

The Relationship of Participation in FFA Activities
and Leadership, Citizenship, and Cooperation*

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The Future Farmers of America (FFA) helps vocational agricultural education to be extended beyond the classroom. Since its founding in 1928, the youth organization has provided its members opportunities to further develop agricultural skills and develop agricultural leadership, cooperation, and citizenship (Future Farmers of America, 1981). Past research substantiates the primary aim of FFA as respondents concluded that the development of agricultural leadership, citizenship, and cooperation were the major foundations upon which the organization should be based (Braker, 1973; Kantner & Bender, 1967). Former national FFA officers concurred with the leadership and personal development objectives of the organization, but felt the FFA met those objectives better during their past membership than it does for members today (Lasap, 1971).

The problem, then, with which this study was concerned was the following: Are the objectives of the FFA fulfilling their purposes and do these objectives address the topic of an active member's personal development?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to describe the relationship between participation in FFA activities and development of leadership, citizenship, and cooperation competencies. The specific objectives of this research were to answer the following research questions.

1. Is there a difference between students' participation in selected FFA activities and their self-perceptions in the areas of leadership, citizenship, and cooperation?
2. Is there a relationship between a student's self-perceived leadership, citizenship, and cooperation development and total high school FFA participation?

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These questions represented part of a larger research project which investigated an additional seven competencies and students' total personal development (Townsend, 1981).

Methodology

An ex post facto co-relational design was employed to investigate the relationship of FFA activity participation and students' personal development. The population for the study consisted of Iowa twelfth grade vocational agriculture students who were members of the FFA. Using a cluster sample technique, 426 responses were generated from 54 randomly selected high schools. The students were administered two instruments: the Personal Development Inventory (PDI) and the FFA Activity Participation Inventory.

As a part of an Iowa Experiment Station project, the PDI instrument was created by devising indicators of personal development characteristics suggested in the FFA statement of aims and purposes. It was designed to solicit the subjects' self-perceptions in 10 areas including leadership, citizenship, and cooperation. For each of 57 items, the selected students indicated whether they disagreed or agreed with the indicators using the following scale: 1 = strongly disagreed, 2 = disagreed, 3 = slightly disagreed, 4 = neither agreed nor disagreed, 5 = slightly agreed, 6 = agreed, and 7 = strongly agreed. A mean for each trait yielded a score for the related personal development competency. An FFA activity participation score was calculated from the participation inventory with each of 37 activities weighted by a jury as to its quality and importance in a student's involvement in the FFA. The PDI trait scores and FFA activity participation score were statistically analyzed using Pearson correlation. T-tests were used to compare unweighted FFA activities with the scale scores of leadership, citizenship, and cooperation.

Findings and Discussion

The correlation between the personal development competencies and the students' weighted FFA participation scores are shown in Table 1. When correlated with the total participation score, the leadership trait had a positive significant relationship ($p < .05$) while citizenship and cooperation revealed no significant relationships. It cannot be concluded that the FFA activity participation caused higher leadership scores, due to the nature of the study, but the positive relationship suggests the leadership trait is enhanced with FFA activity. Citizenship and cooperation, on the other hand, were not found to be related to the students' FFA participation. These traits may be related to numerous factors in the students' lives and FFA participation was only one component of total development.

Table 1
Coefficients of Correlation between FFA
Activity Participation Scores and
Leadership, Citizenship, and Cooperation Scores

PDI scale	n	Coefficients	Probability
Leadership	426	.2009	.000
Citizenship	426	.0208	.334
Cooperation	426	.0072	.441

Although no strong correlations were discovered between the three personal development competencies and the participation score, participation in certain individual activities were related to the trait scores. In these t-test analyses, the number and percentage of participants differed for each activity and students may have been participants in one activity and not another. Each activity was, therefore, independent of another and the scale scores were mean values for each participation group enabling comparison for that activity. Table 2 illustrates the activities which showed a significant difference in PDI scores for participants and nonparticipants. For the leadership, citizenship, and cooperation scales, a positive t-value indicated the participants of an activity scored significantly higher than did the nonparticipants. A negative t-value denoted nonparticipants perceived their personal development in that trait significantly higher than participants. It was observed that for several activities the scores were not significantly different for participants and nonparticipants.

