

Disability inclusion and awareness in a youth livestock exposition: A qualitative exploration of
the Special Olympics Kansas Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair

by

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Abstract

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of children with disabilities participating in livestock exhibitions as livestock shows provide youth with different layers of development and skills that can be learned in the barn and the show ring. Integrating youth with disabilities in agricultural programs can improve social acceptance, self-esteem, and social skills for all youth involved as they can benefit from the opportunity to become more aware of differences and more tolerant and accepting of others. The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of participants in a disability inclusive livestock show and the perceived best practices of livestock expositions that are constructed with diversity inclusion towards youth with disabilities. LaVergne's Diversity Inclusion Program Model was used to construct interview questions. Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted as a collective case study with twenty participants involved in a disability inclusive livestock exposition to understand their perceptions and experiences with the program. Results from this study illuminated how disability inclusion in the livestock industry can create disability awareness and acceptance amongst participants to expose them to diverse individuals. This study offers insight on the lived experiences of individuals with and without disabilities and the benefits gained, along with parent/guardian and adult volunteer perspectives on the perceived best practices for disability inclusive livestock expositions. It was concluded participants obtained a positive experience from participating in the show and developed life skills while also gaining an understanding of equity in the show ring.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to Chance Holliday and his family. Without Chance, I would not have been exposed to working with individuals with disabilities and lacked the passion that I have put behind this study. I cannot express the humility and empathy I have learned from Chance and the awareness I have gained from his family. I hope this study increases disability inclusion and awareness in the youth livestock industry to provide everyone the opportunity to pursue their passion, just like Chance. Thank you again to Chance and the Holliday family.

Who needs luck when you got a Chance...

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Disability

A person with a disability, defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), is “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity” (ADA National Network, n.d., para. 2). The ADA defines disability as a legal term rather than a medical term, to encompass a group of the population that faces societal barriers in ways that may be because of their physical or mental impairment. A physical impairment is any medical disorder, condition, or loss that affects the body to the extent that major bodily functions are challenged (Illinois Legal Aid Online, 2020). A mental impairment includes any mental or cognitive disorder that challenges the individual intellectually (Illinois Legal Aid Online, 2020). People who have a record of an impairment, who are not affected all the time or are regarded as consistently having a mental or physical impairment, are included in the ADA’s definition of disability (Illinois Legal Aid Online, 2020). Disability can also be referred to as an exceptionality, which suggests more to a difference amongst individuals rather than an inability and includes both those who are gifted and disabled (IRIS Center, n.d.). Other synonyms include handicap, impairment, ailment, disorder, condition, abnormality, and other alternative terms that reference specific disabilities. Ableism, which is “discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities” (Kids Together Inc., 2022, para. 1), is also linked with disability as it “is a system in which being nondisabled is treated as a standard of normal living” (Freeman, 2020, para. 3).

Ableism is a way of coping with differences. It occurs because our society does not value people equally. Having a disability is often incorrectly viewed as atypical. The societal

response to the misconception is to try and fix what is perceived as wrong (Freeman, 2020, para. 4).

Disability is part of our everyday society and must be considered when constructing buildings, organizing programs, or even speaking to another individual to avoid ableism. The integration of disability within our organizations is vital to ensure equal opportunity and societal acceptance of all levels of ability.

Disability in the United States

Approximately 26% of adults residing in the United States are diagnosed with a recognized disability (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). About 19% of youth in the United States have special healthcare needs and approximately 23% of youth experience one or more mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral needs (Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health, 2020). While our society is progressing in its cultural norms, the stigma surrounding disability continues to shed a light of uncertainty on inclusivity due to a lack of knowledge or resources to effectively interact with individuals with disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act continuously advocates for accessible programs for all levels of ability, but youth with disabilities are not participating in clubs or organizations after school or on weekends as much as youth without disabilities (Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health, 2020). In 2020, 55% of youth with special health care needs and 60% of youth with emotional, behavioral, or developmental problems for which treatment or counseling is needed indicated they did not participate in clubs or organizations after school or on weekends (Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health, 2020). Of children with special health care needs, 45% indicated they did participate in clubs or organizations after school or on weekends, while 40% of youth with emotional, behavioral, or developmental problems for which

treatment or counseling is needed stated they did participate in clubs or organizations after school or on weekends (Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health, 2020).

Community inclusion is critical to build self-esteem, expand social circles, acquire new life skills, and form meaningful relationships for individuals with or without disabilities. The need for inclusive practices and accessibility within our communities and organizations is becoming more common in our society; therefore, youth development professionals need to know how to properly accommodate individuals with disabilities to present equal opportunities to participate.

Diversity and Disability Inclusion

“Diversity is seeing and accepting, without bias, all human characteristics, experiences and identities that make us unique as individuals and members of cultures and communities” (Walker, 2021, para. 4). Being able to showcase diversity inclusion is the first step towards equity inclusion, which is “discovering, creating and providing what is required, requested and measured by each human to feel equal” (Walker, 2021, para. 6). Diversity in societies builds cultural awareness and creates a sense of belonging when others are conscious and accepting of differences. By acknowledging diversity, we emphasize our differences are what make us unique, and this recognition creates stronger relationships with one another (Walker, 2021).

People with disabilities are the world’s largest minority and the number of people with disabilities is continuing to increase due to demographic trends, chronic health conditions, and other causes (World Health Organization, 2021). By addressing the barriers put in place for individuals with disabilities, we can create sustainable independence that fosters a sense of optimism and self-efficacy within these individuals. Through the utilization of disability inclusion, we can provide cultural accessibility to allow for all levels of ability to participate fully in society.

Disability inclusion is to include people with disabilities in our everyday life and society. It is to provide accessibility to people with disabilities in areas of employment, communications, business, housing, products, and services. It is to provide them with the same opportunity that everyone else in the society gets in every aspect of life (Man, 2020, para. 1).

Inclusive environments allow for people to thrive amongst others who are diverse from them and fulfill the social responsibility of creating equal access and opportunities for all. The premise of inclusion is to create a program or environment that is welcoming to all, regardless of ability. To ensure participants obtain meaningful involvement, many organizations are beginning to further integrate disability into their programs rather than offering a separate class or organization. While this diversity adjustment is slowly taking effect in society, not all organizations are providing accessible access to their programs.

Disability Accommodation and Accessibility

For individuals with disabilities to participate in an activity or program it may be necessary for some to request an accommodation be made to allow for them to fully take part in the experience. “An accommodation is a change that is made so that a person with a disability is able to fully participate” (Youth.gov, n.d., para. 4). A study conducted with 4-H horse programs in Indiana stated that a common concern of providing accommodations to youth with disabilities in competitive events is that it creates an unfair advantage for that individual, while the true purpose of the accommodation is to “allow the child with a disability to participate in the same collective activity as their peers without disabilities” (Brady & McKee, 2005, p. 2). If requested, the accommodation should not adversely affect how other participants in the activity perform, are judged, or are evaluated as an accommodation should only provide the opportunity for

everyone to participate (Brady & McKee, 2005). “It is not the intent of an accommodation to guarantee success or superior recognition, for any participant” (Brady & McKee, 2005, p. 2). While some disability accommodations are easily fulfilled, some may request accommodations that are unobtainable in terms of resources, knowledge, or funds available to the youth development professional. A reasonable accommodation is “something done to accommodate a disabled person that does not jeopardize safety or pose an undue hardship for the party doing it” (Merriam-Webster, n.d., para. 1).

While there may always be a request for specific accommodations for individuals with disabilities, organizations can lessen the request for these alterations by implementing universal design or ensuring accessibility. “Universal design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability” (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. n.d., para. 1). “Accessibility means having a place, environment, or event that is set up from the start to be accessible to all individuals” (Youth.gov, n.d., para. 5). While true accessibility is difficult to achieve, considering factors such as accessible spaces, format, interpretation, language, lighting, restrooms, separate spaces, transportation, video options, and written materials are items that can be altered to accommodate those with disabilities (Youth.gov, n.d.).

Universal Design

Universal design is used to meet the needs of all people and is a fundamental condition of design to create environments that are accessible, usable, convenient, and satisfactory to use (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. n.d.). Inequities or barriers may be unknowingly set in place, usually due to outdated policies or norms, that may limit individuals with disabilities to

participate fully in an experience. These limitations may hinder the outcomes, performance, or success of the individual if they are unable to fully participate and cause a sense of exclusion or discrimination. The need for universal design is especially crucial in educational environments to effectively engage individuals of all abilities as “universal design is an approach that levels the access to learning for our students and helps them remove boundaries and barriers that might be in place” (Headrick, 2021, p. 13). Universal design also promotes independent work and learning as individuals with disabilities are not concerned about accessing required materials or areas and can fully focus on the experience or task at hand. By implementing universal design, we can allow for diversity inclusion to flourish and set a standard of inclusion for all regardless of ability or disability.

Disability in Agriculture

Advocacy for individuals with disabilities to have a livelihood is present in all industries, including the agriculture industry. “More than 13 million individuals in rural America are affected by disabilities” (Willkomm, 2001, p. 1), with approximately 288,000 of those individuals being agricultural workers who are affected by a disability that may limit their ability to work efficiently and safely (Willkomm, 2001). Farm accidents and injuries are a common hazard within the agriculture industry and many farmers and ranchers have lost digits, and limbs, had their mobility impaired, or become paralyzed due to farm-related incidents. Programs such as AgrAbility have steadily increased awareness of disability within the agriculture industry and rural communities by providing accommodation services, financial resources, and professional training to allow these individuals with disabilities to continue their rural livelihood and prevent secondary injuries that may occur due to inaccessibility (Willkomm, 2001).

While AgrAbility has provided accommodations globally, some individuals with disabilities may seek resources closer to home. The Cooperative Extension Service was established in 1914 and is a federally funded educational system through land-grant universities (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, n.d.). It offers programs in agriculture, youth development, and family and consumer science that aid in bettering the community and meeting the needs of its residents. To ensure the resources provided through Cooperative Extension Services are accessible to all, Extension Educators must be aware of disabilities within the communities they serve. However, a literature review conducted in 2019 concluded that there is a need for more research regarding programs serving individuals with disabilities, specifically youth in 4-H (Taylor-Winney et al., 2019). “People with disabilities are an area of limited study in Extension research” (Stumpf-Downing et al., 2004, p. 2) and an array of studies have shown a varying level of disability inclusion resources for Extension professionals from different states (Anderson et al., 2021; Peterson et al., 2012; Taylor-Winney et al., 2019). In a study done by Peterson et al. (2012), Extension professionals indicated the barriers they faced to inclusive programming were a lack of knowledge related to disability and a lack of resources. An additional study in North Carolina based on creating inclusive 4-H environments stated that “inclusion should become an integral part of all future staff and volunteer training” (Stumpf-Downing et al., 2004, p. 4), and

A focus on disability awareness is critical as a first step. If people with disabilities are to be a part of community programs, such as 4-H, an ongoing focus must be on how to ensure individuals with disabilities are offered inclusive opportunities. The progression of information must move beyond awareness to marketing, recruitment, and retention (Stumpf-Downing et al., 2004, p. 5).

The need for disability awareness and inclusion training is vital for Extension professionals to address the needs of diverse individuals in their communities. Inclusion training should become an integral part of Extension to create diversity awareness amongst communities and provide perspectives that are knowledgeable and accepting of others.

Youth with Disabilities in Agriculture

The need for inclusive practices and universal design also filters down to youth in the agriculture industry and their involvement in agriculture-based youth programs, such as 4-H and FFA. Universal design in agricultural education programs is crucial to effectively teach students of all abilities as “universal design is an approach that levels the access to learning for our students and helps them remove boundaries and barriers that might be in place” (Headrick, 2021, p. 13). While the implementation of universal design provides physical inclusion, many individuals with disabilities may still feel excluded from programs because of social exclusion due to peers being intimidated or unknowledgeable about disability awareness and diversity.

Inclusion today “involves social interaction as well as physical integration” (Stumpf et al., 2002, pg. 2). Program diversity and inclusion is heavily influenced by the program leaders or advisors support, as “providing support expresses an acceptance of a person and their abilities and enables the individual to participate at his or her level of independence” (Stumpf-Downing et al., 2004, pg. 2). Ensuring youth program leaders are properly trained on supporting youth with disabilities will showcase acceptance and inclusion by altering the environment rather than forcing an individual with a disability to change (Stumpf et al., 2002). Integrating youth with disabilities in agricultural programs “improves social acceptance, self-esteem, and social skills for all youth involved” (Brady & McKee, 2005, pg. 1). “All youth can benefit from the opportunity to become more aware of differences and more tolerant and accepting of others”

(Brady & McKee, 2005, pg. 1). Disability awareness and understanding can be enhanced by instilling diversity inclusion in youth agriculture programs which “will enhance the program’s ability to facilitate the development of these skills and attitudes among participating youth” (Sumner et al., 2018, pg. 70).

Educator Preparation on Disability Inclusion

Youth development professionals must be knowledgeable about diversity inclusive programs and practices because “helping youth cultivate genuine curiosity and empathy towards people from different backgrounds may contribute to their learning orientation” (Sumner et al., 2018, pg. 75). Preparing future teachers, 4-H extension educators, and youth program leaders on how to interact with youth with disabilities effectively and efficiently is crucial to create an organization that is accessible and provides equal opportunities to all. Diversity and inclusion are relevant to all youth programs because interacting with diverse individuals is a key to success in the modern world (Sumner et al., 2018). However, while the inclusion of youth with disabilities in schools and federally funded programs is mandated by law, there is no comprehensive mandate or national policy related to preparing educators on how to instruct individuals with disabilities (Blanton et al., 2011). In a study done on Texas agricultural educators, it was found that respondents viewed multicultural education “as a tool to increase the awareness of students of color and students with disabilities in relation to diversity inclusion in secondary agricultural education programs. The findings affirm the critical need of developing culturally responsive teachers” (Lavergne, 2008, p. 133). Additional findings from a 2021 study on the perceived importance and ability of secondary agricultural education teachers regarding accommodating students with exceptionalities found “participants who completed a course centered on students

with special needs primarily only reported completion of one course, as a requirement of their degree” (Ramage, 2021, pg. 111).

The high percentage of concurrence that diversity/multicultural training is not happening at the undergraduate level could indicate that many preservice teachers are not being prepared adequately to serve a diverse mixture of students in secondary agricultural education programs. These results suggest that preservice teacher education programs need to incorporate a greater focus on the aspects of the courses that will provide preservice teachers with diversity/multicultural training at the undergraduate level (LaVergne, 2008, p. 140).

The lack of formal and informal educator preparation hinders the accessibility youth development programs can provide to individuals with disabilities. Youth with disabilities who seek to participate in these programs may face barriers that limit their ability to fully participate or feel excluded from peers without disabilities.

Disability in 4-H

The 4-H program is based around developing young people by giving them the ability to express who they are and how they make their lives and communities better through service learning and leadership (4-H, 2022). “Access, equity, diversity, and inclusion are essential elements of 4-H’s goals related to positive youth development and organizational sustainability” (National 4-H Organization, n.d., para. 2). To create an environment where youth feel confident in expressing their originality, youth development professionals must understand differences and exceptionalities to efficiently interact with youth of all levels of ability. “As a system, Cooperative Extension believes that diverse perspectives, values, and beliefs help generate better ideas to solve the complex problems of a changing and increasingly diverse-world” (National 4-

H Organization, n.d., para. 2). 4-H is implemented through the Cooperative Extension Service which is publicly funded through land-grant universities (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2017); therefore, it must abide by the requirements put in place by the Americans with Disabilities Act which prohibits individuals from being denied opportunities, segregated, or otherwise discriminated against based on their disabilities.

Although this act mandates disability inclusion, according to a review of articles regarding the inclusion of youths with disabilities in 4-H from the Journal of Extension, barriers to inclusive practices and universal design include a lack of knowledge and training on disability inclusion strategies for 4-H professionals (Taylor-Winney et al., 2019). If youth development professionals can create an organization that showcases the elements of access, equity, diversity, and inclusion; 4-H can attract youth that feel like outsiders and conspire to create an experience that is supportive and inclusive of diverse youth (Sumner et al. 2018). With the proper accommodations, youth with disabilities can fully participate in 4-H to gain motor skills, social adeptness, and self-confidence while providing differences within the program to prepare youth without disabilities for a world of diversity (Guay, 2020).

Disability in FFA

The National FFA Organization is one of the three components of agricultural education that targets students who are interested in agriculture and leadership (National FFA Organization, 2019). FFA aids in teaching the next generation about the agriculture industry and provides members unique opportunities to develop life skills, explore interests in a variety of agricultural career pathways, and network with other FFA members across the country (National FFA Organization, 2019). As students with disabilities become more common within Career and Technical Education classrooms, the preparation of agriculture educators and FFA advisors

needs to cater towards effectively interacting with these individuals to give them accessible educational experiences (Smith & Rayfield, 2019).

Mark Poeschl, the CEO of the National FFA Organization from 2016 to 2021, stated “The future of FFA is being built on inclusion and equity. We want to create a level playing field for young people who have an interest in agriculture as well as an environment where everyone feels comfortable contributing” (National FFA Organization, 2019, para. 8). While inclusion and equity continue to grow in the agriculture classroom and FFA organization, lack of teacher preparation for the instruction of students with disabilities continues to be a challenge.

Although inclusion of special needs students is mandated by law, teacher preparation for the instruction of these students in the United States is only influenced by federal policies and programs, i.e., no comprehensive mandate or nationwide policy related to teacher preparation exists. Individual states, however, have increased standards for teacher licensing which influence their teacher preparation standards, and systematically includes individualized learning for special needs students. As part of traditional teacher preparation in some states, programs for preservice agricultural educators include curriculum to better prepare these future teachers to serve students with special needs in School-Based Agricultural Education (Teixeira & Edwards, 2020, pg. 81).

Federal teacher preparation of disability awareness in the classroom is not required, therefore many teachers may struggle with feeling prepared to provide accessible accommodations for students with disabilities or knowing how to implement universal design within their classroom. A 2010 study regarding confidence levels and instructional strategies of high school agricultural education teachers when working with students with special needs, stated a “majority of respondents disagreed that their teacher education program prepared them

to work with students with special needs” (Stair et al, 2010, pg. 98). Furthermore, a 2021 study on agricultural education student teaching experiences reported participants acknowledging the need for “additional professional development that featured ways to foster an inclusive educational environment for all students as well as additional mentorship in accommodating the learning needs of students with exceptionalities” (Ramage et al., 2021, pg. 215). The lack of training to prepare future educators during their collegiate career needs to be reevaluated as “preservice courses centered on students with special needs are often not extensive enough in helping teachers feel prepared to teach students with special needs in their programs” (Ramage, 2021, pg. 111).

Animals and Disability

Interacting with animals benefits individuals with disabilities in numerous ways. The Americans with Disabilities Act states, “therapy animals provide people with therapeutic contact, usually in a clinical setting, to improve their physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning” (Brennan & Nguyen, 2022, para. 15). Animals can aid individuals with disabilities by boosting mental health, responding to medical episodes, improving physical health, and providing many other therapeutic benefits (Rock, 2019). Many individuals with disabilities who have companion animals chose to register them as service animals, only dogs are recognized by the ADA to be registered as service animals (Brennan & Nguyen, 2022). Service dogs are specially trained to assist one individual with a disability with either a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability (Brennan & Nguyen, 2022). Therapy dogs are trained to assist numerous people to provide therapeutic stimulation and comfort. Emotional support or comfort animals are pets that can play a vital role in an individual’s daily routine to provide comfort in times of stress or discomfort.

Many individuals with disabilities who do not own their own pet take part in animal-assisted therapy or animal-assisted activities. Animal-assisted therapy is a formal, structured session with an animal and its handler to work towards a specific treatment goal, while animal-assisted activities do not involve treatment goals but rather allow for people to recreationally interact with animals for comfort or joy (AbleLight, 2022). Another form of therapy is therapeutic horseback riding which contributes positively to cognitive, physical, emotional, and social well-being of individuals with disabilities (Rock, 2019). Basic interactions with animals on a daily basis can offer other positive stimulants to individuals with disabilities and can allow for the formation of companionship and social skills that can be applied in community settings (Rock, 2019).

Disability in the Livestock Show Industry

With disability becoming more common within our society, we can assume there will be an increase in the number of youth livestock exhibitors who have a disability and want to participate in exhibiting swine, sheep, goats, or cattle. Many livestock expositions that were reviewed for this study offer programs for youth with disabilities to participate in which are separate from the rest of the show or an individual class specifically for persons with disabilities to exhibit in is created. While this gesture may be with good intentions, we are still emphasizing a separation barrier between individuals with and without disabilities. Providing inclusive opportunities for youth with disabilities to participate in mainstream shows with nondisabled peers creates environments where all individuals feel welcome, can access meaningful experiences, and pursue equal opportunities while building relationships (Stumpf et al., 2002). There is a lack of literature regarding the best practices to include youth with disabilities in mainstream livestock exhibitions, but many studies have showcased the benefits of integrating

individuals with disabilities into programs with nondisabled peers (Sumner et al., 2018; Brady and McKee, 2005; Stumpf-Downing et al, 2004; Stumpf et al, 2002). Livestock expositions that do offer special accommodations to exhibitors with disabilities may be difficult to obtain or get forgotten about due to a shortage of staff or resources. Programs that are created by FFA members specifically for individuals with disabilities may only occur for a year or two before the member graduates and the program is disbanded due to a lack of interest or leadership.

Without the proper training or resources to implement inclusion into youth development programs, how can youth development professionals be expected to understand a youth's individual needs while considering other outside factors that may define those needs (Russell and Campen, 2011). Providing support of equal access to all levels of ability demonstrates acceptance of disability and enables equity of resources to provide the opportunity for the individual to participate at their own level of independence (Stumpf et al., 2002). By better preparing youth development professionals on inclusivity, we are encouraging diversity awareness amongst future generations to develop competent, caring, contributing members of society (Sumner et al., 2018).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to understand and describe the individual lived experiences of participants and perceived best practices of livestock expositions that are constructed with diversity inclusion towards youth with disabilities. LaVergne's Diversity Inclusion Program Model was the guiding conceptual framework for this study. "Diversity inclusion is an educational philosophy that welcomes all learners by actively engaging them in secondary agricultural education programs regardless of their race, ethnicity, or exceptionality" (LaVergne, 2008, p. 42). By observing shows that accommodate youth with disabilities to allow them to

exhibit, we can distinguish specific practices implemented in the exposition that aid in attaining diversity inclusion to apply in other livestock expositions to make them more accessible and inclusive. By addressing the three constructing themes of inclusion, multicultural education, and culturally responsive teaching; educators or program leaders can achieve diversity inclusion within their program (LaVergne, 2008). We hope to better understand how disability inclusion is perceived in the livestock industry, how diversity inclusion is attained, and the life skills it provides youth with and without disabilities.

