

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT EXTENSION AGENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate 4-H Agents' perception and attitude towards competency levels with selected volunteer management functions. Additionally, professional development activities 4-H Agents participated in within the past 24 months were described.

The target population was 4-H Youth Development Agents throughout the United States in 2000. A questionnaire adapted from a previous study (King, 1997) addressing similar issues and questions was developed.

Based on the findings of this study, 4-H Youth Development Agents have moderately positive to positive attitudes (based on a scale of one to four, 1 = important, 2 = little importance, 3 = important, 4 = very important) towards the volunteer management functions of identification of opportunities, recruitment, selection, orientation, training, utilization, supervision, recognition, and evaluation of volunteers. Additionally, 4-H Agents perceive themselves to be "competent" (based on a scale of one to four; 1 = not competent, 2 = little competence, 3 = competent, 4 = very competent) with all nine volunteer management functions.

Comparing attitude and perceived competence, the researcher observed that Agents' attitudes are consistently higher than their perceived competency with the nine volunteer management functions. Collins (2001) interpreted the difference between Agents' perceptions of the importance and their competency with volunteer management functions as implications for training needs. Using this concept, 4-H Youth Development Agents have training needs in all nine volunteer management functions.

This study revealed that 4-H Youth Development Agents do participate in professional development activities related to volunteerism but at a relatively low level. Agents most frequently participate in seminars and workshops, followed by reading journals and other volunteer-related literature. Professional development activities Agents engaged in the least were academic and continuing education courses.

Results from this study imply that 4-H Agents have training needs in all nine volunteer management functions and perceive all nine functions as important to the 4-H program but, are failing to voluntarily seek volunteer-related professional development activities.

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Volunteers have assisted in the development and delivery of 4-H educational programs since its inception. In 1999, 534,294 volunteers throughout the United States donated their time and energy in support of the 4-H Youth Development Program by working with over 6.5 million youth between the ages of 5 and 19 (National 4-H Council, 2000). In 2000, youth membership in 4-H increased to 6.8 million youth and volunteer membership increased to 610,595 (National 4-H Council, 2001). Vines and Anderson (1976) stated, “without the cooperation and energy of tens of thousands of volunteers, it’s inconceivable that Extension could succeed in rallying the resources it has to help solve individual and community problems (p.92). Creating and managing a strong volunteer program allows an Extension agent to maintain and improve current programs as well as introduce new ones to meet the needs of youth. A strong volunteer program requires not only capable and willing volunteers but also professional staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to coordinate and direct the efforts of the program.

As an organization’s need for volunteers strengthens, the need for a person to take responsibility for inducing constructive change in volunteer management within the organization and community increases (Wilson, 1976). Since the emergence of volunteer management as a recognized profession, many theoretical models (Boyce, 1971; Penrod, 1991; McCurley & Lynch, 1996; Culp, Deppe, Castillo & Wells, 1998; and Safrit & Schmiesing, 2000) have been researched and created as well as many lists of volunteer management competencies (Hastings & Lifer’s PRK, 1988; the *4-HPRK*, National 4-H, no date; and the American Volunteer Association’s (AVA) volunteer management functional areas and competency statements, Fisher & Cole, 1993) have been established. In 1998, the 4-H professional research and knowledge taxonomy (*4-HPRK*) was adopted. *4-HPRK* identifies five competency domains that 4-H Youth Development Extension Agents should be proficient: 1) youth and adult development, 2) learning strategies, 3) organizational systems, 4) partnerships, and 5) volunteerism. Each domain identifies specific competencies to address. The volunteerism domain describes desired competencies related to role identification, recognition, orientation, risk management, supervision, selection, policies, recruitment, evaluation and training of volunteers (National 4-H, no date). 4-H Youth Development Extension Agents are expected to master competencies in all domains through pre-service training, in-service workshops, seminars or programs, and on-the-job experience (National 4-H, no date).