Participants in 18 FFA activities had a significantly higher perception of their leadership than nonparticipants. Many of these activities were conducted on the local level and offered individual participation for all students. Also, the activities did not have application processes which could inhibit participation. It was not inferred that participation caused higher leadership development. However, it was concluded that since these activities were part of the FFA program, they enhanced and strengthened the leadership competencies of the students. Students who attended the state and national conferences also had a higher perception of their leadership than nonparticipants. Although these participants were chosen by selection and all students could not attend, the overall theme of these events supported leadership development of those attending.

Table 2

T-test Significant FFA Activities
(alpha = .05) for the PDI Scales ^a

FFA Activity ^b	Participants (n)		PDI scales ^a		
	Yes	No	LDSP	CIT	COOP
Banquet	364	59	+	+	+
Chapter awards	244	179	+		
Chapter farmer	349	71	+		+
Chapter officer	250	175	+		
Chapter president	60	366	+		-
Chapter speech	173	250	+		
Committee chairperson	255	170	+		
Community service	325	98	+	+	
County fair exhibitor	143	281	+		
State fair exhibitor	62	364		-	-
Fund raising	391	32	+	+	+
Improvement project	143	281	+	+	+
Junior officer	146	278	+		
Leadership camp	126	296	+		
National convention	173	252	+		
Chapter proficiency applied	231	194	+		
Received chapter pro- ficiency	168	256	+		
Star chapter farmer	38	385			-
Star greenhand	60	362		-	-
State convention (attendant)	103	323	+		
State convention (participant)	110	315	+		
State fair worker	51	372			-
Washington conference	30	394			-
Total activities for each scale			18	6	10

^a (+) positive significant t-value, (-) negative significant t-value.

^b FFA activities are identified by key words rather than the complete statement used in the instrument.

^c LDSP = leadership, CIT = citizenship, COOP = cooperation.

Parent-member banquet, fund raising, community service, and improvement project participants had significantly higher scores for the citizenship scale. Students dealt with their parents to develop and carry out an improvement project, collaborated with many people in fund raising or community service, and worked with others to organize the banquet. Since the competencies of citizenship were a component of all these experiences with people, the participants needed solid citizenship traits in order to gain positive results.

Star greenhands and state fair exhibitors perceived their citizenship significantly lower than nonparticipants in these activities. An explanation for the lower score may be that these students were high achievers, expected more of themselves, and therefore, rated themselves lower than students satisfied with their status.

Participants in 10 FFA activities had significantly different scores on the cooperation scale than nonparticipants. Elements of cooperation were contained in the activities of chapter farmer, fund raising, and parent-member banquet. In these activities, students cooperated with parents, agribusiness people, advisors, other FFA members, and teachers. The cooperation aim of the FFA was stressed in these activities and strengthened those competencies of participating students. Six activities produced lower cooperation scores for participants than for nonparticipants. In these activities, students experienced many unfamiliar contacts while at the state fair or Washington conference. It was, therefore, concluded that these new experiences enlightened the members to the broadness of life and implied they needed to develop additional cooperation competencies. Chapter presidents, star greenhands, and star chapter farmers may have higher expectations for themselves which would account for their lower perceptions of cooperation.

A major inference from the results of this study involved the overall emphasis of the FFA. Students with participation in local activities seemed to attain higher personal development. In fact, state and national participants had lower perceptions of themselves in the area of cooperation. The organization should continue to stress individual student participation on the local level to fulfill its aims and objectives. State and national activities should not be eliminated, however, as they can serve to build additional personal development of the advanced students and serve as goals for all students to attain.

Implications

From the results of this study, the following implications were formulated for the FFA at the chapter level, state organization level, and national organization.

1. The FFA should continue to stress the personal development objectives outlined in its aims and purposes by promoting activities which enable all students to participate and by offering activities with requirements that do not restrict participation.

2. Based on the positive PDI scores of students participating in local activities, chapters should strive to include many local activities in their programs of activities.

3. Advisors should work with high achievers who receive awards so that those students may reach their high expectations; the advisors should preview and follow-up state and national activities to enhance the confidence of these students.

4. Members should be encouraged to attend state and national conferences to strengthen their leadership competencies.

5. Fund raising and banquet attendance appear to reinforce a student's personal development based on the positive significant relationships between those activities and the participants' PDI scores. These activities should continue to be strongly stressed by the FFA.

6. In order to determine the emphasis to be placed on activities, the FFA should evaluate the activities available to students to identify which personal development competencies are fulfilled within those activities.

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