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UNDERSTANDING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM FOR

URBAN MINORITY YOUTH THROUGH THE VOICE OF 4H YOUTH & EDUCATORS

A Thesis in
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by
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4-H has a long history of educating youth through experiential learning, historically in rural areas, focusing on the topics of agriculture and home economics. Today, 4-H exists in rural, suburban, and urban areas, and includes a variety of topics to foster youth development. Even with the expansion of 4-H into urban communities, the percentage of minority participants is comparatively lower than majority participants. The most recent National 4-H strategic plan focuses on cultural responsiveness and diversity inclusion to begin addressing this issue. This research examines the perspectives of 4-H educators and youth to understand the impact of culturally responsive curricula on minority youth motivation and engagement in 4-H programs. Furthermore, this thesis examines 4-H educator teaching practices also. Using a qualitative approach, youth and program staff from a Mid-Atlantic state were selected for in-depth focus groups and interviews. The results reveal the understanding of what and how cultural responsiveness should be included in curricula based on the perspectives of those involved in the programs.

The findings indicate that 4-H educators operate under two definitions of culture that affect how curriculum cultural responsiveness is perceived. 4-H educators affirm that for a curriculum to be culturally responsive to urban minority youth it must be responsive to the surroundings and the cultures within the urban setting. Educators must understand the needs of urban communities and have the capacity to modify 4-H curricula to meet the needs of those communities. 4-H youth want a curriculum that shows minority youth and represents them. Additionally, 4-H youth want to be welcomed to participate in 4-H programs because, often, urban minority youth do not see how 4-H curriculum programs relate to them and their interests. In most cases, the waning of interest is due to a lack of awareness about 4-H and the historical images of 4-H. Youth communicated how important it is to them that they can relate to the curricula they participate in and apply within their communities. Above all, based on educator and youth statements, if a curriculum can be shown to benefit and serve the needs of urban minority youth, then they will more likely be motivated to engage in 4-H programs. However, cultural responsiveness to meet those needs through curricula is necessary.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Traditional 4-H began as a program for youth in rural areas focusing on farming and homemaking. Outside of school, boys and girls clubs were used to teach youth to appreciate the rural lifestyle and learn by doing. Today, 4-H is in rural, suburban, and urban communities and functions in over 100 land grant universities and 3,000 county offices within the United States (US). The subjects of focus within 4-H still concern agriculture but have expanded also into topics such as computer science, robotics, civic engagement, and environmental science (4-H History, 2017). Even with 4-H expansion into urban areas and 1.8 million participants in these urban areas, the percentage of minorities involved in 4-H is low per race/ethnicity (What is 4-H?, 2017). A recent study by Lerner et al. (2013) indicated that 7.2% of African Americans, 9.4% of Latino/as, 1.8% of Asian Americans, and 1.5% of Native Americans participate in 4-H. Furthermore, of those participating in 4-H, only 17% live in urban areas (Lerner et al. 2013). These percentages reveal that only 20% of 4-H participants are from minorities.

Acting as one of the largest youth organizations in the U.S., 4-H provides a platform for both a social and an educational perception change by showing minority participants that they are valued and can supersede apparent societal limits through the cultural responsiveness of the curricula taught in their programs. During childhood and adolescence, youth are developing an identity, and despite some efforts to produce school
environments and curricula that are termed as diverse, colorblind, and inclusive, minorities are still in many facets of their education subjected to a Eurocentric system (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016). In this type of system, minorities are depicted as subordinate. This image presents the message to developing youth that their knowledge, experiences, culture, and history are not of value and that they should conform to what has been determined as the mainstream way of thinking (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). According to Darling-Hammond (2010), education is meant to produce an avenue for critical thinking and act as a way to challenge/question dominant viewpoints.

For 4-H to achieve their goal of “providing opportunities for all youth to develop as individuals and responsible citizens,” as stated by Ellis (1990), all races and ethnicities must engage in and view 4-H programs as inclusive and culturally responsive (Ellis, 1990). Culturally responsive curricula are only one branch of culturally responsive pedagogy, which, Howard and Terry (2011) note, seeks to develop “students’ academic, social, emotional, cultural, psychological, and physiological well-being.” Many case studies and the few evidence-based studies focused on culturally responsive pedagogy have reported positive impacts, such as better engagement by underrepresented students and a practical understanding of concepts (Howard & Terry, 2011). This study examines the 4-H curriculum impact on urban minority youth engagement and motivation in 4-H programs and the teaching practices of educators. Ringwalt and Bliss (2006) stated that, when preparing and delivering a curriculum, it is important to remember that youth must perceive the curriculum as relatable to them in subject matter, method of delivery, language, and materials used. The guiding theoretical framework for this study is critical
race theory (CRT). This theory is used to take an in-depth look at the role of race and racism in the curricula that are being delivered to a diverse audience. This study provides information regarding which characteristics of culturally responsive curriculum are most effective in enhancing engagement and motivation within 4-H youth programs as seen from the perspectives of the youth involved. Furthermore, this study offers insights into the practices of 4-H educators and how they might modify their curricula to the audiences they are teaching and why.

**History of 4-H**

The beginning of 4-H can be attributed to many people and locations, but one common factor that can be agreed upon is the reason for it starting: families in rural areas felt that the education that their youth were receiving was not relevant. Parents wanted their children to have a practical education; an education that taught the value of nature and agricultural practices (Enfield, 2001). These types of programs became operational in the late 1890s to early 1900s. Some of the first clubs established included Dr. Liberty Hyde Bailey’s Nature Study Club, and boys and girls agricultural clubs, such as Corn Club, Gardening Club, and Canning Club (Enfield, 2001). In these clubs, the well-known phrase “learning by doing” acted as the framework and continues to do so in the current 4-H programs.

Key names in establishing the foundation on which 4-H was built include Seaman Knapp (“Father of Extension”), Dr. Hyde Bailey, John Dewey, and Booker T. Washington (the first black Extension Agent) (Enfield, 2001). Seaman Knapp, the “Father of Extension,” is credited with developing the demonstration system, in which
change agents traveled to various areas, typically rural areas to connect the university to the community by presenting information through demonstrations. Knapp worked with the philosophy under which 4-H exists; a philosophy in which individuals learn by doing (Westwood, 1973).

Dr. Hyde Bailey created various agricultural clubs. He was an educator and important horticulture naturalist who sought to create practical educational experiences relevant to the audience (Enfield, 2001). John Dewey’s theory of experience is a call to link education to students’ past experiences and daily lives. His theory places the responsibility of the experience-education link in the hands of the educator as a way to create engagement and community connections (Jovanovic, 2016). Booker T. Washington is not always remembered for his work in Extension but created traveling demonstrations of his own that he took into black farming communities to address the issues of poor living conditions and illustrate practical applications (Goldstein, 1989). Using experiential education and demonstration education models, 4-H activities focused around real-life experiences in which the participating youth could take the knowledge learned and develop it into applicable life skills. The goal of 4-H from past to present is “personal youth development, improvement of families, communities, and beyond” (Enfield, 2001). Youth involved in 4-H usually range from the ages of 5 to 19-years-old and participate because they want to be involved. The clubs are community based and are operated by Extension educators, volunteers, and youth. Together youth, volunteers and extension educators explore a range of topics and complete projects to enable youth to develop both leadership and citizenship skills.
4-H Curriculum

Topics within 4-H include rocketry, animal science, food and nutrition, science and technology, computers, clothing, and textiles (Enfield, 2001). 4-H youth choose which topic interest them or, in some cases, develop their own projects. The importance of the topics and curricula available to youth centers around the belief that the knowledge and values gained through 4-H are applicable to the future lives of the youth. The learned knowledge and values act as a foundation for adult identity, self-worth, self-esteem, leadership, and citizenship skills. Even though 4-H is youth driven, there is great importance placed on the role of the educator to ensure the environment in which the youth are involved allows for relevant, meaningful, interesting, and motivated learning.

The following quote from a project activity guide puts the importance of an educator into perspective: “The greatest gift leaders can give is to help youth validate themselves as capable people” (Enfield, 2001).

4-H curriculum is developed using the five-step experiential learning model depicted in Figure 1, below, which comprises experience, share, process, generalize, and apply. The basis for this model is that youth learn best when they actively participate in learning and then reflect on their experiences, followed by discussing how to apply their new knowledge in the future (Enfield, 2001).
Carver (1998), regarding Dewey’s principles of interaction and continuity, stated that, “students’ perceptions of and reactions to the objective factors are influenced by internal and subjective factors such as their attitudes, beliefs, habits, prior knowledge, and emotions.” These principles state that, when going through an experience, you leave something behind for the next person that modifies their experience, and that experience is based on the interaction between self and environment (Enfield, 2001). Understanding these principles and considering 4-H’s history, impact, and growth as an organization into suburban and urban communities, the need to understand curriculum’s cultural responsiveness is evident if the organization is to continue impacting youths’ personal development into adulthood, for all youth; as is the intended goal.
Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to provide insights into the cultural responsiveness of the 4-H curricula through the description of perspectives from both 4-H youth and 4-H educators. Furthermore, the purpose is to obtain a greater understanding of how the cultural responsiveness of the curriculum plays a role in youth motivation and engagement in 4-H programs and 4-H educator practices.

Researchers in the field of multicultural education (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994;) have suggested that culturally responsive teaching and curriculum are effective ways of addressing the academic and social needs of culturally-diverse students. Furthermore, culturally responsive teachers are cognizant of the critical role that race and culture play in the way students learn (Howard, 2003). The need for the 4-H curricula to be evaluated for relatability to urban minority youth is because of the recorded low percentage of such youth participating in 4-H programs and discussions with professionals who are working in or have worked in 4-H programs. If there is a way to increase the engagement of this group or enhance the experience of already participating minority youth by making the curricula more relatable to them, it must first be determined whether this is a need. If there is no need, then what other adjustments need to be made must be determined based on the perceptions of those directly affected. The goal of this study is to obtain an understanding of the impact of the curricula on urban minority youth engagement and motivation in 4-H programs and youth educator practices within 4-H. Examining the 4-H curricula helps enhance the development of future 4-H program curricula for diverse audiences and indicates ways to increase
engagement and motivation of 4-H urban minority youth in 4-H programs. As well as providing information about which characteristics of a culturally responsive curriculum are most effective in enhancing engagement and motivation within 4-H youth programs from the perspectives of the youth involved, this study provides insight into the practices of 4-H educators and how they might modify a curriculum to address the needs of the diverse audiences they are teaching and why.

This study is timely in accordance with the 2016 National 4-H Strategic Direction and Goals, which has many elements focused on increasing the cultural responsiveness of 4-H as an organization. Five goals stated in the strategic plan that strictly focus on cultural inclusion/responsiveness are as follows (National 4-H Headquarters, 2016):

1. Youth culture is incorporated into program design and delivery
2. Share promising practices and extend existing opportunities to more diverse youth
3. All 4-H programs are culturally relevant
4. Restructure training to fit needs of target audience
5. Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach embodies inclusivity

Given these set goals, it is beneficial to learn the perspectives of both the educators who work with diverse communities and the diverse youth themselves regarding how these goals can be achieved. The sole purpose of this study is to obtain an understanding of these perspectives regarding the cultural responsiveness of the 4-H curricula. It is hoped that these perspectives describe how and where changes need to be made to achieve curricula that meet the needs of diverse audiences.
Guiding Research Questions and Objectives

Guiding research questions:

1. What are youth and educator perspectives about culturally responsive 4-H curriculum and its impact on urban minority youth engagement and motivation in 4-H programs?
2. How does youth culture affect youth educator practices when delivering a 4-H curriculum for a 4-H program?

Objectives:

1. Investigate the perceptions of 4-H educators and youth in regards to the cultural responsiveness of 4-H curriculum
2. Describe the perceptions of 4-H educators on how curriculum impact their teaching practices
3. Describe the perceptions of 4-H youth on how curriculum impact their engagement and motivation in 4-H

Significance of Study

Given the goals stated in the 4-H strategic plan, this study provides information about which characteristics of culturally responsive curriculum are most effective in enhancing engagement and motivation within 4-H youth programs from the perspectives of the youth involved. Furthermore, this study provides insights into the practices of 4-H educators and how they might modify curricula to the audiences they are teaching and why. This information provides a guide for 4-H curricula developers regarding a method
to make all 4-H programs culturally relevant. The insights obtained through this research provide educators with techniques used by other educators in diverse settings, which could increase the number of 4-H programs that include youth culture in design and delivery. This qualitative research study prepares the next stage of research in terms of testing the newly-developed culturally responsive curricula for 4-H programs through an experimental design study.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

In the increasingly diverse world we live in, youth in schools and outreach programs have diverged from what is classified by society as the mainstream in terms of race and cultural background. During this cultural shift, there have been studies to obtain insights into the importance and benefits of shifting pedagogical styles to be more culturally responsive to the diverse student population. However, there have been few studies on the cultural responsiveness of curricula in outreach programs such as 4-H. This literature review discusses (a) culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum, and their benefits; (b) CRT; (c) 4-H program diversity inclusion efforts; and (d) gaps in the literature regarding culturally responsive curriculum in outreach programs.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Curriculum

Culturally relevant teaching goes hand in hand with culturally responsive curriculum and was developed by the researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings. Culturally-relevant teaching is pedagogy that connects student school and home life by including students’ “backgrounds, knowledge and experiences” in the teaching methods (Coffey, 2008). Gay (2000) echoes this concept by stating that culturally-relevant pedagogy “makes learning more relevant to and effective” for students, and that “it is culturally validating and affirming.” Students question why they have to learn certain concepts in school, already which leads to the possibility of disengagement and a lack of motivation;
now imagine learning if the curriculum devalues or does not include a person’s cultural perspectives, this exacerbates these problems. All students, especially from marginalized groups, need a connection of how the curriculum they are learning relates to their everyday lives (Briggs, 2014). Some curricula attempt to convert student knowledge, language, and culture to those of the majority, but this leads to students becoming disengaged in learning (Howard & Terry Sr, 2011). In a study of 36 college students who were interviewed about what motivated their learning, the students indicated that relevance was one of the most important factors (Briggs, 2014). *Active Learning in Higher Education* by Kember et al. (cited in Briggs (2014)) found four methods of establishing relevance in curriculum: (1) discussing how concepts can be applied in practice; (2) making a link to local cases; (3) relating subject matter to everyday applications; and (4) discussing and finding applications in current issues and events. There are many ways to produce curricula that are culturally responsive, but educators must be aware of the complexities associated with different cultures and respect them (Howard & Terry Sr, 2011).

Some have said that culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum is only for people of color and question its need in education (Howard & Terry Sr, 2011). This responsive-to-the-majority approach has been used in education for many years, as stated by Irvine and Armento (2000), with the “majority” being defined as “US-born, middle-class, English speaking, white students” (Howard & Terry Sr, 2011). Creating relevance in curriculum does not mean neglecting education requirements or minimizing important concepts in schools or outreach programs, but rather presenting these through curricula that highlight and build on the knowledge and experiences that the target population
bring to the learning environment (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Coffey, 2008). Ladson-Billings (1995) lists three criteria when developing culturally relevant pedagogy. These criteria can be used to develop culturally-relevant curricula also (Coffey, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995):

1. Students must experience academic success
2. Students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence
3. Students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order

Culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy provide increased knowledge and skills to the majority also because it allows them to be able to effectively work, learn, and thrive in a multicultural environment (Goodstein, 1994). This ability leads to greater personal development for the majority population by enabling them to consider a perspective that differs from their own (Goodstein, 1994). Teachers can learn much about their students by involving them in an environment that is truly culturally inclusive by enabling students to build knowledge through their cultural and personal experiences (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Many researchers report that the combination of culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy can “potentially improve culturally diverse students’ academic performance and school experience” (Howard & Terry Sr, 2011). Other benefits of culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy are empowering culturally-diverse students, allowing students to view themselves in positive roles and careers outside of what is depicted by society, and improving student comprehension of educational
materials. (Gay, 2000; Howard & Terry Sr, 2011). A curriculum can be considered relevant if students have a “prior intellectual or emotional connection, it is connected to real life, actively engages or involves students, and someone has a contagious passion or enthusiasm” (Howard & Terry Sr, 2011). However, the key to culturally relevant curriculum is including the knowledge and experiences of the students learning the content. Presenting culturally responsive curriculum encourages students to challenge and change oppressive structures built into society (Coffey, 2008). Curricula can act as a means of social change in the greater culturally-diverse society in which we live and interact (Thiessen, 2007).

**Theoretical Framework**

The basis of this study is examining the perspectives of both the youth and educators of 4-H regarding the cultural responsiveness of the 4-H curricula. When considering these perspectives, culture and race are the underlying key factors in how cultural responsiveness is determined. Therefore, the determined appropriate theoretical framework for this study is CRT. As defined by Lynn and Parker (2006), CRT in education is “a critique of racism as a system of oppression and exploitation that explores the historic and contemporary constructions and manifestations of race in our society with particular attention to how these issues are manifest in schools.” 4-H is an organization that has historically operated in rural communities and has had low minority youth enrollment. Now operating in urban communities, the organization has continued its efforts to increase the participation of minority youth in urban areas. Recent statistics,
however, illustrate that participation has slowly declined between 2001 and 2014 (NIFA, 2016).

4-H is an experiential education organization that employs curricula to children of all races. A CRT lens is used to examine the curricula through the narratives and experiences of those people actively involved in 4-H both as educators and youth. Critical race theory seeks to empower those categorized as the marginalized population (people of color) by focusing on underlying instances of racism/white supremacy in society. In this study, the emphasis being 4-H curricula are the instance under focus (Ledesma & Calderón, 2014). In many cases, the way in which educational institutions try to dismantle the Eurocentrism of curricula is by classifying them as “colorblind,” meaning the curricula are culturally neutral, but the underpinnings of this term remains Eurocentric because it was developed through the narrative of those who are considered the majority (Patton, 2016; Ledesman & Calderón, 2014). Critical race theory is built on the idea that narratives produce thick descriptions that enable the mainstream to be challenged by having to look through the eyes of “others” (Lynn & Parker, 2002). The above statement justifies the use of both interviews and focus groups as the methods utilized in this study to gather firsthand perspectives regarding the cultural responsiveness of the 4-H curricula and how it impacts youth engagement and motivation, as well as educator practices.

**Critical Race Theory**

The history upon which the United States is built contains much oppression of minority groups. Some would say there has been change in only how blatant that
oppression is. In the past, slaves were not allowed to be educated, people of color were not allowed to learn in the same schools as white students, and educational opportunities for people of color were limited. However, while these laws have changed, the idea of Eurocentric culture as the norm has not. Derrick Bell, considered a pioneer of CRT, describes this norm as being evidence of endemic racism due to the history of America, and how this history has shaped ideologies on race (Parker & Lynn, 2002). In the field of education, teaching styles and curricula are developed, in most cases, from the perspective of the majority. What is troubling, as stated by Gillborn (2005), is “the most dangerous form of ‘white supremacy’ is...the taken for granted routine privilege of white interests that goes unremarked in the political mainstream.” Studies researching Eurocentric curricula have pointed out that the perspectives of minorities are absent, even when addressing subjects such as history (Gillborn, 2005). Gillborn (2005) makes another important point when stating that addressing this issue is not an attack on white people, but a critical critique of the “socially constructed reinforced power of white identifications and interests” that exist within education. The diverse student population will continue to increase, and the educators of the future leaders of America need to know how to address their needs in all aspects: academically, emotionally, socially, culturally, etc. (Howard & Navarro, 2016).

**Role of Critical Race Theory in Curriculum Development**

Often, learning environments that are labeled as inclusive or diverse are regarded this way through the eyes of the majority. A study by Datnow and Cooper (2009) found that minority students in predominantly white schools struggled academically and
socially even when the school was described as inclusive. To counteract these challenges, the students created their own culturally affirming groups. This research is in line with the work done by Taliaferro Baszile (2009), which indicates that considerations must be made about “the nature of the existing relationship between the official school curriculum and its representation of acceptable identities.” Teaching in ways and with materials that are culturally relevant to students of color has been proven to be most effective (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Labeling a curriculum as either colorblind or neutral in nature only reinforces the idea of white supremacy, because, by using these terms, the curriculum and pedagogy continue to ignore the culture, perspectives, and experiences of people of color (Haney-López, 2014). How can a curriculum or pedagogy be neutral or color blind if they are based on a culture’s perspective? Critical race curriculum (CRC) questions traditional curricula regarding “process, structure and discourse” to challenge the maintained inequalities (Yosso, 2002). Critical race curriculum relies on the perspectives of people of color to help create a more equitable learning environment for students (Yosso, 2002). Structures of curricula traditionally omit experiences of students of color or stereotype them in mini-sections of the curriculum. If these mini-sections are present in the curriculum, they are still presented from the perspective of the mainstream being the “norm.” History courses taught in schools are an easily recognizable example of this (Yosso, 2002). The hidden curriculum within the structures, processes, and discourses of curriculum does not use minority cultures and experiences as resources in education and illustrate they have value. Therefore, the hidden curricular message taught to minority students is that they must conform to the mainstream to be successful in the education system, and the only knowledge that is important is that of the mainstream, because
power is knowledge, and the only valued knowledge is that of the majority/mainstream. Critical race theory is structured around the experiences of communities of color, establishing an environment in which the hierarchy of knowledge is one in which minorities are validated and shown that schools and outreach programs value their participation and want to see them succeed (Yosso, 2002). By increasing the use of culturally responsive curriculum, the mainstream standard of curriculum is challenged, opening the door to true culturally-inclusive schools and outreach programs (Yosso, 2002).

Critical race theory scholars over the past 20 years have developed and followed 5 points of guidance as a foundation for developing CRC. These points can be interchangeably used for culturally responsive curriculum. Ledesma and Calderón (2015) present Yosso’s (2002) five-point CRC in education guide:

1. Acknowledge the central and intersecting roles of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination in maintaining inequality in curricular structures, processes, and discourses
2. Challenge dominant social cultural assumptions regarding culture and intelligence, language and capability, objectivity and meritocracy
3. Direct the formal curriculum toward goals of social justice and the hidden curriculum to Freirean goals of critical consciousness
4. Develop counter discourses through storytelling, narratives, chronicles, family histories, scenarios, biographies, and parables that draw on the lived experiences students of color bring to the classroom
5. Utilize interdisciplinary methods of historical and contemporary analysis to articulate the linkages between educational and societal inequality.

