

**STUDENT TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF IMPORTANT
CHARACTERISTICS OF COOPERATING TEACHERS**

A Thesis

by

HOLLY JO KASPERBAUER

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

August 2005

Major Subject: Agricultural Education

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	T. Grady Roberts
	Barry Boyd
Committee Members,	Gary Briers
	William Nash
Head of Department,	Christine Townsend

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ABSTRACT

Student Teachers' Perceptions of Important
Characteristics of Cooperating Teachers. (August 2005)

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Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Grady Roberts
Dr. Barry Boyd

A challenge faced by agricultural educators across the country is a lack of qualified teachers entering the profession. The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and the decision to enter the teaching profession. Background/demographic characteristics were also examined to determine if relationships existed with the decision about entering teaching. These characteristics included gender, age, academic classification, race/ethnicity, previous agricultural work experience, and semesters of high school agricultural science courses completed.

The target population of this study consisted of preservice agricultural education students at Texas A&M University. The sample consisted of 33 student teachers who completed their student teaching in the fall semester 2004.

The instrument consisted of three parts. Part I of the instrument contained six background/demographic variables (gender, age, semesters of high school agricultural science courses completed, academic classification, race/ethnicity, and agricultural work experience). Part II of the instrument contained 14 items measuring student teacher

perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship. For each item, participants were asked to indicate the importance of each characteristic and the current level of their cooperating teacher using a modified five point Likert-type scale. Part III of the instrument consisted of a single item, “Do you plan to teach agricultural science when you graduate?” accompanied by a seven point response scale ranging from definitely yes to definitely no.

There was no relationship found between the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and the decision to teach. However, a relationship was found between previous agricultural work experience and the decision to teach, as well as a relationship between the semesters of high school agricultural science courses completed and the decision to teach. By knowing how many high school agricultural science courses a student had completed, one could better predict the decision to teach.

As a result of the study, the researcher recommends that agricultural education programs recruit students who have completed high school agriculture courses. High school agricultural science teachers should encourage their students to pursue careers in agricultural education.

DEDICATION

To Nick McKenna

Without your love and support, I would not have been able to accomplish my goal of attending graduate school. From the time I said I wanted to move 900 miles from home, you stood by me and gave me a shoulder to lean on. Thank you for always sacrificing for me. For that, I will always be grateful.

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First and foremost, I want to thank my committee. Dr. Grady Roberts, what can I say, we learned about this process together. Over the past year, you have helped me in so many ways. It has been a learning experience for both of us, and I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. The guidance and support you gave me means more than you will ever know. Thank you for being a great co-chair and more importantly, thank you for being a friend.

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It has also been an honor to work with Dr. William Nash. Dr. Nash, when I first walked into your creative thinking course, I was not sure what I was getting myself into. I had never thought of myself as being creative, and I knew that I would be challenged. It was not until after your class, that I realized my own creativity. The wisdom that you shared is priceless. For that, I will always be grateful to you.

From the time I arrived in College Station, the Ag Ed family welcomed me with open arms. I owe all of you a huge thank you. The faculty, staff, and graduate students became my support system when times got tough. It will be hard to leave my office in August, but I will always cherish the memories. I would like to especially thank my suite mates. Dr. Harlin and Summer – I always looked forward to our weekly chats about the Bachelor or any other crazy reality show we were watching at the moment. Justin, Laura, and Tony – sharing the “closet” with each of you (thankfully not at the same time) was truly an honor. The conversations and fun we had are priceless. Nicole Stedman – from the time you arrived and moved in across the hall, I knew that we would be quick friends. Thank you for being a mentor and a friend. Last, I need to thank Elisa Noble. Without your friendship and support, I think I would have packed up and moved back to Iowa. I do not know what I would have done without your guidance. We survived this together!

Most importantly, I would like to thank my family back in Iowa. Dad and Cindy, thank you for supporting my decision to move to Texas. I know it was hard, but without your support, I could not have done it. Heath, Stephanie, Kenzie, Jed, and Jenna – thank you for the random phone calls and visits. I love all you so much!

The person that I am today is largely because of my mother, the late Jan Kasperbauer. She taught me to dream big and to always believe in myself. Without that, none of what I have accomplished would have been possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the agricultural education profession has faced many challenges. One such challenge has been a shortage of qualified teachers entering the profession. Since 1965, supply and demand of agricultural education teachers in the United States has been studied (Camp, Broyles, & Skelton, 2002). The most recent study in 2001 showed that adequate numbers of potential teachers were produced by university agriculture teacher preparation programs (n=857). However, only 59.4% (509) of the qualified preservice teachers entered teaching (Camp et al, 2002). In the fall of 2001, there was a need for 1,115 new agriculture teachers and only an estimated 693 new graduates looking for jobs in the teaching profession (Camp et al, 2002).

Typically, student teaching is the capstone experience of a teacher preparation program and occurs during the time in which the decision to enter teaching is made. Student teaching is one of the most important events during the teacher preparation process. Throughout the student teaching experience, the student teacher develops as an educator and gains practical teaching skills in the classroom. It is during student teaching that preservice teachers obtain hands on, real world experience. Numerous researchers (Briers & Byler, 1979; Byler & Byler, 1984; Schumacher & Johnson, 1990; Schumann, 1969) have agreed that the experience of student teaching plays a considerable role in preparation of future teachers.

This thesis follows the style of the *Journal of Agricultural Education*.