Given the framework of identified volunteer management competencies for 4-H Youth Development Agents, several questions are worthy of investigation. What are 4-H Agent=s attitudes towards the essential competencies needed to manage volunteers? How competent do 4-H Agent=s perceive themselves in identified areas of volunteer management? Where and how do 4-H Agents receive training in volunteer management and development?

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argued that a person’s beliefs, a representation of the information a person has about an object or a situation, can determine attitude, which can then have an affect on one’s behavior towards an object or situation. Similarly, Tesser, Martin and Mendolia (1995) argued that it is a person’s conscious thought that can determine one’s attitude, which can then have an affect on one’s behavior. Additional studies (Mullen, Conrad & Palmer, 1989; Munson; 1978; Schinfler-Rainman & Lippit, 1971) have indicated that there is a relationship between attitude and behavior. Mullen, Conrad, and Palmer (1989) identified key factors related to the involvement of volunteers in Extension programs. Of these factors, two of

them were a positive attitude towards volunteers displayed by Extension Agents and Agents having the appropriate skills and knowledge needed for working with volunteers.

King (1997) found that Ohio 4-H Agents' perceive selected volunteer management functions as important and themselves to be competent with those same functions. Additionally, King (1997) found that a difference exists between Ohio 4-H Agents' perceptions of the importance of and their competence with selected volunteer management competencies. Collins (2001) interpreted the difference between agents' perceptions of the importance and their competency with volunteer management functions as implications for training needs. Collins (2001) indicated that 4-H Agents in Michigan had training needs "in the areas of evaluation, recruitment, supervision, training, recognition, utilization, selection, orientation, and identification of 4-H volunteers" (p. 111).

Literature to date has limited information regarding 4-H Agents' attitudes and professional and personal growth towards volunteer management and development at the national level. Therefore, this research project studied 4-H Youth Development agents throughout the United States to describe Agents' attitudes towards and competency with volunteer management functions. This study also sought to describe 4-H Agents professional and personal training related to volunteer management.

Purpose and Objectives

4-H Youth Development Agents throughout the United States were surveyed to determine 4-H Agents' attitudes towards and competency with volunteer management functions and to describe professional and personal training related to volunteer management and development. The following objectives were designed to guide the study:

1. Describe 4-H Youth Development agents' in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity.
2. Describe 4-H Youth Development agents' selected professional characteristics including:
 - a. years as a 4-H Youth Development Extension agent, percent 4-H appointment, years of experience in their current county, and years of experience in other Extension positions
 - b. highest degree completed
 - c. volunteer-related professional development activities
3. Describe the 4-H Youth Development agents' current county program demographics including:
 - a. number of 4-H members, number of 4-H volunteers, volunteer roles, and number of volunteers in each role
 - b. number of 4-H agents, and number of 4-H paraprofessionals
4. Describe 4-H Youth Development agents' attitude towards selected volunteer management competencies.
5. Describe 4-H Youth Development Agents' perception of their competence with selected volunteer management competencies.
6. Describe the relationship between selected personal and professional characteristics, and agents' attitude towards and competency with selected volunteer management competencies.
7. Describe the relationship between volunteer-related development activities and agents' attitude towards and competency with selected volunteer management competencies.
8. Describe the relationship between Agents' attitudes towards selected volunteer management competencies and Agents' perceived competence with volunteer management competencies.

Methods and Procedures

This study was both descriptive and correlational in design. A mail questionnaire modified from King (1997) was used. The population of the study was all 4-H Youth Development Agents in the United States in 2001 (n= 2189). A random sampling procedure was used to select 350 Agents. The questionnaire was administered to all 350 4-H Agents following a modified version of the Total Design Method (Dillman, 1978). The instrument consisted of four sections addressing the eight stated objectives. A panel of experts assessed content and face validity and reliability was assessed through a pilot test using 40 4-H Youth Development Agents not included in the study. Internal consistency for the two summated scales assessing attitude and perceived competency resulted in Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of .97 each. Reliability of the section on Professional Development was established using the test/retest method. Data were collected from October through November 2001; the final usable response rate was 51%. Early respondents were statistically compared to late respondents, no significant differences were found, and therefore, the data was generalized to the population. Descriptive and correlational statistics were used to summarize the data; frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency, variability, and measures of association were used to describe the data. Davis (1971) descriptors were used to describe strength of association.