**Critical Race Theory: Areas of Education**

**How Has Critical Race Theory Further Developed Education?**

Critical race theorists in the field of education seek to understand how race and racism play a role in the inequities of education for people of color (Howard & Navarro, 2016). Nieto, Gordon, and Yearwood (2002) noted that neither the practices nor the curricula used to educate students were sensitive or inclusive of people of color. Nieto et al.’s (2002) first point is linked to Howard and Navarro’s (2016) mention of Ladson-Billings and Tate’s (1995) central propositions of social inequity of education:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States
2. United States society is based on property rights
3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity

Students of color are learning in environments in which the materials and practices are not inclusive of their “experiences, histories, or perspectives” (Howard & Navarro, 2016). Nevertheless, students of color are expected to be engaged and motivated in learning. Critical race theory challenges the idea that teaching styles and educational curricula are neutral or colorblind (Howard & Navarro, 2016). As reported by the U.S. Department of Education in 2012, 80% of educators are middle-class, monolingual, and white. Thus, the perspectives taught in the education system stem mostly from this group.
unless educators are made aware of the culture, perspectives, and ideologies of their diverse student body and actively try to include it in their practices and curriculum (Howard & Navarro, 2016).

By using the CRT lens, researchers have been able to move educational research from ignoring or de-emphasizing the educational problems of marginalized groups to placing them front and center via the narratives of these groups (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Critical race theorists strive to inform the education system about the struggle for equity that people of color face to advance themselves academically (Gillborn, 2005). Whaley and Noël (2012) indicate that when African-American students have a strong cultural identity, it tends to enhance their academic performance. This study and other studies support this finding: culturally responsive curricula reinforce the identity of marginalized groups by including their lived experiences, perspectives, and culture into learning and creating positive images of these cultures (Whaley & Noël, 2012). There are many benefits of using a curriculum that is culturally responsive to the students who are receiving the knowledge disseminated by schools and outreach programs.

Critical race theory has furthered the understanding of the intersection of culture and education regarding curriculum, pedagogy, and policy (Yosso et al., 2001). Critical race theory in education research has provided insights into the inequality faced by minority youth through interviews discussing their experiences at various levels of education. Research has produced data addressing minority educational experiences and revealing racism within the field of education (Yosso et al. 2001). The importance of cultural validation and cultural identity in educational climates, pedagogy, and curricula
is justified as a need for better learning experiences for minority youth in both formal and non-formal education (Cerezo et al. 2013).

**4-H Diversity Inclusion Effort**

**The Role of Critical Race Theory in Non-Formal Educational Settings**

4-H has the goal of positive youth personal development (Enfield, 2001). The youth-driven model utilized by 4-H seeks to help youth develop life skills that are relevant to their lives (Enfield, 2001). Enfield (2001) cites a quote from an activity guide used by educators: “the greatest gift leaders can give is to help youth validate themselves as capable people.” Given the goal and focus of 4-H, it makes sense that pedagogy and the curricula are culturally relevant to ensure the organization is inclusive and accepting of all youth. However, outreach programs are just as susceptible to Eurocentric-only-perspective curricula and pedagogy as schools. 4-H was considered to be inadequately serving minorities and the disadvantaged and has been accused of discriminating against these populations (Urban Task Force, Programs Committee NAE4-HA). 4-H has since made efforts to address the needs of these populations through various committees dedicated to diversity and inclusion and the new curricular category on the 4-H Mall “diversity and inclusion.” However, when discussing the topic of a culturally responsive 4-H curriculum, the educators believe there is more work to be done to increase the engagement and motivation of minority youth to participate in 4-H programs. 4-H has made efforts to adjust to the increasing and increasingly diverse population of the United States through projects such as the Change Agent States for Diversity Project, which sought to diversify the employees of the organization. The project brought attention to the
need to increase the diversity of the staff and the student body of the organization (Ingram, 2005). The most recent 4-H strategic plan contains the following five goals that strictly focus on cultural inclusion/responsiveness (National 4-H Headquarters, 2016):

1. Youth culture is incorporated into program design and delivery
2. Share promising practices and extend existing opportunities to more diverse youth
3. All 4-H programs are culturally relevant
4. Restructure training to fit needs of target audience
5. Positive youth development (PYD) approach embodies inclusivity

4-H Curriculum

An important philosophy stated in the State Level Practices to Advance Urban Program article is that it is vital to acknowledge the differences between urban and traditional programming (“State Level Practice”, 2017). Traditional 4-H programming was designed for rural communities in which most clubs consisted of white participants. By changing the context in which programs are run, the culture of the community and individuals also changes, as well as the community needs. To maintain the initiative of urban 4-H, there must be practices in place to support the programming efforts (“State Level Practice”, 2017), even if this means a shift from traditional curricula to serve the needs of the culturally-diverse community in which they operate. James Banks highlights this point by declaring how the retention of students of color historically has been challenging for institutions and that these institutions must be proactive if they wish to become diverse in nature (Bruch, Higbee & Lundell, 2004). 4-H, as a developmental organization, should prioritize the cultural responsiveness of its pedagogy by asking, “To
what extent is the curriculum carrying a diverse message?” (Bruch, Higbee & Lundell, 2004). This is the idea of a hidden curriculum: the underlying message being disseminated to the youth about their abilities, culture, perspectives, experiences, value in society, etc. If these aspects of a culturally-diverse youth are excluded from the curricula they are taught, what message does that send to them?

The 4-H curriculum is developed by committees at a county or multi-state team and is then peer reviewed. There are many subject areas covered on the 4-H Mall website that are in the national 4-H curriculum. Subject areas include science, technology, engineering and math, animal and agricultural science, business and citizenship, creative arts, environment and outdoor science, healthy living and foods, practical skills, professional development, and the newest subject – diversity and inclusion. Considering the 4-H Mall curriculum, there are only two current National 4-H curriculum books concerning diversity and inclusion. One book is dedicated to Latino/a culture ‘Qué Rico’ La Cultura Bilingual Curriculum Helper’s Guide, and the other is Diversity: The Source of Our Strength Curriculum. Both these books consider various types of diversity in everyday life (“Diversity & Inclusion,” 2017). This is the beginning of the effort toward the abovementioned strategic plan goals. However, to truly have a program dedicated to diversity and inclusion the effort cannot be concentrated in one curricular category. Instead, the effort should be incorporated throughout all the 4-H curricula in a way that relates to the everyday lives and experiences of diverse youth audiences (Cerezo et al. 2013 and DaCunha, 2016).
The Role of Culturally Relevant Curriculum

According to Hobbs (2004), 4-H programs designed for diverse populations such as Latino/a youth need to reflect the cultural traditions, beliefs, and values of the audience. The study indicates that when programs are culturally responsive, the participation of Latino/a youth increases (Hobbs, 2004). To increase the diversity of the audience within 4-H, the organization must become more open to new approaches to the design and delivery of programs. Hobbs (2004) states that the mission of Extension does not need to change, but programs need to become more capable of serving the needs of diverse populations. The goal of PYD does not change but is achieved by affirming the culture of diverse populations and create positive self-conceptions among the involved youth (Hobbs, 2004). Society has produced a negative self-image for African Americans, one in which academic success is not a part of their culture. A study by Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz (2007) regarding adult African American women students found that, “integrating students’ experiences as an explicit part of the learning agenda encourages them to participate to the fullest extent in their own education.” The participants of the study asserted that transformative learning happens when cultural knowledge and identity are validated, especially in a society in which opportunity is based on race, class, and gender (Sealey-Ruiz, 2007). To gain diverse student participation there needs to be a stronger connection between lived experiences and the curriculum being taught.

Even with the continued efforts of 4-H to diversify their participants, the demographics of the organization fall short of the national U.S. demographics (LaVergne, 2013). Other reports have noted that the national 4-H curriculum struggles to address the
needs of diverse populations and should be revised (LaVergne, 2013). LaVergne’s 2008 diversity inclusive program model suggests that programs should: (1) include positive attitudes toward diversity inclusion; (2) understand that, because of past perceptions, pre-existing barriers may be the reasons these particular groups are underrepresented; and (3) have an awareness of possible solutions to increase underrepresented group participation.

The barrier being addressed in this research is the lack of culturally responsive curricula. Throughout this paper, the terms “culturally responsive” and “culturally relevant” are used interchangeably even though in theory these terms are understood to be different. The participants in this study consider the terms to be synonymous because, in practice, for curricula to be culturally responsive they must be culturally relevant.

Cultural tailoring is the modification of a curriculum to conform to the cultural characteristics of the intended audience (Ringwalt & Bliss, 2006). There are three methods for modifying a curriculum: peripheral – the appearance of the curriculum; linguistic – the language used in the curriculum; and deep structure – the inclusion of the audience’s culture, history, experiences, etc. (Ringwalt & Bliss, 2006). This study addresses the literature gap by regarding the 4-H curricula as a barrier to minority youth engagement and motivation in 4-H programs. LaVergne (2013) indicates, in the conclusion of his study, that the reason why minority groups continue to be underrepresented in 4-H and investigating what those barriers may be should be determined by those involved through qualitative research.
Gaps in Literature about Culturally Responsive Curriculum

There has been little research regarding culturally responsive curricula in outreach programs, but the modification of program curriculum for specific populations has been proven to help better serve the needs of diverse communities. Ringwalt and Bliss’s (2006) study regarding culturally tailoring a substance-use prevention curriculum for Native American youth found that it is appropriate to culturally tailor a curriculum when the original material was intended for an audience with a different cultural background. Cerezo et al. (2013) illustrated how to serve the needs of minorities through a culturally responsive curriculum when developing the program Latina/o Educational Equity Project (LEEP), a program for Latino/a students. The program was grounded in the lived experiences of the students’ culture. Through the program, the importance of cultural validation and identity was magnified by focusing on the relevance of the topics to the audience. Though the initial program was short in duration, LEEP participants took leadership positions after attending the program by searching for opportunities to lead LEEP discussions within their own communities.

Critical race theory enables education to challenge oppression through educator practices and curricula. “Such a theoretical foundation challenges the very dynamics that work to oppress such students, and calls for the sharing of power in development and delivery of programs because experiential knowledge of people of color is central to efforts directed to these communities” (Cerezo et al. 2013). Qualitative studies have indicated that minority youth are aware of the inequalities they face in education, which could potentially affect their development. The designed workshops wanted to create
self-awareness among minority youth to have them relate the lessons to their lives and view the world through a more critical lens (DaCunha, 2016). The idea behind the curriculum was to demonstrate to youth the agency they have to make change by creating awareness through a CRT-framed curriculum. This process was performed by creating a space to discuss their experiences in relation to the topic and how they can create meaningful change in relation to their communities. Relating topics to minority youth communities increases their understanding of their communities and enables them to potentially solve or discover solutions to community needs (DaCunha, 2016). In addressing this curriculum gap in outreach programs by connecting concepts to lived experiences through cultural responsiveness, this study addresses the needs of a diverse youth.

**Researcher Positionality**

I am an African American female who grew up in a city in which 4-H was present, but as a youth I was unaware of 4-H’s existence. When I learned about 4-H, I was a sophomore in college. After having 4-H described to me, I thought it only focused on agriculture and was unaware that it operated in urban areas. Once I obtained more information about the organization, I could not believe the opportunity I had missed. I later acted as a volunteer with 4-H during the Wildlife and Forestry Education Day at The Pennsylvania State University for three years in a row, and minorities were entirely absent. The drive behind wanting to focus on urban minority youth motivation and engagement is because I identify with this population and, like many other minority youth, I was unaware of the opportunities available to me through 4-H. I wanted to
understand why we form such a low percentage of 4-H participants. The focus on curricula developed from an interest in trying to understand whether the current national curriculum related to what statistically in the organization is an underrepresented urban minority population.
Chapter 3

Methodology

The goal of this qualitative research study was to obtain an understanding of how 4-H curriculum impacts urban minority youth engagement and motivation in 4-H programs as well as youth educator practices within 4-H. As stated in the previous chapter, some researchers in the field of multicultural education (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994;) have stated that culturally responsive teaching and curriculum are an effective way of addressing the academic and social needs of culturally-diverse students. Furthermore, culturally responsive teachers are cognizant of the critical role that race and culture play in the way students learn (Howard, 2003). The objectives of this study achieved this goal by analyzing the perspectives of individuals directly affected by the curricula developed through 4-H programs. The objectives of this study included (1) to investigate the perceptions of 4-H educators and youth in regards to the cultural responsiveness of 4-H curriculum; (2) to describe the perceptions of 4-H educators on how curriculum impacts their teaching practices; and (3) describe the perceptions of 4-H youth on how curriculum impacts their engagement and motivation in 4-H. The guiding research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What are youth and educator perspectives about culturally responsive 4-H curriculum and its impact on urban minority youth engagement and motivation in 4-H programs?
2. How does youth culture affect youth educator practices when delivering 4-H curriculum for a 4-H program?
This chapter discusses the research design, data collection, and data analysis.

**Definition of Terms**

**Table 1. Definition of Terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-H</td>
<td>adj. of or relating to a program set up by the U.S. Department of Agriculture originally in rural areas to help young people become productive citizens by instructing them in useful skills (as in agriculture, animal husbandry, and carpentry), community service, and personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>n. a course of study at a school, university, or program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural responsiveness</td>
<td>adj. react appropriately to culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>n. the skills, arts, etc. of a given people in a given period; the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits or a religious, social, or racial group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurocentric</td>
<td>adj. reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>n. a teacher or school administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>n. a racial, religious, or political group that differs from the larger, controlling group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>n. any of the three primary divisions of mankind distinguished especially by color of skin; any geographical, national, or tribal ethnic grouping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>adj. of or belonging to a city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>n. state of being young; early life; a young person; young persons collectively</td>
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Research Design

The goal of this study was to obtain an understanding of the impact of the curricula on urban minority youth engagement and motivation in 4-H programs as well as youth educator practices within 4-H. The basis of this study was description, providing the research with a qualitative methodology. As discussed in many research design courses, “the question determines the method.” The research design for this study was classified as a collective exploratory case study. The research included three 4-H county offices in a Mid-Atlantic state. These offices acted as individual cases that were then compared to provide greater validity and reliability to the findings. The determination of an exploratory case study was based on the goal of obtaining a greater understanding of the cultural responsiveness of 4-H curriculum. The key terms defined in Table 1 need to be understood to grasp the main components examined during this study.

Methodology Rationale

The focus of this study was to describe the cultural responsiveness of 4-H curriculum via sub-groups within 4-H to obtain their perspectives on the topic. This purpose matches the primary purpose of descriptive research and has been cited as useful for “investigating a variety of educational problems” (R. Radhakrishna, personal communication, 2016). The use of a collective case study allowed for in-depth research of 4-H Extension youth and educators in different locations, which enables the investigation of the phenomenon of cultural responsiveness of 4-H curriculum (Glesne, 2016). Glesne (2016) defines a collective case study as a study
that involves multiple cases used to investigate a phenomenon. This collective case study involved the comparison of the three cases and created a strong sense of validity and reliability through the commonly-used methods of interviews and focus groups.

**Question Development**

I developed two instruments to answer the research questions. Interview questions were developed based on the literature and information I deemed important for the educators participating in the study. The questions are in Appendix A. The questions were field tested by being sent to 3 current/former 4-H Extension agents to check for wording, understanding, and flow for Interview Sessions 1 to 3. Based on the feedback, the questions were adjusted. The second instrument developed was a set of focus group questions to be discussed with the youth participants. These questions are in Appendix B and were reviewed by two Extension professionals who interact with the youth likely to participate in the study. These professionals provided suggestions regarding wording/terminology to adjust the questions to increase youth understanding. Since the focus group questions had already been approved by the institutional review board (IRB), I kept the questions the same but explained the terminology to the participants based on the suggestions made by the Extension professionals.
Description of Sample

The sampling process for the 4-H educators was a mixture of purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The criteria for educators to be participants in the study was applied when I searched the Extension website for urban educators. I contacted a few educators to obtain insights in their interest in participating in the study. After contacting two educators, I was notified to contact the Assistant Director and Senior Educator at the state level to gain permission for educators to participate in the study. The necessary individuals were contacted, and the necessary information was sent. The authorities listed individuals meeting the participation criteria who I should contact as possible participants. The listed educators were contacted, and they made suggestions regarding other educators to contact until the same people kept being mentioned as possible participants.

The sampling process for youth participants took place during a weeklong 4-H event. I explained the study to the youth and offered them the chance to participate. Youth then self-selected themselves by volunteering. Before the weeklong event, all the guardians of the youth planning to attend received a description of the study and a form to sign if they did not wish their child to participate. This form was presented once more when each child checked-in at the beginning of the event. The race, location, and gender of each youth are included in the quotes in Chapter 4 to illustrate that culturally responsive curricula are important to all youth no matter race, location, or gender. All the participants in the study signed a consent form before participating in an interview or focus group.
Given that the focus of this study was on 4-H curriculum, the sites for this study were 4-H county offices in a Mid-Atlantic state based on their location in what are considered urban areas with minority populations present. Three 4-H county offices were selected due to the available minority population in the county and close proximity of the locations to act as a purposeful sample.

**Table 2. Research Participant Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Research Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educator Demographics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educator 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Demographics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
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</table>

*Note: The youth participants represent counties across the state in which the study occurred. All the youth participants self-identified their community as rural, urban, or suburban.*
Semi-structured Interviews

To obtain an understanding about 4-H curriculum, I collected perspectives from those who are directly impacted by the type of curricula both provided and taught. I conducted 3 semi-structured interviews over a period of 4 months with 3 4-H educators, each from a different county location. Each interview lasted 30 to 90 minutes. Interviews allow for in-depth data collection from participants to obtain a fuller understanding of the topic (Teijlingen, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a way of a conversation between the interviewer and interviewee in which the researcher has a set of open-ended questions that enable the participant to offer their perspective and allow the researcher to probe for greater detail as needed (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to both describe and interpret the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of the educators. The semi-structured interviews were facilitated as a discussion and were held face-to-face to create trust between myself and the participants, as well as a way to note both verbal and nonverbal communication using audio recordings and observations throughout the interview process. Examples of the questions asked during the interviews are in Table 3; however, a full script of the questions is in Appendix A.
Table 3. Sample of Semi-structured Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Interview Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you define cultural responsiveness in the context of curriculum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What comes to mind when you think about 4-H curriculum in urban areas in terms of relevance to minority participants?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you modified original 4-H curriculum on your own to better fit your audience? Why or why not? If yes, how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What curriculum characteristics make a program more relatable to urban minority youth?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Groups

The use of focus groups became extremely popular in research in the 1980s in the marketing industry to help understand the experiences of consumers and learn about diversity in society (Ryan, Gandha, Culbertson & Carlson, 2014). This method is designed to produce a collective conversation centered around the topic to gather collective viewpoints that are rich in description (Ryan et al. 2014). Focus groups are generally small and last anywhere from 1 to 2 hours. For this study, the focus groups lasted 60 minutes, the participants were 4-H youth and there were 4 sessions spread over a period of 3 days. Each of the focus group sessions was audio recorded to interpret the verbal communication of participants. Focus groups have been described by various researchers, but specifically by Colucci (2007), as a way “to explore group norms and values, making them a very precious instrument for cultural and cross-cultural studies and research with ethnic minority groups.” Table 4 contains examples of the questions asked during the youth focus groups. All the remaining questions are in Appendix B.
Table 4. Sample Focus Group Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Focus Group Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you think stops/prevents some minority youth from joining 4-H in your community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel 4-H curriculum is made for urban minority youth? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think curriculum needs to be culturally relevant for urban minority audiences? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should 4-H curriculum used in urban diverse settings include?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

Data collection was focused on obtaining the perceptions of 4-H educators and youth regarding the cultural responsiveness of 4-H curriculum, the perceptions of 4-H educators on how the curriculum impacts their teaching practices, and the perceptions of 4-H youth on how the curriculum impacts their engagement and motivation in 4-H. I collected these data by conducting semi-structured interviews with the 4-H educators and focus groups with the youth.

Semi-structured Interviews

There were three 4-H county offices that participated in this study, with an educator participant from each of the three counties. The interviews took place at the designated county office of the educator. The duration of the data collection was over a period of four months. Each educator participated in three interviews; one interview per month to eliminate any fatigue on the part of the participants and to allow adequate time for interview transcription. Each of the interviews lasted 30 to 90 minutes, during which I elicited the perspectives of the educators on the cultural responsiveness of 4-H.
curriculum by using pre-determined open-ended questions. The interviews were structured as a conversation between myself and the educator as a means of obtaining a rich description of their perspectives and experiences.

**Focus Groups**

The structure of the focus groups was a casual group discussion in which the youth participants could voice their views openly while sitting around an outdoor picnic table. The number of individuals participating in each focus group ranged from 2 to 7 individuals. The focus groups lasted 60 minutes and there was only one session per group due to access to the participants. I gained access to the youth participants through a summer 4-H weeklong overnight event. Due to the broad representation of 4-H youth present, it was only possible to gather all the same youth together on one occasion. Therefore, all the focus group questions were asked during that single session.

A voluntary opportunity allowed me to observe 4-H youth interacting with each other during a county fair. I was able also to observe non-4-H youth and their interest in the organization. The opportunity offered me an inside perspective into some of the inner workings of 4-H.

**Data Collection Issues**

There were not many issues during the process of collecting data, and none that drastically changed how the data were collected. There were some minor issues, however. The first issue regarding conducting the youth focus groups concerned access. The original plan was to have three focus group sessions with different groups of youth.
from the same counties the interviews with the educators were conducted in. However, this plan was difficult because it was summer and youth were busy; it was not possible to gather all of the same youth together on three different occasions over the summer. To solve this issue, I accessed youth attending the previously mentioned 4-H event to reach as many youth as possible. I only had access to the different groups once over the weeklong event to conduct the focus groups, but this allowed access to youth representing various counties across the state in focus. The second issue concerned extending the timeline for collecting data to match the schedules of the educators. This issue was solved by simply extending the timeline to be able to have each educator participate in all three semi-structured interviews.