However, there is no consistency regarding the placement practices of student teachers in teacher preparation programs (Rome & Moss, 1990; Norris, Larke, & Briers, 1990). Rome and Moss found that teacher education programs in the Southern Region lacked uniformity in placement methods used and in curriculum presented prior to student teaching. There are mixed opinions about the essential elements of the student teaching experience and of the characteristics of the cooperating teacher that should be identified when placing a student teacher with a cooperating teacher. Roberts and Dyer (2004) and Roberts (2005) identified important characteristics of effective cooperating teachers from the perceptions of student teachers.

Generally, student teaching involves three groups of individuals – the student teacher, the university supervisor, and the cooperating teacher. Cooperating teachers are often the most influential in the development of novice teachers, as they have the most contact and communication with the student teachers. Norris, Larke, and Briers (1990) stated that “the student teaching center and the supervising [cooperating] teacher are the most important ingredients in the student teaching experience” (p. 58). Other investigators (Deeds, 1993; Deeds, Flowers, & Arrington, 1991; Garton & Cano, 1994; Martin & Yoder, 1985) also supported this assertion. Martin and Yoder (1985) further argue that a student teacher’s success during his or her field experience was based “on the general supervisory climate in the department and on the educational leadership abilities of the cooperating teacher” (p. 21). In most instances, the relationship that a student teacher has with his or her cooperating teacher is unique. Montgomery (2000) stated that “if the perspective of the cooperating teacher conflicts with the perspective

learned by the student teacher, this relationship does not permit a smooth transition for the student teacher” (p. 7).

Statement of the Problem

Teacher educators are challenged with the responsibility of determining the reasons that such a large percentage of students completing teacher education programs choose not to enter the teaching profession. Possible solutions to the problem include addressing the concerns related to the quality of the student teaching experience and the effectiveness of the cooperating teacher. Given the plethora of available majors that capture the human dimension of agriculture (agricultural communications, agricultural leadership, extension education, etc.), it is reasonable to assume that students who enroll in an agricultural education (teacher preparation) program have some interest in teaching. However, as reported earlier, many do not enter teaching. Teacher educators need to identify why students enrolled in teacher education programs are completing student teaching but then choosing not to enter the profession. Researchers (Briers & Byler, 1979; Byler & Byler, 1984; Schumacher & Johnson, 1990; Schumann, 1969) posited that the student teaching experience and the quality of the relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher have an impact on the decision to enter the profession.

Background of the Study

This study is part of a larger study being conducted by agricultural teacher education researchers at Texas A&M University (TAMU). Researchers are interested in

understanding the student teaching experience, specifically looking at the relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher. Data collection began in the Fall 2004, with data being collected from student teachers in the Department of Agricultural Education at TAMU. Future plans include the addition of other agricultural teacher education departments in other parts of the country.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine if there is a relationship between student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and the decision to enter the teaching profession.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives guided the study:

1. Describe student teachers from the fall semester 2004 at Texas A&M University.
2. Describe student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship.
3. Determine if student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship change during the student teaching semester.
4. Determine if a relationship exists between student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and the student's decision to enter the teaching profession.

Significance of the Study

This study sought to address the shortage of agricultural education graduates entering the teaching profession by examining what is arguably the most important component of a preservice program, the student teaching experience. More specifically, this study investigated the relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher and how that relationship relates to the student teacher's decision to enter teaching. With this knowledge, teacher educators can better place student teachers, thus maximizing their likelihood of entering the profession. If university teacher educators can identify cooperating teachers who exhibit the most important characteristics, student teachers will likely have a better student teaching experience. Therefore, the shortage of qualified agricultural education teachers, as identified by Camp et al. (2002), will be addressed.

Assumptions

1. Instruments used in the study accurately measured the perceptions held by preservice teachers.
2. Participants provided honest responses to items on the instrument.

Limitations

1. Due to the causal-comparative design of this study, a true cause and effect relationship cannot be determined.

2. Due to the data being collected in the fall semester, student teachers' decision about entering the teaching profession may have been influenced by the fewer number of available teaching positions.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to preservice teachers student teaching at Texas A&M University in the Department of Agricultural Education during fall semester 2004.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined operationally:

Cooperating teacher: Generally, an experienced high school agricultural science teacher who has been in the profession successfully teaching for at least three years. This individual counsels and guides the student teacher daily during the student teaching experience.

Teacher education: An academic program at a recognized institution that provides coursework in pedagogy, teaching and learning, and in subject matter specific content for the purpose of preparing agricultural science teachers.

Student teacher: Any student enrolled in a preservice teacher education program at a university who is completing related coursework and the professional requirements for obtaining certification as a teacher.

University supervisor: Experienced faculty member from the institution who observes and evaluates the student teacher periodically during the student teaching experience and communicates with the cooperating teacher.

Preservice teacher: A student studying to enter the teaching profession.

Inservice teacher: An individual who has entered the teaching profession.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter I outlined the significance of the study. A brief history of teacher education research was presented and the current situation was laid out. The purpose of the study was established, along with the research objectives which guided the study. Key definitions were provided, and assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were outlined.

The student teaching experience is one of the most important events during the teacher preparation process. Throughout the student teaching experience, the student teacher develops as an educator and gains practical teaching skills in the classroom. It is during student teaching that preservice teachers obtain hands on, real world experience. Numerous researchers (Briers & Byler, 1979; Byler & Byler, 1984; Schumacher & Johnson, 1990; Schumann, 1969) have agreed that the experience of student teaching plays a considerable role in preparation of future teachers. Schumann (1969) goes on to state that “a cooperating teacher plays a key role in providing the experiences necessary to become a successful teacher” (p. 156).