This study will identify the perceived benefits individuals with and without disabilities gain by participating in these shows by describing and understanding their lived experiences. Data will provide insight into inclusion, multicultural education, and culturally responsive teaching acquired through participation in these programs. The individual experiences had by participants will also aid in creating a program that will enable character growth for both individuals with and without disabilities.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this collective case study is to understand and describe the individual lived experiences of participants in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show and perceived best practices of livestock expositions that are constructed with diversity inclusion towards youth with disabilities. At this stage in the research, the Champions Livestock Show will be generally defined as a disability inclusive market goat exhibition that occurred at the 2022 Kansas State Fair. The research questions used to guide this study were:

1. What are the experiences of participants with disabilities in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show?

2. What are the experiences of participants without disabilities in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show?
3. What are the Parents of participants with disabilities' perceptions towards disability inclusive livestock shows?
4. What are the perceived best practices for inclusive youth programming and events that involve youth with disabilities?

Limitations

1. The study was limited to participants, parents, and volunteers of the 2022 Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair.
2. There were limited responses from participants with disabilities.
3. The findings from this study cannot be generalized to the population outside of the Champions Livestock Show program.
4. Through qualitative inquiry, the researcher's opinions and biases influenced data interpretation, which resulted in the possibility of differing interpretations if data was analyzed by other researchers.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. Athletes would be able to verbally express their experiences, emotions, and thoughts on participating in the program.
2. Parents of the Athletes would be able to recognize if growth occurred in their child in the areas of life skills, social adeptness, and building relationships with non-disabled peers.
3. All participants responded truthfully and accurately through the interview responses.

Definition of Terms

4-H- Youth program implemented through Cooperative Extension Services based around developing young people by giving them the ability to express who they are and how they make their lives and communities better through service learning and leadership (4-H, 2022).

Ableism- Discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities (Kids Together Inc., 2022, para. 1).

Accessibility- A place, environment, or event that is set up from the start to be accessible to all individuals (Youth.gov, n.d., para. 5).

Accommodation- A change that is made so that a person with a disability is able to fully participate (Youth.gov, n.d., para. 4).

Adult Volunteer- An individual who volunteered at the 2022 Champions Livestock Show.

Animal-Assisted Therapy- A formal, structured session with an animal and its handler to work towards a specific treatment goal, while animal-assisted activities do not involve treatment goals but rather allow for people to recreationally interact with animals for comfort or joy (AbleLight, 2022).

Athlete- A participant in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show who served as a mentee in the program and identified as being disabled. Individuals who were Special Olympic Athletes through Kansas Special Olympics.

Champions Livestock Show- A disability inclusive goat show hosted by Kansas Special Olympics at the 2022 Kansas State Fair.

Coach- A participant in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show who served as a mentor in the program and identified as being nondisabled. Individuals who were 4-H or FFA market goat exhibitors at the Kansas State Fair.

Cooperative Extension Service- An educational system that is federally funded through land-grant universities that offers programs in agriculture, youth development, and family consumer science that aid in bettering the community and meeting the needs of its residents (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, n.d.).

Disability- A person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity (ADA National Network, n.d., para. 2).

Disability Inclusion- To include people with disabilities in our everyday life and society. It is to provide accessibility to people with disabilities in areas of employment, communications, business, housing, products, and services (Man, 2020, para. 1).

Diversity- Seeing and accepting, without bias, all human characteristics, experiences, and identities that make us unique as individuals and members of cultures and communities (Walker, 2021, para. 4).

Emotional Support or Comfort Animals- Pets that can play a vital role in an individual's daily routine to provide comfort in times of stress or discomfort (Brennan & Nguyen, 2022).

Equity Inclusion- Discovering, creating, and providing what is required, requested, and measured by each human to feel equal (Walker, 2021, para. 6).

Exceptionality- A difference amongst individuals rather than an inability and includes both those who are gifted and disabled (IRIS Center, n.d.).

FFA- Agriculture Education program that aids in teaching the next generation about the agriculture industry and provides members unique opportunities to develop life skills, explore interests in a variety of agricultural career pathways, and network with other FFA members across the country (National FFA Organization, 2019).

Mental Impairment- Any mental or cognitive disorder that challenges the individual intellectually (Illinois Legal Aid Online, 2020).

Parent- Individual who served as an Athlete’s parent/guardian at the 2022 Champions Livestock Show.

Physical Impairment- Any medical disorder, condition, or loss that affects the body to the extent that major bodily functions are challenged (Illinois Legal Aid Online, 2020).

Reasonable Accommodation- Something done to accommodate a disabled person that does not jeopardize safety or pose an undue hardship for the party doing it (Merriam-Webster, n.d., para. 1).

Service Dogs- Dogs that are specially trained to assist one individual with a disability with physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability (Brennan & Nguyen, 2022).

Special Health Care Needs- those who have or are at increased risk for chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children (Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health, 2020).

Therapy Animals- Trained animals that provide people with therapeutic contact, usually in a clinical setting, to improve their physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning” (Brennan & Nguyen, 2022, para. 15).

Therapy Dogs- Dogs trained to assist numerous people to provide therapeutic stimulation and comfort (Brennan & Nguyen, 2022).

Universal Design- The design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. n.d., para. 1).

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in 1990 and is one of America's most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights, n.d.a). The ADA

prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life—to enjoy opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in State and local government programs and services (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights, n.d.a, Introduction to the ADA section).

Individuals who are protected by the ADA are those with physical or mental disabilities that substantially limit one or more major life activities or a person who has a history of such impairment (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights, n.d.a). The ADA ensures equal employment, education, and general access to society for individuals with disabilities to fully participate and lead a satisfactory lifestyle where they feel included and accepted. Much of the ADA's work has brought awareness to the needs of excluded individuals to create trainings, resources, and programs that promote the inclusion of diversity and acceptance of differences. The inclusion of disability involves an understanding of diversity and how to accommodate those individuals to ensure satisfactory engagement and meaningful experiences.

The ADA is divided into five titles which are employment, public services, public accommodations, telecommunications, and miscellaneous (Job Accommodation Network, 2012). Title I, employment, requires that employers provide reasonable accommodations for applicants

and employees with disabilities (Job Accommodation Network, 2012). Reasonable accommodations

should make it easier for the employee to successfully perform the duties of the position.

Examples of reasonable accommodations include providing interpreters, readers, or other personal assistance; modifying job duties; restructuring work sites; providing flexible work schedules or work sites and providing accessible technology or other workplace adaptive equipment (United States Office of Personnel Management, n.d., para. 2).

Title I also prohibits discrimination based on disability and regulates medical examinations and inquiries (Job Accommodation Network, 2012).

Title II, public services, ensures that an individual with a disability is not denied services available to the public or participation in programs or activities that are available to nondisabled people (Job Accommodation Network, 2012). Title II regulates that all public transportation systems must be accessible to individuals with disabilities (Job Accommodation Network, 2012).

Title III, public accommodations, encompasses that newly constructed or modified facilities, such as restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, and retail stores; must be accessible to individuals with disabilities (Job Accommodation Network, 2012). Pre-existing facilities must remove barriers that may hinder access to services if readily achievable (Job Accommodation Network, 2012). Title IV, telecommunications, requires telecommunication companies “offering telephone services to the general public must have telephone relay service to individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf or similar devices” (Job Accommodation Network, 2012, para. 5). Title V, miscellaneous, “includes a provision prohibiting either (a) coercing or threatening or (b) retaliating against individuals with disabilities or those attempting to aid

people with disabilities in asserting their rights under the ADA” (Job Accommodation Network, 2012, para. 6).

The ADA protects the rights of individuals with disabilities, but we are still seeing discrimination against disabilities in our society today.

Despite the enactment of the ADA, people with disabilities continue to feel the bite of discrimination as a result of disincentives to enter gainful employment, weak economic incentives to employ them and little support and encouragement to pursue postsecondary education (Keita, 2007, para. 3).

Societal barriers continue to arise against individuals with disabilities to limit their opportunity to participate in society and discrimination persists in environments that should be advocating for diversity inclusion. In a 2018 study, it was found that on average youth with disabilities have lower life satisfaction than their non-disabled peers and experience discrimination which negatively affects life satisfaction (Daley et al., 2018). It was shown that belonging is protective of the well-being of youth and organizations should cultivate a sense of belonging to offset discrimination against youth with disabilities (Daley et al., 2018). Disability inclusion should be a priority in our youth to create a society accepting of differences and aware of exceptionalities that should be viewed in a positive light.

Formal Education and Disability

A crucial area to promote diversity inclusion and the acceptance of others is the education industry. The inclusion of diverse individuals into mainstream classrooms promotes a more inclusive society and ensures students with disabilities can benefit from the best learning situations possible (Lynch, 2015). This inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the classroom is referred to as integrated education which is “the process of bringing children with disabilities

into the mainstream school and placing most of the focus on the individual rather than on the school system” (Khasnabis et al., 2010, pg. 6). Integrated education also plays into inclusive education which is “a process of addressing and responding to the diversity needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education” (UNESCO, 2005, pg. 13). Legislation to integrate these students fully into mainstream classes has progressed throughout history to embrace diversity in the classroom, promote inclusive education, and provide students the opportunity to learn about differences from each other.

Current legislation is in place to ensure equal access and equal opportunity to public schools in Section 504 and the ADA. Section 504 refers to a portion of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which originally stated the “prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by Federal agencies, in programs receiving Federal financial assistance, in Federal employment, and in the employment practices of Federal contractors” (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2020, Rehabilitation Act section). Section 504 currently states, “no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that either receives Federal financial assistance or is conducted by any Executive agency” (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2020, Section 504 section). The requirements instated by Section 504 include reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities, program accessibility, effective communication with people who have hearing or vision disabilities, and accessible new construction and alterations (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2020).

Title II and III of the ADA is comparable to Section 504 as they prohibit discriminating against disability in state and local government and public places and business (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2010). While Title II is similar to Section 504 in ensuring inclusion in government funded programs, Title III encompasses public accommodations and commercial facilities by “prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability in the activities of places of public accommodations, which are businesses that are generally open to the public” (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, n.d.b, Public Accommodations and Commercial Facilities section). Title III is comprised of twelve categories listed under the ADA as public facilities such as schools, recreation facilities, daycare facilities, and restaurants (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, n.d.b). In 2010, the Department of Justice published revisions for Title II and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 to establish enforceable accessibility standards that were sanctioned as the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. “The 2010 Standards set minimum requirements-both scoping and technical-for newly designed and constructed or altered State and local government facilities, public accommodations, and commercial facilities to be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities” (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2010, ADA Standards for Accessible Design section). Adoption of these standards also revised Title II, which enforced making structural changes to existing facilities to meet their program accessibility requirements (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2010).

The ADA and Section 504 apply to all programs and activities offered by public school systems which include extracurricular activities, recreational activities, social and cultural activities, adult education, and summer school or hobby classes (National Association of the

Deaf, n.d.). Section 504 requires all programs that receive federal funding assistance to provide accommodations to individuals with disabilities to allow for full engagement and participation. Section 504 and the ADA also play into the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to provide additional protection in schools as they emphasize the “context of architectural accessibility, extracurricular activities, summer programs, and services for parents, members of the public, and other individuals with disabilities” (National Association of the Deaf, n.d., para. 4).

IDEA was signed into law in 1975, “requires public schools to make available to all eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs” (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2020, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act section). IDEA also requires schools to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each child who has an exceptionality to reflect their individualized needs and best supports them in an educational setting (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2020). IEPs are created and reviewed annually by a team of knowledgeable persons and can be beneficial outside of formal education environments to inform other youth development professionals of the child’s needs (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2020). While IDEA ensures education for individuals with disabilities, it also “requires that schools assist students with disabilities to develop independent living skills and abilities essential to succeed in most of their life’s endeavors” (Cai, 2019, para. 2).

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) also upholds the regulation of quality education for disadvantaged students. ESSA replaced the No Child Left Behind Act in 2015 and granted states a bigger role in holding public schools accountable for ensuring a quality education for all

students is being provided (Understood, 2021). ESSA allows the state to provide a framework for grades K-12 on student achievement for students that historically have been at a disadvantage (Lee, 2021). ESSA permits parents and caregivers to weigh in on this academic framework to advocate for the best plan of educational action for their child and suggest alterations that may directly benefit students who learn and think differently (Lee, 2021). There is controversy surrounding ESSA, as states are allowed to set their own academic standards which may be challenging, but each student, including those with learning differences, must meet these set standards (Lee, 2021). ESSA requires states to conduct annual testing on students, but only 1% of students can be given alternative tests that differ from the general testing material and usually these alternative assessments are only given to students with cognitive disabilities (Lee, 2021). While ESSA has good intentions, it does not focus on generating material that will help students with disabilities succeed in their daily lives and creates academic barriers if those students cannot meet the set standards.

Title II and III of the ADA and Section 504 are the most profound at protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities to have equal access to public facilities and the right to have access to an equal education (United States Department of Education, 2022). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) also ensures that all eligible youth with disabilities receive a free public education in the least restrictive environment (United States Department of Education, 2022), and provides IEPs which can aid in implementing inclusive practices in both formal and informal educational settings. The integration of students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms is beneficial to the promotion of an inclusive society, but students with disabilities may benefit more from hands on classroom experiences than their nondisabled peers.

The concept of the least restrictive environment should be applied to ensure the student is given the most equitable opportunity (Lynch, 2016).

Career and Technical Education and Disability

Career and technical education are “courses and programs designed to prepare students for careers in current or emerging professions” (United States Department of Education, 2019, para. 1) and allow for personalized education based on career interests and specific learning needs (United States Department of Education, 2019). They involve opportunities to explore careers of interest while teaching applicable life skills that can be used in an array of industries. High school CTE courses seek to connect students with post-secondary programs that relate to their career interests and lead to successful graduation and employment opportunities (United States Department of Education, 2019).

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 is the main federal law supporting the development of career and technical skills among students in secondary and postsecondary education. Perkins IV aims to improve academic outcomes and preparedness for higher education of the labor markets among students enrolled in career and technical education programs, previously known as vocational education programs (Granovskiy, 2016, pg. 2).

The act was recently reauthorized in 2018 as the Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act for the 21st Century with the purpose of better developing the academic knowledge and technical and employability skills of the students enrolled in CTE courses (National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, 2021). This reauthorization also focused attention on special populations, including individuals with disabilities (National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, 2021). This is due to the 73% increase in the number of IDEA students who enrolled in CTE courses from

2008 to 2018 (Cai, 2019). CTE courses benefit all students regarding gaining professional development skills, but IDEA students are developing independent living skills that include personal skills, workplace skills, and people skills (Cai, 2019). Federal data has shown that individuals with disabilities who participate in CTE courses are more likely to graduate and are equipped with increased academic proficiency upon graduation (Cai, 2019). By integrating more students with disabilities into CTE programs, educators can teach life skills that are personalized to students' interests and specific learning needs to create a foundation for success and inclusive education in CTE programs.

Agricultural education programs are part of CTE courses available to students. They include animal science, plant science, natural resource sciences, agricultural business and marketing, agribusiness management, leadership development, and an array of other classes related to the agriculture industry (Minnesota Department of Education, 2004). Students who participate in agricultural education are provided opportunities for leadership development, personal growth, and career success through three components which are classroom/laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experience programs, and student leadership organizations (The National Council for Agricultural Education, 2022). Agricultural education offers students hands-on experiences that relate to careers in the agriculture industry to provide students with the opportunity to develop individualized interests and focus on specific learning needs.

“Agricultural education programs are valuable for students with intellectual disabilities because they encourage career success, vocational skills, and social interaction” (Colclasure et al., 2016, pg. 1). As a CTE, agricultural education provides life skills that can be used by students with disabilities towards independent living and professional development upon graduation. The integration of individuals with disabilities in the agricultural education

classroom can also create a sense of empowerment for students with disabilities to feel welcomed and included amongst their peers. “Agricultural education can play a vital role in strengthening the social and career readiness needs of students with intellectual disabilities” (Colclasure et al., 2016, pg. 2). Students with disabilities who are involved in agricultural education can also pursue opportunities outside of the classroom through student leadership organizations focused on agriculture and have the chance to develop in diverse environments.

The National FFA Organization is the student leadership organization component in agricultural education (National FFA Organization, 2019). FFA provides students with the opportunity to pursue experiences outside of the classroom and achieve premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education (National FFA Organization, 2019). FFA “helps its members to develop their own unique talents and explore their interest in a broad range of agricultural career pathways” (National FFA Organization, 2019, What Do The letters FFA Stand For section). Encouraging youth with disabilities to participate in FFA can cultivate independence and confidence in members with disabilities to enable them to pursue additional opportunities that will aid them in growing as a leader (Ploss et al., 1996). FFA members without disabilities will gain disability awareness by interacting regularly with individuals with disabilities and obtain a sense of acceptance and inclusion towards differences among their peers (Ploss et al., 1996). By breaking down barriers that limit FFA members with disabilities, we can boost self-esteem and instill self-reliance to create opportunities outside of the classroom that may have been inaccessible beforehand (Ploss et al., 1996).

Importance of Extra-Curricular Activities and After-School Programs

“After-school activities offer opportunities for kids to learn new skills, explore different areas of talent, deepen existing expertise, get support for areas they aren’t as strong in, make

friends, and form relationships with supportive adults” (Deutsch, 2016, para. 1). After-school activities include extra-curricular activities, which are school-based clubs or teams; after-school programs, which are school or community-based activities; private lessons, faith-based groups, and specialized tutoring or mentoring programs (Deutsch, 2016). “Research suggests that participation in structured after-school programs and activities can have benefits for kids, including social skills, emotional development, and academics” (Deutsch, 2016, para. 3). A study done by Shaffer regarding the importance and impact of co-curricular activities (CCAs) and extracurricular activities (ECAs) for high school students showed that

CCAs and ECAs have a positive impact on student’s individual attendance, academic performance, and future mindset. In addition, there is a significant positive statistical difference that proves schools with more ECAs and CCAs have better outcomes in district graduation rates, building attendance rates and State Academic Scores in most test areas (Shaffer, 2020, pg. 87).

While after-school activities benefit youth in their academics, they also gain skills that will benefit them outside of the classroom. Shaffer stated,

The impact of extra-curricular activities and co-curricular activities outside the realm of education is invaluable. Students will gain valuable skills that can make an impact both culturally and economically. Research has shown that students who participate in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities learn valuable lessons and skills for practical situation both in school and in their community (Shaffer, 2020, pg. 36-37).

After-school activities build self-discipline, self-confidence, and develop skills to handle competitive situations while learning the value of teamwork, fair play, and hard work (Schaffer, 2020). They also learn employability skills such as time management skills, internal skills for

handling pressure, risk-taking skills, and even individual responsibility (Shaffer, 2020).

Educational activities outside of the classroom can benefit youth greatly and provide applicable life skills that participants can utilize throughout their professional careers.

Inclusion of individuals with disabilities in these federally funded activities is mandated by Section 504 and is covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act which states, in providing or arranging for the provision of nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities, including meals, recess periods, and the services and activities set forth in 300.107, each public agency must ensure that each child with a disability participates with nondisabled children in those extracurricular services and activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the need of that child. The public agency must ensure that each child with a disability has the supplementary aids and services determined by the child's IEP Team to be appropriate and necessary for the child to participate in nonacademic settings (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2017, section 300.117).

An extra-curricular activity many individuals with disabilities participate in is Special Olympics which provides individuals with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to discover new abilities, skills, and achieve success through participating in sports (Special Olympics, n.d). Special Olympics' mission is,

to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympic athletes and the community (Special Olympics, n.d., para. 1).

Special Olympics provides its athletic events through Unified Sports which creates an inclusive culture by allowing individuals with and without disabilities to participate on the same level (Special Olympics, n.d.). Special Olympics advocates for the inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities and drives the social change that enables full social participation for people with intellectual disabilities (Special Olympics, n.d.).

CCAs and ECAs can provide great benefits towards the expansion of individuals with disabilities' personal development which was found in a study by Covay and Carbonaro that stated, "extracurricular activities in childhood provide academic benefits for students by providing them with a site to practice and develop their noncognitive skills" (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010, pg. 41). For individuals with IEPs, their IEP team will determine the appropriate extracurricular and nonacademic activities for the individual (Pacer Center, n.d.). Integration of individuals with disabilities can also benefit their nondisabled peers by creating a sense of acceptance and community based on a shared activity.

High quality programs provide a safe space with supportive relationships, appropriate structure, and positive expectations for behavior. But beyond that they also provide opportunities for belonging and skill building and give youth a place to express themselves, take on responsibilities, and tackle challenging tasks (Deutsch, 2016, para. 4).

After-school programs are essential for the personal growth of youth with and without disabilities, but "it is important to recognize that participation does not mean equal benefits or equal quality in programming" (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010, Conclusion section).

Non-Formal Education and Disability

“Education is much broader than schooling. Schooling is important but needs to be seen in the context of a lifelong learning process” (Khasnabis et al., 2010, pg. 4). Non-formal education is education that occurs outside of the formal school system and is used interchangeably with community education, adult education, lifelong education, and second-chance education (Khasnabis et al., 2010). Non-formal education encompasses a wide range of educational activities that occur in the community, home-based learning, government schemes, and accredited courses run by well-established institutions (Khasnabis et al., 2010). Just as extra-curricular activities and after-school programs can offer youth with disabilities the chance to obtain life skills, “the non-formal learning environment can provide students with intellectual disabilities with skills in social interaction and appropriate behavior, in addition to learning experiences” (Colclasure et al., 2016, pg. 2) directly associated with the non-formal educational experience. Non-formal education grants individuals the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom and use different tactics to teach individuals who think and learn differently.

For some learners, non-formal education can be more flexible and effective than the formal education system, which may be too rigid and seen as failing to provide quality education for all. But non-formal education should be complementary, not see as a substitute for an inclusive formal system (Khasnabis et al., 2010, pg. 9).

Extension education is a type of non-formal education that emphasizes bringing knowledge gained from research and education directly to communities to create positive change (United States Department of Agriculture, n.d.b). Extension education was established by the Smith Lever Act in 1914 in partnership with land-grant universities to provide agricultural education to people in rural communities (United States Department of Agriculture, n.d.a).

Today, extension services continue to teach communities about agriculture but also aid in educating on the topics of nutrition and home economics and providing youth development programs that engage the younger generation to become the leaders of tomorrow (United States Department of Agriculture, n.d.a).

4-H is a non-formal youth development program provided through Cooperative Extension Services that provides youth the opportunity to learn life-long skills, participate in positive learning experiences, and create leaders that see the world beyond themselves (4-H, 2022). 4-H allows for youth to complete hands-on projects in the areas of health, science, agriculture, and civic engineering while interacting with supportive adults and peers that range from elementary school to high school (4-H, 2022). “4-H empowers young people with the skills to lead for a lifetime. It’s a research-based experience that includes a mentor, a hands-on project, and a meaningful leadership opportunity” (4-H, 2022, 4-H Way section). 4-H offers valuable life skills that will aid youth in their future endeavors, but ensuring inclusive participation is critical to create an accepting educational environment that is accessible to all learners and displays diversity inclusion for other youth development organizations to follow suit.

