

**DESCRIBING STUDENT MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT EVENTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

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Abstract

Motivational factors that encourage students to participate in Leadership Development Events are described in this qualitative study. A focus group interview of the 2023 Idaho FFA State Employment Skills LDE competitors (n = 4) yielded several themes related to the following research questions: 1) what factors encourage students to participate in LDEs; 2) what factors discourage students from participating in LDEs; and 3) what motivates students to practice for competitive events. Data were analyzed using open and axial coding. Four conclusions were drawn from this study: 1) FFA members and advisors influence student motivation to join the FFA; 2) students participate in LDEs to prepare for careers; 3) the lack of team members may discourage LDE participation; and 4) LDE competitors value being recognized for their efforts. Three major recommendations for practice are: 1) develop learning objectives with students; 2) incorporate LDE objectives into classroom curriculum; and 3) evaluate how FFA members are recognized for their participation in LDEs.

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this project to my parents. Mom and Dad, thank you for supporting me during the years I pursued my degree. Without your love and encouragement, I would never have been successful. You taught me the value of education and pushed me to reach my fullest potential. In addition to my parents, I would also like to thank two of my closest friends for the support they gave me throughout my project. Jesse and Emily, thank you for always being a phone call away and providing the reassurance I needed when I felt like giving up. You two made quite the cheer squad during my defense—thank you! Lastly, I would like to thank the community leaders, members of the agricultural industry, and teachers who did their part to support and sustain me both in my role as teacher and student. While it would be impossible to name them all, they all have my deepest respect and appreciation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Students have access to a variety of school-based activities. Clubs, sports, and career and technical student organizations are noteworthy. Some students may be motivated to participate in an activity because it speaks to their self-identity (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Jones, 2013). Others may be motivated because the activity relates to their future goals and career aspirations (Dik et al., 2008; Jones, 2013). Another group of students may experience amotivation and fail to participate at all (Jones, 2013).

The FFA assists in developing students' interest in agriculture careers through activities like Career Development Events (Croom, 2008). The primary goal of CDEs is to “develop individual college and career readiness skills through personal growth and premier leadership” (National FFA Organization, 2022a, p. 3). Through Career and Leadership Development Events, FFA members develop critical thinking, decision-making, teamwork, and communication skills that apply to careers in the agriculture industry (National FFA Organization, 2022a. p.3).

Although the primary responsibility of School Based Agriculture Education teachers is to teach classroom or laboratory-based content (Bowling et al., 2020), Career Development Events (CDEs) and Leadership Development Events (LDEs) offer a more non-formal setting for learning (Bowling et al., 2020). Participating in events fosters teamwork and promotes communication while recognizing the value of ethical competition and individual achievement (National FFA Organization, 2022, p. 3). Phipps et al. (2008) stated, “The competition of a CDE makes learning fun... and ... when students are having fun, yet experiencing a felt need to learn, motivation to learn increases” (p. 407).

Gliem and Gliem (2000) found that students who joined the FFA saw personal development opportunities as the most motivating factor. Croom & Flowers (2001) found that a student's decision to join or not join the FFA is influenced by their perception of the FFA organization in their school. In a study of $n = 125$ FFA members, Talbert and Balschwied (2004) found that the agriculture teacher was the most significant influence on students joining the FFA, followed by their belief that the FFA would prepare them for the future.

“The complex nature of competition among different programs of SBAE, between individual students, among groups or teams of students, and by FFA chapters makes it difficult to measure its effectiveness as an instructional approach” (Jones & Edwards, 2019, p. 110). Competitive events serve to test both technical and non-technical job-related competencies (Alfeld et al., 2007). Many of these events integrate academic knowledge into industry-developed problem scenarios (Alfeld et al., 2007).

While competition can lead to the development of positive life skills, it can also lead to a hostile or aggressive environment, embarrassment, and fatigue (Knobloch et al., 2016). If youth do not see experiences as beneficial in reaching goals or connecting with peers, they may stop participating in the activities (Lundry et al., 2015; Knobloch et al., 2016).

Motivation helps youth choose activities in which they participate or continue participating in (Knobloch et al., 2016). Two motivation theories guided this study: expectancy value theory (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997). Expectancy value motivation addresses an individual's belief in their ability to do a task based on expectations and task values (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Self-efficacy theory is

a subjective assessment of one's ability to successfully perform a task in a particular situation (Bandura, 1997).

Significance of the Study

To better understand student participation in CDEs and LDEs, it is essential to identify motivational factors from the youths' perspectives (Knobloch et al., 2016; Talbert & Balschweid, 2004). Teachers who knowingly use motivational strategies that are aligned to supported theories better recognize potential student outcomes (Bowling et al., 2020). To maximize student motivation within CDE and LDE preparation, teachers should develop strategies that encourage students to participate in events (Bowling et al., 2020).

Students overwhelmed by the sheer number of school-based activities they must balance with schoolwork are also at risk of losing motivation (Jones, 2003). Students undergoing academic transitions, such as transitioning to new grade levels, often suffer the largest motivational deficits (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Having information on students' personal expectancies and values can help teachers and coaches tailor instruction based on classroom-wide or individual motivation deficits (Kosovich et al., 2015).

An increase in chapter membership could persuade agricultural education students, who are not FFA members, to join the FFA (Talbert & Balschweid, 2004). Agriculture teachers could use the findings of this study to strengthen their conversations with students about the benefits of CDEs and LDEs; develop additional methods for motivating their students to join the FFA and participate in events; help students stay motivated while studying; and provide additional incentives for students before, during, and after events.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe student motivation to participate in Leadership Development Events. The study allowed an examination of the following research questions:

1. What factors encourage students to participate in LDEs?
2. What factors discourage students from participating in LDEs?
3. What motivates students to practice for competitive events?

Conceptual Framework

Kitchel and Ball (2014) explained that a conceptual framework is based on theory and serves as a visual diagram or description of the relationships among variables in a study. Two motivation theories frame this study: expectancy value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997). Figure 1 shows the relationships between variables in this study.

Figure 1.1

Factors Influencing Student Motivation in Leadership Development Events



The conceptual framework begins with demographic and other student information that may influence achievement-related choices. Demographics for this study include the participants' age, gender, race, ethnicity, and grade level. Other characteristics include the

participants' FFA chapter, years as an active FFA member, and information about the LDE they competed in.

The subjective task values of expectancy value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) are used to describe student motivation. The four components of expectancy-value motivation include (1) "*Attainment Value* – the personal importance of doing well on a task, and how it relates to one's self-schema; (2) *Cost Value* – the negative aspects of engaging in the task, such as the amount of effort needed to succeed or the lost opportunities; (3) *Intrinsic Value* – the enjoyment the individual gets from performing the activity, or the subjective interest the individual has in the subject; (4) *Utility Value* – how a task relates to current and future goals, such as career goals, and how the task relates to an individual's short and long term goals" (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 120).

Self-efficacy is another subjective task value used to describe student motivation. Individuals who are not efficacious avoid tasks they see as challenging, while highly efficacious individuals are more willing to face challenging tasks (Bandura, 1993; Seifert, 2004). If an individual perceives the challenge associated with a task as being greater than their perceived ability (self-efficacy), the individual is at a higher risk of not attempting the task in the future (Bandura, 1997).

Conceptual Definitions

For the purposes of this study it is important to conceptually define the following terms as they relate to the research being conducted.

Career and Leadership Development Events (CDEs and LDEs) - competitive activities involving one or more FFA members in demonstrating material learned in the

classroom and supervised agricultural experiences (Croom, 2001). CDEs occur at the local, state, and national levels (National FFA Organization, n.d.).

Motivation - how individuals approach tasks based on their beliefs, values, goals, and desire to achieve (Usher & Kober, 2012).

Operational Definitions

For the purposes of this study it is important to operationally define the following terms as they relate to the research being conducted.

Attainment Value - “the personal importance of doing well on a task, and how it relates to one’s self-schema” (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p.120).

Cost Value – “the negative aspects of engaging in the task, such as the amount of effort needed to succeed or the lost opportunities” (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 120).

Intrinsic Value – “the enjoyment the individual gets from performing the activity, or the subjective interest the individual has in the subject” (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 120).

Utility Value – “how a task relates to current and future goals, such as career goals, and how the task relates to an individual’s short and long-term goals” (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 120).

Self-Efficacy - an individual’s confidence in their ability to solve a problem or accomplish a task (Bandura, 1997).

Assumptions

Assumptions are statements made without proof of accuracy (Wargo, 2015). The following are the assumptions of this study:

1. All participants in the 2023 Idaho State Employment Skills LDE have been active members of the FFA for at least one year.

2. All participants in the 2023 Idaho State Employment Skills LDE completed the survey honestly and impartially.
3. All participants in the 2023 Idaho State Employment Skills LDE participated in the focus group honestly and impartially.

Limitations

Limitations are the characteristics of a study that the researcher did not or could not control, which could impact the findings (Price & Murnan, 2004). The limitation of this study is that the participants are limited to the 2023 Idaho State Employment Skills LDE competitors only. Caution should be used when interpreting these results, as they are not generalizable to all FFA LDE competitors.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Throughout this review of the literature, factors that encourage FFA and CDE participation; outcomes of CDE participation; and the contemporary motivation theories that provide a foundation for this study are discussed.

Why Students Choose to Participate in the FFA

FFA is the top school-based youth leadership development organization in the United States (National FFA Organization, 2022b, p.7). “More than 11,000 FFA advisors and agriculture teachers deliver an integrated model of agricultural education, providing students with innovative and leading-edge education” (National FFA Organization, n.d.).

In a study of (n = 170) Illinois FFA members and (n = 154) non-FFA Illinois students, Phelps et al. (2012) found that students attributed participation in the FFA to encouragement from others, personal gain, social components, and how fun they perceived the activities. Non-members attributed negative perception, apathy, and scheduling to be reasons why they did not want to be involved in the FFA. This qualitative study was part of a collective case study investigation that used a combination of survey and interview techniques. The researcher used purposive sampling to identify schools with active FFA programs and student participants. 10 out of 15 invited schools accepted the invitation to participate in the study. Twelve to twenty FFA members, and six to twenty non-FFA members, were chosen per school to complete focus group interviews, individual interviews, and surveys regarding their participation in FFA.

Croom and Flowers (2001b) found North Carolina FFA members (n = 168) perceived FFA as a way to build career readiness skills; a means to gain leadership skills; a program that helps students with their educational goals; an opportunity to travel; and a way to get a

lot of attention and win awards. Non-members in the study (n = 236) provided significantly lower mean scores in their opinions that the FFA helps students build career readiness skills and a way to get attention and awards. The population for this study was first-year students enrolled in the Agriscience Applications course in North Carolina. Participants were selected based on the geographic region in which their school was located. A questionnaire was developed based on a series of FFA program characteristics derived from the objectives of the FFA Local Program Success Model. Croom and Flowers (2001b) concluded that “students’ decision to join or not join the FFA is influenced by their perceptions of the image of the FFA organization in their school” (p. 7).

Rose et al. (2016) found that FFA members (n = 394) felt the FFA made their high school experience more enjoyable (96.2%), was one of their favorite activities at school (95.2%) and gave them the ability to make friends at school (93.4%). Participants said the FFA improves their appreciation for self-discipline (92.9%), helps them reach goals (94.4%), teaches them to learn from their failures (91.6%), and gain new skills or trades (93.1%). A majority (59.1%) of participants agreed that they were able to participate in CDEs without a high amount of pressure to succeed. 81.7% of members reported they felt more accomplished due to their participation in CDEs. The researchers distributed a questionnaire to students attending the Tennessee FFA Camp. Maslow’s (1943) basic human needs theory served as a basis for each question. The researchers concluded that “participation in CDEs, working with others, and public speaking opportunities allow students to learn new knowledge and skills, making students ready for careers and/or college” (p. 42).

Rayfield et al. (2008) found five variables to be significant in determining a student’s willingness to join the FFA: (1) high school grade point average; (2) involvement with in-

school activities other than vocational student organizations; (3) agreement with the statement “leadership activities have made me a more confident person;” (4) year in school; (5) and agreement with the statement “my friends would think less of me.” The target population was all students in secondary agricultural science programs in Arizona, Florida, and Texas in communities with less than 10,000 residents. $n = 683$ non-FFA members and $n = 1,428$ FFA members from 41 schools completed the survey. The researchers found that students enrolled in agricultural education classes carried an “A” or “B” grade point average and had plans to continue their education beyond high school. FFA members believed the number one reason for joining the FFA was that they thought it would be fun. Factors that deterred FFA membership and participation were mostly athletics, clubs, teams, and leadership organizations.

Talbert and Balschweid (2004) mailed a self-administered questionnaire to $n = 125$ FFA members and $n = 125$ non-FFA members in each of the four National FFA Organization regions, with the purpose of determining the degree of engagement of agricultural education students in the FFA. Of the one thousand questionnaires mailed, $n = 221$ usable responses for FFA members and $n = 220$ usable responses for non-FFA members were received. The researchers found that members of the FFA were in greater agreement than non-members that their agriculture classes were preparing them for the future, challenging, interesting, exciting, and accepting of open discussion. 22.8% of the FFA members said that their agriculture teacher was the reason they joined the FFA followed by their own interest (17.7%), parents (15.8%), siblings (15.8%), friends (14.9%), and “other” (13%). Factors to not joining the FFA by non-members were not having enough time (25.1%); the purpose of the FFA is not attractive (16.3%); FFA is not interesting (17.4%); FFA is not helpful for the

future (11.2%); FFA costs too much money (13.4%); transportation is difficult (12.3%); and the agriculture teacher (5%).

