

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE MENTORING IN A  
FORMAL MENTORING SETTING

A Thesis

by

REBECCA ANN LUCKEY

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

December 2009

Major Subject: Agricultural Education

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Manda H. Rosser
Committee Members,	Christine D. Townsend
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## ABSTRACT

Characteristics of Effective Mentoring in a  
Formal Mentoring Setting. (December 2009)  
Rebecca Ann Luckey, B.S., Texas A&M University  
Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Manda H. Rosser

A qualitative phenomenological study was conducted to determine the perceived levels of effectiveness and barriers for a successful mentoring relationship between mentors and mentees. Specifically, this study explored the formal mentoring relationships within Texas AgriLife Extension's Mentoring Program. Research was conducted on mentoring relationships from mentor and mentee perspectives to determine how they perceived the relationships' effectiveness, which may serve as a model for further research.

The population for this longitudinal study was mentors and mentees in a formal mentoring relationship between the years of 2004 and 2008 within Texas AgriLife Extension Service. One hundred-six mentoring relationships were examined over a five year period. The data were gathered from an open-ended evaluation instrument administered at the end of the one-year mentoring relationship.

Wells, (1997) served as the conceptual framework for this study. Wells's model is based on the nine roles of value—creating order, inspiring action, and improving performance—and was used to identify skills that could build professional capacity for a

mentor and mentee. The findings of this study indicated that mentors and mentees perceived the formal mentoring program to be effective in sharing knowledge, resources, and experiences. Mentors and mentees indicated that the barriers of time, distance, differences, and work load existed and the relationship could have been improved if barriers were minimized. The perceived characteristics that emerged for an effective mentoring relationship were trusting, encouraging, and leadership.

Recommendations were made that researchers should continue to look at training and processes for mentors and mentees preparing for a mentoring relationship.

## DEDICATION

By the grace of God and my wonderful and loving family,

husband Paul and children

Alisa, Elaine, Ryan and Jack, I dedicate this work.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my husband Paul, thank you so much for making this journey possible. I would not have completed this journey without your unwavering love, support, and encouragement. Thank you for everything.

To my four wonderful blessings from God—Alisa, Elaine, Ryan, and Jack. If this degree does nothing more for me may each of you know the importance of an education early in life and how education is a key for limitless opportunities.

To my family, thank you so much for supporting and believing in me throughout many phases in life. Thank you for teaching me that with the fundamentals of hard work and determination, I can achieve anything. Your love, support and encouragement has made this journey possible, and for that I am eternally grateful.

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purpose for meeting you and our paths would cross again. The insight and passion you possess for service and people gives me the strength to know even on bad days, I am making a difference.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could  
because someone else thought they could  
—Iowa Mentoring Partnership

Employees entering the work force for the first time characteristically have many developmental adjustments to overcome. In addition, there is a need to feel a connection within the organization. New employees typically do not have established relationships in the new organization or feel comfortable going to the supervisor or co-worker to ask for assistance (Gilley, Eggland, & Gilley, 2000). New employees often indicate a need for a mentor. To help reduce organizational ambiguity and anxiety as well as provide a welcoming environment to address needs or issues that may arise (Gilley, Eggland, & Gilley, 2000). Additionally, a mentor can offer the support, guidance, and counseling that a new employee needs to transition into the organizational structure (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kram, 1983).

### **Review of Literature**

Mentoring within a large organization provides new or less-experienced employees opportunities to network with more experienced individuals to develop a better and broader understanding of the organization beyond just their individual position. Being surrounded by role models that portray positive characteristics,

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This thesis follows the style of *Journal of Extension*.

appropriate attitudes, behaviors and skills enable mentees to experience and observe practices they can emulate to succeed within the organization (Allen & Poteet, 1999; Henderson, 1985; Noe, 1988). The term “mentor,” as it is being used, refers to a more senior employee providing guidance and counseling to a newer or less experienced employee (Kram, 1983; Noe, 1988). From a human resource development and training aspect, the mentor often provides on-demand training and skills for the new employee. The new employee is not required to wait for scheduled trainings to become available, which assists in providing a transfer of knowledge through the organization from an experienced mentor to the mentee (Cummings & Worley, 2001).

Organizations historically understand the importance of mentors. Public and federal organizations like the United States Department of Agriculture, Apple Computer, AT&T, Federal Express, Jewel Companies and the Internal Revenue Service are investing in their employees through career and training development opportunities provided by a mentoring program (Hegstad, 1999; Kram, 1983; Zey, 1985). Mentoring helps mentors and mentees by establishing, progressing, and safeguarding various stages of their careers (Cummings & Worley 2001). Mentors can provide opportunities for organizational socialization, motivation, and increased job performance by identifying what skills a new employee may be lacking to become more engaged (Wilson & Elman, 1990). Mentees can provide employee satisfaction back to the mentor. Mentors have the opportunity to view new perspectives on their current performance and communicate the organization through different experiences to help the mentor to grow professionally (Stone, 2004).

Mentors receive self-fulfilling job revitalization within the organization while providing positive visibility with beneficial experiences to the mentee (Rosser & Egan, 2003). The mentor provides career support by opening doors within the organization and creating opportunities for the mentee. Providing challenging work opportunities further creates high visibility for both employees, thus reflecting a mutual reinforcing relationship that demonstrates the value and commitment of both employees in support of the organization (Desimone, Werner & Harris, 2002). Mentors are characterized as individuals devoted to providing leadership to a new employee in an effort to minimize organizational obstacles and increase the upward advancement of mentees (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992; Hunt & Michael, 1983). Mentors have the opportunity to share knowledge and experiences as role models, while having a new employee shadow them allows for the mentors to receive respect, support, and recognition among peers as well as from new employees (Desimone et al., 2002; Kram, 1983; Noe, 1988).

### **Mentoring Roles for New Employees**

Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978), *The Season of a Man's Life*, describes mentoring as an essential tool discussing the role of being a mentor as a support system to young adults in helping them to transition into new roles and visualize their goals. The *Harvard Business Review* published two articles at this time entitled "Everyone Who Makes It Has a Mentor" (Collins & Scott, 1978) and "Much Ado about Mentors" (Roche, 1979) that both communicate how CEOs began careers learning the socialization culture and responsibilities of the job from senior-level managers who were their mentors. Jones (1983) wrote that all new employees experience the power of

organizational socialization when they enter a new job. New employees are faced with uncertainty and apprehension leading to stressful feelings regarding how they fit within the organization. Noe (1988) wrote that direct observational learning is part of the organizational socialization and training program. A new employee observes a more senior employee so feedback can be provided as the new employee begins to learn about the organization. Within organizations, there is formal and informal mentoring. Informal mentoring is not structured; it just happens naturally when two people who have similar interests, find they are compatible and want to share ideas (Allen & Eby, 2008, p. 12). Formal mentoring has structure and involves a third party who pairs the mentor & mentee together (Allen & Eby, 2008). Although relationships may develop that are spontaneous in nature, the relationships may not develop in a timely or consistent manner for new employees to learn needed skills. To assist new employees, many organizations have implemented formal mentoring programs to alleviate apprehension for new employees to help attract, retain, support, and develop potential high performing employees (Allen, Eby & Lentz, 2006; Kram, 1983, Kram, 1985; Zey, 1985). Organizational mentoring programs pair an experienced employee with a new employee and provide structured assignments or tasks for each so integration within the organization begins immediately (Allen & Eby, 2008).

### **Mentoring in Extension**

There is a perceived consensus that a mentoring program is needed to address the specific issues county extension agents face. In reviewing the extension literature, there is support for formal mentoring, but within each article, there are discussions for

improvement on the pairing of the mentoring relationships that needs to be further addressed. Smith and Beckley (1985) with Ohio Cooperative Extension were the first to report positive feedback from a mentoring program. Zimmer and Smith (1992) followed with an article that discussed mentoring within the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service. Zimmer and Smith's (1992) article said that new county agents need a mentor similar in job responsibilities and to be paired within a short time-frame of being hired. Zimmer and Smith (1992) discussed providing teaching, guiding, and role modeling for new employees at the onset of their career since there is a tendency for new employees to become overwhelmed with the demands the new job puts on them and their family. Zimmer and Smith (1992) concluded that with management, structure, and encouragement, a successful mentoring program can be established and maintained. Penn State Cooperative Extension expanded the research on county extension agents where they studied factors that could facilitate or hinder a mentoring relationship from a mentor and mentee perspective.

Mincemoyer and Thomson (1998) explored perceptions and experiences of mentee and mentor relationships within extension as Safrit's (2006) study confirmed a formal mentoring program is needed within extension. Mincemoyer and Thomson (1998) concluded a mentor orientation would benefit the mentoring relationship in providing a better understanding of what expectations the organization had and information the mentor should cover with the new employee. In both studies, there were recommendations that a formal mentor program is needed to provide a foundation for a new employee to be productive and build self-confidence, while reaffirming that they are

valued employees. Productive, self-confident employees are what state extension organizations are striving to retain. Mincemoyer and Thomson's (1998) research findings expressed a need for a formal mentoring program. Similar to Mincemoyer and Thomson's (1998) recommendations, a formal mentoring program was developed within Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

### **Texas AgriLife Extension Mentoring**

In recruiting qualified new agents, Texas AgriLife Extension Service recognizes many of these individuals have had little or no professional or extension experience. Within Texas AgriLife Extension Service formal assignments are made for a new agent who is paired with an experienced agent mentor who collaborates with the district administrator, regional program directors, and new agent's county co-workers to provide a professional, educational and personal support system from inception of employment. Texas AgriLife Extension's mentoring program is guided on the premise of mentoring as a partnership from the basis of "a mentor is someone who helps someone else learn something that he or she would have learned less well, more slowly or not at all if left alone" (Bell, 2000, p. 54). In much of the literature, mentors are identified as higher ranking or prominent senior employees or managers that have in-depth experience and knowledge about the organization (Kram, 1985; Roche, 1979). Within Texas AgriLife Extension Service the mentoring structure utilizes experienced employees for mentors rather than supervisors and mid-managers.

