

**THE BENEFITS OF FFA MEMBERSHIP AS PART OF THE THREE-CIRCLE MODEL
IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION**

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
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Chelsea Brooke Rose
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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my family. My parents, Jeff and Beth Doss, cast a vision for personal development for me long ago. This project is a culmination of that vision and I am a product of their faithful, constant leadership for my family. Likewise, my husband, John, has been a constant source of encouragement and sound advice for me as I have worked toward completion of this research. Just as my family has encouraged me, I hope this project will encourage other meaningful research in the field of agricultural education.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Carrie Stephens was instrumental in the completion of this study. Her time and attention on this research improved the quality of my work throughout the past two years. Dr. Christopher Stripling and Dean Tim Cross were also instrumental as members of the thesis committee. I would also like to thank the staff of Tennessee FFA Camp who distributed and collected surveys throughout the summer. Katlyn Lawhon was especially helpful during the project, as well.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the benefits of membership in the Future Farmers of America (FFA) student leadership organization among Tennessee FFA members by surveying members attending Camp Clements FFA Leadership Training Camp. The study focused on the fulfillment of FFA members' basic human needs as defined by Abraham Maslow (1943). The three needs on which this study focused are: love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization (1943). The study found that a majority of FFA members' three basic human needs are met due to their involvement in career development events, leadership positions, and other FFA activities. Of all research questions, the highest concentration of members claimed to have a more enjoyable high school experience as a result of their membership in FFA. With that in mind, future research should focus on determining how FFA improves the high school experience. This research could be helpful to other career and technical education organizations and future success within FFA. Moreover, linking the relevance of meeting Maslow's basic human needs with active participation in student organizations could assist teachers and program advisors as they recruit and retain members.

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Chapter I: Introduction

FFA is a student-led youth organization with a mission of making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education (National FFA Organization, 2003). Students within FFA (National FFA Organization, 2003) are regularly exposed to opportunities for engagement within the organization. However, it is unclear what benefits FFA members receive beyond travel, scholarships, recognition, and awards. This study investigated how students' basic human needs are being fulfilled through involvement in FFA.

All FFA members are enrolled in agricultural education. Agricultural education follows a recognized model for learning known as the three-circle model (National FFA Organization, 2013a). The three-circle model is a balanced and complete approach to secondary agricultural education (Croom, 2008). The model integrates membership and participation in the National FFA Organization with classroom learning and laboratory exercises and a student's Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2013). The mission of agricultural education is: agricultural education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems (National FFA Organization, 2013a).

According to the Tennessee FFA Association's (2013) data, approximately 33,500 Tennessee secondary students are enrolled in agricultural education. However, only 13,644 students are dues paying members of the National FFA Organization (Tennessee FFA, 2013). Thus, 19,856 Tennessee agricultural education students receive only two of the three components the National Association of Agricultural Educators (2013) considers to be the total package of

agricultural education: classroom and laboratory instruction, SAE, and membership in the National FFA Organization.

Because of FFA's place within the three-circle model of agricultural education, FFA is not considered to be a club; rather it is referred to by its leaders as an intracurricular organization (National FFA Organization, 2013c). The National FFA Organization (2013d) argues that this is an important distinction from extracurricular activities and that the National FFA Organization adds benefits to agricultural education by providing the leadership development aspects of FFA.

Beyond agricultural education stakeholders, sponsors and educational policy decision-makers need a clear understanding of how students are affected by involvement in FFA. This need stems from the consideration of a new program designed to aid in the effort of paying dues for every agricultural education student. That program was adopted in 2010 by the National FFA Organization Board of Directors (Worley, 2014) and is known as Program Affiliation.

According to Clay Worley (2014) with the National FFA Organization, chapters may pay its national dues in bulk by seeking funds from state and local government or other fundraising programs. By paying the affiliate membership fee, chapters save money per student and can offer every student membership. Program Affiliation was created as a result of a challenge from then United States Assistant Secretary of Vocational and Technical Education, Dr. Troy Justessen (Worley, 2014). Secretary Justessen challenged teachers to consider how FFA can justify collecting dues when the three-circle model claims FFA is an integral part of agricultural education (Worley, 2014).

In addition to being an integral part of agricultural education, one wonders what other benefits FFA has and if FFA is meeting the basic needs of humans. Abraham Maslow (1943) identified five basic human needs: physiological, safety and security, love and belonging, self-

esteem, and self-actualization. The latter three needs are organized as higher-order needs (Maslow, 1943). Therefore, this study questioned if Tennessee FFA members' basic needs of love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization were being fulfilled. This research could be helpful to the National FFA Organization by revealing the tangible benefits of the program through substantiation. In addition, this quantitative research study could be useful to the leaders of FFA in Tennessee in a time where increasing educational standards do not always encompass agricultural education (Education Sector, 2013).

Furthermore, agricultural education policy decisions could be influenced by determining the benefits of FFA membership for policymakers and other stakeholders. A description of the benefits of FFA membership will aid Tennessee legislators, political leaders, sponsors, and individual donors as they consider funding FFA membership for all agricultural education students.

Statement of the Problem

The National FFA Organization (2013a) and the National Association of Agricultural Educators (2013) view agricultural education as being comprised of three components: classroom and laboratory instruction, SAE, and participation in FFA. However, according to Tennessee FFA Association (2013) data, of the 33,500 agricultural education students in Tennessee, only 13,644 are FFA members. Thus, the non-FFA members are not receiving the fully integrated three-circle model approach to agricultural education. Without membership in the organization, those students are not experiencing the benefits that may come through participation in FFA. Therefore, it was important that this study explore what those benefits may be through the lens of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Of course, if non-FFA members are not experiencing the fully integrated three-circle model of agricultural education they are missing out on some of the easily seen benefits of FFA, such as, the financial benefits. Currently, FFA members nationally earn more than \$4 billion annually (National FFA Organization, 2013b). Plus, the National FFA Organization awards approximately \$2 million in scholarships annually (National FFA Organization, 2013b). In addition, 87% of FFA members are interested in learning about career exploration, and 81% are interested in learning about college preparation (National FFA Organization, 2013b).

Aside from benefiting through scholarships and awards, students are also preparing themselves to work in an industry that hires more than 21 million Americans annually (American Agri-Women, 2014). That equals 20% of the American workforce, meaning our students are leaving the classroom equipped for careers in a field with many opportunities (America Agri-Women, 2014). Career success is one component of the FFA mission and students are better equipped for that success through involvement with FFA.

Further, FFA members are exposed to learning opportunities and travel that only come with FFA membership. For instance, FFA members in Tennessee are invited to attend a regional banquet, the state FFA convention, and the national FFA convention. Those events happen throughout the state and nation exposing students to other cultures, customs, and environments.

These aforementioned statistics demonstrate the benefits that FFA has for its membership. These are benefits non-FFA members enrolled in agricultural education could be receiving with membership in the FFA organization. Thus, the fundamental problem addressed in this quantitative research study was identifying the benefits of FFA membership.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to identify the benefits of FFA membership based on the fulfillment of three basic human needs: love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The guiding question of this study was: What is the benefit of FFA? The following research objectives gave structure to the research and answered the guiding question in organized detail.

Objective 1: Determine if FFA members are developing feelings of love and belonging while active in FFA.

Objective 2: Describe FFA members' self-esteem as it relates to their FFA involvement.

Objective 3: Assess FFA members' development of self-actualization through participation in FFA.

Significance and Stakeholders

The results of this study provide information regarding the benefits of FFA membership through the lens of meeting three basic human needs: love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. This study provides data that would be insightful for sponsors and/or educational policymakers as they consider issues such as funding FFA membership for all agricultural education students. The findings from this research are also meaningful to non-FFA members enrolled in agricultural education allowing those students to understand the benefits of FFA membership (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991). The findings are also helpful to FFA advocates in the debate over FFA membership as an essential component of the three-circle model of agricultural education.

Information on the benefits of FFA membership will be useful for high school agricultural educators seeking to evaluate their FFA chapter and promote membership in that

chapter. Furthermore, principals and school administrators may use this data to justify their agricultural education program.