Outcomes of Career and Leadership Development Events

In agricultural education programs, students are challenged by real-life tests of skills used to prepare them for careers in agriculture, science, leadership, and business (Lundry et al., 2015). CDEs extend formal classroom instruction by allowing students to apply their knowledge in a competitive environment and acquire valuable career readiness and life skills (Croom et al., 2008; Lundry et al., 2015). CDEs encourage the critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills employers demand (Lundry et al., 2015; Phipps et al., 2008). About 141,800 openings for agricultural workers are projected each year, on average, over the decade (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023).

Talbert and Balschweid (2006) posited, “From an occupational perspective, student involvement in career preparation activities is theorized to lead to more informed, more appropriate career selections” (p. 68). The authors stated, “Participation and involvement in agricultural education, especially the career development aspects of FFA and SAE, may have a positive impact on members’ career development processes” (p. 68).

Lundry et al. (2015) studied the benefits of CDEs from the teacher’s perspective. Oklahoma agriculture teachers (n = 30) were asked how CDEs prepare students for careers in agriculture and how CDEs improve students’ knowledge about careers in agriculture. The researchers found that teachers agreed CDEs expose students to specific agricultural careers (93%); students have greater exposure to college campuses (89%); CDEs spark an interest in agriculture (89%); CDEs provide real-world experiences (89%); students involved in CDEs have a greater likelihood of pursuing a career in agriculture (93%); competitive environments

enhance students' ability to learn (84%); CDEs help students meet industry specialists (84%); CDEs provide real-world application of the curriculum (84%); and winning creates motivation to explore careers in agriculture (79%).

Contemporary Motivation Theories

Modern theories of motivation focus on individuals' beliefs, values, and goals in relation to their actions (Cook & Artino, 2016). Eccles and Wigfield (2002) defined motivation as the function of the expectation of success and perceived value. Bandura (1997) proposed that personal and environmental factors inform one's decision to participate in educational activities. Ryan and Deci (2000) argued that individuals are motivated by intrinsic interests and extrinsic values. Although other motivation theories exist, these theories helped guide this study and will be discussed below.

Expectancy Value Theory

Expectancy value theory (Eccles-Parsons et al., 1983) focuses on an individual's expectation for success within educational contexts (Eccles et al., 2002). Expectancy value theory is now known as situational expectancy value theory (SEVT) as a reflection of the theorists' work on gender and ethnic group differences in motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). Expectancy refers to an individual's confidence in the task (Eccles et al., 2002). Value refers to how important, valuable, or enjoyable the individual perceives the task (Eccles et al., 2002).

Eccles-Parsons et al. (1983) identified four achievement values related to an individual's expectation of success (Eccles & Wigfield, 1983). *Attainment value* is an individual's importance of doing well on a given task; *intrinsic value* is the pleasure of doing well on a task; *utility value* refers to how a task fits into an individual's future plans; *cost*

value is how engaging in an activity limits access to other activities, how much effort will be required, and how emotionally taxing the activity may be (Eccles & Wigfield, 1983).

Eccles and Wigfield (2002) defined expectancies for success as “individual’s beliefs about how well they do on upcoming tasks, either in the immediate or longer-term future” (p. 119). Achievement choices are assumed to be influenced by both negative and positive task characteristics, and all choices are assumed to have costs associated with them (Eccles et al., 2002). Past success or failure can impact an individual’s perception of the likelihood of success (Eccles et al., 2002).

Cook and Artino (2016) define expectancy value motivation as a function of the expectation of success and perceived value. Expectation of success is the “degree to which individuals believe they will be successful if they try” (Cook & Artino, 2016, p. 1000). Perceived value is the “degree to which individuals perceive personal importance, value, or intrinsic interest in doing the task” (Cook & Artino, 2016). If an individual finds a task to be useful, enjoyable, or beneficial to themselves, they have higher perceived importance (Cook & Artino, 2016, p. 999).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986) proposes that personal and environmental factors inform one’s decision to participate in educational activities. Behavioral change is made possible by a personal sense of control (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). If a person believes that they can take action to solve a problem, they will feel more committed to the decision (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015).

The main idea of SCT is that human learning and performance result from interactions among personal (self-efficacy, cognition, emotions), behavioral, and

social/environmental factors (Cook & Artino, 2016). For example, if a teacher were to remark on how well a student is doing in class (behavior), this remark may validate their perception of learning (personal) and motivate them to continue (Schunk & Usher, 2020).

Self-efficacy is a key motivational process in SCT (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Motivational outcomes of self-efficacy are choice of activities, effort, persistence, and achievement (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). A strong sense of efficacy enhances personal well-being and drives motivation (Cook & Artino, 2016). Low self-efficacy leads to pessimistic thoughts about accomplishing difficult tasks (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015).

Performance accomplishments are the most reliable source that people use to assess their self-efficacy (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Performing well enhances continuous learning (Schunk & Usher, 2020). Self-evaluation of goals is another source people use to measure their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Making goal progress helps sustain self-efficacy and motivation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Self-Determination Theory

People are often moved by external factors, such as reward systems, grades, evaluations, or opinions they fear others might have of them (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Yet, they are just as motivated by internal factors such as interests, curiosity, care, or internal values (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The interplay between extrinsic and intrinsic motives is the foundation of self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT also focuses on how social and cultural factors affect a person's well-being and the quality of their performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Cognitive evaluation theory, a sub-theory of SDT, proposes three basic psychosocial needs that foster intrinsic motivation: *autonomy* (one's control of their actions), *competence*

(self-efficacy), and *relatedness* (sense of belonging to others; Cook & Artino, 2016).

Providing opportunities for choice, acknowledging feelings, avoiding judgment, and encouraging personal responsibility for actions promotes autonomy (Cook & Artino, 2016).

Offering feedback on challenging tasks promotes competence (Cook & Artino, 2016).

Environments that exhibit genuine caring, mutual respect, and safety promote relatedness (Cook & Artino, 2016).

Extrinsic motivation is divided into four regulatory levels that range from external regulation (actions motivated by anticipated rewards or punishments) to integrated regulation (values and goals have become fully integrated into one's self-image; Cook & Artino, 2016). In the middle are introjected regulation (compulsion, self-esteem, guilt) and identified regulation (consciously valued goals; Cook & Artino, 2016). The transition from external to integrated regulation requires that values and goals become personally important and fully integrated into one's sense of self (Cook & Artino, 2016). Internalization and integration are promoted or inhibited by the three basic psychosocial needs: relatedness, competence, and autonomy (Cook & Artino, 2016).

Intrinsic motivation forms the core of SDT (Cook & Artino, 2016). Deci & Ryan (2016) define intrinsic motivation as doing an activity because it is interesting and enjoyable. Inherent satisfactions derive primarily from experiences of competence (self-efficacy) and autonomy (self-determination; Deci & Ryan, 2016). When a person's psychological needs are satisfied, they develop healthy behaviors and thrive (Deci & Ryan, 2016).

Extrinsic motivation involves doing an activity because it leads to a reward or consequence (Deci & Ryan, 2016). External regulation is a controlling form of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2016). Feeling pressured through the temptation of rewards or the coercion of

threats dissatisfies an individual's need for autonomy and some well-being consequences are likely to follow (Deci & Ryan, 2016). Extrinsically motivated behaviors become self-determined when the individual accepts the real importance of the activity for themselves (Deci & Ryan, 2016).

Describing Students Who Participate in the FFA, CDEs, and LDEs

In 2022, the National FFA Organization announced that 43% (n = 365,853) of the nation's members (N = 850,823) identified as female; 50% (n = 425,411) identified as male; and 7% (n = 59,559) was undisclosed. The National FFA Organization reported that chapter numbers increased by 178 resulting in 8,995 chapters in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (National FFA Organization, nd).

A larger percentage of members identify as White or Not Latino. Lawrence et al. (2013) surveyed (N = 128) chapters in four National FFA Regions. The researchers found that 55% (n = 4,789) of the membership identified as male and 45% (n = 3,926) identified as female. The majority of students identified as White (80.41%, n = 7,387); only 12.51% (n = 1,149) of the students identified as Hispanic. One-fourth (n = 32) of the population (N = 128) identified as rural; one-fourth (n = 32) as urban; one-fourth (n = 32) as suburban; and one-fourth (n = 32) as at-large. There was a total of 155 FFA advisors from the 128 chapters yielding an average of 1.21 FFA advisors per chapter.

In a study of the 2018 Idaho State Leadership Conference LDE or CDEs participants (N = 413), Smith and Thapa (2022) found 66.8% (n = 241) of the participants identified as female, 32.4% (n = 117) identified as male and n = 3 respondents preferred to not say. The bulk of participants were juniors (n = 128, 33.5%) or seniors (n = 111, 29.1%).

In a descriptive study of the students attending the 2017 Northern Idaho Leadership and Career Development Events ($N = 98$), 38.7% ($n = 38$) identified as male, and 60.2% ($n = 59$) identified as female (Smith & Bucknell, 2017). Students who competed in the FFA Creed speaking LDE spent $M = 8.29$ ($SD = 6.04$) hours per week practicing on their own, $M = 7.7$ ($SD = 10.46$) hours with a group, and $M = 4.94$ ($SD = 8.39$) hours with a coach. Students who competed in the extemporaneous speaking LDE spent $M = 3.75$ ($SD = 1.58$) hours per week practicing on their own, 2.88 ($SD = 3.31$) hours with a group, and $M = 2.56$ ($SD = 1.12$) hours with a coach. Students who competed in the Greenhand knowledge quiz CDE averaged spending $M = 2.97$ ($SD = 4.14$) hours per week practicing on their own, 2.06 ($SD = 2.17$) hours with a group, and $M = 1.48$ ($SD = 1.89$) hours with a coach.

Career and Leadership Development Motivation

Knobloch et al. (2016) initiated an effort to develop and validate a survey instrument to more reliably assess students' motivations to participate in Career Development Events. The researchers identified expectancy-value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) as an appropriate theoretical framework that measured attainment, cost value, utility value, intrinsic value, and self-efficacy. CDE participants ($n = 419$) identified most with cost and utility motivation, which reflected that CDEs were worth their time and effort (Knobloch et al., 2016). Self-efficacy was the most contributing factor to youth motivation and was highly related to intrinsic, cost, and utility value motivation (Knobloch et al., 2016). The instrument by Knobloch et al. (2016) can be found in Appendix A.

Jones (2013) surveyed students ($n = 84$) who had participated in at least one CDE in the Southeast region of North Carolina. Deci & Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory guided the study. Statements were related to the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate

students to participate in CDEs. Students indicated the most agreement with the statements related to intrinsic values. Likert-based items on the survey ranged from 1 = completely disagree to 7 = completely agree. Students agreed that they like to learn new things in a CDE ($M = 6.46$, $SD = 0.97$); they participate for the pleasure and knowledge they gain ($M = 6.31$, $SD = 1.01$); they participate in continuing learning about things that interest them ($M = 6.31$, $SD = .90$); they believe the knowledge they obtain will make them a better worker ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 1.17$); they participate to prove they are capable of doing well ($M = 6.13$, $SD = 1.18$); and they participate to have a better salary later on ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.80$). Students did not agree that CDEs were a waste of time ($M = 1.38$, $SD = 1.14$).

Jones (2013) found that students viewed the FFA advisor as the individual with the greatest impact on their success in career development events. First, they agreed with the idea that the FFA advisor was the main individual that recruited them to participate in career development events. Secondly, they agreed that they would not be very successful in their career development event participation without the efforts of their FFA advisor. It is ultimately the advisor's responsibility to make the decision regarding what career development events will be facilitated in the agricultural education program (Jones, 2013).

Croom et al. (2009) conducted a study to determine what motivates students to participate in national CDEs and the factors related to their participation in CDEs. The population was the total number of registered participants at the 2003 National FFA Convention. The survey was completed by $n = 2,145$ FFA members and $n = 206$ coaches. Five of the 31 items on the survey instrument were related to the members' decision to participate in the national CDE. The items were (1) related to a career choice; (2) leadership development; (3) scholarship awards; (4) travel/fun; (5) competition. The item that most

influenced the members' decision to participate was the CDE relating to their career choice. The item that had the least impact on their decision to participate was the thrill of competing.

To describe how to motivate CDE teams and the role of competition, Ball, et al. (2016) conducted a case study over the course of 16 weeks that followed an agricultural education program through the CDE season. The qualitative study consisted of $n = 46$ student interviews, three FFA advisor interviews, and one administrator interview. Two major themes emerged from the interviews: 1) performance and 2) motivation coaching strategies. They concluded the motivational strategies employed by the instructor were initially extrinsic but evolved to intrinsic motivation strategies as students gained a deeper understanding of content related to their CDE.

Blakely et al. (1993) assessed the perceived value of FFA contests and awards by students and adult groups such as parents, advisors, administrators, and state staff. Blakely et al. (1993) found that the primary reason FFA members participated in contests and awards was the enjoyment of winning and greater feelings of self-esteem.

Jones (2018) found that FFA advisors, as coaches, have the ability to positively influence their students' motivation and feelings of confidence and satisfaction and express the value of the tasks. The participants in this study rated their FFA advisor's character-building competence highest and technique competence lowest. Jones (2001) concluded FFA advisors have the ability to positively influence students' personal development and attitudes toward their CDE/LDE.

Russell et al. (2009) used a qualitative case study to describe how eight Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers motivated students to participate in CDEs. Six themes were identified: 1) drawing upon the traditions and success of the chapter; 2)

providing opportunities for students to compete; 3) promising students that they will gain life skills; 4) enabling students to have fun; 5) actively recruiting members who show potential for doing well with CDEs; and 6) making CDEs an integral part of the classroom curriculum. The teachers reported their students expected to be successful when they participated and had a high expectancy for the task. Teachers also reported that their students participated in CDEs based on the rewards they would receive at the conclusion of the event, either intrinsic or extrinsic.