Results/Findings

Objective 1: Describe 4-H Youth Development agents' in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity.

A profile of 4-H Youth Development Agents throughout the United States indicates over 68% (n = 115) of the respondents were female. Ages of study participants varied greatly ranging from under 25 to over 55 with the majority of the respondents falling in the 46-55 age category (n = 58, 34.3%), followed by age category 25-35 (n = 46, 27.2%). Agents under 25 years of age were the least represented category with 4.7% (n = 8). Ethnicity of respondents was overwhelmingly Caucasian (n = 156, 91.8%) with only one other ethnic group, African American (n = 10, 5.9%) significantly represented.

Table 1 Summary of Selected Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<u>Gender</u> (n = 169)			
Female	115	68.1	68.1
Male	54	31.9	100.0
Total	169	100.0	
<u>Age</u> (n = 169)			
Under 25	8	4.7	4.7
25 – 35	46	27.2	31.9
36 – 45	41	24.3	56.2
46 – 55	58	34.3	90.5
Over 55	16	9.5	100.0
Total	169	100.0	

<u>Ethnicity (n = 170)</u>			
Caucasian	156	91.8	91.8
African American	10	5.9	97.7
Other	4	2.3	100.0
Total	170	100.0	

Objective 2: Describe 4-H Youth Development Agents’ selected professional characteristics including years as a 4-H Youth Development Agents, percent appointment working with 4-H, years of experience in their current county, and years of experience in other positions; highest degree completed; participation in volunteer-related professional development activities.

Professional demographic characteristics of the sample (n varies for each characteristic due to item nonresponse) of agents who participated in the study are shown in Table 2. The mean tenure as a 4-H Youth Development agent was 11.7 years; mean time each agent held that position in their current county was 9.5 years; and the mean time each agent served in other Extension positions was 5.1 years. Subjects spent between zero and 32 years as a 4-H Youth Development agent in their current county and within other Extension-related positions. Additionally, 4-H Agents described what percent of their total job responsibilities were within 4-H as having a mean of 87.9 with the range falling between 10 and 100 percent.

Table 2 Selected Professional Characteristics

Characteristic	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Years as an Agent	169	11.7	8.8	0- 32
Percent 4-H Appointment	162	87.9	23.7	10-100
Years in Current County	168	9.5	8.0	0- 32
Other Extension Positions	152	5.1	7.6	0- 32

The highest educational level completed by the majority of respondents was a master’s degree followed by a bachelor’s degree. Only two (1.2%) respondents indicated they had a Ph.D/Ed.D but over 5% (n = 9) indicated the “other” category, which includes specialized certificate programs and associate degrees (Table 3).

Table 3 Educational Attainment (n = 167)

Degree	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bachelor’s Degree	48	28.7	28.7
Master’s Degree	108	64.7	93.4
Ph.D./Ed.D.	2	1.2	94.6
Other	9	5.4	100.0
Total	167	100.0	

Volunteer-related professional development activities studied included participation in seminars/workshops, professional conferences, professional organizations, reading journal and non-journal literature, and attending credit generating and/or non-credit generating academic

courses within the past 24 months. Professional development activities related to volunteerism most often engaged in within the past 24 months were seminars and workshops (CES sponsored, 89.8%; non-Extension sponsored 44.4%) followed by reading professional journals (CES sponsored, 58%; non-Extension sponsored, 48%), reading non-journal literature (CES sponsored, 48%; non-Extension sponsored, 52%), and membership in professional organizations (CES sponsored, 60%; non-Extension sponsored, 36%). Volunteer-related professional development activities participated in least were academic courses for credit (CES sponsored, 8.3%; non-Extension sponsored, 5.1%) and non-credit (CES sponsored, 14.7%; non-Extension sponsored, 12.2%). (Table 4)