Thus, data showing the benefits of FFA membership relative to the basic human needs of love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization could be useful information for secondary students, education policymakers, FFA advocates, high school agricultural educators, principals, and school administrators.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study are subject to the following design limitations:

1. The study relied on the self-evaluation of secondary agricultural education students who are FFA members. These students may not have a strong ability to accurately self-evaluate or may otherwise lack the motivation to seriously self-evaluate.
2. FFA chapters vary in scope; therefore, students' access to FFA activities and even membership may be affected by their high school agricultural education program making research findings somewhat inconsistent across multiple chapters.
3. Convenience sampling was used to select FFA student to complete the survey during Tennessee FFA Camp. The camp provided a venue for several hundred students to participate in the study; however, those students attending the camp are naturally among the more active members within the Tennessee FFA membership. Thus, survey results may reflect more accurately on active FFA members, rather than the entire membership.

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were made for the purposes of this study:

1. Students participating in the research questions responded as accurately as possible.
2. Career development event opportunities and leadership positions are made available to each FFA member surveyed.

Definitions of Terms

1. Love and belonging: as a basic need is defined using Maslow's (1943) description of "hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group, and strive with great intensity to achieve this goal".
2. Self-esteem: as a basic need is defined using Maslow's (1943) description of "a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others".
3. Self-actualization: as a basic need is defined using Maslow's (1943) description of "the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming".
4. FFA membership: dues paid to local, state and national Future Farmers of America Organization.
5. Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE): the experiential learning component of agricultural education; students keep records of their SAE or project work from beginning of membership to completion (National FFA Organization, 2003).
6. Agricultural education: secondary agricultural courses offered by an agricultural educator, which includes: classroom/laboratory instruction, SAE and FFA.

7. FFA: Future Farmers of America or the National FFA Organization; a student-led agricultural youth organization for middle school, high school and college students.

FFA is an intracurricular component of agricultural education.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Background

As this study explores the benefits of FFA today, it is important to understand how FFA began, how it is funded, and what opportunities students have for involvement. Founded in 1928, the Future Farmers of America brought together students, teachers, and agribusiness to solidify support for agricultural education (National FFA Organization, 2013c). In Kansas City's Baltimore Hotel, 33 young farm boys from 18 states chartered the organization (National FFA Organization, 2013c). It was the movement created by the passage of the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act of 1917 that spawned the organization of the Future Farmers of America and the founding of high school agricultural education programs throughout the nation (National FFA Organization, 2003).

In 1925, the Future Farmers of Virginia was created by Virginia Tech agricultural education professors and served as the prototype for what would become the Future Farmers of America (National FFA Organization, 2003). Even in its infancy, leaders of the Future Farmers of America organization understood the need for community and parental support and encouragement (National FFA Organization, 2003). Adults have played important roles as advisors and teachers supporting the development of FFA members since 1928 (National FFA Organization, 2003).

Adult volunteers and advisors have helped FFA members maintain many traditions over time. For instance, in 1929, FFA members adopted official colors: national blue and corn gold (National FFA Organization, 2003). Later in 1930, members adopted a standard, official dress consisting of a dark blue shirt, blue or white trousers, blue cap, and yellow tie (National FFA Organization, 2003). Members today abide by a similar standard for dress. It was in 1933 when

the iconic, blue corduroy jackets were recognized as the organization's official dress; a tradition continued today serving to heighten students' sense of belonging to the organization (National FFA Organization, 2003).

Over time, monumental changes were made within FFA. Perhaps chief among those changes were the integration of African-Americans and the addition of females to the membership in 1965 and 1969, respectively (National FFA Organization, 2003). Other meaningful changes within the organization include the adoption of a creed in 1930 and the creation of an Alumni Association in 1971 (National FFA Organization, 2003).

Agricultural education is funded through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which has evolved over time (National FFA Organization, 2003). An important milestone within agricultural education came in 1950 when FFA was granted a federal charter (National FFA Organization, 2003). The federal charter signified and continues to signify Congress' recognition of FFA as an intracurricular part of the educational program (National FFA Organization, 2003).

FFA is supported financially by the National FFA Foundation that raises approximately \$15 million per year to support the program (National FFA Organization, 2013c). The Foundation began in 1944 under the leadership of agricultural stakeholders across the nation (National FFA Organization, 2003). The Foundation funds various programs and scholarships within FFA. Aside from garnering support from private industry, FFA member dues support the work of the Organization (National FFA Organization, 2003).

A portion of the funds raised by the National FFA (2003) Foundation goes to support the career development events in which students compete. A value of National FFA is the understanding that everyone is a potential born leader (National FFA Organization, 2003).

Through career development events or competitions, students are afforded the opportunity to discover and tap into their potential as leaders (National FFA Organization, 2003). FFA was founded around competition during the American Royal Livestock show in Kansas City, MO and since then, every National FFA Convention has hosted numerous career development events for members (National FFA Convention, 2003).

There are 25 career development events offered to the FFA membership that challenge students in critical thinking, communication, livestock evaluation, and skill development (National FFA Organization, 2014z). Career development events are held throughout the year on the local, regional, state, and national level and reward students with cash awards, scholarships, plaques, recognition, and more (National FFA Organization, 2014z).

These career development events provide students with opportunities to achieve, which is essential in meeting the basic human needs defined by Maslow (1943). In fact, some traits claimed as those gained by FFA members are synonymous with self-esteem: confidence, pride and dignity (Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus, 2013). Wingenbach and Kahler (1997) conducted a study in which Iowa FFA members were surveyed to determine if a significant relationship existed between their self-perceived youth leadership and life skills development scores and their participation in youth leadership activities. The study revealed a positive relationship between the scores and students' participation in FFA. As the students in this study were more active in FFA and youth leadership activities, they better fulfilled their basic human need for self-esteem.

Another study relevant to this paper is that of Professors Bird, Henry, and Phelps (2012). Together, they authored an article entitled *Factors Influencing or Discouraging Secondary Students' FFA Participation*. That research inspired the quantitative research approach used in this study. In their research, Bird, Henry, and Phelps (2012) used semi-structured interviews,

individual interviews, and questionnaires to identify themes as reasons students join or do not join FFA in 10 Illinois small town, rural, and urban fringe schools.

The study revealed four themes as reasons students join FFA and three themes as reasons students do not join FFA (Bird, Henry, & Phelps, 2012). The researchers then used those themes to draw conclusions about FFA membership trends in Illinois. The goal was to gain the perspective of high school FFA members and non-members in regard to the benefits gained or lost through FFA. To prompt the emergence of themes, the Bird, Henry, and Phelps research used Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* to guide the questions asked of each student participating in the survey (Bird, Henry, & Phelps, 2012). Likewise, each question asked in this study directly correlates with the three human needs being examined and thereby, each question directly correlates with each of the three objectives. The questions lead to themes organized by objective that will be helpful in understanding the benefit of FFA membership.

Theoretical Framework: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) outlines five levels of needs that human beings share: physiological, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow (1943) explained that if physiological and safety and security needs are met, the need for love and belonging develops. He describes love and belonging as an individual hungers for affectionate relations with others and desires to have a place within a group (Maslow, 1943). Securing a position within a group such as FFA could build feelings of love and belonging by giving one a "group" to call his own (Maslow, 1943).

Maslow (1943) also described that all people feel a need for self-respect or self-esteem. He divided that need into two categories: the desire for strength and confidence and the desire for

reputation or prestige (Maslow, 1943). These needs may be met through succeeding in a competition or by receiving recognition for achievements made (Maslow, 1943).

However, even with the needs for love and belonging and self-esteem met, Maslow (1943) stated that an individual may still feel restless if he is not fulfilling his potential. Students were asked about opportunities provided through FFA to explore their potential. Although FFA offers many venues for competition and interaction, it is important that students fulfill their need for self-actualization as explained by Maslow.