Summary

The primary goal of CDEs is to “develop individual college and career readiness skills through personal growth and premier leadership” (National FFA Organization, 2022a, p. 3). National FFA membership may be nearly equal in male and female numbers, but Smith and Thapa (2017) found that females in Idaho state level CDEs and LDEs are participating at a larger rate.

Preparation for competitive events provides hands-on experience in different trade, technical, and leadership fields (Alfeld et al., 2007). FFA members develop critical thinking, decision-making, teamwork, and communication skills that apply to careers in the agriculture industry (National FFA Organization, 2022a, p.3). Rayfield et al. (2008) found the number one reason FFA members joined was for enjoyment. Croom et al. (2009) found the item that most influenced the members’ decision to participate was how the event related to their career aspirations. Knobloch et al. (2016) found self-efficacy was the most contributing factor to youth motivation and was highly related to intrinsic, cost, and utility value motivation.

Though success is often measured by extrinsic rewards, intrinsic values are just as important when motivating students to participate in competitive events (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Teachers and coaches must remember that when the emphasis is placed solely on winning, students may lose sight of improving their skills because their primary goal becomes external recognition (Jones, 1958).

Chapter 3: Methods

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social human problem (Creswell, 2007). Ideas, perceptions, opinions or beliefs of a person or group of people are collected in a natural setting (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) divided qualitative methods into five categories including phenomenological research, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative research. We chose grounded theory as the research design for this study.

The 2023 Idaho State Employment Skills LDE competitors (n = 4) participated in a focus group interview. Consensus was reached on a number of ideas that helped describe the factors that encourage or discourage students from participating in LDEs. Data were coded by two professionals along with the lead researcher to establish trustworthiness. The constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used to analyze and report the data.

Research Design

Creswell (2007) defines grounded theory as “a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation of a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants.” The collection techniques commonly identified in qualitative research are document collecting, observations, and interviews (Kolb, 2012).

Observations help gain an understanding of the research setting and participants in the study (Kolb, 2012). Interviews helped gain the perspectives of the participants in the study (Kolb, 2012).

The researchers collected survey documents, observations, and interview answers in this study. Participants answered the survey questions on paper and shared their thoughts

with each other during a focus group. The lead and assistant researchers observed and recorded field notes during the focus group.

Population

The Idaho FFA district winners of the Employment Skills LDE (N = 10) were the population of this study. A convenience sample (n = 4) participated in the study. This sample fit Krueger's (2014) criteria for focus groups; it was a carefully recruited group of students who held something in common. The participants were members of the FFA, they won a district competition in the Employment Skills LDE, and they competed in the Idaho State Employment Skills LDE at the Idaho State Leadership Convention prior to the interview. More descriptive information about the participants can be found in Chapter 4 on page number 25.

Method

Focus groups are carefully recruited populations of five to ten people with similar goals (Krueger, 2014). A group of four people could be acceptable if the participants are selected methodically (Kreuger, 2014). Open-ended questions are used to gather powerful information (Krueger, 2014). The lead researcher listens for inconsistent, vague, or cryptic comments and probes for understanding (Krueger, 2014). The assistant researcher(s) do not participate in the discussion but instead take notes to give feedback to the researcher on crucial points, big ideas, hunches, body language, and non-verbal activity (Kreuger, 2014). Comments and observations are coded by question and analyzed for common themes (Krueger, 2014). The results are sequenced by theme or question and written narratively (Krueger, 2014).

We used an instrument to assess youth motivation to participate in CDEs Knobloch et al. (2016) to develop the interview protocol. This instrument is included in Appendix A. Our team chose to conduct a focus group rather than distribute the instrument by Knobloch et al. (2016) because the instrument was not designed for LDEs. Knobloch et al. (2016) distributed the instrument to youth participants in Indiana's state CDEs; many of the statements are context-specific and do not align with the objectives of LDEs. For example, students competing in Employment Skills are not required to test their knowledge by an exam, which is a component of the instrument by Knobloch et al. (2016).

The focus group questions probed for answers related to attainment, utility, cost, intrinsic, and self-efficacy task values. All questions were open-ended and designed to avoid dichotomous answers. Probing questions were used to help add missing details in the conversation. Appendix B shows the justifications for each question.

Subject Recruitment

When the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix J), the research team sent a focus group invitation to the participants' advisors. The email (see Appendix E) included an introduction of the researcher; the purpose of the research; the date, time, and location; and a list of the incentives for the participants.

The research team greeted the Employment Skills LDE competitors (N = 10) and their advisors during the event orientation. Each student was given a custom-made sticker and paper invitation (see Appendix D). We spoke to the event participants as a group; only the details of the event location, time, and dinner arrangements were shared. We spoke to each of the participants' advisors outside of the orientation room and received confirmation that nine students would attend the focus group.

Five students did not show up. Two advisors shared that their students did not attend because they were too tired after competing. Two advisors said that their students could not miss the first 20 minutes of the activity that overlapped with the focus group. One advisor gave his student permission to leave the convention after he competed earlier in the day.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity emphasizes an awareness of a researcher's presence in the research process (Barry et al., 1999). Researchers need to be aware that their involvement with participants can influence the direction of the research (Barry et al., 1999). Reflexive statements should be written before, during, and after the research process (Barry et al., 1999). Barry et al. (1999) suggest answering the following reflexive questions before the research process:

In what way might my experience color my participation in the project?

I am certified to teach agriculture and have two years of formal teaching experience in Idaho. I have employed motivation techniques to encourage LDE participation. I coached three LDE teams, two of which placed in the top five teams in Idaho. I am acquainted with many of the teachers who coached the participants in this study.

What experience have I had with qualitative research?

I conducted a case study of the teachers of the 2018 National FFA American Star award recipients. The interview followed a semi-structured protocol that included questions about the participants' background in agriculture, how they motivate their students to initiate an SAE, how they motivate their students to continue and complete an SAE, and how they recognize their students' accomplishments. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis using the constant comparative method.

What results do I expect to come out of this project?

I expect the participants to speak in favor of the benefits of the FFA. I expect the participants to be highly involved in their chapters and be highly motivated by extrinsic values. I speculate a strong consensus on the advisor being the main motivator for participation.

What do I fear?

I hope that students will show up. I fear that the participants will not be open and honest in their answers. I fear that the students will not speak up and contribute to the conversation. I fear that I will not ask the right probing questions.

Data Collection

We collected data by interviews, written documentation, and observational methods. When the students entered the room, they completed a pre-interview survey (see Appendix C) that included the interview questions. The participants were offered dinner as they completed the survey. The lead researcher facilitated the focus group and the assistant researcher took field notes. The interview was video recorded using Zoom software. Immediately after the focus group, the participants completed a post-interview survey (see Appendix D). As the participants exited the room, they received an insulated water bottle, a custom-made sticker, and a bag of treats.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established so that this study can be replicated in the future. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested triangulation, peer debriefing, and reflexive journaling as methods for establishing trustworthiness. A sense of consensus matrix was also used to help validate the findings.

Surveys, written observations, and a video transcription were triangulated. The assistant researcher, who silently observed the interview, debriefed the lead researcher immediately after the interview. The lead researcher kept a reflexive journal throughout the study. The journal included the researcher's observations, reflections after the interview, and reflections during the data analysis. A sense of consensus matrix (see Appendix I) was developed to identify major moments of consensus during the focus group. Verbal and/or nonverbal actions were noted in the matrix.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (2006) explained data analysis as a systematic process of sifting and arranging all information obtained from interview transcripts, field notes, and other material collected to increase your understanding of the data to enable the presentation of what has been discovered. Immediately following the completion of the focus group, the lead researcher and assistant researcher shared field notes and completed a peer debrief as a measure of trustworthiness.

The lead researcher transcribed the interview using Zoom software, then audited the video recording by developing a sense of consensus matrix (Appendix I). The matrix was compared to the lead and assistant researchers' field notes.

Two professionals who agreed to assist in data analysis. One professional has a formal background in agricultural education and is familiar with the purpose of LDEs. The other professional is a licensed clinical social worker unfamiliar with agricultural education and the FFA organization.

The team of coders used the constant comparative method to open code the data into major categories of information (Kolb, 2012). Inductive and deductive thinking processes

were used to create axial codes (Kolb, 2012). A priori codes included the subjective task values in the study's conceptual framework: attainment, cost, intrinsic, utility, and self-efficacy. We assembled a story that describes the interrelationship of categories (Kolb, 2012).

Summary

We chose grounded theory as the research design for this study. Focus group methodology (Kreuger, 2014) was used to collect data about what factors encourage or discourage students from participating in LDEs. The instrument by Knobloch et al. (2016) to assess youth motivation to participate in Career Development Events (Appendix A) guided the interview protocol. A convenience sample ($n = 4$) of students who competed in the 2023 Idaho State Employment Skills CDE ($N = 10$) participated in the focus group. Written documents, observations, and peer debriefing were collected to triangulate the data. A team of coders used the constant comparative method to open and axial code the data into themes (Kolb, 2012). Findings were reported by each research question. Recommendations are given for practicing teachers, pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and high school students.

Chapter 4: Findings and Results

The purpose of this study was to describe the motivational factors that encourage students to participate in Leadership Development Events. We chose grounded theory as the research design for this study. Focus group methodology (Kreuger, 2014) was used to collect data about what factors encourage or discourage students from participating in LDEs, and how students motivate themselves to study for LDEs. Findings from this study are presented as emergent themes under the research questions. Additional items that can be added to the instrument to assess youth motivation by Knobloch et al. (2016) are also included.

Summary of the Participants

A convenience sample ($n = 4$) of the 2023 Idaho FFA district winners of the Employment Skills LDE ($N = 10$) participated in the study. 100% of the participants were white/Caucasian and 100% were female. One student was Hispanic or Latino. Three students were in the 12th grade, and one was in the 10th grade. One student was a first-year FFA member. Two students were fourth-year FFA members. One student was a fifth-year FFA member. Two students attended a rural school district, and two students attended an urban school district. For confidentiality purposes, all participants were given pseudonyms. Descriptive characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Overview of the Participants' Demographics in the Focus Group ($n = 4$)

Participant	Age	Grade	Ethnicity	Year in the FFA	Year Competing in the Employment Skills LDE
Allie	18	12	White	4	2
Jessica	17	12	Hispanic or Latino	3	3
Courtney	16	10	White	1	1
Emily	18	12	White	5	2

Characteristics of the participants' FFA chapters are included in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Overview of the Participants' FFA Chapters (n = 4)

Participant	Allie	Jessica	Courtney	Emily
School District	Urban	Urban	Rural	Rural
Number of members enrolled in the chapter in the 2022-2023 school year	88	53	106	39
Affiliate chapter	No	No	No	No
The number of teachers in the chapter and their genders	3 females	1 male 1 female	1 male 1 female	1 female
The number of members that attended the 2023 Idaho State Leadership Convention	34	23	24	9

Participants completed a pre and post-survey related to their confidence in winning the event. Responses to the questions are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Participants' Perceptions of Winning the Employment Skills LDE (n = 4)

Pre-Focus Group Interview				
	Allie	Jessica	Courtney	Emily
How confident were you that you would win this event when you signed up?	Slightly confident	Not at all confident	Very confident	Slightly confident
How important is it for you to win this event?	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Very important	Somewhat important
Post-Focus Group Interview				
How confident are you that you will win this event?	Not at all confident	Slightly confident	Somewhat confident	Slightly confident
My advisor expects me to win.	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Agree	Agree

The pre-interview survey included questions about how the participants were selected to compete in the Employment Skills LDE. Allie was selected to compete because she won her chapter's run-off. Jessica and Courtney's teachers selected them to compete. Emily was chosen because she was one of the oldest students in her FFA district.

Room Arrangement

Kreuger (2014) suggests creating a relaxed and informal setting when conducting focus groups. The lead researcher did not sit at the head of the table, but rather in the corner of the seating arrangement. The participants were seated in a semi-circle so they could always make eye contact with each other and the researcher. The assistant researcher sat at a separate table that was out of the participants' direct line of sight. The video camera was positioned so it could capture the participants' verbal and nonverbal answers. Figure 4.1 shows where the participants, researchers, and video camera were positioned in the room.

Figure 4.1

Arrangement of the Room During the Focus Group Interview

Lead Researcher	Jessica	
Allie		Courtney
		Emily
Assistant Researcher	Video Camera	

The lead researcher greeted each participant and shook their hand as they walked into the room. The students were asked to share how they spent their time between the competition and the focus group. The participants were then directed to complete the pre-

focus group survey while eating dinner. The participants were given the freedom to choose their seats.

First Impressions

As the students arrived, the lead researcher asked each student how they spent their time between the competition and the focus group. Allie and Jessica participated in a community service event with their chapters. Courtney went swimming, and Emily took a nap in her hotel room.

The participants were allowed to speak to each other while they filled out their surveys, ate pizza, and waited for the interview to begin. The participants' conversations revolved around how they spent their time before the focus group, music, and food. They did not discuss their feelings about the contest. Emily was the most vocal during this time; she enjoyed talking about her chapter and its traditions.

Emily was the first participant to arrive; she arrived 25 minutes early and was not escorted by her advisor. Courtney arrived 10 minutes early and was escorted by her advisor. Jessica arrived on time without her advisor. Allie arrived a few minutes late and was not escorted by her advisor.

The pre-focus group survey included questions about the participants' impressions of the others in the room. Allie's first impression of the participants in the room was that everyone seemed nice and excited to participate. She compared herself to the others in the room as having better interview and speaking skills than herself but said "It's so cool to be surrounded by such amazing people."

Jessica's first impression was that the participants seemed professional and nice. She said she saw herself being in the "same group and the same level as everyone else."

Courtney's first impression was feeling "intimidated but I loved seeing a bunch of girls that I know got here the same way as me." She felt she was "the younger competitor who is not exactly sure of how I will compare during scoring."

