

# 4-H IN IDAHO:



# WHY KIDS BELONG



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# 4-H in Idaho: Why Kids Belong

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## Introduction

How do former 4-H members, as young adults looking back on their experiences in the Cooperative Extension 4-H program, feel about those experiences? How close do their views reflect what professional and volunteer staff think happens? Recently, a sample of former 4-H members in the Idaho program responded to a survey designed to determine who participates and, to what extent, what is most satisfying, what is learned and what is gained through the 4-H experience. Although 4-H has existed since the early part of the 20th century, no evaluation of program effectiveness has ever been conducted in Idaho. This is a first attempt to collect baseline data from a sample of alumni.

This current study has three sections. The first looks at how individuals participated in the program in terms of type of group or club organization, how long they stayed as members, what projects were taken and activities were participated in and which learning experiences were viewed as most valuable. The second section examines motivations for joining, for continuing and for leaving the program before age 19. The final section assessed respondents' retrospective views of what they gained most from their 4-H membership, what affect this had on continuing their education beyond high school and what affect 4-H experiences might have had on career choice.

At the time of the survey, respondents were approximately 21 years of age. They were thus reflecting on experiences that had occurred between 2 to 10 or more years previously.

## Study Respondents

The sample design called for a two step process to locate an appropriate sample. First, a sample was drawn systematically from among the 4,928 participants with 1961 birthdates listed on 1972 Idaho county enrollments. This list of 565 names and addresses, along with club

and leader names for potential sources of new information, was then sent to individual county offices for updating.

County offices were able to provide current addresses and/or names for 343 participants. Of these, 65 addresses were found to be undeliverable. Postcards with a return card attached sent to the remaining 222 names and addresses yielded 15 more updated addresses for a total sample of 293 names. After a rigorous follow-up procedure (Dillman 1978), 183 usable surveys were returned resulting in a final return rate of 62.5 percent (Table 1).

## Characteristics of the Sample

At first glance, the characteristics of the study sample tend to reflect those of Idaho 4-H participants as these were found between 1972 and 1978, the period during which most respondents could have and/or did participate in 4-H. Comparison with average state enrollment figures during this period, however, shows males, nonwhites and small town residents to be under-represented (Table 2).

Table 2. Characteristics of the sample.

Personal characteristics	1972 sample		1972-1978 average state enrollment	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Sex				
Male	43	24.3	10,377	37.1
Female	134	75.7	17,595	62.9
Race				
White	173	98.3	26,894	96.1
Non-white	3	1.7	1,079	3.9
Residence during youth				
Farm or ranch	81	46.0	11,085	39.6
Open country	34	19.3	43.1	9,872
Under 2,500	18	10.2		
2,500 to 10,000	24	13.6		
Over 10,000	14	8.0		
Metro or suburb	5	2.8	1,885	6.7

Table 1. The survey collection process.

Total	Eligible 11-year-olds					Final sample
	12% sample	Drawn	Addresses verified	Undelivered	Not returned	
4,928	594	565	358	65	110	183 (62.5%)

# Part 1 — How Individuals Participate

## Type of 4-H Group or Club

In 1972 and early 1973, before the advent of urban 4-H programs in Idaho, a sizeable percentage of 4-H participation was found in school health clubs. Additional school enrichment programs and Mulligan Stew via television in the school classroom were added to the participation opportunities beginning in 1974. A short term day camping program also became available in certain locations about this same time. Participation in these newer 4-H delivery modes, in addition to the traditional organized club, is seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Type of 4-H participation (multiple responses possible).

Participation	n	Percent
4-H club member	165	90.2
Individual study	29	15.8
School class	18	9.8
Mulligan Stew TV	11	6.0
Short term class	22	12.0
4-H overnight camp	66	36.1
4-H day camp	29	15.8
Don't remember 4-H	3	1.6

Detailed analysis revealed that individuals whose only participation in 4-H was through such short term special interest groups and/or school enrichment programs were totally missing from the sample. All study participants of non-traditional 4-H delivery modes were also members of organized 4-H clubs. Comparisons across participation types are thus not possible with this sample.