Love and belonging needs are among what Maslow (1943) termed as the lower-order needs, which include physiological and safety needs. Noltemeyer, Bush, Patton, and Bergen (2012) performed a study that tested the theory that meeting the lower-order or deficiency needs is necessary before meeting growth needs—self-esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). What they found was that in the 40 Midwest schools participating in their study, there was a positive relationship between deficiency needs and growth needs (Noltemeyer, Bush, Patton, & Bergen, 2012).

The impetus for the study stemmed from the expectation that regardless of the degree to which deficiency needs have been fulfilled, students are expected to achieve academically (Noltemeyer, Bush, Patton, & Bergen, 2012). Noltemeyer, Bush, Patton, and Bergen (2012) believed that a better understanding of the relationship between deficiency needs and growth needs could serve as a prerequisite for establishing conditions that maximize learning outcomes. This study investigated a similar notion, seeking to learn if students are fulfilling the need for love and belonging through their participation in FFA.

Beyond fulfilling a need for belonging, students actively seek to build self-esteem (Baumeister & Harter, 1993). This, of course, is an important aspect of the theoretical framework

of the study. In the theoretical frameworks described for this study, (Maslow, 1943) self-esteem is identified as a basic human need. Baumeister (1993) argued that children and adolescents are so desperate for a high level of self-esteem that they can develop depression and suicidal tendencies with low self-esteem.

Thus, it is important that students achieve a high-level of self-esteem. The National Future Farmers of America Organization (2013a) offers many opportunities for students to test their confidence through training and education. The survey asked students to indicate how their confidence and ability is tested.

Students were also asked questions relating to their potential and goal-setting tendencies. Akcay and Akyol (2012) explored environments in which individuals may be able to reach their fullest potential. Specifically, Akcay and Akyol (2012) investigated the potential of the individual to reach his highest level of personal fulfillment throughout his life. They did this within the context of learning in the Lifelong Education Centers in Turkey (Akcay & Akyol, 2012).

The study revealed that individual needs for self-actualization must be considered in several ways including: emotional, intellectual, and social dimensions (Akcay & Akyol, 2012). Akcay and Akyol (2012) concluded that for lifelong education programs to satisfy the need for self-actualization, those programs must be designed to meet the emotional, intellectual, and social dimensions at play. They went on to state that individuals who state realistic aims for themselves, develop thinking and studying skills, and have strong self-respect and confidence are more successful in attaining self-actualization than others (Akcay & Akyol, 2012).

Abraham Maslow laid the foundation for many investigations into the five basic human needs. Several have focused on the fulfillment of deficiency needs and how those needs can lead

to the satisfaction of the three higher needs, such as, the study performed by Noltemeyer, Bush, Patton, and Bergen. As students and young people seek to fulfill their higher needs, exposure to team situations and leadership activities have proven to aid in that effort (Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997). Building on the studies previously mentioned, this research sought to learn, specifically, how FFA members' needs are met.

Chapter III: Methods and Procedures

Design

This research questioned whether FFA meets three of five of the most basic human needs, which include: physiological needs, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). The study did not investigate whether physiological or safety and security needs were met as a result of FFA membership. The instrumentation used in this study and the overall approach did not allow for those needs to be accurately examined.

The benefits of FFA membership were quantified by asking FFA members to state whether they agree with statements relating to love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Surveys were completed in the form of a descriptive survey and engaged members from all high schools attending the camp. These students are enrolled in a variety of courses and represent grades level nine through twelve and even immediate high school graduates. The research is quantitative in nature and relies on the perspective of FFA members.

Convenience sampling was most sensible due to the fact that the entire population could not be surveyed and each week of FFA Camp hosts chapters from each of the three regions of FFA (Ary et al., 2010). According to Ary et al. (2010), because researchers cannot generally survey an entire population, they select a sample from that population. It was very important to select a sample that would provide results that are similar to those that would have been obtained if the entire population had been surveyed (Ary et al., 2010). Tennessee FFA Camp provided such an environment.

Sample

This research used convenience sampling to understand the benefits of FFA through descriptive surveys completed by students attending Tennessee FFA Camp. Convenience sampling was chosen because FFA Camp brings together approximately 900 FFA members throughout the summer and made for a good environment to distribute written surveys. A survey was chosen because they were more easily distributed among students at FFA camp who do not have computer access.

The target population (Ary et al., 2010) for this study was Tennessee FFA members who are enrolled in at least one agricultural education course on the secondary level. FFA membership is implicit due to their participation at Camp Clements FFA Leadership Training Camp. Notice was given to students' guardians that the survey would be taken at FFA camp. They were also notified that participation in the survey was optional.

The sampling frame (Ary et al., 2010) for this study was students in high schools in each of Tennessee's three regions. These regions represent each of Tennessee's three grand divisions: West, Middle, and East. In this study, the sampling frame included 50-100 students from each of the six weeks of FFA camp. Although the surveys were anonymous, parents and guardians were notified that their child would be invited to participate in a survey. Students were made aware that their participation was voluntary when the surveys were issued.

There were 394 students who participated in the study. Of those participating, 0.3% were incoming high school freshman; 33.8% were incoming high school sophomores; 34.0% were incoming high school juniors; 29.9% were incoming high school seniors; and 1.5% were immediate high school graduates. Nearly all research participants had participated in at least one career development event.

The sample consisted of 37.1% male and 62.7% female members, as well as, 2.5% African-American, 8.6% Hispanic, 86.3% white, non-Hispanic, and 2.6% other ethnicities. According to the National FFA Organization (2014), 67% of the membership, nationally, is white, non-Hispanic; 22% is Hispanic; 8% is African-American or American Indian; and 3% represent other races. Thus, the demographic makeup of the convenience sample was a close representation of the general membership.

Length of membership in FFA within the sample included: 32.7% first-year members, 30.5% second-year members, 25.9% third-year members, 10.4% fourth-year members, and 0.3% fifth-year members. Nationally, 5% of FFA members are currently enrolled in grades 7-8; 91% of FFA members are currently enrolled in grades 9-12; 4% have already graduated from high school and may be engaged in postsecondary studies (National FFA Organization, 2014). And 40.6% of members surveyed live on a farm; 59.4% do not live on a farm.

Instrument

The survey instrument was created using Maslow's (1943) basic human needs of love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization as a basis for each question. The other two needs: physiological and safety and security were not evaluated in this study. Quite simply, the two lower needs are not easily measurable through written surveys and may not be fully applicable in the question of the benefits of FFA membership.

The survey began by asking students to indicate their level of participation in career development events. This provided context for understanding how involved research participants were in FFA. Student participation was relevant as this sample was selected to represent the entire population. Later in the survey, students were also asked to indicate leadership positions

held and what, if any, travel opportunities they experienced. Again, these questions provided understanding of the scope of involvement in FFA of the students surveyed.

Three objectives guided the development of survey questions. Objective 1 was to determine if FFA members are developing feelings of love and belonging while active in FFA; objective 2 was to describe FFA members' self-esteem as it relates to their FFA involvement; and objective 3 was to assess FFA members' development of self-actualization through participation in FFA. Those objectives were investigated using questions in a survey format. The questions devised for each objective were:

Objective 1: Determine if FFA members are developing feelings of love and belonging while active in FFA.

Question 1a and 2a: ability to work with others, appreciation for agriculture

Question 1b and 2b: recognition

Question 2: leadership positions

Question 4: high school more enjoyable, remain dedicated to school, ability to make friends, a place to call "home", FFA favorite activity

Question 4a: motivates to attend school, remain active in school

Question 4b: participation in FFA events after-school

Objective 2: Describe FFA members' self-esteem as it relates to their FFA involvement.

Question 1a and 2a: confidence and ability to speak publicly

Question 1b and 2b: recognition

Question 1e: participate without pressure, when failed advisor was not upset, more likely to try new things

Question 3: realize value in college education, realize value in technical training,
more likely to pursue college or technical training

Objective 3: Assess FFA members' development of self-actualization through
participation in FFA.

Question 1: gauge student participation in FFA to allow for deductions regarding the
development of self-actualization in subsequent survey questions.