**Data Analysis**

After collecting the data, each interview and focus group audio recording was transcribed by hand using Windows Media Player and Microsoft Word. The transcription of the interviews and focus groups took four months. Once the transcriptions were finished, I hand coded the nine educator interviews first and then the four focus groups. I coded any excerpts that related to the research questions. There were no pre-codes developed prior to analysis. I coded each interview and focus group twice by hand, and then created code lists with the connected excerpts. The code lists were separated into educator and youth code lists. I categorized the codes and excerpts based on the data. Then, the categories were examined for emerging themes and subthemes. This analysis produced four major themes, which are discussed in depth in Chapter 4.
Limitations of the Study

- The population samples for this study are small and only represent one small geographic location of the 4-H community.
- The results of the study cannot be generalized to the entire 4-H population, only to the individual cases studied.
- The 4-H curricular sample was a small representation of curricula from one geographic location.
Chapter 4

Findings

The collected and analyzed data are discussed in this chapter, as are the three themes that emerged during the data analysis. The participant demographics regarding the 4-H educators who participated in the interviews and the 4-H youth who participated in the focus groups include gender, race, and location in the 4-H programs (see Table 2). The theme sections of this chapter present the three emergent themes with the respective subthemes and supporting quotes from the participants. This chapter only presents the data, it does not include any interpretation. The themes presented in these sections emerged after analyzing the perspectives collected from both the educators and the youth and represent their voices. Each theme represents a major finding of the study, supported by the subthemes. The relationships between each research question and the themes and subthemes are depicted in Figure 2 for Research Question 1, and Figure 3 for Research Question 2. Themes are only represented under the questions from which they emerged during the data analysis. This exploratory study seeks to (1) investigate the perceptions of 4-H educators and youth in regards to the cultural responsiveness of 4-H curriculum; (2) describe the perceptions of 4-H educators on how curriculum impact their teaching practices; and (3) describe the perceptions of 4-H youth on how curriculum impact their engagement and motivation in 4-H. These objectives were designed to answer the research questions.
Research Question 1

What are youth and educator perspectives about culturally responsive 4-H curriculum and its impact on urban minority youth engagement and motivation in 4-H programs?

Figure 2. Relationship between Research Question 1, themes, and subthemes

*Note: Themes are represented only under the questions from which they emerged*
**Research Question 2**

How does youth culture affect youth educator practices when delivering 4-H curriculum for a 4-H program?

Figure 3. Relationship between Research Question 2, themes, and subthemes

*Note: Themes are represented under the questions from which they emerged*
Theme 1: Factors That Make Curriculum Culturally Responsive

Research Question 1 seeks both educator and youth perspectives. Therefore, each theme is deconstructed respectively. As the collected data were coded by hand, it became clear that both educators and youth felt that there are certain aspects that make a curriculum culturally responsive. Thus, the theme “Factors that make curriculum culturally responsive” emerged. This theme was developed from the interviews with the 4-H educators and the focus groups with the 4-H youth. Both the educators and the youth described what they believe, based on their experience, makes the curricula culturally responsive. Each subtheme represents a factor mentioned by all three educators and the youth. These factors impact the cultural responsiveness of curricula (some more than others), including topic, curriculum structure, and educator practices.

Topic

The topic of a curriculum was one of the first subthemes to emerge from the data when discussing cultural responsiveness. The curriculum used in programs is based on the needs and interests of the audience; so the question is, are there topics that are of interest and culturally responsive to urban minority youth? There are many topics offered through 4-H curriculum, and this was made apparent by each educator interviewed.

When I’m talking to parents I always say it doesn’t matter what your kid is interested in, we have curriculum, meaning the actual books and suggestions of activities, we have those on pretty much any topic you could ask for. The goal is to develop relationships with caring adults, experience some growth and mastery of new skills over time and develop leadership and citizenship so that they can carry that into adulthood. It’s not about specific topics, but we use specific topics to gain participation and interest in the program. (Educator 2)
A couple of the educators discussed diversity and the curriculum and noted that this was a difficult topic due to the range of 4-H topics offered.

One thing that I will say about 4-H curricula is that ummm there is great diversity with regard to the curricula. So, you know, thinking of 4-H curricula, they publish a book on goats and another one on robotics, another one on mentoring, another one on diversity, another one on healthy living, so there is a wide variety. (Educator 3)

That’s becoming a tough one to figure out now. Umm..yeah I think that we have gotten a lot of good curriculum recently and so I don’t think there are any major subject areas that aren’t being covered. (Educator 1)

The educators openly acknowledged that there is a separation between some topics that are considered urban versus rural in the structure of 4-H. In most cases, STEM, entrepreneurship, leadership development, etc. are usually promoted in urban communities; whereas, many agriculture-related curricula are not as common. Each educator agreed that this mindset has been, and is in the process of, changing, but there remains room for improvement regarding having curricula that could be for either urban or rural communities.

I think we are starting to see a good mix for urban and rural. I think again that the curriculum may need to be adjusted a bit to bridge that gap. But I think a lot of our programs, all of our stuff is right here, I’m just looking there, all of those can be brought into an urban or rural community. Some of them are probably certainly more useful. Some of the newer curriculum I feel has gotten a lot better at showing diversity and showing how it can be used in different communities. A lot of the urban communities I have worked with, the kids and the adults are looking for something that they can put into use in their communities to make it better right now. It’s not knowledge that they can use in the future, it’s knowledge they can use right now. And so, I think we have gotten a lot more of the social advocacy and citizen science projects that are being incorporated into our newer curriculum. I think that is a good thing. Something that we need to keep showing is how the curriculum can be used in their community right now. (Educator 1)

I think the 4-H curriculum brings a value to all communities. Do I think that there could be an increase for urban communities…yes. I think maybe as far as rural communities,
there is a ton of curricula. But I’m not so certain about urban communities. Ummm… I mean just like thinking of some curricula like sewing, like that would be a curricula that could be used like urban, suburban, rural. But as far as cultural responsiveness, yeah, I feel like there is always room for improvement. So, yeah, there could be an increase. (Educator 3)

I feel like they have kept with the same topic areas, that have been going on for quite a while. I don’t know, I think they are trying to find ways to reach urban youth, but I think the focus on that is more on entrepreneurship, and the umm community development and things like that, and the STEM areas. But not really coming up with new curriculum focused on urban ag or foods that are specific to the urban community. So I think it’s just uhhhh… really getting a better grasp on what the needs are. (Educator 1)

When the 4-H youth discussed the topics offered by 4-H, in the focus groups comprising young people of different races from various counties across the state, a difference was evident in their knowledge regarding the available topics. Urban minority youth felt that there were many topics in 4-H but were surprised by the topic areas offered in more suburban and rural youth communities that they were unaware of. The 4-H curricula topics were not always regarded by the youth as being responsive to urban minority culture. This view usually applied when discussing the emphasis of agriculture-related topics, or the lack of emphasis of other curricular topics in urban communities that the youth were interested in but did not know about. All the youth participants in the study felt that the lack of knowledge about the variety of topics offered by 4-H was one reason why urban minority youth do not believe that the 4-H curriculum is responsive to their culture. Youth talked about finding topics that match the interests of urban minority youth as a way to be culturally responsive.

Well I think that 4-H should do a better job of appealing to minorities, like African Americans. Don’t just emphasize agriculture, there is other sides to 4-H, because if you are just going to broadcast 4-H as like an agricultural club, not that many people…like not that many African Americans are going to join. I think that they should emphasize
community service and like not just livestock. I mean like everybody has dogs, like I never heard of a dog club before, this is the first I’m ever hearing of that. You know there is lots of different kinds of dog lovers and stuff…not just agriculture. Just I think they need to just emphasize different parts of 4-H. (Black Urban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

That’s what I just started to really realize, that there is different topics. Like I said, I still don’t really know a lot about 4-H, that’s how new I am to it. Maybe I’m not just aware of all the opportunities or all the stuff that I could be involved in that I would like even more and possibly make me have a better perspective on the whole thing. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

The topics just weren’t that enticing; it just didn’t seem like something that I would be interested in. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

I remember when I first was introduced to 4-H, it was because we went to like an overnight camp thing for school. And my school is like predominantly African American, so I remember everybody saying “this is weird, I don’t want to come back here.” We were learning about like poop and animals and stuff. And they were like, “I don’t want to come back here, this is weird.” But once you get involved with it you see that there are different aspects to it and it does help you with college and gives you scholarships and good opportunities. So I think that they should emphasize that a little more too. (Black Urban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

Non-minority youth discussed how they consider agriculture to be overshadowing other topics in 4-H that youth in urban communities might be interested in. This overshadowing, they believed, is because of the lack of knowledge or availability in their counties.

I think that’s the good thing about 4-H, like there are so many different options. Like my friends are like “I don’t want to scoop poop, I don’t want to sleep in the barn with a cow.” And I’m like, you don’t have to, you could do community service, you could write cards to kids in hospitals, you could do whatever. And then there are the people that do want to get their hands dirty, they do want to do…like it has something for everyone honestly. Like our 4-H is literally a bazillion different clubs like for everything under the sun. (White Urban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)
I don’t really know. That is a really difficult question for me. Because I feel like there are so many great programs through 4-H already. I feel like there isn’t much very more that you can add on to 4-H, like what they have already is great enough. And they have a different thing for everyone. Like you might be into robots, so you have robotics, or you might be into horses like me, and so you have the horse program and everything. But I understand that not all counties have that stuff, so, I mean, I feel like the counties that don’t have the chance to have those should definitely gain those and get them for the kids that want to try that out. (White Rural Youth, Female, Focus Group 4)

None of the youth considered agriculture topics to be negative. Some urban youth were interested because it is different, but all the youth agreed it is not the culture of many youth. If agriculture is at the forefront of 4-H’s advertised topics, the images of the 4-H curricula will not seem culturally responsive to all youth from different backgrounds. 4-H has to demonstrate the benefits of their topics for all youth because, as one youth stated, if there is a benefit, culture is not always as important.

Everything that people are saying, I think it would be nice to learn about different agriculture and different stuff like that, because in my community we don’t really learn about stuff like that. (Black Urban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

We run away from stuff like that. (Black Urban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

Yeah, that’s what I was starting to think. I was like we do a lot of agriculture. Which is great, don’t get me wrong there, but there are some people who don’t come from the farm background. (White Rural Youth, Female, Focus Group 4)

For my camps, we ain’t talk about no animals, and when we hiked, we hiked just for fun and when it was an animal it was like “oh that’s a deer, we know what a deer is. Ohh that’s a baby bear, we know it.” But if you go to like a farm and you see a horse, it’s like it really stinks. I wouldn’t be like that is a male horse and I know what it is about. But I wouldn’t do that because my community we don’t do stuff like that, we just have fun. But the reason why I come to 4-H is because they have different opportunities and I can learn more about horses and stuff like that. (Black Urban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

It’s not a bad thing, it’s just I’m not used to it. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)
I mean, we go to camp and we talk about animals and we go into the woods and stuff. But it’s not like how you plant this, so this was news to me. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

The youth mentioned that 4-H should capture urban minority youth interest by relating the curricular topics to sports, because sports is a topic of great interest in urban communities and with youth in general.

I think that the person who went last, before the last, made a really good point actually with the whole...ummm...there is a lot of belief, but it’s kind of true that if a lot of people who play sports end up playing sport in college, and they rake in a lot of money, but if they are focused only on the sport and not on their education then they end up failing and they really don’t have any focus but the sport itself. But maybe if 4-H was advertised to a lot of these minorities who play sports, football and basketball, and maybe there is some kind of, I don’t know...whatever kind of project that is linked between sports and 4-H, they could eventually end up teaching them more. And then they have something to hold on and maybe they learn about robotics and then they decide to major in engineering while they play sports in college. I think that would be really groundbreaking actually. (Black Urban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

And then there are just some people who just don’t have an interest for it. So, I think if you got kids into sports programs, and I mean really the only sport in 4-H I guess you could say would be horseback riding. But not...that’s not everyone’s thing. So I think if they could add sports that people commonly do, like soccer, football, field hockey, volleyball, something like that, it would encourage more people to join. And also it would keep a healthier lifestyle going, which would tie also into 4-H because there is the healthy living styles, so they could expand on that one. (White Rural Youth, Female, Focus Group 4)

Curricular topics developed for youth should be impactful and relevant to the audience and their community.

I think that they should be more impactful. A lot more impactful and definitely more sustainable. In whatever way possible. Like I said, I a lot of these kids have something great which is just interest in something, something that is able to be beneficial. So, if these skills or these interests are utilized properly, then they could easily make this world a better place and I just want to see more of that. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)
I don’t think we really care as long as we are benefiting from it. Like who is there right now. I don’t think my mom would shy away…well, she didn’t, if like culturally minorities weren’t already there. Because I can benefit from it and I would be able to use what I learn. So it’s not really what culture is there, or like who is around, or like how I’m going to fit in or anything. It’s like if the topics are there, which they are, which I can gain from, then I’m going to do it. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

**Curriculum Structure**

When considering the cultural responsiveness of the curricula, it seems obvious to want to understand the structural components that comprise the curriculum of focus. The curriculum structure subtheme is one that each educator had strong views about regarding the 4-H curriculum structure in general, the importance of the curriculum structure being culturally responsive, and what the structure should consist of to be better culturally responsive. An agreed upon statement made by each educator was the goal/mission of every 4-H curriculum, no matter the topic, was the capacity of the curriculum to teach youth life skills and a sense of empowerment.

So, I feel like all of 4-H curriculum is to build life skills. Umm it doesn’t matter, we always talk about that, it doesn’t matter what project you’re doing, we’re always going for the same life skills. Whether it’s robotics or livestock, and curriculum is really there to guide us in that in getting to those life skills and having that research base behind what we are teaching. (Educator 1)

Another educator in a similar location had the same sentiment.

The mission is to empower youth to reach their full potential in an inclusive setting. And the STEM initiative, that’s accomplished through STEM activities, so through science, technology, engineering, and math. Umm…and then the curricula I feel like, helps to meet that goal by providing resources that have that experiential learning model within them. So, the whole do, reflect, and apply. (Educator 3)

The overall goal of the 4-H program is to promote the 5 Cs, growing life skills and citizenship among young people, preparing them for the next step in life in a way...
different from the traditional education system. Once I started using my own words it’s a lot easier. Learning through hands-on experience has a lot of value in developing skills beyond the content that is learned. So, you know, public speaking skills, leadership skills, learning how to manage projects where you are in charge, especially for our teenage members. Developing social skills and friendships for younger kids outside of the school. So, ummm yeah, overall just a holistic youth-development program where they do fun stuff but, in the end, it produces the fine upstanding citizen through participation in our programs. (Educator 2)

Even with all the 4-H curricula having the same overall goal of youth developing life skills, there were still questions and concerns about the current development of the 4-H curriculum with a structure that includes cultural responsiveness. Efforts to improve the cultural responsiveness of 4-H have been seen by the educators. In the interviews, however, the educators stated that it has been a continuous struggle when it comes to recruiting minority youth. The educators indicated that cultural responsiveness needs to begin at the foundation of the curriculum structure, and that starts with development: who is developing the curriculum? Is there diverse representation? What are the reasons behind certain curricular topics? Is the curricular development timely and relevant?

I think, like I said before, with the other question, I think that there is always room for improvement. I think what would be interesting for me to know is, like as far as who is creating the curricula, and let’s say, and I don’t know, but let’s say that the people who are creating the curricula are only in rural settings. Well, then they may not have the cultural responsiveness that we talked about for urban settings, or vice versa. I mean, I don’t know. And then the other thing that we talked about too with STEM and cutting edge. And the curriculum isn’t cutting edge, sometimes, because, like you know, first it has to be written and then peer reviewed, and that takes time. Well, the same could be true for like cultural responsiveness. Like things that you are seeing that are issues that need to be addressed today may be quite different than like 10 years ago. And that too again because of having to be peer reviewed may be lagging behind as well. I don’t know how you…like maybe speeding up the peer-review process. And again I don’t really know how that can be done. I can’t really speak to that because I have never peer reviewed the curricula, I don’t know how that goes. But yeah, I feel like there is always room for improvement and I think it would be interesting for me to know like maybe the authors of the curricula and what was the driving force behind creating the curricula. Like, was it born out of a need or was it like maybe the background or education or
interest of the authors? Or maybe it was like more geography, so I think that would be interesting to know. But yeah, I think there is definitely room for improvement. But I think it is definitely the peer-review process. Like that time lag plays a factor. And it’s funny, I have never thought about that before you brought up that question. (Educator 3)

Another educator answered the concerns that Educator 3 mentioned above.

A lot of times when we have new curriculum coming out it does get pilot-tested in different communities and then they take that back for rewrites for the final project. So it is a long process, sometimes it might take years, which can be a challenge when doing technology-based stuff (laugh), it’s very challenging because stuff changes too fast. But we always try and test it in different areas first to see how it’s going to work. That way the educators have the minimum amount of changes to make it relevant for their program. (Educator 1)

The educators discussed the need for diverse representation and perspectives during the curricular development process.

And that somebody, and I mean I don’t even know how these things are decided, right? But, let’s say there is a table, that somebody at that table is representing…well, that there is diversity at the table and that there is somebody representing urban youth. Urban settings, because, well, you want diversity in all backgrounds. Ummm, so that the people that are making the decisions, that they represent all of us. You know, I was going to say within the United States, but 4-H, we are actually global. So, yeah, I think that is really important. (Educator 3)

I would say the great thing about 4-H curriculum is that, for the most part, it is developed by 4-H educators on a team. So, they do get that input, they can have their own experiences in their communities. Some states obviously have their own curriculum-development specialist, but they are working on a team within their state or possibly multiple states. In curriculum that I am helping develop we are getting input from 20 different states. Whatever small group of us get together to set up a curriculum, we are going to be able to take that input into account. (Educator 1)

The components of the 4-H curriculum structure that some educators considered needed to be improved included aspects such as images of diverse races, cultures, and locations. As one educator states, below, “being able to see yourself in the curriculum is
important,” especially when you are trying to indicate the relevance of what is being taught to your audience.

It’s also, I think, important though, when we look at the project books, that there are some things in the project books that need to be changed so that curriculum represents urban and rural youth. When we do our advertising for robotics or any of our engineering programs or camps, we’re very conscious of making sure we are showing a diverse audience in our advertising. I think that’s something that has been a challenge at times. Even if it is an agricultural program, we’re making sure we are showing that diversity. (Educator 1)

And I was like, you know, as far as the curricula….like when someone opens up their curricula they should be able to see themselves in the curricula. You know what I mean? Not only should they be able to see someone that looks like them in the curricula, but also, like thinking about your question about urban environments, that there be cityscapes. You know, and that’s when we were talking about, and that’s just an example, but when we were talking about the water cycle. And talking about storm drains, and talking about, and that’s just one example again that comes up for urban environments. And coastal might be something completely different. And rural might be something completely different. But that it’s included right! (Educator 3)

We even drew, like say this is a book, right? Because that’s the thing we are like talking about like seeing you in the water cycle. Well then, we could have like blocks out here, like well if you live in the desert, if you live in the city, if you live on the coast. Like how, specifically like, you are a part of the water cycle, and uniquely in a way. (Educator 3)

Curricula should display settings that are relevant to urban minority youth if they are to be culturally responsive.

Like we said last time, making it relevant, but not only relevant, but showing urban settings in the books. Ummm, in the literature and the pictures that are being used, really focusing on that a little more. Some of our engineering, ummm, projects we could really do a better job of focusing on that. You know the agriculture ones are obviously going to be focused on a rural area, but we could modify some of those to have an urban agriculture curriculum for small container gardening, things like that. (Educator 1)

I mean, that’s the motto of 4-H, right? Making the best better. Like we talked about earlier, youth should be able to see themselves in the curricula and where they live in the
curricula. For example, if the curricula just shows like barns and corn fields, just like a rural environment, you could understand how urban youth would say, “Well how does this apply to me?” And conversely. You know? So, I really do feel like to be able to personalize as best as possible, I mean I understand there is probably like, I’m just thinking like making a book, like budget constraints and printing or whatever. But that all youth should be able to see themselves in the curricula if they want to and so, yeah, I definitely, and I know we have talked about it, I guess that starts early in the curriculum-development process. You know? So I think that’s important, I know we kind of don’t know step by step that process, but that it happens early on is important. (Educator 3)

Not all the educators agreed that the imagery in the curricula is an important factor in the cultural responsiveness of the 4-H curriculum structure; in most cases the curriculum is not seen by the youth. It is the overall structure of the program being culturally responsive that more strongly impacts youth engagement and motivation. Educator 2 argues that the curriculum books are just a resource, and that if the program itself is culturally responsive then youth will still be engaged in the projects they are working on.

I would say if you are talking about books, I don’t think you are going to run into the clash of urban versus non-urban, because they are about specific skills. I think where you are going to run into the clash of urban and non-urban is more on the Big C, the overall planning and vision and mission rather than the books. The books are just lessons, and a lot of them are about specific skills, and it’s more about the overall program and how the volunteers are trained and managed is where you will see the preparedness of working with urban audiences. (Educator 2)

I honestly don’t think the kids look at the curriculum very much. I mean they might, but a lot of the curriculum they don’t have pictures, they just don’t, unless it’s for a craft. So, you know, they have like illustrations and cartoons and stuff, but a lot of them don’t have like pictures of people. Like yeah, photography does, but a lot of the curriculum are meant for adults. So that’s why I’m not so concerned about that because it’s really the adults that I need to capture rather than the kids with the curriculum. (Educator 2)

Well, I guess going back to what I said before, if we are talking about the books, no. If we are talking about the way we build our programs, yes. Like…if we look at how to
define cultural responsiveness and then incorporate that into the structure of our programs, then I don’t think it matters what curriculum we use or what it looks like as long as it doesn’t do anything offensive. I think that if cultural responsivity is built into the way a program is setup, let’s say we are talking about sewing. Maybe the picture in the sewing curriculum that you use has a bunch of white kids doing sewing and that’s all that’s available on 4-H Mall, but if you got that adult volunteer that wants to inspire the kids in their communities, and they are doing an entrepreneurship project and they are going to sew things to sell, and they are just using this curriculum to supplement their activities, then I don’t think it matters that it’s all white kids in the curriculum looking happy at their projects. It’s more about who you involve in the setup on the ground floor and how you go about recruiting the participants. As long as there is nothing offensive in the imagery, then I don’t think it matters as much what they look like in the actual book or curriculum you are using. (Educator 2)

One positive aspect of the structure of the 4-H curriculum that each educator noted helps with making the curriculum culturally responsive is its generic structure. The broad general structure of the 4-H curriculum is considered a positive because it allows for flexibility to modify the curricula to be more culturally responsive to their specific audience.