Since it is highly unlikely that all school club, school enrichment and special interest participants are also in organized clubs in every case, we believe that those who were not club members tended not to respond to the questionnaire. Possible reasons for this failure to respond could be failure to identify such experience as being 4-H (particularly true where the 4-H identity is missing), or an unrewarding, at best mediocre, experience with 4-H.

Thus, the sample for this study reflects the more traditional type of 4-H participation — membership in an organized club which is the dominant type of participation in Idaho.

## Length of Time in 4-H

Length of time in 4-H for this sample ranged from 1 year (10.9 percent) to 12 years (less than 1.0 percent). Average mean years numbered 4.19, with 3 years the usual amount of time for the greatest number of respondents. Distribution by grouped years showed 22.4 percent participating for 1 or 2 years, 24.7 percent for 3 years, 25.8 percent for 4 or 5 years, and 27.1 percent participating in 4-H 6 or more years (Table 4). This appears to be generally what is found in the 4-H club population and reflects a sample typical of club members (Pigg and Meyers 1980).

Table 4. Length of participation.

Years	n	Percent	Group percent
1	19	10.9	
2	20	11.5	22.4
3	43	24.7	24.7
4	27	15.5	
5	18	10.3	25.8
6	9	5.2	
7	8	4.6	
8	13	7.5	
9	9	5.2	
10	4	2.3	
11	3	1.7	
12	1	.6	27.1
	174	100.0	100.0

## Projects Taken

The Idaho 4-H curriculum in 1972 through 1978, the time of greatest participation by this sample, consisted of 51 subject related projects in 11 general categories ranging from animal sciences to communications. Study respondents' participation in project subject categories paralleled state enrollment figures as seen in Table 5. Animals/poultry, plants/crops, health/safety and communication project areas were under-represented, however, while ecology/natural resources, leisure/cultural and individual/family resources were over-represented.

Table 5. Project participation by subject categories.

Project subject categories	Average 1972-78 state enrollment		Study respondents	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Animal/poultry	11,004	23.7	170	20.3
Plants/crops	1,516	3.7	20	2.4
Mechanical sciences	3,128	6.7	57	6.8
Ecology/natural resources	1,320	2.8	36	4.3
Economics/jobs/careers	241	0.5	—	—
Community involvement/citizenship	2,871	6.2	25	3.0
Leisure/cultural	2,992	6.5	71	8.5
Health/safety	6,767	14.6	63	7.5
Individual/family resources	12,852	27.7	355	42.4
Communications	3,369	7.3	23	2.7
Self-determined/miscellaneous	265	0.6	17	2.1
	46,332	100.3	837	100.0

Study respondents identified the subjects they had taken through 4-H projects and those which they felt were most important to them. Their listing reflects what records have shown to be the most popular projects taken over the years (Table 6).

Collectively, over half (55 percent) of our sample listed agriculture projects, three out of four respondents (74 percent) indicated having taken home economics projects, and more than half (58 percent) said they have taken at least one project from among those categorized as miscellaneous or other projects (Table 7).

**Table 6. Individual subjects taken by study respondents (multiple responses possible for projects; single responses indicated most and second most important).**

Project	n	Percent	Importance	
			Most (%)	Second (%)
Food/nutrition	113	62	16	25
Clothing	104	57	20	23
Beef-sheep-swine	57	31	15	8
Horse	48	26	17	4
Knitting/crocheting	42	23	2	5
Art	35	19	2	3
Health	31	17	2	1
Food preservation	30	16	1	3
Child care	27	15	1	
Dairy heifer/cow	25	14	8	2
Teen leadership	25	14	1	5
Handwork	23	13	1	1
Home improvement	20	11	1	2
Vet science	20	11	1	2
Gun safety	20	11	4	3
Bicycle	18	10		1
Photography	13	7	1	1
Leathercraft	13	7		1
Family living	13	7		1
Entomology	12	7	1	1
Flying or rocketry	10	6		1
Public speaking	10	6	1	
Self determined	10	6		1
Garden	9	5	1	
Dog care and training	9	5	1	2
Forestry/wildlife	9	5	1	1
Geology	8	4	1	1
Rabbit	7	4		1
Environmental conservation	7	4	1	
Money management	6	3		
Safety/survival	6	3		
Snowmobile	5	3		
Automotive	5	3		
Tractor	5	3		
Home beautification	5	3		
Poultry	4	2		
Skiing	4	2		
Electricity	4	2	1	
Small engines	4	2	1	
Woodworking	3	2		
Motorcycle	3	2	1	
Field crops	3	2		
Weed fighter	2	1		
Archery	2	1		
Plants and soils	1	.5		