Table 4 Professional Development Activities

Activity	CES Sponsored			Non-Extension Sponsored		
	n	Frequency	%	n	Frequency	%
Seminars/Workshops	167	150	89.8	160	71	44.4
Professional Conferences	162	57	35.2	160	20	12.5
Professional Organization	166	99	59.6	160	57	35.6
Reading Journals	160	93	58.1	160	77	48.1
Reading Non-Journal literature	155	75	48.4	157	82	52.2
Academic Courses (for credit)	158	13	8.3	156	8	5.1
Academic Courses (non-credit)	156	23	14.7	156	19	12.2

Objective 3: Describe 4-H Youth Development Agents’ current county program demographics including number of 4-H members. Number of 4-H volunteers, volunteer roles, and number of volunteers in each role; number of paid professionals, and number of paraprofessionals within the county office.

The reported median number of 4-H members involved within the county program was 45 with county 4-H programs consisting of 20-130 members within the 25th and 75th percentiles. The reported median number of adult volunteers within the county 4-H program was 137 with programs consisting of 65-250 members falling within the 25th to 75th percentiles (Table 5).

Table 5 County Demographics

Demographic	Mean	SD	Range	25%	Median	75%
4-H Members (n = 151)	400.0	1737.5	0-19,200	20	45	130
4-H Adult Volunteers (n = 161)	206.0	364.2	7- 4,365	65	137	250

Volunteers serve the 4-H Youth Development program in a variety of roles (Table 6). Study participants were asked to list the three primary roles volunteers within their county served and the number of volunteers serving within those three roles. The majority of agents indicated use of volunteers in the roles of adult/club (65%) and committee/board (60%). Volunteer roles least reported included school-related (5%) and advisory (9%). The volunteer role with the highest mean number of volunteers serving the 4-H Program within that capacity is project volunteers (131.9) followed by adult/club (108.3). The role group with the least number of volunteers is advisory/board with a mean of 19.3.

Table 6 Volunteers by Roles

Role	Frequency	Percent	Number of Volunteers in each Roles	
			Mean	Range
Adult/Club	102	65	108.3	0-948
Committee/Board	94	60	45.8	0-328
Youth Leaders	72	46	57.0	0-410
Key Leaders	47	30	36.1	0-175
Project	42	27	131.9	7-485
Other	29	19	53.5	0-168
Teen Leaders	19	12	43.4	0-138
Organizational	18	12	29.6	0-100
Advisory	14	9	19.3	0- 60
School-related	8	5	73.6	5-210

The mean number of paid professionals within each county office was 4.0 and paraprofessionals was 4.4. (Table 7)

Table 7 Mean Number of Paid Staff within the County Office

Staff	Mean	SD	Range	25%	Median	75%
Professionals (n = 157)	4.0	6.3	0- 50	1	2	4
Paraprofessionals (n = 143)	4.4	12.9	0-145	1	2	4

Objective 4: Describe 4-H Youth Development agents' attitude towards selected volunteer management competencies.

Agents reported all nine competencies as important or very important (Table 8). Competencies reported as important include identifying volunteer opportunities, recruitment, selection, recognition, and evaluation of volunteers. Competencies identified as very important include orientation, training, utilization, and supervision of 4-H volunteers.

Table 8 Attitude towards Selected Volunteer Management Competencies

Competency	Potential Min/Max	Total Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Total Scaled Score
Identify Opportunity	6/24	20.2	2.5	3.4*
Recruit Volunteers	7/28	23.9	2.8	3.4*
Select Volunteers	10/40	34.1	4.2	3.4*
Orient Volunteers	9/36	31.2	3.6	3.5**
Train Volunteers	10/40	34.8	3.8	3.5**
Utilize Volunteers	6/24	20.8	2.5	3.5**
Supervise Volunteers	6/24	20.7	2.3	3.5**
Recognize Volunteers	9/36	31.0	3.6	3.4*
Evaluate Volunteers	10/40	32.6	4.1	3.3*

*Important

**Very Important

Scale: 1.0-1.4 = Not Important

1.5-2.4 = Of Little Importance

2.5-3.4 = Important

3.5-4.0 = Very Important

Objective 5: Describe 4-H Youth Development Agents' perception of their competence with selected volunteer management competencies.