Question 1a and 2a: desire for improvement, desire to set and achieve goals

Question 1c and 2c: attained knowledge, test skill-level, skill-level improved

Question 3a: plan to pursue college education (4-year), plan to pursue college
education (2-year), plan to pursue technical training, plan to enter workforce

Question 3b: self-discipline, reaching goals, remaining dedicated to goals,
appreciation for learning

Question 4c: maintain a GPA, do not want to disappoint advisor with below average
grades, below average grades may prevent FFA activity

Data Collection

FFA Camp staff assisted with the distribution of the surveys each Monday of FFA Camp. Completed surveys were due on Friday. Monday through Friday represents the entirety of the week of camp. The surveys were collected each week and all surveys were used in the results found within this study.

Chapter IV: Journal of Agricultural Education Manuscript

This chapter includes the manuscript prepared for submission to the Journal of Agricultural Education.

Author Note

Chelsea B. Rose, Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communications, University of Tennessee; Carrie A. Stephens, Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communications, University of Tennessee.

We offer our thanks to the staff of the Tennessee Future Farmers of America (FFA) Camp Clements for assisting with the distribution and collection of the survey completed by FFA members.

We acknowledge while the data herein was collected objectively, there may be a perceived conflict of interest due to my volunteer and professional role with the Tennessee FFA Foundation, Inc.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Chelsea Rose, P.O. Box 5034, TTU, Cookeville, TN 38505. Email: crose16@utk.edu

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Introduction

FFA is a student-led youth organization with a mission of making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education (National FFA Organization, 2003). Students within FFA (2003) are regularly exposed to opportunities for engagement within the organization. However, it is unclear what benefits FFA members receive beyond travel, scholarships, recognition, and awards they may receive from time to time. This study investigated how students' basic human needs are being fulfilled through involvement in FFA.

Abraham Maslow (1943) identified five basic human needs: physiological, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The latter three needs are organized as higher level needs (Maslow, 1943). This study questioned if Tennessee FFA members' basic needs of love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization were being fulfilled.

As this study explores the benefits of FFA today, it is important to understand how FFA began, how it is funded, and what opportunities students have for involvement. Founded in 1928, the Future Farmers of America brought together students, teachers, and agribusiness to solidify support for agricultural education (National FFA Organization, 2013c). Adult volunteers and advisors have helped FFA members maintain many traditions over time. For instance, in 1930, members adopted a standard, official dress consisting of a dark blue shirt, blue or white trousers, blue cap, and yellow tie (National FFA Organization, 2003). Members today abide by a similar standard for dress. It was in 1933 when the iconic, blue corduroy jackets were recognized as the organization's official dress; a tradition continued today serving to heighten students' sense of belonging to the organization (National FFA Organization, 2003).

Agricultural education is funded through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which has evolved over time (National FFA Organization, 2003). An important milestone within agricultural education came in 1950 when FFA was granted a federal charter (National FFA Organization, 2003). The federal charter signified and continues to signify Congress' recognition of FFA as an intracurricular part of the educational program (National FFA Organization, 2003).

FFA is supported financially by the National FFA Foundation that raises approximately \$15 million per year to support the program (National FFA Organization, 2013c). The Foundation began in 1944 under the leadership of agricultural stakeholders across the nation (National FFA Organization, 2003). The Foundation funds various programs and scholarships within FFA. Aside from garnering support from private industry, FFA member dues support the work of the Organization (National FFA Organization, 2003).

A portion of the funds raised by the National FFA (2003) Foundation goes to support the career development events in which students compete. There are 25 career development events offered to the FFA membership that challenge students in critical thinking, communication, livestock evaluation, and skill development (National FFA Organization, 2014z). Career development events are held throughout the year on the local, regional, state, and national level and reward students with cash awards, scholarships, plaques, recognition, and more (National FFA Organization, 2014z).

Together, Professors Bird, Henry, and Phelps (2012) authored an article entitled *Factors Influencing or Discouraging Secondary Students' FFA Participation*. That research inspired the quantitative research approach used in this study. In their research, Bird, Henry, and Phelps (2012) used semi-structured interviews, individual interviews, and questionnaires to identify

themes as reasons students join or do not join FFA in 10 Illinois small town, rural, and urban fringe schools.

Theoretical Framework: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) outlines five levels of needs that human beings share: physiological, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow (1943) explained that if physiological and safety and security needs are met, the need for love and belonging develops. He describes love and belonging as an individual hungers for affectionate relations with others and desires to have a place within a group (Maslow, 1943). Securing a position within a group such as FFA could build feelings of love and belonging by giving one a "group" to call his own (Maslow, 1943).

Maslow (1943) also described that all people feel a need for self-respect or self-esteem. He divided that need into two categories: the desire for strength and confidence and the desire for reputation or prestige (Maslow, 1943). These needs may be met through succeeding in a competition or by receiving recognition for achievements made (Maslow, 1943).

However, even with the needs for love and belonging and self-esteem met, Maslow (1943) stated that an individual may still feel restless if he is not fulfilling his potential. Students were asked about opportunities provided through FFA to explore their potential. Although FFA offers many venues for competition and interaction, it is important that students fulfill their need for self-actualization as explained by Maslow.

Purpose and Objectives

In order to identify the benefits of FFA membership, this study used a primary guiding question throughout: What is the benefit of FFA? The study sought to identify the benefits of FFA membership based on the fulfillment of three basic human needs: love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The following research objectives gave structure to the research and answered the guiding question in organized detail:

Objective 1: Determine if FFA members are developing feelings of love and belonging while active in FFA.

Objective 2: Describe FFA members' self-esteem as it relates to their FFA involvement.

Objective 3: Assess FFA members' development of self-actualization through participation in FFA.

Methods and Procedures

The benefits of FFA membership were quantified by asking FFA members to state whether they agree with statements relating to love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Surveys were completed in the form of a descriptive survey and engaged members from all high schools attending the camp. These students are enrolled in a variety of courses and represent grades level nine through twelve and even immediate high school graduates. The research is quantitative in nature and relies on the perspective of FFA members.

Convenience sampling was most sensible due to the fact that the entire population could not be surveyed and each week of FFA Camp hosts chapters from each of the three regions of FFA (Ary et al., 2010). This research sought to understand the benefits of FFA through descriptive surveys completed by students attending Tennessee FFA Camp. A survey method

was chosen because they were more easily distributed among students at FFA camp who do not have computer access.

Although the surveys were anonymous, parents and guardians were notified that their child would be invited to participate in a survey. Students were made aware that their participation was voluntary when the surveys were issued. There were 394 students participated in the study. Of those participating, 0.3% were incoming high school freshman; 33.8% were incoming high school sophomores; 34.0% were incoming high school juniors; 29.9% were incoming high school seniors; 1.5% were immediate high school graduates. Nearly all research participants had participated in at least one career development event.

The sample consisted of 37.1% male and 62.7% female members, as well as, 2.5% African-American, 8.6% Hispanic, 86.3% white, non-Hispanic, and 2.6% other ethnicities. According to the National FFA Organization (2014), 67% of the membership, nationally, is white, non-Hispanic; 22% is Hispanic; 8% is African-American or American Indian; and 3% represent other races. Thus, the demographic makeup of the convenience sample was a close representation of the general membership.

Length of membership in FFA within the sample included: 32.7% first-year members, 30.5% second-year members, 25.9% third-year members, 10.4% fourth-year members, and 0.3% fifth-year members. Nationally, 5% of FFA members are currently enrolled in grades 7-8; 91% of FFA members are currently enrolled in grades 9-12; 4% have already graduated from high school and may be engaged in postsecondary studies (National FFA Organization, 2014). And 40.6% of members surveyed live on a farm; 59.4% do not live on a farm.

The instrument was created using Maslow's (1943) basic human needs of love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization as a basis for each question. The other two needs:

physiological and safety and security were not evaluated in this study. Quite simply, the two lower needs are not easily measurable through written surveys and may not be fully applicable in the question of the benefits of FFA membership.

Three objectives guided the development of survey questions; objective 1: determine if FFA members are developing feelings of love and belonging while active in FFA; objective 2: describe FFA members' self-esteem as it relates to their FFA involvement; and objective 3: assess FFA members' development of self-actualization through participation in FFA. Those objectives were investigated using questions in a survey format.