And the great thing too, I would say, about being an informal educator within 4-H is that… I have taught middle, high, and college before. And sometimes there are like prescribed curricula and so, like, on this day you have to teach covalent bonds and you have to teach it with this activity, and these, and even down to these, are the questions that you have to ask as wrap-up. And with 4-H you have flexibility, so I do like that you’re able to tailor the program and activity to the needs of the school, the teachers, the classes. So, that worked really well. (Educator 3)

But I really think as far as the books, there is not going to be a lot of, for like the nationally reviewed curriculum you are not going to run into that, like the cultural responsiveness because they are written so generically that like it’s, you could take the lesson material of like the healthy living lesson and swap out the recipe for something else. I really think they are applicable because they can be modified. And again, I think the diversity and cultural appropriateness is more about the broader events and things that you put on and your approach of recruiting more people to join, that’s where you are going to run into the issues of cultural appropriateness. And, like, where you show up in the county. (Educator 2)
So, I think most of the curriculum can be modified, but I think, umm, the idea of having something specific to urban, and again I think this is getting more towards the ag literacy and environmental science. Those areas that were focused on, I think that needs to be rewritten so that it is specific to an urban community. Mainly because I don’t think a lot of educators, unless they have that background, won’t be able to translate that on their own. A lot of our urban educators don’t have an ag background, so they really don’t know how to take what’s already written there for rural communities and transfer it to urban settings. Luckily, I have a background in ag, so I’m able to take that and modify that, but that’s not the case for most. (Educator 1)

When the educators were asked if they could build a 4-H curriculum made for urban minority youth, what would it look like and include, aspects of curriculum structure such as images, flexibility, meeting the needs of youth, and the inclusivity of diverse representations in race and location were all mentioned.

That it be inclusive, curriculum that is inclusive, challenging, exciting, ummm. Well, I know for us sometimes finances like getting the funding for the robots and stuff, that can be a challenge. So, when it is something that is affordable, I feel like everybody benefits from that. Yeah, that it also has the experiential learning model within each of the lessons. That it is I said inclusive, but culturally respectful and appropriate. That it is exciting... that it’s not curricula that everybody else already has. You know what I mean? So that it’s like unique and, ummm, because we don’t in this case want to reinvent the wheel. So yeah, that it is unique. And also too that it meets the needs of our youth. (Educator 3)

So the images I would include if I was advertising for this program or even if there was a booklet that was a part of this project, that I would put pictures of minority youth in college, or in a particular educational environment that’s relevant. Because maybe one of the professionals that I would expose children to would not be one that requires a four-year degree, but still one that requires beyond a secondary education. So, I would put pictures of stuff like that in the booklets. (Educator 2)

Educator 2 wanted the curriculum structure to illustrate to youth the possibilities that they have for their futures and to depict opportunities with people who look like them.
So, I guess if you’re talking about youth-development program, it’s like you’re preparing them for adulthood. So, you want to put pictures of them in that next stage, pictures of young adults in positions that you are encouraging…that look like them. So, it’s kind of like riding the wave of things like Hidden Figures and movies like that, show the people that look like that community in positions that you are trying to push them towards…that reflect the economic needs of the community. (Educator 2)

Umm, what would it have? Umm, some of the things that it would definitely have in it would show very diverse images, very diverse not only participants, but diverse locations as far as being used. I would make sure that it had the flexibility for meeting community needs. I think the key is the flexibility piece. Not having just one set script that everyone has to follow but given options depending on where they are starting at with the knowledge base as well as what they really need for that area. (Educator 1)

The structure of the 4-H curriculum was approached differently in certain respects by the youth compared with the educators. As expected, the youth spoke about aspects that are better addressed in Theme 3. Some youth from two separate focus groups commented on diverse imagery and project structure within the curriculum in clubs for youth with varying accessibility to the necessary resources.

The youth in Focus Group 2 spoke passionately about the imagery used in the 4-H curriculum and advertisement, and the lack of diversity among the participants and topics they felt the curriculum depicted. The statements from Focus Group 2 directly concerned the issue of cultural responsiveness and how they understood why urban minority youth would not be motivated to engage in 4-H programs if they do not see their culture represented.

There is always white people. There are never people of color doing STEM activities, or it’s never people of color showing the cows or horses. It’s always just white people and agriculture. So, when you go on the website, you just like this isn’t my culture, I don’t see anyone who looks like me, I really don’t want to be the only person.” (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2) “It’s like you can’t relate.” (White Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2) “Yeah, you can’t relate.” (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2) “If you are the only person of that type in there, you don’t want to be
there, you’re not going to go there.” (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2) “It literally seems like you’re not even welcome. It’s like you don’t feel welcome.” (White Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2) “Yeah, you don’t feel welcome, and you just feel so uncomfortable, and it’s hard to participate if you feel uncomfortable, especially if you don’t know anyone there. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2)

Youth in all the focus groups mentioned the advertisement at some point and the lack of representation regarding race in the curriculum. These sentiments relate to the point made by Educator 2 regarding the importance of the cultural responsiveness of a program and the curriculum structure.

Like most people were saying advertising, but also if you go on the 4-H website, the first thing that pops up is “We are all about agriculture and animals and stuff.” So, most people when they go to the website, they’re just like, nah I’m not into this, so I’m not going to get involved in this. Like we need to add more about engineering, and science and technology, and more of the things that we do in 4-H. Like show more than one club, or just showing the horse, or the beef or cattle club on our website and stuff. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

I think that advertising includes certain cultures, it doesn’t include all the cultures that 4-H brings. So, if it doesn’t match your culture, then you’re less likely to go, so I think it’s a little bit of both. (White Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

In Focus Group 3, a concern about the curriculum project structure was raised.

The youth thought that the structure of projects in some clubs could be limiting and non-inclusive if youth do not have access to the animals or materials needed to participate. Having alternative projects available was suggested, so that no matter a youth’s background or resources, they could have a meaningful project to participate in, and not be limited in participating if they, for example, have interest in horse club but do not have a horse.
So, it’s kind of hard to like fit in…well, I’m accepted in my group and stuff, but like just to find what to do for a project and stuff because it’s so random to be in a horse club and not have a horse. (White Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

My view on projects is I kind of feel like they are a little bit of an impediment. Not like…I feel like it’s just something you have to do if you want to be in 4-H. Lots of people spend a lot of time on theirs, but mine I just write down what I do in my riding lessons. But I find that they are really ill-defined, so it’s something that I just do to stay in the club. Like I don’t really like think too deeply into it. (White Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

So, I think sometimes projects in more direct clubs, meaning clubs like the beef club, like if you don’t show beef and you are in the beef club then why are you in the beef club-type thing. Because, like, you are in 4-H you have to do a project, and at least in my club, I’m in the dog club and some kids don’t have dogs, so they find ways to expand on their project. Like some kids use dog bowls, some kids use like other type things like helping out at training. So, I think sometimes they can be good but sometimes they can be a little too direct per club. (White Urban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

**Educator Practices**

A curriculum might not be structurally culturally responsive, but an educator’s practices can make a curriculum culturally responsive for the audience. For this study, educator practices are defined as those things that the participating educators believe should be done by 4-H educators to make the curricula more culturally responsive to their audiences in general and specifically in urban areas. When an educator wants to bring a curriculum into communities, the first step is for the educator to be involved in the community in some way to be able to learn about the needs and wants of the people directly from those people they are trying to reach. If an educator involves the community members in the decisions concerning the curriculum brought to their communities as well as the delivery of that curriculum, there is a better chance of that curriculum being culturally responsive to the intended audience.
I think the first thing is meeting with our partners in that community and finding out from them what they feel is most useful. You know, every community is different, we work with nine different pal centers. And each of those pal centers has a different type of clientele and needs. We give them a couple of lessons a year they can use, and again they are modifying them to fit their center a little bit. So, I think meeting with our partners and making a plan with them being involved is a key to what we do. And being flexible with what we are willing to offer, and what is available for them. (Educator 1)

I think that is all dependent on the approach of the person in my position. So, yes, there is so much material available through 4-H and the university system and people’s creative minds that we can follow the model of 4-H, like the national 4-H model, we can follow that in an urban area and have it work. It just all depends on the educator’s approach. So, are you showing up in the communities that you are trying to do your programing in, are you marketing in a variety of places, using multiple technologies, trying to get your publicity out? Or are you only targeting one group? So, the challenge of anyone in my position is to try to expand your partnership and collaboration. So, I spend a lot of my time every week calling and scheduling meetings with other groups that serve the community to try to partner with them. I have just been taking the shotgun approach – hit everybody and see what sticks. (Educator 2)

I kind of came at the tail end of one where I met a school person there and I kind of shared that I was looking for a place to deliver this curriculum if they would be interested and she said, “Ohh yes, I would love that for my high school, let's bring it in.” And the way I found out was through stakeholder meetings, which didn’t necessarily deal directly with youth, but people who work with the youth. (Educator 2)

Making connections with both the youth and adults of the community is an important educator practice to understand the needs and interests of the target audience the educators are trying to attract.

So, I guess the biggest thing to get more engagement would be to get adults from the community you are trying to target to lead certain programs and it would just get people to show up. (Educator 2)

I think the biggest thing for me is to go in open minded. You know, umm… I might go in with a plan with what I think is going to work, or what is needed in the area. Sometimes that’s even with talking with our partners in the area, talking with the center directors of the pal centers, we come up with a plan about what’s needed in the area. But, when we actually get there, and we are working with the kids, and sometimes that need changes.
Ummm… and we realize that as we are going through. We have a recent example: I was doing a new program where I was training some teens to become teachers at their Pal Center, and the idea was going to be that they were going to go through some training and then they were going to take some of our curriculum and teach it at their Pal Center. My idea and the Pal Center director’s and the county coordinator all thought it would be a great way to expand the science program in the Pal Center. But when we started going through it, and I showed them a lot of different curriculum and I let them decide what they were going to teach, they found that the cultural diversity and anti-bullying was their main concern. So, when we took a step back and let the teens decide what was most important for their community, we got a different picture of the needs than what we come up with to start with. That’s just saying that staying open minded and flexible about what we are going to do is a really important piece. You know, really listening to the needs, not just the adults in the community, but hearing what the kids are going through. (Educator 1)

Another characteristic would be like choice. So, like giving youth the chance to ask for something and then bring it. So, like they would say we want a program about this and get it. Because there may be less trust of institutions. Like, you know, in rural communities, especially with Extension programing. Like, Extension is a trustworthy name in rural areas. People may know the university in the more urban areas, well they probably do, and you know they may or may not trust it. So, giving them a chance to say this is what we want and fulfilling that would have more potential for success. (Educator 2)

The educators all mentioned wanting to present themselves as welcoming and wanting to work with the community to understand the community and be responsive to their needs.

In urban areas, I also do want to project the image that we are nondiscriminatory, and of course it’s on everything that we print, you know we have the policy on everything. But I try to approach urban partners in as kind, you know I just try to project an image of openness just through my personality. Because I feel like that’s the more powerful tool, is staff personalities rather than a policy. So, when I’m out there, and right now it’s just me, but whenever we get more people I will make sure to also emphasize with them to use your personality to make everyone feel open, because if you’re not, then it doesn’t matter that you have the best program on earth that would solve all their problems, it’s, if they don’t feel welcome then they’re not going to come. I think I mentioned this before with the diversity thing, I don’t look like most people that live here, so I have to try to project an open welcoming vibe and that I’m responsive to their thoughts on how their community works and that I am excited to be partnering with them or bring programs to their area. (Educator 2)
You know, I don’t have the same experiences as the kids that I’m going to be working with in an urban environment, and I’m not going to pretend that I do. But I am going to find things that I can relate to with them. But I think that if we go too far trying and make programs too culturally responsive to their community, unless the volunteer is engaged in that community all the time and lives in that community, I think it runs the risk of coming off insincere. So, I think we have to balance that, and making sure we are giving the community what they need and what they want, with understanding that we don’t understand their community completely. We have to meet somewhere in the middle. (Educator 1)

I think for cultural responsiveness in terms of curricula, I feel like there has to be some emotional intelligence involved as well. To be able to access the class that you are teaching. To understand where the class is coming from. To be able to um.. to be able to clearly and effectively communicate. And then be able to answer questions that may arise. (Educator 3)

Another educator practice that helps make a curriculum culturally responsive is an educator having adaptable teaching styles to match their audience.

Ummm…so, my teaching style is very much, I’m not a by-the-book kind of teacher. I do tend to adlib things a lot and sometimes that can get me in trouble (laugh). But, in general, I think teaching styles, we have to be aware of the learning styles of the kids. And knowing that every kid that we talk to is going to learn differently. I try to make sure my teaching style incorporates several different ways of teaching, and I think that works in all environments. In urban environment, I think that we really have to be engaged hands-on, just like anywhere else, I think that maybe that may have more of an impact with them. Because the schools a lot of time are struggling just to get the core knowledge at many of the schools, whether that be because of, you know, budget issues, teacher issues, behavior issues within the communities within the schools. A lot of time when they come to our programs they are expecting it to be just like school, and we have to make sure that it’s not. That we are giving them something completely different from what they are used to. That, in itself, can be a challenge because they don’t know how to respond to that. When I hand a group of kids a bunch of building materials and say here is the challenge we need to do, by the end of 45mins you are going to build a catapult that can fire a marshmallow across the room, you know, and we talk about a couple of basic concepts and they get to just start building, they really don’t know what to do, and you can see it because they stand around for a couple of minutes until someone finally picks something up and starts building. They’re really not sure what they are supposed to be doing. Where when I do that in a rural community, as soon as I put the stuff out there, they are building. Whether it is they are used to doing it at school or used to doing it at home, just going outside and building things from scratch. But, you know, it’s a different
set up, so that learning style, sometimes we need a little bit more guidance to get them started on something. (Educator 1)

So, as a teacher, to be able to make sure that, if possible, when teaching, that you are able to teach the auditory learner, the visual learner, the kinesthetic learner, I think that that’s really important. And I would say for any teacher and not just 4-H, I feel like it’s really important that, I don’t know, that the teacher is excited about the material. And like passionate about what they do. Because if they’re like “okay, fill a test tube and the beaker with a few mL of water” (in monotone voice), that comes out. But if you’re like “okay, we are going to do this super cool science experiment, I can’t wait to see what our results are!” (excited voice). I think that that’s really important and so, yeah, I think teaching styles do play a big factor. Like you want someone who is passionate about what they do right. And just super excited to teach. (Educator 3)

The recurring point of emphasis by the 4-H youth regarding educator practices was that for youth to be engaged in a curriculum, the educator must be engaging. Youth wanted their educators to display passion and excitement about what they are teaching and to make them excited about the topic and its application. The youth provided examples of experiences in 4-H when they had an engaging educator versus a non-engaging educator and how their peers responded. 4-H programs in which the educator was engaging and allowed for discovery appeared to be the most memorable.

I know like people aren’t always going to be like that. But I like when people are like actually like teaching and are like involved and talk like they want to do it. That’s how I like people to teach me stuff. So, yeah, that would make me enjoy projects. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

For me, it’s kind of the project and the people and who is teaching it. Because one year I signed up for a rocketry assignment because I’m in aerospace club and the teacher just literally had us sit there and paint and the kids were whining and it was not an enjoyable experience. But then, the next year, they switched the teacher and he had us building and engaged and the kids were a lot better. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2)
Many youth echoed the same sentiment of enjoying educators who displayed enthusiasm and passion while teaching but who also provided students with the room to discover things for themselves.

For me, like, I definitely have to have interest in the project. Like was said, if it is just a really long PowerPoint and the person isn’t excited about what they are talking about and they aren’t into it at all, then I don’t get the point of why we are doing it because everyone is miserable. And I feel like the project should be…..like if someone is preparing a project for something they should know who their audience is. (White Rural Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

So, like, for me at least, there are other factors. So, something that I might really like engineering, if it’s not taught well or there’s not really people that I enjoy there or people that I don’t enjoy there, I might not really like it that much. But, if there is something that I don’t really like and the teacher really engages me and there are people there that I can just hang out with and learn from, I might like it a little bit more. (White Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

When we went to the garden, the one where we made the lotion today, like when we learned about the pharmacy stuff. I had another one but I can’t remember what it was called. But those are my favorites because they actually seemed like they were interested in what they were teaching. Like they….some people sound dull when they are teaching, like they don’t sound like they want to do it. So, I liked how the guy and the girl that were in the garden they were smiling the whole time, they were like making fun things to do, we were able to look at the flowers and they were teaching us about the flowers. They were just very involved and seemed like they wanted to teach us what they were doing. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

But I definitely love my dairy project because everybody is really helpful, but they also do let you struggle a little because you won’t learn anything if you don’t have some failures. (White Rural Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)
Theme 2: 4-H Curriculum Provides a Structure for Educators to Adapt to Their Audience

This theme emerged from the interviews with the 4-H educators. Every educator discussed how the 4-H curriculum provided a guide for educators, and that even though the 4-H curriculum is developed with the intention to be used as is, to make sure it is culturally responsive the educator must adapt it to the intended audience. Factors that educators should be aware of when adapting a curriculum for their audience to make it culturally responsive include setting, baseline knowledge of subject, culture, and language. The practice of educators modifying the curriculum to better fit their audience was briefly discussed previously, with the educators stating that the generic structure of the 4-H curriculum allows for easy modification. Based on the interviews with the educators, the curriculum acts as more of a guide to developing their programs for communities. The educators do not use the 4-H curriculum as a script to follow, but as a resource for ideas. They stated that the system they operate under provides them with the freedom to deviate from the provided curriculum to better appeal to the specific communities they are serving.

Okay, well, I guess with any curriculum there is the “Do we have to do it this way mentality.” Like, you know, on the one hand, someone wrote this with the intent of it to be used as is; on the other hand, you have to adapt in some sense to meet local needs and time constraints and what the kids are interested in. So, I would say most 4-H books, it’s really easy to pick and choose what you want out of them if you don’t want to use the whole thing or if you don’t think it’s relevant. So, I would say it’s not a challenge but a plus. The people who wrote them wrote them in a way that provides the basics and you can go from there. I also use some non-4-H curriculum, that my state leader has said go ahead and use it. (Educator 2)

Ummm, typically I adapt it to what we are doing. I’ll take the 4-H curriculum and curriculum from outside sources depending on what we’re teaching and use it together.
When we have new club leaders or partners, we do tend to have them strictly go through the guides as they’re getting started, so that we know that they are following appropriate methods based on the 4-H model. (Educator 1)

The educators stated that the curriculum is used as a resource to gain ideas but they rarely follow it as a script.

Yeah, I don’t know, I just see most of those as limiting. Like I use those as idea repositories, that I draw from to do it my own way, which they generally give us the freedom to do in our system. So, I offer those curriculum more to club leaders and people who want specific projects to do, rather than me as the educator planning a program for the community. (Educator 2)

So, the curriculum allows us as educators to not have to search online for hours on end to find a really cool hands-on experiential learning activity. But that curricula is that resource for us then. So, yeah, I feel like that is the purpose, in order for us to reach our goal. (Educator 3)

**Setting**

When modifying a curriculum, the educators noted that the setting can be a determining factor in how you address the needs of a community through a program’s curriculum, and that the curriculum should be modified if necessary. The setting can determine how a curriculum is taught or a program is run, the resources available or used to teach a curriculum, and the types of curricula wanted by the communities.

Examples used to explain concepts differ depending on the setting, as does the type of project associated with a curriculum, or the type of curriculum taught in general can depend on the setting of the community your audience is in. The cultural responsiveness of a curriculum is related to how responsive it is to the setting it is being utilized in.
And the 4-H program itself looks different in both areas. And so, the community club setting vs the afterschool setting, you know, doesn’t look the same, the projects don’t look the same. So, it’s hard for some to understand it’s the same 4-H program, just run differently. (Educator 1)

So…in our rural areas we have a lot of community clubs. Our volunteers are used to that method of once-a-month meeting, they are in it year-round. There are the same kids for 10 years, with the same volunteers doing the same projects over and over. Then we get to our afterschool in our more urban areas, we may get the kids for 6-8 weeks, and then they’re, we lose them and they go to do something else, and then they might show up a couple of years later to do another project. And the same with the volunteers; the volunteers that we have may be willing to teach a program at the library for 6 weeks, and then they are out of the program for a while, until they are ready to do that project again or we have another project that fits their interest or skill set. They are not there with that monthly meeting, year-round for the entire 8 or 10, now that they have clovers, 14 years that the kids can be in 4-H, so. (Educator 1)

4-H allows educators to have flexibility in their choice of curriculum and their practices, creating space for modifying the curriculum based on setting.

But, as far as programming, uhhh, I really think they leave that up to the local people; state and local. Because every county’s needs is going to be different. Overall, they’ve adopted issues that are relevant nationwide, such as the focus on STEM education. So, of course, that’s why 4-H national sponsors 4-H youth science day, they make a big deal out of that. 4-H national has also worked with this county specifically and others in the state, they have invited us on other, like, science-related events. So, once we got to go on a field trip to a science engineering firm, which was pretty cool. So, I think their national focus is STEM education, anything else they probably leave up to the local. I mean, any Extension employee is that way. (Educator 2)

(laughs) Yeah, I certainly do. Yeah, making it culturally responsive to the needs of the community will obviously make them more engaged. They want to hear about what means something to them. If I’m teaching ag literacy or a better example is if I’m teaching environmental science (and we talk about this all the time in the environmental science field), if I’m teaching about environmental science and we only talk about big open parks, then kids who are growing up in an urban environment that don’t have access to that feel like it’s not something that they can take part in. So, we have to be responsive to the location and experiences of the youth that we are working with. So, you know, when we teach environmental science and we talk about the backyard environment that includes the pavement and the urban environment that they are living in, they are going to be more responsive to that. (Educator 1)
The setting of a community determines the resources available to teach a curriculum. The educators made it clear that it is important to be aware of setting if you want a curriculum to be culturally responsive. The economic status or the density of a setting can affect curricular resources. These are the aspects of setting that educators must consider when modifying a curriculum to be more culturally responsive to an audience.