**Table 7. Categories of projects indicated by individuals (multiple responses possible).**

Project categories	Percent	Individuals
Agriculture projects	55	(101)
Home economics projects	74	(136)
Miscellaneous projects	58	(107)

We looked also at combinations of projects taken. Generally speaking, those projects considered by some to be peripheral to the Extension mission (i.e., neither agriculture nor home economics) were found taken in conjunction with the more traditional subjects. That is, these are taken in addition to the traditional projects, not by themselves. Over 92 percent of those who listed miscellaneous projects as ones taken also listed projects from the agriculture area (15 percent), the home economics area (32 percent) or from both (46 percent) (Table 8).

**Table 8. Additional projects taken by individuals taking "miscellaneous" projects.**

Project category	Percent	n
Agriculture projects	14.9	(16)
Home economics projects	31.8	(34)
Both agriculture and home economics	45.8	(49)
Neither agriculture nor home economics	7.5	(8)
	100.0	107

## Activities Participated In

Activities such as project demonstrations, judging contests, tours and field trips and participation in fairs supplement the individual member projects around which a 4-H club is built. In addition, special recreational events, camping, community service activities, group participation in club organization and planning and teen conferences and workshops add to the learning experience.

Respondents indicated activities, in addition to project work, were important to the 4-H program. Four out of five (80.9 percent) said activities were very important, and nearly all said they were at least somewhat important. Less than 1 percent thought activities were not important (Table 9).

**Table 9. Importance of activities to the 4-H program.**

Importance	n	Percent
Very important	148	80.9
Somewhat important	28	15.3
Not very important	1	.5
Not at all important	0	—
No response	6	3.3
	183	100.0

The local basis of most individual's 4-H experience and the club as the focal point of that experience would predict that activities conducted within the club and/or

**Table 10. Activities participated in (multiple responses possible).**

Rank	Activity	Percent (%)	Most important (%)
1	County fair	92.3	70.6
2	Demonstrations in club	83.1	31.2
3	Club officer or committee	63.4	25.7
4	County demonstration/style revue	52.5	14.4
5	County camp	39.3	9.4
6	District demo/style revue/judging	37.2	9.8
7	Community Pride or service	36.1	7.5
8	District Fair	33.3	10.3
9	State judging contest	19.1	9.2
10	State 4-H Congress	11.5	8.0
11	County teen club	9.3	0.0
12	District teen workshop	6.0	0.0
13	District community business survey	3.3	0.6
13	Japanese exchange	3.3	1.8
15	Interstate or Canadian exchange	1.6	0.0
16	Citizenship . . . Washington Focus	0.5	1.2
16	National 4-H Congress	0.5	0.6
16	National 4-H Conference	0.5	0.6

county draw greater participation than those available at the district, state, national or international levels. Increasing levels of activities are important, however, as incentives for continued growth and participation. This pattern can be seen in Table 10.

The county fair, demonstrations given at the club level, serving as a club officer or committee member, and the county demonstration contest and/or style show were activities participated in by the greatest number of respondents. District events — such as camp, fair and contests — were the next more frequently participated-in activities followed by state level events.

Activities specifically designed for teens — 4-H Congress, county teen club and district teen workshops and/or community business survey events — were less frequently participated in by this sample of former members.

Understandably, respondents were less likely to have participated in national activities which are limited to those selected at the state level (National 4-H Congress and National 4-H Conference) and those requiring considerable expenditure of personal funds or local fund raising (Citizenship . . . Washington Focus).

## Part 2 — Motivations for Belonging to 4-H

There are many reasons why some youngsters join 4-H while others do not, why some stay with the program until they are no longer eligible to belong while others do not complete a full year. To get at the various motivators, this survey examined reasons for joining, experiences in the club, sources of enjoyment and satisfaction, perception of 4-H status in the community and reasons for leaving before age 19.