FFA Camp staff assisted with the distribution of the surveys each Monday of FFA Camp. Completed surveys were due on Friday. Monday through Friday represents the entirety of the week of camp. The surveys were collected each week and all surveys were used in the results found within this study.

The target population (Ary et al., 2010) for this study was Tennessee FFA members who are enrolled in at least one agricultural education course on the secondary level. FFA membership is implicit due to their participation at Camp Clements FFA Leadership Training Camp. Notice was given to students' guardians that the survey would be taken at FFA camp. They were also notified that participation in the survey was optional.

The sampling frame (Ary et al., 2010) for this study was students in high schools in each of Tennessee's three regions. These regions represent each of Tennessee's three grand divisions: West, Middle, and East. In this study, the sampling frame included 50-100 students from each of the six weeks of FFA camp.

Results

The results of the survey are organized by objective. Objective 1 pertaining to love and belonging is represented in Tables 1.1-1.2. Objective 2 relating to self-esteem needs is represented in Tables 2.1-2.3. Objective 3, which is based on self-actualization needs, is represented in Tables 3.1-3.3. (Where totals do not equal 100%, students opted not to answer.)

First, objective 1 focused on determining if FFA members are developing feelings of love and belonging while active in FFA. The results in Table 1.1 show that more than 80% of students surveyed agreed that either their participation in career development events or leadership roles have strengthened their appreciation for agriculture.

Table 1.1 Skills Relating to Love and Belonging Needs			
Skills	Percentage Disagree	Percentage Agree	Percentage Unsure
Appreciation for agriculture gained through career development event participation	0.8	89.1	3.0
Ability to work with others gained through career development event participation	1.5	84.0	7.1
Appreciation for agriculture gained through leadership position(s)	0.5	82.5	3.6
Ability to work with others gained through leadership position(s)	0.3	81.5	4.3

Table 1.2 highlights survey results that showed FFA makes high school more enjoyable, causes students to remain dedicated in school, enhances their ability to make friends, gives them a place to call “home”, motivates them to attend school, and causes them to remain active in school. In fact, 89.6% of students agree that FFA has given them a place to call “home” within their school. In keeping with that response, 96.2% of students agree that FFA has made their high school experience more enjoyable.

Table 1.2 School Engagement Relating to Love and Belonging Needs			
Statements	Percentage Disagree	Percentage Agree	Percentage Unsure
FFA has made my high school experience more enjoyable.	0.5	96.2	2.3
FFA has helped me remain dedicated to school.	4.3	87.1	7.4
FFA has given me the ability to make friends at my school.	0.5	93.4	4.8
FFA has given me a place to call “home” within my school.	2.3	89.6	7.1
FFA is among my favorite activities at school.	0.5	95.2	3.3
FFA motivates me to attend school.	5.6	85.0	6.6
FFA is at least part of the reason why I remain active at my school.	9.1	81.0	6.6

Table 2.1 shows how survey participants responded about confidence gained and the ability to speak publicly. Students were asked to indicate the confidence and speaking abilities gained through career development events and leadership positions. For example, FFA members felt they were more confident by participating in leadership positions within FFA (78.9%) and also gained a significant amount of confidence from participating in career development events (82.5%).

Table 2.1 Skills Relating to Self-Esteem Needs			
Skills	Percentage Disagree	Percentage Agree	Percentage Unsure
Confidence gained through participation in career development events	1.8	82.5	7.4
Ability to speak publicly gained through participation in career development events	6.1	72.3	13.2
Confidence gained through participation in leadership position(s)	0.9	78.9	5.8
Ability to speak publicly gained through participation in leadership position(s)	3.6	71.1	11.2

Table 2.2 shows survey responses that measured student self-esteem by asking about the pressure they may feel to succeed, how their advisor(s) react to failure, and how likely they may be to try new things. FFA members clearly felt they were more eager to try new things because of their participation in career development events (81.7%).

Table 2.2 Participation Relating to Self-Esteem Needs			
Statements	Percentage Disagree	Percentage Agree	Percentage Unsure
I was able to participate in career development events without a high amount of pressure to succeed.	11.7	59.1	19.8
When I failed in a career development event, my advisor was not upset.	12.2	64.7	13.7
I am more likely to try new things due to my participation in career development events.	1.3	81.7	6.9

Table 2.3 shows a majority of students surveyed have realized the value in a college education and in technical training. Further, most students agreed that they are more likely to pursue higher education as result of their involvement with FFA (80.5%).

Table 2.3 Realization of Value in Education Relating to Self-Esteem Needs			
Statements	Percentage Disagree	Percentage Agree	Percentage Unsure
My involvement with FFA has helped me realize the value in a college education.	3.8	84.8	6.9
My involvement with FFA has helped me realize the value in technical training. (Auto-diesel, culinary arts, etc.)	5.3	73.1	16.2
I am more likely to attend college or pursue technical training as a result of my FFA involvement.	6.1	80.5	8.1

Table 3.1 shows student responses to questions relating to desire for improvement and setting and achieving goals. Results show that more than 80% of students surveyed want to improve and have a greater desire to set and achieve goals as a result of their FFA membership.

Table 3.1 Improvement/Goal-Setting Relating to Self-Actualization Needs			
Skills	Percentage Disagree	Percentage Agree	Percentage Unsure
Desire for improvement gained through participation in career development events	1.3	86.0	4.8
Desire to set and achieve goals gained through participation in career development events	0.8	84.8	6.6
Desire for improvement gained through participation in leadership role(s)	0.8	81.7	3.8
Desire to set and achieve goals gained through participation in leadership role(s)	0.5	81.7	3.8

In Table 3.2, results show that more than 70% of students agreed that they attained knowledge, tested their skill-level, and improved their skill level while participating in career development events or leadership positions. Specifically, 86% of members surveyed agreed that their skill-level was improved through participation in career development events.

Table 3.2 Learning/Development Relating to Self-Actualization Needs			
Statements	Percentage Disagree	Percentage Agree	Percentage Unsure
I attained knowledge through participating in career development events.	0.5	87.1	3.8
I was given the opportunity to test my skill-level through participation in career development events.	0.8	84.8	5.6
My skill-level was improved through participation in career development events.	0.3	86.0	4.3
I attained knowledge through participating in a leadership position(s).	1.5	74.6	6.6
I was given the opportunity to test my skill-level through participation in a leadership position(s).	2.0	72.6	8.1
My skill-level was improved through participation in leadership position(s).	1.5	73.9	6.9

Finally, Table 3.3 shows how students improved their appreciation for self-discipline (92.9%), reaching goals (94.4%), remaining dedicated to goals (93.7%), learning from failure (91.6%), and learning new lessons, skills, or trades (93.1%). Fewer than 3% of the students responded that they disagreed with the statements below.

Table 3.3 Lessons Learned Relating to Self-Actualization Needs			
Statements	Percentage Disagree	Percentage Agree	Percentage Unsure
FFA has taught me or improved my appreciation for self-discipline.	1.3	92.9	3.8
FFA has taught me or improved my appreciation for the value of reaching my goals.	1.3	94.4	2.3
FFA has taught me or improved my appreciation for remaining dedicated to my goals.	1.5	93.7	2.5
FFA has taught me or improved my appreciation for learning from failure.	2.3	91.6	4.1
FFA has taught me or improved my appreciation for learning new lessons, skills, or trades.	1.5	93.1	3.0

Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

FFA provides a place for many students to belong. The organization also builds confidence and self-esteem within its members. Plus, FFA members are pushed to reach their potential through career development events, leadership positions, and other responsibilities. It is clear that the three needs described by Maslow as love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization are met through involvement in FFA (1943).

Objective 1: Determine if FFA members are developing feelings of love and belonging while active in FFA. First, love and belonging are needs that cause an individual to “hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group, and strive with great intensity to achieve this goal” (Maslow, 1943). Students who participated in the survey overwhelmingly responded that FFA is the place they belong. Through the twenty-five career development events FFA organizes, students learn new knowledge and skills in an environment that caters to low-pressure development. This study proved that FFA provides opportunities for individuals to fulfill that basic need of love and belonging by working on a team and creating relationships with team members during training, travel, and competition.