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service is a large organization that is dispersed throughout Texas, with agent representation in all 254 counties. Texas AgriLife



Extension has 640 county agent positions structured with 12 mid-managers who supervise an average of 50–65 county agents in 18–22 counties within each of the respective 12 districts. It is difficult for those supervisors to provide all necessary training and face to face meetings and to promote skill development that a new employee needs. The mentoring program was implemented to provide a professional, educational and personal support system for new employees and assist the district administrator with frequent face-to-face meetings by utilizing appointed mentors with all new employees. The mentors attended a face-to-face training and provided a resource notebook with tools and checklists to use prior to being assigned a mentee.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A limited number of articles examine mentoring within the extension field. This study analyzed an active formal mentoring program over the past five years providing historical qualitative data received from mentor and mentee exit evaluations. There is a need among extension, state agencies, large corporations, and non-profit organizations to keep productive employees engaged and loyal. The evaluation data examined for this study will provide a perspective of what mentees and mentors experience in a formal mentoring program.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceived effectiveness of and barriers for a successful mentoring relationship and what characteristics exist from mentors and mentees within Texas AgriLife Extension's Mentoring Program.

### **Research Objectives**

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following research objectives were developed:

- (1) Identify the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship from the mentor and mentee perspective;
- (2) Identify the barriers, if any, within the formal mentoring relationship from both mentor and mentee's perspective;
- (3) Identify what perceived characteristics must be present to enable an effective mentoring relationship.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Wells (1997) emerged from other potential models because of the similarity of core characteristics that are shared within extension's competency base on progression of training new employees as well as training experienced employees to be mentors and then to supervisors and mid-managers. Wells's (1997) model is based on the nine roles or core values that he addresses in his book *From Sage to Artisan: The Nine Roles of the Value-Driven Leader*. Wells's (1997) proposed strategy focuses on three management principles: systems, people, and work. Within each of the three principles are three levels of the leadership processes: creating order, inspiring action, and improving performance. The nine core values that Wells (1997) identified are Sage, Visionary, Magician, Globalist, Mentor, Ally, Sovereign, Guide, and Artisan.

The nine stages of the Wells's core values progress from apprentice to advanced employee. At the Sage or Apprentice stage, new employees have many questions, are energized and motivated about seeking knowledge to understand their new role. As a new employee develops with approximately one year of experience within the organization they progress to Visionary. Visionaries seek others to communicate and share processes with and are perceived to be motivated to go beyond the basic to begin to think outside-the-box. A Magician begins to have the ability to process and understand balance between the organization's structure, the system and processes. Magicians are developing the understanding of being receptive to change to maintain flexibility when change is necessary. The fourth stage is Globalist, the bridge builder. The Globalist is a good listener, looks for common ground, and is able to draw on people's strength to maintain a productive organizational culture. The mid-stage is Mentor. The Mentor is committed to personal and professional development of individuals to provide guidance and learning opportunities for others. To progress from Mentor stage to Alley stage, employees should have the ability to build highly effective collaborations with people or teams and make higher standards for the team. Sovereign employees are willing to take risks and embrace ambiguity. Sovereigns allow decisions to be made from within the team but are responsible for consequences of decisions made. A Guide is eager to take on challenges to keep moving forward but is keenly aware of differences that could disrupt work progress and focuses on how to achieve success by working through differences. The final stage is Artisan. The Artisan strives for excellence by questioning process and procedures and is devoted to mastery of skills

and techniques while understanding the organization and how to improve the mentee's performance and experiences to become a better employee.

As written, the context of the Wells's framework could be interpreted as centering on the concept that these categories are for supervisors or mid-managers. However, this framework can also be applied to a new employee gaining experience and developing skills to become a mentor. Likewise, from a mentor's perspective, a mentor who is newly trained will begin at the Magician or the Globalist stage. Experienced mentors are perceived to build on their experiences at the Mentor stage and strive to progress toward the Artisan level to step into a mid-manager role. Texas AgriLife Extension's mentoring program provides an opportunity for mentees to expand their knowledge and skill base from a Sage to Visionary, to Magician, to Globalist, and develop into Mentor. Wells's model aligns with Extension's competencies to identify further opportunities the experienced mentor can strive for. Experienced mentors can broaden their responsibilities to build collaborations with fellow agents and better understand Extension's core values for improving performance and person's experiences that transitions into artisans.

### **Methodology**

The process for this qualitative data collection is to provide a holistic view of five years of evaluation data (2004–2008) that capture the mentees' and mentors' perspectives for each mentor relationship. Table 1 itemizes the mentoring relationship participants by years. Trained mentors illustrate the number of mentors who are available for mentor relationships each year. The participants are categorized by

mentoring year, number of formal relationships, and number of relationship evaluation responses received.

**Table 1. Mentoring Relationships Itemized by Years**

Mentor Program Year	Trained Mentors	Assigned Mentoring Relationships	Returned Relationship Responses
2004	161	14	4
2005	165	70	39
2006	156	62	37
2007	181	50	26
2008	179	57	46

### **Significance of the Study**

Although Texas AgriLife Extension is within an educational system, its operations of hiring and training new employees are similar to corporate organizational structures. Extensions and other organizations across the United States have a vested interest in acclimating new employees as quickly as possible while retaining experienced employees. Although there is some literature available on organizational formal mentoring, there is limited literature within Extension. This study will help bridge the gap in literature to enable organizations to strengthen or develop a formal mentoring program for their employees.

### **Assumptions**

For this study, the following assumptions were made regarding my approach to the study:

- Formal mentoring, in general, can be effective.
- Respondents provided true and accurate responses on the evaluation instrument.
- Respondents were fully employed within Texas AgriLife Extension Service when completed evaluation instrument were received.

### **Limitations**

The following are identified as limitations of the study:

- I acknowledge that there will be some inherent biases on mentoring.
- I am an employee within Texas AgriLife Extension Service.
- I work directly with the mentoring process and coordinate the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Mentoring Program Training.
- Only open-ended evaluation questions were used. There were no follow-up or interviews for further interpretation.
- The open-ended questions were limited to only a specific amount of space on the evaluation instrument.

### **Definitions**

*Mentor*—an Extension agent who has been employed within the Extension organization for five or more years. This individual is identified for consideration by the district administrator (supervisor). Extension administration selects mentor candidates based on attitude and perceived knowledge of organization. If agent is selected to be a mentor candidate, the agent must be willing to participate in an eight-hour organizational mentor training.

*Mentee*—a new agent who is new to Extension and has no professional work experience.

Other terms to describe a mentee are a new employee or protégé.

*New Employee*—an employee who has less than one year of Extension experience.

*Formal mentor relationship*—formal, third-party pairing of the mentor and mentee for one year.

*Mentor Training Program*—Texas AgriLife Extension Services' formal training to the mentor and the one-year pairing of a mentee to a mentor. The formal mentor program provides a guide book to trained mentors. The formal relationship arrangements are first made with the mentor and then the mentee when officially hired. Mentor relationship assignment is made within the first 30 days of the mentee's employment. After the formal one-year mentoring relationship ends, an evaluation form is sent to the mentee and the mentor from the supervisor for each to complete and return to the mid-manager.

*Mid-manager*—Within Texas AgriLife Extension, mid-managers are identified as the 12 district Extension administrators and the seven-county Extension directors. The seven-county Extension directors have offices in each of the seven large urban counties.

*Mentoring Guidebook*—The official training notebook provided to newly trained mentors that provides checklists, suggestions, sample letters, biographical sketch for mentor and mentee to fill out and share with each other, and a needs assessment sheet for mentees to fill out for the mentor prior to their first meeting.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mentoring within an organizational environment is becoming more prevalent as organizations see the benefit as a professional and career development tool for retaining new employees (Finkelstein & Poteet, 2008). Donald S. Perkins, former CEO of Jewel Companies, said “Everyone who succeeds has a mentor” (Roche, 1979, p. 14).

#### **History**

History tells of guidance and instruction in one of the most notable Greek myths the “Odyssey.” Odysseus entrusted his young, inexperienced son, Telemachus, to his trusted friend, Mentor, to guide and instruct while Odysseus was away (Hamilton, 1942). Much like a young child, a new employee needs a nonthreatening, trusting individual they can observe and learn from.

Dating back to the Stone Age, archaeologists and anthropologists posit the medicinal men, cave artists, and shaman taught younger individuals their skills to carry on traditions (Shea, 1994). During the Middle Ages, blacksmiths would take on a young apprentice to learn from the master craft guild (Murray, 2001).

For masonry to be successful, a strong foundation is needed before the first brick is laid. Foundation is imperative for the wall to stand successfully. Much like a free-standing wall, mentoring of new employees demands a strong foundation for mentors. Mentors need to have the organizational knowledge and time commitment so new



employees can be effective in gaining knowledge and skills in learning the organization and their new job (Mincemoyer & Thomson, 1998).