Agents also perceive themselves to be competent with all nine volunteer management competencies (Table 9). They include identifying volunteer opportunities, recruitment, selection, orientation, training, supervision, recognition, and evaluation of volunteers.

Table 9 Perceived Competency of Selected Volunteer Management Competencies

Competency	Potential Min/Max	Total Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Total Scaled Score
Identify Opportunity	6/24	18.0	2.5	3.0*
Recruit Volunteers	7/28	19.5	2.8	2.8*
Select Volunteers	10/40	29.6	4.2	3.0*
Orient Volunteers	9/36	28.6	3.6	3.2*
Train Volunteers	10/40	29.2	3.8	2.9*
Utilize Volunteers	6/24	18.2	2.5	3.0*
Supervise Volunteers	6/24	17.9	2.3	3.0*
Recognize Volunteers	9/36	27.7	3.6	3.1*
Evaluate Volunteers	10/40	26.6	4.1	2.7*

*Important

Scale: 1.0-1.4 = Not Important

1.5-2.4 = Of Little Importance

2.5-3.4 = Important

3.5-4.0 = Very Important

Tables 8 and 9 also indicate that 4-H Agents' perceive the importance of the selected volunteer management competencies as generally higher than what they perceive their competency level. Additionally, t-tests reveal there is a significant difference between attitude and competency levels for all nine competencies at the .05 alpha level.

Objective 6: Describe the relationship between selected personal and professional characteristics, and agents' attitude towards and competency with selected volunteer management competencies.

No strong associations were found between the personal and professional characteristics and 4-H Youth Development Agents' attitudes towards and competence with the selected volunteer management competencies (Tables 10 & 11). However, a negative low association was indicated between gender and attitude towards volunteer identification, selection, orientation, utilization, and supervision competencies (Table 10) and gender and perceived competency of identification and orientation competencies (Table 11). Due to coding procedures of the instrument (female = 1 and male = 2), the negative low associations suggest males are lower on average than females in attitude towards and competency with the selected volunteer management functions. Relationships were described using Davis (1971) descriptors.

Table 10 Relationship between Selected Personal and Professional Characteristics of Agents and Attitude towards Selected Volunteer Management Competencies

Competency	Age**	Gender*	Years as an Agent**	Percent Appt.**	Years in County**	Other Ext. Positions**	Highest Degree***
Identify	-.02	-.11 ^a	.04	-.01	.02	.04	.02
Recruit	.02	-.01	.04	-.04	.01	.02	-.01
Select	.04	-.21 ^a	-.02	.08	-.02	.04	.05
Orient	-.03	-.15 ^a	-.04	-.03	-.06	.04	-.02
Train	-.01	-.07	.03	-.07	.01	.10	.04
Utilize	-.07	-.10 ^a	.02	.01	-.04	.08	-.01
Supervise	-.06	-.14 ^a	-.01	-.01	-.03	.05	.04
Recognize	-.07	-.03	-.07	.01	-.09	.04	.01
Evaluate	-.06	-.15 ^a	-.02	.08	-.05	.02	.09

*Point-biserial, **Pearson, ***Rank-biserial, ^aLow Association (Davis, 1971)

Table 11 Relationship between Selected Personal and Professional Characteristics and Agents Perceived Competence with Selected Volunteer Management Competencies

Competency	Age**	Gender*	Years as an Agent**	Percent Appt.**	Years in County**	Other Ext. Positions**	Highest Degree***
Identify	.01	-.10 ^a	.11 ^a	.11 ^a	.05	.10 ^a	.09
Recruit	.07	.02	.12 ^a	.06	-.01	.10 ^a	.06
Select	.01	-.10	.04	.13 ^a	.01	.07	.02
Orient	.05	-.18 ^a	.03	.05	.01	.13 ^a	.01
Train	.02	-.04	.10 ^a	-.01	.01	.13 ^a	.05
Utilize	.04	-.03	.16 ^a	.04	.10	.16 ^a	.03
Supervise	-.01	-.02	.06	.05	-.02	.14 ^a	-.01
Recognize	-.04	-.03	.01	.08	.01	.06	-.04
Evaluate	-.02	-.03	.03	.10 ^a	.01	.11	.08

*Point-biserial, **Pearson, ***Rank-biserial, ^aLow Association (Davis, 1971)

Objective 7: Describe the relationship between volunteer-related development activities and agents' attitude towards and competency with selected volunteer management competencies.

