re-enroll?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What causes 4-H leaders to not re-enroll?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will it take to keep you as a 4-H leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything else that you think is important to share in regards to keeping 4-H leaders involved in St. Joseph County 4-H?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Former Leader Focus Group and Personal Interview Protocol
Former Leader Focus Group and Personal Interview Protocol

Project: 4-H Volunteer Leaders: Factors that Affect Their Persistence in the 4-H Youth Development Program

Date of Focus Group: _________________________________

Time of Focus Group: _________________________________

Location: _________________________________________

Interviewer: _______________________________________

Interviewees: Former 4-H Leaders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did you enjoy about being a 4-H leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What barriers, obstacles, or challenges did you face as a 4-H volunteer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advice would you give someone considering becoming a 4-H volunteer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your experiences with extension office staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you find the extension office staff supportive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do volunteers have staff support that they need to do their jobs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the source of any conflict between paid staff and volunteers and how is it addressed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you provide me with specific examples of situations in which the extension office supported you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you provide me with specific examples of situations in which the extension office did not support you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your responsibilities as a 4-H leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the most important responsibility of a 4-H leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your decision-making process to not re-enroll as a 4-H leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What causes 4-H leaders to re-enroll?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What causes 4-H leaders to not re-enroll?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will it take for you to re-enroll as a 4-H leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything else that you think is important to share in regards to keeping 4-H leaders involved in St. Joseph County 4-H.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

4-H Agent Interview Protocol
4-H Agent Interview Protocol

Project: 4-H Volunteer Leaders: Factors that Affect Their Persistence in the 4-H Youth Development Program

Date of Personal Interview: ________________________________

Time of Personal Interview: ________________________________

Location: ___________________________________________

Interviewer: ____________________________________________

Interviewees: Current or Previous 4-H Youth Agent in the St. Joseph County 4-H Youth Development program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do 4-H leaders enjoy about being a 4-H leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What barriers, obstacles, or challenges do 4-H leaders face?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advice would you give someone considering becoming a 4-H volunteer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do volunteers have staff support that they need to do their jobs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the source of any conflict between paid staff and volunteers and how is it addressed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you provide me with specific examples of situations in which the extension office supported 4-H Leader(s)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you provide me with specific examples of situations in which the extension office did not support 4-H Leader(s)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you/do you support a positive relationship between extension office staff and 4-H leaders?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about the responsibilities of a 4-H leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the most important responsibility of a 4-H leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about the decision-making process to not re-enroll as a 4-H leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What causes 4-H leaders to re-enroll?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What causes 4-H leaders to not re-enroll?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will it take to keep 4-H leaders?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will it take to re-enroll 4-H leaders who have left the program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything else that you think is important to share in regards to keeping 4-H leaders involved in St. Joseph County 4-H.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I

Summary of Participant Information Regarding the Degree Leader and Extension Office Relations Are a Factor in the Re-enrollment Decisions of Leaders: Current Leader Responses
Summary of Participant Information Regarding the Degree Leader and Extension Office Relations Are a Factor in the Re-enrollment Decisions of Leaders:

**Current Leader Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Phrases indicating status of Rx with extension office</th>
<th>Intention to remain</th>
<th>Reason given?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CL-PI1</td>
<td>I get along with staff just fine</td>
<td>Will remain</td>
<td>Family history/involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL-PI2</td>
<td>Only problem is mandatory mtgs.</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Need to resolve mandatory mtgs., leave leaders alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL-PI3</td>
<td>I’ve always had good report with them</td>
<td>Will remain</td>
<td>As long as my wife is doing it, I’m doing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG1 M1</td>
<td>The office should realize they are here to support us</td>
<td>Will remain</td>
<td>I enjoy it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>Hot and cold</td>
<td>Will remain</td>
<td>Grandkids/don’t want anyone messing up the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>I don’t have an opinion</td>
<td>Will remain</td>
<td>Enjoy the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>The atmosphere isn’t very welcoming</td>
<td>Will remain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6</td>
<td>As long as you know what you want or need</td>
<td>Will remain</td>
<td>The children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG2 M1</td>
<td>You run into roadblocks with some of the staff</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Politics with some of the other leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>They’ve been very accommodating</td>
<td>Will remain</td>
<td>I want to get better. I will stay as long as I have control. Sometimes I think “no” – but as long as I have control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>My concerns fall on deaf ears</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>My leadership seems to have no value to the office. It makes it hard to come back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Will most likely quit</td>
<td>Time for husband now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J

Summary of Participant Information Regarding the Degree Leader and Extension Office Relations Are a Factor in the Re-enrollment Decisions of Leaders:

Former Leader Responses
## Summary of Participant Information Regarding the Degree Leader and Extension Office Relations Are a Factor in the Re-enrollment Decisions of Leaders: Former Leader Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Phrase indicating status of RX with extension office</th>
<th>Intention to return</th>
<th>Reason provided?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FL-PI1</td>
<td>No support from extension office</td>
<td>Will not return</td>
<td>Put energies elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL-PI2</td>
<td>I know Maury</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Wait to see if grandkids ask me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL-PI3</td>
<td>N/A – does not know this staff</td>
<td>Will not return</td>
<td>On to other things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG3 M1</td>
<td>Not good nowadays</td>
<td>Will not return</td>
<td>Too old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>N/A – does not know this staff/previous staff excellent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Too old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>N/A – does not know this staff</td>
<td>Will not return</td>
<td>On to other things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>N/A – does not know this staff</td>
<td>Will not return</td>
<td>Considered it, did not want to take classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td>N/A – does not know this staff/previous staff excellent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6</td>
<td>N/A – does not know this staff/previous staff excellent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7</td>
<td>It's a strange place over there now</td>
<td>Will not return</td>
<td>I do not feel like I belong there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG4 M1</td>
<td>N/A – does not know this staff/previous staff adequate</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>I do not want to attend mandatory meetings, I am acting as a 4-H leader without being an official 4-H leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>No support from office</td>
<td>Will not return</td>
<td>Busy with other things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>I had no issues. That was a long time ago.</td>
<td>Will not return</td>
<td>Busy with other things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td>It is pulling teeth to get anything.</td>
<td>Will not return</td>
<td>I do not want to attend mandatory meetings, I am acting as a 4-H leader without being an official 4-H leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6</td>
<td>In recent years, it seems it is just about keeping the books.</td>
<td>Will not return</td>
<td>I am pissed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix K

Summary of Participant Information Regarding the Degree Leader and Extension Office Relations Are a Factor in the Re-enrollment Decisions of Leaders:
Current/Former 4-H Agent Responses
Summary of Participant Information Regarding the Degree Leader and Extension Office Relations Are a Factor in the Re-enrollment Decisions of Leaders:
Current/Former 4-H Agent Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Phrases indicating relationship with leaders</th>
<th>What will it take to keep leaders?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-Mary</td>
<td>We were there for the 4-H leader. But we are not going to hand-hold.</td>
<td>Constant communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Linda</td>
<td>In general, we were supportive. But staff doesn’t always know what they need.</td>
<td>Forcing them to do more...be developed more. Educational opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Patricia</td>
<td>I think we were supportive of leaders</td>
<td>Support from office. Positive reinforcement. An orientation session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Barbara</td>
<td>Overall, we were supportive.</td>
<td>Leaders need to feel valued.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Pseudonyms were used and Agents were placed in random order.
Appendix L

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Letter of Approval
Date: February 1, 2010

To: Van Cooley, Principal Investigator
    Regina Switalski Schinker, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 10-01-27

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “4-H Volunteer Leaders: Factors that Affect their Persistence in the 4-H Youth Development Program” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: February 1, 2011