Theoretical Framework

This study was framed in the situated learning theory and through legitimate peripheral participation. Lave and Wenger (1991) viewed learning as a “situated activity” (p. 29), a “learn by doing” approach. This approach models what teacher educators attempt with the placement of student teachers during their student teaching

experience. An important notion within the situated learning theory is the idea of legitimate peripheral participation. This is the “process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice” (p. 29). As learners participate in the community, they acquire the knowledge and skills required to be practicing members within that community.

Conceptual Model

Applying the situated learning model to the student teaching experience is shown in the diagram below. As illustrated in Figure 1, learners begin the process as preservice teachers. As preservice teachers enter the student teaching experience, they begin acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes about teaching. It is during this experience (student teaching) that preservice teachers make their decisions about entering the teaching profession. The researcher hypothesizes that the relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher has a direct effect on the legitimate peripheral participation and ultimately has an effect on the decision to enter the community (teaching profession). The move from preservice teacher to inservice teacher involves the acquisition of knowledge and skills, much of which is obtained during the student teaching experience.

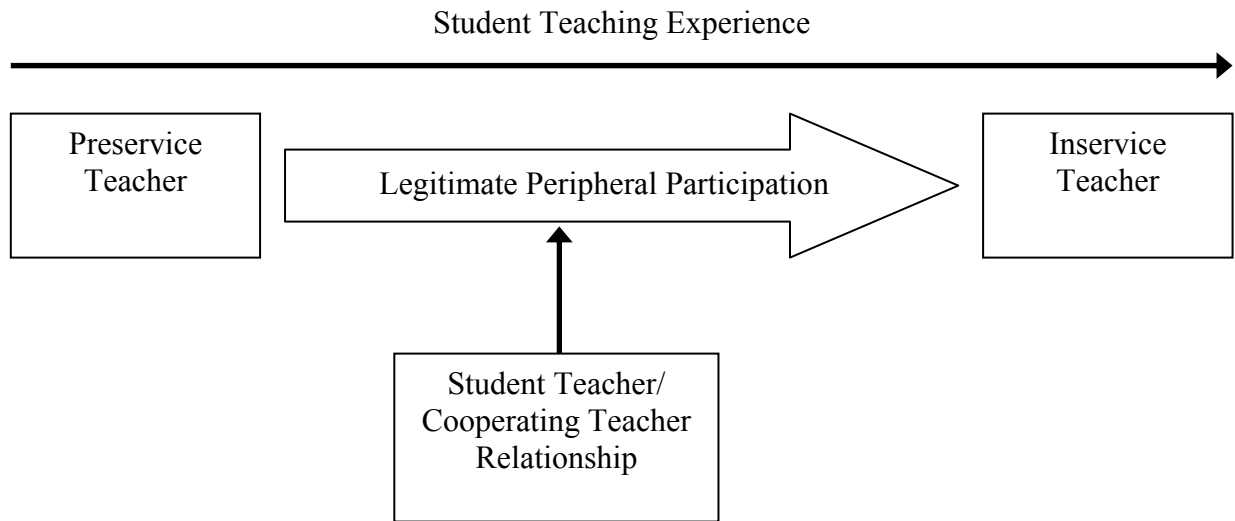


Figure 1. Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship Conceptual Model

Relevant Research Concerning Teacher Preparation

This study is largely based on the preliminary findings of two studies; Roberts and Dyer (2004) and Roberts (2005). In 2004, Roberts and Dyer examined the interaction that took place between student teacher and cooperating teacher. The results of the Delphi study identified 19 characteristics (see Figure 2). The characteristics were placed into five categories: instruction, advising, professionalism, cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship, and personal characteristics. They developed a model (see Figure 2) of cooperating teacher effectiveness.

A major limitation of the Roberts and Dyer (2004) study was the small sample size. Thus, in 2005, Roberts (2005), sought to develop a model of cooperating teacher effectiveness through the replication of the work completed in 2004. Using identical research methodologies, Roberts conducted a Delphi and identified 30 characteristics (see Figure 3). These characteristics were categorized into four categories: teaching/instruction, professionalism, student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship, and personal characteristics.