There is low to negligible association between Agents volunteer-related professional development activities and their attitude towards and competence with selected volunteer management competencies.

Objective 8: Describe the relationship between Agents’ attitudes towards selected volunteer management competencies and Agents’ perceived competence with volunteer management competencies.

An indication of low to substantial associations between 4-H youth Development Agents’ attitudes towards and their perceived competency with selected volunteer management competencies was found (Table 12). A substantial association was found between agents’ attitudes towards orientation of volunteers with their perceived competence with orienting volunteers (.53). Moderate associations were found between: attitude towards identification of volunteer opportunities and competency with identification (.49) and orientation (.35); attitude towards recruitment and competency with recruitment, attitude towards selection of volunteers and competency with selection (.49) and orientation (.39); attitude towards orientation of volunteers and competency with training (.33), supervision (.33), and recognition .31); attitude towards training of volunteers and competency with training (.39), utilization (.30), supervision (.31), and recognition (.30); attitude towards utilization of volunteers and competency with utilization (.45), supervision, (.36) and recognition (.33); attitude towards supervision of volunteers with competency of supervision (.44); attitude towards recognition of volunteers and competency with recognition (.48); and attitude towards evaluation of volunteers and competency with evaluation.

Table 12 Relationship between 4-H Youth Development Agents Attitude towards and Perceived Competency with Selected Volunteer Management Competencies

Competency	Attitude								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Identify	.49 ^b	.23	.28	.35	.23	.21	.23	.23	.14
2. Recruit		.30 ^b	.20	.28	.21	.18	.21	.21	.14
3. Select			.49 ^b	.39	.25	.15	.26	.19	.20
4. Orient				.53 ^a	.33	.29	.33	.31	.25
5. Train					.39 ^b	.30	.31	.30	.23
6. Utilize						.45 ^b	.36	.33	.24
7. Supervise							.44 ^b	.25	.21
8. Recognize								.48 ^b	.28
9. Evaluate									.30 ^b

^aSubstantial Association, ^bModerate Association (Davis, 1971)

Conclusions/Recommendations/Implications

The majority of 4-H Youth Development Agents are Caucasian females, ages 46-50. Additionally, 4-H Agents have dedicated, on average, 100% of their work time towards their current county 4-H program the past zero to 32 years. The majority of 4-H Agents have attained their Master’s degree, although, approximately less than half actively engage in CES sponsored volunteer-related professional development activities and one third engage in non-Extension sponsored volunteer-related professional development activities. Additionally, Agents that are

participating in these activities are doing so at a relatively low level. Agents reported only 1-5 hours were spent in seminars/workshops, attendance at one or two professional conferences, membership in one or two professional organizations, read one to five journals, and one to five items of non-journal literature within the past 24 months. The low levels of participation in volunteer-related professional development activities indicate that volunteer-management improvements are not a high priority for 4-H Agents in the United States. Volunteerism is one of the five competency domains the 4-H Youth Development Program employs and advocates in mandatory post training programs, or, in-service (CSREES Publication, no date). Additionally, Hutchins (1990) cited that seventy-five percent of nationally surveyed 4-H agents feel that their most important responsibility is working with volunteers. If this is so, then why aren't more 4-H Agents participating in such activities? Why are the Agents that are engaging in these activities doing so at such a low level? What incentives does the 4-H program currently have that encourages 4-H Agents to voluntarily seek professional development activities in volunteer management? Is competency in volunteer management included in each Agents yearly performance appraisal? These questions and others deserve further investigation.