So, one of the pieces of guidance I got about reigniting the ag part of the program is that you can start with ag and animal science with pets and small animal projects, where, if someone has a hamster, that can fit in an apartment. I don’t think hamsters are a project, but we do have like guinea pig and rabbit events that take place statewide actually. So, like, that’s like small animals that can take place in a dense area where people don’t have like yards and stuff. And that was some advice I received from my supervisors about being more responsive to what is available in the area. (Educator 2)

And the great thing actually for robotics is that there is a curriculum called Junk Drawer Robotics, so you actually can use everyday items. You don’t have to have a Lego robot or NXT for those curricula, it’s just using everyday items. (Educator 3)

For me, it’s what are the needs of that community. What is the community looking for? What is the makeup of that community? It’s going to be a difference if I’m going into, and we can see it in our programming. If we are going into a county where it’s a very urban community but a high-income community, their needs are obviously going to be different than a low-income community. You know, bringing a lot of STEM and technology programs into a low-income area, where they don’t have access to the technology, is not going to be helpful. We gotta start with community development and helping them to find grants to get technology in the community. So, the starting point is the biggest thing to consider. Where they’re at and what they’re needs are immediately. It’s always good when we can bring in that technology, but if I have it in my car and I bring it in and I leave, it really doesn’t have any impact. (Educator 1)

The 4-H youth seemed to understand how the settings of communities could limit the type of curriculum they can participate in or that counties offer. One black suburban youth spoke about how she was unfamiliar with the 4-H agriculture topics because her club does not talk about them.
Yeah, like, I didn’t really experience the agriculture side of 4-H until I came here because our club doesn’t really talk about agriculture, livestock, like any of that, so I’m not really used to that. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

A white rural youth spoke about how even though many people think they cannot participate in livestock-related 4-H topics because of where they live or what they look like, they can participate because of a partnership 4-H has with some farmers.

So, also with the livestock, like, everyone is saying that people don’t want to join because they think it’s all like white farmers with their cows. But anyone can do livestock too. Like, my friend lives in an apartment and she shows cows. She just like borrows a cow from a farmer. Like, it’s open to everyone, they can be involved with the animals if they want, they can be involved in anything. And I think 4-H should make that more clear, that you don’t have to…it doesn’t matter where you live or what you look…like, it doesn’t matter, you can do whatever you want with 4-H. (White Rural Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

Another white rural youth discussed how curriculum topics should be brought to counties based on best fit to the setting, but that should not limit youth participation in other curricula if they have an interest.

I think that each county should do what fits them best. I don’t think every county should have the same thing. Because there are some counties that are more of an urban county and I think if they want to have livestock and stuff and want to go for it, I think they definitely should, but if they want to stay more to the robotics, or archery or shotgun, I think they should also do that. And I think it should be what best fits the county. (White Rural Youth, Female, Focus Group 4)

**Baseline Knowledge**

For making a curriculum culturally responsive, each educator mentioned understanding the baseline knowledge the audience has regarding the topic. When presenting the curriculum, the material should not be too basic or advanced, since this could affect engagement of the youth and the and responsiveness of the curriculum as a whole. Each of the educators provided an example of a curriculum they have modified to
meet the baseline knowledge of their audience, or an experience delivering a curriculum they feel should have been modified better to meet the base knowledge of the 4-H youth, or strategies they use to understand the baseline knowledge of their audience.

So, what I try to do, I always do basic knowledge first, try to feel out where they’re at. So, I’ll ask questions to get them started. So, if we’re talking about aerospace, we start off with what is a rocket or what does a rocket do? Same with robotics, we ask those kinds of questions to see what their base knowledge is. If I’m doing an agricultural program, I ask them the question where does your food come from? One of the first questions, where does your food come from? If I have a lot of them telling me that farmers grow it and it’s processed and then taken to the stores, then I know somewhere along the line they’ve learned the basics and I can take it up a step. If I hear most of them saying our food comes from the supermarket, then I know I have to back it up a little bit and start back with the basics of where the foods start. And a lot of time that will also tell me a lot about their learning styles too, that will tell us a lot. (Educator 1)

And then for the “Agploration,” ummm, I mean this is really great because the curricula is tailored for this state. Like, the quiz in the beginning really is a short quiz about the state’s agriculture. So, really assessing how much the youth really know about agriculture right here in our state. And that’s important for all youth, because no farm no food. And that where does our food come from? And appreciating that in some places there are probably food deserts. And it’s very eye-opening at times because, we’ll talk about like milk, where does that come from? Okay, it comes from a cow. Okay, where does chocolate milk come from? A chocolate cow. You know, and it’s like “No.” And so we’ll talk about that. And we’ll talk about where does your fruits and veggies come from? You know, I have heard that some youth think that they come from the grocery store. That ohh well they mist that water so they are growing right there. And it’s like no no no no. So, umm, you know talking about, well this is our state’s agriculture, this is taking place in our state, and learning about that. (Educator 3)

I’d say I do adapt it sometimes, based on the groups that I’m working with. Especially sometimes when I’m working in an urban area with an agricultural program, a lot of times I find that I do have to adapt it down to what is written as a middle-school curriculum, might be used with a middle school and high school just because they don’t have the basis there already. But when we are working with the STEM programs, they may already have a pretty good understanding of the STEM and engineering programs and we can actually adapt that up and use the middle-school curriculums for even higher elementary school. So, it’s more based on age and experience level than what their backgrounds are. (Educator 1)
The educators discussed the importance of knowing the baseline knowledge of your audience through being aware of their experiences.

For some reason, I know everybody loves health rocks. I don’t know how sold I am on it, especially for the youth that need it most. I guess for some youth, this just might be me in my bubble, like they really don’t understand how drugs are bad. Umm, that’s hard for me to grasp though, and so this whole curriculum dedicated to really basic ideas about drug abuse I feel like is inadequate. And it’s not that they don’t need antidrug programming. It’s that that one just seems so basic. (Educator 2)

I will say sometimes though, for instance, we have programs that are…we have an ecology center, and sometimes, for students, it’s the first time that they may have been to the beach. And while we are on the beach and we are talking about climate change, we have another activity talking about piping plover, pelicans, and sea turtles. So, when the activity wraps up, we’ll talk about when you go to the beach and you see trash, pick it up even if it’s not yours. And the comment was, “This is the first time I have been to the beach.” And it’s like “Ohh!” That’s important to know. Because you talk about cultural responsiveness, like, well, then maybe in reflecting on that activity there should have been more backgrounding. (Educator 3)

Educator 1 emphasized that baseline knowledge is not always an issue of urban vs rural but could be an age issue also, as well as making sure the curriculum is at the right baseline knowledge level for a certain age group.

That one I found, I found that engineering doesn’t take that much change. It starts with finding out what level the kids are starting out at. An example would be, we recently were doing an afterschool program, and I don’t think this is a difference between urban and rural, but an age issue, ummm, and what other things they have available around them. We were surprised when a group of 23 kids, between 1st grade and 5th grade, over half of them didn’t know how to make a paper airplane. We took for granted they were just going to know how to make a paper airplane. We took for granted they were just going to know how to make a paper airplane. So, we had to take a step back and teach them how to make a paper airplane before we could start the project. So, I think sometimes we have those challenges of what they have already learned in the schools, and so, if we are looking in an urban area where the school system isn’t that strong, we might have to take our engineering pieces and what was originally, and elementary school program might be a middle-school program. And I think that’s the case anywhere, engineering is so heavily focused on science and math, that a rural area could have the same problem if they’re not exposed to that. So, really, in my engineering programs, my
focus is really on resiliency and creative thinking. That piece of it has to be brought out, just getting them to think that it’s okay to make a mistake. If you are living in an area where any mistake can be extremely costly to you, you are less likely to take that risk, so I think that might be some of the mindset we have to work with. (Educator 1)

The 4-H youth did not address baseline knowledge during their focus group discussions when reviewing the data, but there was one youth who confirmed the points made by the educators.

I did engineering and, like, it was more of a hands-on activity, like they showed us machines running and everything and how they got to that point. And like how they started at nothing and how they worked up to there. Which was better for me, and I think it would be better for everybody because you got to see how it works, and it just really engages you a lot more than a teacher who we had where we... who just sat and gave us a giant presentation, and just tried to connect it to joining the university. And most of the time it was just stuff you learned when you were a kid, like if you had a car what engineer type would make it. (White Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

Culture

Culture, in the sense of race and ethnicity, does not impact the way a youth receives non-social-related curriculum topics, as discussed by some of the educators.

Topics such as STEM, entrepreneurship, and robotics are easily transferable between location and race.

So, umm, so, on that one because there is so much dialogue and potential for the culture to influence it, umm, I guess I do address it. But for other things, I see less potential for culture to influence how it is received. And I think some people would definitely argue with me and say culture is in everything, you know it’s going to affect everything. But I really don’t think culture is going to influence how you receive an electrical programing robotics program. It’s just you are here to solve a specific challenge. And culture may influence the group dynamics. But that’s not me teaching you how to run the robotics program, that’s me offering separate workshops on behavior management and group dynamics. So, like, programs that have a more social emphasis, yeah, culture is going to play a big role. But teaching sewing and crafts and stuff like that, it’s whatever, it’s not a big deal, you just pick the things that they want to do. And we have like a Hispanic and Latino cultural arts book, but I guess my point is that culture is more important in some programs than others. (Educator 2)
I’m probably just going to keep repeating myself. The entrepreneurship and leadership development is easily transferred because it doesn’t matter if you’re in rural or urban settings, entrepreneurship is the same and leadership development and community activism is the same no matter what community you are in, so you don’t have to make a lot of modification on that. We have some curriculum on finances and financial literacy. I don’t use them much myself, but those are other ones that are easily transferred because the economy is the same regardless of where you’re at; you might make your money differently, but financial management is the same. Most of our STEM, engineering areas, so technology curriculum can be easily transferred, I think the biggest thing there is we just have to know what the school system that they’re coming from is already teaching to know where we have to start with it, it’s easily transferred. Like rocketry is the same no matter where you go. We’re not going to change that. (Educator 1)

Culture plays a role in social topics regarding cultural appropriateness and not offending people. Social topics involve dialogue and allow for culture to play a factor in how a curriculum is received by youth.

And as far as culture is concerned, I feel like that hits more with food. So, like, this is less like a 4-H thing and more like a FESNE nutrition educator thing and will walk into a Hispanic community and be like stop eating beans there is too many carbs or something, and it’s like you’re not going to get them to do that. So, you have to shift the conversation to more about portion control and things like that instead of trying to eliminate foods that are very meaningful to the culture. (Educator 2)

This Reading Makes Cents thing, that could go system-wide and that would be great. And actually thinking about modifications, I read through it and I didn’t really care for the giving and philanthropy activities in there. So, I decided to modify that with help from another group who their whole mission is focused on developing a philanthropy mindset amongst youth. And having that be applicable across a range of SES. Cause you know not everyone has money or time to give. So, this group’s approach in philanthropy is the 4 Ts, it could be time and treasure, which is traditionally what people think of, but can be harder in urban areas. But also talent and trust, so expanding, so you can teach someone a skill to help them do something new and maybe that takes less time and it's free because you already know how to do the skill. So, I’m working with them and they are developing a custom lesson for me to replace. And Reading Makes Cents is like a peer reviewed national 4-H curricula and all that, so I just have taken my educator’s license to do it a little different with this group. Because I read, and I was like: A, the book was a Christmas story and I was like I don’t want to be in a public library reading and it’s Scrooge, like a lot of people know about it. But I know we have at least five to six kids that are Muslim, so I don’t want to be reading a Christmas story to them in front of their parents. (Educator 2)
So, one of my most popular curriculum that I use is non-4-H curriculum and it’s about healthy romantic relationships and I find that it is in huge demand for that curriculum. And I have probably only ever done it not in this area. I have only ever done it with more urban audiences. I don’t think I have gone to rural high school to do it. Where I previously did it was a very small city, but they still had a city mentality. So, yeah, and I think one of the things that is appealing about that is it cuts across many boundaries, because most people are going to be involved in romantic relationships no matter what your background is. And so, my biggest challenges with that have been to respond to comments that youth will give to me like, “That’s not how it works here,” and they will say in this county. (Educator 2)

The culture of a youth’s everyday environment should be present in the curriculum; youth should recognize themselves in the curriculum.

And I was like, you know, as far as the curricula…like when someone opens up their curricula they should be able to see themselves in the curricula. You know what I mean? Not only should they be able to see someone that looks like them in the curricula, but also like, thinking about your question about urban environments, that there be cityscapes. You know, and that’s when we were talking about, and that’s just an example, but when we were talking about the water cycle. And talking about storm drains, and talking about, and that’s just one example again that comes up for urban environments. And coastal might be something completely different. And rural might be something completely different. But that it’s included right! (Educator 3)

The 4-H youth were very vocal about cultural representation in 4-H. Many of the youth’s concerns were about social aspects of cultural representation and unity. The lack of cultural representation in the curriculum, when mentioned, was in relation to image.

Because the people out there are wanting to try and find the people who fit in, or they are the people that are trying to fit in, they are trying to find the people who are like them and like the same things; have, like, the same state of mind. Like my mom is telling me find your tribe, she calls it. Find your tribe. There is a lot of people that you might not know that they like games or making games or coding, they like many things. And you just have to go out there and find them. And you may find it in 4-H and it’s awesome. (Asian Rural Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

Ummm…I think it depends on who you are, really. Because I don’t think 4-H is for everyone. It definitely…I would say it’s kind of niche. Like you have to be
interested…like I don’t see anybody that…. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

I think some of it might be that the people who even know what 4-H is, it’s just such a misconception that it’s like just white people who own farms and raise livestock. (White Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

The 4-H youth believed there is a lack of unity among the different counties within 4-H. They did not know how to solve this issue with the curriculum, but thought that the curriculum could be used to address culture and to decrease the isolation of youth from different settings.

She is right about the isolation part, cause like coming here….I think we do need unity. I don’t really know what the solution to that is; when you have to appeal to so many different areas it’s hard to be unified, but I guess that is something we can work on. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

I think each county should have their own thing, but everybody should have a general thing that everybody does, I don’t know what that would be. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

Some people have the same culture as you, but most of the time, if they don’t know about it, then they don’t care about it. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

The youth in Focus Group 1 discussed how the representation of culture in 4-H projects is only of certain people.

I don’t know about the booklets, but one time I was walking into where my 4-H meets. And it was in the office for 4-H, and there was this poster thing of 4-H, and there was one white guy, one white girl, and the rest was just one of each minority: like one black guy and one Latino. But, like, the white boy and girl were in front and the minorities were one of each in the back. And I don’t know what to think of that. I didn’t know if it was just, it seemed like…I don’t know. What do you get from that? (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)
In real life, you know what I’m saying? I feel like it is heavily focused on agriculture, and I don’t think all minorities want to be focused on agriculture. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 1) Yeah, because the 4-H that I have seen is more about some society and a lot of agriculture for like dairy, cattle to chickens and stuff. So, I get what he means. It actually is projecting to everyone who is into farming and into raising animals than to people in a social-and-going-out-to-work-type people. (Asian Rural Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

Language

The adaptation of the curriculum to meet the language needs of an audience seemed implicit when discussing cultural responsiveness. The educators very much understood this, even though it was only touched on minimally. Two of the educators mentioned language adaptation in the traditional sense of having the curriculum available in different languages. The other educator discussed language in the sense of comprehension and having the curriculum available at different knowledge levels so that youth can conceptually understand the language used in the curriculum. The 4-H youth, however, did not mention language in their focus groups regarding the need for the curriculum to be culturally responsive.

And part of that here is the ability to speak Spanish. So, like, yeah, those people showed up with translators at these schools that I visited a few times but, umm…and so I hadn’t prepared the program in Spanish, but I made sure that even though I hadn’t prepared it in Spanish that I still tried to speak some things in Spanish, clarify some things, like listen to what the translator was saying to make sure they were capturing in Spanish the same essence in English. Cause sometimes things don’t translate right. (Educator 2)

But then, with the programs, as far as barriers for the curricula, I guess one that may come to mind, not necessarily that we have encountered it…well no actually…Ummm, you know, if a student only speaks Spanish and then the curriculum is in English. (Educator 3)

…just making it relevant to the communities and making it available in a language that they’re going to understand; I think that’s an important piece. When I talk about a language they understand, I think, that’s partly not just having it available in different
languages, like translated, but having it available at the right level. Again, when talking about environment science or ag, ag literacy is an important aspect and something we need, but we can’t take something that’s right for a third to fifth grade level here in a rural area and expect the same age students in an urban area to understand that, because they may need more background first. (Educator 1)

**Theme 3: Characteristics of Successful 4-H Curricula**

The characteristics of successful 4-H curricula were developed based on the perspectives of the 4-H youth collected during the focus groups and the 4-H educators collected via the interviews. These characteristics were determined by the educators as those that make their best curricula/programs successful; and were determined by the youth as those that need to be included in curricula/programs to make them engaged and motivated in what they are learning. All of the characteristics were mentioned by both the educators and the youth and include hands-on activities, relatability to youth, and having real-world application.

**Hands-on Activities**

The 4-H educators all discussed the experiential learning model at some point during their interviews. This model includes some characteristics that the educators mentioned as being key in program curriculum success: hands-on activities. The educators stated that hands-on activities are what keep youth engaged, help them build skills and a sense of creativity, and excite them about topics that they are not regularly exposed to.

The children are more concerned with what is the activity. So, umm...so, by doing something fun attracts the children. But the adults are looking at the structure of things
and what are you going to be doing, which is laid out in a curriculum. The imagery would
definitely help, but it would be more towards the adults. (Educator 2)

I would say, like, everyone. If the activity is not exciting and hands-on and making like a
real-world application, then I think all youth could be, like, this is boring. Nobody wants
to hear Charlie Brown’s teacher, like wamp wamp wamp. You know what I mean? So,
yeah, I would just say if it’s not, like, exciting, like a hands-on activity, umm… I mean
just lecture is boring, you’ll lose a lot of kids that way. (Educator 3)

I think about how hands-on on it is; I want to make sure the most hands-on experiences
are brought to this group. Because I know that just in general these will be the youth that
have the hardest time sitting down, so I need to make sure that there is something to keep
the attention going and keep them active. I think that’s why these food prep programs go
so well, because they get to eat and do stuff with their hands. (Educator 2)

Throughout the interviews, the educators discussed the need for hands-on
curricula to keep youth engaged and motivated to participate in the programs.

I would say definitely hands-on, student-centered, inquiry-based, all of these things. No
one wants to have an educator that just talks at them. Especially with STEM, it’s so
important that it is hands-on and really that the students are investigating, that we aren’t
telling them the answers. That they are able to investigate themselves, that they are able
to make those discoveries. (Educator 3)

Plus letting them like…I try to incorporate some art when I can so that it’s more like
STEAM, so they can be expressive. A great example is with the drones, the foam gliders
they were able to decorate. (Educator 3)

Yeah, actually I find that a lot of the kids, they really like all the hands-on activities, it
doesn’t matter what curriculum we are using. But I find, you know, when we take our
agricultural curriculum, our gardening and things like that, into urban areas, umm.. that
that is something that they really do become engaged in, umm.. because it’s something
they’re not exposed to as often. I think that’s part of it. You know they have the
engineering programs that we take into urban areas, ummm… we do find a lot of interest
for that because it’s hands-on science. But I think that they also see that we are doing
some of the same things that they do in school and other places with that engineering and
science curriculum. But the agricultural curriculum that we take in is something that is
new for them. (Educator 1)
Curricula that enable youth to be active are the most successful because they are the curricula that youth are most excited to participate in.

So, the national youth science day experiments, we teach that, and again, we’ve taught that in two locations, both in cities. And for us, it’s just that, like, STEM is super exciting and cool. And you know to be able to go outside and jump on a stomp rocket and launch it. And to not be just sitting in a classroom being talked at. But I think empowering youth to do their best, like okay this is your challenge, these are the materials you are given and these are your constraints. Whether it be materials or time, and then seeing them succeed and having a great time too, you know, being able to launch the rocket, launch their drone. (Educator 3)

Uhh, we do a lot, a lot of it is train the trainer. So, I’ll go out and do a training with the Pal Center, the police athletic league, they’re one of your big partners. So, I’ll do a training with the nine directors of the centers we have in the county. And they’ll take that back and use it in their programs, and they can’t get enough; they look forward to the twice a year we do the training, to getting some new lesson plans and some new kits that they can use. That’s one of the things that the kids really seem to enjoy, because it’s hands-on. (Educator 1)

For example, one of our most successful programs here is our science adventures programs, and it’s where middle-school-aged kids go to campus and I try to get campus people to lead hands-on activities in their disciplines. (Educator 2)

And like, for the summer camp today, it was three hours. You cannot lecture for three hours. So, like, making sure that it’s a topic and activity, that is relevant, that is age appropriate, that it’s a hands-on activity is really important. (Educator 3)

These final subthemes were the most popular of discussion among the 4-H youth. The youth expressed wanting to be active and have fun while learning. Their statements explained that hands-on activities helped them remain engaged in the curriculum, allowed for a stronger connection to the skills they are learning, and created a sense of self-discovery and accomplishment. The youth provided examples of some of their favorite curricula they have participated in so far, and each example contained hands-on activities.
What makes me like a project is to have people like be like hands-on. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

I think projects are important in a program, but I also think freedom to learn in your own way is important because, like, personally for me, if someone is giving me a presentation, I’m going to go take a nap. Because it’s not something that I’m engaged in or really interested in. But if you like set me up in like a workshop and have me working on something while talking about it while we are doing it, then I’m more engaged and I’m most likely not going to fall asleep. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

I’m not really sure what subject it would be on, but some things that I would want it to include is it has to be hands-on… (White Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

I think that there should be a good balance of both, because it’s really important to learn about life skills so you can be prepared for the future, but it’s also fun to live in the present and do fun things while you’re learning about things that you could do and things that will help you at the same time. (Latinx Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2)

Youth feel more connected to a curriculum if it allows them to be hands-on while learning.

I like projects because they make me busy, because I don’t like sitting down around all the time. And projects are at like, certain ones are actually kind of fun. And I get to learn new things and how this project works and get to learn from my mistakes. If I did this wrong, like if I have to do it again, like when they have sample works and the ones you actually have to do for a grade, I can learn how to do that one better… (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

I think that life skills are actually important. And I enjoy the balance, and I don’t also enjoy when there is a certain project that you’re doing or when there is a life skill that you are supposed to be learning, where it’s just boring and it just doesn’t feel like it’s important at all. But I think that, I think the reason that life skills are more important, because at 4-H you’re going to make a lot of friends anyway, so you’re going to have fun with them, especially in between the life skills or in between the different projects that you’re doing. So, I think that’s more important. (Black Urban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

I think life skills are important, but I think you need to add fun to them just so, like, it makes everybody more connected to them. (White Rural Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)
I think life skills are important, but there needs to be an even balance of life skills and fun because when you’re having fun you learn better, at least in my opinion. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2)

Many of the youth discussed their favorite projects that included hands-on learning that enabled them to make discoveries on their own and be creative.