### **Theoretical Foundation**

In today's fast-paced work environment, new employees are expected to come with ready skills and talents to step into their job roles and perform. For many new employees, acclimation to the environment may take longer. Within the business world, environmental acclimation is referred to as organizational socialization (Jones, 1983; Kram, 1985). For new employees socialization is a very important step to understanding the organization in which they work so not to feel estranged from the group environment. Often within a large organization, a talented new employee becomes overwhelmed because of lack of guidance, thus leaves the job frustrated in search of another career. The organizational upset creates burdens on the employees while waiting for another person to fill the vacancy, often causing low moral that is felt throughout the entire organization. Within a large complex organization, new employees are unable to envision the significance of their role and how it impacts the rest of the organization. Jones (1983) said that all new employees experience the power of organizational socialization when they enter a new job. New employees are faced with ambiguity and apprehension leading to stressful feelings related to how they fit within the organization. Noe (1988) said that direct observational learning is part of the organizational socialization and training program in that new employees observe a more senior employee as new employees begin to learn about the organization. To alleviate the apprehension for new employees, many organizations established formal mentoring

programs to help attract, retain, support, and develop potential high-performing employees (Allen, Eby & Lentz, 2006; Kram, 1983, Kram, 1985; Zey, 1985).

### **Types of Mentoring**

Literature informs that many organizations acknowledge the value of mentoring relationships (Kram, 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985). There is much discussion on mentoring and how relationships are formed either selected by a third party or by self selection. Within the realm of literature research on mentoring types, two types are defined as formal or appointed mentoring and the informal of self-selected mentoring.

#### **Formal Appointed Mentoring**

A formal mentoring program pairs a new employee with an experienced employee within the organization. Organizations formalize mentor assignments either by random assignments to matching personnel files or related areas of work (Russell & Adams, 1997; Chao, et al., 1992). Hegstad (1999) describes an ideal mentor assignment as one where the organization appoints two individuals with similar job interests and characteristics to a non-intrusive learning environment with open communication. This relationship is typically quick to develop and remain successful because the mentee as well as the mentor have similar interests. Within a formal mentor assignment, the appointed time is typically for one year (Allen, McManus, & Russell, 1999; Kram, 1983; Noe, 1988). The mentor and mentee are provided reference manual or specific elements to accomplish within the assigned period. The formal mentoring relationship ends after the one year, but a continued rapport is not uncommon because of the working relationship that was formed during the mentorship.

Wilson and Elman (1990) discuss the importance of choosing the right mentor. The selection of an appropriate mentor would provide for open meaningful communications within a safe environment free of conflict of interest or presumed judgmental aspects (Wilson & Elman, 1990). An immediate supervisor or manager of a new employee could be an awkward placement because of the power structure in certain instances. A mentor should still be a person who is close to the mentee or has similar interest so to draw from experiences that can create a positive working relationship for the two individuals (Bell, 2000). Organizations committed to a formal mentoring approach are interested in their new employees obtaining organizational socialization; understanding the culture and vision of the organization; and providing career development opportunities for a new employee to be successful (Finkelstein & Poteet, 2008; Mincemoyer & Thomson, 1998; Shea, 1994, Wilson & Elman, 1990). If a new employee is committed and feels connected to the organization, then it is perceived that employees can be retained as a valued employee.

### **Self-Selected or Informal Mentoring**

An informal or self-selected mentoring relationship can be defined as a relationship free from formal intervention within the organization (Fagenson, 1989; Fagenson–Eland, Marks & Amendola, 1997). The informal mentoring relationship tends to be a lasting relationship but often takes some time to develop or occur. Ragins and Cotton (1999) and Rosser and Egan (2003) describe an informal mentor relationship as not identified by a third party but rather by a similar interest that can happen spontaneously or without prompting. Kram (1983) said mentors should see themselves

in a new employee and want to “shepherd” the new employee to better understand the organization, much like they experienced. The new employee often sees this experienced employee as a role model. Informal relationships usually focus on career goals and how a new employee can move up within an organization. The mentor in an informal relationship typically keeps the interest of the new employee as priority to help identify long-term goals. Mentors are able to position new employees with opportunities to begin to strive and achieve their goals. In doing so, mentors provide new employees with the necessary developmental objectives and skills to be more satisfied in their jobs with vision toward their goals. (Kram 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000).

### **Mentoring in Extension**

Within the bounds of this research study, the research focus will be on formal mentoring. In researching existing mentoring needs within other Extension organizations, there is a perceived consensus that there is a need for a formalized mentoring program that addresses the specific issues that county Extension agents face. In reviewing the literature, there is support for formal mentoring but within each of the articles written there are discussions for improvement on the pairing of the mentoring that needs to be further addressed. The first reported mentoring program published in *Journal of Extension* was Smith and Beckley (1985). The article focused on informal mentoring as a supplement to the Ohio Cooperative Extension orientation training. The reported results noted positive feedback from supplementing with an informal mentoring

program. Zimmer and Smith (1992) followed with a second study based from Smith and Beckley (1985).

Zimmer and Smith (1992) said mentoring within the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service new county agents need mentors similar in job responsibilities and being paired within a short time frame of being hired. Zimmer and Smith (1992) discussions linked successful relationships for agents that were newly hired in providing teaching, guiding and role modeling. Identifying a mentor relationship with a new agent at the onset of their career noted to be more successful since there is a tendency for new agents to become overwhelmed with the demands the new job puts on them and their family. Penn State Cooperative Extension further expands the research on mentoring county Extension agents where they studied factors that could facilitate or hinder a mentoring relationship.

Mincemoyer and Thomson (1998) completed a qualitative study that provided mentoring experiences for mentors and mentees. The research was done in two phases where the first was a pre-assessment survey sent to newly hired agents. Phase two was concentrated on the mentee returns that indicated that they did not have a favorable experience with their mentoring arrangement. Those mentoring relationships were then randomly pulled and then contacted for interviews to determine why the mentoring relationship was not successfully with a list of questions. The study indicated for mentor relationships to be effective, the mentor needed to have a great deal of organizational and program knowledge.

Kutilek and Earnest (2001) viewed mentoring from a trainer agent perspective. Earlier new Extension agents were assistant agents and paired with a trainer agent. The trainer agent would assimilate the new assistant agent within the organization. Kutilek and Earnest (2001) discuss peer coaching with new agents as well as a third party being district mentoring contacts that follow-up with new agents to assist the mentor. The district mentoring contacts oversees the mentoring relationship and provides individualized support to the mentoring pair.

Safrit (2006) looked at the past mentoring literature in Extension and the task force put forth recommendations of a standard mentoring curriculum that could be used for formal or informal mentoring. The data that Safrit (2006) and the task force used was national state 4-H program leader data on types of mentoring programs, if any was each state currently using. This study concluded that mentoring was valuable and more research was needed to further explore commonalities and differences in mentoring programs.

### **Summary of the Literature**

Much like Telemachus' experience, Texas AgriLife Extension Service assigns a new agent with a formal mentor to collaborate with the district administrator, regional program directors and the new agent's county co-workers to provide a professional, educational and personal support system right from inception of employment. Texas AgriLife Extension Service's mentoring program is guided on the premise of "Mentoring as a Partnership" from the basis of "a mentor is someone who helps someone else learn something that he or she would have learned less well, more slowly

or not at all if left alone” (Bell, 2000, p. 54). Mentors are often identified as higher ranking or prominent senior employees or managers that have in-depth experience and knowledge about the organization and have committed to provide new employees a sound foundation for a new employee’s professional career (Kram, 1985; Roche, 1979).

The study conducted by Mincemoyer and Thomson (1998) explored perceptions and experiences of mentee and mentor relationship as Safrit’s (2006) study confirmed mentoring as a tool for an organization. In both studies there were recommendations that need to be further addressed when providing a foundation for which a new employee can begin to be productive that enables self-confidence in themselves so they feel and are perceived as a valued employee within the organization. The conclusions of both reports were that formal mentoring outcomes were favorable when a relationship could be linked with a mentor with similar types of programs. Within Texas AgriLife Extension Service, the first priority for a mentor assignment is within the same discipline so the mentor can begin to assist the mentee with their program planning or share multi-county programs to be engaged with the organization.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Wells’s (1997) strategy focused on three management component principles: systems, people, and work. Within each of the three principles there are three levels of the leadership processes: creating order, inspiring action, and improving performance. The nine core values that Wells identified are: sage, visionary, magician, globalist, mentor, ally, sovereign, guide, and artisan. Table 2 is the illustration of Wells’s theory based on the nine core values.

**Table 2. Leading-Edge Manager Roles**

Principal Focus of Managing Effort	Principal Leadership Process		
	Creating Order	Inspiring Action	Improving Performance
Systems	Sage Designs Strategy	Visionary Innovates the Future	Magician Orchestrates Change
People	Globalist Bridges Cultural Differences	Mentor Motivates Development	Ally Builds Partnerships
Work	Sovereign Empowers Decisions	Guide Achieves Goals	Artisan Pursues Excellence
	FOUNDATION OF ALL ROLES CORE VALUES		
Recreated from Wells (1997), p. 5			

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the nine roles of core values that Wells (1997) incorporated in his book *From Sage to Artisan: The Nine Roles of the Value-Driven Leader*. To further examine the nine core values Table 3 is a summary of the characteristics for each. These core characteristics have parallel resemblances of mentoring relationships within an organization in building professional capacity in improvement of skills, performance and development for both the mentor and the mentee (Kutilek & Earnest 2001).