A majority (89.6%) of the FFA members surveyed responded that FFA has given them a place to call “home” within their school. A majority (93.4%) of members also responded that FFA has enhanced their ability to make friends. Each of these responses among others indicates FFA members are placed in an environment that leads students to fulfill their basic human need of love and belonging.

Objective 2: Describe FFA members’ self-esteem as it relates to their FFA involvement. Next, self-esteem is an individual’s need for “a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others” (Maslow,

1943). This study asked FFA members if they feel they have been recognized or received scholarships for their accomplishments in FFA.

A majority of students surveyed indicated they have been recognized or awarded at the local, regional, state, and/or national levels. The National FFA Foundation (2013d) awards more than \$2 million annually in the form of scholarships. The Tennessee FFA Association awards students on the local, sectional, regional, and state level (Tennessee FFA Association, 2013). The awards and scholarships build self-esteem in agricultural education students and will help them as they seek to fulfill their potential.

A majority (82.5%) of FFA members responded that they have gained confidence through their FFA involvement. A majority (81.7%) of members surveyed responded that they feel more accomplished due to their participation in CDEs.

Further, a majority (84.8%) of members agree that their involvement with FFA has helped them realize the value in a college education. Likewise, 73.1% of members surveyed realize the value in technical training due to FFA involvement. In a culmination of awareness of post-secondary educational opportunities and a development of self-esteem, a majority (80.5%) of FFA members surveyed responded they plan to enroll in college or pursue technical training.

Objective 3: Assess FFA members' development of self-actualization through participation in FFA. Finally, self-actualization is described by Maslow (1943) as “the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming”. The research questions in this study investigated students' expanded interest in career development and growth for potential career success. A majority of students stated they have higher aspirations for themselves as a result of their membership. Each of these benefits of FFA membership contributes to self-actualization.

Among the questions asked of the FFA members, Q1.5 most closely related to a student's ability to achieve self-actualization through FFA. In fact, a majority (59.1%) of members agreed that they are able to participate in CDEs without a high amount of pressure to succeed. When asked if members felt more accomplished due to their participation in CDEs, a majority (81.7%) responded they indeed felt more accomplished. These results and others from the survey reveal that students are given opportunities to achieve their full potential through FFA and feel confident trying new things. It is important that other student organizations and youth-oriented leadership groups realize the importance of providing students with opportunities to meet their basic human needs.

It is recommended that other career and technical student organizations conduct similar research and compare how their students relate to the same feelings. Further, the National FFA Organization should consider surveying its membership to study how well students' basic needs are being met across the country. It is important that students feel empowered personally and academically. Investigating the fulfillment of those needs is a worthwhile endeavor.

Chapter V: Summary, Implications, and Recommendations

The results of this study make it easy to see why agricultural education was designed to follow the three-circle model for learning (National FFA Organization, 2013a). Clearly, students gain a sense of love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization through their involvement with FFA. The three-circle model can only be a balanced and complete approach to secondary agricultural education when students are also members of FFA (Croom, 2008). The benefits of FFA membership were shown through the three objectives and associated results that guided this research.

First, objective 1 focused on determining if FFA members are developing feelings of love and belonging while active in FFA. The survey asked students to comment on their appreciation for agriculture. This statistic is meaningful because forming an appreciation for agriculture draws students closer to the underlying theme of FFA. As students appreciate agriculture, they can more readily identify with the industry and thereby, with FFA. The results in Table 1.1 show that more than 80% of students surveyed agreed that either their participation in career development events or leadership roles have strengthened their appreciation for agriculture.

Likewise, the survey asked students to gauge how their ability to work with others was impacted by their FFA involvement. As Table 1.1 indicates, more than 80% of students surveyed agreed that their ability to work with others has been improved because of their involvement in either career development events or leadership positions. Working with others is an essential skill when becoming part of a group and remaining part of that group. Maslow describes identifying with a “group” as an important piece of fulfilling the need for love and belonging.

Another key survey question relevant to objective 1 was that of the amount of recognition students receive through FFA. Survey results showed that 78.2% of students surveyed have been recognized at the chapter level or above as a result of participating in a career development event. Further, 65.5% of students surveyed have been recognized at least on the chapter level because they hold a leadership position.

Beyond being recognized for participation in FFA, the survey also asked students how FFA impacts their overall experience at school. Table 1.2 highlights survey results that showed FFA makes high school more enjoyable, causes students to remain dedicated in school, enhances their ability to make friends, gives them a place to call “home”, motivates them to attend school, and causes them to remain active in school. Each of these results speaks to students’ development of a sense of belonging within their school as a result of FFA. Students begin to feel as if they belong by becoming further integrated in activities at school.

Next, objective 2 was based on describing FFA members’ self-esteem as it relates to their FFA involvement. As with love and belonging, gaining recognition leads to self-esteem. Maslow (1943) refers to “achievement” as a component of a human’s basic needs. Aside from the statistics mentioned previously relating to student recognition at the chapter level, the survey also revealed that nearly half (53.0%) of the students received plaques as recognition. Plaques are long-lasting symbols of achievement that could boost self-esteem over an extended period of time.

Students earned their recognition through participation in career development events and by holding leadership positions. And survey participants responded that aside from recognition, their participation led to confidence and the ability to speak publicly. Each of these qualities, enumerated in Table 2.1, will aid in sustaining self-esteem within the students.

Members' self-esteem was further evaluated by asking them to indicate if they were able to participate in FFA activities without a high amount of pressure to succeed; if their advisor was upset when they failed; and if they were more likely to try new things. The willingness to try new things is an important quality developed as a product of self-esteem. Trying new things also leads to fulfilling one's need for self-actualization. As Maslow (1943) states, the highest needs cannot be met until the lower order needs are fulfilled. Table 2.2 shows survey responses that measured student self-esteem by asking about the pressure they may feel to succeed, how their advisor(s) react to failure, and how likely they may be to try new things.

Student self-esteem was also tested by asking students to indicate how their feelings about higher education may have developed throughout their involvement with FFA. As Table 2.3 shows, a majority of students surveyed have realized the value in a college education and in technical training. Further, most students agreed that they are more likely to pursue higher education as result of their involvement with FFA. These realizations that emerged as a product of FFA involvement point to the development of the self-esteem that students may develop when they begin to desire to aim higher.

Finally, objective three directed the study to assess FFA members' development of self-actualization through participation in FFA. It was important to measure students' desire for improvement and their desire to set and achieve goals. Table 3.1 shows that more than 80% of students surveyed want to improve and have a greater desire to set and achieve goals as a result of their FFA membership. Aiming for a higher level of success and achievement are characteristics of the fulfillment of self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

Attaining knowledge, testing skill-level, and improving skill level are indicators of the fulfillment of self-actualization needs. As students improve, they are growing closer to

understanding and reaching their potential. Maslow (1943) described meeting one's potential as a step toward achieving self-actualization. In Table 3.2, results show that more than 70% of students agreed that they attained knowledge, tested their skill-level, and improved their skill level while participating in career development events or leadership positions.

Finally, Table 3.3 shows how students improved their appreciation for self-discipline, reaching goals, remaining dedicated to goals, learning from failure, and learning new lessons, skills, or trades. Again, improvement is a cornerstone of fulfilling self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1943). More than 92% of students agreed that their appreciation for several key qualities, such as, remaining dedicated to goals and learning from failure was improved.

The students' sense of improvement and realization of their own potential culminated in 79.2% of students answering that they plan to pursue a 4-year (Bachelor's Degree) college education upon education. That statistic is a mark of confidence from a great majority of survey participants. When students have a desire to achieve on a higher level, as Maslow (1943) described, their need for self-actualization is being fulfilled.

When increasing educational standards do not always reasonably integrate FFA, this study serves as an important testament to the relevance of FFA for any high school student; college bound or workplace bound (Education Sector, 2013). As educational policy decisions are made, the value of meeting students' basic needs should be considered. FFA in Tennessee is a great mechanism for fulfilling students' needs, as exemplified in the data collected.