### Reason for Joining 4-H

The two most important reasons given for joining 4-H — “because it sounded like fun and friends were in or joining” — should surprise no one. Young people are generally attracted to activities that offer fun and excitement and where they can do what their friends are doing (Table 11).

Table 11. Reasons for joining 4-H (multiple responses possible).

Rank order	n	Mean score*	Importance	
			Most	Second
1 Sounded like fun	176	3.49	25.6	25.3
2 Friends were in or joining	177	3.15	23.3	18.1
3 Wanted to be in County Fair	168	3.04	8.1	10.2
4 Parents wanted me to join	173	2.90	7.0	12.7
5 Wanted to be part of a club or group	172	2.87	5.2	8.4
6 Wanted to attend 4-H camp	164	2.48	1.7	5.4
7 Brother or sister was involved	171	2.46	11.6	4.2
8 Mother or dad was a leader	169	2.13	6.4	8.4
9 Had nothing else to do	166	1.82	—	1.2
10 Parents were 4-H members	167	1.76	3.5	4.8
11 Had no choice; required at school	166	1.32	—	.6

\*Very important - 4; somewhat important - 3; not very important - 2; not at all important - 1.

The influence of the fair as a motivator to 4-H participation can also be seen in Table 11. This deserves attention as a public relations and recruitment tool. Of lesser importance but nonetheless a contributing factor are the actions and attitudes of other family members. These also serve as a stimulus to joining as does the desire to be part of a group.

Table 12. How participants first learned about 4-H (multiple responses possible).

Rank order	Percent	n
1 Through friends	67.2	123
2 Through family members	48.6	89
3 Through information at school	27.3	50
4 Display at County Fair	16.4	30
5 Teacher involved class	5.5	10
6 Parent called Extension office	1.1	2

The influence of friends and family members on recruiting youngsters into 4-H is also seen in the sources of first knowledge about 4-H (Table 12). Those already involved were the source of first contact for over half of the study respondents. Also important as a first contact for many was a display at the county fair and information passed out at school.

### Involvement in Other Community Youth Programs

A wide variety of community and extracurricular school programs and activities for youth are available in most communities today. To some extent, these vie for the after school time and attention of young people and may prevent many from being active in 4-H, particularly beyond the elementary grades. Volunteer 4-H leaders and 4-H/youth professionals generally feel participation in other youth activities is a factor limiting youth involvement in 4-H activities.

On the other hand, active involvement in voluntary organizations might reflect a tendency to participate in groups in general. Those who are oriented to social group membership (joiners) tend to belong to a greater number of groups than those who are not so oriented (Parr 1975). These same individuals may be the doers of society, those who are active participants in everything the local community has to offer.

Studies show that many young people participate in no out-of-school youth programs. Medrich et al. (1982:163) found only 11 percent of their sample not involved in at least one organized activity, including lessons of various sorts. We were interested in seeing what percentage of our study respondents belonged to other youth organizations and how many different groups they belonged to.

Among our sample, 7.7 percent of the respondents indicated belonging to no other group besides 4-H. Nearly three-quarters (74.8 percent), however, belonged to one or two groups in addition to 4-H and 45.8 percent were members of three or more groups (Table 13).

In response to the question of which groups they belong to (Table 14), by far the largest number of

Table 13. Number of other groups belong to.

Number	n	Percent	Cumulative by number
None	14	7.7	7.7
One	32	17.5	92.3
Two	53	29.0	74.8
Three	46	25.1	45.8
Four	30	16.4	20.7
Five	6	3.3	4.3
Six	1	.5	1.0
Nine	1	.5	.5
	183	100.0	100.0

**Table 14. Community and school youth program participation (multiple responses possible).**

Youth group	n	Percent
Church youth group	115	62.8
School athletic team	100	54.6
Scouts	48	26.2
Parks/recreation team	39	21.3
FFA	32	17.5
FHA	31	16.9
Camp Fire	25	13.7
YM/YWCA	13	7.1
Masonic group	13	7.1
Boys/girls club	11	6.0

respondents (62.8 percent) indicated they belonged to their church youth group. Over half of the study respondents indicated belonging to a school athletic team (54.6 percent) and less than one-quarter on the parks and recreation athletic team. Scouts drew slightly over one-quarter of the respondents and the two vocational programs of FFA and FHA about 17 percent each. Camp Fire, Masonic groups and YM/YWCA groups account for between 6 and 14 percent of study respondents' group membership.