My favorite project was making the documentary for my club. Because, like, I wasn’t told exactly how I was supposed to do it or what I had to do. I was allowed to discover what I like and my talents in making documentaries, and I have still been making them ever since because I like that. And I think if I had someone lecturing me on it, I probably wouldn’t have done it. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

My favorite project is controlling planes, because it’s a lot of hands-on work, we’re soldering using bench saws. And they kind of just give us a template and let us roll with it. We can paint it, we can change the design if we really want to. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2)

So, my favorite project personally was sewing. The reason why I like it, number one, the teachers were always great. And it wasn’t crazy expensive to get fabric, and it was a hands-on thing for sure because you had to be sewing all the time. And, like, you did have to take your time to learn stuff but it was always really worth it because the outcome was always really amazing. I think the parts that made it really great were the teachers, and then the variety of things that you could do, and that it was really hands-on and fun to do in general. (Latinx Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2)

My favorite project was photography so far. Because, with photography, even though the purpose of the project was to teach us how to take great pictures and how to be a photographer, we were really able to be creative and take pictures of different types of things or ourselves or our friends. I took a picture of my friend and sent it to him, and he still uses it for profile pictures and stuff, that I never thought I would be able to take, the lighting was amazing. I would have looked at it and thought it was professional if it wasn’t taken by myself. So, I think what makes a project important or special is its ability to not only teach you something, but to also teach you how to make it your own. (Black Urban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)
Relatability to Youth

Having the 4-H curriculum be relatable to urban minority youth is a subtheme that the educators considered very important for the engagement and motivation of youth in general, but urban minority youth in 4-H programs in particular. The 4-H youth did not mention the relatability of the curriculum to themselves in the same way as the educators, but instead discussed relatability regarding real-world application, which is discussed in the next section. The educators stated that if curriculum concepts are not made to relate to urban minority youth experiences and environments, it leaves youth asking, “How does this apply to me?” The educators discussed examples of experiences they have had in which youth were able to connect curricular concepts to their experiences and environments, and how, sometimes, simply updating the curriculum can create better relatability to urban youth.

Relating curricular concepts to the experiences and environments of urban minority youth helps the youth understand and connect with the information being taught.

So, it’s really an image thing here. The urban people don’t know about 4-H or don’t think they have any offerings relevant to them. (Educator 2)

Ummm..I think it has an impact in the beginning. If they don’t feel like it’s related, that there’s anything they can relate to, then they’re not going to be engaged to start with, to want to do the project in the first place. So, I think it’s something we definitely have to think about as we go into a community. That we make sure we are taking the right information to them, the right curriculum and the right attitude into it. I don’t know that it’s the primary motivation once they get started in the experience of 4h. But, certainly, getting started in the community, it’s something we have to be aware of. (Educator 1)

Actually, it just happened today. We did an observation skills activity, based on the five senses. And the last sense was the sense of taste. So each student held out their hand and closed their eyes, and we placed a dumb dumb pop in their hand and they had to remove the wrapper and not look at the pop and they had to guess the flavor. So, at the very end,
one of the counselors said that he would have never guessed his flavor, because I think he had like mango peach, and he is like, “I’ve never had that, how do I know what mango peach taste like if I’ve never…” and I was, like, yeah, that’s a really good point. But I think that’s, like, applicable to curricula, like, if you are going to talk about a combine. And you are going to talk about the inner workings of a combine, and the engineering or something. If you have no frame of reference for a combine or maybe even understand what a combine does. You could ask the question, like, when am I ever going to use this? How is this applicable to me? And that’s where, that’s why I feel, like, the cultural responsiveness, and that’s why I say, maybe, yes. I don’t know if that makes sense. (Educator 3)

I think it can still work as long as we can find how it relates to them. So, if I’m going teaching gardening to kids that aren’t going to have a chance to garden, it’s not going to have any meaning to them. I’ve gotta find a way to show them how that they can make it work for them. We’re not going to dig in the ground to plant something, we are going to do it in pots. We have to find a way that they can use it and they can relate to it and why it’s important to them. (Educator 1)

Taking the curriculum and relating it to examples relevant to urban minority youth communities is important for youth engagement and motivation to participate in programs.

I think the biggest thing is to make it relatable to where they’re at. Ummm, especially the agricultural and environmental curriculum I use has to really relate to them, because when I talk to urban kids about environmental science, and we are sitting in the middle of a concrete jungle basically, there is no green around them, it’s hard for them to understand why this is important to them at first. I can’t just go in there talking about wildlife conservation, because that means nothing. So, we have to find a way to relate environmental science to their community. A lot of time that’s talking about storm water runoff, the health of the water now that’s impacted by their part of the watershed, and even helping them understand what’s happening to the water once it hits the streets in their community and where it goes. We have to really focus on their individual community first, and then we can go into concepts like carrying capacity and wildlife management. You know, wildlife management doesn’t mean anything to someone who doesn’t see wildlife. So, ummm, so, finding those examples in their community is important. And same with agriculture. You know, coming in and talking about commercial agriculture isn’t going to have any impact, but bringing it in on a personal level of where their food is coming from and how it relates, how it relates to what they buy at the grocery store, relates to agriculture national and how it’s important. (Educator 1)
I can’t go the other direction, you know? Like, if I’m talking to kids in a rural area, we might start with learning about different types of farming systems and then break it down to their own personal projects. We have to go the other way, I think, a lot of time, in urban areas, and find what is it that relates directly to you here, and then expand on it from there, you know, build out. ( Educator 1)

In one area they just built a wind turbine, so when we were talking about wind energy, the students were really able to understand the wind turbine because there is one right in their backyard. So, yeah, if there is a way to relate the STEM activity to their surroundings, I think that is really helpful. ( Educator 3)

Some curricula, according to the educators, do not need to be modified all that much because they include curricular topics that everyone can relate to.

Ahhh… I would say yeah, things that are things that everyone has to deal with. So, like finances, the more basic life skills things. Like the financial program, I think it was really easy to get people to participate in that. And really most science programs, that’s not a basic life skill, but most science programs are really successful. Umm, it just depends on what the topic is. I would say robotics is easily transferable. You know, like the relationship program because everyone has to navigate that. And the bad examples are more prevalent in distressed urban areas. And so, it’s easier to identify, when you are looking at people go through messed up relationships. It’s easier to connect with why you want to participate in that program. I would say out of the animal curriculums, it would be the pet curriculum. I would say the more difficult ones would be like the livestock, agriculture, I mean they say urban ag, but it doesn’t happen all that often, so it is more difficult. It’s a trend, but I mean it’s not like widespread yet. Uhh… so, I had someone request a cooking program. And actually one of our science adventure days in the spring was on healthy eating, and they all loved it. So, I would say food programs, especially where preparation is involved, transfers easily. So, again, that’s like basic life skills, food, finances, relationships, because everyone deals with it. ( Educator 2)

Yeah, and I think some of the things, like, even, like, we talk about some of those home economic pieces, just making them more relevant, so you know focusing less on, you know, for the sewing, focusing less on the, it used to be just like making outfits and making it more relevant to the fashion industry and things like that are ways that we can modify it. We need to update it sometimes. ( Educator 1)

Each educator offered examples of curriculum that have been modified to relate to urban minority youth, curriculum that urban minority youth were able to connect to their
experiences or environments, or curriculum that is relatable across boundaries or setting or race.

I was on a STEM webinar…Monday for the incredible wearables. And somebody said something on the webinar, and I was like, that is really insightful. They said, “In order for,” like, I mean, they were talking about STEM. “A STEM experience, to be meaningful, it needs to be personal.” And I was like, oh yeah! Like, yeah, I know that, but it made me think about, like, the questions you know that you had been asking. (Educator 3)

Another program that is significantly culturally responsive, I would say actually our communications projects. Like our public speaking contests and becoming a good public speaker. Because I think that there is some cultural treasure to be used in the African/African-American community to be had here because, nationally and locally of course, the religiosity is higher, and so they participate in these churches where they hear great speakers, and I think that cultivates an interest in public speaking by that virtue, and that’s a very traditional program, public speaking. But I think it works well with our population because of what they see in their day-to-day lives. And it’s funny, I mean sometimes you can see it come out in the contest. When I was listening to some of my speakers, they almost sounded as if they were giving a sermon at a church. They had that tone, which is fine. But that’s where I can see the influence, but how again it makes it more appealing/relevant to them. They have experiences in their own lives that help them do well in some of the experiences that 4-H offers. And I hadn’t really thought about that until you asked me. (Educator 2)

Something that comes to mind, and a great example of this, is that I just taught a program about climate change at one of the local middle schools. And part of the activity there are these climate change cards, they aren’t from 4-H, it’s called “Cool It,” and it’s about global warming and how to save the planet. Each group was given a mystery pack of “Cool It” cards and then they had to figure out the theme. So, like, one mystery pack of playing cards would be, like, about people who are studying climate change. So, like scientist, engineers, business leaders. And another pack would be about causes, so, like, inefficient appliances, gas guzzlers, you know a variety of things that cause climate change. And another pack would be, like, solutions. So, like energy efficient appliances, recycling. And so, once they open the pack, they have to figure out what the theme was, and then they have to make a mobile about their theme. Well, one of the cards was wind energy and they have a wind turbine, and that was totally a relatable moment. And they were like, “Ohh my gosh this is just like the turbine down the street.” And I was like, yeah, that’s exactly it. So, I think being able to connect it to every day. (Educator 3)

Uhhh, so, first of all, keeping it relevant to the current times. The foods curriculum is a good example; I think we have done a good job of looking at that and recognizing that
not everyone is a chef, not everyone cooks at home all the time. We have a lot of urban youth that are home alone after school. And we have had some curriculum to come out that are really good with microwave cooking, umm, other cooking and snacks that don’t need cooking but teach how to have good nutritious snacks and meals that they can prepare on their own. I think that has been a good change from the past. (Educator 1)

Relating curriculum to urban minority youth so that they can know how to apply their knowledge in their communities is the most important aspect, according to the educators.

Well, I guess I’m going to use the relationship program as an example, because I think that is really relatable for an urban minority audience because it is a broad issue that people don’t necessarily get at home or in other schooling. So, like, the umm, so, like what makes it relevant is that it is a common experience and that it is not usually dealt with in an organized way. So, when you bring up a program all about that, that is interesting cause it’s like, ohh, this is an issue we all deal with but in a program form. (Educator 2)

So, when we talk about our summer program, and what is a watershed, and what is runoff, we talk about water conservation and bio-inspired floating wetlands and water properties and water quality. When we talk about these things, well, first off, do you live in a watershed? And we had a big discussion about that. And then saying like, yeah, everyone lives in a watershed. Now, let's talk about storm water runoff. Well, what does that mean? How does that apply to me? Well, when you throw your trash on the ground and it rains, then that’s going right into the storm drain. So, it’s like, ohh gosh, and we talked about herbicides and pesticides and soil and we talked about pollution. Then we talked about, so there’s this watershed model, this tabletop model we use, and we use like Kool-Aid for the pesticides and cocoa powder for the soil, and then we say there is a rain storm, and they will spray the water. And then they will see this large body of water all of a sudden get this Kool-Aid and oil look. And it was like, oh my gosh, it really hits home. (Educator 3)

Educator 1 explained how 4-H has work still to do to make its curricula relatable to urban minority youth, and that making the curricula culturally responsive would improve youth engagement.

(thinking) I think that there is still some work that needs to be done for us to say “adequate.” I think that the basis is there that we can use, but that we need to include
more that relates to urban populations. More examples, more hands-on experiences that can be done in urban communities. I think that’s where we are lacking right now.  
(Educator 1)

(laughs) Yeah, I certainly do. Yeah, making it culturally responsive to the needs of the community will obviously make them more engaged. They want to hear about what means something to them. If I’m teaching ag literacy or, a better example is if I’m teaching environmental science (and we talk about this all the time in the environmental science field), if I’m teaching about environmental science and we only talk about big open parks, then kids who are growing up in an urban environment that don’t have access to that feel like it’s not something that they can take part in. So we have to be responsive to the location and experiences of the youth that we are working with. So, you know, when we teach environmental science and we talk about the backyard environment, that includes the pavement and the urban environment that they are living in, they are going to be more responsive to that. (Educator 1)

Real-world Application

The educators stated that they wanted the curriculum to have a real-world application that youth can apply in their communities. The 4-H curriculum should fill a need for the community. As the educators mentioned previously, the purpose of the 4-H curriculum is for youth to gain life skills, and these should be skills they can apply.

But that real-world application is really important, because sometimes I feel like…I don’t know if you have ever sat in a class and been like, when will I ever need to know this or when am I ever going to use this? (Educator 3)

I would say, just in a program being able to use examples that are meaningful to your audience, that’s the biggest one, when you are teaching something and you are introducing new ideas or concepts or skills and it involves some level of communicating abstract concepts or ideas, you want to make them concrete by giving them real-world examples, and so you want to make sure those examples make sense to your population. (Educator 2)

So, I would say it’s applicable if it involves something that can be done, you know, the 4-H experience is about, you know, having those clubs come together in groups. So, if it can be done, I keep thinking in an apartment building, then you can have success with it. And I think most are applicable in that sense because I think most of the skills we are talking about in book form are basic life skills. Like public speaking, you can practice
that anywhere. Leadership, you can do it through a variety of these other programs. Cooking, you can, if you aren’t homeless, you have a place to do that. Sewing, crafts, a lot of that stuff, I mean some of the things that require a lot of space. Some of the craftier-type stuff that requires a lot of space, like woodworking, that require a lot of room, that might be harder unless your event is taking place in a public space. I think a lot of these programs are applicable as long as the youth are interested in it. (Educator 2)

The application of the life skills is the main point of the curriculum; if youth cannot apply what they learn, there is no point.

Yeah, I think it brings value to any community we bring it into, ummm…. And I think the reason is that, again, we aren’t focusing on the educational piece, in the respect of when I go in and teach aerospace, I teach a lot of engineering programs. So, if I’m teaching aerospace or robotics in a community, you know, I want the kids to learn about aerospace and robotics because that’s what they are interested in, apparently. But in the end, I’m not worried about whether a kid leaves knowing about gear ratios or not. If they don’t understand gear ratios when they leave, that’s okay, but if, as long as they work through the challenges that we gave them and learn the life skills that we are trying to teach them, resiliency you know, trying something, going back and trying it again. That engineering process that we are trying to get them to understand, those are things they can use in other parts of their lives. If they never touch a robot or rocket again, they have learned those life skills, and to me that is the value of all our 4-H curriculum, is the life skills development. And it really doesn’t matter to me if they learn the program topic as long as they learned those life skills we want them to learn underneath that. (Educator 1)

So, I feel like most of the ones that I have talked to want things that are immediately relevant, not something for future. So, if they do a cooking project, or something that they are learning about nutrition, they want something they can take home to their families, that’s important to them. If it’s something that…in how to protect themselves or how to intervene with bullying or with that type of behavior, those have been helpful to them right away and they appreciate having that. So, I think a lot of it is how immediately they can use it. We have also talked to a lot of them looking for college prep and anything that can help them get into college, so they see the leadership and public speaking as being important as well. And I think a lot of that comes from a lot of them being the first generation to consider going to college. They aren’t really sure how to get there but they recognize that having leadership experience is going to help them. Kind of a resume building for them. (Educator 1)

So, we’re not just doing an activity, but there is also a wrap-up, a reflection, you know, that includes application. So, ummm, you know, it’s great to do a cool science activity, but what does that really mean? What are the real-world applications? Well, with drones
that, you know, with all the talk about drones, you know, that is pretty easy to make that real-world application. But, umm, yeah, so, that’s the 4-H model experiential learning the do, reflect, and apply. But I would say competitions too. So, being able to have the build and being able to test it, to see if it works. Umm, and then we talk a lot about, gosh, we just talked about this last week, the engineering design process. And that’s really important that, you know, you have this problem and you come up with a variety of solutions, and then, you know, you build and test and redesign, and you keep this going until you feel like you have the best. And we talk about, well, that’s like 4-H, to make the best better. But it’s also applicable not just in STEM, right? You have this problem or solution, ohh I’m sorry, you have this problem and you have to come up with possible solutions and then, you know, implementing them. (Educator 3)

If a curriculum can be applied to fill a need within a community, the youth seem to be more motivated to engage in the programs.

4-H has a category of curriculum that are based on personal development. So, I think it fits, it’s not a 4-H written curriculum, but definitely fills a need. So, I mean, and people don’t really care what you do as long as it fills a need. You know, there is a strong preference for “Oh, yeah you are using 4-H curriculum, awesome.” But if you are doing good work, they’ll let you do it. (Educator 2)

Most of the kids I have talked to, especially the teens I have worked with, ummm, are there to learn, to be better leaders in their community. They want to be able to take an active part in their community. So, really, that communication, leadership training, all the pieces surrounding community advocacy, really seem to be the pieces they are really interested in and how to take that to the younger kids as well. (Educator 1)

I think the biggest thing is finding those leadership components and outreach components in each one. We may have to go back and look at some of them and figure out how can we make community involvement and community engagement a bigger part of every curriculum. (Educator 1)

The 4-H youth want a curriculum that they can apply in their communities, to teach others, and that provides them with the skills to prepare them for their future. The 4-H youth gave examples of program curricula they participated in that provided them with real-world skills that they can apply.
For youth to know…I think that 4-H should really focus on getting the kids and their interest and applying them to better the society. Finding a good place to invest their interests. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

I think it’s good, because 4-H gives you a lot of opportunities, like they have scholarships, and you learn a lot depending on what it is, and so it’s good. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

Like, in school you learn all this useless information that you are never going to use, so you don’t want to go to something outside of school that’s going to do the same thing. So, you want to at least have a purpose of going to that. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

I agree with that, because you learn just so many life skills by just going on with 4-H. Like stuff you would never learn anywhere else, and if you just give it a chance, maybe you’ll like it. (White Rural Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

The 4-H youth wanted a curriculum that enables them to learn skills they can apply, whether it is at their school, fair, or community.

I think that projects are important. Not all of them are required, because a lot of projects might involve just games or just, like, something that is not necessarily that significant. But a lot of curriculum is related to things that you may have not known about or known how to do. And also, the diamond clover project is really important, especially for you individually to show what you have learned and what you’re really interested in. (Black Urban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

Yeah, like, mine dairy leasing, I actually raise a cow, and then go to the state fair and show this cow. So, like, we learn all about the cow and then go show it. And it’s an awesome experience. (Asian Rural Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

So, the project that I just started, my healthy living project, I think it is the most if not the most useful project because, like, it’s going to stay with you your whole life. Like, it’s important to be healthy and, like, use what you learn from it the rest of your life. So, I think that’s one of the most useful things. (White Urban Student, Female, Focus Group 3)
Skills that can be applied by youth to help them grow as individuals are important to them.

As I said earlier, when I was younger, I used to be extremely antisocial. So, being in 4-H, I have done the public speaking project for a while, and that has definitely helped me a lot, but all my projects have helped me with talking to people. Especially because I do the herdsman at county fair, so I’m supposed to talk to people, and that has helped me so much through 4-H and learning to be more social and caring for other people in general. (White Rural Youth, Female, Focus Group 4)

When we were learning about financial literacy, that was important because we don’t learn that in school. And they taught you, like, all useful information and how you need to get to where you need to be in your profession and things like that. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

I think the most useful one I’ve done is I took a public speaking course because I used to be really introverted and not have a lot of friends because I never talked…and now people can’t get me to shut up. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2)

I think the biggest skill is that I have learned, now that I was able to do programming on my team, I was able to learn so much more coding much better than if I was in a classroom and I had to do it for a grade. I actually got to do it because I wanted to do it. (Latinx Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

I think, actually, something that is useful that I learned is, I help grade the demos of people. It’s kind of hard because sometimes they aren’t that good, but they are also my friends. So, I have to learn how to give constructive criticism, even though it might put them down a bit, so they can do better. (White Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

I took a public speaking, well, not a class, but it was a 4-H workshop somewhat. It involved a public speaking contest entry. And my mom, I was just going back and forth with her, because I just really did not want to do it. But since I am a writer, and I found a way to write a speech about something that I enjoyed, I was able to deliver it really well. And it wasn’t just about winning, I actually won in three categories, but it wasn’t only about that, it was the fact that I did it anyway. And I’m not…I don’t jump right up to public speak, but I can do it if someone calls on me to do it, so I think that’s really important. (Black Urban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)
The youth gave examples of curricula they have participated in or would like to create that provide them with skills they can apply.

I would do something for self-protection, so that a 4-H club will have youth learn how to protect themselves out in the real world. (Asian Rural Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

I took a sewing class. So, now I can fix my pants whenever I rip them. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

And from working with them and being in 4-H and being in horse bowl and horse judging, it has shown me that I want to be a veterinarian specializing in equines. So, that has been my biggest thing. (White Rural Youth, Female, Focus Group 4)

Many of the youth emphasized the application of skills learned through 4-H curricula as a way for them to prepare for college.

I think it’s important because I want to be an engineer, and being on a robotics team gives you a lot of experience with working with metal, wood, programming…all kinds of things. (Latinx Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

I know for me, at least, 4-H has opened a lot of doors. I’ve gone to meet a lot of experts with, like, nuclear power and all of that kind of fun stuff due to robotics and aerospace. I’ve gained a lot of knowledge and I kind of know what I want to do because I have tried a little bit of everything, so it’s just opened a lot of doors. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2)

I think 4-H is good because some people don’t know or don’t get the opportunity to understand what college is like. So, I think that 4-H gives people that opportunity to know how college is and get to interact with different people, and get the understanding of how it would be to be older and on a big campus and how to not always have fun. Like, 4-H is fun, but like it’s like a balance how…like it could be how college is, like you’re not going to always have fun in college. So, it gives you that chance to know how college is going to be. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

I think that definitely including sports or something would totally get the minorities in, but also advertising that there are ways to get to college through 4-H. I know that a lot of
people from 4-H do end up going to this university because it’s 4-H, but 4-H also has a lot of scholarship opportunities and just ways to get money. And there is always the out-of-state trips, and you can get money for that too. So, I think kind of just showing them that through 4-H you can go and see all different parts of the world and get scholarships and all kinds of things like that. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2)

This is a little bit not the question, but like, for me, more than just the projects are useful, like all of 4-H, because you can do so many different things, there are so many different options. And it has helped me figure out what I want to do, like, for college and, like, for my life, and not just through projects but with camps like this. And I don’t know, I just think it’s all useful and most of the time it’s pretty fun. (White Rural Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

I think projects are important because they kind of help you figure out what you want to do because there are so many and so many different fields. So, it’s kind of like auditioning for future jobs or maybe majors you want to do in college. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2)

Leadership and, like, teambuilding, like something that a college would really want to see. There wasn’t that much. It was all like cow club and all that stuff. So, I much rather there be something to help me learn and help me to progress my skills to help me go to college someday. (White Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

The 4-H youth wanted to be able to teach other members of their communities the skills they learned to make a difference in their communities.