We can further conclude that agricultural businesses and employers should look to FFA for potential employees. Because the agricultural industry employees more than 21 million Americans, a steady supply of confident, highly skilled graduates is needed (American Agri-Women, 2014). Nearly all members of FFA surveyed agreed that their skill-level improved from

their involvement with FFA. The mission of FFA is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education (National FFA Organization, 2013a). That mission is being achieved in Tennessee and will aid in building a ready workforce for the future.

As educators and policymakers consider the dues structure for FFA, they should consider these findings and conduct similar research throughout the nation. This research revealed that FFA is an important factor in student development and in meeting student needs. The findings echo the conclusion made by the National Association of Agricultural Educators that states that a complete agricultural education experience includes membership in the National FFA Organization (2013).

Based on the results of this study, the Tennessee FFA Board of Directors should consider whether collecting FFA dues is sensible. The FFA leadership should consider the following questions: Should FFA membership be included in enrollment in agricultural education? If so, how can FFA operate with the lost revenue of membership dues? Are students in every chapter being exposed to the full spectrum of opportunities within FFA?

Being involved in FFA gives students the chance to fulfill three of their basic human needs: love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow's (1943) five basic human needs are important to consider in developing young adults. This study revealed that FFA gives students a safe, low-pressure environment to test their skills, knowledge, and abilities. It is important that FFA continue to be a vehicle for personal development for agricultural education students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Form

FORM B APPLICATION

All applicants are encouraged to read the Form B guidelines. If you have any questions as you develop your Form B, contact your Departmental Review Committee (DRC) or Research Compliance Services at the Office of Research.

FORM B

IRB # _____

Date Received in OR _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

1. Principal Investigator Co-Principal Investigator:

Principal Investigator:
Chelsea Brooke Rose
1161 Old Lancaster Road
Hickman, TN 38567
615-796-0217
crose16@utk.edu

Co-Principal Investigator:
Dr. Carrie Ann Stephens
325 Morgan Hall
865-974-7371
cfritz@utk.edu

Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Carrie Ann Stephens
325 Morgan Hall
865-974-7371
cfritz@utk.edu

Department:*Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications*

2. Project Classification:*Master's Thesis*

3. Title of Project:*The Value of FFA Membership as Part of the Three-Circle Model in Agricultural Education*

4. Starting Date:*Upon IRB Approval*

5. Estimated Completion Date:*December 11, 2014*

6. External Funding*(if any):None*

- **Grant/Contract Submission Deadline:**
- **Funding Agency:**
- **Sponsor ID Number** *(if known):*
- **UT Proposal Number** *(if known):*

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to identify the value of membership in the National Future Farmers of America (FFA) Organization for agricultural education students enrolled in Tennessee high schools. The overall question of this study is: What is the value of FFA?

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Research participants will be those high school agricultural education students who are attending the Camp Clements FFA Leadership Training Camp (Camp Clements) in the months of June and July 2014. Each of the six weeks of Camp Clements will host approximately 150 students. This will be a random mix of males and females. All students will be invited to participate and will be rising freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors in high school. The students will come from a variety of FFA chapters located in West, Middle and East Tennessee. There is no relationship

between the participants and myself. See attached letter (Exhibit A) granting permission for research to be conducted at Camp Clements.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Surveys (see attached Exhibit B) will be distributed in each classroom located in the FFA Camp administration building at the start of class each week and will be collected at the end of class prior to the students' departure. Surveys may be deposited into a locked box at a time that is convenient for each student; the deadline for submitting the survey will simply be before departing FFA Camp. Students will be invited, but not required to participate. No student will see negative impact as a result of having chosen not to participate in the survey.

This research will use cluster sampling to understand the value of FFA through surveying students attending Camp Clements. The type of research was chosen because answers given in the written survey will speak to the general value FFA offers to its members.

It was important to select a procedure for the research that would allow for the exploration of a broad swath of FFA members' involvement in the organization. Those findings will be organized into easily interpretable data collections. The quantitative research method of surveying a cluster sample will provide students with confidentiality and clear, concise questions.

The value of FFA membership may be quantified by surveying FFA members participating in the annual training camp. This will be completed in the form of a sample survey using students from all high schools in attendance. These students are enrolled in a variety of courses and represent grades level nine through twelve. The research will be quantitative in nature and will rely on the self-perspective of FFA members.

Sample surveying will be most sensible due to the fact that the entire population cannot be sampled (Ary et al., 2010). According to Ary et al. (2010), because researchers cannot

generally survey an entire population, they select a sample from that population. It is very important to select a sample that will provide results that are similar to those that would have been obtained if the entire population had been surveyed (Ary et al., 2010). Camp Clements will provide such an environment. Students will be reminded to complete the survey, if they desire, by the camp administrator at the midpoint of each week.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

This research subject has little potential to present risk to survey participants. Names will not be used in the final research product. Names will not be asked as part of the survey. Chapter names may be used, but specific students will not be cited. The use of a chapter name would not enable an individual participant to be identified. All surveys will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

The primary risk to participants is a breach of privacy and the best way to mitigate this risk is to make the survey anonymous and refrain from collecting signed consents. Thus, neither the students, nor the parents were asked to sign consents. Parents of the participants were informed that an optional survey would be given to students during their week at camp. That information was included as part of the registration packet.

VI. BENEFITS

There are no obvious benefits to study participants.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS

No consent forms will be collected due to the fact that no names will be collected.

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The investigator has completed a Qualitative Research Methods course at the university taught by Dr. Christopher Stripling, professor of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications. The investigator has also completed the Research Proposal Development course taught by Dr. Carrie Stephens, associate professor of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications. Further, attached is proof of CITI Training (see attached Exhibit C).

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH

The surveys will be distributed and collected at Camp Clements in Doyle, TN.

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)

The following information must be entered verbatim into this section:

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:

- 1. Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.**
- 2. Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.**
- 3. An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.**
- 4. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.**

XI. SIGNATURES

ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE ORIGINAL. The Principal Investigator should keep the original copy of the Form B and submit a copy with original signatures for review. Type the name of each individual above the appropriate signature line. Add signature lines for all Co-Principal Investigators, collaborating and student investigators, faculty advisor(s), department head of the Principal Investigator, and the Chair of the Departmental Review Committee. The following information should be typed verbatim, with added categories where needed:

Principal Investigator: Chelsea Brooke Rose

Signature: _____ **Date:** July 3, 2014

Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. Carrie Stephens

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Student Advisor (if any): _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:

☐ Expedited Review -- Category(s): _____

OR

☐ Full IRB Review

Chair, DRC: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Department Head: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Protocol sent to Research Compliance Services for final approval on (Date) :

Approved:
Research Compliance Services
Office of Research
1534 White Avenue

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

For additional information on Form B, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer or by phone at (865) 974-3466.

****Original signed form on file with the University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board. To request a copy of the form, call 865-974-3466.**

Appendix B: Parental Notification

FFA Research Study

2014 Tennessee FFA Leadership Training Camp attendees are invited to participate in a research study during their visit to Camp Clements. The purpose of the research study is to determine the value of FFA membership. Each child must have parental consent to participate in the study.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Campers who participate in the study will complete a written survey. Questions on the survey will relate to their experiences as an agricultural education student and FFA member. The survey will take no more than 15 minutes to complete and any materials necessary to complete the survey will be provided.

RISKS

This research subject has little potential to present risk to survey or interview participants. However, names will not be used in the final research product. Chapter names may be used, but specific students will not be cited. All surveys will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

BENEFITS

There are no obvious benefits to participation in the study. However, the results of this study will be used to better understand the benefits of FFA membership to Tennessee's high school students.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Survey responses will be kept confidential. Survey responses will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Chelsea Rose at Box 5034, Tennessee Tech University, Cookeville, TN 38505, and 615-796-0217. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary; your child may decline to participate without penalty. If your child decides to participate, he/she may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which he/she are otherwise entitled. If he/she withdraws from the study before data collection is completed his/her data will be destroyed.

Thank you.