### Quality of the Club Experience

The overriding instructional strategy of 4-H is "learning-by-doing" or experiential learning, derived from the educational theories of John Dewey. The effectiveness of experiential learning fluctuates with the opportunities provided in the learning environment (Pigg and Meyers 1980). Much of this depends upon the abilities and attitudes of the adult leadership, including parents. How supportive adults who work with young 4-H members are and how much allowance is made to self-directed individualized inquiry and exploration make a difference in the type of learning environment. Experiences in the club make a difference in how satisfying the 4-H experience is for members.

It is generally agreed that the community club type of organization lends itself to the greatest involvement of members in experiential learning. Community clubs traditionally have planned programs which include a variety of learning experiences and numerous projects and activities. Junior or teen leadership provides cross-age peer counseling related to project work, thereby giving teens experience in leadership and helping others while providing greater individualized attention to younger members. Club officers and committees work with adult leaders in planning the club program and organizing various activities.

To a lesser extent, project clubs — those based on a single project and generally led by a single adult leader — provide some of the same type of experiential features for club members as do community clubs. These are generally smaller units and often meet for a shorter period of time during the year than do community clubs.

Study respondents generally gave high marks to the amount of help and support they got within the 4-H club and the freedom available to develop on their own.

Lower scores went to being included in important decisions, being given responsibility and being given opportunity to learn and develop leadership. Adult leaders may need to increase such involvement and make sure all members have a chance to serve on committees and as officers (Table 15).

**Table 15. Quality of the club experiential environment.**

Rank order		n	Mean score*
1	Got help when needed	174	3.68
2	Freedom to develop/use own skills	173	3.62
3	Given clear directions/instructions	173	3.57
4	Involvement in learning	173	3.49
5	Involved in planning club program	175	3.28
6	Given challenging tasks	170	3.17
7	Discussed progress with club leader	173	3.17
8	Felt you made a contribution	171	3.16
9	Included in important decisions	176	2.99
10	Given important responsibilities	175	2.99
11	Given opportunity to learn and practice leadership	173	2.88

\*Often - 4; sometimes - 3; rarely - 2; never - 1.

### Source of Enjoyment and Satisfaction with 4-H

In order to determine what members enjoy about being in 4-H, study respondents were asked to indicate how enjoyable and satisfying various facets of 4-H were to them (Table 16). The 4-H projects members worked on received the highest overall marks as a source of enjoyment and satisfaction followed by the county fair excitement and awards received. Asked to identify the most enjoyable, respondents mentioned 4-H projects first and the people they were with second. The challenge of bettering one's own records and club meetings were given as least enjoyable. One might wonder, however, how the term "bettering one's own records" was interpreted. To many in 4-H, one's records are the forms laboriously filled out at the completion of a project before displaying it for judging at the fair!

**Table 16. Sources of enjoyment, satisfaction in 4-H program.**

Experience	n	Mean score*	Most Enjoyable	Least
1 4-H projects worked on	175	3.77	24.1	4.5
2 County Fair excitement	174	3.61	16.7	5.8
3 Awards, prizes received	171	3.60	11.5	5.8
4 4-H activities you were in	173	3.55	6.9	6.5
5 People you were with	175	3.53	19.5	6.5
6 County Fair competition	171	3.46	12.6	7.1
7 Challenge of bettering own record	167	3.14	5.2	25.3
8 Club meetings	172	3.05	1.7	21.3
9 Teen club	132	1.92	—	16.2

\*Great deal - 4; some - 3; a little - 2; none - 1.

### Continuation Through the Teen Years

Those respondents who continued in 4-H through the teen years (42.6 percent) were asked to recall the importance of several items as motivation for their con-



tinuing. Once again the affect of the fair and of the 4-H projects themselves is seen both in the mean scores (3.59 and 3.30 on a 4.00 scale) and in the most important column (listed by 26.3 and 30.3 percent, respectively). Earning money at the fair stock sale was listed as most important by 15.8 percent, although it received a lower mean score than did several other items (Table 17).