**Table 3. Summarizing Characteristics of the Nine Core Values for All Employees**

<b>Core Characteristics</b>		<b>Wells's Core Characteristic Descriptors</b>	<b>Extension Competency Progression Comparison</b>
<b>Sage</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has many questions</li> <li>• Open to learning</li> <li>• Seeking knowledge</li> <li>• Energized and motivated</li> </ul>	Onboarding of new county agents from 1 <sup>st</sup> Day–2 years
<b>Visionary</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivated to go beyond the basics</li> <li>• Challenge to think outside-the-box</li> <li>• Seek others to share excitement</li> <li>• Communicate the process of methods and/or accomplishments</li> </ul>	
<b>Magician</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calm, easy going and receptive to change</li> <li>• Understands balance between organization's structure, system and processes</li> <li>• Maintains flexibility and open to change when necessary</li> </ul>	Transition from new employee to career ladder 2–5 years
<b>Globalist</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge builder across cultures and experiences</li> <li>• Good listener</li> <li>• Looks for the common ground</li> <li>• Maintains productive organizational culture to draw on people's strength</li> </ul>	

Table 3. Continued

Core Characteristics		Wells's Core Characteristic Descriptors	Extension Competency Progression Comparison
<b>Mentor</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed to personal and professional development of individuals</li> <li>• Provide guidance for helping people advance in careers</li> <li>• Provide learning opportunities</li> <li>• Support decisions that a person may make</li> <li>• Help people to gain new outlook or avenue potentials in their job</li> </ul>	
<b>Ally</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to form highly effective and productive teams and alliances</li> <li>• Strive to make higher standards for their team</li> <li>• Build collaboration with people or teams in which they are involved</li> </ul>	<b>Early Mid-Career County Agents</b>  <b>5–10 years</b>
<b>Sovereign</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow decisions to be made by others within the team but taking responsibility for making decisions</li> <li>• Willing to take risks and embrace ambiguity while being responsible for consequences of decisions</li> <li>• Strive to empower decisions to generate systematic delegation</li> </ul>	

Table 3. Continued

Core Characteristics		Wells's Core Characteristic Descriptors	Extension Competency Progression Comparison
<b>Guide</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible organizers</li> <li>• Direct tasks and goals to core values that support the organization</li> <li>• Action oriented</li> <li>• Eager to take on challenges to keep moving forward</li> <li>• Identifies and resolves matters concerning people while ensuring that work continues</li> <li>• Keenly aware of obstacles or differences that could disrupt work progress focuses on the objectives and accomplishments most critical to achieve success</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mid-Career County Agents</b></p> <p><b>10+ years progressing to Mid-Manager and Regional Program Director Level</b></p>
<b>Artisan</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devoted to mastery of a skill/technique</li> <li>• Strive for excellence by questioning process and procedures</li> <li>• Concerned about aesthetics as well as practicality</li> <li>• Excels understanding the organization with improving performance and a person's experiences.</li> </ul>	
Wells (1997)			Onboarding Timeline within Texas AgriLife Extension

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY

From a young child, one knows the feeling of nurture but does not comprehend. During the teens, one may encounter guidance but not fully appreciate. A young adult searches for the opportunity to receive support. In later years, one yearns to give back, seek, and provide what was once taken for granted. As we reflect on our youthful journey through life, most of us can picture at least one individual who provided the guidance, support, and nurturing we needed to get out on our own and find that perfect job. For some, after acquiring that perfect job, the job becomes a burden, the journey loses its clearness, and the vision is clouded with overwhelming obstacles until the perfect job is left behind.

Through all stages of human development, effective mentoring relationships are powerful and sought after by individuals and organizations. Within the educational and cooperative Extension structures mentoring relationships become valuable learning experiences for a new employee to progress in becoming a successful employee while allowing a mentor to develop organizational leadership and breadth of career advancement potential within the organization.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

A limited number of articles examine mentoring within the Extension field. This study analyzed an active formal mentoring program over the past five years providing historical qualitative data received from mentor and mentee exit evaluations. There is a

need among Extension, state agencies, large corporations, and non-profit organizations to keep productive employees engaged and loyal. The evaluation data examined for this study will provide a perspective of what mentees and mentors experience in a formal mentoring program.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceived effectiveness of and barriers for a successful mentoring relationship and what characteristics exist from mentors and mentees within Texas AgriLife Extension's Mentoring Program.

### **Research Objectives**

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following research objectives were developed:

- (1) Identify the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship from the mentor and mentee perspective;
- (2) Identify the barriers, if any, within the formal mentoring relationship from both mentor and mentee's perspective;
- (3) Identify what perceived characteristics must be present to enable an effective mentoring relationship.

### **Qualitative Methods**

The focus of this study is to describe thoroughly and accurately some of the self perceived experiences of mentees and mentors during their formal mentoring

relationship. The researcher seeks to explore and discuss the effectiveness, barriers, and characteristics with the formal mentoring relationship. Because lived experiences of participants will be examined for meaningful themes a qualitative approach was determined to be appropriate (Creswell, 2007).

### **Qualitative Inquiry**

Qualitative research is fundamental in nature in that reasoning can emerge from only a small portion which develops into a big picture. Therefore, big picture overviews are drawn from specific events. The intent of qualitative inquiry is to provide a voice for the people behind the statistical numbers in order to share their experiences to increase knowledge, awareness or enhance an existing program (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research is exploring data with the large picture in mind. Less structured than quantitative methodologies, qualitative can bring depth to a study. Building categories and themes from the “bottom-up” enables the researcher to identify variables that can be measured with rich describable data to allow the voices of each participant to be heard (Creswell, 2007).

The limited mentoring articles within the *Journal of Extension* provide quantitative outcomes that do yield accurate research involving mentoring and human experiences that are aggregated for analysis in a systematic, standard, condensed table. Qualitative findings are longer more detailed, and variable in content as analysis can be difficult because responses are not as generalized (Patton, 2002). A qualitative approach to mentoring research has the potential to allow the voice of mentors and mentees in this

study to be heard within their own context. The data is presented in an individually open-ended nature from past evaluation data received from mentors and mentees.

The theory behind the qualitative approach may not be expressed to its fullest potential to warrant such a large amount of data to be analyzed and coded by hand. But the essence of 106 mentor relationships could prove to be extremely beneficial when preparing training materials for future mentors. Professionally knowing these employees within the organization prior to attending a mentor training and prior to their first mentor relationship assignment they often question if they have what it takes to be a mentor to a brand new employee. The experiences they encountered can best be captured qualitatively with no boundaries to enable others to learn from. Future development and training of the mentor program can be strengthened by the richness of the themes that could emerge.

Though many qualitative methodologies exist, selection of the appropriate qualitative method of analysis for this study was guided by the “principal research questions,” which speak to the lived experiences of the participants. Hence, the appropriate method was phenomenology. Within phenomenological research, the revelation of meaning emerges within the context of the participant’s sense of experiences while in a formal mentoring relationship within Extension.

### **Phenomenological Methodology**

“Phenomenology asks for the very nature of a phenomenon, for that which makes a some-‘thing’ what it is—and without which it could not be what it is” (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology began with the philosophical foundation of Edmund Husserl

(1859–1938) and Alfred Schutz (1899–1959) who were significant in integrating phenomenology as a major social science perspective (Patton, 2002). The original intent of reporting phenomenological findings was to explore the universal structures, or essences, of the human experience (Patton, 2002). Van Manen said that there is one final dimension that differentiates a phenomenological approach: the assumption that “there is an essence or essences to shared experience” (Patton, 2002). Patton said an essence is the core meaning to be mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. The experiences of different people are bracketed, analyzed and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Patton provides examples of these essences of the phenomenon: the essence of loneliness or the essence of being a participant in a particular program. For the purpose of this study, the researcher is connected with the social science phenomenon as it relates to a mentor program within an organization and the experiences that mentors and mentees have during mentoring relationships.

### **Researcher’s Role**

The primary researcher’s role in this study is open-ended. As researcher, I am entering the research with preconceived notions or predetermined hypotheses. I coordinate the mentoring program within Texas AgriLife Extension Service. I have professional knowledge of many of the trained mentors and have interaction with the new agents that participate in the mentoring program within the organizational development unit that I work. New agents and mentors have the ability to contact me if they need assistance. I work closely with the district administrators within mentoring



and professional development for new employees. As novice qualitative researcher, I am led by the process of the unfolding of data through the discovery of emerging themes. Like the quantitative researcher, the qualitative researcher strives to be unbiased and impartial, yet the defining component of the qualitative investigator includes the openness toward the participant's reflected experiences from the mentors and mentees on describing their thoughts of effectiveness or what barriers existed and did characteristics emerge during the mentoring relationship.

### **Research Design**

The design of this study was unit analysis—phenomenology. According to Creswell (2007, p. 78), unit analysis “studies several individuals that have shared the experience” to “understand the essence of the experience.” In this study, five years of exit evaluation data were analyzed to understand the effectiveness and barriers mentees and mentors experienced during their one year formal mentor relationship.

### **Population**

The process for qualitative data collection was to provide a longitudinal view of five years of evaluation data (2004–2008) that captures the mentee's and mentor's perspectives. The population of this study consisted of 152 paired mentoring relationships in Table 4. The participants are broken down by mentoring year, number of formal relationships, and number of relationship evaluation responses received.