4-H Agents have a positive to very positive attitude towards all nine volunteer management functions, and, additionally, perceive themselves as competent with all nine functions. Although this study resulted in little evidence indicating a relationship between personal and professional characteristics and Agents' attitude towards and perceived competency with volunteer management functions exists, there is evidence that a difference exists between gender and attitude towards and perceived competency with the volunteer management functions. Data suggests that, on average, males score slightly lower in attitude towards and perceived competency with the nine functions compared to females. Additional research identifying explanations would be beneficial.

There is a positive relationship between 4-H Youth Development Agents' attitude towards and perceived competency with all nine of the volunteer management functions. Additionally, 4-H Agents' perceive the importance of the selected volunteer management competencies as consistently higher than what they perceive their competency level. King (1997) stated that a "difference exists between the agents' perceptions of the importance of and their competence with selected volunteer management competencies..." (p. 155). Collins (2001) interpreted the difference between agents' perceptions of the importance and their competency with volunteer management functions as implications for training needs. Using these concepts, 4-H Youth Development Agents have training needs in all nine volunteer management functions of identification, recruitment, selection, orientation, training, utilization, supervision, recognition, and evaluation.

"Volunteers are an important component of American society as a whole" and an especially critical element of the 4-H Youth Development program (King, 1997). As the 4-H program grows and increases in youth membership, it will require more and more volunteers. The 4-H Agent will be required to become an expert in volunteer management to continue the accomplishments 4-H is able to create in meeting the growing needs of youth and volunteers. Results from this study imply that 4-H Agents have training needs in all nine volunteer management functions and perceive all nine functions as important to the 4-H program but, are failing to voluntarily seek volunteer-related professional development activities. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, how will the 4-H Youth Development Program continue to survive if training needs in the area of volunteer management are evident but not pursued by the Agents? The researcher suggests that administration and staff development officials should require pre-

service training and/or experience in volunteer management as a requirement for employment. Additionally, administration and staff development officials should provide mandatory volunteer management in-service for current 4-H Agents. It is also recommended that a mentoring program be established providing new 4-H Agents with quarterly personal communication from state or district specialists or a 4-H Agents designated as experienced and knowledgeable in the area of volunteer management.

It is important to continue to research underlying factors (such as attitude, perceived competence, professional development, and knowledge of volunteer management competencies) that contribute to an agent's use of volunteers in order to effectively provide the training and support necessary to develop 4-H agents into effective volunteer managers.

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4-H Youth Development Extension Agents' Attitudes Towards Volunteer Management Competencies

A Critique

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The authors have identified an important and pressing research topic for their study on volunteer management competencies and attitudes. The theoretical framework was well established and an appropriate model was chosen to test volunteerism domains among 4-H Agents.

The study surveyed Agents on their self perceptions as the literature shows a relationship between attitude and behavior. Clearly, the Agents perceived themselves as competent, thus put little effort into seeking further in-service training.

The authors conclude the study with questions regarding Agent accountability and ask what would motivate an Agent to seek further education in volunteer management (incentives). It would be interesting to learn what clients thought of their Agents in addition to the reflective data collected and to document the relationship between self and others' perceptions of competencies. Could 4-H Agents collect this type of data as part of their program evaluation work? It may serve as a motivator to 4-H Agents in obtaining more of the necessary in-service training they have avoided, as reported in the study.

The authors also ask what will happen when Agents fail to obtain the necessary training for volunteer management, hinting that the youth development program may not survive for lack of in-service training for Agents. Further research might focus on how Agents are learning to manage volunteers in the dearth of training provided. This line of inquiry may hit upon unexplored coping mechanisms for life-long learning needs among adults.

Without knowing Agents' criterion-referenced level of competencies it is difficult to predict the future of volunteer management within the CES; however, we can assume that the army of 534,294 adult volunteers are being managed with some competency, else they would not remain in service to the youth. I encourage the authors to continue seeking solutions to the ever-pressing problem of in-service training for all land-grant university field staff, as they are the foundation resource for the institution.