Table 17. Motivators for continuing during teen years.

Importance of	n	Mean score	Most important
Participate in County Fair	75	3.59	26.3%
Gain new skills through projects	78	3.30	30.3
Be with my friends	75	3.03	13.2
Please my parents	76	2.54	5.3
Serve as teen leader	73	2.36	2.6
Belong to county teen club	74	2.23	—
Earn money at fair stock sale	75	2.21	15.8
Serve as camp counselor	71	1.80	2.6
Attend Idaho 4-H Congress	73	1.74	1.3
Win a trip to Chicago	71	1.45	1.3

Serving as a teen leader is generally thought to be a valued activity for older youth in 4-H. For the average teen, however, this is apparently not the case. None of the items relating to specific teen activities through 4-H (i.e., serving as teen leader, belonging to county teen club, serving as camp counselor, attending Idaho 4-H Congress) received very high mean scores, thus indicating the incentives provided for teens generally fail to be effective.

Of the 37 respondents who served as teen leaders in a 4-H club, one-third (34.3 percent) gave the experience outstanding marks, however, while nearly half (48.6 percent) indicated the experience was satisfactory as preparation for working with others (Table 18).

## Influences on Decision Not To Continue in 4-H

The most heavily weighted reasons given for not continuing in 4-H ranged from "outgrew 4-H" (a matter of personal perception as opposed to passing the maximum age for participation) to "involvement in other school activities or employment." "Club disbanding" or "leader quitting" were also frequently given reasons for discontinuing. General loss of interest seen as "meetings becoming boring," "projects no longer be-

Table 18. Value of teen leadership experience as preparation for working with others (n = 37).

Rating of experience	Percent	n
Outstanding	34.3	13
Satisfactory	48.6	18
Fair	17.1	6
Poor	—	—
	100.0	37

ing challenging" and "loss of confidence in adult leadership" contributed to some respondents' discontinuing in 4-H. Generally, all of the reasons given for discontinuing reflect the natural maturing of the participants. None, however, were found to have contributed significantly to participants discontinuing in 4-H.

This fact, combined with findings for teenage continuation in 4-H, leads us to the conclusion that for many, if not perhaps most, 4-H fulfills the needs of and is most viable for the 9- to-12-year-old age group. Relatively few (approximately one in four) appear to have stayed with the program until they reached 19. The question thus arises as to whether the 4-H program in Idaho provides meaningful experiences for teens or simply continues with the same activities and expectations for teens as those they have previously mastered as younger members. Youngsters mature into teenagers but 4-H appears not to be able to compete with the variety of influences on teenagers or the extracurricular opportunities now available to them both in and out of school. In some instances, it may be that young people simply are not aware of what 4-H can offer the older member (Table 19).

Table 19. Influences on decision not to continue in 4-H.

Rank	Influence	n	Mean score*
1	Outgrew 4-H	154	2.56
2	Other school activities interfered	153	2.51
3	Club disbanded or school year ended	157	2.29
4	Employment interfered	154	2.17
5	Leader quit	153	2.09
6	Meetings were boring	155	2.08
7	Projects no longer challenging	153	1.99
8	Leader didn't know how to lead a club	151	1.58
9	No longer eligible (over 19 years old)	151	1.52
10	Family moved	150	1.37

\*Very - 4; somewhat - 3; not very - 2; not at all - 1.

## Part 3 — 4-H Contributions to Future Development

### Contributions to Lifeskill Development

The nationally stated mission and objectives of the 4-H program (4-H Development Committee 1982) reflect what adults working in 4-H expect youth to gain through long term participation in the traditional 4-H club (Pigg and Meyers 1980:86). A series of questions based on these objectives asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they felt participation in 4-H contributed to their development in each of several areas. The areas include an understanding and use of scientific knowledge and skill development in agriculture and/or home economics, primary focal points of 4-H projects, and personal growth and development in general. Possible responses for the individual items range from a high of 4.0 (4-H contribution was great) to a low of 1.0 (no contribution through 4-H participation). Mean scores for these items are displayed in Table 20.