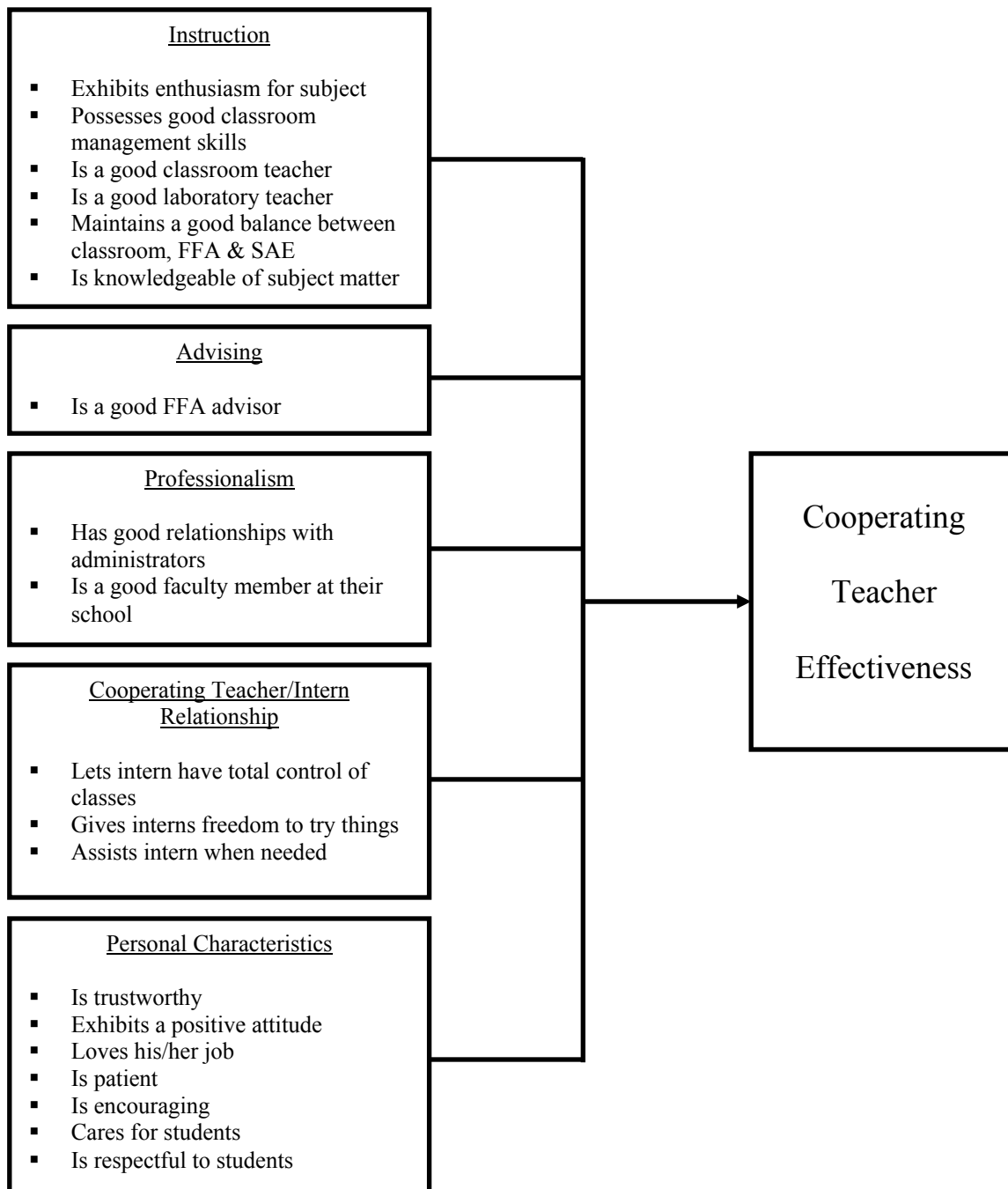


Figure 2. Cooperating Teacher Effectiveness Model (Roberts & Dyer, 2004)