Because you want something useful in life, because you can’t learn something if you aren’t going to use it. So, I would want something useful in life, something you can remember, something you can teach your family and your friends. But it would also have to be, like, fun to me. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

Yeah, like, don’t just learn and sit around, teach someone else. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

I think 4-H is important because we do a lot of work with the community and stuff. So, even if you are not directly involved with girl scouts or boy scouts, you can still do similar activities, help other people... (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)
I did a demo at, like, the strawberry festival, does that count? That was probably my favorite project ever, because I get to, like, talk about and share information and knowledge about things that I’m interested in to, like, even kids that are younger than me and could actually be better than me at what I’m learning and interested in to better the planet that we live on. I was doing a conservation demo. So, like, I don’t know, it’s almost like molding the future. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

I would probably do food desserts. I would probably do that. Just because it would help people be more comfortable. But if I was appealing to my interests, I would probably be some conservation things. But definitely my first choice would be food desserts. Probably because, first of all, they can be aware of food desserts and what it means. And maybe it would help them choose better food options. And then, maybe, because they are the future, they could have more time to think about the disadvantage that they’re at, and maybe advocate for it when they get older, and yeah. (Black Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

The youth described the most useful curriculum they have participated in that they could apply.

I think one of the most useful things I’ve learned is food as well. Because, after getting more comfortable in the kitchen, I’m able to make my own stuff, and my parents can trust me to, like, make dinner for myself. Or, if they’re sick, make dinner for them or my sisters. And it’s a really great skill to have, and learning that through 4-H was great, and I can do a lot more stuff well. Like, if we forget to make something for a potluck, I’m always able to do stuff instead of having some extra stress on my parents, having them have to do it. So, I’m able to take some weight off their shoulders as well as do something that is fun. (Latinx Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 2)

My favorite one for 4-H for the workshops was the garden as well. The garden was my favorite because I like eating a lot of healthy things, and when they were telling us about the flowers and different things and how to garden some stuff, I actually like learning about that stuff because I am actually trying to garden some flowers, fruits and vegetables with my grandmother this summer. So, we are trying new things and that actually helped me with some stuff. (Black Suburban Youth, Female, Focus Group 3)

So, like, I raise animals at my farm, but I don’t know what to do. So, like, why is it so important to raise animals like this instead of another way? So that I can actually know all the body parts and systems that work together. Why a cow needs to get grass and not straw and corn also. How does this animal help you grow nice grass and why you need to rotate it? Why with cows or any livestock doesn’t need to stand in its pen all day? It’s a
lot of different things that you need to know about the animal to actually raise it nice and cleanly. And it makes a better way of getting your grass green. (Asian Rural Youth, Male, Focus Group 1)

I did a cooking class through 4-H and I think learning how to cook for others and something that I maybe wouldn’t like as much really like was really useful to me. Because sometimes, when my parents aren’t home or something, I would make dinner for my sister or something…or for others, something that I might not like. Like, I didn’t know how to make it before and now I do, and it’s really nice to give back to others. (White Suburban Youth, Male, Focus Group 2)

The themes and subthemes presented in this chapter emerged after coding the 4-H educator interviews and the youth focus groups. The themes that emerged from the analysis are as follows: (1) factors that make curriculum culturally responsive; (2) 4-H curriculum provides structure for educators to adapt to their audience; and (3) characteristics of successful 4-H curriculum. In Chapter 5, these themes are deconstructed and interpreted to indicate how they answer the research questions of this study.
Chapter 5
Discussion

This chapter interprets the findings presented in Chapter 4 and explains how the findings answer the research questions. The deeper meaning behind the key findings and how these findings are based on researcher observations and experiences are explored. The findings are connected to prior studies to illustrate how this current study closes the gaps in the previous literature and supports the current literature. The implications of this study for 4-H youth development and the general field of youth-development education are then discussed. Finally, recommendations for future research based on the conclusions made in this study are suggested and explained.

The interpretation of the findings is addressed by the research questions; each theme and its supporting data are elaborated on. The purpose of this study is to obtain a greater understanding of how the cultural responsiveness of curricula plays a role in youth motivation and engagement in 4-H programs and 4-H educator practices.
Research Question 1

What are youth and educator perspectives about culturally responsive 4-H curriculum and its impact on urban minority youth engagement and motivation in 4-H programs?

To answer this question, the researcher investigated the perceptions of 4-H educators and youth regarding the cultural responsiveness of the 4-H curriculum, and the perceptions of 4-H youth on how the curriculum impacts their engagement and motivation in 4-H. There were two relevant themes that emerged from the raw data to answer Research Question 1: Theme 1: Factors that make curriculum culturally responsive, and Theme 3: Characteristics of successful 4-H curricula.

Theme 1: Factors That Make Curriculum Culturally Responsive

Topic.

4-H curricula have a plethora of topics that cover various fields of interest for youth. The topic of a curriculum is a factor identified by 4-H educators and youth that make curriculum culturally responsive. According to the educators, the goal of a 4-H curriculum is to teach youth life skills, and the use of specific topics in a curriculum gains the interest of youth to participate in 4-H programs. The conclusion drawn from this subtheme is that the cultural responsiveness of a curriculum is connected to how the curriculum topic relates to the culture of the community. Thus, cultural responsiveness concerns choosing topics that youth in that particular community want and need. The three 4-H educators in this study stated that there needs to be a better grasp of the needs of urban communities to provide curricular topics that are culturally responsive. Many
topics in 4-H curricula do interest urban minority youth, but assumptions about which
topics urban minority youth are interested are sometimes poor. For example, urban
minority youth are interested in agriculture, but they want to learn about it in ways that
relate to their communities. A gap remains between what is considered urban and rural
curricula. This gap is being bridged via the number of curricula that can be utilized in
both urban and rural settings, but if a curriculum is going to be culturally responsive, then
the topic of focus must be considered.

The 4-H youth believed that cultural responsiveness is matching topics to youth
interests. As the youth discussed the various clubs and 4-H curriculum topics they had
learned about, it became clear that the urban minority youth had less knowledge about the
vast array of topics offered by 4-H. The urban minority youth were clearly excited about
all the new topics they were hearing about, but also expressed displeasure that they are
involved in an organization without understanding all that it has to offer. The youth
explained that this lack of knowledge regarding 4-H curricular topics acts as a barrier to
urban minority youth engagement in 4-H because it does not seem as if they have topics
that relate to them. The youth described agricultural topics in 4-H as overshadowing other
curricular topics, whether at the county fair or in 4-H advertising, and they clearly stated
that this is not everyone’s culture. This same sentiment was expressed by the youth in a
study by Morris (1997): “when examined by other characteristics...urban residents
reported substantially little or no knowledge of 4-H programs. What little knowledge
these groups had of the 4-H program provided them with an image of rural white youth
with farm animals which had no relevance to their everyday living.” The youth stated that
the agriculture-related topics in 4-H are not culturally responsive to urban minority
communities, but they still wanted to have the option to learn about agriculture. A recent study by Dr. Maurice D. Smith (2017) found that African American males recognize the value in agricultural youth programs but do not feel they are designed for minorities. In the focus groups in this current study, the youth expressed that 4-H should emphasize topics that minorities have interest in and relate to, in the spaces that minorities occupy, so they can know and learn about the opportunities offered. For example, the dog club: many of the youth could not believe there was a 4-H club for dogs. “Everyone loves dogs,” one youth explained, but she did not know that such a club existed. Without a curriculum that is culturally responsive, youth may see value in a program but have no motivation to participate because they have no personal connection to the material or, if they do participate, they are not engaged because the information is not connected to any previous experience or knowledge they have (Briggs, 2014). Each of the focus groups discussed the topic of sports in some form or fashion when discussing topics of interest for minority youth, whether it was advertising at or sponsoring sporting events so that urban minority youth could hear about the curricular topics offered by 4-H, or linking 4-H curricular topics to sports in some way to gain minority interest. The youth knew what they want and need and have an interest in when it comes to curricular topics. The impression they offered was that all 4-H needs to do is ask critical questions.
**Curriculum Structure.**

The second factor that makes curricula culturally responsive is curriculum structure. The overall goal of all 4-H curricula is to teach 4-H youth life skills that will help them positively develop. The educators stated that for a curriculum to be culturally responsive it should start at the beginning of curriculum development. Two of the educators were unsure about the process of 4-H curriculum development, asking questions such as, who is developing the curriculum? Are curriculum developers from diverse backgrounds of age, race, and setting? What are the reasons for the developers’ choice of curriculum topic? How timely is the curriculum? How relevant is the curriculum? For a curriculum to be culturally responsive, the educators thought that the first step was having people from diverse backgrounds involved in curricular development to contribute their different perspectives on what should be included (NC 4-H, 2015). One educator, who had taken part in developing curriculum, said that, in many cases, 4-H curricula are developed in a team and then pilot-tested in different communities before being published. However, because of the lengthy process, the educator stated that sometimes a curriculum is not timely, especially in areas relating to STEM.

The educators considered the generic structure of 4-H curricula to be positive, allowing for flexibility in modification; giving educators the ability to make a curriculum culturally responsive by tailoring it to the needs of their audience. There are many aspects that the 4-H educators considered necessary for 4-H curricula to be culturally responsive, including the experiential learning model, for a curriculum to be exciting, inclusive,
affordable, unique, culturally appropriate, flexible in its modification and knowledge base starting point, and the incorporation of diverse imagery of race and location. When discussing the structure of curriculum, some educators believed it was important to include diverse images of different race, culture and location, so that all 4-H youth could see themselves in the curriculum. Hill (2012) supports this idea by explaining the importance of culturally-responsive literature to PYD: “Literature is a powerful medium. Through it, children construct messages about their cultures and roles in society. Literature offers them personal stories, a view of their cultural surroundings, and insight on themselves. When children read books that are interesting and meaningful to them, they can find support for the process of defining themselves as individuals and understanding their developing roles within their families and communities.” Opening a curriculum and being able to see people and landscapes that you can relate to provides youth with the sense that this topic is relevant to them. When a 4-H curriculum is being developed, the developers need to be able to consider the messages the curriculum is presenting to youth (Bruch, Higbee & Lundell, 2004). Is the message of the curriculum one of diversity and inclusion? Having curricula specifically for urban settings for some topics, because of a lack of educator background knowledge on topics such as agriculture and others, and having the ability to modify a curriculum so that it relates to urban settings is seen as a need. The 4-H educators stated that there is an increasing need for educators who can adapt curricula to diverse audiences and for 4-H to create more culturally relevant curricula that are readily available to educators (Fields, 2016). Having a curriculum structured in a way that makes it relevant to the community it could be taught in is important. However, images are not always considered an important
curriculum structure feature; the overall structure of a program’s cultural responsiveness is more important, according to one educator. If the overall structure of a program is culturally responsive to the setting, needs, and interests of the community, then the curriculum will be too. 4-H, as an organization, must be dedicated to implementing a diverse and inclusive message at all levels, demonstrating acceptance and respect to the many differences between people (Morris 1997).

The 4-H youth discussed the lack of diverse imagery in 4-H in topics and participants in the curricula. Minority youth are not depicted enough in 4-H curricula or advertisements, according to the youth. They want to be able to, as one educator put it, see themselves in the curriculum they are being taught. A curriculum should allow all youth to be able to envision themselves doing whatever activity or career is associated with the curriculum topic, and culturally responsive imagery is required for this (Howard & Terry, 2011). Another major curriculum structure feature that the youth raised was the limiting structure of 4-H projects. Some of the youth believed that, for certain clubs, the projects limited who could participate. For example, one youth is involved in a horse club, but does not have a horse. The youth considers the project to be simply an “impediment”; something they must do to stay in the club, but they do not actually learn from it. The youth suggested incorporating alternative projects into the 4-H curricular structure; projects designed for youth who might not have access to the necessary resources or setting to participate in a certain club. With such alternative projects, all youth could participate in any club they have an interest in, no matter the setting or resource accessibility.
Educator Practices.

Educator practices are another factor that can help make 4-H curriculum culturally responsive. These practices are things that can be done by an educator to make a curriculum more culturally responsive to the community it is being taught in. Educators cannot rely on stereotypes to know what urban communities want or need; they must be involved in the communities and build relationships (Sleeter, 2012). Below is a list of elements that the 4-H educators believed should be done by an educator to make sure a curriculum is culturally responsive to its audience. The most important element is involving the community.

- Take part in the community to learn about its needs from the people living there; go to community meetings and events
- Involve the community in decisions about the curriculum taught in their community
- Create partnerships within communities
- Involve community members in delivering the curriculum to community youth
- Listen to the needs of youth from community youth
- Show you are excited to work with the community and be responsive to their needs

Creating community partnerships and engaging with the youth and their families creates a culturally responsive urban 4-H educator who can understand racial and cultural impact and adjust their practices accordingly (Landrieu & Russo, 2014). However, to keep this
understanding and curriculum relevant “requires that we continually update our understanding about how race and culture impact lives” (Landrieu & Russo, 2014).

Another key educator practice discussed by each educator was educator self-awareness. An educator should be aware that their experiences and background could be different from the youth participants, and therefore should be open minded to the youths’ experiences and find a way to relate (Landrieu & Russo, 2014). The important aspect of this practice is to not try to be so culturally responsive that you appear insincere; there is a balance between respecting your differences and learning from each other. This practice goes hand in hand with adaptive teaching styles and how different experiences might affect how an educator must teach a topic by being aware that everyone learns differently. Urban minority youth enjoy hands-on activities just like any other group of youth, but how an educator teaches the lesson might be different depending on how each specific group learns best (Bonner, Warren & Jiang, 2017). Finally, an educator can make a curriculum culturally responsive sometimes by just being excited about what they are presenting and involving youth in the activity. If the educator has high energy and makes the lesson appear to be a lot of fun, youth will be motivated to engage in the curriculum being taught (Howard & Terry, 2011).

This sentiment was echoed by the 4-H youth who participated in this study. They gave many examples of curriculum that they participated in that they believed were responsive to them simply because the educator was excited about what he/she was teaching. The key conclusion from this subtheme for 4-H youth is that educator
excitement affects youth engagement; if the educator is not excited about the topic, then youth do not see the point of participating or being engaged.

**Theme 3: Characteristics of Successful 4-H Curricula**

**Hands-on Activities.**

The 4-H youth understood the importance of learning life skills to help prepare them for the future, but they want to have fun while they learn also. Thus, they consider hands-on activities important for a curriculum to be culturally responsive. Hands-on activities keep youth engaged in the curriculum they are participating in and create a strong connection between the youth and the skills they are learning (Howard & Terry, 2011). When the youth described curriculum they felt engaged in and motivated to continue participating in, it involved hands-on activities that provided opportunities for self-discovery and led to a sense of accomplishment. Including hands-on activities that allow for creativity and the freedom to learn on your own and from your mistakes is something that the youth valued. Hands-on activities that are culturally responsive help youth better understand the concepts taught in curricula (Enfield, 2001).

**Real-world Application.**

Unfortunately, many of the youth regarded the skills they learn in a school setting as something they will never apply in real life. Therefore, if they are going to participate in something outside school, they want it to teach them something they can apply and that benefits them. The 4-H youth wanted skills they can apply in their communities, to teach others, and to prepare them for the future. If there is not real-world application to the
skills they are learning, then the youth considered the curriculum a waste of time. Thus, relatability plays a role in real-world application. If youth cannot recognize how a skill can be utilized in their community or by themselves after the program is over, then that skill does not have real-world application from their perspective, and therefore it is not culturally responsive (Briggs, 2014). Youth want practical skills that they cannot learn anywhere else. Describing some of their favorite curricula, these involved skills that the youth believed they could apply to help their communities, to use at home, or to teach others (NC 4-H, 2015). The 4-H youth recognized how the skills they have learned have real-world applications, such as animal science, media, and robotics. These skills taught the youth about different career paths and majors they might want to study in college in the future. Public speaking helped the youth build social skills for those who are normally shy. Gardening, sewing, cooking, and financial literacy are skills they can apply now and teach someone else. These are all curricula that the youth consider culturally responsive because they have relatable real-world application skills. Without such skills, the youth do not see the point in participating in a program.

Research Question 2

How does youth culture affect youth educator practices when delivering 4-H curriculum for a 4-H program?

To answer this research question, the researcher analyzed the perceptions of the 4-H educators regarding how a curriculum impacts their teaching practices. There were two relevant themes that emerged from the raw data regarding answering Research Question 2: Theme 2: 4-H curriculum provides a structure for educators to adapt to their audience
to make curriculum culturally responsive; and Theme 3: Characteristics of successful 4-H curricula.

**Theme 2: 4-H Curriculum Provides a Structure for Educators to Adapt to Their Audience to Make Curriculum Culturally Responsive**

**Setting.**

To make sure that a curriculum is culturally responsive, educators use the 4-H curriculum as a guide and modify the curriculum to adapt it to their audience. Setting is a curricular feature that might need to be adapted to make a curriculum culturally responsive to an urban area (Fields, 2016). Cultural responsiveness, according to the 4-H educators, is related to how responsive a curriculum is to the setting it is being taught in. The setting a curriculum is going to be delivered in affects how an educator addresses the needs of a community. Setting determines which curriculum will be used and how it is taught. When delivering a curriculum in an urban setting, educators might need to modify the examples used to explain the concepts and relate them to the setting (Fields, 2016). Setting can determine what type of projects are associated with a curriculum, because some projects cannot feasibly be performed in certain settings. For example, one educator discussed teaching gardening in an urban area: the project would need to be container gardening in a setting that is a “concrete jungle.” An educator’s practices must be culturally responsive to the setting when delivering a curriculum if that curriculum is going to be culturally responsive.
Baseline Knowledge.

The baseline knowledge of youth is something that 4-H educators must consider when delivering a curriculum. The knowledge level starting point of a curriculum should match that of the audience and not be too basic or too advanced. Making a curriculum responsive by teaching it at a level that your audience can understand is a practice educators use to make curriculum culturally responsive. The educators expressed not taking the understanding of basics in a curriculum for granted when teaching. Baseline knowledge is based on youth experiences; some youth might need more background to understand curricular concepts (Ringwalt & Bliss, 2006). A strategy that 4-H educators employ to understand youth baseline knowledge is asking questions at the beginning of a program to establish the level of knowledge. These initial questions enable an educator to assess at which point they need to begin. For example, agriculture programs in urban areas, according to one educator, usually need to be adapted down a level for basics in agriculture, but adapted up a level for STEM topics because of the experiences the youth have with these topics. This educator suggested incorporating different levels of starting points within the 4-H curricula to enable educators to easily adapt to youth baseline knowledge.

Culture.

Culture, according to the educators, is more important to modify for in some curricula than others. Some curricula require less modification for culture because they easily transfer from urban to rural settings and for both minority and majority populations. Based on the perspectives of the 4-H educators, non-social-related
curriculum topics are not affected by culture because they transfer across the boundaries of culture, religion, race, and ethnicity; for example, financial literacy, robotics, and rocketry. Social curricula are affected more by culture and how youth receive programs because educators must consider cultural appropriateness and not offending people. Examples of social curricula that culture affects include food, relationships, and public speaking. Even with the two distinctions concerning which curricula are greatly affected by culture, the educators believed it is important for youth to be able to see themselves in a curriculum no matter the topic.

**Language.**

Adapting a curriculum to be culturally responsive to meet the language needs of the audience is a feature that was only minimally discussed by the 4-H educators. However, the educators expressed an understanding of this necessity. The educators explained that curricula should be available in multiple languages to reach audiences who do not speak English. One educator provided an example of how the translation of curricula is important to pay attention to, because you want to make sure that the concepts are being translated with the same meaning in any language. Another educator stated that language includes having curricula available in the appropriate knowledge base languages for the conceptual understanding of a curriculum. Even though language seems a commonsense curricular aspect for being culturally responsive, especially concerning urban minority youth, it is an aspect that should not be overlooked (Bowditch, 2013).
Theme 3: Characteristics of Successful 4-H Curricula

**Hands-on Activities.**

Hands-on activities are a major part of the experiential learning model, and the educators concluded that hands-on activities keep youth engaged in a curriculum. Djonko-Moore et al. (2017) point out that, in past research, experiential education models that use hands-on approaches were found to be “important for diverse learners.” When curricula incorporate hands-on activities, they enable youth to investigate, make discoveries, be creative, and have a sense of empowerment. According to the 4-H educators, hands-on activities are a requirement; if these types of activities are absent, then there is a chance that youth engagement will be lacking also. Having hands-on activities makes youth excited about a curriculum no matter the topic, because having the chance to actively apply something you learn, even if it is something you are not familiar with, is exciting (Hill, 2012).

**Relatability to Youth.**

If curricular concepts are not designed to relate to urban minority youth experiences and settings, then youth may ask, “How does this apply to me?” If youth are asking this question, it means the curriculum is not culturally responsive. Urban communities do not see 4-H as having curriculum relevant to them. This viewpoint was expressed by one educator as an image thing in urban areas about 4-H. Educators must demonstrate how the curriculum are relevant to urban minority youth. Therefore, curricula must be connected to the experiences and setting of the audience. A curriculum must appear to have some cultural relevance, as Djonko-Moore (2017) states:
“...embedding cultural relevance allows children to make connections between content areas like mathematics, science, and writing and their personal lives, homes, and communities.” Make curricula meaningful to youth, illustrate how each curriculum can work for them (Fields, 2016). For a curriculum to be relatable to urban minority youth, activities must be able to be performed in an urban setting, examples must relate to the location, and the curriculum must be relevant to the time period. A curriculum that is easily transferable between settings can relate across boundaries of race, culture, and setting. The 4-H educators stated that there is a need to increase the number of activities in 4-H curricula that relate to urban community populations.