Diversity inclusion in 4-H is crucial for individuals to develop academically and socially outside of the classroom. “Helping youth cultivate genuine curiosity and empathy towards people from different backgrounds may contribute to their learning orientation, and 4-H is poised to be particularly supportive in this regard because of its many opportunities for cooperative learning and collaboration” (Sumner et al., 2018, pg. 75). By enhancing diversity inclusion in 4-H to create a more diverse community, 4-H can facilitate the development of diversity awareness in its members and create positive attitudes towards differences (Sumner et al., 2018). “Diversity and inclusion are critical components of achieving positive youth development outcomes,

supporting workforce development in the 21st century, and necessary for the overall sustainability for youth-serving organizations” (Sumner et al., 2018, pg. 78). A literature review of the inclusion of youths with disabilities in 4-H “reported believing that inclusion of youths with disabilities or special needs in programs is beneficial to youths without disabilities, can improve relationships among diverse youths, and can benefit the entire community and statewide programs” (Taylor-Winney, 2019, pg. 8).

With a continued focus on diversity and inclusion, 4-H will be better-positioned to help more youth form deep and meaningful connections with youth and adults from diverse backgrounds, playing an essential role in providing the diverse, inclusive and supportive environments young people need to develop into competent, caring, contributing members of society (Sumner et al., 2018, pg. 78).

While the 4-H program creates individuals who are aware of differences in their peers and understand the importance of diversity inclusion, there are still barriers that limit the accessibility of this mainstream program. A study conducted on diversity and inclusion in youth development with a focus on marginalized young people; marginalized young people including those of different social class, ability, sexuality, citizenship status, race, ethnicity, or culture than the mainstream; stated “many youth development organizations and programs that were founded over a century ago primarily serve youth in the mainstream: youth from the middle classes, from traditional families, and from dominant culture groups” (Russell & Campen, 2011, pg. 95).

Advocacy for diversity inclusion in all youth development programs is a crucial step to creating accessible programs that welcome all learners and teach youth how to be accepting of differences and collaborate successfully. “Diversity and inclusion are relevant to all youth programs, even those serving a population that is racially and/or ethnically homogenous, because interacting

with people from different backgrounds is a key to success in the modern world” (Sumner et al., 2018, pg. 76). This study will emphasize the benefits of including youth with disabilities in non-formal mainstream youth development programs, such as 4-H, and the advantages gained by both disabled and nondisabled participants.

Benefits of Livestock Expositions

A predominant project in the 4-H and FFA organizations is the exhibition of livestock. A livestock show is a “competitive educational activity satisfying the mission of agricultural sciences and cooperative extension by teaching youth the responsibility of caring, feeding, managing and showing through exhibiting livestock projects” (Davis et al., 2005, pg. 10). Livestock shows have been around since the early 1900s and are held across “the United States for adults and youth to compare the quality of their animals” (Martin & Rusk, 2021, pg. 64). Participants can raise and exhibit market or breeding animals where they learn a variety of life skills. Youth who raise market animals will learn how to raise wholesome food from well-nourished animals and attain the skills of proper feeding and efficient livestock development (Martin & Rusk, 2021). Youth who raise breeding animals learn tremendous responsibility as they learn how to properly raise their animal to maturity and select the best method for breeding to continue its prosperity in the future (Martin & Rusk, 2021). “Youth who raise breeding or market animals are critically important to the future of the livestock industry. The skills they learn at a young age will pay dividends for many years to come” (Martin & Rusk, 2021, pg. 64).

Exhibiting and caring for livestock can provide youth with a variety of life skills. A study conducted by Davis et al. (2000) found that students who raise livestock show projects gain the benefits of social relations, character, family, exposure to competition, exposure to culture, and finance for education. In a 2011 study conducted by Walker et al., it was shown that students

who participate in livestock shows have a high level of life skills and leadership development. Another study conducted by Huston (2020) found livestock SAE projects provide “students with the opportunity to practice the skills they learn in the classroom” (pg. 59) and develop students who are “highly efficacious in their abilities” (pg. 59). A recent study in 2022 stated, “There is a positive relationship between years of livestock project involvement and life skills development, as well as leadership development” (Mott et al., 2022, pg. 84). This study also showcased the opportunity to strengthen family ties and build relationships with mentors outside the family to form a connection with the community (Mott et al., 2022). Youth involved in caring for livestock may also view this responsibility as an aspect of their identity and culture (Mott et al., 2022). Raising livestock can give youth the skills to successfully enter the animal science career field through instructional value and self-efficacy (Huston, 2020). “Regardless of whether the youth is a member of 4-H, FFA or simply raising animals on their family’s farm or ranch, the valuable life skills developed from raising animal projects are numerous” (Martin & Rusk, 2021, pg. 64).

Benefits of Livestock Exhibitions for Youth with Disabilities

“In recent years, we have seen an increase in the number of children with special needs participating in youth livestock shows” (Martin & Rusk, 2021, pg. 64). Many individuals with disabilities become involved in exhibiting livestock as livestock shows provide youth with different layers of development and skills that can be learned in the show ring (Durian & Fowler, 2020). While exhibiting livestock is initially a competition,

Intentionally focusing on what a young person is capable of doing on their own will help ensure that the focus of livestock projects is truly on developing the competence and confidence that is critical for youth development, not just winning shows (Mott et al., 2022, pg. 95).

Vocational education activities, such as the care for animals, can offer tremendous help in developing applicable skills that can be utilized for future employment or community involvement (Randolph, 1998). Youth with disabilities may become involved with the vocational activity of livestock shows through agricultural education as “most individual education plans submitted for special education requirements suggest vocational training for special needs students” (Davis et al., 2005, pg. 10).

A case study regarding the perceived benefits a child with autism gained by participating in competitive livestock exhibitions concluded that the life skills of social relations, family involvement, and responsibility/knowledge and care of animals were obtained through participation (Davis et al., 2005). The study discusses the use of livestock shows for youth with disabilities who are lacking in social development to develop life skills (Davis et al., 2005). It also recognizes utilization of livestock shows to increase family involvement as it can be an activity that is accessible to everyone (Davis et al., 2005). Caring for animals can provide the life skills of responsibility and consciousness of needs in youth with disabilities while providing them with a meaningful experience (Davis et al., 2005). Exhibiting livestock can also aid youth with disabilities who struggle to connect with other humans, as there is an emotional component to raising livestock that provides the youth the opportunity to form relationships with the animal (Mott et al., 2022).

Using animals as a therapeutic tactic for individuals with cognitive disabilities has shown to provide emotional support and stress relief, create self-awareness, cultivate social skills, and provide opportunity for activity and training (Koukourikos et al., 2019). “The positive benefits of animal involvement in the treatment process lead to the reduction of the onset of negative symptoms caused by mental disorders and the emergence of positive behaviors, mainly

concerning the responsibilities and activities of everyday life” (Koukourikos et al., 2019, pg. 6). Exhibiting and caring for animals can provide individuals with disabilities the opportunity to acquire life skills in the show ring while using the animal as a therapeutic method to increase positive behavior and reduce stress.

Diversity Inclusion

According to LaVergne (2008), “diversity inclusion is an educational philosophy that welcomes all learners by actively engaging them in secondary agricultural education programs regardless of their race, ethnicity, or exceptionality.” Diversity inclusion is important in society today as we move away from the medical model of disability, which is seeing disability as a defect that must be cured, to the social model, which views disability as a restriction imposed by society (University of California, n.d.).

The social model of disability moves away from an individual-impairment-based view of disability and focuses on removing barriers in society to ensure people with disabilities are given the same opportunity to exercise their right on an equal basis with all others. Similarly, inclusive education focuses on changing the system to fit the student rather than changing the student to fit the system (Khasnabis et al., 2010, pg. 5).

Acknowledging differences fosters an atmosphere of being able to effectively teach individuals and meet their specific learning needs (LaVergne, 2008). “Diversity inclusion mirrors a practical, human development approach to not only the educational wellbeing but also social wellbeing that calls for more than removing the barriers or fears of a cultural responsive classroom” (pg. 6). Creating accessible learning spaces and reevaluating the way we educate others who learn and think differently is the first step, but “the right to education needs to be understood in the context of rights-based approach to development” (Khasnabis et al., 2010, pg. 4).

Understanding the rights of individuals with disabilities and how to fully include them in programs is the responsibility of youth development professionals. “For youth development professionals, the tension lies in the need to understand a youth’s individual needs while considering the broad network of family, social, and community relations and experiences that may define the needs of that young person” (Russell & Campen, 2011, pg. 102). To meet this need, educators need to understand the dimensions of multicultural education that encompasses content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure (LaVergne, 2008). These components create educational environments where educators are aware of the diversity amongst their students and make them feel included through learning materials, equity, and empowerment of diversity.

Highlighting the components of multicultural education is culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is an educational process by which educators use their cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to create more applicable and valuable learning encounters (Gay, 2000). Forming relationships with students provides a pathway for understanding and connecting with them on a personal level to create a more meaningful learning environment. Transforming the learning environment from the societal norm to diverse, inclusive education with new tactics and approaches, is the turning point for teaching students who learn and think differently.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that will guide this study encompasses the three components of inclusion, multicultural education, and culturally responsive teaching to form LaVergne’s Diversity Inclusion Program Model (LaVergne, 2008). The Diversity Inclusion Program Model

highlights the critical infusion in which a diversity inclusive program should exist through an illustrated guide that emphasizes inclusion, multicultural education, and culturally responsive teaching (LaVergne, 2008). Youth educators and programs that are established with diversity inclusion in mind showcase

positive perceptions about the benefits of diversity inclusion; understand that, because of past perceptions, whether it be from students, teachers, or external factors there may lie pre-existing barriers as to why these particular students are underrepresented in agricultural education, and have an awareness of possible solutions to increase underrepresented group participation in agricultural education (LaVergne, 2008, pg. 43).

Youth development professionals who recognize and are receptive to diversity inclusion also build personal relationships with youth to gain an understanding that relates to the personal needs of the individual (LaVergne, 2008). The overarching goal of the Diversity Inclusion Program Model is to formulate an educational environment that is structured to provide social equity and equitable education to all students regardless of race, ethnicity, language, social class, physical, or mental abilities (LaVergne, 2008). While this framework is formed around classroom culture, it is applicable to non-formal educational programs as well.

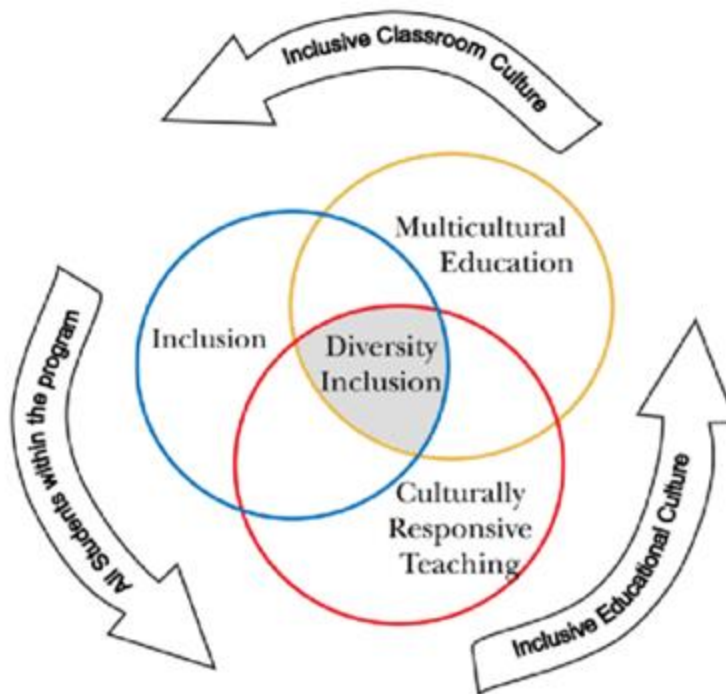


Figure 1. The Diversity Inclusion Program Model (LaVergne, 2008)

LaVergne based this model upon the philosophical foundations of Salend's (2008) principles of inclusion, Bank's (2008) dimensions of multicultural education, and Gay's (2000) culturally responsive teaching theory (LaVergne, 2013). This conceptual framework has been utilized in studies regarding perceptions of agricultural education teachers on diversity inclusion (LaVergne, 2008), 4-H youth professionals on diversity inclusion within the 4-H program (LaVergne, 2013), and identifying strategies for diversity inclusion in agriculture education programs (LaVergne et al., 2012). The Diversity Inclusion Program Model was chosen for this study due to its display of intertwining philosophical foundations to create diversity inclusion in educational programs and its relevance to the demographic shift among youth in society.

Statement of Problem

“In 2019-2020, nearly 1 in 5 children (19.4%) in the United States had a special health care need, representing 14.1 million children” (Health Resources & Services Administration, 2022, Prevalence of Special Health Care Needs section). “In 2020-2021, the number of students ages 3-21 who received special education services under IDEA was 7.2 million or 15% of all public-school students” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022, para. 1). “Ninety-five percent of school-age students served under IDEA in fall 2020 were enrolled in regular schools” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022, para. 7) and sixty-six percent of those students spent eighty percent or more of their day in general classes (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Individuals with disabilities are continuously being integrated into mainstream classrooms and programs so the need for diversity inclusion and disability awareness is prominent in educational youth development programs. As schools progress to create more inclusive classroom environments, extracurricular activities and after-school programs should follow suit to allow for accessible opportunities to individuals of all abilities. As stated above, “research suggests that participation in structured after-school programs and activities can have benefits for kids, including social skills, emotional development, and academics” (Deutsch, 2016, para. 3). Extracurriculars are critical for emotional and social development of youth with disabilities, but not all programs recognize the barriers these individuals may face to access these programs. Ensuring diversity inclusion in non-formal education programs, such as 4-H, is also critical as “diversity and inclusion are critical components of achieving positive youth development outcomes, supporting workforce development in the 21st century, and necessary for the overall sustainability for youth-serving organizations” (Sumner et al., 2018, pg. 78). The need to create youth development professionals who are knowledgeable in diversity inclusion,

multicultural education, and culturally responsive teaching is invaluable to produce diversity inclusive programs that benefit youth of all levels of ability.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Institutional Review Board

I complied with the federal guidelines to conduct ethical research with human research subjects by gaining approval to conduct this study through the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board (KSU IRB). The IRB application included the following components: study information, design and procedures, research subjects, risk-protection-benefits, confidentiality, informed consent, informed consent checklist, project information, subject information, FDA activities and conflict of interest, project collaborators, and online CITI training. Separate IRBs were submitted for the participants without disabilities and participants with disabilities and their parents in this study. Following submission, approval was granted (IRB-11169) on April 26, 2022, to study the individuals without disabilities and approval was granted (IRB-11230) on June 6, 2022, to study the individuals with disabilities and their parents.

Role of the Researcher

This research study was conducted with a disability interpretive lens, as I utilized a qualitative methodology to meet the investigation's guiding questions and focus on disability not as a defect, but as a dimension of human differences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Table 2.2 in Creswell and Poth (2018), states the possible goal of the researcher to utilize disability theories is "to address the meaning of inclusion" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg. 34). The study was performed as a collective case study through observation analysis and in-depth interviews with the individuals who participated in the program. As the researcher, I performed as the main data collection instrument for this study and maintained an interpretative role as I sought to collect and understand the study's participant experiences, perceptions, and emotions regarding disability awareness and inclusion.

It is important to acknowledge my researcher subjectivity by addressing my prior experience and biases that potentially influenced my interpretation of the findings and the outcomes of the study produced. I participated in ten years of 4-H where I exhibited livestock on a national level. During my time as a livestock exhibitor, I mentored an individual with Down Syndrome to create a positive relationship and provide meaningful experiences that would teach life skills. I have since volunteered at other livestock events for individuals with disabilities and view these as positive experiences for participants with disabilities to gain life skills, social adeptness, and increase disability inclusion in the livestock industry. My prior experience and enthusiasm regarding the event being studied may have influenced participants' responses during the interview portion of the study. Despite having preconceptions that this study would produce positive, meaningful responses from its participants, efforts were made to ensure qualitative quality through data interpretation.

Research Design

The investigation was conducted as a collective case study, where the researcher selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). "Often the inquirer selects multiple cases to show different perspectives on the issue" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg. 99). Cases are defined by Bhattacharya as being "a bounded system and it is up to the researcher to create the boundary of what a case ought to be with justification from existing literature and theoretical perspectives" (Bhattacharya, 2017, pg. 110). A case may encompass researching a person, program, policy, or any other phenomenon that is bounded by the justification brought forth by the researcher (Merriam, 1998).

In a collective case study, "a case could include one-person, multiple people, or a whole organization" (Bhattacharya, 2017, pg. 110). The cases selected for a collective case study

should be a representative of the issue under investigation and be a source rich in information (Bhattacharya, 2017). “Reports in this type of inquiries include a report on individual cases and a cross-case report too” (Bhattacharya, 2017, pg. 110). By producing reports on individual and multiple cases, the researcher can provide analytical insight on the similarities and differences between the individuals and groups in the collective case study (Bhattacharya, 2017). The collective case study method was utilized to explore four groups, or cases, with different roles who participated in a disability inclusive livestock exhibition to examine lived experiences and provide insight on potential best practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Population and Sample

The Champions Livestock Show is a disability inclusive goat show hosted through Special Olympics Kansas that took place at the 2022 Kansas State Fair. The show is separate from the mainstream show and pairs 4-H/FFA market goat exhibitors with Special Olympic Athletes to provide them an inclusive opportunity to exhibit a goat. The population for this study was defined as all individuals who participated or volunteered at the 2022 Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure confidentiality and case names were created based on the pseudonyms assigned to the participants regarding the role they had in the program. The population consisted of Coaches ($N=17$), Athletes ($N=15$), the Parents/Guardians of an Athlete ($N=15$), and Adult Volunteers who served in influential roles ($N=3$). There were other Adult Volunteers who assisted with the Champions Livestock Show, but they were unable to be contacted to be interviewed for this study.

Individuals who participated as Coaches were 4-H or FFA market goat exhibitors at the Kansas State Fair who served as a mentor for the Athletes in the 2022 Champions Livestock

Show. Individuals labeled as Coaches did not have a disability and had to apply to serve in the role of a Coach through the Kansas State Fair 4-H Goat Show Superintendent. Individuals who participated as Athletes in the Champions Livestock Show were members of Special Olympics Kansas and served as mentees in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair. Individuals labeled as Athletes did have a disability and had to complete a registration form to participate in the program. It was observed the Athletes selected which Coach they wanted to pair up with and introductions were not made prior to this selection. The Athlete's Parents/Guardians were included in the interviews to aid the Athlete during the interview if needed and provide insight on a caregiver's perceptions of a disability inclusive livestock show. The group of participants labeled as Parents consisted of four of the Athlete's parents and one guardian who indicated they were not the parent of the Athlete they attended with. The singular guardian will be labeled as a parent in this study to ensure confidentiality. The group labeled Adult Volunteers consisted of three Adult Volunteers which included a sixth Parent of a nonverbal Athlete who has been involved with the Champions Livestock Show since it began; an individual with a physical disability who grew up exhibiting livestock on a national level with a disability; and the judge for the show who provided an outside, nondisabled participant's perspective of the program. The four groups were selected for a collective case study as they presented multiple groups to show different perspectives on the program, various lived experiences, and personal encounters with disability inclusivity. Individuals in this study were selected based on their experience with participating in an inclusive livestock show and to better understand their perceptions, emotions, and experiences on interacting with disabled and nondisabled participants.

The population was accessed through the Superintendent of the 4-H Goat Show at the Kansas State Fair and the Director of Grants and Development at Special Olympics Kansas. Due to time restraints at the event not all Coaches, Athletes, and Parents were able to be interviewed immediately following the show for this study. Adult Volunteers were contacted at a later date to be interviewed over Zoom. The accessible population that was interviewed immediately after the show or in the following months of September and October consisted of seven Coaches, five Athletes, and five Parents. The fourth group of the population consisted of three Adult Volunteers who were identified as serving in significant roles throughout the Champions Livestock Show.

Design Procedures

In this study, I employed a collective case study approach which “involves collecting and analyzing data from several cases and can be distinguished from the single case study that may have subunits or subcases embedded within” (Merriam, 2009, pg. 49). Stake (2006) explains that in collective case study research,

the single case is of interest because it belongs to a particular collection of cases. The individual cases share a common characteristic or condition. The cases in the collection are somehow categorically bound together. They may be members of a group or examples of a phenomenon (pg. 5-6).

The Coaches, Athletes, Parents, and Adult Volunteers were considered four separate groups bounded together by a shared experience. Each group consisted of individual cases that provided overarching findings and themes that described the group collectively. Participants of this investigation were bounded by time and place (Stake, 2006), as they were Coaches, Athletes, Parents of Athletes, and Adult Volunteers during the 2022 Champions Livestock Show at the

Kansas State Fair. Based on the bounds of the case, I utilized purposeful maximal sampling, which selects “cases that show different perspectives on the problem, process, or event preferable” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg. 100), to choose participants who served in the role of a Coach, Athlete, Parent, or Adult Volunteer at the 2022 Champions Livestock Show.

Convenience sampling, selection of the “sample based on time, money, location, or availability of sites or respondents” (Merriam, 2009, pg. 79), was also enacted as individuals volunteered to participate in the study.

To collect data, I conducted informal, semi-structured, open-ended interviews which ranged from 4 minutes to 34 minutes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Due to the time constraint, some interviews were in person at the event and others were conducted over Zoom at a later date. Observations were also conducted, as I collected data in the role of nonparticipant or observer as participant, where “the researcher is an outsider of the group under study, watching and taking field notes from a distance. He or she can record data without direct involvement with activity or people” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg. 168). Introductions were made to establish my identity as the researcher to participants before the observation study was conducted. By observing as a nonparticipant, I had access to many individuals and a wide array of information, but the level of information revealed during the study was controlled by the participants being investigated (Merriam, 1998).