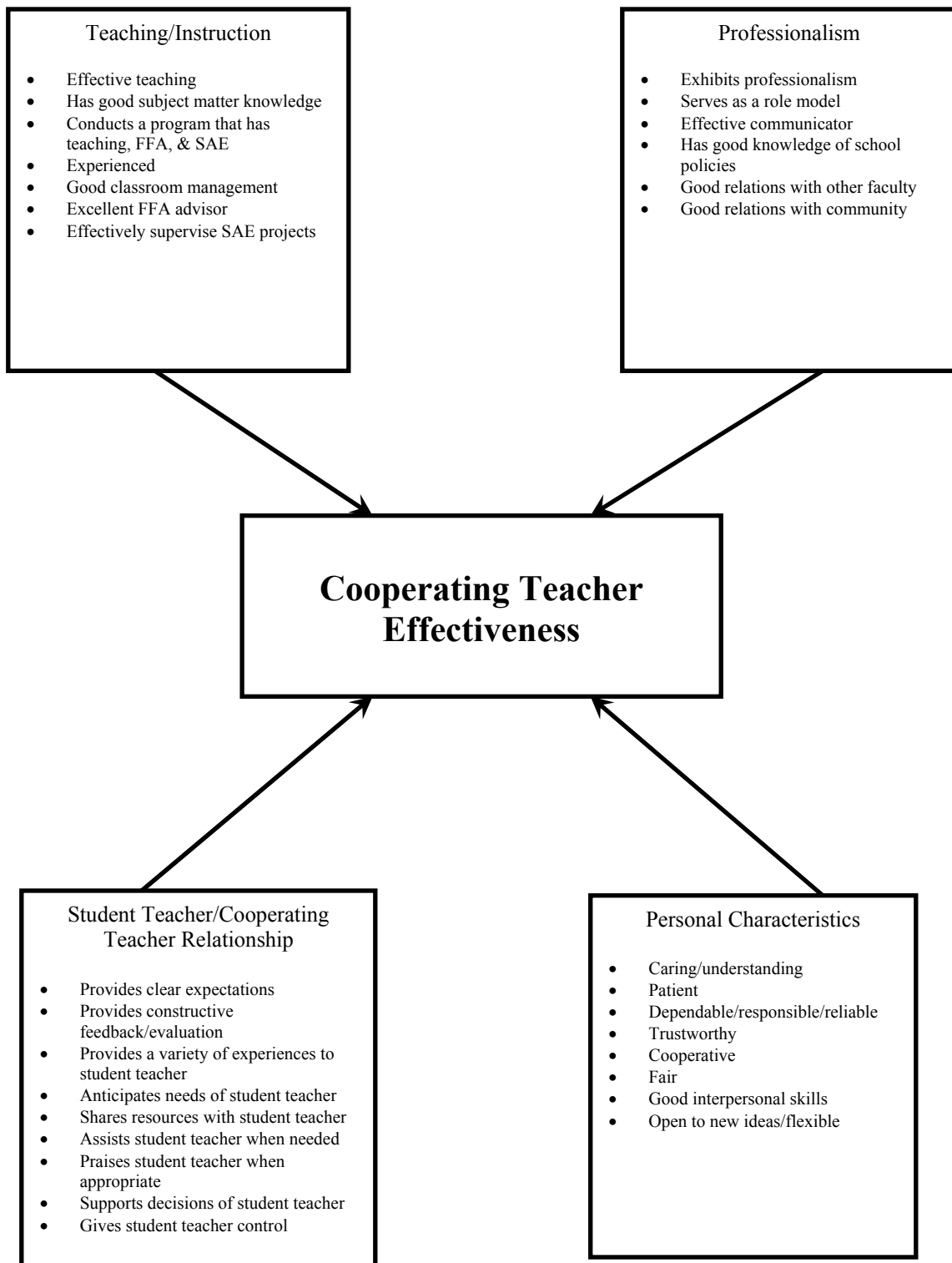


Figure 3. Model of Cooperating Teacher Effectiveness (Roberts, 2005)

Background/Demographic Characteristics of Student Teachers

Wildman and Torres (2001) attempted to identify important factors when selecting a major in agriculture. They found that students perceived that having experiences in agriculture (work/job related) influences their decision to major in agriculture. The prior experience was the most influential when compared with other factors such as family and friends, recruitment activity, professionals, and job considerations (Wildman & Torres, 2001).

Harlin, Edwards, and Briers (2002) did a comparison of student teacher perceptions before and after the student teaching experience. Their study, conducted at Texas A&M University in 2001-2002, found that the gender among the student teachers was almost evenly split. There were 19 males and 17 females. The researchers also questioned students about their classification level or grade level in school. Of the 36 student teachers, only three were working on a master's degree, while 24 others reported an interest in graduate school (Harlin et al., 2002).

Raven and Shelhamer (1992) looked at characteristics of preservice teachers of agriculture in Montana. Their study focused on the teaching style, learning style, and personality style of the preservice teachers, however, their findings regarding the demographics are of interest. Although the sample size was small ($n = 18$), they found that 64% of the respondents were males, and more than two-thirds of males were 25 years old or older. The students sampled were enrolled in a teaching methods course at the university.

Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship

In 1977, Karmos and Jacko sampled 60 student teachers completing student teaching in elementary and high school settings and examined the role of significant others during student teaching. They found that 70% of those student teaching were female and the average age was 22.8. More than 60 of the respondents ($n = 34$) indicated that their cooperating teacher had the most influence (Karmos & Jacko, 1977).

Byler and Byler (1984) attempted to identify if the morale of student teachers changes during the student teaching experience. They found that student teachers' morale significantly increased (positively) between the pretest and posttest when asked about communication with supervising teacher (cooperating teacher). It was also concluded that a relationship existed between the morale of the student teacher and the morale of the cooperating teacher, suggesting the importance of the relationship between the two (Byler & Byler, 1984).

Deeds and Barrick (1986) looked at preservice teachers' attitudes about themselves as future teachers of agriculture. They found that preservice teachers' perceptions about their future of teaching agriculture were positively related to their field experience. This study supported the conclusions made by Byler and Byler (1984).

Martin and Yoder (1985) noted that in order for a student teaching experience to be successful, it must be a "team approach" (p. 19). They argued that the success of the experience and the student teacher "depends, to a very great extent, upon the general supervisory climate in the department and on the educational leadership abilities of the cooperating teacher" (p. 21). Because student teachers often put cooperating teachers in

a role model situation, cooperating teachers should encourage their student teacher to discover new situations. Korthagen and Kessels (1999) further stated that the cooperating center “must be able to offer a sound balance between safety and challenge and a balance between the goal of serving the student teachers’ learning and the interests of the school” (p. 14). Garton and Cano (1994) concluded that “priority should be given to selecting teachers who model the desired teaching behaviors expected of student teachers” (p. 53). The cooperating teacher has the opportunity and ability to positively guide the student teacher into becoming a successful educator (Schumann, 1969).

Numerous researchers identified dimensions of the student teaching experience through various research methodologies (Deeds, 1993; Deeds, Flowers, & Arrington, 1991; Larke, Norris, & Briers, 1992; Roberts & Dyer, 2004; and Roberts, 2005). Deeds (1993) conducted a national survey of 82 institutions offering agriculture teacher preparation. A recommendation from the study was concerned with the feedback received by cooperating teachers and student teachers. An outcome from the Roberts (2005) study was that providing constructive feedback was important to the overall effectiveness of the cooperating teacher and to the relationship exhibited between the student teacher and cooperating teacher. Larke, Norris, and Briers (1992) also conducted a national survey of teacher education programs. They identified three groups: teacher educators, supervising teachers (cooperating teachers), and student teachers. The study attempted to determine important characteristics, compare the responses of the three groups, and identify priority areas where attention should be paid. Fortunately, the results showed that teacher educators, supervising teachers (cooperating

teachers), and student teachers generally agreed about the important qualities of teacher education programs. Specifically, the three groups agreed that it was important for the cooperating teacher to routinely observe and provide feedback to the student teacher. This notion was supported by the findings of Roberts (2005).