**Table 4. Population of Mentoring Relationships Itemized by Years**

Mentor Program Year	Assigned Mentoring Relationships	Returned Relationship Responses
2004	14	4
2005	70	39
2006	62	37
2007	50	26
2008	57	46

### **Mentoring Program within Texas AgriLife Extension**

The mentoring program was developed in an effort to provide support for new Extension agents being hired. Prior to the implementation of the mentoring program, Extension was hiring assistant agents to work in a county with trainer agents for the first one to two years. The mentoring program replaced the assistant agent program in order to hire agents in all needed counties rather than selected trainer agent counties. The mentoring program implementation was based on a “no power” mentoring relationship meaning that co-workers and colleagues would be the mentors rather than supervisors.

#### **Mentor Selection Procedure**

The County Extension Directors, District Extension Administrators, Regional Program Directors, and State Program Leaders will nominate and make recommendations for new mentors to the County Programs Office. Final selection of mentors will be made by the administrative leadership team (Mentoring in Extension, 2008).

**Mentor Training**

Mentors are selected based upon a set of characteristics and criteria that are deemed critical. Upon selection, mentors will attend a workshop that will cover information important to the success of the mentoring relationship. There will be an initial comprehensive training workshop to address the policies and procedures and provide experiential learning to assist in the development of coaching skills. Update trainings will also be held periodically for mentors. Administrators, District Extension Administrators, County Extension Directors, Regional Program Directors, State Program Leaders, staff development specialists, university faculty and others will be involved in conducting the workshops (Mentoring in Extension, 2008).

**Matching Process**

The appropriate supervisor(s), with input from the county staff, will determine the Mentor/Mentee match. Consideration for matching the mentor and mentee will include (where possible) similar programmatic responsibilities and geographic proximity. Copies of all mentoring information will be collected and maintained at the state level. This information will be used to evaluate the mentoring program. The Mentee Needs Assessment will be filled out by the mentee and forwarded to the mentor within a week of being matched up or during the mentee's first week of the job (Mentoring in Extension, 2008).

**Mentor Guidelines**

Research shows that the most successful mentoring relationships are those, which are initiated as early as possible in the mentee's employment. In addition, a mutual

commitment to meet regularly is important since success is related to time spent together (Mentoring in Extension, 2008).

The following suggestions should help the mentor begin the mentoring relationship:

- Write a letter of commitment to the assigned mentee.
- Send the mentee a copy of your completed Mentor/Mentee Biographical Sketch and encourage him/her to send you a copy of his/her completed biographical sketch as well.
- Send copies of the letter and biographical sketches to the appropriate supervisor(s).
- Call the mentee to initiate the relationship and ask the mentee to complete the Mentee Needs Assessment and mail it to you before your first formal face-to-face meeting.
- Get started early. Set up the first meeting within one month (or as soon as possible) of the mentor and mentee pairing announcement.
- Upon completion of the formal mentoring process, the mentor should complete the Mentoring Program Evaluation and submit it to the mentee's supervisor.

### **Instrumentation**

Texas AgriLife Extension Service developed an open-ended five-question instrument to evaluate: experiences and effectiveness of the mentoring relationship; activities that were most helpful in the development their mentoring relationship; perceived characteristics of a mentoring relationship to be effective; and barriers that

hindered the mentoring relationship. At the conclusion of the one year mentoring relationship, this evaluation questionnaire was sent to mentors and mentees by mid-managers to be returned back to the mid-manager upon completion of the mentoring relationship. See Appendix A for instrument.

### **Participants and Data Collection Methods**

The participants for this study were Texas AgriLife Extension Service mentees and mentors who completed a formal mentoring relationship from 2004 to 2008. The data collection method for the purpose of this study was document analysis only. The evaluation instrument was submitted directly to the mentor and mentees by e-mail from the mid-manager and was then forwarded by fax, e-mail or mail to the researcher for analysis.

### **Analysis**

For this study, data was analyzed using the unit analysis method. Categories were identified for grouping in the areas of effectiveness, barriers and characteristics. Analyses facilitated the emergent design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) but for the purpose of this study, categories were identified to coincide with the instrument used and themes emerged within these categories.

This process was extremely time intensive but for me, coding by hand provided me with closeness to the data that I could not have researched had I used a software product. Because I am a novice at qualitative coding, this process immersed me with an educational hands-on experience. The data I am learning from are the data that will allow me to grow professionally as a mentor-training coordinator to enable better

understanding of the jobs that mentors and mentees are in within the Extension organization.

In obtaining the data for this study, I was given permission to use the mentor relationship evaluation data on the past mentees and mentors from Texas AgriLife Extension Service since I am an employee within the organization that coordinates the Extension mentor training. The data received had actual mentor and mentee names so a graduate assistant typed all the evaluation forms into a Word Table providing pseudo names for each of the mentors and mentees. Once the typing in the data was completed I read through all the data to get a better understanding of what was written. After reading, I hand-coded each individual record for all 152 mentor relationships according to the three research objectives. After the first round of coding with highlighter, I had 3 colors. One color for each of the three categories: Effectiveness (Blue); Barriers (Red); and Characteristics (Pink). While completing the initial coding, I made notes to myself to capture any uniqueness while analyzing. Since there was so much data to read through, I went back and highlighted my margin notes in yellow so they could be seen. Once I completed the first round of analysis, I discovered that there could initially be numerous numbers of emerging themes. Second round, I began to code by pencil and code by each statement using a letter code for each theme (i.e., T = Time; A = Accommodating, L = Leadership, etc.). The third round of analysis, I began to collapse themes into related themes. Fourth round was the same process in collapsing additional themes. Fifth round of analysis yielded the themes in each of the categories that are

presented in this study. The themes within each of the research objective categories are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Emerging Themes from Each of the Research Objectives**

	Category	Emerg ed Themes
Research Objective #1	Effectiveness	Accommodating
		Resource
Research Objective #2	Barriers	Time
		Distance
		Differences
		Workload
Research Objective #3	Characteristics	Trusting
		Encouraging
		Leadership

### **Assumptions**

For this study, the following assumptions were made regarding my approach to the study:

- Formal mentoring, in general, can be effective.
- Respondents provided true and accurate responses on the evaluation instrument.
- Participants were fully employed within Texas AgriLife Extension Service when completed evaluation instrument were received.

### **Limitations**

The following are identified as limitations of the study:

- I acknowledge that there will be some inherent biases on mentoring.
- I am an employee within Texas AgriLife Extension Service.
- I work directly with the mentoring process and coordinate the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Mentoring Program Training.
- Only open-ended evaluation questions were used. There were no follow-up or interviews for further interpretation.
- The open-ended questions were limited to only a specific amount of space on the evaluation instrument.



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter examines the research findings of this phenomenological study and includes a description of the participants, and perceptions to support the three research objectives that guided the study.

- (1) Identify the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship from the mentor and mentee perspective.
- (2) Identify the barriers, if any, within the formal mentoring relationship from both mentor and mentee's perspective.
- (3) Identify what perceived characteristics must be present to enable an effective mentoring relationship.

#### **Collection of Data**

Documents from 152 mentoring pairs were received from Texas AgriLife Extension Service for the researcher to analyze for years 2004–2008. Of the 152 mentoring pairs, four pairs were from 2004; 39 pairs were from 2005; 37 pairs were from 2006; 26 pairs were from 2007; and 46 pairs were from 2008. The mentoring pairs were all employed within Texas AgriLife Extension Service and participated in the formal mentoring program from 2004 to 2008.

#### **Presentation of Data**

To support the research objectives when examining qualitative data from a five-year longitudinal perspective, there were three categories driving the researcher's view.

Two of the categories were effectiveness and barriers to the formal mentoring program. Creswell (2007) wrote the importance for the researcher to capture the “essence” of the phenomenon. The phenomenon will emerge from the perspective of the mentor and the mentee based upon the experiences they had reflecting on their mentoring relationship. Reviewing the two categories, the researcher identified two themes that emerged from the participant responses related to effectiveness. From the second category, barriers, four themes emerged.

Data including the category and themes are presented by each statement below. Representative quotes are provided for each theme.

### **Findings Related to Research Objective One**

Research objective one was to identify the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship. From research objective one, the data analyzed were from mentors and mentees’ perspectives. The open-ended instrument question asked the mentor and mentee the same question, “Briefly describe your experience in working with the mentor/mentee and the effectiveness of the relationship.” In examining the category effectiveness from both the mentor and mentee perspective two distinctive themes emerged: accommodating and resource.

The mid-managers in selecting a mentoring relationship consider each new employee individually just as they do the mentor they will pair with the new employee. When agents are hired, they meet prior to employment with the mid-manager. At this pre-employment meeting, the mid-manager identifies proficiency that new agents may need and informs them that they will be assigned a formal mentor upon employment.

After the pre-employment meeting, the mid-manger evaluates the mentors who are available, what specific skill set is needed and is the closest distance to the new agent for optimal mentoring.

### **Effectiveness**

The trained mentors in the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Mentoring Program were chosen because the mid-managers and administrative committee believed them to be professional, successful, well-organized, and resourceful in their job roles as experienced county agents. Within the effectiveness category accommodating and resource will individually be addressed with mentor and mentee statements.

### Accommodating

Mentors perceived their role in accommodating mentees by being supportive, communicating face-to-face, by e-mail, or by telephone and to be available to answer questions and offer to let mentee ride to meetings with mentor one-on-one discussion time.