The protocol for this investigation was developed through Creswell and Poth’s (2018) procedures for conducting interviews and observations guides. Interviews were based on eliciting personal experiences from individuals to establish an in-depth understanding through different perceptions and lived experiences of participants (Jones et al., 2022). Observations were

conducted to describe, interpret, and evaluate the program to produce thick and rich narrative descriptions to aid in understanding the experience under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The interview questions were derived from LaVergne's Diversity Inclusion Program Model (LaVergne, 2008) and to elicit lived experiences and emotions from the participants. Interview protocol was reviewed by a panel of experts and piloted with graduate students at Kansas State University. The panel of experts and student pilot group suggested rewording of questions so the study's participants would better understand if they had a lower reading level. Consent and assent forms were created and approved by IRB before being distributed through email before the event. The forms were collected by the researcher before interviews were conducted. The study's interviews were conducted in-person or through Zoom during the months of September and October 2022. Coaches and Adult Volunteers were interviewed individually, and Athletes and their Parents/Guardians were interviewed together. The in-person interviews were audio recorded on a secure laptop and the Zoom interviews were video recorded on a password protected account.

Data Analysis

After data collection, voice recordings from in-person interviews and video recordings of Zoom interviews were uploaded and transcribed by Otter.ai™, an online transcription service. The recordings were listened to a second time by the researcher and mistakes in the generated transcripts were corrected. A second transcriber was enlisted to ensure reliability of the transcriptions before being coded. Phenomenological data analysis methodology was used as a guide to describe personal experiences through significant statements from the participants and create a description of "what" experiences the participants encountered (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To formulate results, I analyzed the individual transcripts in each group by manually conducting initial coding to form major categories from the data (Saldaña, 2021). Initial coding with notes and analytic memos was used to produce overarching ideas, reflections, and general categories from participant responses. Initial coding “breaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences” (Saldaña, 2021, pg. 148). Transcripts were analyzed and a code book was created in preparation of axial coding which “describes a category’s properties and dimensions and explores how the categories and subcategories relate to each other” (Saldaña, 2021, pg. 361). A Microsoft Excel® file was created with individual spreadsheets for each group of participants to organize the interview responses and keep group data separate. Theoretical coding was then applied to progress “toward discovering the central/core category that identifies the primary theme or major conflict, obstacle, problem, issue, or concern to participants” (Saldaña, 2021, pg. 369).

After formulating group themes, constant comparative analysis (Merriam, 2009) was performed to compare the shared experiences of the individuals in each group.

The constant comparative method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data are grouped together on similar dimensions. This dimension is tentatively given a name; then it becomes a category. The overall object of this analysis is to identify patterns in the data (Merriam, 2009, pg. 30).

After themes were produced for each group, cross-case analysis was used to provide thematic analysis across all cases along with assertions or interpretations of meanings from the cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Coding was conducted solely by the researcher and then reviewed and revised by a second coder to ensure validity and reliability amongst the themes.

The notes taken during the observation analysis of the show were interpreted by the researcher to be used towards program evaluation and determination of perceived best practices. “Interpretation in qualitative research involves abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg. 195). The field work provided additional description and insight to the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interviews based on the interpretations of the researcher.

Qualitative Quality

Throughout the collective case study, methods were used to produce trustworthy, quality findings that provide insight and understanding on the lived experiences of the participants. Qualitative quality was established through utilization of Tracy’s (2010) Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. A worthy topic was established through the relevance, significance, and interest of disability inclusion in the livestock industry due to an increase in disability within the population and including those individuals in mainstream programs (Tracy, 2010). Rich rigor and meaningful coherence were achieved through purposeful data collection and analysis procedures to ensure the results aligned with the research objectives and intended purpose of the study (Tracy, 2010). There is a low number of studies and literature centered on disability inclusion and awareness within the livestock industry resulting in this study being a significant contribution to the existing research and future investigations (Tracy, 2010).

Trustworthiness was established through sincerity and credibility which were met through maintaining self-reflexivity throughout the study, subjectivity statement regarding potential bias, and the use of thick, rich descriptions (Tracy, 2010). Trustworthiness was further enhanced as credibility was also established through prolonged engagement and triangulation by

analyzing two types of data collected, interview transcripts and observation analysis field notes (Tracy, 2010). Resonance was attained by ensuring transferability and writing methods used throughout the investigation to convey meaning to the reader (Tracy, 2010). Procedural ethics dictated by the university as universally necessary were applied through the compliance of the IRB for human subjects through Kansas State University to uphold the participants' human rights throughout the duration of the investigation (Tracy, 2010). The application of the "Big-Tent" criteria demonstrated the efforts put forth by the researcher to produce a qualitative study that exemplified integrity and quality.

Chapter 4 - Results

Overview of Participants

Fifteen interviews with a total of twenty individuals who held a position in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show, participated in this study. The participants of these fifteen interviews consisted of seven Coaches, five Athletes, five Parents, and three Adult Volunteers. Of the twenty participants, twelve were female and eight were male. A list of participant demographics can be seen in Tables one through four. To begin each semi-structured interview, all participants were given an overview of the study and its objectives. Athletes and Parents were interviewed together to allow the Parent to help the Athlete answer interview questions if needed.

The twenty individuals were selected for this collective case study as they presented multiple cases to show different perspectives on the program, various lived experiences, and personal encounters with disability inclusion. Individuals in this study were selected based on their experience with participating in an inclusive livestock show and to better understand their perceptions, emotions, and experiences on interacting with disabled and nondisabled participants. Purposeful maximal sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and convenience sampling (Merriam, 2009) were utilized to select participants that served in different roles and volunteered to participate in the study. Participants were placed in groups based on the role they served in the program.

Table 1. Demographics of Individuals who served as Coaches (*n*=7)

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ability Status
Coach 1	Male	14	Nondisabled
Coach 2	Female	12	Nondisabled

Coach 3	Female	16	Nondisabled
Coach 4	Male	13	Nondisabled
Coach 5	Female	16	Nondisabled
Coach 6	Male	18	Nondisabled
Coach 7	Female	17	Nondisabled

Table 2. Demographics of Individuals who served as Athletes (n=5)

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ability Status
Athlete 1	Male	11	Disabled
Athlete 2	Female	18	Disabled
Athlete 3	Male	11	Disabled
Athlete 4	Male	14	Disabled
Athlete 5	Male	16	Disabled

Table 3. Demographics of Individuals who served as Parents (n=5)

Pseudonym	Gender	Ability Status
Parent 1	Female	Nondisabled
Parent 2	Female	Nondisabled
Parent 3	Female	Nondisabled
Parent 4	Female	Nondisabled
Parent 5	Female	Nondisabled

Table 4. Demographics of Individuals who served as Adult Volunteers (n=3)

Pseudonym	Gender	Ability Status
Adult Volunteer 1	Male	Disabled
Adult Volunteer 2	Female	Nondisabled
Adult Volunteer 3	Female	Nondisabled

Findings

The fifteen interviews were recorded on an audio recording app on both the researcher's laptop and cell phone. Recordings were then transcribed by Otter.ai™ and checked for reliability by the researcher who corrected any mistakes. Transcripts were then checked for reliability by a

secondary transcriber before being coded. The researcher manually conducted initial, axial, and theoretical coding on the transcripts to form major categories and produce themes and sub-themes (Saldaña, 2021). Seven major themes were identified from the analysis conducted by the researcher and were then checked for validity and reliability by a second researcher who specializes in qualitative research. The study's research questions guided the interpretation of these themes to conduct constant comparative analysis to determine similarities and differences in the data (Merriam, 2009). Cross-case analysis was then performed to provide thematic analysis across all cases to formulate meanings from the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The field work provided additional insight to the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interviews based on the interpretations of the researcher.

Including and Accepting Others

Participants demonstrated acts of inclusion and acceptance of others regardless of differences amongst individuals through the three sub-themes of (a) disability inclusion, (b) disability exposure, and (c) agriculture exposure.

Inclusion Sub-Theme 1: Disability Inclusion

Participants displayed disability inclusion through acknowledging integration of individuals with disabilities into mainstream programs and when given the chance many individuals can achieve success in these programs. It was observed by the researcher during the Champions Livestock Show that many Coaches were eager to give the Athletes the opportunity to engage with their goats and experience the limelight within the show ring. When asked about his time in the show ring, Adult Volunteer 1 discussed his experience exhibiting beef cattle on a national level while being diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy and how inclusive his nondisabled peers were of him by stating "Everybody wanted to try to help me any way they could." Adult

Volunteer 1 related his livestock exhibition experiences to his current employment as a district extension agent and how he has continued being involved in the livestock industry through maintaining his own herd of cattle and judging livestock shows. Adult Volunteer 1 shared how his inclusion in the livestock industry benefited him by giving him the unique experience to be involved in the industry and provide him with opportunities by stating “If I didn't have cows though, I, I literally have no idea what I would do. Because it's, it's opened up pretty much every door I've ever worked through.” When asked about his experience with disability inclusion in the livestock industry, Adult Volunteer 1 shared that he never felt discriminated against, but inclusion was restricted as he felt like the “guinea pig” of the livestock industry because no one else with a disability had exhibited nationally. Adult Volunteer 1 shared “I just want people to realize that, you know, make sure you're being as inclusive as, as what you can be on so many different things.” To end the interview, Adult Volunteer 1 spoke about the inclusion of individuals with disabilities and the how “most of us can really do everything else that anybody can do, but you just have to be willing to work with us a little bit.”

The seven Coaches were all observed displaying disability inclusion through participating in the Champions livestock show and then continuing to interact with their Athletes after the conclusion of the show. Coach 6 shared that by including individuals with disabilities we are giving them a unique opportunity to gain new experiences and partake in activities that may not be regularly available to them. He stated “I feel like all the Athletes and especially the Athletes' parents, they get, they get more out of it than what we do. Because they're getting to experience something that they don't ever like, get to see.” It was observed that the Athletes were the ones to select which Coach they would be paired with during the show. When asked about the method of pairing Coaches with Athletes and if she enjoyed giving the Athletes the opportunity to

choose, Coach 7 expressed disability inclusion by stating “I actually do kind of like that, partially because I think that it makes, um, the participants have just a little better, um, control of the situation.” The Coaches were asked about disability inclusion outside of the Champions Livestock Show and many shared they were involved with Special Olympics, tutored individuals with disabilities, or had friends with disabilities. Coach 2 shared disability inclusion could simply be “acknowledging just them in the hallway, you know, saying like hey or, not ignoring them. I think, you know, you could just add a smile to their face.”

In the Athlete and Parent interviews, the researcher asked how disability inclusion was promoted through the show. Parent 3 stated “They welcomed anyone and everyone no matter the ability” and Parent 1 shared “I saw a lot of people with different abilities that were participating and having a great time.” Parent 1 elaborated by saying “I believe strongly in inclusion... any chance you have to normalize the inclusion, and this is the way we are as a society.” It was expressed the Champions Livestock Show promoted disability inclusion to the public by pairing Coaches and Athletes together and educating the public about the program throughout the duration of the show. When asked how the show displayed disability inclusion, Parent 5 stated “they made sure that they felt like that they honored that they were equal” as every Athlete had the opportunity to exhibit a goat and have the same amount of time to be mentored by their Coach and learn about their animal. Disability inclusion was observed by the researcher as Adult Volunteer 3 spoke directly to the Athletes rather than the Coaches. Each Athlete was addressed by the Adult Volunteer 3 multiple times to provide them a chance to interact and communicate about their animal.

Many comments were made about diversity in age amongst the participants as well. Parent 2 shared “the Coaches I noticed are all different ages” and this was validated as a positive

as Parent 3 explained the younger Coaches will remember this experience forever as “they were Coaches to Athletes who are older than them” and had to learn how to interact with someone who may be legally an adult. Parent 5 expressed she felt the program was a positive example of disability and diversity inclusion, but difficulties are still seen in youth programs, such as 4-H, stating “anybody can join 4-H, but it is a little tougher on those that, um, struggle a little bit because they have, they do have rigid rules.”

Inclusion Sub-Theme 2: Disability Exposure

Six out of the seven Coaches interviewed expressed they had been exposed to disability before participating in this program and therefore already had experience with interacting with individuals with disabilities. Coach 6 and Coach 7 shared they had been exposed to disability through family members by stating “I’ve always had family members with disabilities and everything like that. So, like I had prior knowledge, but I didn’t know everything about them” and “I’ve always kind of grown up, um, around special needs people.” The four other Coaches discussed being involved in school programs that allowed them to interact with individuals with disabilities. Coach 1 shared “I tutored a third grader that had a learning disability” and Coach 2 expressed she had classmates with disabilities that she had gone out of her way to befriend. “We would sit together at lunch you know and they would have a good time and they would love it and they would always look forward to lunch to sit with their best friends, which was us.” Coach 1 and Coach 2 shared their school was a large supporter of Special Olympics and they had been exposed to disability through pep rallies that had been hosted to honor the students competing in Special Olympic events. Coach 4 and Coach 5 both indicated they participated in Puzzle Club and helped with Special Olympic programs at their school. They explained Puzzle Club was what their school labeled their special needs program.

Coach 3 indicated she had not been exposed to disability before participating in the Champions Livestock Show. She shared “in my small town, I didn't know of anyone that was, um, had special needs” and explained that she was very nervous when she began participating in the Champions Livestock Show by stating “I felt that it was hard to make connections with those who maybe are different than myself. And I was always scared to go up to someone with special needs.” When asked if she would seek out other opportunities to work with individuals with disabilities, Coach 3 shared through the exposure she had to disability through the Champions Livestock Show, she felt she had the confidence to seek out other opportunities, stating:

That self confidence that you build every year that you do this experience... you get more and more confident... as I see more people with special needs, I have the confidence to kinda go up to them, talk to them.

Coach 7 was the only individual who had been exposed to disability through other disability inclusive livestock shows. She shared she had been involved in shows such as “Show for the Gold” and “All Star Showdown”, and she explained how she had been recruited to serve on a board as a junior exhibitor member to organize and create an inclusive show. When asked if this exposure has increased her involvement with individuals with disabilities, she stated:

I actually go out of my way kind of outside of the shows and reach out to special needs family, just because I know that they don't always get, um, a lot of the social interaction that we always do.

Exposure to disability was discussed as a positive by the Parents. Parent 3 shared exposure to disability for the Coaches “creates that opportunity for them to become comfortable with...the unnorm.” Parent 1 explained disability exposure “promotes inclusion” as youth are learning to become more comfortable and confident with interacting with diverse individuals.

Parent 3 also expressed disability exposure “creates that...atmosphere, that relationship of someone who maybe hasn’t grown up with a special needs person in their life” as “even though the Athletes are learning, the Coaches are learning just as much if not more.”

Inclusion Sub-Theme 3: Agriculture Exposure

Regarding the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in agricultural experiences, the Athletes and Parents were asked to indicate the Athlete’s involvement in other agricultural experiences. All but one Athlete had been exposed to an agricultural experience through family farming, FFA or 4-H involvement, or simply by interacting with animals on a relative or neighbor’s farm. Athlete 3 seemed to be the most active in agriculture as he stated he was a member of 4-H, which Parent 3 followed by stating “we show swine and dairy cattle already. We’re a big 4-H family.” Athlete 3 stated he also does “crops judging” which Parent 3 shared “provided the experience [for Athlete 3] to be able to go and tour farms, um, to the wheat expo.” Parent 3 indicated Athlete 3 participates in “horticulture and entomology” projects as well.

Parent 1 shared Athlete 1 “really loves animals, and we have goats” and their family has a farm where Athlete 1 has been exposed to agriculture, but they had never participated in a livestock competition outside of the Champions Livestock Show. Parent 4 stated Athlete 4 had “went to his teacher’s house in fifth grade, and she had goats” and through that experience along with other encounters with agriculture, she shared “the teacher had asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. And he said, farmer.” Athlete 5 had a similar experience which developed a desire to do “part time...work on his uncle's farm.” Athlete 5 expressed his “cousin has goats” and his “uncle does have pigs” which sparked his interest in agriculture. Parent 5 shared that Athlete 5 sought out agriculture courses in school and has taken “Plant and Soil Science” and

Parent 5 has also exposed him to agriculture through “aquaponics” by growing “plants in the fish tank” that was available to them.

Adult Volunteer 2, who founded the Champions Livestock Show, expressed that her Athlete grew up participating in activities on the family farm by stating “We raise cattle. So, he participates in that.” Adult Volunteer 2 also indicated her Athlete had prior exposure to livestock exhibitions through sharing “he has shown on a county level but...we never took him to State Fair.” Adult Volunteer 2 discussed her Athlete’s participation in caring for their other children’s show animals by indicating “he[‘s] walked all the animals that have won, we won state fair before, in the goat show and he's walked all those animals. He's fed all those animals. He's worked hard, but he never got to show one.” Through this exposure to agriculture and the livestock industry, Adult Volunteer 2 created the Champions Livestock show to provide an opportunity for her Athlete to participate in exhibiting livestock.

Using Multicultural Education to Increase Disability Inclusion

Multicultural education emerged as a theme as participants discussed their personal perspectives of disability, how they feel society views disability, and the strategies used to raise awareness of diversity inclusion in mainstream programs. Multicultural education was expressed through the sub-themes of (a) disability acceptance, (b) disability perspective, and (c) disability awareness.

Multicultural Education Sub-Theme 1: Disability Acceptance

Disability acceptance was interpreted as disability being viewed as a mere difference between humans rather than a disadvantage or limitation. Four of the Coaches spoke about disability acceptance, and it was discussed by all three Adult Volunteers. Adult Volunteer 1 discussed how due to his disability he has “been met with some degree of skepticism by

somebody that doesn't know me” in the livestock industry and in his career through extension. He indicated that he never felt discriminated against by others and explained skepticism as “it's human nature to kind of...judge a book by its cover” therefore it is common for individuals to underestimate the ability of someone with a disability. Adult Volunteer 1 did explain that once individuals became familiar with him, they became more comfortable and confident in his ability to perform tasks in his career and the livestock industry.

Adult Volunteer 2 viewed disability acceptance for her Athlete as “a chance for him to be seen in a...a capacity as other kids are seen.” She felt that programs like the Champions Livestock Show gave Athletes the opportunity to participate with nondisabled peers on a level playing field. A chance to be seen as a typical participant while showcasing acceptance of diversity. Adult Volunteer 3 echoed this when she spoke about disability being “different, not less” and it was observed that she interacted with each Athlete in accordance with their perceived ability level in the show ring.

For the Coaches, disability acceptance was displayed through acknowledging that disability is not a limitation, but individuals with disabilities must participate and engage in different ways that meet their needs. Coach 7 discussed disability acceptance by stating:

I think that because they have to walk in the same walk that we do every single day, but they have to find different ways to do it because of how God made them. And it's just so amazing to me that most of them are so happy and so full of life, no matter what they're going through like they always have a smile on their face.

An additional expression of acceptance from Coach 7 was “I genuinely enjoy any kind of special needs person's presence” and how she had been raised around disability which shaped her perspective of acceptance of others. Coach 6 discussed disability acceptance through the process

of training his Athlete during the Champions Livestock Show. He shared “I was able to be like, step back and I actually trained him like I would train another [nondisabled] person.” Coach 6 also discussed that while individuals with disabilities may face challenges, they also have their strengths too and their disabilities do not hinder their right to participate in mainstream programs. Other expressions of acceptance were Coach 4 stating “[individuals with disabilities] can do the same thing as what any of us can do” and Coach 5 sharing “they're just normal people they just have things that make them special and unique.” It was observed by the researcher that throughout the duration of the show Adult Volunteer 1 continuously educated the public about the concept of the program and promoted disability education and acceptance to the spectators.

Multicultural Education Sub-Theme 2: Disability Perspective

The second sub-theme was how participants without disabilities view disability before and after participating in the program and how they feel their perspective of disability is different from others. This sub-theme focused heavily on the Coaches and their perspective of disability as youth. Some Coaches in this study expressed having exposure to disability before participating in this program, therefore their perspectives had other influencing factors besides their interaction with the Athletes in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show. Coach 6 shared his perception of disability regarding the perseverance his Athlete exhibited in the program by stating:

I've known [Athlete 3] forever so and he's always like fought through it and like I have a lot of respect for those individuals because they do try and I just...like kudos to them, especially trying out for like livestock showing because it's not always easy.

Coach 7 reflected on her personal perspective of disability and stated “I kind of grew up being taught that...when you come to an interaction with a special needs individual...it will be the biggest blessing of your life.” She continued to explain how she has always appreciated

individuals with disabilities because of the different perspective they bring to others and the change of mindset that can occur. Coach 1 explained his perception of individuals with disabilities as being “young people in big bodies” and Coach 3 shared her perspective as “I have that different point of view. Being able to do this experience helps develop that.”

When asked about how others may perceive disability, Coach 7 shared “I definitely think that like where you live, and how exposed you are, um, to different people definitely makes a difference.” Coach 6 echoed this by sharing that his community did not have anyone with a prominent disability and by participating in the Champions Livestock Show he “became more aware than my peers back home.” Integration of individuals with disabilities into mainstream programs gives nondisabled individuals the experience to interact with diversity and gain awareness of disability in society. Coach 3 expressed “I feel that most of my peers, um, view people with special needs as kind of how I viewed in the past” after explaining that before participating in the program she was intimidated to approach an individual with a disability due to lack of interaction with them. When asked if her perspective on disability was different from her peers, Coach 5 responded “some of my peers aren't really like, educated and like haven't had the opportunity to like work with [individuals with disabilities]” and expressed experience is the first step to understanding how to interact with diverse populations efficiently and effectively. Coach 6 stated “we don't always get the day-to-day aspect of interacting with a Special Olympic Athlete. And I feel like it kind of helps open both of our eyes and broadens both of our horizons.” The Champions Livestock Show gives Coaches the opportunity to form their own perspective of disability through interaction in an event that showcases disability inclusion in the livestock industry.

Multicultural Education Sub-Theme 3: Disability Awareness

The third sub-theme of Disability Awareness focused on awareness of disability in society and how it is perceived by others that may not have had exposure. Including educational encounters that teach the public about disability topics and showcase disability inclusive events. Parent 1 discussed how programs like the Champions Livestock Show bring awareness to the need for inclusion and stated “it's not only good for the kids but I'm a big proponent for it being good for the community” as it is displaying acceptance and educating spectators on the topic of disability. When asked if the program should be expanded to further expose others to disability and raise awareness of disability, she responded “I think the more we do that and make it normal, you know, the better off it is.” This was echoed by Adult Volunteer 1 as he explained disability awareness by saying:

we as people are very visual and so you know, I think if anytime you can see somebody that, that is doing something that, you know, visibly doesn't look quote, unquote, normal. I think it's, you know, it's a good reminder.

He continued to explain how individuals are usually surprised to see him actively involved in the livestock industry through raising cattle and judging livestock shows. When asked how he raises awareness of disability and educates others, he stated he tells people “just know that I'm going to do things a little different” and adapts as needed. Adult Volunteer 3 spoke on disability awareness by explaining how “we've never seen a show like this” and by emphasizing the impact it has on the participants’ life, we can create a need for more programs like the Champions Livestock Show.