Rome and Moss (1990) surveyed first year teachers, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers in the Southern region and found that agriculture teacher preparation programs lack consistency in placement methods, supervisory visits, and actual length of time spent student teaching. However, all three groups agreed on the importance of the student teaching experience, stating that “student teaching was the most valuable component of the teacher education program” (p. 31). The study also found that the first year teachers agreed that their student teaching experience was positive and they disagreed that student teachers learn very little from the experience (1990). Rome and Moss concluded that the “overall effectiveness of the cooperating classroom teachers used during the student teaching experience is adequate” (pp. 32-33).

Swortzel (1997) was interested in the status of preservice teacher education programs and found differences in the requirements required for admission, length of program, coursework completed, and hours spent in the formal classroom. A recommendation from the study stated that similar studies should be conducted every five years in order to examine trends. To the researcher’s knowledge, this has not been done, and inconsistencies still exist across teacher education programs.

Harlin, Briers, and Edwards (2002), conducted a comparison of student teacher perceptions before and after the student teaching experience. The important elements

were grouped into core areas; one of the core areas was cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship. Items in this area received the highest overall rating in terms of their importance. Student teachers were able to identify the importance of the relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher both before and after the student teacher experience (Harlin et al., 2002).

A similar study conducted in 1998 with cooperating teachers identified the importance of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship (Briers and Edwards, 1998). Edwards and Briers (2001a) did a focus group and a quantitative follow up with a group of cooperating teachers attending a workshop. Participants were broken into core groups, one of which was cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship. This core area yielded five of the 10 highest rated items when the quantitative analysis was completed (Edwards & Briers, 2001a).

A recent study in Oklahoma developed a profile of cooperating teachers and centers used in the student teaching experience. Using an approach similar to that of Edwards and Briers (2001a), Young and Edwards (2005) found that items in the core area of cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship received seven of the ten highest ratings. This supports the work done earlier in Texas by Edwards and Briers (2001a), who also found that cooperating teachers recognized the importance of the relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher. One recommendation from the Young and Edwards (2005) study was to investigate student teachers about their perceptions of the student teaching experience.

Decision to Teach

Edwards and Briers (2001b) examined characteristics of entry-phase teachers, looking specifically at those characteristics that would help explain a teacher's decision to stay in the teaching field. They found that nearly one-third of the teachers were female and that nearly 80% had "considerable agricultural work experience" (p. 10). The females in this study had less work experience in agriculture and had lower expectations of the number of years they expected to teach. Edwards and Briers (2001b) found a "moderate relationship ($r = .38$) between the agricultural work experience of the teacher and how many years they expected to teach" (p. 12). By using multiple regression, the researchers were able to explain approximately 17% of the variation in years to teach by knowing gender and previous agricultural work experience (Edwards and Briers, 2001b). Teachers who had more agricultural work experience expected to teach longer than those who had less work experience in agriculture.

Summary of Literature Review

Previous studies identified the student teaching experience as an important step in the development of future teachers. Further research indicated that the cooperating teacher plays a vital role in the overall success of the student teacher. The researcher found no study that addressed whether specific characteristics of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship are related to a student teacher's decision to enter the teaching profession.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter I outlined the significance of the study. A brief history of teacher education research was presented and the current situation was laid out. The purpose of the study was established, along with the research objectives which guided the study. Key definitions were provided, and assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were outlined.

Chapter II set up the theoretical and conceptual framework for studying teacher preparation. Relevant and current information about the student teaching experience and teacher preparation was presented.

The purpose of the study was to determine if a relationship exists between student teacher perceptions of the importance of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and a student teacher's decision about entering the teaching profession. The study also described the level and importance of cooperating teacher characteristics and determined if the level of importance changes during the student teaching experience.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives guided the study:

1. Describe student teachers from the fall semester 2004 at Texas A&M University.
2. Describe student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship.

3. Determine if student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship change during the student teaching semester.
4. Determine if a relationship exists between student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and the student teacher's decision to enter the teaching profession.

Research Design

A causal-comparative design was used for this study and was ex post facto in nature. This study attempted to identify the relationship between student teacher perceptions of important characteristics of cooperating teachers and the decision to enter the teaching profession as they existed during the semester of which student teaching was being completed. Causal-comparative designs set out to study cause and effect relationships (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003), however, given that variables are not manipulated, a true cause and effect relationship was unable to be determined. This study investigated the cause and effect relationship between the quality of the student teacher relationship with the cooperating teacher (independent variable) and the decision to enter the teaching profession (dependent variable). Due to the small sample size and the sampling method employed in this study, definite inferences to the general population of student teachers cannot be made.

Population and Sample

The target population of this study consisted of preservice agricultural education students at Texas A&M University. A purposive sample of students was selected during fall 2004. The accessible sample consisted of student teachers in agricultural education at Texas A&M University in fall 2004, a group of 33 student teachers. This group was chosen because the students participating in the student teacher block had the information needed about relationships between student teachers and cooperating teachers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this group is representative of student teachers in agricultural education at Texas A&M University. The location of the sample used in this study allowed for the sampling method to also be convenient. The preservice teachers were engaged in a four week pre-experience teaching block on the campus and then were reconvened at the midpoint of the semester and again at the conclusion of the twelve weeks. The sample consisted of 33 preservice teachers.

Instrumentation

The instrument utilized for this study was based on preliminary research conducted by Roberts (2005) and a thorough review of the literature. Roberts (2005) sought to develop a model of cooperating teacher effectiveness by identifying characteristics of effective cooperating teachers. Four categories were identified: teaching/instruction, professionalism, student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship, and personal characteristics. Thirty characteristics were grouped into those categories

(Roberts, 2005). Content validity and construct validity of the instrument were verified by an expert panel of university teacher educators not involved in the study.