Mentors' perspective for accommodating mentees:

Mentor and mentee had a good working relationship. Contact was made as needed throughout the process as needed by phone or in person. Situations were always discussed and work completed. The experience was positive and was a reminder of what it was like when I first started Extension.

The success of mentoring depends heavily on the relationship. We did work together and call each other to check progress on programs. My mentee had a child near the end of the year and that added a difficult dimension.

Great working relationship as neighboring counties and involved in several multi-county events. Had the opportunity to involve him in

several program, committee meetings and even interpretations to stakeholders.

Mentee and I communicated regularly through phone calls and email. We also had informal times to visit at various district meetings and trainings. I also traveled to his county and visited with him.

Initial contact with mentee, as with any new agent, was important. We established an open line of communication rather quickly. Personal visits and invitations to participate in programs being conducted also provided an avenue for him to become exposed to Extension Programs.

As the year progressed we moved from a mentor/mentee relationship to one of equal co-workers. Mentee's previous teaching experience helped with her transition into Extension. She had a great deal of potential and is a rising star to watch.

Mentees' perspective for mentors accommodating mentees:

Working with my mentor, Mentor was a great help. I was able to observe her programs and her work within her county and then apply that knowledge to my county programs. She was also someone I turned to via email at least weekly for answers to questions or advice on programs.

The experiences I had with my mentor were so great! Mentor always knew what I asked and always knew what to say to keep me motivated.

Mentor is a pleasant person that is easy to visit with. He is an experienced professional and I value his knowledge.

Excellent mentor. He made me feel very comfortable and welcome at every meeting/program we had. He was always available whenever I had a question or concern and was truly interested in helping me during the whole year.

Face-to-face meetings; willingness to offer suggestions and answer questions via phone and email.

My mentor came to my county to help me sort through things in my office. I called her a lot with questions, very helpful.

### Resource

Resource can be identified as a tool or supply that can assist with a task being complete. Within the realm of mentoring, resource can be implied to mean the mentor as the tool, contact, or material used for assisting the mentee. The second theme to emerge from the mentor and mentee data was resource. Mentors perceived their role as being a resource to mentees by finding and providing resources as needed. Mentees perceived their role as being accommodated by mentors supported, having open communications face-to-face, by e-mail or by telephone to help them learn the job. Mentees appreciated mentors who were available to answer questions and to let them be involved.

Mentors' perspective for being a resource for mentees:

Meeting at Mentee's office for the initial visit; going to lunch and just visiting and getting acquainted; developing a personal relationship with one another; having joint mentoring trainings with two other mentees and mentors within the district.

One-on-one visits with Mentee, and evaluating livestock projects or selection of livestock projects. Looking at crops and crop demonstrations and discussing plant mapping, websites to find information, and where to look or who to call for certain needs. Knowing the people in the community and helping him understand the community.

Mentee and I work on program plans, TEEA, 4-H FCS projects, BLT and reporting.

I worked in that county for four years. Meeting with Ag and 4-H RPD when mentee was hired. Meeting with agent during meetings and agent retreats. Worked on programs together.

Mentee is a very capable and organized person. I tried to explain how I kept things organized and gave her hints on working with volunteers and keeping time for herself and family. I served as a sounding board for working through problems.

Very positive. We worked closely together on programming, result demonstrations and program planning the entire year.

Mentees' perspective for mentors being a resource for mentees:

The experience in working with a mentor was a definite resource. I am confident that my mentee/mentor relationship was greatly enhanced by the tri-county mentoring sessions because of the occasions the resources of three experienced agents were accessible.

Truly all the experiences I have had with Mentor were awesome. The think that I appreciated the most was the networking that was accomplished through him with others relationships built with other agents in a similar position. Also, I enjoyed having him as a source of information or advice when needed.

Is a great mentor to have in Extension. He helped walk me through issues that I have faced here in my county. I feel that this is a great resource for new employees.

I had the great pleasure of having a mentor. He is a level 4 agent who brings a wealth of information to Extension. We have a great working relationship. We are conducting joint programs for educational purposes.

My first week on the job, Mentor came to my county to help with the fair. I was overwhelmed and just having someone around with knowledge of what the county agents responsibilities are was very helpful. Mentor dropped in several times to check up on things. He helped work out some kinks in the office with the computer system and helped me find resources to answer day to day questions.

District Horse Show was the first time Mentor and I spent any time around each other. He serves as the Horse Chairman and I was allowed to shadow him for the day. The other two events were the district retreat and the TCAAA Association Conference. During these events we spent time visiting about Extension programs.

### **Summary of Research Objective One**

The mentors and mentees within the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Mentoring Program identified several key elements in an attempt to describe effectiveness in a mentoring relationship both from the mentor and mentee perspective. The mentor and mentee viewed the roles within accommodating and being a resource as providing opportunities to increase knowledge while still enabling time for building a relationship for open communication to happen.

### **Findings Related to Research Objective Two**

Research objective two was to identify the barriers of a mentoring relationship. From research objective two, the data were analyzed from a mentor and mentee perspective. The open-ended instrument question asked the mentor and mentee the same question: Describe three or four barriers that affected the development of the mentoring relationship. In examining the category barriers from both mentor and mentee perspective, four themes emerged: time, distance, differences, and workload.

#### **Barriers**

Many may view barriers as obstacles, but within the mentoring program within the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, barriers are a way to strengthen the formal mentoring program. Within the barriers, each category will be addressed individually with mentor and mentee statements.

#### **Time**

That point or period where something happens is what many people are faced with when sharing the hours of the day and week with others. The mentor and mentee

both perceived that the lack of time hindered or eliminated meetings from happening, questions being answered with time valued one-on-one discussions. Statements below substantiate the theme of time being a barrier.

Mentors' perspective on time as a barrier for the mentoring program:

Just the daily demands of taking care of the clientele can make it hard to develop the relationship necessary to positive mentoring.

Time constraints. Both of us struggled to make time to meet.

Time – it's hard for a new agent trying to get established to be out of the county as much as required the first year – as a result we tried to be in touch 'after the fact' many times to discuss items/program requirements that mentee clarified.

We had difficulties in scheduling times to meet because of schedule conflicts. It would have benefited us to schedule meetings quarterly throughout the year so our calendars did not become so overloaded.

Perhaps feeling that we did not have enough time to do a lot of one-on-one meetings.

Mentees' perspective on time as a barrier for the mentoring program:

Not enough time spent with mentor.

Time was a limiting because of the date in which I was hired.

Time was the biggest constraint with meetings and trainings to attend.

The main problem that I had with the program was the same issue every agent experiences: TIME. Now that I have been an agent for a year, I have a much better grasp of what I need to learn to be a good agent. You know the old 20/20 hindsight.

Time for everything that we wanted to discuss.



## Distance

The amount of space or separation between two points of interest, particularly as it deals with office locations and driving for face-to-face visits.

Mentors' perspective on distance as a barrier for the mentoring program:

Number one barrier was the distance between counties which hindered contact and involvement with mentee. If the two agents could have been closer together, similar or multi-county programming could have strengthened the relationship.

Geographic distance between counties.

Location of both individuals. Geographical location is also a concern. The closer the mentee is to the mentor, the more beneficial the program would be.

Distance from mentee's county to my county is 110 miles and agents close to mentee were new and had little experience.

The only barrier I determined was not having enough time to work with mentee because of the distance between our counties and the fact that both agents in that county were new to Extension.

Mentees' perspective on distance as a barrier for the mentoring program:

Miles apart. We were approximately 120 miles apart and this greatly hinders the ability to run over and work through paperwork like program plans. Having this mileage barrier also prevented us from meeting and just talking over issues that I had with my job on a face-to-face level.

Distance although within district, distance is still a factor.

Distance to mentor's county. The drive is not too bad but it still take a day if you want to talk more than just a lunch.

Traveling from Austin to San Antonio at times can be a problem or nuisance.

Less distance would have allowed me to spend more one-on-one time with mentor to learn more.

Distance between the two of us was the largest barrier.

### Differences

The non-similarity that mentors and mentees experience within their job roles, county or district structures, and opinions of others such as co-workers or supervisors.

Mentors' perspective on differences as a barrier for the mentoring program:

The biggest barrier to the mentoring relationship is that all counties are so different and what mentee see happening in my county may not be the way things are done in her county.

The only barrier is that we were in different districts. I would think of suggestions/ideas according to my calendar and often miss things on mentee's calendar.

Differences in job responsibilities and experience. Mentor's job responsibilities were strictly horticulture and she came with some experience in public schools which I had not reference to.

The major barrier was mentees lack of understanding that the entire office staff was here to help and to support him. When the rest of the staff shared input or made suggestions those were not taken as helpful suggestions but rather as criticisms, therefore he began to communicate less and less with the total staff about 4-H decisions and plans.

Since I am more specialized in my program area, had to refer some questions or direct mentee to the correct source.

Difficult to advice on matters that were specific to that district.

Mentees' perspective on differences as a barrier for the mentoring program:

The difference in county situation/scenarios was not the same – so what works in one county might not work in another. The person to person meetings made it less informal.

I believe there were some barriers due to the age gap. I am sure that Wayne thought of me as his daughter or something like that, and I felt as if I were not treated as a professional at times. More communication could also have proven beneficial. I am not sure, but having a mentor have two mentees could have been a challenge.

Easier to talk to co-workers most of times because counties are so different from one another that the questions I had were easier answered by them.