Emily's first impression was seeing the other participants as "nice and dedicated to this contest." She felt everyone in the room was like one another.

The lead researcher's first impression of the room was that the participants were relaxed, friendly with one another, and happy to be there. The discussion was not forced, and the lead researcher did not have to call on any participants to start the conversation. Courtney volunteered to answer almost every question first. Allie or Jessica would follow Courtney. Emily was the last to answer most of the questions. The participants had good eye contact with the researcher when speaking. When interrupted, the conversation did not stall, and the participants did not need to be redirected.

The lead researcher noted that Courtney was the most outgoing of the group, but her body language suggested she felt more out of place than the others because she focused mostly on the researcher and less on the other participants. Allie was very outspoken and the most confident in the group; her body language suggested she felt very accomplished and proud to be in the room. Jessica had very thoughtful and detailed answers; her body language suggested she was the most interested in the conversation. Emily was an active listener and would echo the others; her body language suggested she was tired but still interested in the conversation.

Results by Research Question

Findings for each research question are included in this section.

RQ 1: What factors encourage students to participate in LDEs?

FG Q1 Part 1: What or who influenced you to join the FFA?

Analysis of the data collected from this focus group question yielded three emergent themes: 1) advisors as influencers; 2) family traditions; and 3) peer recognition. Examples of the motives that encouraged participation are listed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Identified Motives that Influence Students to Participate in the FFA

Theme	Example quotes
Advisors as influencers	<p>“When I first joined, I was most looking forward to being with my teachers who support me” (P2: Jessica).</p> <p>“The reason I started doing it was because when my advisor asked me, I said, sure, why not, what’s the worst that could happen...I don’t win anything” (P4: Emily).</p>
Family traditions	<p>“I grew up with FFA...my dad’s entire side of the family have all done the FFA... I always thought it sounded like fun” (P4: Emily).</p> <p>“My family is really competitive...I had to win more medals than my siblings combined” (P2: Jessica).</p> <p>“Motivation started with beating my siblings and then it became just reaching the goals that we [advisors and chapter] set” (P2: Jessica).</p>
Peer recognition	<p>“I got complimented on something and they’re like this is what you should do, like I think that you’re really at that. So, I did it” (P3: Courtney).</p> <p>“Something strikes your interest because someone compliments you on it” (P1: Allie).</p> <p>“It’s just so cool when it comes from someone your own age, rather than adults for some reason” (P3: Courtney).</p>

The Advisor

All participants agreed that the advisor is an important motivating factor in FFA participation. While most of the participants' comments were positive, some comments suggested that the advisor's approach could also be monotonous and overbearing. Allie said, "My teachers harp about the FFA and how cool it is. They begin to sound like your mom...kind of tune them out." Courtney was the first participant to speak about her advisor's influence. She said that before her advisor left for maternity leave, she told Courtney that she would hunt her down and make her do it. Courtney replied, "I guess I'm doing it then." When Courtney shared this, the other participants laughed and nodded their heads in agreement.

The next participant to share her thoughts about her advisors was Emily. Emily said, "For me, it was more of a why not when my advisor asked... I thought what's the worst that could happen... I get out of school for a day and I don't win anything." Emily's body language suggested she was present for the experience, not winning the competition. Allie said, "Participating in the FFA Creed is something that influenced me to join the FFA." Emily replied, "Yeah, in my chapter we usually have a good turnout for speaking events because we have to do the Creed in Intro to Agriculture."

All participants agreed that being recognized for their strengths was a reason they joined the FFA. Jessica said, "I started doing this because I created such a bond with my advisors...when they told me that they wanted me to do it, I was like, yeah I'll do it." Allie said, "My freshman year my teacher told me I was really good at speaking...she told me to FFA and do the contest [Employment Skills] so I did, and then it took over my life." Allie's comment made the other participants laugh and sit up in their chairs. Jessica said, "My

sophomore year my advisors wanted me to do it just for fun...like no pressure or anything.” Jessica smiled and shrugged her shoulders when she made this statement.

All participants agreed that they strive to make their advisor(s) proud. Jessica said, “My advisor has always supported us [the chapter] in our contests...so making him proud and seeing him smile when we do good is so fun.” All participants nodded their heads in agreement. Allie and Jessica said their advisors are the first people they go to after competing in a contest. Allie said, “If I do not win, I feel like I’m letting my advisors down.”

Two of the participants felt like their advisors spent too much time encouraging students to join the FFA. Jessica said, “I feel like the advisors are always looking for people to do contests...you know it’s just part of their job.” Jessica sought consensus on this comment by looking at the others and asking if they agreed. Emily said, “Sometimes when the advisor comes up to you, you feel pressured.” Courtney strongly agreed with Emily when she turned in her chair to face Emily and said “Yes, exactly.”

Family Traditions

Three of four participants spoke about their family members motivating them to join the FFA. Allie spoke about her brother. Emily spoke about her sisters. Jessica spoke about her siblings [genders were not defined]. Emily was the only participant who had a parent who was a member of the FFA.

Allie’s brother inspired her to take agriculture classes. She said, “When I got to the point where I was choosing my classes, my brother was like, you need to take an ag class and you need to join the FFA. It’s so much fun.” Allie said, “I saw all the super cool stuff he was doing, and I was like, man, that’s awesome. I want to do that too.” Allie’s body language suggested she has a lot of pride in her brother. Jessica said, “I saw my siblings coming back

from Moscow [Idaho State CDEs] and they would have so much fun, so I wanted to do it too.”

Competing with and against siblings was a motivating factor for Jessica and Emily. Emily said she would use her influence on her siblings to fill every spot on a CDE team. She told her siblings “I’m going to make you a deal. You do this for one year and I’ll never bug you again. It worked well because they came back.” Jessica said “My family is really competitive. When I started, I had to win more medals than my siblings.” Emily said she made it a goal to compete at a state competition her senior year just like her sister. This goal came true for Emily.

Peer Recognition

All participants (n = 4) agreed that being approached by an FFA member is more meaningful than being approached by an advisor. The participants were very animated when they shared their ideas with one another. Allie was especially passionate about this idea:

When you have a chapter officer, just somebody your own age, come up to you and be like, hey you’re super cool, you’re really good at this, you should do this in FFA. You’re more inclined to listen (P1: Allie).

Courtney echoed Allie saying, “I got complimented on something...they said I was really good at speaking...and I was like oh okay I’ll do that.” Jessica said, “When another student sees what you’re doing it’s like oh I should join. It means more.” Emily felt that when an FFA member, who doesn’t usually talk to you, says something it’s special. She said, “When it’s your advisor it’s like, okay, whatever you say, sir.” Courtney ended the conversation by saying:

Teenagers are kind of brutal. So, when they come up to you and say I think you're really good and then it means a lot. But when the advisor also talks to you, like you're being targeted by a member and the advisor, it works well (P3: Courtney).

FG Q1 Part 2: What were you most looking forward to?

Analysis of the data collected from this focus group question yielded two emergent themes: 1) gaining a sense of belonging and 2) receiving recognition. Aspects of the FFA the participants expected when they joined are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Aspects of the FFA that the Participants Expected when Joining the FFA

Theme	Example quotes
Gaining a sense of belonging	<p>“I wanted to grow close to the people in my chapter” (P1: Allie).</p> <p>“What I was most looking forward to was being with my friends and teachers who supported me. Like building me up and getting me involved” (P2: Jessica).</p>
Receiving recognition	<p>“It wasn't until my first leadership conference when I saw other kids going up on stage and getting a plaque and pin, I was like wow, that's super cool. I want to do that too” (P1: Allie).</p>

Gaining a Sense of Belonging

Three of the four participants spoke about finding a place to belong. Allie, Jessica, and Courtney spoke about finding new passions, meeting new people, spending time with supportive teachers, and taking advantage of new opportunities. Allie started the conversation saying,

High school is about finding yourself and then finding your passions and you can only be in the FFA once, so you might as well take advantage of it while you have all these opportunities on a silver platter for you to just take. You never know unless you try it (P1: Allie).

Allie expressed she doesn't have a traditional background in agriculture. She said, "Agriculture is something I didn't know anything about until I took agriculture classes, so it [FFA] just really intrigued me because it was something I didn't know about." Now Allie attributes the FFA to her passion for agriculture. She said "I never realized how important agriculture was. I never knew there was so much to it. The FFA helped me realize that." Courtney, Jessica, and Emily nodded their heads in agreement.

Courtney spoke next about her experience with finding a passion for agriculture. She said, "I live on a farm right now, but I always felt like, I'm not going to farm. I want to be a vet. Now I know it goes with agriculture." Allie nodded her head and said "Yeah" after Courtney's comment. Jessica spoke next. She said, "I was most looking forward to having a place to fit in and having a family that supported me. All the learning was just extra." Allie said "Yeah, the life-changing experiences were just extra to finding a group of friends."

Receiving Recognition

All participants (n = 4) agreed that a "win" to a high school student looks like being recognized for their work. The participants were very animated in their body language when speaking about being recognized for their work. Allie said she was motivated by being recognized on stage. She said, "It wasn't until I saw it actually happen [students on stage] and saw all their hard work pay off that I was like man that's cool I want that too."

Emily said she was most looking forward to earning at least one plaque from an FFA contest. She said, "My sister is really good at contests, so my goal was to win at least one." Jessica said, "Yeah, I'm really competitive. My goal was always to win more medals than my siblings." Allie was incentivized to participate because her goal was to make it on stage.

Courtney was the only participant who expressed that her goal wasn't to win a trophy. Her goal was to be proud of herself. She said, "I wanted to have an appreciation for where I've gotten so far." The other participants nodded their heads in agreement. Courtney then said, "I'm sure next year my goal will be physical like a medal, but this year my goal was mental." Allie said, "I think for me, I also wanted to make my chapter and advisors proud of me."

FG Q2: If you invited a friend to participate in FFA contests, what would you say in the invitation?

Analysis of the data collected from this focus group question yielded two emergent themes: 1) traveling to new places and 2) taking risks. Examples of these themes are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Identified Motives for Participating in FFA Contests

Theme	Example quotes
Traveling to new places	"I went to Moscow [Idaho State FFA CDEs] and then I went to Nationals [National FFA Convention] and I showed my friends video and they're like wait, what? That looks like so much fun" (P2: Jessica).
Taking risks	"Some people I can hype up about a contest and tell them they'd be so good at this and they'd have so much fun. It usually works" (P4: Emily). "I'll tell them they might find something that they genuinely like that they wouldn't have had any idea about without doing the contest or getting involved" (P1: Allie).

Traveling to New Places

Jessica talked about her FFA chapter visiting middle schools to recruit new members. She talked about using videos of FFA trips to excite the students. She said, “What got the kids excited was talking about all the trips like state convention and nationals [National FFA Convention]. That’s what got them intrigued.”

Allie shared a story about her favorite memory as an FFA member. She talked about visiting the World Ag Expo with her chapter. She said “I’ll always remember how happy we were and how much fun we had. I never would have had that opportunity if it weren’t for the FFA.” Allie also shared how honored she felt for the opportunity because she had to apply for a scholarship from her chapter’s alumni chapter. She said, “I got that scholarship because I was active and participated in CDEs and LDEs.”

Emily sold the idea of participating in FFA events by telling her friends they could get out of the school building for a day. She would tell her friends “You get out of school and you get better food than what’s in the cafeteria.” The other participants laughed and sat up in their chairs when Emily shared this statement.

Taking Risks

Emily convinced students to join CDE teams by telling them they only had to do it once and she would never bug them again. Her friends would take the risk and they would try it again another year. Jessica spoke about watching freshman students join the FFA. She said, “You could see them coming in kind of iffy about it and then they’re like whatever I’ll take the leap.” Allie nodded her head in agreement with Jessica’s comment.

Jessica followed that idea by talking about her experience transitioning from 4-H to FFA. She said one of the motives for transitioning to the FFA was so she wouldn’t have to do

4-H record books and interview evaluations. Courtney and Emily nodded their heads in agreement. Emily said, “Yeah, the contest [Employment Skills] was so much easier than interview evaluations].

RQ 2: What factors discourage students from participating in LDEs?

FG Q3: Suppose your friend declined your invitation to participate in FFA contests. Why weren't they interested?

Analysis of the data collected from this focus group question yielded four emergent themes: 1) fit; 2) time; 3) public speaking; and 4) practicing as an individual. Examples of factors that discourage FFA and LDE participation are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Identified Factors that Discourage FFA and LDE Participation

Theme	Example quotes
Fit	<p>“A few of my closest friends I told to join and they’re like no, that’s so weird I’m not going to farm. I don’t want to join” (P2: Jessica).</p> <p>“People say it’s not really their thing” (P4: Emily).</p>
Time	<p>“I think most people don’t do it because they’re busy” (P3: Courtney).</p> <p>“They thought it was too much work” (P1: Allie).</p>
Public speaking	<p>“They’re afraid they will fail at speaking” (P4: Emily).</p> <p>“They’re scared to speak in front of people” (P3: Courtney).</p>
Practicing as an individual	<p>“You’re just kind of on your own [when practicing]” (P3: Courtney).</p> <p>“I think it’s harder to do LDEs because you don’t have anyone keeping you accountable and keeping you going” (P2: Jessica).</p>

Fit

Consensus (n = 4) was reached that students decline an invitation to join the FFA because they don’t see it as a good fit for them (See Appendix I). All participants used the

word “fit” when describing reasons their friends didn’t join. Courtney defined fit as “people don’t see themselves as agriculture kids because they don’t know much about it and they don’t like stuff like that.” Jessica said, “Yeah, it’s like we’re a big clique. But we’re a clique that involves everyone.” Allie, Courtney, and Emily nodded their heads in agreement.