The Coaches discussed disability awareness as understanding disability more than their peers and learning about disability as an entirety. Coach 7 shared “boundaries was a huge one”

when it came to interacting with the Athletes and knowing their comfort level with the Coaches and the animal. When asked if he felt he was more aware of disability than his peers, Coach 1 answered “I think that both of us are a little more passionate and caring about it than maybe average but we’re not too different” and “I think we’re more understanding than some.” Coach 6 discussed how he became more aware of different disabilities by sharing “I knew there was differences on like different levels of needs” and how each level must be approached in a different way to ensure needs are met. Coach 5 expressed the program can “promote like, um, positivity towards the people with disabilities” and create awareness of the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in mainstream programs.

Promoting Equity through Culturally Responsive Teaching

Participants identified teaching methods that adapt to meet the needs of individuals with different learning styles in a more applicable and valuable manner through the three sub-themes of (a) adaptable teaching, (b) equity, and (c) animal therapy.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Sub-Theme 1: Adaptable Teaching

The sub-theme of adaptable teaching revolved around the Coaches’ strategies to adapt their teaching style to meet the unique learning needs of individuals with disabilities to provide comprehensive instructions and meaningful experiences. Coaches expressed this action by changing their teaching style to better fit the needs of their Athlete after interacting with them at the beginning of the program and recognizing their needs. Coach 1 and Coach 2 both explained teaching their Athlete was “like teaching our younger siblings how to show.” Coach 3 commented that when teaching her Athlete “you make some suggestions and some go through, some don’t” but being able to find a method to teach them is the goal. Some Coaches discussed their previous involvement in the program with different Athletes and how each Athlete had

different needs from the years prior. Coach 6 explained that each year at the beginning of the program when the Coaches and Athletes are paired up, he utilized that time to get to know his Athlete and understand how to best communicate with them. When asked about the duration it took to recognize the Athlete's needs, Coach 6 stated "in the first 15 minutes I knew what I needed to do." Recognition of learning needs is crucial to efficiently and effectively interact with the Athlete to provide a positive, meaningful experience where they can gain skills and form a relationship with their Coach and the animal.

When asked about the differences between the Athletes Coach 6 and 7 had, they each experienced different levels of functioning and skill level from their Athletes. When asked about the differences between Athletes in prior years and his most recent Athlete, Coach 6 stated "They didn't have the experience that [Athlete 3] had with livestock showing. And, you know, it was just kind of like, hard to...first know how to interact with that." Coach 6 shared that the two previous Athletes he had did not want to fully participate in showing the goat, but rather wanted to stand and observe their surroundings. When asked about the route of action he took to provide the Athletes with the best experience, Coach 6 replied:

instead of trying to teach him I just let him mess with the goat because I was like, let's let him have a good experience because I want him to see, like my goat had a really good personality too, so I wanted him to interact with that.

When asked about her teaching experience, Coach 7 shared that she had previously coached a nonverbal Athlete. She shared:

I didn't have a participant that could speak back to me and have a conversation with me.

So, I didn't exactly know, um, what he wanted to do, what his boundaries were. So, you

really had to be patient and go off of his body language. And this year, um, my participant was very vocal, [Athlete 3] was very amazing.

When asked about meeting the nonverbal Athlete's learning needs, Coach 7 explained:

he would make noises so we just had to read his entire body language and the noises that he was making, and there would be times that he would like grab our hands, and he would want us to pet the goat with him, which is when we knew that, um, he was kind of enjoying the experience.

Interacting with individuals of different abilities presents Coaches with the skill of adaptable teaching and the ability to recognize different types of learners.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Sub-Theme 2: Equity

The second sub-theme of equity referred to understanding that everyone has different needs and therefore require different resources to reach an equal outcome. Coach 6 expressed to reach equity for some of the Athletes that have a more severe disability, it may be beneficial to assign them two Coaches to provide them with the resources they may need. This would also aid the Coaches as they would be able to collaborate to assess the individual's needs and combine their knowledge to provide the best instructions to create a meaningful experience. Coach 6 elaborated on equity by stating "they have special challenges and we have to meet them" to give them the fullest experience possible. Coach 2 exhibited equity stating "they just want to understand it and know how to do the same thing that you do" which was echoed by Coach 1 who shared "everybody should have a chance in their life to do something similar." When asked about how she recognized equity, Coach 7 stated:

To see the different kinds of disabilities and, um, the differences on how they comprehend things and just kind of how they work and how I have to change the way that I think and the way that I speak and, um, move to kind of work with all these people. Through participation in this program, Coaches are exposed to scenarios where equity is required to give participants the resources they need to reach an equal outcome.

The Parents were asked if the program provided equitable opportunities for their Athletes to participate in, which many responded how the Adult Volunteer 3 exhibited equity in the show ring. Parent 2 responded how Adult Volunteer 3 was “looking at the Athlete to see what they were...so seeing, hearing that and that she was looking at...that was kind of, that was...comforting to me.” Parent 3 discussed how Adult Volunteer 3:

was asking different questions to every kid and not trying to ask them all the same thing to compare. Um, so there was a couple of nonverbal Athletes that were close to him, and she was asking yes or no questions.

Parent 3 also explained, “When [Adult Volunteer 3] asked [Athlete 3] questions, she was asking a little bit more difficult when she realized that, you know, he could communicate.” Parent 5 expressed she felt the Champions Livestock Show positioned the Coaches and Athletes like equals and shared she believed “everybody was on the same playing field” when they were in the show ring.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Sub-Theme 3: Animal Therapy

The third sub-theme was the use of animals as a therapeutic method and educational material in the program. The Champions Livestock Show utilized 4-H and FFA members’ market goats as a tool to allow Athletes to exhibit in a showmanship style class. Coach 7

discussed understanding the social needs of individuals with disabilities and how they may connect better with animals than people. She shared:

I know for me personally with the special needs kids or adults that I have worked with, a lot of people don't understand that they don't always connect with other human beings, but they connect with animals and objects too.

Animals can be used to build a relationship between individuals with and without disabilities. Animals can also provide comfort and aid in developing social adeptness through communication and interaction with a living being. Adult Volunteer 2 expressed her Athlete “has relationships with these animals” he interacts with on their farm. When asked about the role the animal plays in the Champions Livestock Show, Adult Volunteer 2 stated “the animal is just...the tool for them to start communicating.”

It was observed the goats utilized in the program were used as a topic of discussion to begin the conversation between Coaches and Athletes. The use of the animal provided a segway to form a connection between the team to then understand each other's needs to efficiently interact with one another. The animals also aided the Athletes by giving them something to focus on. This was noticed by Parent 5 who stated “I think the goats actually helped him stay centered” when asked if the animal aided in her Athlete not becoming overwhelmed in the show ring. Parent 5 elaborated by expressing each Athlete “could pet and touch the animals [which] probably helped every single one of them out there get through that.” Parent 1 shared for her Athlete “Working with animals is really good. It's very therapeutic” as she has noticed her Athlete is “really patient with animals” which strengthens that life skill. Parent 2 explained that she enjoyed seeing her Athlete have control over the animal and be able to handle it properly. Parent 2 also expressed “it's nice to see her be with the animals and she likes animals so that

helps.” Parent 4 discussed exposure to animals is beneficial for her Athlete as “he can get the experience of being around all different types of animals and working with them” which can aid him in the future as he wants to pursue a career as a farmer.

Learning Life Skills for the Future

Life skills theme revealed skills learned by participants that are necessary and applicable to everyday life. The sub-themes of life skills were (a) humility, (b) communication, and (c) experiential learning.

Life Skills Sub-Theme 1: Humility

The first sub-theme of humility was expressed by Coaches, Adult Volunteer 1, and Adult Volunteer 3. Coach 7 expressed her sense of humility by stating:

I definitely learned a lot more from them than I ever expected I would, and I think, um, that's the biggest thing that I love about spending time with these individuals is that they teach me more than they will ever know.

She followed that by stating that this experience was “one of the most humbling experiences that I had ever been through” and “we all deserve a chance to do things that we love.” When asked about what this experience meant to him, Coach 6 shared “this is a once in a lifetime experience.” Coach 1 explained he had experienced humility before participating in this program by sitting next to and interacting with a peer in class who had a learning disability, stating “it’s just kinda special to me that me playing a couple rock paper scissors rounds or something with someone could mean so much.” Coach 4 displayed humility by sharing that his favorite portion of the program was “seeing [the Athletes] be happy” and “how you make other people smile.” He discussed that he would promote the program by telling others how much of a fun experience it was while also discussing the impact it had on him. Coach 5 echoed this by

expressing her favorite takeaway from the program was “seeing how happy these kids were” and knowing she helped make a memory that would last a lifetime for these Athletes.

Adult Volunteer 1 brought a different perspective to the sub-theme by expressing his gratitude to be involved in livestock exhibitions and judging. Adult Volunteer 1 explained his background in livestock judging and the adaptations made to allow him to be safe and successful in the show ring as the judge. Regarding receiving the chance to judge, he shared “somebody in my position and anybody really, you're, you're just excited for the opportunity to judge something.” Adult Volunteer 3 discussed for her it was “definitely an honor to be able to do that show” as she has a relative with a disability and was humbled to be involved in the Champions Livestock Show. Humility in recognizing one’s capabilities is critical to understand equity and meeting the needs of others.

Life Skill Sub-Theme 2: Communication

Communication emerged as the second sub-theme regarding the responses indicating effective instruction and meaningful conversation. Coach 6 explained the different ways he had to communicate with different Athletes to ensure they understood the situation and the instructions being given. When asked about adapting his instructions, he shared the need to be more thorough with his instructions by stating “I need to break it down and explain and make sure there's clarifications along the way.” Coach 3 shared she had always been nervous approaching individuals with disabilities, but her role as a Coach has drastically expanded her comfort zone, stating “my experience as a Coach has really changed that and made me believe that it's really okay to just go up and talk to someone with special needs because they're usually really, um, receptive to what you say.” She also shared “I gained a lot of leadership and communication skills just um being patient, trying to really clearly communicate.” Coach 7

expressed a different perspective when interacting with an Athlete by stating “when somebody is trying to speak to you, um, you let them speak. I don't like interrupting people and I don't like when people interrupt me.” She explained the need to give the Athletes the chance to respond to the instructions being given and how the Coaches need to be active listeners and not overpower the conversation. When asked about why active listening was a critical part of communication, Coach 7 explained her experience with individuals with disabilities outside of the program and how she communicated with them in a way that demonstrated respect and patience. She shared “that took me spending like ample amounts of time with [outside individual with a disability] and also communicating with the people that she was around the most.” Coach 2 responded with a similar answer, explaining that acknowledging the individual is critical to show you are listening and trying to form a positive relationship. She stated, “Understanding that rather than being like confused on what they were saying I kinda had to be like okay, you know try and understand it... to acknowledge that I heard what they were saying.”

Athletes and Parents were asked what life skills they felt were gained by participating in the Champions Livestock Show in which many responded with communication and social skills. Parent 1 stated the biggest attribute her Athlete gained was:

Social skills cause any time he can work with a peer, um, and talk, just even just talking that's a really big deal... anytime he gets a chance to do that, to have whole conversations, that's always a big deal.

Athlete 1 followed this by sharing his Coach and him “were actually talking a lot” and had a good conversation throughout the duration of the program. Parent 2 expressed communication was the largest takeaway for her Athlete, stating “being able to take direction from somebody I think is very important” which was followed by Athlete 2 stating “[Coach 3] helped...had easy

instructions.” When asked what the greatest gain her Athlete attained from participating in the program, Parent 3 responded “the social aspect, um, the life skills just...being, um, in a large crowd, learning the social interaction, eye contact, communication, shaking hands, all life skills.” Parent 5 stated “social skills” when asked about the life skills her Athlete learned, explaining “I came back was bragging to everybody how [Athlete 5] was, um, introducing himself and shaking his hand and, um, talking to people and, uh, how they were responding back to him.”

Life Skills Sub-Theme 3: Experiential Learning

The final sub-theme formed was experiential learning which was interpreted as the ability to learn by doing and applicable skills that are obtained through hands on experiences. Including skills that individuals learned from past participation in the program that they applied this year in the program. Adult Volunteer 1 shared that the Champions Livestock Show is “a good learning opportunity for both, for both sides” as “experience is kind of a good teacher” which was later echoed by Parent 3 stating “the Athletes are the best education for the Coaches.” Coach 3 shared through her past experiences as a Coach she has learned that by “making those connections and having that confidence to go up to someone new” she now feels she can confidently interact with anyone with a disability.

Parent 2 expressed that her Athlete has grown much through experiential learning. She explained through her Athlete’s past participation “the next year, she always goes a little bit, you know, she’s stronger, she’s better.” Parent 2 discussed her Athlete’s ability to control the animal in the show ring and take the actions to exhibit the animal has improved each year, stating “she was leaning in trying to get them to, you know, line up and stuff. And she would bend over and fix the feet which last year it was just walking around.” Parent 2 also added the incentive of being named grand or reserve grand champion enticed her Athlete more this year, stating “last

year she got placed second and so, she wanted, this year she, her goal was to get first.” Parent 5 explained her Athlete’s experiential learning happened outside of the show ring. She discussed their journey to the fairgrounds and how they had to utilize their navigation and financial management skills. Parent 5 stated “we had to follow a map and we had to look at our schedule and make sure we were where we were supposed to be on time” and “went to the concession stands and he bought some souvenirs for his brothers, so we had a lot of teachable moments there.” She also shared her Athlete has been working rigorously in the classroom on his social skills, so she was excited to see Athlete 5 “be able to go out there and use those social skills and actually get some actual experience.”

Participating in this Program Offers a Chance to Feel Like You Belong

The theme of profound participation describes how participating in this program made both disabled and nondisabled participants feel. The sub-themes that emerged were (a) sparking joy, (b) meaningfulness, (c) self-awareness, and (d) building relationships creates a sense of belonging.

Profound Participation Sub-Theme 1: Sparking Joy

The first sub-theme recognized moments where joy was evidently displayed by individuals with or without a disability. Coach 6 shared moments where his past Athletes who had not wanted to participate in the show displayed joy by sharing “I knew that he enjoyed it because he came up right after the show and gave me a big hug” and explained that sometimes joy occurred just by being with an animal. He elaborated on the joy of a past Athlete by stating:

he loved the goat. Like he petted the goat and his parents were standing there on the side and they were like just videoing it and they were so happy for him and he was just like laughing and smiling.

Coach 6 also spoke about Athlete 6 who is nonverbal and did not participate in this study, but had participated all three years in the program and showed continuous joy by explaining “he’s not able to like really do everything, but like he loves to be there and like he loves to be around everybody” and “he’s always just like, so excited to be there and so excited to be part of the show.” Adult Volunteer 2 validated this by stating Athlete 6 experienced “pure joy. I mean, he is so happy to be doing it. I mean you can just see he’s just so happy and excited about it.” Adult Volunteer 2 also discussed how joyful it is for her to see her Athlete participate in this program, stating “it’s very joyful for us as it’s joyful for him. It’s our dreams for him come true.”

Coach 1 and Coach 2 were both observed exhibiting joy during their interview when they spoke about their Athletes’ experiences. Coach 1 stated “it was just fun seeing...some people who had trouble talking to you smile” and Coach 2 followed this statement with “you just saw that big grin on their face and it was, it was pretty cool.” Coach 7 shared she experienced moments of joy with a past nonverbal Athlete by recognizing:

he would kind of like get excited and not scream, but kind of scream in a way and get like really, really excited and smile, he would smile so big. So that’s how we knew when he was enjoying the experience.

Coach 7 explained this year she experienced joy by taking in the environment around her and her Athlete, stating:

I think it’s all the smiles that I see and all the people outside of the arena that were taking pictures, and I mean, almost both sets of stands that were there were full of people just wanting to be there and wanting to watch and wanting to support and that just made my heart really full.

The Athletes and Parents expressed they felt joy throughout the duration of the program and many Athletes were observed by the researcher laughing or smiling while out in the show ring. When asked if Athlete 5 had a positive experience, he stated “it's so fun” which was followed by Parent 5 expressing “he was very excited! His whole family was very excited he got to go.” Parent 5 shared their experience while at the Kansas State Fair and how positive the experience was for them to go and participate. She ended the story by stating “we were just smiling all the way home” and “his smile was so huge the whole time.” Parent 3 shared she found joy in seeing the Champions Livestock Show teach Athlete 3 that “they can do pretty much anything if they tried.” Athlete 3 continuously shared: “I liked showing” and “I like doing it” when asked about his participation in the program. Parent 3 stated she felt like the program gave Athlete 3 the opportunity to learn “what he can do and what options are out there, and that he can do anything that he sets his mind to.”

Profound Participation Sub-Theme 2: Meaningfulness

Participants expressed that participation in the Champions Livestock Show had provided sincere significance in their lives and was a meaningful experience. Adult Volunteer 2 explained for her Athlete, this experience was “everything it was supposed to be because he got to show an animal at the state fair” and “a moment of time for him to be excited and have fun...on his own level.” Coach 6 explained participation in the show was “probably one of the best experiences I've had in livestock showing” and the significance of this program changed his perspective by stating “I learned that perfection doesn't always happen and sometimes, instead of being perfect, it's more about the experience and the interaction with the Athletes than it is about being the grand champion.” Coach 6 did discuss some negative experiences he had during his first year participating in the program which included lack of participation and interest from his Athlete

along with inappropriate name calling. While these were challenging experiences, Coach 6 stated “that was one of my favorite fairs because I got to do the Champions Livestock Show.” He concluded by sharing “it’s a highlight of each State Fair for me here in the last three years and just, I just really enjoy it. And I’m thankful that I said, yes.”

Coach 3 expressed the most meaningful part of being a Coach for her was “when they really try to listen and learn and like, you feel like you’re making a difference.” She shared that by serving as a Coach she has been exposed to a diverse group that she may not have approached without the aid of the Champions Livestock Show, stating “I feel like I’ve made some connections and even some friendships, that, with people that I may not have had anything in common with necessarily, but just establishing those connections has probably been my favorite part as a Coach.” She ended her interview by stating “it was the best experience that I just stepped out there and decided to try.”

When asked if her participation in the program was meaningful, Coach 7 stated “[This is] one of the most humbling and rewarding experiences that I have ever been through, and I would do it a thousand times over again if I had the chance.” She elaborated on the significance of her experience by discussing that “being with an animal and being able to do...what I do on a daily basis and seeing how happy they are doing the same thing that I do, it’s kind of just liberating.” The significant impact the program had on the participants’ lives is displayed through their responses which showcase how meaningful this experience was to them. The researcher observed a display of emotions throughout the show and how many parents expressed joy for their Athlete or Coach to have the opportunity to participate. Many Coaches were observed to be displaying positive emotions and expressing how meaningful the show was to them through continuation of interacting with their Athlete after the conclusion of the show.

Parents expressed the program was meaningful for them to be able to witness their Athletes be involved in a unique program that provided them a chance to step out of their comfort zones and develop life skills. Parent 1 expressed “it was positive for him. It was positive for his peer. It’s good for everybody.” Parent 2 explained how beneficial this experience was for her Athlete and how “this is something that I wish my other kids could do.” Parent 5 discussed witnessing how joyful every participant was even though they were doing a brand-new activity that was outside their comfort zone, stating “they were all happy and smiling and, and we don't always get those happies and smiles sometimes when we're learning new things, because new things are hard.”

Profound Participation Sub-Theme 3: Self-Awareness

The third sub-theme expressed was self-awareness which was mainly discussed by Adult Volunteer 1 as he explained his time as an exhibitor and recognizing “my exhibition of livestock was always maybe a little different” from others. When asked about the confidence others had in his ability to successfully exhibit, he explained:

there was some skepticism there of can I do it, but it's one of those things like anybody, once you do it, and you can prove to yourself that you can do it, then you just got a lot more confidence.

Adult Volunteer 1 explained how there were not many guidelines on how to include him in the show ring during his time as an exhibitor, stating “I kind of felt like I was the first one to show a lot of people that hey, you know, you can, you can do this” and “it's really progressed so much, even since I got out of showing.” He elaborated on how being able to successfully exhibit livestock and be involved in the livestock industry made him “feel good about myself because I'm able to be involved and do this.”

Parent 2 spoke about her Athlete becoming self-aware of her ability to exhibit the animal and utilizing the skills she learned in the past to push herself a little further each year. Parent 2 explained Athlete 2 has become aware of the confidence she has gained in the show ring, stating “she gets that confidence” by participating each year. Parent 4 explained she signed her Athlete up for the program because “it pushed him out of his comfort zone” and made him aware of his ability to try new experiences and learn. Parents celebrated the minor victories of the day while at the Champions Livestock Show and Adult Volunteer 3 took notice of that, stating “it makes you, um, think about the things we take for granted.” Adult Volunteer 3 elaborated further, stating “somebody was excited to do chores with their, um, parents. I never was excited hardly to do inside chores. So just those cool things that you know, we maybe take for granted or don't see as fun things.”

Profound Participation Sub-Theme 4: Building Relationships to Create a Sense of Belonging

Adult Volunteer 2 shared she felt her Athlete’s participation in the program provided him a sense of belonging as he was able to build relationships with others who shared a passion for exhibiting livestock. She expressed that by participating in the program her Athlete was “entertaining friendships” and she explained, “it's good for the Coaches to have these relationships too.” Adult Volunteer 2 also shared she felt the relationships built between Coaches and Athletes were more than a onetime thing as they were “building a relationship with this, uh, person in our community” who may be involved in the same programs in the future. Responses from Adult Volunteer 1 elaborated on securing a sense of belonging in the industry as he explained “to a degree you kind of have to prove that you belong” by showcasing that he could exhibit livestock alongside his peers who were nondisabled. When asked if he had ever felt

discriminated against, he replied “I never really felt...left out, I never felt discriminated against” but he then shared he had established industry relationships through family members before he began exhibiting livestock, therefore the connection was already made.

Parent 2 and Athlete 2 had a unique relationship with their Coach, as she had been Athlete 2’s Coach the year prior. When asked about her Coach, Athlete 2 promptly stated “I had her last time”, in which Parent 2 explained:

the girl that we had last year, stopped her and approached her and then so they, they, she goes do you want to do it again with me this year and she was like, yeah, absolutely. So, like I said a friendship was formed.

Parent 2 elaborated on this bond by sharing “[the Coach’s] mom sat with us during the show. So, it's, it’s nice that you know all around we’ve gained a whole family of friends to do it with us.”

Parent 3 discussed the relationships that Athlete 3 has built through this program has allowed him to recognize familiar faces at other events, stating “the experience, the friendships, the connections that he’s making when we go to other events, he sees familiar faces.” Parent 5 explained that her Athlete and his Coach exchanged phone numbers and were invited to attend other shows with the Coach where “if he went up and showed or something we can just, he could go up and just hang out and do something with him.” She expressed that Athlete 5 met her outside the show ring exclaiming “I’ve made a friend! I made a friend!” She continued to discuss the newfound friendship by stating “they talked for that whole time or maybe even longer, and they, they shared stories about their family and what they did.” It was observed that the Athletes were welcomed with open arms by the Coaches who made their best attempt to create a comfortable environment and form a relationship. This created a sense of belonging for the Athletes to engage in exhibiting the goat while also expressing their self.