Table 20. Extent to which 4-H contributed to personal development.

Rank order		n	Mean score*
1	Develop personal pride in achievement and progress	173	3.54
2	Develop cooperative attitudes and skills toward working with others	173	3.38
3	Develop a sense of responsibility	173	3.33
4	Learn to accept self	174	3.12
5	Develop skills to effectively assume leadership skills	174	2.99
6	Learn about the selection and preparation of food products and the importance of good nutrition	171	2.99
7	Develop ability to use leisure time constructively	170	2.99
8	Develop the ability to communicate effectively	174	2.96
9	Learn to select and construct articles for clothing and/or home	171	2.81
10	Preparation for assuming adult responsibilities	173	2.80
11	Practice wise consumer decision habits	170	2.57
12	Acquire skills necessary for employment	174	2.51
13	Learn about the production, processing and marketing of agricultural products	170	2.24
14	Gain understanding of how factors of production, processing, marketing and distribution of agricultural products affect profit and loss	173	2.05
15	Continuing education through high school	170	1.90
16	Choice of job/career	173	1.81
17	Develop skill in the maintenance, repair and safe use of mechanical equipment	171	1.77
18	Continuing education beyond high school	171	1.64
19	Choice of college to attend	173	1.43

\* Great - 4; some - 3; a little - 2; none - 1.

Respondents felt the contribution of 4-H was greatest to those personal skills and qualities having to do with feelings of personal well-being (pride in achievement, responsibility, acceptance of self), social development (cooperative attitudes and skills, leadership, leisure, communication) and the family living area of foods and

nutrition. These items all received an individual mean score of 2.96 or higher. Scores of 3.54 for "develop personal pride in achievement and progress," 3.38 on "develop cooperative attitudes" and "skills toward working with others" and 3.33 on "develop a sense of responsibility" can be interpreted as very high indeed!

Overall, these respondents rated the 4-H contribution generally as positive for all items with lower ratings given for the agriculture objectives and for the effect of their 4-H experiences on future decisions related to education and career choices (Table 20).

The influence of 4-H on future education and career decisions appears to be negligible for most of our respondents. Scores for continuing education beyond high school and choice of job/career indicate only minimal influence from 4-H, at least in the view of our study respondents.

Thus, according to their retrospective views, the contribution of 4-H for this sample of alumni varies widely with the greatest contribution to personal growth and development. These results apply to this sample only, however. They cannot be generalized to all 4-H participants.

### Summary and Conclusion

In this study report, we have seen that nearly all of the former 4-H members responding to our questions participated in 4-H as members of an organized 4-H club. Most stayed in the program about 3 years, took a variety of projects (primarily in home economics and livestock subject areas) and participated in activities related to their club membership or those offered in the county for younger members.

The primary motivations for joining were peer or group oriented — because friends were joining or it was important for them to be a part of a group. Family influence was also strong. The prospect of having fun through 4-H stands out as the overriding motivation, however.

Over 90 percent belong to at least one other youth group and a very high percentage belonged to several other youth groups. These 4-H members were active participants of community groups!

The focal point of projects and club experiences can be seen through our respondents' views of what they enjoyed most and what gave most satisfaction. The picture that emerges is one of highly individualized skill development especially for the pre-teen youth.

At the same time, the skills developed do not appear to be specialized agricultural or home economics skills but rather those generalized skills considered to be personal and social (lifeskills) such as occur through overall 4-H participation. Specific subject matter knowledge and skills will change as changes occur in the respec-

tive scientific and technical fields. Personal and social skills that contribute to one's ability to adapt and change as changes occur through technological development, however, will be useful throughout life. This is where 4-H makes its greatest contribution.

To increase our understanding of the factors within the 4-H experience that contribute to the development of lifeskills, additional analysis is required. Such will be found in "Experiences That Make A Difference: Alumni Perceptions of 4-H Contributions," which is forthcoming. In this publication, the affect of length of time in the program and the breadth of project experiences, participation in 4-H activities and the quality of the club environment all on respondents' assessment of 4-H contributions to lifeskill development are explored.

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