Emily spoke up next. She said, “They’re like it’s just ag and 4-H. It’s not really my thing. But I think there’s a lot more than they think there is.” Courtney said, “Yeah that’s why I put it off for two years, I thought it wasn’t a good fit for me. But when my advisor told me to do it, I’m glad she did.” The participants laughed in unison. Jessica said, “Yeah, I think you just have to convince them it’s a good fit for everyone. There’s a place or an event for everyone.” Allie replied “Absolutely.”

Time

The discussion about time was brief. Jessica started the conversation by saying her friends thought LDEs were too much work. Courtney said

That’s why people wouldn’t want to do it. They’re busy and don’t feel like they’re a good fit. But I’ve actually been so much busier this year and I’m so glad I joined. I’m motivated by stress. (P3: Courtney).

Allie said, “People would rather do teams because they feel like they don’t have to do as much.” Jessica and Emily nodded in agreement.

Public Speaking

Consensus (n = 4) was reached that fear of public speaking is a discouraging factor to LDE participation (see Appendix I). Allie said, “Friends tell me that they won’t do it [LDEs] because it’s overwhelming and scary.” All participants nodded and said “Yeah.” Emily said, “Yeah it’s definitely part of it. They’re like oh, I don’t want to actually talk to people or

whatever.” Courtney said, “But that’s why I wanted to do it [Employment Skills] because I get really flustered in front of the class and I wanted to get better at communicating.”

Practicing as an Individual

All participants (n = 4) agreed that LDEs are challenging because they have more individual elements than other events. The participants were very passionate about this theme. Their body language was animated, and they made more eye contact with each other than the lead researcher.

Jessica said, “I definitely think it’s harder with LDEs because with CDEs you have a team holding you accountable.” All participants nodded their heads in agreement. Courtney said, “yeah, I think they’re a lot harder because it’s like you’re the only reason you’re doing it. No one else can make you do it.” Allie said, “I agree with that. It’s like you’re kind of on your own.”

Jessica said, “You don’t have that motivation because your friends aren’t on the team to help encourage you to get involved.” Courtney very quickly replied, “Yeah you get more stressed. I feel like because you’re worried about letting yourself down instead of letting your team down.” The other participants verbally agreed with Courtney.

RQ 3: What motivates students to practice for competitive events?

FG Q6: What kept you motivated while preparing for this event [Employment Skills]?

Analysis of the data collected from this focus group question yielded two emergent themes: 1) developing career skills; 2) stress as a motivator. Examples of the participants’ motives are listed in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8*Motivational Factors to LDE Participation and Preparation*

Theme	Example quotes
Developing career skills	<p>“I learned the skills I’ll need to get a job” (P3: Courtney).</p> <p>“I learned a lot more about how to be professional and personable” (P1: Allie).</p>
Stress as a motivator	<p>“Stress keeps me motivated...I’m going to feel so accomplished” (P3: Courtney).</p>

Developing Career Skills

The participants spoke about becoming better communicators. Allie, Jessica, and Courtney all used the words professional and personable when talking about communication. Jessica said, “I learned how to be personable but also professional. I always thought that they were separate, but I learned how to find that in between to be both at the same time.” Courtney said, “I learned a lot more about how to present myself. It was just good practice.” The other participants nodded in agreement.

Courtney continued saying “I will use my knowledge of presenting myself to get a job. I’m 16 I know I’m going to be getting a job soon. I did this to help me get a job.” The researcher asked for a hand count of those who had experienced a real job interview. Allie raised her hand. She spoke about her interview being easier because of what she learned from the Employment Skills LDE. Allie said, “I was just so much more confident. It was more conversational and not as scary.” Emily said, “Yeah, because you’re not being judged.” All the participants laughed.

Stress as a Motivator

Consensus (n = 4) was reached that stress is motivating. Courtney said, “Stress keeps me motivated. I’m terrified but I’m like, if I get this done, I’m going to feel so accomplished.” All participants nodded their heads and agreed verbally. Emily said, “Yeah, I think that’s my thing too.”

Results by Subjective Task Values

Expectancy value theory (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) framed this study. Expectancy value theory categorizes motivation into four task values: 1) attainment; 2) utility; 3) cost; and 4) intrinsic value (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). Self-efficacy theory defines self-efficacy as an individual’s confidence in their ability to solve a problem or accomplish a task (Bandura, 1997).

Attainment Value

Attainment value is defined as “the personal importance of doing well on a task” (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002, p.120). The instrument for assessing youth motivation to participate in CDEs by Knobloch et al. (2016) includes three items for attainment: 1) my friends were participating; 2) my parents/guardians wanted me to participate; 3) my coach wanted me to be on the team. These items represent if youth value the outcome expectations of being with friends and responding to the expectations of their parents and their coach (Knobloch et al., 2016).

Results from this study yielded similar items for attainment. The participants valued being with their peers, following the example set by their family members, and granting their advisors' wishes. Suggested items of attainment yielded from this study are included in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9*Suggested Items for Attainment Value*

Attainment Value	Example quotes
A chapter officer wanted me to participate	“When you have a chapter officer come up to you...you’re more inclined to listen” (P1: Allie).
The event was related to a class assignment	“We have a pretty good turnout for speaking events because we have to do the FFA Creed” (P4: Emily).
Prior experience related to the event gave me the confidence to participate	“Last year we did two job interviews in FHLA so I thought I’ve done that before maybe it can help me [in Employment Skills]” (P2: Jessica). “In 4-H we had to do the record books and interviews every year. So, it was natural to transition from 4-H to the FFA” (P2: Jessica).
I wanted to earn more medals/trophies than my siblings	“When I walked in, I told my ag teacher that I had to win more medals than my siblings. It became goals we set” (P2: Jessica).
I wanted to be recognized for my work on a stage	“I saw kids going up on stage to get a plaque and a pin...I wanted to do that too” (P1: Allie).

Utility Value

Utility value is defined as “how a task relates to current and future goals” (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002, p.120). The instrument for assessing youth motivation to participate in CDEs by Knobloch et al. (2016) includes four items for utility: 1) wanting to learn something new; 2) enjoying competition; 3) wanting to be more competitive for scholarships/awards; 4) wanting to develop career skills. These items represent the youth’s value of tasks that would help them reach future goals, build career skills, and earn awards for their efforts (Knobloch et al., 2016).

The results of this study yielded similar responses. The participants enjoyed competing against others; they wanted to be recognized for their accomplishments; and they wanted to develop career-related skills. Suggestions for items of utility value are shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

Suggested Items for Utility Value

Utility Value	Example quotes
I wanted to learn how to advocate for myself	<p>“You definitely learn how to advocate for yourself” (P1: Allie).</p> <p>“You learn how to defend yourself when you’re talking to people. Like you’re trying to explain why you’re right with facts” (P3: Courtney).</p>
I participated in this event to help me be more competitive in other events	<p>“I took a year off to do another event and I feel like what I had to do in this one [Employment Skills] helped me do better” (P2: Jessica).</p>
I wanted to improve my resume	<p>“I got the skills I need to get a job” (P3: Courtney).</p>

Cost Value

Cost value is defined as “the negative aspects of engaging in the task” (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002, p.120). The instrument for assessing youth motivation to participate in CDEs by Knobloch et al. (2016) includes three items for cost value: 1) willingness to study alone; 2) willingness to study with a team; and 3) willingness to practice on a Saturday. These items represent the youth’s value of devoting practice time outside of regular class hours (Knobloch et al., 2016).

The participants felt that LDEs required more effort because they had to study alone rather than study with a team. Suggested items of cost value are listed in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11*Suggested Items for Cost Value*

Cost Value	Example quotes
I was willing to willing to hold myself accountable	“I definitely think it’s harder with LDEs because with CDEs you have a team holding you accountable” (P2: Jessica).
I was willing to try something new for the good of my chapter	“My chapter cares and wants everyone to succeed. They’re so supportive” (P1: Allie).
I was willing to keep myself motivated	“What kept me motivated was the appreciation I have for where I’ve gotten so far” (P3: Courtney). “I’m the only one who can pick myself up when I’m down because I don’t have a team to be there for me” (P3: Courtney).
I tend to evaluate and reevaluate my abilities	“I know I did my best and I’m proud of myself, but there’s always more that can be done” (P1: Allie).
I tend to overestimate the amount of work I must put in	“It wasn’t until I saw my hard work pay off that I was truly confident in myself. I didn’t know how much time this thing was going to take” (P1: Allie).

Intrinsic Value

Intrinsic value is defined as “the enjoyment the individual gets from performing the activity, or the subjective interest the individual has in the subject” (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002, p. 120). The instrument for assessing youth motivation to participate in CDEs by Knobloch et al. (2016) includes six items for intrinsic value. All items are context specific to Indiana’s 12 state-level CDEs. The items represented the youth’s interest in learning, working, and pursuing a career in the context related to the CDE (Knobloch et al., 2016). For example, the fourth item for intrinsic value is “I am interested in a career in [context].”

The interview protocol for this study did not include context-specific questions for intrinsic value. The researcher sought to obtain general items for intrinsic value using Eccles

and Wigfield's (2002) definition of intrinsic value. Suggested items for intrinsic value are included in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

Suggested Items for Intrinsic Value

Intrinsic Value	Example quotes
I wanted to find a new passion	"High school is about finding yourself and then finding your passions" (P1: Allie).
I wanted to get out of my comfort zone	"I'm not very good at presenting in front of people but I'm good at communicating, so I thought why not try Employment Skills to get better at speaking" (P3: Courtney).
I wanted to do something that I would get recognized for without the help of team members	"I've practiced a lot to make myself proud" (P3: Courtney).
I wanted to be successful in the same event my sibling participated in	"I wanted to make it to state in the same event my sister did" (P4: Emily).
I wanted to make my chapter proud	"Everyone is supportive, and they helped me do my best. I want to make them proud" (P2: Jessica).
I wanted to make my advisor proud	"The first person I talked to after the contest were my advisors. It's so much fun seeing a smile on their face" (P2: Jessica).

Self-Efficacy

The instrument for assessing youth motivation to participate in CDEs by Knobloch et al. (2016) includes eight items for self-efficacy. All items are context specific to Indiana's 12 state-level CDEs. The items represent a youth's ability to perform tasks related to the context of the CDE (Knobloch et al., 2016). For example, the fourth item for self-efficacy is "I am confident in my ability to identify [context]."

The interview protocol for this study did not include context-specific questions for self-efficacy. The researcher sought to obtain general items for self-efficacy using Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as an individual's confidence in their ability to solve a problem or accomplish a task. Suggested items for self-efficacy are listed in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

Suggested Items for Self-Efficacy

Self-Efficacy	Example quotes
I believe I will be competitive against others	"I kind of put myself in the group with everyone else at the same level" (P4: Emily).
I am confident I will achieve the goals I set for myself	"I am extremely proud of myself. I worked hard and have accomplished so many of the goals I have worked towards" (P1: Allie).
I am confident I will do well because I put the time in to win	"It wasn't until I won districts that I was like, wow, now I like actually have to work for this" (P1: Allie).
I will not be disappointed in myself if I do not win	"I am very proud because I did my absolute best and I didn't stress over anything that I couldn't control" (P3: Courtney).
I am confident I will use the skills I gained in my future endeavors	"I'm 16. I know I'm going to be getting a job soon. I did this to help me get a job" (P3: Courtney).
I am confident that the skills I gained from this event will make me more competitive in other LDEs and/or CDEs	"I took a year off to do another event and I feel like what I had to do in this one [Employment Skills] helped me do better" (P2: Jessica).

Summary

Participant characteristics and chapter descriptions are provided in this chapter. Data collected from this focus group is presented in nine themes arranged by research question. Suggested items for attainment, utility, cost, intrinsic value, and self-efficacy, in addition to the instrument used by Knobloch et al. (2016) for assessing youth motivation to participate in CDEs, are also included.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Motivation helps youth choose activities in which they participate or continue participating in (Knobloch et al., 2016). While competition can lead to development of positive life skills it can also lead to a hostile or aggressive environment, embarrassment, and fatigue (Knobloch et al., 2016). If youth do not see experiences as beneficial in reaching goals or connecting with peers, they may stop participating in the activities (Lundry et al., 2015; Knobloch et al., 2016).

Expectancy value motivation addresses an individual's belief in their ability to do a task based on expectancies and task values (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Knobloch et al. (2016) initiated an effort to develop and validate a survey instrument to more reliably assess students' motivations to participate in Career Development Events. CDE participants (n = 419) identified most with cost and utility motivation, and self-efficacy was the most contributing factor to youth motivation (Knobloch et al., 2016).

The motivational factors that encourage and discourage student motivation to participate in the FFA and LDEs was outlined in Chapter 4. Items of attainment, cost, utility, intrinsic, and self-efficacy values, in addition to the instrument used by Knobloch et al. (2016) for assessing motivation to participate in CDEs. In this chapter, conclusions and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Conclusions

The findings from this study support expectancy value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997). The participants valued doing well in the competition (attainment value); they chose an event that related to their personal and future goals (utility value); they participated regardless of the negative aspects of the event (cost

value); they genuinely enjoyed competing in the event (intrinsic value); and they were confident in their ability to perform well (self-efficacy). Although consensus ($n = 4$) was reached on multiple factors that encourage and discourage participation in LDEs, three factors stood out and are worthy of summarizing in detail. Caution should be used when interpreting these results. While the results are valuable to future research on LDE motivation, they are not generalizable to populations of students outside of the sample ($n = 4$) in this study.

Conclusion 1: FFA Members and Advisors Influence Student Motivation to Join the FFA

A consensus ($n = 4$) was reached that the advisor plays a major role in motivating students to participate in the FFA. This finding supports the studies by Talbert and Balschweid (2004) and Jones (2003); members joined the FFA because of their advisor's influence. One participant was approached by her advisor after she did well on an assignment in class. Two of the participants' advisors pressured them to join; they told them to do it, and they would not take no for an answer. The participants' emotional feelings towards their advisors' approaches were inconclusive; they did not share how they felt when their advisors made them join the FFA.