These Challenging Experiences Were Just Learning Curves

Learning curves was developed as a theme in response to the positive and negative experiences participants had that resulted in learning opportunities. The sub-themes that emerged were (a) challenging experiences and (b) creating opportunity.

Learning Curves Sub-Theme 1: Challenging Experiences

Participants were asked about negative experiences they encountered in the program and all participants made it very clear they did not experience anything negative but saw it rather as a challenge or a learning curve. Coach 6 explained his first experience with the program was difficult because his Athlete “didn’t want to participate that much” and “he called me fat boy the entire time.” When asked how these negative encounters made him feel, Coach 6 stated “I wouldn’t call any of those experiences negative. It’s just they were learning curves.” Coach 7 shared one of the challenges she faced was not having enough time to get to know her Athlete. She reflected on her first year in the program and revealed “the first year having a nonverbal participant...it’s very, very hard not spending enough time...to know their boundaries and what they’re comfortable with.” Coach 3 expressed her concern was “having that feeling that what if I’m not getting to them, like what if I’m not making them happy” and how she worried about how her Athlete would react if something went wrong in the show ring.

Adult Volunteer 2, Adult Volunteer 1, and Adult Volunteer 3 brought different perspectives to this sub-theme. Adult Volunteer 2 explained that the Coaches may feel like they are taking a risk by allowing their animal to be used in the Champions Livestock Show. She elaborated on the possibility of the animal becoming hurt during the program and this would hinder their chances to exhibit in the junior show. Adult Volunteer 2 stated “I don’t want someone not to do it because they’re worried”, regarding the potential risk the Coaches are taking

by using their animals. Another challenge faced by Adult Volunteer 2 and Volunteer 3 was the awarding of the Grand and Reserve Grand Champion Showman. Adult Volunteer 2 expressed “I think there should be awards for everybody” and Adult Volunteer 3 shared the biggest challenge she faced was selecting just two champions “because I wanted them all...to get a big belt buckle, a big banner, everything because they, you know, stepped out of their comfort zone.” This challenge was even echoed by Coach 7 who expressed “I think that everybody deserves a banner.”

Adult Volunteer 1 spoke about his experience in the show ring being more of a physical and safety challenge that he had to find a way to surmount. He explained the adaptations made to the walking devices he used in the ring and the countless hours spent making his animals comfortable with the equipment but expressed “you never really knew how other animals were going to react.” He shared the challenges they faced to convince the show managers to allow him to exhibit and stated “first year I ever showed in Denver, we had...like our, our beef superintendent, we basically had to, like, bribe them to let me show despite the fact that we had, that I'd worked at it.” He also shared the challenges he had faced while judging livestock, including almost being trampled by a heifer when she became spooked by his walker.

Learning Curves Sub-Theme 2: Creating Opportunity

The sub-theme of Creating Opportunity surrounds the creation of programs or opportunities to allow individuals with disabilities to participate in experiences with nondisabled individuals. Adult Volunteer 1 elaborated on the opportunities he had been grateful to participate in but concluded with “people with disabilities can be kind of an underserved audience at times and, and maybe they don't have as many opportunities as they could.” When Adult Volunteer 2 was asked about why she created the Champions Livestock Show for her Athlete, she expressed

“we know he needed an opportunity to be able to participate in this kind of activity in his life.”

She continued to explain the desire to provide her Athlete the opportunity to show alongside nondisabled peers and how the Champions Livestock Show was founded to grant him the opportunity. Adult Volunteer 2 elaborated on how this program is:

an opportunity to bring those... Athletes and the Coaches together, just in perfect unison because they're the professional, I mean, they're the, the professional about the goat and they have somebody who needs to teach and so it just breaks that down immediately.

When asked about pursuing other opportunities to interact with individuals with special needs, many Coaches expressed their desire to participate in other programs or pursue the opportunity to participate in the Champions Livestock Show again. Coach 3 shared “if there was ever an opportunity to pop up, um, to help with something like this or something similar I would totally be all in to do it.” Coach 6 expressed that by participating in this program, he had the opportunity to “put agriculture and livestock showing in a better light because a lot of people have misconceptions about livestock showing” and by advocating for more opportunities for individuals with disabilities to exhibit livestock we can create a positive environment that is inclusive of all showmen. Coach 5 shared “it was a lot of fun getting to help these kids that normally do not have the opportunity” and she would participate in the program again if given the opportunity.

Athlete 3 and Parent 3 felt the Champions Livestock Show was an opportunity “to get more people in 4-H.” Parent 3 expressed this program was “an opportunity for [Athlete 3] to come...and do this at this level I think is good encouragement” for exhibiting at other expositions in the future. Parent 3 also shared she felt the program was executed to where “everything was an experience and an opportunity. You always get to learn and make things

better.” Parent 1 stated that after seeing her Athlete participate, she was “trying to find ways to get him involved in 4-H” as she felt this opportunity was extremely beneficial for him. Parent 5 responded that this was an opportunity where “[Athlete 5] got to do...some things that a lot of kids don't” and this experience really opened him up to the possibility of becoming more involved in agriculture programs. Parent 4 stated they were looking for ways to expand Athlete 4's experiences, stating “we want to just push him and help him. I figured showing the goat would be a good start”, she also expressed “that's the first time we've done something that wasn't really sport related” with Special Olympics and felt this opportunity gave her Athlete the chance to experience inclusion in a way many others may not.

Program Evaluation and Improvement

The final theme was program evaluation which was feedback regarding positive and negative experiences from participants to understand the perceived best practices of the program and better the program for the future. The sub-themes were (a) program expansion, (b) accessibility and accommodations, (c) future participation, and (d) program marketing.

Program Evaluation Sub-Theme 1: Program Expansion

The sub-theme of program expansion focuses on participant responses surrounding the desire to expand the program to include other species at the Kansas State Fair or create additional disability inclusive livestock shows at a local, state, or national level. When asked how the program could improve Coach 6 stated “I think the way to improve it is to open up to other species” and Coach 7 echoed by saying “implementing like the main five species, maybe horses if that was a possibility, um...pigs, sheep, and cattle and I mean, goats. I think that all of those five species would be really cool to implement into this program.” Coach 1 suggested, “do it on rotation for animals like goats one year, then sheep and just switch on and off that way people if

they come back it's not the same animal, they get to do something else too.” This suggestion would also allow for exhibitors from other species to have the opportunity to serve as Coaches in the Champions Livestock Show and build relationships with individuals with disabilities to become more aware and inclusive. When asked why the program should be expanded, Coach 6 responded “I'm trying to advocate to get it in other barns because like I said, I feel like it's a really good experience” and Coach 4 answered from the perspective of the Athletes stating, “I'm sure that they want to learn about more, how to show more animals than just one species.” Coach 3 shared her thoughts on recruiting more Coaches and Athletes to expand program attendance by stating “drawing in more interest like maybe us specifically asking people in our communities that we know of than just reaching out so that we can get more um, attendance and participation.”

Coach 7 discussed her involvement with outside disability inclusive livestock shows that provided a chance for the Athletes to be more involved in the show preparation process. She explained “we actually take time to put our animals on the stand. And we kind of let the participants like fit with shaving cream and brushes.” It was observed at the Champions Livestock Show that the Athletes were not introduced to the Coaches until they were in the show ring and no formal introductions were ever made. By implementing the practice of introducing Coaches and Athletes before the show, this gives the Athletes the opportunity to become comfortable with the animal and the Coach before entering the show ring.

The desire to expand the program to other species was echoed by the Athletes and Parents. When asked how he would improve the program, Athlete 5 exclaimed “Bring more animals in!” which was followed by Parent 5 stating “I think it would be really good to understand the other species” and “I would encourage to do some other animals.” The feeling

was mutual between Parents with Parent 1 stating “We need more of this” and Parent 4 suggesting “different species” being a neat opportunity for her Athlete to encounter. Parent 2 proposed “not just do Special Olympics but maybe even go into the classrooms of the schools” to recruit more Athletes for the program and spread awareness of how individuals can get involved.

Adult Volunteer 1, Adult Volunteer 2, and Adult Volunteer 3 all expressed their desire to expand the program to other barns at the State Fair. Adult Volunteer 1 elaborated further by sharing the ideas of bringing in different groups of Athletes or hosting the program at different locations to make it more accessible to different special populations. Adult Volunteer 2 voiced that she felt a negative of the program was “more people aren't involved”, meaning Athletes and Coaches, and she hoped a future improvement would be to “hopefully expand to the sheep barn. And I'd like to try to get over to the hog barn.” Adult Volunteer 3 explained a similar disability inclusive program at the Missouri State Fair by sharing the Athletes “do farm visits. So, they have to go out and they know their animal, they know what they're getting into for the most part.” She ended her interview by stating “we can do this in the cattle barn, we can do it in sheep, we can do it everywhere. We just all have to work together to make it happen.”

Program Evaluation Sub-Theme 2: Accessibility and Accommodations

Participants were asked to share their thoughts on how accessible the program was. It was observed by the researcher that no Athletes with physical disabilities participated in the show, only Athletes with cognitive disabilities. Adult Volunteer 2 expressed concern by stating “I would worry some about physical ability...would a kid in a wheelchair be able to access this?” This concern was echoed by Parent 1 who first stated, “I would say it's really super accessible” but then countered with “the only tricky thing I could think is if someone was in a wheelchair.”

When asked about the accessibility of the program Parent 3 asked Athlete 3 directly “Do you think any of your friends could come and do this too?”, which he responded “yes.”

Adult Volunteer 1 reflected on his experiences with accessibility in the show ring on a local, state, and national level. He described that a waiver had been required for him to participate to ensure if his safety was put at risk, the livestock show would not be sued. He spoke about how some shows were more accessible than others depending on the waiver’s requirements. He explained, “I could show...basically proof of the work that I put in at home and, and then so you know, then we get a special waiver sort of thing to, to get, to get in the ring.” When asked to elaborate on the accessibility the show provided, he explained “there wasn't really a...spelled out process and how to do it...you just kind of had to figure some of that out as you went along.”

Much of Adult Volunteer 1’s interview focused on the adaptations made during his time as an exhibitor to be successful in the show ring. He stated “we always kind of had to adjust and adapt, you know, a little bit as I showed” to meet his needs to efficiently exhibit alongside others. When asked about the accommodations his family made, he explained “we always had to make some adjustments to my walker”, his physical show stick was a “wooden shepherds’ cane with a crook”, “my show stick carrier was an old rifle scabbard”, and “bigger wheels” on his wheelchair. When asked about the accommodations the show provided him, he explained “they would kind of put me, you know, towards the end of the class...try to limit...the potential of a wreck” and the show would “have one extra ring person there to kind of be my quote unquote bodyguard in case something goes haywire.”

Program Evaluation Sub-Theme 3: Future Participation

The sub-theme of future participation focused on the participants' desire to participate in the Champions Livestock Show in the future or other disability inclusive livestock expositions. When asked if they would serve as a Coach again all seven Coaches stated yes. Coach 2 responded "I'd go back and do it again. I wouldn't think twice to do it again." Coach 6 shared his perspective after serving as a Coach since the program started by responding "I feel like I've seen some more, uh, Coaches sign up, like year after year, and, uh, I feel like it's gonna stick more, especially as there's some younger ones."

Four of the five Athletes indicated they would want to participate in the Champions Livestock Show in the future. Athlete 1 was the only Athlete to state he did not want to participate again, but Parent 1 expressed that he did have a good time and was just being stubborn with his answers. Athlete 2 did not show much emotion during the interview, but when asked if she would like to participate again, she eagerly exclaimed "Yeah!" and showed signs of excitement and joy. Parent 2 explained Athlete 2 participated in the program previously and "she was pretty, uh...insistent she was doing it again." The Parents were asked if they would encourage their Athlete to participate in the program in the future which they all answered yes. Parent 4 shared "we've talked about getting our other son in next year" and Parent 1 expressed "Yes. Absolutely. Any chance we get it's always a good thing." Parent 3 responded "I absolutely would" encourage her Athlete to participate in the future and Parent 5 stated "I definitely would" support future participation.

Program Evaluation Sub-Theme 4: Program Marketing

The sub-theme of Program Marketing revolved around how the program was marketed to all participants including where they saw or heard about information on the program, how they were recruited to participate, and how participants shared information and experiences to others

about the program after participating. The Coaches were asked how they would promote the Champions Livestock Show to others to which they responded with “posts in social media”, write ups in local “newspapers”, “word of mouth”, and “advocate for it.” Coach 3 suggested “going to our communities as individual Coaches” to recruit new Coaches while also spreading awareness about the program. She also suggested “reaching out to [Athletes] so that they feel comfortable and safe to come here” and understand what the program has to offer. Coach 6 explained that he feels “more awareness is getting raised about it” after the show rather than prior because photos are posted, and experiences are shared publicly.

Parents were asked how they heard about the program and how they would promote it to others. Parent 1 responded they were made aware through friends, Parent 3 expressed “we heard through 4-H”, Parent 4 said they saw a post on “Kansas Special Olympics website or Facebook page”, and Parent 5 explained, “they sent us an email asking us to nominate students to go.” Many Coaches stated they were made aware of the program through Facebook, but there was a varying number of ways Athletes and their families became aware of the program. When asked about promoting the program, Parent 1 exclaimed “that's my own personal responsibility...as a parent, um, I need to spread the word because I want my child to be included” and Parent 3 stated they would promote the program by “sharing our story and our experience.” Parent 5 explained she would do a “write up in our paper” about Athlete 5’s experience and she would share it within her school and co-op. Parent 1 was very passionate about promoting inclusive programs like the Champions Livestock Show. She shared “I work for a high school as a para educator...literally my job is inclusion” from which she stated “don’t be a passive participant. Get out there and spread the word!”

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to understand and describe the individual lived experiences of participants and perceived best practices of livestock expositions that are constructed with diversity inclusion towards youth with disabilities. LaVergne's Diversity Inclusion Program Model was the guiding conceptual framework for this study. "Diversity inclusion is an educational philosophy that welcomes all learners by actively engaging them in secondary agricultural education programs regardless of their race, ethnicity, or exceptionality" (LaVergne, 2008, p. 42). By observing shows that accommodate youth with disabilities to allow them to exhibit, we can distinguish specific practices implemented in the exposition that aid in attaining diversity inclusion to apply in other livestock expositions to make them more accessible and inclusive. By addressing the three constructing themes of inclusion, multicultural education, and culturally responsive teaching; educators or program leaders can achieve diversity inclusion within their program (LaVergne, 2008). We hope to better understand how disability inclusion is perceived in the livestock industry, how diversity inclusion is attained, and the life skills it provides youth with and without disabilities.

This study will identify the perceived benefits individuals with and without disabilities gain by participating in these shows through describing and understanding their lived experiences. Data will provide insight on inclusion, multicultural education, and culturally responsive teaching acquired through participation in these programs. The individual experiences had by participants will also aid in creating a program that will enable character growth for both individuals with and without disabilities.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this collective case study is to understand and describe the individual lived experiences of participants in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show and perceived best practices of livestock expositions that are constructed with diversity inclusion towards youth with disabilities. At this stage in the research, the Champions Livestock Show will be generally defined as a disability inclusive market goat exhibition that occurred at the 2022 Kansas State Fair. The research questions used to guide this study were:

1. What are the experiences of participants with disabilities in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show?
2. What are the experiences of participants without disabilities in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show?
3. What are the Parents of participants with disabilities perceptions towards disability inclusive livestock shows?
4. What are the perceived best practices for inclusive youth programing and events that involve youth with disabilities?

Summary of Themes

Seven themes were produced from this research and aided in displaying the benefits and impact of including individuals with disabilities in livestock expositions. These themes are the foundation for understanding the importance of including youth with disabilities in non-formal youth development programs. The participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews provided unique insight on their lived experiences and their perspectives on disability inclusive livestock shows to create themes that displayed inclusion is valued and programs like this have significant impact on all participants.

Theme 1: Including and accepting others.

Participants displayed acts of including individuals with disabilities to provide them with unique experiences that created an atmosphere of acceptance. Inclusion was influenced by Coaches' prior exposure to disability and their comfort levels varied by exposure and past interaction. Inclusion of the Athletes in other agricultural experiences was examined to gain insight on outside inclusive programs based on agriculture and the exposure the Athletes were gaining from participating in the Champions Livestock Show.

Theme 2: Using multicultural education to increase disability inclusion.

The use of multicultural education in the Champions Livestock Show provided teaching strategies to raise awareness of disability and increase inclusion by meeting the Athletes' unique learning needs. Coaches expressed their acceptance of disability being mere differences amongst individuals and their perspective had been shaped by past exposure and their interaction with the Athletes through the program. The Champions Livestock Show exhibited disability awareness to spectators while providing an educational component that showcased inclusion.

Theme 3: Promoting equity through culturally responsive teaching.

Culturally responsive teaching was met through adaptation of teaching methods to better meet the needs of the Athletes to provide comprehensive instruction and meaningful experiences. Equity was recognized and understood as providing individuals with the resources they need to achieve success. The use of animals in the Champions Livestock Show was seen as a therapeutic technique while also serving as an educational component that provided a segway for the Coaches and Athletes to form a connection and begin communicating.

Theme 4: Learning life skills for the future.

The most prominent life skills gained by participants in the Champions Livestock Show were humility, communication, and experiential learning. Life skills are applicable to everyday life and provide individuals with the necessary knowledge. Humility was expressed by the Coaches as humble moments they had while interacting with the Athletes and allowed them to view their own capabilities in a modest way. Communication for the Athletes was a significant life skill that provided them the opportunity to effectively communicate and engage in meaningful conversations. Experiential learning was obtained through participating in hands on experiences where participants learned by doing and could apply those skills in the future.

Theme 5: Participating in this program offers a chance to feel like you belong.

This theme encompassed how participating in the Champions Livestock Show made both individuals with and without disabilities feel. Moments of joy were observed from all participants in this study, and many expressed how happy they felt during the program along with witnessing joy from others. Participants indicated the sincere significance the program had in their life and how meaningful it was for them to partake in this opportunity. Self-awareness was displayed as participants recognized their own confidence levels and ability while understanding that everyone can achieve success, just in different ways. Relationships were built by all participants in the program through shared experiences which created a foundation for friendship.

Theme 6: These challenging experiences were just learning curves.

The theme of challenging experiences encompassed the negative experiences participants had, but all participants indicated no experience within the program was poor, rather a learning experience. Challenging experiences looked at moments where participants struggled or felt

anxious in regard to interacting with diverse individuals and the response they would receive. Many individuals indicated they would increase the creation of disability inclusive programs or seek out additional opportunities to take part in diversity inclusive programs.

Theme 7: Program evaluation and improvement.

Program evaluation and improvement analyzed the feedback collected on the positive and negative experiences participants had with the Champions Livestock Show itself. All participants expressed the desire to expand the program to other species or create other inclusive livestock shows and declared their willingness to participate in the program in the future. Factors regarding accessibility of the program and accommodations provided were taken into consideration to increase inclusivity while also recognizing resources. Program marketing was also evaluated to increase participation and recruitment.

Synthesis of Findings by Research Questions

The interviews provided an in-depth look at the lived experiences of participants and the perceived best practices of disability inclusive livestock expositions. With minimal previous research on these types of inclusive youth development programs, this study has provided a research foundation for this topic and a better understanding of the perceived benefits participants gained and the best practices implemented in the program. The following is a synthesis of the results as they relate to the four research questions presented throughout this study.

RQ1: What were the experiences of participants with disabilities in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show?

Research question one sought to describe and interpret the lived experiences of participants with disabilities in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair.

The responses regarding individuals with disabilities experiences in the program were collected from five Athletes and six Parents. Four of the five Athletes had exposure to agricultural experiences through family farming, FFA or 4-H involvement, or simply interacting with animals on a relative or neighbor's farm. Adult Volunteer 2 indicated her nonverbal Athlete had exposure to agriculture through participating in activities on the family farm and caring for his sibling's show animals. It was noted that Athlete 3 and Athlete 6 had participated in exhibiting livestock outside of the Champions Livestock Show and Athlete 2 had previously participated in the program before participating in this study.

It was indicated that the greatest benefit the Athletes gained by participating in the Champions Livestock Show was communication and social skills. Athletes were observed communicating with Coaches and adjusting to the show ring while being receptive to the instructions being presented to them. Relationships were established between Coaches and Athletes that allowed for effective social engagement and interaction. Athlete 2 was sought out by the Coach she had when she participated previously in the program, and it was expressed that a friendship had been formed between the Coach and Athlete along with both of their families. It was observed the Champions Livestock Show provided the opportunity for Athletes to independently interact with Coaches who made their best attempt to create a comfortable environment and form a relationship. This created a sense of belonging for the Athletes to engage in exhibiting the goat while also expressing themselves.

Four of the five Athletes indicated they would want to participate in the Champions Livestock Show in the future. Athlete 1 was the only Athlete to state he did not want to participate again, but it was explained that he did have a good time and was just being stubborn with his answers. Athlete 2 expressed the most emotion when asked if she would like to

participate again as she eagerly exclaimed “Yeah!” and showed signs of excitement and joy. Through this expression of future participation, Parents shared they were looking for ways to further involve their Athletes in livestock exhibition through 4-H and other youth programs based around agriculture.

It was observed that all Athletes and Parents expressed pure joy throughout the program as this was an opportunity to exhibit livestock alongside peers who are nondisabled. A sense of belonging was created as Athletes built relationships with others in the program to establish an atmosphere of inclusion in the show ring. The only indication of a negative experience with the program was the awarding of the Grand and Reserve Champion rather than equally recognizing each Athlete for their participation in the program. Feedback was shared on how the Champions Livestock Show could be improved to grant Athletes a more meaningful experience in the future through expanding the program to other species and providing the opportunity for individuals in other barns to serve as Coaches and gain exposure to disability to increase awareness.

RQ2: What were the experiences of participants without disabilities in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show?

Research question two sought to describe and interpret the lived experiences of participants without disabilities in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair. The responses from the seven Coaches interviewed for this study were interpreted as being positive and the program having significant impact on their lives. Six out of the seven Coaches interviewed expressed they had been exposed to disability before participating in this program and therefore already had experience with interacting with individuals with disabilities. Coach 3 was the only individual who had not had prior exposure to disability before participating in the Champions Livestock Show.