This research study focused only on the category of student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship. Therefore, the instrument utilized consisted of three sections: background/demographics, cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship characteristics, and intent to enter teaching (see Appendix A).

Background/demographics section consisted of six items: gender, age (years), semesters of high school agricultural science courses completed, academic classification, race/ethnicity, and agricultural work experience. The section of the instrument used to determine student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship consisted of 14 items. For each item, respondents were asked to indicate the importance of each characteristic and the current level of that characteristic as possessed by their cooperating teacher. Respondents used a five-point scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = low, 2 = moderately low, 3 = average, 4 = moderately high, and 5 = high). The intent to teach section of the instrument consisted of a single item, "Do you plan to teach agricultural science when you graduate?" accompanied by a seven point response scale ranging from definitely yes to definitely no.

Pilot Test

The instrument was pilot tested by a similar sample of preservice teachers at the University of Georgia for reliability and face validity. Data in the pilot test were collected from 33 participants. Reliability of the student teacher/cooperating teacher

section, as measured by internal consistency, was $\alpha = 0.85$. Respondents were also given the opportunity to suggest changes to the format of the instrument. However, no suggestions were given.

Data Collection Procedures

The study was conducted during the fall semester 2004. During the professional semester, student teachers observe in their assigned cooperating centers for one week, return to campus for four weeks to complete specific course work to prepare for the student teaching experience, and then return to their student teaching center for eleven weeks. Data were collected face to face using paper instruments at four points during the semester: the first day of the on-campus, four week session, the last day of the four-week session, at the midpoint of the student teaching experience (sixth week), and at the conclusion of the student teaching. The first administration of the questionnaire contained all questions. The remaining three administrations omitted the background/demographics questions. Following data collection, responses were coded and entered into a database.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 12.0. Significance levels were set *a priori* at .05. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample of student teachers. To achieve the goals of the research objectives, frequencies, percentages, and central tendencies were calculated. Repeated Measures

ANOVA was used to determine if student teacher perceptions of the cooperating teacher changed throughout the student teaching experience.

Discrepancy variables were calculated using the mean scores from each data collection point for importance and cooperating teacher level. The variable was calculated by dividing the cooperating teacher level mean by the importance mean and multiplying the difference by 100. The discrepancy variable was calculated to examine the differences in the means of the importance and current level and to determine if it changed throughout the student teaching experience.

Multiple regression was used to build a model that explained the greatest amount of variability in the student teacher's decision to enter teaching, based on the student teacher perceptions of the cooperating teacher and other suspected predictor variables.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter I outlined the significance of the study. A brief history of teacher education research was presented and the current situation was laid out. The purpose of the study was established, along with the research objectives which guided the study. Key definitions were provided, and assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were outlined.

Chapter II set up the theoretical and conceptual framework for studying teacher preparation. Relevant and current information about the student teaching experience and teacher preparation was presented.

Chapter III presented the specific research methodology used in this study. The research design, population and sample, instrumentation, pilot test, data collection procedures, and data analysis were presented in great detail.

This chapter highlights the findings from this study. This study attempted to determine if there was a relationship between student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and the decision to teach. It also examined how student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship changes during the semester of student teaching.

Description of Sample

The target population of this study was preservice agricultural education students at Texas A&M University. The sample consisted of students completing their student

teaching experience during the fall semester 2004 ($n = 35$). Time-in-place sampling was the chosen method because the students participating in the student teacher block had the information needed about the relationships between student teachers and cooperating teachers and anecdotal evidence suggested that they are representative of other groups of agricultural education student teachers at Texas A&M University.

As discussed in Chapter III, data for this study were collected at four points during the semester. The first collection point instrument consisted of three parts: demographics, decision to teach, and the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship. First round of data collection occurred on the first day of the student teaching block. Data were collected from 33 participants.

The second data collection consisted of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship instrument and the decision to teach instrument. Second round of collection occurred at the end of the student teacher block (4 weeks), and data were collected from 32 participants.

The third data collection consisted of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship instrument and the decision to teach instrument. Third round collection took place at the midsemester conference (6 weeks into student teaching). Data were collected from 32 participants.

The final data were collected from 33 participants and it occurred at the conclusion of the student teaching experience. The student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship instrument and the decision to teach instrument were used.

To compute the demographic variables (age, classification, gender, race/ethnicity, previous experience with agriculture besides formal education, and number of semesters of high school agricultural science courses,) frequencies and means, the SPSS procedure FREQUENCY was used.

The purpose of the study was to determine if there is a relationship between student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and a decision to enter the teaching profession.

The following research objectives guided the study:

1. Describe student teachers from the Fall semester 2004 at Texas A&M University.
2. Describe student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship.
3. Determine if student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship change during the student teaching semester.
4. Determine if a relationship exists between student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and the student's decision to enter the teaching profession.

The research objectives guided the presentation of findings for the study and data is presented in separate sections categorized by objective.

Findings Related to Research Objective One

Gender and Age

The gender of the respondents is reported in Table 1. Of the 33 participants in the study, 57.6% were female ($n = 19$). Males comprised 42.4%, or ($n = 14$), of the respondents (see Figure 4).

Table 1

Distribution of Student Teacher Gender at Texas A&M, Fall 2004

Gender	<i>n</i>	%
Female	19	57.6
Male	14	42.4
Total	33	100.0

The ages of participants ranged from 21 to 47 (see Figure 5). The average age of participants was 23.61 years old ($SD = 4.95$, $n = 33$). The median age was 22.