The participants spoke about their advisors in a positive light for the duration of the focus group. Only two negative comments were made that were quickly followed by something positive. The participants felt that their advisors could be overbearing and disingenuous. They felt that their teachers would harp about the FFA and cause their students to lose interest. This finding aligns with the findings from Talbert and Balschweid's 2004 study where a small percentage of participants reported their agriculture teacher being a barrier to participation.

The participants' negative comments were followed by an idea that students are more motivated to join the FFA when they are invited by another member. This finding supports the findings by Phelps et al. (2012) that students attributed participation in the FFA to encouragement from friends. Consensus (n = 4) was reached that being approached by an FFA member, or a chapter officer, is more meaningful than being approached by the advisor. However, two participants felt that it is even more effective when a member and advisor work together to motivate students to join.

The instrument for assessing youth motivation to participate in CDEs by Knobloch et al. (2016) includes three items of attainment that represent if youth value the outcome expectations of being with friends and responding to the expectations of their parents and their coach. The results of this study yielded similar items for attainment. The participants valued being with their peers, creating a bond with their advisor(s), and competing against their siblings. Other suggested items of attainment yielded from this study include: 1) a chapter officer wanted me to participate; 2) the event was related to a class assignment; 3) prior experience, related to the event gave me the confidence to participate; 4) I wanted to earn more medals/trophies than my siblings; 5) and I wanted to be recognized for my work on a stage.

In conclusion, the participants were motivated to join the FFA and try competitive events because of their advisors, peers, and siblings. The participants (n = 4) valued doing well in the competition because they wanted to make their advisors and chapter members proud; find new passions; try something outside of their comfort zones; and be successful in the same events as their siblings. Although they felt more valued when they were approached by someone their own age, they also joined because of their advisors' influence. These

findings support the instrument by Knobloch et al. (2016) for assessing student participation in CDEs.

Conclusion 2: Students Participate in LDEs to Prepare for Careers

Croom et al. (2009) conducted a study to determine what motivates students to participate in national CDEs and the factors related to their participation in CDEs. The items were (1) related to a career choice; (2) leadership development; (3) scholarship awards; (4) travel/fun; (5) competition. The item that most influenced the members' decision to participate was the CDE relating to their career choice. The results of this study yielded a similar response.

The students (n = 4) were motivated to participate in the Employment Skills LDE because they wanted to gain the experience necessary to succeed in a real job interview. They spoke about the event as "good solid practice" (P1: Allie). Allie put her three years of experience competing in Employment Skills to use; she said her real job interview was easier than the competition. The specific skills the participant employed during her interview were not discussed.

The participants (n = 4) agreed that LDEs help students learn to become better communicators. Jessica said, "I learned how to be personable, but also professional. I always thought that they were separate, but I learned how to find that in between to be both at the same time." Courtney said, "I will use my knowledge of presenting myself to get a job. I'm 16 I know I'm going to be getting a job soon. I did this to help me get a job." These comments support the findings by Talbert and Balschweid (2006) that "from an occupational perspective, student involvement in career preparation activities is theorized to lead to more informed, more appropriate career selections" (p. 68).

The instrument for assessing youth motivation to participate in CDEs by Knobloch et al. (2016) includes four items for utility that represent youth's value of tasks that would help them reach future goals, build career skills, and earn awards for their efforts. The results of this study yielded similar items of utility value. The students were motivated to participate in the Employment Skills LDE because they wanted to be successful in their future job interviews and they wanted to earn recognition for themselves, their advisor, and their chapter. Additional items we recommend for utility that emerged from this study are: 1) I wanted to learn how to advocate for myself; 2) I participated in this event to help me be more competitive in other events; 3) I wanted to improve my resume.

It should be noted that the students did not discuss their future endeavors. Three of the four students were seniors; they did not share how the FFA prepared them for their next steps. The remaining student was a junior; she did not discuss her future plans in the FFA or if she plans to participate in another LDE.

In conclusion, the participants chose to participate in the Employment Skills LDE for a variety of reasons, but one that they all agreed on was gaining interview experience through real-world scenarios. Three of the four participants competed in the event for multiple years; they explained they wanted more practice, but they also felt they could be more competitive with experience. All of the participants wanted to compete in an event they could own; they wanted recognition for something they did without the help of team members. In a way, it was like they were simulating the outcome of a real job interview; they wanted to be recognized for their own efforts and accomplishments without the help of others.

Conclusion 3: The Lack of Team Members May Discourage LDE Participation

Cook and Artino (2016) define expectancy-value motivation as a function of the expectation of success and perceived value. The expectation of success is the “degree to which individuals believe they will be successful if they try” (Cook & Artino, 2016, p. 1000). If an individual finds a task to be useful, enjoyable, or beneficial to themselves, they have a higher perceived importance (Cook & Artino, 2016, p. 999).

The participants in this study agreed that some LDEs are uniquely challenging because they do not involve teamwork. Jessica said, “You don’t have that motivation because your friends aren’t on the team to help encourage you to get involved.” Courtney said, “You get more stressed. I feel like because you’re worried about letting yourself down instead of letting your team down.” Regardless of this notion, Courtney still chose to participate in the Employment Skills LDE. This notion may suggest that students who prefer working alone, and want to be recognized for their own efforts, choose to participate in individual rather than team LDEs.

The instrument for assessing youth motivation to participate in CDEs by Knobloch et al. (2016) includes three cost-value items that represent if students are willing to engage in a task regardless of its negative aspects. The items include: 1) willing to study alone; 2) willing to study with a team; 3) willing to come on a Saturday. The results of this study yielded a similar item of cost value. The students were, in fact, willing to study alone. Other suggested items for cost value that emerged from this study include: 1) I was willing to hold myself accountable; 2) I was willing to try something new for the good of my chapter; 3) I was willing to keep myself motivated; 4) I tend to underestimate myself; and 5) I tend to overestimate the amount of work I must put in.

It should be noted that the participants did not discuss the amount of time they spent preparing or the methods they used to practice for the competition. Information about the number of additional CDEs or LDEs the participants had competed in was not collected. It is unknown if the participants can compare their experience in the Employment Skills LDE to other individual or team events.

Motivational outcomes of self-efficacy are choice of activities, effort, persistence, and achievement (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). A strong sense of efficacy enhances personal well-being and drives motivation (Cook & Artino, 2016). Low self-efficacy leads to pessimistic thoughts about accomplishing difficult tasks (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). Jessica said, "I think it's harder to do LDEs because you don't have anyone keeping you going." This notion suggests that the participants in this study had a high sense of self-efficacy; they were willing to study alone and keep themselves motivated.

In conclusion, the participants chose to participate in the Employment Skills LDE regardless of its negative aspects. They were confident in their ability to study alone and were able to hold themselves accountable for their actions. Emily said, "I'm the only one who can pick myself up when I'm down because I don't have a team to be there for me." The other participants agreed with Emily's comment. This suggests that students who choose to participate in LDEs have a high sense of self-efficacy and a greater expectation of success and perceived value.

Conclusion 4: LDE Competitors Value Being Recognized for their Efforts

People are often moved by external factors, such as reward systems, grades, evaluations, or opinions they fear others might have of them (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Yet, they are just as motivated by internal factors such as interests, curiosity, care, or internal values

(Ryan & Deci, 2000). The participants in this study sought to be recognized for their efforts. Three of the four participants were highly motivated by extrinsic rewards. One participant was highly intrinsically motivated.

Two participants wanted to be recognized on stage, and two participants wanted to win more medals than their siblings. Jessica said, “I had to get more medals than my siblings.” One participant wanted to recognize herself for her accomplishments. She said, “What kept me motivated was the appreciation for where I’ve gotten so far...I wanted to make myself proud.” This finding supports the study by Blakely et al. (1993) that the primary reason FFA members participated in contests was awards and the enjoyment of winning and greater feelings of self-esteem.

Six items for intrinsic value emerged from this study: 1) I wanted to find a new passion; 2) I wanted to get out of my comfort zone; 3) I wanted to do something that I would recognize for without the help of team members; 4) I wanted to be successful in the same event my sibling participated in; 5) I wanted to make my chapter proud; and 6) I wanted to make my advisor proud. The participants identified three extrinsic values: 1) I wanted to get on stage; 2) I wanted to win more medals than my siblings; and 3) I wanted to get a job.

In conclusion, the participants were intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to participate in the Employment Skills LDE. They chose to participate in an event that did not involve teamwork. This suggests that they sought to be recognized for their own efforts. While winning a medal or trophy was the goal for three of the four participants, one participant had a goal to walk away knowing she did her best. It should be noted that the participants who competed in the event for multiple years did not discuss if their goals changed over the years.

Recommendations for Research

The findings from this study are the result of one focus group with students who competed in the same LDE. The students were all female. One student identified as Hispanic or Latino. Three students had participated in the FFA for more than three years, and one student was a first-year FFA member. The following are recommendations for future research:

1. Conduct additional focus groups or semi-structured interviews with students participating in LDEs. This study was limited to a small population of students; the researcher could not control the participants' genders, ethnicities, grade levels, or years of FFA membership. Research has shown that FFA membership may be nearly equal in male and female students, but females are participating in FFA CDEs/LDEs at a larger rate (Smith & Thapa, 2022). A larger percentage of members identify as White or Not Latino (Lawrence et al., 2013). Future studies should include male and female students; students of different ethnicities; students in every grade level; and students in every year of FFA membership. Results could help describe students' characteristics in relation to their motivation to participate in CDEs and LDEs.

2. Analyze the similarities and differences in youth motivation across different states and regions. This study was limited to a population of students competing in the Idaho State Employment Skills LDE. Blakely et al. (1993) found that the primary reason FFA members participated in contests was awards and the enjoyment of winning and greater feelings of self-esteem. Teachers in a study by Russell et al. (2009) reported that their students participated in CDEs based on the rewards they would receive at the conclusion of the event, either intrinsic or extrinsic. Analyzing the specific nature of specific CDEs/LDEs (Knobloch

et al., 2016; Lancaster et al., 2013) or extrinsic rewards offered by chapters, districts, and states (Ryan & Deci, 2000) may help explain if motivation is different because of the influence advisors or because of award systems. Results may help researchers better understand why students are motivated to participate in certain LDEs in different regions of the National FFA Association.

3. Pilot an instrument that measures student motivation to participate in LDEs from the lens of expectancy value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997). This qualitative study used questions that yielded items of attainment, cost, utility, intrinsic value, and self-efficacy that can be used to develop an instrument for assessing student motivation to participate in LDEs. The findings of this study can be combined with the instrument used by Knobloch et al. (2016) to assess CDE motivation. A new instrument, with non-context specific questions, may be useful to identify differences in youth motivation related to specific LDE competitions.

4. Conduct a mixed-methods study that involves LDE team and LDE individuals to describe and compare the motivation of students who prefer teamwork versus individual work. The participants in this study agreed that some LDEs are difficult because they do not involve teamwork. Findings also suggested that some students in fact thrive in events that do not involve others. Motivational outcomes of self-efficacy are choice of activities, effort, persistence, and achievement (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). A strong sense of efficacy enhances personal well-being and drives motivation (Cook & Artino, 2016). Low self-efficacy leads to pessimistic thoughts about accomplishing difficult tasks (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). Jessica said, "I think it's harder to do LDEs because you don't have anyone keeping you going." Further research could help describe the efficacy to individuals

who find tasks enjoyable because of working with friends versus the efficacy of individuals who prefer working alone.

5. Conduct a mixed-methods study that compares student motivation to participate in LDEs to their performance outcomes. Croom et al. (2009) conducted a study that determined what motivates students to participate in national CDEs. The item that most influenced the members' decision to participate was the CDE relating to their career choice. The item that least influenced the members' decision to participate was the thrill of competition. Jones (2013) surveyed students (n = 84) who had participated in at least one CDE in the Southeast region of North Carolina; students indicated the most agreement with the statements related to intrinsic values. Future research could compare intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to performance scores and placings. Findings may help describe if students who are more motivated by intrinsic values perform better or worse than students who are more motivated by extrinsic values.

Recommendations for Practice

Recommendations for advisors, pre-service teachers, teacher-educators, and high school students are included in this section.

For Practicing Advisors

1. FFA advisors should develop learning objectives for CDEs and LDEs with their students. Having information on students' personal expectancies and values can help advisors and coaches tailor their instruction based on motivation deficits. Although students may feel motivated and efficacious toward their event, lower performance may be an indication of a lack of support (Jones, 2013). The participants in this study agreed that individual LDEs, such as Employment Skills, may be more challenging because they lack the element of

teamwork. Prior to chapter, district, and state events, FFA advisors should develop situations that are sources of self-efficacy. Knobloch et al. (2016) suggested, “One might expect that self-efficacy would be higher as youth advance to a higher level of competition because of mastery experiences” (p. 25). This could look like practice nights with other LDE competitors, chapter and district workshops, invitational contests, and the use of real examples with industry professionals. These opportunities would allow students to practice and master the skills related to their events.

2. FFA advisors should incorporate LDE objectives into the classroom curriculum. A student in this study was motivated to participate in LDEs because she was required to give the FFA Creed in her Intro to Agriculture class. LDE participation should motivate and support learning that takes place in the classroom (Blakely et al., 1993; Croom & Flowers, 2001a; Talbert et al., 2014). For example, if a teacher were to remark on how well a student is doing in class (behavior), this remark may validate their perception of learning (personal) and motivate them to continue (Schunk & Usher, 2020). Often, performance in a CDE/LDE can be a reflection of the curriculum instruction that students are receiving (Edwards & Booth, 2001). FFA advisors should set high standards and expectations that are upheld by CDE/LDE participants (Russell et al., 2009; Kosovich et al., 2015).