Differences between counties (rural vs. semi urban); differences in 4-H involvement; mentor was so established (20+ years) that it was sometimes hard to offer suggestions on how to get started.

The different work areas that we deal with. I could see where it would have been beneficial to have had another horticulture agent as mentor because our work duties and plans would be much more similar.

Correlating two very different and busy schedules.

### Work Load

Refers to the amount of work mentors and mentees encounter, with belief perceived by the number of hours that participants determine to be more than the performing work schedule.

Mentors' perspective on work load as a barrier for the mentoring program:

Sometimes I would be too busy to remember to call. After about six months I forgot that she was new and I would forget to call and see how things were going.

Problems with support staff in mentee's county; illness in mentee's family; mentee's co-worker being fired. My workload, time management issues and being pregnant during the time of the mentorship.

I had a baby in January, out for 12 weeks as well as two hurricanes, our office flooded – lost everything. I did not give my mentee my best.

Busy schedule prevented agents from spending time together.

Lack of time to deal with everyday issues and questions.

Complexity and unscheduled demands that an agent has on a day to day basis can be a problem to making sure a mentoring relationship is successful.

Mentees' perspective on work load as a barrier for the mentoring program:

Coordinating schedules to meet, we tried to plan quarterly meetings ahead of time but sometimes trainings and activities (New Employee) conflicted.

Schedule – we were both busy.

Schedules – we were both busy trying to run our own programs.

Mentors schedule prevented adequate face-to-face visits.

Primarily the busy schedule of a new agent and trying to schedule time to meet with my mentor.

Trying to go over too much at one time. Information overload.

### **Summary of Research Objective Two**

In examining four emerged themes: time, distance, differences, and work load, within the barriers category, the mentors and mentees provided rich insight to the challenges that affect day-to-day factors. How well a mentor relationship develops depends not only on the mentor and mentee building a relationship but on how they strive to minimize outside challenges to keep the relationship a priority.

### **Findings Related to Research Objective Three**

Research objective three was to identify the perceived characteristics in a mentoring relationship. From research objective three, the data were analyzed from a mentor and mentee perspective. When removing the job roles from the mentoring process, what remains is the human dimension, which is perceived to be characteristics of what makes a good mentoring relationship. Within the mentoring relationship data, trusting, encouraging and leadership emerged as the three themes of perceived characteristics.

#### **Trusting**

Having someone that you can confide in and feel comfortable talking with is perceived to be much slower to develop than any of the other characteristics. Much like a mother handing her newborn to a stranger, it does not happen. The mother must feel comfortable and safe and get to know the stranger as a friend. Once the friendship begins, the stranger becomes someone the mother can trust to hold her newborn. Trusting expectations are often mutual when meeting a person for the first time. Mentors who set expectations and share themselves, allow mentees the ability to begin to develop a trustworthy relationship with others besides the mentor.

Mentors' perspective on trust as a characteristic for the mentoring program:

Served as a counselor on how to interest and deal with other agents at the local level, district directors, regional program directors and state specialist director.

I agreed to mentor Floyd because he already had experience as a county agent and we were friends. That made it easy for me. Bonnie and I had a very positive, open, and honest relationship.

I feel that we established a relationship built on trust and understanding. We were both open and honest with our opinions and suggestions.

Relationship was excellent and developed a line of communication and trust with mentee.

Developed a relationship with the mentee that will last through our careers. I trust that the mentee can rely on me at all time for support and advice.

Mentees' perspective on trust as a characteristic for the mentoring program:

My mentor let me watch her do meetings, and many other things. There wasn't a time that I felt I couldn't pick up the phone and call her. If it was not for her, I don't know what I would have done!!

I was introduced to Jim via phone call shortly after joining Extension. Later we met in person at his county office. He was very nice and made me feel like I could discuss with him issues on a more private matter that may have been awkward with my county director.

I believe having the right mentor can 'make or break' the Extension career of a new agent.

I believe that my mentor gave me her best efforts to allow me to utilize my talents and skills to build a strong ENP group in Cameron County and to be a great agent.

## **Encouraging**

Be the optimistic person in a mentor relationship. A mentee coming into a new job is similar to a young child riding a bicycle. Children do not believe or feel safe without a parent holding the back of the seat while they pedal. The mentor knows the children can ride by themselves but they need a cheerleader to encourage them to try. A mentee is similar to child. Mentees have the skills and talents needed they just have not developed the self-confidence to ride solo until they have had exposure to the organizational environment. As a mentor, your job is to encourage them to succeed.

Mentors' perspective on encouraging as a characteristic for the mentoring program:

Provide encouragement as well as being available to answer questions. I invited Brooke to activities that I thought would be

helpful for her to observe. I always found Brooke to be receptive to suggestions and she came up with good observations on ways to improve contests.

Provide encouragement as well as being available to answer questions.

Riding with each other to district events provided time to discuss Extension activities; working together on committees helped foster our relationship; the numerous meetings we (mentors) had together with the three new FCS mentees were very helpful to everyone.

Mentees' perspective on trust as a characteristic for the mentoring program:

I found this experience to be very positive. Odette is a true professional. It was comforting to know I had someone to go to with questions. I really appreciated her Friday e-mails of encouragement.

The phone calls that gave me encouragement were most helpful.

Felicia was a great cheerleader and always willing to offer creative fun ideas. Felicia made many unnecessary trips "just to check on me."

The assigned mentor was very helpful and straight to the point. Helped me to learn to manage time and prioritize certain events.

## **Leadership**

Being the shepherd who guides mentees in the right direction enables mentees to feel in control and to make decisions. Mentees are refreshing, energetic employees who are seeing the organization with a fresh perspective. Mentees need a mentor who can tell them what needs or expectations are demanded without telling them how to do their job.

Mentors' perspective on leadership as a characteristic for the mentoring program:

Feel a sense of accomplishment that I was able to help and guide a new agent. Tiffany was a pleasure to work with, she is a valued asset to Extension.

A stronger relationship with mentor and mentees' co workers to guide and help train the new employees on various aspects of the job. In other words, communication between experienced agents and supervisors involved would help determine goals for the mentorship.

Approach in working with Millie was to offer guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing her commitment to Extension work. She has great competence and character that made my work easy. Providing advice, friendship, reinforcement, and constructive examples are powerful tools, in keeping new agents in Extension.

I believe mentee felt comfortable asking for assistance and guidance when needed.

Renee has been receptive to guidance and change. She has implemented strategies and practices to support the mission, goals, and objectives.

Mentees' perspective on leadership as a characteristic for the mentoring program:

Ralph has not only shown me guidance as a mentor, but also as a friend both now and I am sure well into the future.

Approach as if mentee doesn't know anything and guide or provide guidance in every aspect because this is a new career for mentee. Be comfortable sharing what you know mentee needs to know.

Experience made it easier for Vic to guide me in my direction/decision making.

His experience and guidance has helped me in knowing what my job is as an Extension Agent. Garrett will always be a mentor/role model to me.

Overall, this program helped me get through my first year with guidance and allowing me to make the final call. (Give me enough rope to hang myself, with someone there to pick me up when I fall.)



I have been very fortunate to have Nina as my mentor. Other new agents will be just as fortunate to have Nina as a mentor, providing positive, professional guidance and support.

### **Summary of Research Objective Three**

Research objective three strives to capture the essence of mentor relationship characteristics. Through the statements from the mentors and mentees, there is a sense of caring undertone for each response. When there is a connection within the mentoring relationship, the focus of the relationship seems to shift from job-tasking and expectations to a caring and observing role where both parties took pride in their roles and became actively engaged in working together on projects and calling just to check on them.

### **Summary**

This chapter focused on the findings for the phenomenological study. Themes emerged from the five years of data received from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. The data were presented through descriptive narratives. The conclusion findings and recommendations for future research will be discussed in the final chapter.

From my perspective, the mentoring program within Texas AgriLife Extension provides a tremendous benefit for the mentee and mentor. Mentees benefit because they are provided with a mentor to shadow and guide them in the right direction for anticipated success for years to come. The mentor's benefit may often not be as tangible as the mentee but extremely rewarding. When mentors realize that their mentee saw them as a role model and want to be a good agent just like them, it takes them back to

their childhood where role models where “top-notch.” There is a small grin and thinking pause then the agents say, “Well, I don’t know if I would go that far; I did the best I knew how to do.”

The formal mentor training that I coordinate, the first hour is spent asking the mentor recruits two questions. The first question is what they think makes them a good mentor. Most of the answers come back that they have been in Extension for a long time, I’m a seasoned agent, I do good programming, and the like. The second question is to think about your current or past mentor, close your eyes and picture them. What qualities and characteristics does that person have to be a good mentor? This takes the majority of the hour to get all the responses recorded on the wall.

In analyzing the data for this study, I have a sense of pride reading quote after quote of how many mentees and mentors described their perspective of how successful their mentoring relationship was.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine that mentee and mentor characteristics existed within Texas AgriLife Extension's Mentoring Program and the perceived effectiveness and barriers for a successful mentoring relationship. This study strengthened earlier research studies on mentoring by focusing on the importance of the mentoring relationship in how effective the experience was for the mentor and the mentee. Much of the previous research focused on the needs of mentees within the relationship and what they learned. This study however, looked at both roles within the mentoring relationship, and attempted to portray the perceptions of the mentor and mentee.