The seven Coaches were all observed displaying disability inclusion through participating in the Champions Livestock Show and then continuing to interact with their Athletes after the conclusion of the show. The Coaches acknowledged disability as being a mere difference amongst individuals and how they came to accept disability with the realization that individuals with disabilities can accomplish the same task as individuals without disabilities. The Coaches expressed equity was needed to allow their Athletes to achieve success, therefore modifications had to be made to their teaching strategies to present instructions in a way that could be understood. This was accomplished through equitable practices and communication between Coaches and Athletes to ensure the experience was positive and meaningful. All Coaches discussed a need for multicultural education and implementation of culturally responsive teaching strategies to provide clear instructions to create a connection with their Athlete. These indications related back to LaVergne's Diversity Inclusion Program Model components (LaVergne, 2008). The Coaches shared the challenges they faced in the program and how they were able to adapt and overcome these to provide their Athletes with the best possible experience. They all expressed the desire to increase involvement by expanding the program to other species and create the opportunity of disability education for others. The Coaches concluded with how meaningful participating in the program was to them and the significant impact it had on their perspective and awareness of disability.

Coaches expressed that participation in the Champions Livestock Show had provided sincere significance in their lives and was a meaningful experience. Coach 6 explained participation in the show was "probably one of the best experiences I've had in livestock showing" and the significance of this program changed his perspective by stating "I learned that perfection doesn't always happen and sometimes, instead of being perfect, it's more about the

experience and the interaction with the Athletes than it is about being the grand champion.” The significant impact the program had on the participants’ lives was displayed through their responses which showcase how significant this experience was to them. Many Coaches were observed to be displaying positive emotions and expressing how meaningful the show was to them through continuation of interacting with their Athlete after the conclusion of the show.

RQ3: What were the Parents of participants with disabilities perceptions towards disability inclusive livestock shows?

Research question three sought to describe and interpret the perceptions of Parents towards the Champions Livestock Show and other disability inclusive livestock expositions. Adult Volunteer 2 shared her perceptions as a parent towards disability inclusive livestock shows as being able to provide her Athlete the chance to be seen in the same capacity as other youth are seen. It was mentioned by all Parents that equity was displayed through the judge who spoke directly to the Athletes rather than the Coaches. Each Athlete was addressed by the judge multiple times to provide them a chance to interact and communicate about their animal. Adult Volunteer 2 explained how the program benefits the Coaches too by providing them interaction with individuals who are different from them and building relationships. She discussed how this experience had such a positive impact on her Athlete and each year he came away with more skill development and positive memories that he could reflect on.

Parents expressed that disability inclusion was promoted during the Champions Livestock Show. Parent 3 stated “They welcomed anyone and everyone no matter the ability” and Parent 1 shared “I saw a lot of people with different abilities that were participating and having a great time.” When asked how the show displayed disability inclusion, Parent 5 stated “they made sure that they felt like that they honored that they were equal” as every Athlete had the opportunity to

exhibit a goat and have the same amount of time to be mentored by their Coach and learn about their animal. Disability exposure was discussed as a positive by the Parents as it gives the Coaches a chance to interact with a diverse individual they may not typically approach. It was discussed how programs like the Champions Livestock Show bring awareness to the need for inclusion and that it is an event that engages the community by displaying acceptance and educating spectators on the topic of disability.

The Parents shared the program provided many equitable opportunities for their Athletes to participate in. Many Parents responded how Adult Volunteer 3 exhibited equity in the show ring while speaking with the Athletes. Parents discussed how Adult Volunteer 3 assessed the Athletes to know how to best approach and communicate with them. Adult Volunteer 3 asked different questions based on the Athletes ability and did not compare them based on their responses.

Parents expressed the program was meaningful for them to be able to witness their Athletes be involved in a unique program that provided them a chance to step out of their comfort zones and develop life skills. Adult Volunteer 2 explained for her Athlete, this experience was “everything it was supposed to be because he got to show an animal at the state fair” and “a moment of time for him to be excited and have fun...on his own level.” Parent 2 expressed how beneficial this experience was for her Athlete and how “this is something that I wish my other kids could do.” Adult Volunteer 2 also shared she felt her Athlete’s participation in the program provided him a sense of belonging as he was able to build relationships with others who shared a passion for exhibiting livestock.

For the Parents the animals used in the show were seen as a tool to form a connection between the Coaches and Athletes while also being used as an educational and therapeutic

instrument. They spoke about exposure to animals being a positive interaction for their Athletes as it gave them something to focus on while being a segway for communication between the Coaches and Athletes. It was shown that the Parents felt their Athletes benefitted from participating in this program and the possibilities seemed endless if the practice of inclusion continued to progress in the livestock industry.

RQ4: What were the perceived best practices for inclusive youth programming and events that involve youth with disabilities?

Research question four analyzed the perceived best practices for inclusive youth programming and were interpreted by the researcher through the theme program evaluation and improvement. This theme included feedback regarding positive and negative experiences from participants that were encompassed by the three sub-themes of program expansion, accessibility, and accommodations. These tied into the culturally responsive teaching component of LaVergne's Diversity Inclusion Program Model to adapt to better meet the needs of individuals with different learning styles in a more applicable and valuable manner (2008).

When asked how the program could improve, almost every response related to expanding the program to other species. Coach 6 stated "I think the way to improve it is to open up to other species" and Coach 7 echoed this by saying "implementing like the main five species, maybe horses if that was a possibility, um...pigs, sheep, and cattle and I mean, goats. I think that all of those five species would be really cool to implement into this program." Coach 1 suggested doing a rotation between species to expand the Athletes' opportunities to interact with new animals and new Coaches. This suggestion would also allow for exhibitors from other species to have the opportunity to serve as Coaches in the Champions Livestock Show and build relationships with individuals with disabilities to become more aware and inclusive.

The desire to expand the program to other species was supported by the Athletes and Parents. When asked how he would improve the program, Athlete 5 exclaimed “Bring more animals in!” which was followed by his Guardian expressing her encouragement for him to participate in other species. The feeling was mutual between Parents with statements including “We need more of this” and numerous suggestions of “different species”. There was advocacy to expand the program to individuals with disabilities outside of Special Olympics to target a larger population and present the opportunity to those who may not be aware of the program.

Adult Volunteer 1’s experiences of exhibiting livestock with a disability before inclusive practices were implemented was displayed through his insight on obstacles he had to overcome to be able to exhibit his animals. Adult Volunteer 1 spoke about the adaptations and accommodations made to help him be successful and safe in the show ring. Collectively, all participants shared positive experiences with minor suggestions for the Champions Livestock Show and expressed interest in future involvement in this program and others.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study demonstrates inclusion of individuals with disabilities in youth livestock shows is beneficial for youth with and without disabilities as it provides life skills and significant experiences which creates positive memories and disability awareness. It was concluded that exhibiting and caring for livestock can provide youth, both with and without disabilities, a variety of life skills which correlates with the findings of Walker et al. (2011) who found students who participate in livestock shows have high levels of life skills and leadership development. The greatest life skill the Athletes gained by participating in the Champions Livestock Show was communication which can be applied towards future employment or community involvement as expressed in a study by Randolph (1998). The program provided

emotional development for participants by utilizing the animal to form a connection and create a segway to begin communicating. The emotional development component relates to Mott et al.'s (2022) study on the meaning of youth livestock production and how exhibiting livestock can aid youth with disabilities who struggle to connect with other humans. It was determined the use of animals in the program benefitted the participants with disabilities as it served as a therapeutic tool. Koukourikos et al. found that using animals as a therapeutic tool for individuals with disabilities has provided them with emotional support and stress relief, creates self-awareness, cultivates social skills, and provides opportunity to engage in an activity (2019).

This study concluded that by including individuals with disabilities in the Champions Livestock Show a sense of belonging was created for the Athletes. It was shown by Daley et al. (2018) that belonging is protective of the well-being of youth and organizations should cultivate a sense of belonging to offset discrimination against youth with disabilities. Participants without disabilities gained increased awareness of disability and a different perspective regarding disability in their peers and society. This was also indicated in Ploss et al.'s study which found FFA members who regularly interact with individuals with disabilities will gain awareness and obtain a sense of inclusion and acceptance (1996). The participants indicated how meaningful participating in the program was to them and the significant impact it had on the Coaches' perspective and awareness of disability. This finding solidifies the importance of including and integrating individuals with disabilities into mainstream youth development programs as it creates acceptance and positive attitudes towards differences in youth without disabilities. This is supported by Sumner et al.'s study on diversity and inclusion being essential elements of youth development programs (2018).

Multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching strategies were implemented by the Coaches to provide clear instructions and have effective interactions. This conclusion relates back to this study's conceptual framework, LaVergne's Diversity Inclusion Program Model components (LaVergne, 2008) and how inclusion is obtained through understanding equity and meeting different learning needs. Disability acceptance was established through the Coaches acknowledging disability but viewing it as a mere difference amongst individuals and welcoming the Athletes into the program. LaVergne backs this by sharing that acknowledging differences fosters an atmosphere of being able to effectively engage and include individuals to meet their specific learning needs (2008). It was determined programs like the Champions Livestock Show bring awareness to the need for inclusion and that it is an event that engages the community by displaying acceptance and educating spectators on the topic of disability. This conclusion is supported by Taylor-Winney's (2019) findings which stated the inclusion of youth with disabilities in mainstream programs is beneficial to members without disabilities and can benefit the entire community and future program development.

Discussion and Implications

The livestock industry has seen a continuous increase in the number of youth with disabilities participating in livestock shows over the years (Martin & Rusk, 2021). With this increase, the need for disability inclusion is critical to provide youth the opportunity to develop applicable skills that can be utilized for future employment or community involvement (Randolph, 1998). The livestock show ring can provide different layers of developmental skills to youth with disabilities while also giving them the opportunity to build relationships with peers (Durian & Fowler, 2020). Ensuring the components of inclusion, multicultural education, and culturally responsive teaching are met in youth development programs, can formulate an

educational environment that is structured to provide social equity and equitable education to all students regardless of race, ethnicity, language, social class, or ability (LaVergne, 2008).

Based on the lived experiences of participants in the Champions Livestock Show, participants are gaining experience with diverse individuals and forming an understanding of diversity amongst their peers. Diversity inclusion is being created through inclusion of individuals with disabilities into a program which showcases disability acceptance and education to the public. This program also offers individuals with disabilities the opportunity to care for an animal which builds the life skills of responsibility and consciousness of other's needs (Davis et al., 2005). The results of this study showed participants obtained a positive experience from participating in the show and developed life skills while also gaining an understanding of equity in the show ring. Parents viewed the program as being an opportunity for their Athlete to grow independently and form relationships while enhancing their social skills. The Champions Livestock Show should be expanded into other species at the Kansas State Fair to increase opportunities for disability inclusion and awareness and further the experiences of participants into new ventures.

The act of including individuals with disabilities in livestock shows also creates a sense of belonging. Adult Volunteer 1 spoke about how exhibiting livestock alongside peers without disabilities made him feel good about himself and able to relate to others in a more personal way. Athletes who participated in the Champions Livestock Show were able to be viewed in the same capacity as other exhibitors, while also displaying disability inclusion and education to spectators. Programs like the Champions Livestock Show help break the mold of the typical livestock showman and bring awareness to the endless possibilities available to individuals with

disabilities if they are given the chance to be included. This program builds a structure of equity to be used in mainstream livestock exhibitions to increase inclusion.

This study provides a foundation for including and integrating youth with disabilities in the livestock industry. While this research is based around an inclusive livestock show that is separate from the mainstream show, it can be used as a segway for integration of individuals with disabilities into mainstream livestock expositions to allow youth with disabilities the opportunity to obtain the same experiences as others. However, it appears to be a perception by the Parents that livestock exhibition is limited for individuals with disabilities due to rigid rules in 4-H and FFA, but Parents expressed including their other children without disabilities in these programs. By mainstreaming youth with disabilities into general livestock shows, we can enhance social life participation and create that sense of belonging mentioned by this study's participants. Although, some youth with more severe disabilities may benefit more from being included in shows exclusively for individuals with disabilities as specific accommodations can be made and the individuals' needs can be met more directly. However, separate shows do not fully represent inclusion, as inclusion is to provide individuals with disabilities with the same opportunity that everyone else in the society gets in every aspect of life (Man, 2020, para. 1). It was noted that all recommendations made by participants were about separate shows, not inclusive shows. Youth organizations and general shows need to address this and to determine whether mainstreaming or inclusion in a separate show would be the best possible choice for an individual with a disability, the concept of the least restrictive environment should be applied (Lynch, 2016).

This study exemplifies the experiences and benefits gained by participants who are involved in programs that provide the opportunity to interact with diverse individuals and foster

an atmosphere of acceptance. “Diversity inclusion mirrors a practical, human development approach to not only the educational wellbeing but also social wellbeing” (LaVergne, 2008, pg. 6). Understanding the benefits of disability inclusion and the experiences of individuals can progress the livestock industry to provide equitable opportunities to all.

Limitations

The study was limited to twenty participants consisting of Coaches, Athletes, Parents, and Adult Volunteers in the Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair. Interviews were also limited to only participants in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show program due to the bounds of time and place of the event. Contacting additional participants was attempted by the researcher but was met with lack of response. Due to the limited sample size and participants themselves, the researcher did not explore other inclusive livestock shows or participant experiences outside of the Champions Livestock Show. Certain data from this study cannot be generalizable to all disability inclusive livestock exhibition participants, making specific findings limited to that of Champions Livestock Show participants.

I experienced a lack of response from the participants with disabilities. The participants were prompted by the researcher and interview questions were restated to increase understanding, but many times the Parents would respond for their child. I assumed participants with disabilities would be able to verbally express their experiences, emotions, and thoughts on participating in the Champions Livestock Show, but many questions were met with silence from these participants.

Participants without disabilities may have experienced the Hawthorne effect which “refers to improvement in performance solely due to the subject’s knowledge that he or she is being studied” (Fox et al., 2008, pg. 111). Coaches may have displayed an unconscious social

bias towards disability inclusion after being told this study was examining the benefits of including individuals with disabilities in programs alongside their nondisabled peers. Responses may have been bias regarding inclusion as participants recognized the goal of this study was to produce positive results regarding disability inclusion.

The findings from this study apply specifically to the Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair and the regulations set by Special Olympics Kansas and the Kansas State Fair Market Goat Program. Due to these limitations, the perceived best practices may not be generalizable to the population outside of the Champions Livestock Show program. Since other disability inclusive livestock expositions were not observed, the data cannot be generalizable to all programs.

Through qualitative inquiry, the researcher's opinions and biases influenced data interpretation, which resulted in the possibility of differing interpretations if data was analyzed by other researchers. This was the first time the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. This inexperience could have potentially influenced outcomes based on the inexperience of the researcher with conducting interviews. This was countered by the researcher attempting to educate herself prior to conducting interviews and refraining from using biased questions or probes.

Recommendations for Practice

The results of this study highlight the lived experiences of participants in the 2022 Champions Livestock Show and the perceived best practices were also evaluated to implement in other programs to create disability inclusion. As individuals with disabilities increase their involvement in livestock shows, this study sheds light on the impact disability inclusion has on participants and the meaningfulness behind being included in a program. This study can serve as

a base for future research about disability inclusion in youth livestock exhibition and the youth development that comes from including diverse individuals in mainstream programs. The results of this investigation should be shared with livestock show managers to grant them understanding of inclusive practices and accommodations to offer or adaptations to make to increase accessibility.

The Champions Livestock Show displays disability inclusion while educating its participants and the public in a positive accepting manner, but feedback from participants should be taken into consideration. The program should consider expanding to other species to provide other 4-H and FFA exhibitors the opportunity to serve as a Coach while also allowing Athletes the opportunity to handle different species. This can allow for expansion of agricultural education amongst the Athletes and expose more youth to disability education and increase awareness. Marketing strategies should be increased to reach a larger audience and expand participation in the program. Publicizing the program more can break the mold of what the typical showman looks like and can promote inclusion and encouragement towards individuals with disabilities.

There were no negative experiences related to participating in the Champions Livestock Show, but participants did indicate learning curves they faced and suggested alterations to the show to improve it. Since the Champions Livestock Show has seen an increase in Athlete participation over the years, it should be noted that the number of individuals in the show ring at one time may be overstimulating for some. Dividing the participants into multiple classes or heats may aid in reducing stress in the show ring while also allotting for more time for the Athletes to be in the spotlight. This may also aid in acclimating the animals with the Athlete before entering the show ring. It was recommended by participants that Athletes should receive

equal recognition for their participation to encourage future involvement and feel recognized in their accomplishments. It is recommended that disability awareness and inclusion trainings be offered to volunteers or staff aiding in facilitating the Champions Livestock Show, along with meetings with Parents to better understand the Athlete's needs and how to address them.

Recommended best practices from the Champions Livestock Show for general youth livestock expositions include extra help in the show ring, liability waivers in case of injury, allowing an assistant to accompany the showman in the ring, adaptations to carry show sticks or lead animals, and rearrangement of the lineup of the class to prevent animals from being startled. Person first language should also be utilized along with speaking clearly and directly to Athletes when interacting with them, especially when providing instructions. Disability inclusion and awareness trainings should be required to provide show managers and volunteers with foundational knowledge on how to effectively interact with an individual with a disability and increase inclusive design ideas. It is recommended that meetings with parents/guardians or advanced notification of potential accommodations or adaptations be made clear to show managers so they can plan accordingly.

For youth development professionals it is recommended that meetings with the individuals' parents, guardians, special education teacher, or IEP team take place to best understand the individual's unique needs. Meetings with parents can also help them understand the reasonable accommodations the organization can provide to the child, along with explanations of how equity can be obtained through compromise between the parents and the youth development professional. Obtaining a copy of the individual's IEP can aid in addressing educational needs and providing equitable resources. Disability awareness and inclusion

trainings for youth development professionals should cover a section regarding reading and understanding IEPs.

For parents of individuals with disabilities wanting to include their child in mainstream shows, we recommend advanced notification of the exhibitors' needs to event management. Meeting with the show manager or youth development professional can provide valuable insight regarding the child's disability and unique needs that must be addressed to ensure full inclusion. These meetings can aid in addressing barriers and rigid rules that may be in place by the youth organization which may be modified to allow full participation of the individual with a disability. Addressing these barriers is the first step to bring awareness of disability in youth organizations and discriminatory practices that may hinder accessibility and inclusion.

It is recommended that a manuscript be produced identifying the best practices to increase inclusivity in youth development programs. This manuscript can provide resources on how to obtain accessibility within the program along with descriptions of reasonable accommodations and universal design tactics. The manuscript can coincide with a certification program that properly trains and certifies youth development professionals on how to efficiently and effectively address and interact with individuals with disabilities. It is recommended to best implement this certification program, a new position be created at Kansas State Research and Extension regarding disability awareness and inclusion in youth development programs.

Recommendations for Research

For future research we recommend expanding the study to include participants of other disability inclusive livestock exhibitions. This will provide different perspectives and gain further insight on different practices implemented in each program to select the best ones to recommend to other youth development leaders for their programs. Including programs that

revolve around other species besides goats may also be beneficial to observe therapeutic animal practices and how different species may impact individuals differently. This will provide insight on safety and which species are the safest, most manageable for individuals with disabilities. Researching shows with participants that have physical disabilities is recommended to aid in assessing physical accommodations made to the environment and how animals are handled, along with how to best achieve accessibility.

It is recommended to conduct research on other disability inclusive livestock programs and the founding of their organization to understand the reasoning behind the program's establishment. Gathering data on how different programs have evolved to become more inclusive can provide guidelines for other youth programs to increase disability inclusion through a step-by-step process. This can also aid in providing a timeline for programs to attain resources that will allow for them to create more accessible facilities and train staff and volunteers on disability awareness. Researching the motivational orientation of disability inclusive livestock show managers may also aid in understanding their desire to implement disability inclusive practices. This can provide insight on show managers' perceptions of disability inclusion and how important it is to them to provide reasonable accommodations and ensure accessibility.

Future research should focus on disability awareness and inclusion trainings for youth development educators and how to provide them with the resources to obtain disability inclusion. Understanding the trainings or lack of trainings provided to youth development educators can offer insight to the areas of the Diversity Inclusion Program Model (LaVergne, 2008) that may need more attention. Evaluating how established disability inclusive programs train their staff and volunteers may allow for detailed trainings that cover all areas of diversity inclusion in depth. Providing a manuscript with reasonable adaptations or accommodations that can be made

can also offer youth development professionals an accessible resource on which to begin implementing disability inclusive practices.

It is recommended to research why parents of individuals with disabilities are not including them in mainstream youth development programs. This study displayed parents/guardians advocating for an increase in specialized livestock shows rather than increasing inclusivity in mainstream expositions. Understanding the barriers parents face when wanting to enroll their child in 4-H or FFA can enhance the accessibility of these programs and provide equitable resources to allow these individuals to participate alongside their nondisabled peers.

Final Thoughts

Inclusion of youth with disabilities is critical to provide equal opportunities and experiences that allow individuals to gain life skills and build relationships with diverse peers. While inclusion of youth with disabilities in specialized livestock expositions is important, integration of youth with disabilities into mainstream programs is a crucial next step. Youth with and without disabilities benefit from interacting with one another which can create an atmosphere of acceptance and awareness. By exposing youth without disabilities to diverse individuals, we can create a generation that is conscious of equitable opportunities and understands the importance of inclusion. Including youth with disabilities needs to become prominent in youth development programs and youth development professionals need to be properly trained to interact and accommodate these individuals. With the increase of youth with disabilities participating in livestock expositions, disability inclusion and awareness needs to be accepted and applied to take the next step of integrating these individuals into mainstream programs.

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Appendix A - Institutional Review Board Approval: Coaches



TO: Jonathan Ulmer
Communications & Ag Education
Manhattan, KS 66506

Proposal Number IRB-11169

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 04/26/2022

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Benefits of Serving as a Champions Livestock Show "Coach" at the Kansas State Fair

4-H Extension Educator's Perceptions on Disability Awareness and Inclusion."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for three years from the date of this correspondence.**

APPROVAL DATE: 04/26/2022

EXPIRATION DATE: 04/25/2025

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

No more than minimal risk to subjects

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Electronically signed by Rick Scheidt on 04/26/2022 4:54 PM ET

TO: Jonathan Ulmer
Communications & Ag Education
Manhattan, KS 66506

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 09/27/2022

RE: Proposal #IRB-11169, entitled "Benefits of Serving as a Champions Livestock Show
"Coach" at the Kansas State Fair

4-H Extension Educator's Perceptions on Disability Awareness and Inclusion."

MODIFICATION OF IRB PROTOCOL #IRB-11169, ENTITLED, "Benefits of
Serving as a Champions Livestock Show "Coach" at the Kansas State Fair

4-H Extension Educator's Perceptions on Disability Awareness and Inclusion"

EXPIRATION DATE: 04/25/2025

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) has reviewed and approved the request identified above as a modification of a previously approved protocol. **Please note that the original expiration remains the same.**

All approved IRB protocols are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced in-progress reviews may also be performed during the course of this approval period by a member of the University Research Compliance Office staff. Unanticipated adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB, and / or the URCCO.

It is important that your human subjects activity is consistent with submissions to funding / contract entities. It is your responsibility to initiate notification procedures to any funding / contract entity of any changes in your activity that affects the use of human subjects.