3. It would be advantageous to evaluate the recognition given to FFA members for their participation in LDEs. The results of this study suggest that students who participate in LDEs are highly motivated by intrinsic value and self-efficacy. Performance accomplishments are the most reliable source that people use to assess their self-efficacy (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Performing well enhances continuous learning (Schunk & Usher, 2020). Self-evaluation of goals is another source people use to measure their self-

efficacy (Bandura, 1977). While plaques and pins are certainly positive symbols of achievement, self-evaluation of goals can be equally positive. Motivation to participate in LDEs may improve through the interplay between extrinsic and intrinsic motives.

For Pre-Service Teachers and Teacher Educators

Pre-service teachers should help certified agriculture teachers and FFA staff members facilitate LDE and CDE events. In agricultural education programs, students are challenged by real-life tests of skills used to prepare them for careers in agriculture, science, leadership, and business (Lundry et al., 2015). Pre-service teachers should assist practicing teachers in conducting CDE and LDE competitions. They can test their knowledge and skills in actual scenarios, much like high school students do as FFA members. The experience may help pre-service teachers develop higher expectations of themselves and their future students. Teacher educators should help facilitate these experiences for pre-service teachers.

For High School Students

1. The students in this study ($n = 4$) used their experience in the Employment Skills LDE to help them apply for jobs. They walked away with ready-to-use resumes, cover letters, applications, and interview experience. Students should consider participating in LDEs, so they have the knowledge, skills, experience, and materials they will need when they are ready to apply for jobs.

2. The participants in this study agreed that it feels more meaningful to be invited to join the FFA when they are approached by other members or chapter officers. Students should consider seeking out and complimenting their classmates on their skills, talents, and interests to help their chapter grow.

Discussion

The FFA advisor is the individual with the greatest influence over a student's decision to participate in career and leadership development events. While students' friends and family members play some role in whether or not a student chooses to participate in FFA events, the advisor is most often the person who encourages a student to take the leap. Students believed that their advisor plays a role in their success and they want to make their advisor proud.

Advisors should acknowledge their students' efforts and performance. Students participating in LDEs may feel like they're on their own at times, so advisors should be there for them when they are feeling alone. Students should be recognized for the work they are doing before; cheered on during; and praised for their performance after they compete.

The experience students gain by participating in LDEs can help them get jobs. Events like Employment Skills help students enter the job market with ready to use application materials. Advisors should help their students seek jobs in agriculture; these jobs can double as students' Supervised Agricultural Experiences.

Students who participate in LDEs may feel more confident to participate in CDEs. The participants spoke about participating in the Employment Skills LDE so they could be more competitive in CDEs. CDE and LDE objectives should be integrated into the classroom curriculum. Having students recite the FFA Creed is a good place to start, but advisors can be should incorporate more LDE objectives into classroom activities and assignments.

The participants in this study agreed that being approached by an FFA member is more meaningful than being approached by an advisor. Teachers should encourage their officer teams to recognize the skills of other students in their chapters. Officers and

upperclassmen should learn how to have more directed conversations with new members. Older members can help younger students align their interests, skills, and talents with the objectives of different CDEs and LDEs. Older students, who have experience in LDEs, can mentor younger students who are just getting started.

Summary

We found that students are motivated by tasks that have personal importance, relate to their current and future goals, and are pleasurable. While some students are motivated to earn plaques or pins, others work to earn a sense of accomplishment. We suggest that students who choose to participate in LDEs have a high sense of self-efficacy and a greater expectation of success and perceived value. Additional qualitative studies should be conducted to broaden our understanding of what motivates students to participate in LDEs. Researchers could use the results of this study to develop an instrument that assesses LDE motivation through the lens of expectancy value theory (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997).

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Appendix A: Knobloch's (2016) Instrument to Assess Youth Motivation to Participate in Career Development Events

<i>Items</i>	<i>Factor Loading</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
<i>Attainment (3 items)</i>		
AT_1: My friends were participating	.64	42%
AT_2: My parents/guardians wanted me to participate	.49	40%
AT_3: My coach encouraged me to be on the team	.66	51%
<i>Cost & Utility Value (7 items)</i>		
C_1: I was willing to take time to study alone	.59	56%
C_2: I was willing to take time to study with team	.55	75%
C_3: I was willing to come on a Saturday	.46	65%
UT_2: Want to learn something new	.72	75%
UT_3: Enjoy competition	.58	73%
UT_4: Want to be more competitive for scholarships/awards	.61	70%
UT_5: Want to develop career skills	.61	73%
<i>Intrinsic Value (6 items)</i>		
IN_1: Interested in learning about [context]	.68	62%
IN_3: I like [context]	.52	67%
IN_4: Interested in a career in [context]	.73	35%
IN_7: I am interested in working in [context]2	.44	26%
IN_8: I am interested in working in [context]3	.64	38%
IN_9: I am interested in [context] as a lifelong hobby	.69	57%
<i>Self-Efficacy (8 items)</i>		
SE_1: I am confident in my ability to answer general questions about [context]	.66	54%
SE_2: I am confident in my ability to answer questions about [context] anatomy/characteristics	.70	43%
SE_3: I am confident in my ability to answer questions about [context] 1	.67	42%
SE_4: I am confident in my ability to answer questions about [context] 2	.63	37%
SE_5: I am confident in my ability to identify [context] 1	.59	58%
SE_6: I am confident in my ability to identify [context] 2	.71	57%
SE_7: I am confident in my ability to choose the most [context]1	.74	45%
SE_8: I am confident in my ability to choose the most [context]2	.68	46%

Note: Frequencies represent: 4 = "Quite a Lot" & 5 = "A Great Deal."

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

DESCRIBING STUDENT MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT EVENTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Amber Bucknell

University of Idaho

Name of the Study	Describing Student Motivation to Participate in Leadership Development Events: A Qualitative Study
Purpose & Research Questions	<p>This research study describes students' motivational approaches to participating in Leadership Development Events. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What factors encourage students to participate in LDEs? 2. What factors discourage students from participating in LDEs? 3. What motivates students to practice for LDEs?
Participants	Idaho FFA State Employment Skills LDE competitors (n = 4).
Recruitment Procedure & Incentive	<p>The researcher will send an invitation to the participants' advisors when the study is approved. The invitation will include an introduction of the researcher; the purpose of the research; the date, time, and location; and a list of the incentives for the participants.</p> <p>The researcher will ask the Employment Skills LDE superintendent for five minutes of time at the event orientation to invite the students to the focus group. The researcher will text a reminder to the participants' advisor(s) one hour prior to the focus group. The participants will be given a drink and pizza during the focus group, and an ice cream sandwich afterward. Participants will receive an insulated water bottle after the interview.</p>

Date, Time & Location:	<p>Date: Friday, April 7th, 2023</p> <p>Students' event orientation: 12:30 pm</p> <p>Students' event: 1:30 pm</p> <p>Text reminder to advisors: 5:30 pm</p> <p>Order pizzas: 5:45- 6:00 pm</p> <p>Focus group interview: 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm</p> <p>Debrief 7:30 pm - 7:45 pm</p> <p>Location: College of Southern Idaho Classroom: TBD</p>
Resources Needed:	<p>Invitations for participants</p> <p>A classroom that offers roundtable-style seating</p> <p>Computer</p> <p>ZOOM account</p> <p>Pre-interview surveys (10)</p> <p>Post-interview surveys (10)</p> <p>Pencils</p> <p>Pizzas (3)</p> <p>Ice Cream Sandwiches</p> <p>Drinks (requested by the students)</p> <p>Amazon gift cards - \$15 (10)</p> <p>Stickers (10)</p> <p>Water bottles (10)</p> <p>Thank you cards (10)</p> <p>Notepads for researchers</p>
Timeline	<p>Contact event superintendent: 2 weeks prior to the event.</p> <p>Email advisors: 3-4 weeks prior to the event</p> <p>Speak to participants during event orientation: 12:30 pm</p> <p>Text reminders to advisors 5:30 pm</p> <p>Set up the classroom: 5:45 – 6:00 pm</p> <p>Meet with the research team: 6:00 – 6:30 pm</p> <p>Greet participants and eat pizza: 6:30 pm</p>

	Dismiss participants and pass out ice cream sandwiches: 7:30 pm Debrief with the research team: 7:30 – 8:00 pm
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STEP 1: INTRODUCTION

Greet participants as they walk in the door. Hand them a pre-interview survey, direct them to get some pizza, and ask them what they did between the event and the time they arrived. Tell students they can choose their seats. Give the students a five-minute warning before starting the interview.

Thanks for joining us to talk to us about your experience in the FFA and the employment skills event. My name is Amber Bucknell, and with me is Gavin. Gavin and I are students at the University of Idaho. I am working on my master's degree in agricultural education. When I was teaching agriculture, I was always curious about why my students chose to participate in CDEs and LDEs but also why students were not interested, so I wanted to learn more about what motivates students or discourages students from participating. Gavin is here to help me stay organized.

You are all here today because you are an elite group of awesome FFA members. Competing in Employment Skills at the state level is a huge accomplishment, and you should all be really proud of yourselves! There is a lot of knowledge and talent in this room, and I would love to learn more about what motivated you to participate in Employment Skills, how you stayed motivated while you were preparing for this event, and what you expected to get out of your experience.

Our goal tonight is to share our experiences with one another like we're at a big family dinner. There are no wrong answers, and what you have to say will not impact your scores because you have already competed! Your personal information will not be connected to the results of this conversation. We would love to hear all sides of your experience; the good, the bad, the awesome, the frustrating. Our hope is that what we share with one another will help teachers have better conversations with their students

about why they should participate in the FFA and what makes Career and Leadership Development events worth students' time.

Before we get to the pizza and fun, you've probably noticed we are recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People say helpful things in these discussions, and we can't write fast enough to get them all down.

What questions can I answer before we begin?

STEP 2: INTERVIEW (45 minutes maximum)

Question 1	Justification
<p>Let's find out more about each other by going around the room.</p> <p>Please share your name, and number, and then tell us what you like the most about being an FFA member.</p>	<p>Krueger (2002) suggests conveying a sense of relaxed informality. The environment should be comfortable. Participants should be able to see each other.</p> <p>Students will not be asked to share where they're from; students may not feel as comfortable sharing their ideas if they are in the same room as a rival FFA member.</p>
<p>No probing questions keep this short and simple!</p>	
Question 2	Justification
<p>Think back to the time you decided to participate in the FFA. What or who influenced you to join? What were you most looking forward to?</p>	<p>This question addresses research question 1: what factors encourage students to participate in LDEs?</p> <p>This question should yield answers related to Eccles & Wigfield's (2002) attainment values. Attainment is defined as the personal importance of doing well on a task and how it relates to a person's self-identity (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).</p>

	Knobloch et al. (2016) asked students if they participated because their friends were doing it, their parents/guardians wanted them to, or their coach encouraged them to join. The answers to this question may yield similar statements.
Probing questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you choose the FFA over other activities in your school? • What were the costs for you competing – did you have to give up anything? 	
Question 3	Justification
If you invited a friend to participate in FFA contests, what would you say in the invitation?	<p>This question addresses research question 1: what factors encourage students to participate in LDEs?</p> <p>This question should yield answers related to Eccles & Wigfield's (2002) utility values. Utility is defined as how a task relates to a person's future goals such as career goals (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).</p>
Probing Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does your advisor choose individuals or team members for the events? • What would you say about your chapter? What reputation does your chapter have in your school? 	
Question 4	Justification
Suppose your friend declined your invitation (told you no). Why weren't they interested?	<p>This question addresses research question 2: what factors discourage students from participating in LDEs?</p> <p>This question should yield answers related to Eccles & Wigfield's (2002) cost value. Cost is defined as the negative aspects of engaging in a task, such as the time or effort required (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).</p>

<p>Probing Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you do to change their mind? • Were there any negative aspects of participating in today's event and preparing for it? (cost, time, effort, stereotypes like wearing the jacket). 	
Question 5	Justification
<p>What skills or knowledge did you expect to gain when you decided to participate in this event? What did you want to get out of it?</p>	<p>This question addresses research question 3: what motivates students while preparing for LDEs?</p> <p>This question should yield answers related to Eccles & Wigfield's (2002) intrinsic value. Intrinsic value is defined as the enjoyment an individual gets from participating in an activity, or their interest in the activity or task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).</p>
<p>Probing Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What made this experience fun? • How did you make practices enjoyable? • What life skills did you expect to gain? Did you? • Did you create any relationships? (ag teacher, community members, other chapters) 	
Question 6	Justification
<p>How will you use what you learned from participating in this event?</p>	<p>This question addresses research question 3: what motivates students while preparing for LDEs?</p> <p>This question should yield answers related to Eccles & Wigfield's (2002) intrinsic value. Intrinsic value is defined as the enjoyment an individual gets from participating in an activity, or their interest in the activity or task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).</p>
<p>Probing Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills can you list on your resume? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did this experience help you grow as a person? • What will you tell your future employer about your experience? 	
Question 7	Justification
What kept you motivated while preparing for this event?	<p>This question addresses research question 3: what motivates students while preparing for LDEs?</p> <p>This question should yield answers related to Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura 1993, 1997). Self-efficacy is defined as people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action to attain designated types of performances (Bandura 1993, 1997).</p>
<p>Probing Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you learn anything from participating in this event? (related to the contest objectives) • What else did you learn from participating in this event? (think life skills or core-memories) • Were rewards offered to you while you practiced? • How often did you practice with your advisor? • How often did you practice with other students? 	
<p>STEP 5: CONCLUSION</p> <p>*** ask the assistant researcher if he would like to ask 1-2 questions</p> <p>Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us today. We have some great information here to help teachers better motivate their students to participate in FFA events and keep their students excited and invested throughout the year.</p> <p>I have a couple more questions but I’m going to have you answer these privately (see Appendix D).</p> <p>I’ll collect these as you leave and, on your way out, I have another thank you gift.</p>	

Thanks again everyone and congratulations on making it to the state contest!