The strength of this research is the longitudinal study that provides insight for a formal mentoring program that has remained constant for the past five years. A qualitative approach was used in this study to provide a voice for the mentor and mentee as they reflect on their experiences after the one-year formal mentoring relationship ended. The basis for qualitative research is to discover themes (Patton, 2002). The objectives of this study were to identify and describe the themes associated with the effectiveness, and barriers and characteristics of the formal mentoring program within Texas AgriLife Extension Service. The objective was to uncover and explore the essence, or statement, of the mentoring experience in a formal mentoring relationship.

Table 6 depicts how the three research objectives related to each category and the emergent themes from each category.

**Table 6. Summary of Emerging Themes from Each of the Research Objectives**

	Category	Emerg Themes
Research Objective 1	Effectiveness	Accommodating
		Resource
Research Objective 2	Barriers	Time
		Distance
		Differences
		Work Load
Research Objective 3	Characteristics	Trusting
		Encouraging
		Leadership

### Summary of Findings

Research Objective 1: Identify the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship from the mentor and mentee perspective.

As communicated in the emerged themes in Chapter IV, there was evidence that mentoring relationships are effective within the Texas AgriLife Extension Service formal mentoring program. The findings communicated to the researcher that mentors were accommodating mentees by sharing knowledge and providing resource opportunities for mentees to shadow and share experiences with their mentor. This is supported by Noe (1988) who found direct observation of the mentor is part of the mentee's organizational socialization.

Research Objective 2: Identify any barriers within the formal mentoring relationship from both mentor and mentee perspective. The emerged themes within Chapter IV provided that there is evidence that barriers existed within mentoring relationships. The scheduling barriers seemed to be huge and can hinder the effectiveness of the program as noted by Hegstad (1999) who found non-intrusive environments and open communication was critical. The cross-county distances and difference in county type (rural and urban) were also barriers that decreased effectiveness. Wilson and Ehman (1990) said to chose mentors presumed no judgments and similar interests. These are similar findings that were found in this study that the closer match that could be found the better the mentor relationship sharing. The findings further provide that real-world challenges are inevitable, but when providing supplemental training to mentors, they can be improved.

Research Objective 3: Identify what perceived characteristics must be present to enable an effective mentoring relationship. The characteristics that emerged during formal mentoring relationships were trusting, encouraging, and leadership. This is supported by Mincemoyer and Thomson (1998), Kram (1985), and Roche (1979) who concluded that organizational knowledge was critical characteristics needed for effective mentoring relationships. Within the realm of mentoring, characteristics become core values to many individuals.

Within the findings substantiated by literature, Wells's model can be customized to implement the framework in which Extension creates its own model for all Extension employees. Extension's model can be used when onboarding new employees, enhancing

transitioning employees, and strengthening the experienced employees to prepare them for mid-manager roles.

Extension can use the findings to strengthen the Texas AgriLife Extension Services' mentoring training program. Wells's customized model can provide stages of progression for mentors within Extension and mentors to be identified in the future. The progression of learning and developing into a mentor is similar to progressing into experienced employees. Table 3, Chapter III, was a summary of the characteristics for Wells's model. The core characteristics have parallel resemblances of mentoring relationships within an organization in building professional capacity (Kutilek & Earnest 2001). Table 7 provides an illustration of Wells's model expanded and integrated into Extension's training, development, and progression of competencies needed by all employees prior to moving to the next stage of development, whether it be a new employee, new mentor, experienced mentor or experienced employee progressing to Artisan stage in developing mid-managers.

**Table 7. Extension Professional Development Model for Extension Employees**

<b>Core Characteristics</b>	<b>Wells's Core Characteristic Descriptors</b>	<b>Extension Competency Progression</b>	<b>Employee Development</b>
<b>Sage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has many questions</li> <li>• Open to learning</li> <li>• Seeking knowledge</li> <li>• Energized and motivated</li> </ul>	<b>MENTEE</b>	
<b>Visionary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivated to go beyond the basics</li> <li>• Challenge to think out-side-the-box</li> <li>• Seek others to share excitement</li> <li>• Communicate the process of methods and/or accomplishments</li> </ul>	Onboarding of new county agents from 1 <sup>st</sup> Day – 2 years	<p>Appointed as Mentor</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> Assignment, completed Mentor Training</p>
<b>Magician</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calm, easy going and receptive to change</li> <li>• Understands balance between organization's structure, system and processes</li> <li>• Maintains flexibility and open to change when necessary</li> </ul>	Transition from new employee to career ladder 2 – 5 years	Currently trained mentors with 3-5 years of experience

**Table 7. Continued**

<b>Core Characteristics</b>	<b>Wells's Core Characteristic Descriptors</b>	<b>Extension Competency Progression</b>	<b>Employee Development</b>
<b>Globalist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge builder across cultures and experiences</li> <li>• Good listener</li> <li>• Looks for the common ground</li> <li>• Maintains productive organizational culture to draw on people's strength</li> </ul>		<p><b>Early Mid-Career County Agents</b></p> <p><b>5 – 10 years</b></p> <p>Currently trained mentors with 5-10 years of experience</p> <p>Optimal Goal for all trained mentors within Mentoring Program</p>
<b>Mentor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed to personal and professional development of individuals</li> <li>• Provide guidance for helping people advance in careers</li> <li>• Provide learning opportunities</li> <li>• Support decisions that a person may make</li> <li>• Help people to gain new outlook or avenue potentials in their job</li> </ul>		



**Table 7. Continued**

<b>Core Characteristics</b>	<b>Wells's Core Characteristic Descriptors</b>	<b>Extension Competency Progression</b>	<b>Employee Development</b>
<b>Ally</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to form highly effective and productive teams and alliances</li> <li>• Strive to make higher standards for their team</li> <li>• Build collaboration with people or teams in which they are involved</li> </ul>		<p><b>Provide opportunities for Employee to develop into Mid-Manager</b></p> <p><b>Mid-Career County Agents</b></p> <p><b>10-15 years progressing to Mid-Manager and Regional Program Director Level</b></p>
<b>Sovereign</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow decisions to be made by others within the team but taking responsibility for making decisions</li> <li>• Willing to take risks and embrace ambiguity while being responsible for consequences of decisions</li> <li>• Strive to empower decisions to generate systematic delegation</li> </ul>		

**Table 7. Continued**

Core Characteristics	Wells's Core Characteristic Descriptors	Extension Competency Progression	Employee Development
<b>Guide</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible organizers</li> <li>• Direct tasks and goals to core values that support the organization</li> <li>• Action oriented</li> <li>• Eager to take on challenges to keep moving forward</li> <li>• Identifies and resolves matters concerning people while ensuring that work continues</li> <li>• Keenly aware of obstacles or differences that could disrupt work progress focuses on the objectives and accomplishments most critical to achieve success</li> </ul>		<b>Executive Leadership Training for Administrative Positions</b>

**Table 7. Continued**

Core Characteristics	Wells's Core Characteristic Descriptors	Extension Competency Progression	Employee Development
<b>Artisan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devoted to mastery of a skill/technique</li> <li>• Strive for excellence by questioning process and procedures</li> <li>• Concerned about aesthetics as well as practicality</li> <li>• Excels understanding the organization with improving performance and a person's experiences.</li> </ul>		
Wells (1997)		Onboarding Timeline within Texas AgriLife Extension	Mentoring within Texas AgriLife Extension (2009)

## **Recommendations**

### **Training**

- Provide supplemental training for trained mentors at a minimum of every year.  
Mentor forums to assist the mentor stay up-to-date on procedures to feel knowledgeable and confident for a mentoring relationship.
- Provide professional development opportunities for mentors. Many recognize the benefits of mentoring, but after several years, the goal may fade.  
Professional development opportunities to focus on organizational actions, communication and case studies
- Establish a mentee orientation (training) so mentees are aware of their responsibilities for the one-year commitment, and so mentors do not have the sole responsibility of providing for the mentee to have experiences. Within the organization there needs to be training that prepares new employees to become a mentee and communicate that the organization has expectations for the new employee to be an engaged learner.

### **Processes**

- Encourage and inspire mentors by providing new tips and techniques instead of assuming that once they were trained, they would be able to remain successful on their own.
- Require district administrators to become actively involved with the mentoring process during the mentoring relationship.

- Reinforce the mentoring guidebook to mentors and mentees at the initial appointment to ensure that all relationships maintain the minimum requirements.
- Work with evaluator to produce an evaluation instrument that will capture knowledge gained and report findings. Have a more in-depth survey to yield a better quality response from the mentor, mentee, and the district administrator.
- Minimize the distance that the mentoring pair has to travel to perform their duties.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

- Develop a procedure to pair mentor relationships better.
- Research literature to discover mentor and mentee relationships with today's millenniums.
- Develop a practical model that would integrate Wells's model with the Texas AgriLife Extension employee capacity building to provide employee development for all levels of employees.

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APPENDIX A  
MENTORING PROGRAM EVALUATION

**Your Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **District:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dates of Mentoring Relationship (mm/yy to mm/yy):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Check one:**        \_\_\_\_\_ **Mentee**        \_\_\_\_\_ **Mentor**

**Briefly describe your experiences in working with the mentor/mentee and the effectiveness of the relationship:**

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**Describe three or four activities that were most helpful in developing your mentoring relationship:**

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**Describe three or four barriers that affected the development of the mentoring relationship:**

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**What suggestions do you have for making the program stronger?**

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**Email, Fax, or Mail to:**  
**Your District Extension Administrator**  
**cc:Rebecca Luckey**  
**Fax: 979-845-2970**

## VITA

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