Within the Mentoring Mosaic: Influences of 4-H Teen Leadership Identity
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Abstract
This qualitative investigation describes the experiences, leadership examples, and influences, which contributed to Virginia 4-H members pursuit of statewide leadership positions. This study was guided by the mentoring mosaic framework, which is supported by situated learning theory. When discussing the experiences that led participants to their assumed leadership roles within 4-H, prior leadership (30%) was the most prevalent factor. When providing examples of leadership, 42% identified leadership traits and 60% identified specific people. Over 80% identifies family members as those who influenced their leadership endeavors. Interestingly, individuals identified as influential were not as highly mentioned when providing examples of leaders. Findings from this study can inform professionals working with youth the importance of helping teens identify the leadership qualities within their mentors, supporters, and peers.

The Gap In The Literature
Little is know about the “journey” 4-Hers take towards understanding their own leadership identities. This study aims to fill this gap by providing insight into the experiences, leadership examples, and influences that led Virginia 4-Hers to attain leadership positions.

Conceptual Model
- Situated learning theory emphasizes context and practice as ways for linkages to occur between knowledge, experience, and skill (Choi & Hannafin, 1995).
- Mentees and mentors must engage in the collaborative construction of knowledge through insightful reflection and discussions of lessons from their previous experiences (Miller, 2002).
- The mentoring mosaic incorporates “a network of secondary mentors that provide strength of weak times, this can incorporate events, situations, and circumstances of life; books one reads; or crises one face” (Bey & Holmes, 1992, p. 15).
- Holistic consideration of mentoring as a culmination of all experiences and relationships, whether natural or planned, which provide guidance and support for the learner.

Results
Factors Influencing Pursuit of State Leadership Position
- Ability to Practice Leadership Skills: 19.0%
- Engagement with Older 4-H Youth: 24.0%
- Prior Leadership Roles: 24.0%
- Active 4-H Participation: 29.0%

Examples of Leadership Role Models
- Family Members: 34.0%
- 4-H Extension Agent: 29.0%
- Historical Figures: 29.0%
- Leadership Traits: 48.0%

Influential and Supportive People
- 4-H Leaders: 29.0%
- Teachers: 29.0%
- Extension Agents: 57.0%
- Family Members: 80.0%

Participants had the opportunity to provide multiple responses per question thus percentages may not equal 100%.

Methodology
- Data consisted of a qualitative open-ended survey (Patton, 2005) distributed to 21 4-H members ranging from 14 to 19 years of age who held statewide leadership roles within Virginia 4-H.
- Responses were transcribed verbatim and open-coded by three researchers independently (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).
- An iterative process was utilized to group like codes (Creswell, 1998).
- Responses were quantified and transformed into nominal values (Chi, 1997).

Conclusions & Implications
- Work to incorporate a more holistic view of leadership, where 4-H teen leaders are able to attribute leadership qualities to their mentors and supporters
- Consider how to break down the barriers associated with views of iconic leaders to allow teens to see themselves and their peers more easily as exemplars
- It is important for 4-H teens to be able to identify community leaders outside of a positional role or trait approach to continue to support community initiatives.

References
Lerner, M. L., & Lerner, J. V. (2013). The positive development of youth: Comprehensive findings from the 4-H Study of positive youth development.