Appendix C: Survey Instrument

THE VALUE OF FFA MEMBERSHIP AS PART OF THE THREE-CIRCLE MODEL IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION SURVEY

FFA Chapter: _____ **High School:** _____ **City:** _____
Grade Level: Incoming Freshman ____ Incoming Sophomore ____ Incoming Junior ____
Incoming Senior ____ High school graduate ____ **Gender:** Male ____ Female ____ **Race:** African-
American ____ Hispanic ____ White, Non-Hispanic ____ other ____ **Age:** ____ **Years member of**
FFA: ____ **Live on a farm:** Yes ____ No ____ **Region:** East ____ Middle ____ West ____

1: Please indicate which Career Development Event(s) (CDE) you have participated in and the number of years you have participated in the CDE by checking the appropriate boxes below.

Career Development Event	Check for participation	1 year or less	2 years	3 years	4 years or more
Agricultural Communications	☐				
Agricultural Issues	☐				
Agricultural Sales	☐				
Agricultural Technology& Mechanical Systems (Skills)	☐				
Agronomy (Soil Evaluation)	☐				
Creed Speaking	☐				
Dairy Cattle Evaluation and Management	☐				
Dairy Cattle Handlers'	☐				
Environmental and Natural Resources	☐				
Extemporaneous Public Speaking	☐				
Farm Business Management	☐				
Floriculture	☐				
Food Science and Technology	☐				
Forestry	☐				
Horse Evaluation	☐				
Job Interview	☐				
Livestock Evaluation	☐				
Marketing Plan	☐				
Meats Evaluation and Technology	☐				
Milk Quality and Products	☐				
Nursery/Landscape	☐				
Parliamentary Procedure	☐				
Poultry	☐				
Prepared Public Speaking	☐				
Veterinary Science	☐				

1a: Please indicate which of the skills listed below you feel you have gained or have been improved as a result of your involvement in CDEs.

Skill	Disagree	Agree	Unsure
Confidence			
Ability to speak publicly			
Desire for improvement			
Appreciation for agriculture			
Ability to work with others			
Desire to set and achieve goals			

1b: Please indicate which, if any, of the following awards or recognition you have gained or expect to gain as a result of your involvement with CDEs from this year, previous years or future years.

Honors	1-2 times	3-5 times	5-10 times	10 or more times
Chapter recognition				
District or Section recognition				
Region recognition				
State recognition				
National recognition				
Scholarships				
Cash awards				
Plaques				
Ribbons				
Other items of value (T-shirt, belt buckle, certificate, etc.)				

1c: Please indicate if you agree with the following statements:

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Unsure
I attained knowledge through participating in CDEs.			
I was given the opportunity to test my skill-level through participation in CDEs.			
My skill-level was improved through participation in CDEs.			

1d: Please indicate what travel, if any, you did as a result of your involvement with CDEs.

Travel	1-2 times	3-5 times	5-10 times	10 or more times
Travelled outside my home county				
Travelled outside my region (West, Middle or East)				
Travelled outside my state				
Travelled outside my country				

1e: Please indicate if you agree with the following statements:

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Unsure
I was able to participate in CDEs without a high amount of pressure to succeed.			
When I failed in a CDE, my advisor was not upset.			
I feel more accomplished due to my participation in CDEs.			
I am more likely to try new things due to my participation in CDEs.			

2: Please indicate which leadership position(s), if any, you have held within your chapter, region or state FFA Association.

Position	1 year or less	2 years	3 years	4 years or more
Chapter Committee or Work Group				
Chapter Officer				
Other Chapter Leadership Position				
Regional Committee or Work Group				
Regional Officer				
Other Regional Leadership Position				
State Committee or Work Group				
State Officer				
Other State Leadership Position				

2a: Please indicate which of the skills listed below you feel you have gained or have been improved as a result of your leadership position(s).

Skill	Disagree	Agree	Unsure
Confidence			
Ability to speak publicly			
Desire for improvement			
Appreciation for agriculture			
Ability to work with others			
Desire to set and achieve goals			

2b: Please indicate which recognition or awards, if any, of the following you have gained or expect to gain as a result of your leadership position(s).

Honors	1-2 times	3-5 times	5-10 times	10 or more times
Chapter recognition				
District or Section recognition				
Region recognition				
State recognition				
National recognition				
Scholarships				
Cash awards				
Plaques				
Ribbons				
Other items of value (T-shirt, belt buckle, certificate, etc.)				

2c: Please indicate if you agree with the following statements:

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Unsure
I attained knowledge through the leadership position(s) I have held.			
I was given the opportunity to test my skill-level through the leadership position(s) I have held.			
My skill-level was improved through the leadership position(s) I have held.			

2d: Please indicate what travel, if any, you did as a result the leadership position(s) you have held.

Travel	1-2 times	3-5 times	5-10 times	10 or more times
Travelled outside my home county				
Travelled outside my region (West, Middle or East)				
Travelled outside my state				
Travelled outside my country				

3: Please indicate if you agree with the following statements:

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Unsure
My involvement with FFA has helped me realize the value in a college education.			
My involvement with FFA has helped me realize the value in technical training. (Auto-diesel, culinary arts, etc.)			
I am more likely to attend college or pursue technical training as a result of my FFA involvement.			

3a: Please indicate if you agree with the following statements:

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Unsure
I plan to pursue a 4-year (Bachelor's Degree) college education upon graduation.			
I plan to pursue a 2-year (Associate's Degree) college education upon graduation.			
I plan to pursue technical training upon graduation. (Auto-diesel, culinary arts, etc.)			
I plan to enlist in the armed forces upon graduation. (Air Force, Army, Marines, Navy)			
I will enter the workforce upon graduation.			

3b: Please indicate if you agree with the following statements:

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Unsure
FFA has taught me or improved my appreciation for self-discipline.			
FFA has taught me or improved my appreciation for the value of reaching my goals.			
FFA has taught me or improved my appreciation for remaining dedicated to my goals.			
FFA has taught me or improved my appreciation for learning from failure.			
FFA has taught me or improved my appreciation for learning new lessons, skills or trades.			

4: Please indicate if you agree with the following statements:

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Unsure
FFA has made my high school experience more enjoyable.			
FFA has helped me remain dedicated to school.			
FFA has given me the ability to make friends at my school.			
FFA has given me a place to call “home” within my school.			
FFA is among my favorite activities at school.			

4a: Please indicate if you agree with the following statements:

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Unsure
FFA motivates me to attend school.			
FFA is at least part of the reason why I remain active in my school.			

4b: Please indicate what after school events, if any, you participated in as a result of your involvement with FFA this year or in previous years.

After School Events	1-2 times	3-5 times	5-10 times	10 or more times
Chapter meetings				
Officer or committee meetings				
CDE practices				
Banquets (local, regional, state, or national)				
Chapter fundraisers				

4c: Please indicate if you agree with the following statements:

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Unsure
To participate in CDEs, I must maintain a certain GPA or grade-level (A, B, C, D).			
To hold leadership positions in FFA, I must maintain a certain GPA or grade-level (A, B, C, D).			
To travel to conventions or other meetings with my chapter, I must maintain a certain GPA or grade-level (A, B, C, D).			
FFA has inspired me to achieve average or above-average grades in school.			
I do not want to disappoint my advisor by having below average grades in school.			
Having below average grades in school may prevent me from being fully active in FFA.			

Thank you for participating in this survey.

Vita

Chelsea Rose was born in Lebanon, Tennessee, to Jeff and Beth Doss. She is the middle child of three girls. Katlyn is her younger sister and Kinsey is the eldest. She attended Rockvale Elementary School from kindergarten through seventh grade and Eagleville School from eighth grade to twelfth grade. After graduation, Chelsea enrolled at Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville, Tennessee where she began her studies in agricultural communications. She obtained a Bachelor of Science degree from TTU in May 2012. She accepted the position of Government Affairs Specialist for the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association in Nashville, Tennessee and spent two years in that role. Now, she is the Executive Director for the Tennessee FFA Foundation, Inc. in Cookeville. Chelsea graduated from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville with a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications in December 2014. She plans to spend her career promoting agricultural education and the FFA.