**Real-world Application.**

For 4-H curricula to be culturally responsive, they must fill a need. If a curriculum is filling a need, then it has a real-world application. The interviewed educators clearly stated how cultural responsiveness relates to real-world application: a curriculum should have real-world application that urban youth can apply in their communities. Briggs (2014) explains how the relevance of a curriculum can be established by “showing how theory can be applied in practice, establishing relevance to local cases, relating material to everyday applications…” Educators should apply real-world examples relevant to youth, and a curriculum should teach skills that all youth can apply (Howard & Terry, 2011). The 4-H educators explained that youth want curricula to have community aspects, skills they can take home and apply to or teach to their families, and skills they can use in college. The educators echoed the youths’ beliefs that if a curriculum does not have a real-world application, then that curriculum has no purpose. One educator stated
that application is what should be made clear to youth during the reflection period following the teaching of a curriculum.

Key Findings

The definitions of culture that emerged during the research are a key finding that must first be presented before reintroducing the research questions of this study. Culture can be defined in many ways: the culture of race or ethnicity (see Table 1), economic status, neighborhoods, families, schools, etc. After discussing with the 4-H educators, the definitions of culture in which they and 4-H operate are twofold. These definitions (see Table 7) affect how curriculum cultural responsiveness is perceived. The first definition of culture concerns race or ethnicity and involves having a curriculum that is inclusive of all people. This definition was usually operationalized when discussing the images used in the curricula and the lack of representation, cultural appropriateness, and not wanting to be offensive. Furthermore, the definition was discussed if a curriculum was socially influenced, such as curricula that specifically focus on diversity or cultural foods and celebrations. The 4-H educators called for diverse images to be more strongly represented in 4-H curricula, as one educator stated: “youth should be able to see themselves in the curriculum.” Based on the discussions with the educators, this definition of culture is important because you want youth to be able to picture themselves doing the skills and activities being taught to them. Moreover, 4-H is inclusive and should present themselves as such through the images they display. Fields (2016) raised the point that, “positive youth development models that are not culturally relevant, can run the risk of maintaining societal forces of privilege and dominance.” 4-H must be careful not to only represent
cultural backgrounds in curricula that teach about a specific culture; this is not culturally responsive pedagogy. Curricula should utilize the differences in cultural backgrounds to engage urban minority youth in programs (Bottiani et al. 2017).

The second definition, and the one that the 4-H educators seemed to operate under most often when discussing culturally responsive curriculum is culture as a combination of location, setting, and community. This definition is how educators determine, in more ways than one, whether a curriculum is culturally responsive to the needs of their 4-H audience. Operating under this definition, the educators consider a multi-faceted approach to cultural responsiveness, such as the examples used to explain concepts; the hands-on activities youth participate in; the real-world application in the communities the youth live in; the relatability of the curriculum to the youth in specific locations; how the youth setting might affect their baseline knowledge about certain curriculum topics; and how the culture of the youth community might affect the youth’s experiences. Under this definition of culture, educators assess how they can best meet the needs of youth, and, based on their testimonies, the best way to do so is by asking the question, “How culturally responsive is this curriculum to the location, setting, and community of my audience?” The 4-H educators consider the generic structure of 4-H curricula in this regard to be an asset, because it allows for easy modification to make a curriculum more culturally responsive to meet the needs of the audience. However, with some topics, such as agriculture, the educators stated that the 4-H curricula should be specifically designed for urban settings because of the number of modifications necessary to make such a curriculum culturally responsive and for ease of use for those educators who lack knowledge in that area to be able to cover those topics in ways that relate to their youth.
If a curriculum was not initially developed for the audience it is going to be taught to, and the audiences differ in cultural background, modification to meet the needs of the population is necessary (Ringwalt & Bliss, 2006). This need prompted two suggestions by the 4-H educators to make the 4-H curricula more culturally responsive in structure. First, to have curricula developed at different baseline knowledge levels because, depending on location, audiences may have varying experiences to draw knowledge from on certain topics. 4-H curricula are set by grade level, but just because someone is in a certain grade does not mean they have the baseline knowledge necessary to understand the topic of interest set by their designated grade level, especially if it is a topic they do not have experience with to draw knowledge from. What the educators are stating, based on my understanding, is that each level of a curriculum be structured so that it has a starting point based on the audience’s baseline knowledge level instead of entirely basing it on grade level. This strategy would make it easier for those educators who do not have the necessary training to modify a curriculum to make it culturally responsive to their youth audience. Second, the educators want curricula to display different settings, particularly urban, because they want their youth to be able to see themselves in the curricula and how they relate to and have meaning for them (LaVergne, 2013). Representing different settings in the curricula means including pictures and examples that allow youth to see how what they are learning relates to them and provides context for using their learned skills. When educators bring a curriculum into an urban community, they see it as urban culture, not the culture of individuals, even though they stated that educators should be aware of this to be sure they are not being offensive. Images in curricula should be diverse, depicting various races and environments. For
curricula to be culturally responsive to urban minority youth they must be responsive to the surroundings and the cultures within the urban setting. Above all, however, based on educator affirmations, if a curriculum can be proven to benefit and serve a need of urban minority youth, then youth are more likely be motivated to engage in 4-H programs. When trying to make sure 4-H curricula are culturally responsive to urban minority youth, which is the focus of this research study, these are the two definitions of culture and the factors that 4-H educators consider.

An even more enlightening finding of this study is that based on the testimonies of the 4-H youth who discussed each of the abovementioned definitions of culture as well. The youth also considered these definitions key to making 4-H curricula culturally responsive. The 4-H youth want curricula that portray minority youth and represents them in a way that demonstrates that their culture is valued and they are welcome to participate in 4-H programs (Goodstein, 1994). When the youth expressed their opinions, they operated first under culture as defined by race and ethnicity, requesting more diverse images in 4-H curricula and advertising. The youth spoke passionately about how important it was to them to see cultural representation in terms of race and how they feel underrepresented as minorities in 4-H (LaVergne, 2013). Each youth focus group comprised mixed races, and all the youth present were very aware of the lack of cultural representation. The youth made it clear that they believed this was a cause of urban minority youth not being motivated to engage in 4-H programs, which caused socially uncomfortable situations at times because of the lack of cultural understanding between 4-H youth participants in both club and event settings. The lack of representation makes it appear that 4-H does not have anything relevant to offer urban minority youth. One
youth described this lack of representation as a feeling that because you are a minority even in large settings you are not welcome and must “step back.”

The 4-H youth then defined culture by location, setting, and community when they discussed how important it is to them to relate to and apply the curriculum they participate in to their communities. These two aspects were key in discussing the cultural responsiveness of curricula regarding urban minority youth. The youth called for curriculum topics that have a practical use in their communities, that offer skills they can teach someone else, and that benefit them in the long term. These are the goals of 4-H curricula; however, according to the 4-H youth some curricula lack these key factors, and thus negatively impact their motivation to engage in 4-H programs. An important statement was made by one minority youth concerning this study of curriculum cultural responsiveness – a statement that has potential implications for curriculum development and that one I found very interesting – when discussing relatability of curriculum topic to culture in terms of race/ethnicity, the youth stated: “I don’t think we really care as long as we are benefiting from it.” This statement and others made by the 4-H youth led to the conclusion that cultural representation of race/ethnicity in 4-H curricula is important but has greater impact on urban minority youth motivation to engage in 4-H programs for social reasons rather than curricular reasons. This reason is not to be understood, however, as youth not wanting greater diverse representation in the curricula. Curriculum cultural responsiveness in terms of relatability to youth and application in their communities impacts the motivation of urban minority youth to engage in 4-H programs. When analyzing the youth focus groups, the previously two mentioned aspects of
curricula impact urban minority youth motivation to engage in 4-H programs more than cultural responsiveness regarding race/ethnicity representation in curricula.

The 4-H youth and educators share many of the same perspectives regarding culturally responsive 4-H curriculum and how they impact urban minority youth engagement and motivation in 4-H programs, only through two different lenses. Both groups agree that culturally responsive curricula are necessary for urban minority youth to be motivated to engage in 4-H programs and that 4-H curricula could be improved in some areas when addressing the issue of cultural responsiveness. The educators and youth want a more diverse representation of images depicting minorities in 4-H curricula and advertisements. Urban landscape representations need to be increased also, so that youth can see themselves in the curricula. Having more activities and projects that are culturally responsive to urban settings is necessary, so that all youth can participate in any topic, no matter the setting or learning environment. Having culturally responsive curriculum that all urban minority youth can participate in sometimes means having specific curricula for urban settings, but generally begins with having all the curriculum topics visible to urban minority youth. Once all the curricula are visible, the next stage is making sure the curricula meet urban minority youth interests and needs. These interests and needs include having curricula that relate to urban youth and their setting, with skills they can apply in their communities, and curricula presented based on the youths’ different baseline knowledge levels. 4-H has continued to work to increase participation in 4-H programs from urban minority youth, and improving inclusion and diversity in the curricula has been a major strategy of focus. Based on the participants’ perspectives, the
key findings in Tables 5 and 6 suggest that a key influence on urban minority youth motivation to engage in 4-H programs is the cultural responsiveness of 4-H curricula.

Educator practices are affected by youth culture, as they should be, according to 4-H educators, because everyone’s needs are different and how you meet those needs can depend on culture. The modification of curriculum is the overarching educator practice used to enhance 4-H curriculum to the needs of an audience. The 4-H educators regard 4-H curricula to be guides to get them started, resources they can use for ideas, rather than strict scripts they must follow. When modifying a curriculum, there are a few culture elements that educators adapt. First, the setting: urban settings have a unique culture that a curriculum needs to be adapted for to ensure it is responsive to the community. Second, baseline knowledge and how it is based on the previous experiences the audience has with the topic: educators should have an understanding of this level of knowledge to be able to make sure the taught concepts relate to things youth might have experienced. Third, culture itself: in many cases this concerns adapting curriculum to make sure it is not offensive (e.g. to religious beliefs), or it could be understanding the culture of the community the curriculum is being taught in and adapting it to meet those needs. Finally, language: making sure curricula are translated correctly so that concepts have the same meaning no matter the language and are at a conceptual language level that the audience can understand. The two different definitions of culture are important for 4-H educators to understand because they play different roles in affecting educator practices.
Table 5. Key Findings of Educator and Youth Perspectives for Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Findings</th>
<th>Educator’s Perspective</th>
<th>Youth’s Perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1. What are youth and educator perspectives about culturally responsive 4-H curriculum and its impact on urban minority youth engagement and motivation in 4-H programs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Factors that make curriculum culturally responsive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtheme: Topic</td>
<td>- Need to be a better grasp of the needs of urban communities to provide curricula topics that are culturally responsive</td>
<td>- Cultural responsiveness is matching topics to youth interests</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Assumptions made about what topics urban minority youth are interested in</td>
<td>- Urban minority youth are unaware of all the topics offered by 4-H</td>
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<td>- 4-H is perceived as not having topics that relate to urban minority youth</td>
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<td>- Ag topics overshadow other curriculum topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtheme: Curriculum Structure</td>
<td>- Cultural responsiveness begins with curriculum development; need diverse representation in development process</td>
<td>- Diverse imagery needed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Generic structure of curriculum is a positive for modification</td>
<td>- Curriculum project structure limiting who can participate in certain clubs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Include diverse images of race and location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtheme: Educator Practices</td>
<td>Create curricula specifically for urban setting for some topics</td>
<td>Involve community in decisions about curriculum brought to community</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: Hands-on Activities</td>
<td>Educator’s Perspectives</td>
<td>Youth’s Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: Real-world Application</td>
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Table 6. Key Findings of Educator and Youth Perspectives for Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Findings</th>
<th>Educator’s Perspectives</th>
<th>Youth’s Perspectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ2. How does youth culture affect youth educator practices when delivering 4-H curriculum for a 4-H program?</td>
<td>Theme 2: 4-H curriculum provides a structure, for educators to adapt to their audience to make curriculum culturally responsive</td>
<td>• View curriculum as a guide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | Subtheme: Setting | • Modify examples to relate to setting to explain curriculum concepts  
• Affects how curriculum is delivered  
• Determine projects associated with curriculum |
| | Subtheme: Baseline Knowledge | • Educator should be aware of audience knowledge of topic  
• Baseline knowledge is based on experiences of audience  
• Strategy is to ask questions before beginning curriculum |
| Subtheme: Culture | • Non-social curricula require less modification for culture regarding race/ethnicity  
• Youth should be able to see themselves in the curricula |
| --- | --- |
| Subtheme: Language | • Curricula translated so that concepts have same meaning in any language  
• Language includes knowledge level appropriate for conceptual understanding |
| Theme 3: Characteristics of successful 4-H curricula |  |
| Subtheme: Hands-on Activities | • Necessary to keep youth engaged in curriculum  
• Youth will be excited about curriculum no matter the topic as long as they are actively involved |
| Subtheme: Relatability to Youth | • Curriculum should relate to urban minority youth experiences and settings  
• Urban communities do not believe 4-H has curriculum relevant to them  
• Curriculum should be relevant to time  
• Need to increase activities in curricula that relate to urban communities |
Real-world Application

- Curriculum need to fill a need
- Curriculum should have real-world application that urban youth can apply in their communities
- Educators should use real-world examples relevant to youth

Table 7. Key Finding of Operational Definitions of Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two Definitions of Culture that 4-H Operates Under</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Culture regarding race/ethnicity; having curricula that are inclusive of all people</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Culture of location/setting/community and how curricula match these or need to be modified</td>
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Research Implications

The implications of this study are centered around the new found understanding of 13 to 18-year-old 4-H youths’ perspectives regarding culturally responsive curricula and how they impact urban minority youth engagement and motivation to participate in 4-H programs. This study includes insights into the perspectives of 4-H urban educators and their practices to make curriculum culturally responsive to meet the needs of urban minority youth. The findings of this study can impact the development of 4-H curricula and their contents and curriculum delivery as a whole, but especially in urban areas.

Based on the perspectives of the youth, 4-H as an organization can better understand the wants of the audience they are trying to serve (i.e. youth) in the hope of increasing urban minority engagement in 4-H programs. From the educator perspective, this study can impact 4-H educator practices and training regarding strategies for making curriculum culturally responsive as well as aspects to consider during that process. This study can be utilized to help meet the goals set in the 4-H strategic plan by using methods that are practical for the organization and its educators. This study states which aspects of the curricula are necessary to consider for 4-H to be regarded as culturally responsive by both youth and educators. There is minimal literature on culturally responsive curriculum that includes the perspectives of youth in the age range represented in this study; most literature focuses on college-age students and college courses. Research specifically regarding the urban 4-H setting about culturally responsive curricula addressed from both the youth and educator perspective is also scarce. This study hopes to bridge those gaps.
and provide a starting point for addressing the needs of those directly impacted by 4-H curricula. Finally, in the field of PYD, this study can be utilized to understand the aspects of culturally responsive curriculum that keep youth engaged in what they are learning as well as educator teaching practices regarding curricula that connect concepts in ways that help youth learn best.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

As stated at the beginning of this research, this study is an exploratory study that sought to obtain an understanding of the perspectives of participants regarding culturally responsive 4-H curricula. This study is only the starting point of what could develop into an experimental study on culturally responsive 4-H curricula. Future research should take the perspectives and suggestions made by the 4-H youth and educators and develop culturally responsive curricula for urban areas and test how they impact urban minority youth motivation to engage in 4-H programs.

Suggestions for future research are divided into the following three sections of possible experimental study components: the addition of a control group testing curricula; the addition of a survey instrument; and the addition of volunteer training by National 4-H. The addition of a survey instrument will be used to test the suggestions made by the 4-H educators and youth in this study. A curriculum will be modified based on the perspectives of the 4-H educators and youth. Then, a survey instrument will be developed to ask questions concerning the modified curriculum focusing on cultural responsiveness, motivation, and engagement. The structure of the survey will be a Likert scale, and questions will be based on the perspectives of the 4-H youth and educators who
participated in this current study. A purposeful sampling approach will be used to sample urban minority youth.

This study was an exploratory study; the next study should be experimental to test the findings. One component that could be included in an experimental study to test the original findings is a control group. Incorporating a control group would mean having two groups of 4-H youths: a control group that receives a 4-H curriculum without any modifications, and an experimental group that receives a 4-H curriculum that has been modified based on the perspectives of the 4-H youth and educators from this current study. After each group has participated in their designated curriculum, surveys will be given to the youth regarding the curriculum. Based on the youth’s responses, focus group questions will be developed. Both groups youth will be put into focus groups as a method to add comprehensive understanding to the findings from the surveys.

The final experimental study would involve volunteer training developed by National 4-H regarding culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy. The training will be developed based on the testimonies of the 4-H youth and educators from this current study. To test the findings of this current study, a control group will be included. There will be a group of volunteers that receive National 4-H training without a culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy component, and a group of volunteers that receive training with a culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy component. The volunteers will be given a curriculum of interest to deliver to an urban minority youth audience that is not tailored specifically to the audience. The youth will then be given a
Likert scale survey with questions concerning the curriculum and teaching methods.

Using the surveys, the control and experimental groups will be compared.

To best control for bias, all the participants should remain unaware of which group they are in and of the aspects of interest of the study. These experimental studies will provide insights into the impact of culturally responsive curricula on urban minority youth motivation to engage in 4-H programs.
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Appendix A

Educator Interview Questions

Questions for interview #1:

1. Did you participate in 4-H as a child? If so, what level (clover bud, intermediate, teen), and why did you participate?

2. In your own words, what do you think is the purpose of 4-H curriculum?

3. Why did you decide to work with 4-H in an urban setting?

4. If you could use three words to describe urban culture, how would you define urban culture? Why this description?

5. Interviewer explain what is meant by cultural responsiveness

6. How would you define cultural responsiveness in the context of curriculum?

7. Does 4-H curriculum bring value to urban communities? Why or Why not?

8. What curriculum characteristics make a program more relatable to urban minority youth?

9. Do you notice a difference in motivation or engagement of minority youth in a program depending on the curriculum being taught?

10. Do you think the cultural responsiveness of curriculum affects the motivation and engagement of minority youth to participate in 4-H? Why or why not?

11. What curriculum characteristics do you see having a more positive effect on minority youth engagement and motivation?
12. Do you think teaching styles play a factor in the cultural responsiveness of 4-H curriculum? Why or why not? (provide examples of teaching styles)

13. What teaching styles have you found effective among urban youth?

14. Do you feel 4-H curriculum adequately addresses the needs of urban minority youth?
   Why or why not?

Questions for interview #2:

1. What are barriers to participation of urban minority youth in 4-H curriculum currently provided?

2. What comes to mind when you think about 4-H curriculum in urban areas in terms of relevance to minority participants?

3. What curricula do you view as significantly culturally responsive to urban minority youth? Why? Can you name some of these curricula?

4. What are programs that urban minority youth view as most appealing?

5. Do you use curriculum provided by 4-H? If not, what reasons do you choose not to?

6. What 4-H curricula easily transfer into urban 4-H settings? Why do you think this is the case?

7. What factors do you think are considered when 4-H curriculum is developed for urban areas?

8. What factors are most important to consider when 4-H curriculum is developed for urban areas?
Questions for interview #3:

1. If you could build a 4-H curriculum tailored for urban minority youth, what would be the focus?

2. If you could build a 4-H curriculum made for urban minority youth, what would it look like?

3. What suggestions do you have for the development of curriculum for diverse urban settings?

4. What types of curriculum would you like to see added to your 4-H county/community?

5. What ways do you think the suggested curricula changes are important? would improve urban minority youth engagement in 4-H programs?

6. Do you feel making 4-H curriculum more culturally responsive to minority youth will improve their engagement in 4-H programs? Why or why not?

7. Do you see any challenges trying to change 4-H curriculum?
Appendix B

Youth Focus Group Questions

● How did you learn about 4-H?
● Why did you join 4-H?
● How would you define urban culture?
● Do you think 4-H curriculum is important to youth participating in 4-H? Why?
● Does a program’s project determine if you like the program or are there other factors?
● What factors determine whether you like a project?
● What are characteristics of your favorite project you have participated in?
● What projects do you think are most useful? Why?
● What do you think stop/prevent some minority youth from joining 4-H in your community?
● What factors do you think are considered when 4-H projects are developed?
● What projects best fit into urban diverse settings that you have participated in? Why?
● What teaching styles did you have the most fun participating in while learning 4-H projects?
● What are your favorite activities to do in 4-H? Why?
● Do you feel 4-H projects are made for urban minority youth? Why or why not?
● If you could build a 4-H project made for urban minority youth, what would it look like and include?
● Do you think projects need to be culturally relevant for urban minority audiences? Why or why not?
● What are suggestions you have for educators about 4-H projects?
● What should 4-H projects used in diverse settings include?
● What types of projects would you like to see added to 4-H in your community?
● If you could talk to a developer of 4-H projects, what would you tell them about the projects? Good or bad feedback.
Appendix C

Research Recruitment Flyer

Recruitment Flyer

RELATABILITY OF 4-H CURRICULUM TO URBAN MINORITY YOUTH AND EFFECTS ON THEIR ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION IN 4-H PROGRAMS

Join Chinenir Smith, Master’s student at The Pennsylvania State University studying Agriculture and Extension Education in her study to gain an understanding of perspectives 4-H minority youth and 4-H educators/volunteers have about the cultural responsiveness of 4-H curriculum used in 4-H programs.

Participant Requirements

4-H youth: actively involved in 4-H, 10-15 or 10-15 years old, identify as a minority and have participated in 4-H for at least 1 or 2 years.

4-H educator/volunteer: actively involved in delivering curriculum, employed in 4-H urban setting for 1 or 2 years and over the age of 18 years old.

Study Details

Two part study involves educators/volunteers participating in three 60-90 minute uninterrupted interviews that will be audio and video recorded. 4-H youth will be involved in three 60-minute focus groups that will be audio and video recorded. Sessions will be spread over a 3 month period between late May—early August. Interviews and focus groups will be open discussions about 4-H curriculum relatability to urban minority youth and possible effects on engagement and motivation in 4-H programs. The benefits of the study will be for developers of 4-H curriculum to have a better understanding of how to make sure 4-H curriculum relates to the needs of all 4-H participating youth. Contact Chinenira with any questions at chinenira.al@gmail.com

All participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, as well as not answer any questions they don’t want to answer. No personal or identifying information will be released during or after the study, and will only be handled by the principle investigator (Chinenira Smith).

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