STEP 6: DE-BRIEF

The research team will compare field notes with each other:

- What did you notice about the participants? Were any participants more hesitant than the others? Who spoke the most?
- What was the mood in the room? Was it comfortable?
- What notable quotes did you catch?
- What themes did you see emerge?

References:

Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivational beliefs, values, and goals. *Annual review of psychology*, 53(1), 109–132.

Knobloch, N. A., Brady, C. M., Orvis, K. S., & Carroll, N. J. (2016). Development and Validation of an Instrument to Assess Youth Motivation to Participate in Career Development Events. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 57(4), 16-28.

Krueger, R. A. (2014). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Sage publications.

Appendix C: Student Pre and Post Surveys

Name: _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____

The number of years you have been in the FFA (including this year): _____

1. Gender (select one):

- Female
 Male
 Not Listed

Prefer Not to Answer

2. Race (select one):

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
 Asian
 Black or African American
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 White
 Multiple ethnicity/other (please specify below):

3. Ethnicity (select one):

- Hispanic or Latino
 Not Hispanic or Latino

4. How many years have you competed in Employment Skills (including this year)?

- 1
 2
 3
 4

5. How were you selected to represent your chapter in this event? Select the best answer.

- My teacher selected me
 I won a chapter run-off
 I was the only student interested
 Other (please describe below)

6. How important is it for you to win this event? Circle the number that best represents how you feel.

Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
1	2	3	4

7. When you decided to participate in this event, how confident were you that you would win? Circle the number that best represents how you feel.

Not at all Confident	Slightly Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident
1	2	3	4

BUT WAIT! BEFORE YOU GO...

How confident are you that **you will** win this event? Circle the number that best represents how you feel.

Not at all Confident	Slightly Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident
1	2	3	4

Circle the number that best represents your feelings about this statement: my advisor expects me to win.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

If you do not win, will you feel you have let yourself down? Please explain your answer below:

If you do not win, is there someone you feel you will let down? Please explain your answer below:

What was your first impression of the other participants in the room? Please explain your answer below:

How would you compare yourself to the others in the room? Please explain your answer below:

How proud are you of what you accomplished? Please explain your answer below or on the back of this paper:

Appendix D: Focus Group Invitation

This invitation will be handed to each participant during event check-in and emailed to the advisors before the event.



A SPECIAL INVITATION JUST FOR YOU!

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS
DISTRICT WINNERS ONLY

Share what went well and what could have gone better, and help us brainstorm ways teachers can keep their students motivated.

Friday, April 7th

Shields Building Room #108

Pizza served at 6:15 pm

Sharing session 6:30-7:30 pm

Casual dress is encouraged

Contact your teacher for
more information

Appendix E: Advisor Email Invitation

Hi (FFA advisor's name),

State Leadership Convention is just around the corner! I hope your plans are coming together and your students are ready for the trip to Twin Falls.

(My name is Amber Bucknell – for FFA advisors who may not know me). I am pursuing my master's degree in Agricultural Education through the University of Idaho this semester. I am interested in learning more about what motivates students to participate in LDEs and what they expect to gain from their experience.

I want to invite (insert participant's name) to participate in a focus group with the other Employment Skills LDE participants on the evening of Friday, April 7th, from 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm in the Shields building, room #108. Our discussion will take place several hours after their competition, so they will have some time to decompress and change before joining the conversation. Pizza, drinks, and ice cream sandwiches will be provided. Casual dress is encouraged.

(Insert participant's name) will get an Amazon gift card and tumbler for participating in the discussion. We will make sure she gets to the dance or wherever you need her to be after the focus group.

Here are a couple of the questions I will be asking:

1. When you decided to participate in this event, what did you expect to gain?
2. How will you apply what you learned from your experience to your future?
3. Looking back on how you prepared for this event, what kept you motivated while studying?

I have attached the invitation I will hand to (insert participant's name) during the event check-in on Friday.

I have attached the parent consent form I'll need to collect if (insert participant's name) is under 18 years of age. If you would be willing to print the form and have (him/her) bring it to orientation on Friday, I would appreciate it!

I cannot stress how important this is for my thesis, so I would greatly appreciate your help getting (insert participant's name) to the focus group. It should be a relaxed and fun event that's special just for the Employment Skills kiddos!

My cell phone number is (208) 899-3554. Calls/texts are appreciated if you have any questions.

Thank you!

Amber Bucknell <<ATTACH INVITATION & PARENT CONSENT>>>

Appendix F: Parent Consent Form

Dr. Jeremy Falk and Amber Bucknell from the Department of Agriculture Education are conducting a research study. The purpose of the research is to describe what motivates students to participate in FFA Leadership Development Events. You are being asked to give permission for your child to participate in this study because they are a member of an elite group of individuals competing in the Employment Skills LDE.

Your child's participation will involve a group discussion with the other participants a few hours after the competition. The focus group interview should take about one hour to complete. The focus group includes questions such as what did you expect to gain from participating in Employment Skills and how did you motivate yourself while studying? Your child's involvement in the study is voluntary, and they may choose not to participate. They can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. There are no names or identifying information associated with their responses. This study has no known risks, but some children may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. Data will be transcribed, analyzed for themes, reported in narratives without identifiers, and destroyed. We will be using Zoom to record the discussion. The Terms of Service and Privacy Policies for these can be found here: <https://zoom.us>.

The findings from this project will provide information on how teachers can better motivate their students to participate in LDEs. If published, results will be presented in summary form only.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call Jeremy Falk at 208-885-6358. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input you may call the Office of Research Assurances at (208) 885-6340 or email irb@uidaho.edu.

By signing below and returning this survey with your child at the event, you certify that you are the child's parent or legal guardian and agree to give permission for the child to participate in the focus group.

Print Child's Name

Name of Parent/Guardian/LAR

Signature of Parent/Guardian/LAR

Name of Research Team Member

Signature of Research Team Member

Appendix G: Informed Assent for Focus Group

Dr. Jeremy Falk and Amber Bucknell, from the Department of Agricultural Education, are conducting a research study. The purpose of this research is to describe the factors that encourage students to participate in FFA Leadership Development Events. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are part of an elite group of students who have participated in the Employment Skills LDE at the state level.

Your participation will involve participating in a group interview with other Employment Skills participants. The focus group interview should take about one hour to complete. The focus group includes questions such as when you decided to participate in this event, what did you expect to gain? involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. There are no names or identifying information associated with your responses. This study has no known risks, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. Data will be transcribed using video and audio recording and reported in narrative descriptions without identifying information associated with your name and chapter. We will be using ZOOM to conduct the research. The Terms of Service and Privacy Policies for these can be found here: <https://zoom.us>.

You will receive a battery pack and an insulated water bottle for taking part in this study.

The findings from this project will provide information on why students participate in LDEs and what motivates them to study for the event. If published, results will be presented in summary form only. Your parent or guardian has already given permission for you to participate in this study.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call Jeremy Falk at 208-885-6358. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input you may call the Office of Research Assurances at (208) 885-6340 or irb@uidaho.edu.

By signing below, you certify that you are at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in the above-described research study.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Name of Research Team Member

Signature of Research Team Member

Appendix H: Informed Consent for Focus Group

Dr. Jeremy Falk and Amber Bucknell, from the Department of Agricultural Education, are conducting a research study. The purpose of this research is to describe the factors that encourage students to participate in FFA Leadership Development Events. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are part of an elite group of students who have participated in the Employment Skills LDE at the state level.

Your participation will involve participating in a group interview with other Employment Skills participants. The focus group interview should take about one hour to complete. The focus group includes questions such as when you decided to participate in this event, what did you expect to gain? involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. There are no names or identifying information associated with your responses. This study has no known risks, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. Data will be transcribed using video and audio recording and reported in narrative descriptions without identifying information associated with your name and chapter. We will be using ZOOM to conduct the research. The Terms of Service and Privacy Policies for these can be found here: <https://zoom.us>.

You will receive a battery pack and an insulated water bottle for taking part in this study.

The findings from this project will provide information on why students participate in LDEs and what motivates them to study for the event. If published, results will be presented in summary form only.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call Jeremy Falk at 208-885-6358. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input you may call the Office of Research Assurances at (208) 885-6340 or irb@uidaho.edu.

By signing below, you certify that you are at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in the above-described research study.

Name of Adult Participant

Signature of Adult Participant

Name of Research Team Member

Signature of Research Team Member

Appendix I: Sense of Consensus Matrix

The following notations describe the participants' consensus during the focus group interview:

O: Original response

AV: Indicated verbal agreement

AN: Indicated nonverbal agreement

SE: Provided significant statement or example suggesting agreement

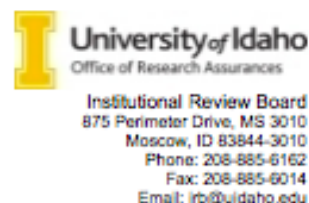
	Allie	Jessica	Courtney	Emily
1 - What or who influenced you to join the FFA?				
Advisor	SE	SE	O	AV
Sibling	SE	O		SE
4-H		O		AN
2 - What were you most looking forward to when you joined the FFA?				
To join a group that supported me	SE	O	AN	
The events	AN	O	AN	AN
3 - If you invited a friend to participate in FFA contests what would you say in the invitation?				
Take advantage of opportunities when they're given to you	O	AN	AN	
Agriculture is important	O		AN	
Traveling	AN	O		
Social events	AN	O		AN
Take the leap	AN	O		AN
Don't have to do 4-H record books anymore		O		AN
Being recognized or complimented by another member	AN, AV, SE	AN, AV, SE	O	AN, AV

Being recognized for speaking skills	AN	AN	O	AN
Being approached by members and advisors is meaningful	AN, AV	AN	O	AN
The advisor can be overbearing	O	AN, SE	AN, SE	AN, SE
You get out of school for a day	AN	AN		O
Try it for one year	AV	AV	O	AN
4 - Suppose your friend declined your invitation. Why weren't they interested?				
It isn't a good fit for me	AV	AN	O	AV
I'm too busy	AN	AN	O	AN
I'm not part of the group	AV	AV	O	AN
I'm not interested in farming or agriculture	AV, SE	AV, SE	AV, SE	AV, SE
5 - Do you find it more difficult to motivate students to try LDEs than CDEs?				
Yes because you don't have a team holding you accountable	AN, SE	O	AN	
Yes because it's easier to let yourself down when you don't have a team to pick you back up	AV	AV	O	AN
Yes because people are afraid to speak in front of others			AN	O
Not always because there are years where no one is interested and years where people compete against each other for a spot in the competition		AN		O
5 - What skills or knowledge did you expect to gain when you decided to participate in Employment Skills?				
Real life interview experience	AN, AV	AN	O	AN, AV

Learn how to speak in front of others	AV	AN	O	AV
Build confidence in myself	AN, SE	O	AN	AN
Learn how to advocate for yourself	O	AV	AV	AV
6 - How did this contest compare to your real job interview?				
The real job interview was easier than the contest	O	AV	AV	AV
The real job interview felt more conversational than the contest	O	AV	AV	AV
I was able to share why I was a good fit during my real job interview because I practiced that skill for the contest	AV	AV	O	AV
6 - How will you use what you learned from participating in this event?				
To feel more confident when competing in other FFA events	AV	O		AV
To do well during my FFA STAR interview	AV	AV	AN	O
7 - What kept you motivated while preparing for this event?				
Appreciation for how far I've gotten	AN	AN	O	
Stress	AV	AN	O	AN
My advisor supported me	O	AV	AN	
My chapter wanted me to succeed	O	AV	AN	
I like competition	AV	O		AV
I set goals for myself	SE	O	SE	SE

I saw others receiving recognition and wanted to be like them	O	AN	AN	AN
I wanted to feel accomplished	AV	AV	O	AV
8 - Do you feel like you worked hard enough to win?				
I worked hard enough to make myself proud and everyone else has too	AV, SE	O	AV, SE	AV, SE
This contest is subjective	O	AV	AV	AV
I'm just happy to be here	AV	AV	AV	O
9 - What was your vision for winning this event?				
Making my advisor proud	AN	O	AN	
10 - Who is the first person you will tell if you succeed in this event?				
Advisor	AV	O	AV	AV
Chapter	AV	O	AV	
Family	O	AV	AV	AV

Appendix J: IRB Approval Letter



April 10, 2023

To: Jeremy Falk

Cc: Amber Bucknell

From: University of Idaho Institutional Review Board

Approval Date: April 10, 2023

Title: DESCRIBING STUDENT MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT EVENTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Protocol: 23-094, Reference: 021977

Exempt under Category 1 at 45 CFR 46.104(d)(1).

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the protocol for this research project has been certified as exempt under the category listed above.

This certification is valid only for the study protocol as it was submitted. Studies certified as Exempt are not subject to continuing review and this certification does not expire. However, if changes are made to the study protocol, you must submit the changes through [VERAS](#) for review before implementing the changes. Amendments may include but are not limited to, changes in study population, study personnel, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment materials, sites of research, etc.

As Principal Investigator, you are responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable FERPA regulations, University of Idaho policies, state and federal regulations. Every effort should be made to ensure that the project is conducted in a manner consistent with the three fundamental principles identified in the Belmont Report: respect for persons; beneficence; and justice. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that all study personnel have completed the online human subjects training requirement. Please complete the *Continuing Review and Closure Form* in VERAS when the project is completed.

You are required to notify the IRB in a timely manner if any unanticipated or adverse events occur during the study, if you experience an increased risk to the participants, or if you have participants withdraw or register complaints about the study.

IRB Exempt Category (Categories) for this submission:

Category 1: Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who



provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.