Appendix B - Institutional Review Board Approval: Athletes



TO: Jonathan Ulmer
Communications & Ag Education
Manhattan, KS 66506

FROM: Sara Rosenkranz, PhD, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 06/29/2022

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Benefits of Participating as a Champions Livestock Show "Athlete" at the Kansas State Fair."

Proposal Number IRB-11230

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for three years from the date of this correspondence.**

APPROVAL DATE: 06/28/2022

EXPIRATION DATE: 06/27/2025

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

No more than minimal risk to subjects

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Electronically signed by Sara Rosenkranz, PhD on 06/29/2022 11:09 AM ET

TO: Jonathan Ulmer
Communications & Ag Education
Manhattan, KS 66506

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 11/09/2022

RE: Proposal #IRB-11230, entitled "Benefits of Participating as a Champions Livestock Show "Athlete" at the Kansas State Fair."

MODIFICATION OF IRB PROTOCOL #IRB-11230, ENTITLED, "Benefits of Participating as a Champions Livestock Show "Athlete" at the Kansas State Fair"

EXPIRATION DATE: 06/27/2025

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) has reviewed and approved the request identified above as a modification of a previously approved protocol. **Please note that the original expiration remains the same.**

All approved IRB protocols are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced in-progress reviews may also be performed during the course of this approval period by a member of the University Research Compliance Office staff. Unanticipated adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB, and / or the URCO.

It is important that your human subjects activity is consistent with submissions to funding / contract entities. It is your responsibility to initiate notification procedures to any funding / contract entity of any changes in your activity that affects the use of human subjects.

Electronically signed by Phil Vandiman on 11/09/2022 11:51 AM ET

Appendix C - Coaches Assent/Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE: Benefits of Serving as a Champions Livestock Show “Coach” at the Kansas State Fair

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE: April 26, 2022

Project EXPIRATION DATE: May 2023

LENGTH OF STUDY: 12 Months

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Jonathan Ulmer, Regan Culp

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: Regan Culp, 219-863-8599 or rculp@ksu.edu

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION: *For the subject should he/she have questions or wish to discuss on any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB. These are:* Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: This study's aim is to identify the benefits individuals gain who serve as "Coaches" in The Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair Market Goat Barn. A focus group will be organized to interview Coaches who served in 2022 to understand their experience while serving as a Coach. Results from the focus groups will be compiled and provide insight on life skills, disability awareness, and experience Coaches acquired by participating in the program. Results will also help us gain an understanding on how disability is perceived the livestock industry and how it may be implemented amongst other species at the Kansas State Fair.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

A focus group will be organized to collect responses from participants who served as Coaches during the 2021 and 2022 Kansas State Fair Champions Livestock Show event by the facilitating graduate student. Participants will be asked to answer 12-15 questions regarding their experience while serving as a Coach and their perception of disability before and after participating in the program. The focus group will be video/audio recorded on Zoom to better analyze participants' responses after the conclusion of the focus group. Written explanation of consent/assent and the research study will be described in the email before participants are allowed to participate in the focus group. The consent/assent form must be submitted to the facilitating graduate student before the individual is allowed to participate in the focus group. Once data is collected it will be evaluated and analyzed.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: There will be no known risks or discomforts anticipated in this study.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: Potential to better understand the benefits youth gain by participating in The Champions Livestock Show program to become more aware of disability in their environment and how to effectively work with disabled individuals. Potential to present reason to expand the program to other species/barns at the Kansas State Fair.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Information that will be collected as part of this research could be used for future research studies or distributed to other investigators for future research studies without additional informed consent. All data collected will be stored on a password protected account on a password protected computer in a secure area. Data will be stored for two years. The focus group will be recorded on Zoom to be analyzed and compiled. The recorded focus group will be stored on a password protected Zoom account on a password protected computer in a secure area to ensure confidentiality.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS:
No

PARTICIPANT NAME/SIGNATURE:

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:

**PARENT/GUARDIAN
APPROVAL SIGNATURE:**

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**PARTICIPANT
NAME:**

**PARTICIPANT
SIGNATURE:**

DATE:

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Appendix D - Athletes Assent/Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE: Benefits of Participating in the Champions Livestock Show as an “Athlete” at the Kansas State Fair

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE: June 29, 2022

Project EXPIRATION DATE: May 2023

LENGTH OF STUDY: 12 Months

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Jonathan Ulmer, Regan Culp

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: Regan Culp, 219-863-8599 or rculp@ksu.edu

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION: *For the subject should he/she have questions or wish to discuss on any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB. These are:* Sara Rosenkranz, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Heath Ritter, Acting Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: This study's aim is to identify the benefits individuals with disabilities gain by participating as an "Athlete" in The Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair Market Goat Barn. Focus groups/interviews will be conducted with Athletes and their parents/guardians who participated in 2022. Data from these focus groups will be compiled and provide insight on motor skills gained, social adeptness, and impactful experiences acquired by participating in the program. Results will also help us gain an understanding on how disability is perceived the livestock industry and how it may be implemented amongst other species at the Kansas State Fair.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

A focus groups or individual interviews will be organized by the facilitating graduate student to obtain personal experiences from individuals who participated as Athletes for the Champions Livestock Show during the 2022 Kansas State Fair. Parents/Guardians will also be asked to participate in the focus group to share their perspectives on the program along with provide insight on how the program impacts youth with disabilities. The interviews/focus group will take place at the Kansas State Fair after the conclusion of the Champions Livestock Show and they will last approximately 1 hour. Written consent/assent forms will be distributed beforehand as many participants are minors and will need parent consent along with their own. Focus groups will be organized and recorded to analyze common themes and relay information for the researcher. An assortment of nine questions will be asked by the researcher towards the youth and twelve questions will be asked towards the parent/guardian to gain insight on the personal experience subjects obtained from the program, parent/guardian's perceptions of how the program impacted their child, and the skills learned by the participating individuals. No survey will be conducted, only a focus group. Once data is collected it will be evaluated and analyzed.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: There will be no known risks or discomforts anticipated in this study.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: Potential to better understand the benefits youth gain by participating in The Champions Livestock Show program to expand the program to other species/barns at the Kansas State Fair. Evaluate the improvement of motor skills, social adeptness, mental health, and inclusiveness.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Information that will be collected as part of this research could be used for future research studies or distributed to other investigators for future research studies without additional informed consent. All data collected will be stored on a password protected account on a password protected computer in a secure area. Data will be stored for two years. The focus group or interviews will be recorded on Zoom to be analyzed and complied. The recorded focus group will be stored on a password protected Zoom account on a password protected computer in a secure area to ensure confidentiality. Responses will be kept confidential, names will not be reported, and results will be presented as a group. Participants information will not be stored with their data so data will be de identifiable in future research studies. For the recorded focus groups, the recordings will be saved as password protected.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS:
No

PARTICIPANT NAME/SIGNATURE:

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:

**PARENT/GUARDIAN
APPROVAL SIGNATURE:**

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**PARTICIPANT
NAME:**

**PARTICIPANT
SIGNATURE:**

DATE:

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Revised Language for Lower Reading Levels

PROJECT TITLE: Benefits of Participating in the Champions Livestock Show as an “Athlete” at the Kansas State Fair

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE: June 29, 2022

Project EXPIRATION DATE: May 2023

LENGTH OF STUDY: 12 Months

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Jonathan Ulmer, Regan Culp

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: Regan Culp, 219-863-8599 or rculp@ksu.edu

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION: *For the subject should he/she have questions or wish to discuss on any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB. These are:* Sara Rosenkranz, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Heath Ritter, Acting Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of this study is to understand what benefits people with disabilities gain by being an “Athlete” in The Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair. One-on-one interviews or group interviews will be conducted with each Athlete and their parents/guardians to talk about their experiences with the Champion Livestock Show. Results from the interviews will help us understand the importance of programs like The Champions Livestock Show and possibly how to start other programs like it.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

One-on-one interviews or group interviews with the Athletes and their parents/guardians will be organized by the researcher. The interviews/focus group will take place at the Kansas State Fair after the conclusion of the Champions Livestock Show and they will last approximately 1 hour. To participate in the interviews, Athletes will have to sign a Consent/Assent form allowing the researcher to interview Athletes and their parent/guardian. The interviews will be recorded so Athlete’s answers can be listened to again. The interview will have nine questions for the Athletes to answer so the researcher can understand Athlete’s experience with The Champions Livestock Show. Parents/Guardians will be asked twelve questions so the researcher can understand their experiences as well.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: There will be no known risks or discomforts anticipated in this study.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: The benefits of this study are to create more programs like The Champions Livestock Show and understand what benefits Athletes gain by participating in the program.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Information that will be collected as part of this research could be used for future research studies or given to other investigators for future research studies without additional informed consent. All data collected will be stored on a password protected account on a password protected computer in a secure area. Data will be stored for two years. The one-on-one interviews or group interviews will be recorded on Zoom to be analyzed and compiled. The recorded interviews will be stored on a password protected Zoom account on a password protected computer in a secure area to ensure confidentiality. Responses will be kept confidential, names will not be reported, and results will be presented as a group. Participants' information will not be stored with their data so data will be de-identifiable in future research studies. For the recorded focus groups, the recordings will be saved as password protected.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS:
No

PARTICIPANT NAME/SIGNATURE:

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:

**PARENT/GUARDIAN
APPROVAL SIGNATURE:**

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**PARTICIPANT
NAME:**

**PARTICIPANT
SIGNATURE:**

DATE:

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Appendix E - Coaches Interview Protocol and Questions

Semi-structured Interviews

Introduction

I am Regan Culp, a master's student at Kansas State University pursuing my degree in Agricultural Education and Communication. I am conducting my thesis project that analyzes the benefits of serving as a Coach and participating as an Athlete for the Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair. I am conducting interviews for those who served as Coaches or participated as Athletes for the Champions Livestock Show program in the summer of 2022 to gather insight on the life skills potentially gained and viewpoints on disability in the livestock industry. If you wish to participate in the study, I will need a signed consent/assent form from you. If you are under the age of 18 and wish to participate in the study, you will need a parent's consent. The interviews will take a short amount of time and we will be recording them so we can reference back to your responses on how this program has impacted you. Please consider participating so we can gain a better understanding of how programs like this can be implemented into other youth organizations.

Questions-Coaches

1. State your age.
2. Can you confirm that you were a Coach at the 2022 Champions Livestock Show?
 - a. Have you served as a Coach before?
3. How would you describe your Coaching experience?
4. How did you hear about this program?
5. How were you recruited to participate in this program?
 - a. Why did you choose to apply to participate in this program?
6. What were your positive experiences with the Champions Livestock Show?
 - a. What caused you to feel that way?
7. What were your negative experiences with the Champions Livestock Show?
 - a. What caused you to feel that way?
8. Think back to your experiences before you served as a coach...how did you view people with disabilities?

9. After your coaching experience how do you now view people with disabilities?
 - a. If your view differed, how did it change?
 10. Do you think your current view of people with disabilities is similar or different from your peers?
 - i. Why or why not?
 11. What skills did you gain from serving as a Coach?
 12. If you received the opportunity to serve as a coach again, would you do anything differently?
 13. How would you improve the Champions Livestock Show program?
 14. How would you promote the Champions Livestock Show program to others?
 15. Should the Champions Livestock Show be implemented in other barns at the Kansas State Fair?
 - a. Why or why not?
 16. Can you identify experiences you had with people with disabilities before participating in this program?
- Continue for 2020 and 2021 Coaches if applicable.
17. Did you serve as a Coach for the Champions Livestock Show in 2021?
 18. Can you identify experiences you had with people with disabilities after participating in this program?
 19. Have you sought out opportunities working with people with disabilities since participating in this program?

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for participating in the Champions Livestock Show Coaches and Athletes Research Study. Results will be evaluated for Regan Culp's thesis and other small research projects. Once data has been analyzed and formatted, an email containing results will be sent to all participants that participated in the study. Thank you for your time and effort and we look forward to sharing results with you soon.

Appendix F - Athletes and Parents/Guardians Interview Protocol and Questions

Semi-structured Interviews

Introduction

I am Regan Culp, a master's student at Kansas State University pursuing my degree in Agricultural Education and Communication. I am conducting my thesis project that analyzes the benefits of serving as a Coach and participating as an Athlete for the Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair. I am conducting interviews for those who served as Coaches or participated as Athletes for the Champions Livestock Show program in the summer of 2022 to gather insight on the life skills potentially gained and viewpoints on disability in the livestock industry. If you wish to participate in the study, I will need a signed consent/assent form from you. If you are under the age of 18 and wish to participate in the study, you will need a parent's consent. The interviews will take a short amount of time and we will be recording them so we can reference back to your responses on how this program has impacted you. Please consider participating so we can gain a better understanding of how programs like this can be implemented into other youth organizations.

We are going to go through a series of 10 questions that will be answered by just the Athlete unless help from the parent is required. After those 10 questions, I will ask some questions that can be answered by both of you. The last set of questions will be for just the Parent/Guardian to answer. So, if you both are ready, we will begin with the Athlete questions.

Questions-Athletes and Parents/Guardians

Athlete Questions (Parents can aid with answering questions if youth are unable to)

1. How old are you?
2. Can you confirm that you were an Athlete the 2022 Champions Livestock Show?
3. Tell me about the good experiences you had with The Champions Livestock Show?
4. Tell me about the bad experiences you had with The Champions Livestock Show?
5. What did you learn from participating in this program?
6. If you were asked to participate next year, would you do it again?
 - a. Why?

7. What did you like about how you and your Coach worked together?
8. What do you wish was different about your Coach?
9. Do you feel that your Coach treated you well?
 - a. Why or why not?
10. What would you change about the Champions Livestock Show to make it better?

The following questions can be answered by Athlete or Parent/Guardian

1. How did you hear about this program?
2. How were you recruited to participate in this program?
 - a. Why did you choose to register your Athlete to participate in this program?
3. Did you gain life skills, social skills, or other positive attributes from participating in this experience?
 - a. What skills did you gain?
 - b. Ask parents “anything else you’d like to add”
4. Does the Champions Livestock Show provide equal access to all individuals of different abilities?
 - a. How or how not?
 - b. Ask parents if they have anything to add
5. If other species at the Kansas State Fair started Champion Livestock Shows in their barns, would you want to participate?
 - a. Why or why not?
6. Have you participated in similar programs to the Champions Livestock Show?
 - a. What other programs?
7. What other agricultural related experiences have you been able to participate in?

Parents/Guardians Questions

1. What were your positive experiences with the Champions Livestock Show?
 - a. What caused you to feel that way?
2. What were your negative experiences with the Champions Livestock Show?
 - a. What caused you to feel that way?
3. Your Athlete said they would/would not participate again. Would you encourage them to participate in this program again?

- a. Why or why not?
- 4. How does the Champions Livestock Show promote diversity inclusion?
- 5. How does the Champions Livestock Show showcase disability acceptance education?
- 6. How do the program leaders of the Champions Livestock Show display diversity responsive teaching towards individuals with disabilities to meet their learning needs?
- 7. How would you improve the Champions Livestock Show program?
- 8. How would you promote the Champions Livestock Show program to others?

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for participating in the Champions Livestock Show Coaches and Athletes Research Study. Results will be evaluated for Regan Culp's thesis and other small research projects. Once data has been analyzed and formatted, an email containing results will be sent to all participants that participated in the study. Thank you for your time and effort and we look forward to sharing results with you soon.

Appendix G - Adult Volunteers Interview Protocol and Questions

Semi-structured Interviews

Introduction

I am Regan Culp, a master's student at Kansas State University pursuing my degree in Agricultural Education and Communication. I am conducting my thesis project that analyzes the benefits of serving as a Coach and participating as an Athlete for the Champions Livestock Show at the Kansas State Fair. I am conducting interviews for those who served as Coaches or participated as Athletes for the Champions Livestock Show program in the summer of 2022 to gather insight on the life skills potentially gained and viewpoints on disability in the livestock industry. We are also collecting data on the experiences of Adult Volunteers within the program. If you wish to participate in the study, I will need you to verbally grant your consent. The interviews will take a short amount of time and we will be recording them so we can reference back to your responses on how this program has impacted you. Please consider participating so we can gain a better understanding of how programs like this can be implemented into other youth organizations.

Questions-Adult Volunteers

Judge

1. How were you recruited to serve as the judge for the Champions Livestock Show?
2. Describe the responsibilities of the judge.
3. Describe how you felt serving as the judge.
4. Describe your experience with the Champions Livestock Show.
5. What challenges did you face being a part of the Champions Livestock Show?
6. What were your positive experiences with the program?
 - a. What caused you to feel that way?
7. What were your negative experiences with the program?
 - a. What caused you to feel that way?
8. Were you aware of the Champions Livestock Show before being a part of the program this year?
 - a. How did you become aware of this program?

9. Does the Champions Livestock Show provide equal access to all individuals of different abilities?
 - a. How or how not?
10. Does the Champions Livestock Show promote diversity inclusion?
 - a. How?
11. Does the Champions Livestock Show showcase disability acceptance education?
 - a. How?
12. Do the program leaders of the Champions Livestock Show display diversity responsive teaching towards individuals with disabilities to meet their learning needs?
 - a. How?
13. How would you improve the Champions Livestock Show program?
14. How would you promote the Champions Livestock Show program to others?
15. Have you been a part of other programs similar to the Champions Livestock Show?
 - a. Have you judged events that have had participants with special needs?

Adult Volunteer 1

1. Describe your background in agriculture.
2. Describe your involvement in 4-H/FFA.
3. Describe your experiences exhibiting livestock.
4. What challenges did you face while exhibiting livestock?
 - a. How did you overcome those challenges?
5. Describe accommodations that were made to help you be successful in the show ring.
6. How did you request accommodations or suggest changes to increase accessibility during your time as an exhibitor?
 - a. Who or what was your main resource for accessibility?
7. Were you treated differently by other livestock exhibitors or professionals in the livestock industry?
 - a. How were you treated differently?
8. Did you experience discrimination or feel you were being treated differently during your time as an exhibitor due to having a disability?
 - a. What caused you to feel that way?

9. How were you recruited to serve in the Adult Volunteer 1 position for the Champions Livestock Show?
10. Describe your experience with the Champions Livestock Show.
 - a. What were your positive experiences with the Champions Livestock Show?
 - b. What were your negative experiences with the Champions Livestock Show?
11. Does the Champions Livestock Show promote diversity inclusion?
 - a. How?
12. Does the Champions Livestock Show showcase disability acceptance education?
 - a. How?
13. Do the program leaders of the Champions Livestock Show display diversity responsive teaching towards individuals with disabilities to meet their learning needs?
 - a. How?
14. How would you improve the Champions Livestock Show program?
15. How would you promote the Champions Livestock Show program to others?

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for participating in the Champions Livestock Show Adult Volunteers Research Study. Results will be evaluated for Regan Culp's thesis and other small research projects. Once data has been analyzed and formatted, an email containing results will be sent to all participants that participated in the study. Thank you for your time and effort and we look forward to sharing results with you soon.

Appendix H - Code Book

Theme	Sub-Theme	Code Description
Inclusion		Act of including and accepting others into a group regardless of differences amongst individuals. Including mainstream and special education programs.
	Disability Inclusion	Inclusion of individuals with disabilities. Excluding special education programs.
	Disability Exposure	Exposure or lack of exposure to interaction with individuals with disabilities. Excluding the Champions Livestock Show.
	Agriculture Exposure	Exposure or lack of exposure to agriculture related programs or experiences. Excluding the Champions Livestock Show.
Multicultural Education		Teaching strategies that raise awareness of diversity awareness and the inclusion of diverse individuals in mainstream programs.
	Disability Acceptance	Viewpoint that disability is a mere difference between humans rather than a disadvantage or limitation. Acceptance of others regardless of ability.
	Disability Perspective	How non-disabled participants view disability before and after participating in the program.
	Disability Awareness	Awareness of disability in society and how it is perceived by others that may not have had exposure. Including educational encounters that teach the public about disability topics and showcase disability inclusive events.
Culturally Responsive Teaching		Teaching methods that adapt to meet the needs of individuals with different learning styles in a more applicable and valuable manner.

	Adaptable Teaching	Ability to adapt ones teaching style to meet the unique learning needs of an individual to provide comprehensive instructions and meaningful experiences.
	Equity	Evidence of an understanding that everyone has different needs and therefore require different resources to reach an equal outcome.
	Animal Therapy	Utilization of animals as a therapeutic technique while also using them as educational material.
Life Skills		A skill that is necessary and applicable to everyday life.
	Humility	Ability to modestly view one's own capabilities in comparison with an individual with a disability. Realization of the things we may take for granted due to being nondisabled. Excluding pity and sympathy.
	Communication	Ability to effectively communicate with an individual with a disability to present instructions and have meaningful interactions. Includes active listening, eye contact, ability to carry a conversation, efficiently interact with others, follow directions, and create a positive interaction
	Experiential Learning	Ability to learn by doing. Applicable skills that are obtained through hands on experiences. Includes skills that individuals learned from past participation in the program that they applied this year in the program.
Profound Participation		How participating in this program made both disabled and nondisabled participants feel.
	Sparkling Joy	Moments where joy was evidently displayed by the individual with or without a disability. Including indication that level of ability does not hinder an individual's opportunities and individuals with disabilities can partake in any experience they desire.

	Meaningfulness	Expression that participation in the program provided sincere significance in the individual's life.
	Self-Awareness	Participants' awareness of confidence levels, one's own ability, past perception of disability and overall view of themselves.
	Building Relationships	Indication that a relationship was formed between Coaches and Athletes through shared experience and participation in the program to create a sense of belonging.
Learning Curves		Positive and negative challenges faced by participants that resulted in learning opportunities.
	Challenging Experiences	Examples or experiences of struggle when the participant felt anxious about how their actions may be received or what actions to take. Including moments where participants may not have been recognized to the extent they should have.
	Creating Opportunity	Creation of programs or opportunities to allow individuals with disabilities to participate in experiences with nondisabled individuals. Including seeking out additional disability inclusive opportunities after participating in the program.
Program Evaluation		Feedback regarding positive and negative experiences from participants to understand the perceived best practices of the program and better the program for the future.
	Program Expansion	Desire to expand the Champions Livestock Show to other species at the Kansas State Fair or create other disability inclusive livestock programs at local, state, or national expositions.
	Accessibility and Accommodations	Factors regarding how accessible the event was to individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities and adaptations made to the program to allow for successful

	participation based off the individual's disability and the resources they needed to succeed. Includes identification of ways to increase accessibility for others.
Future Participation	Desire to participate in the Champions Livestock Show or different programs based around interacting with individuals with disabilities in the livestock industry.
Program Marketing	How the program was marketed to all participants including where they saw or heard about information on the program, how they were recruited to participate, and how participants shared information and experiences with others about the program after participating