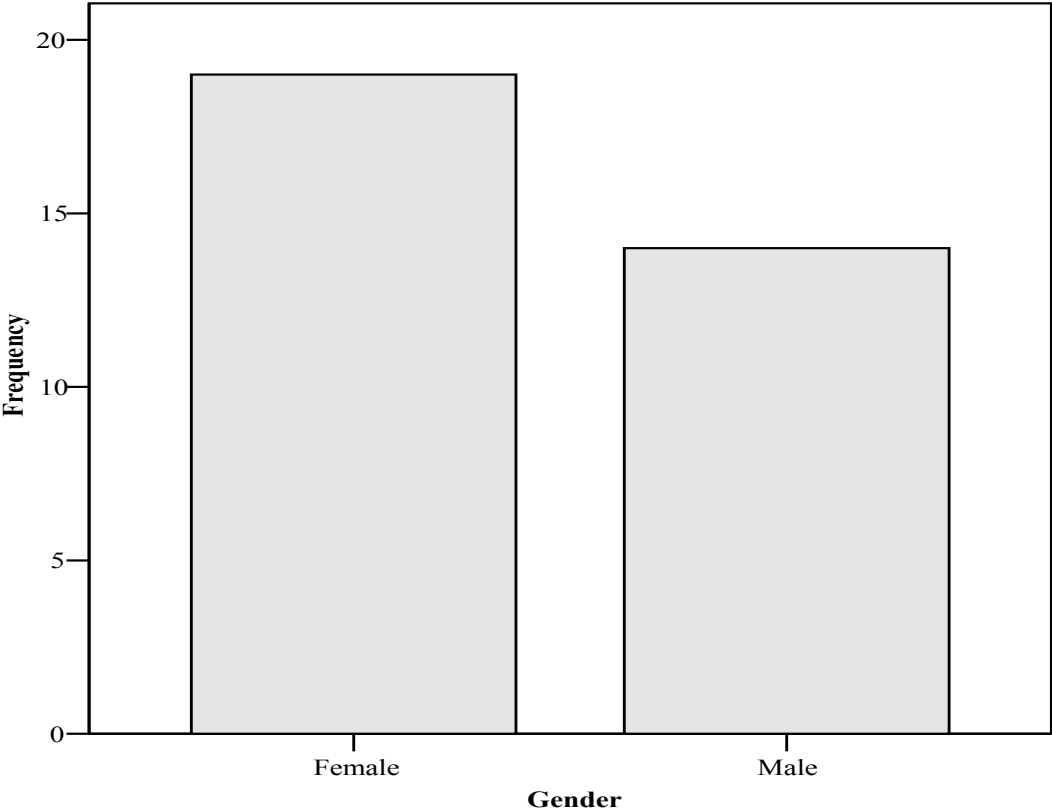


Figure 4. Distribution of Student Teacher Gender at Texas A&M, Fall 2004

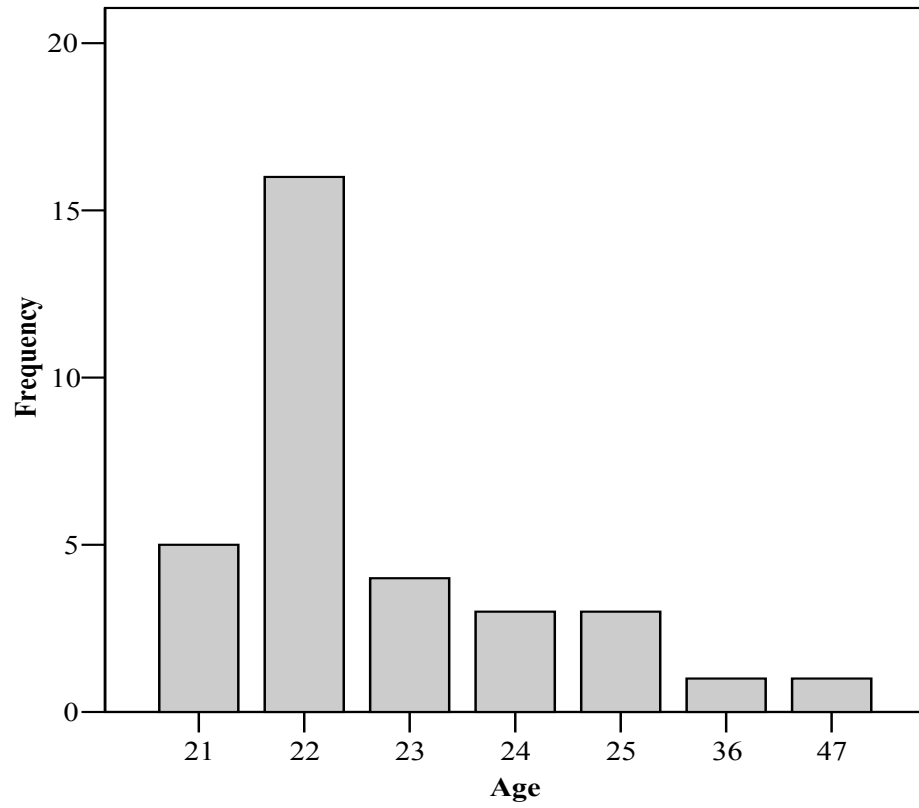


Figure 5. Distribution of Student Teacher Age at Texas A&M, Fall 2004

Academic Classification

The classification of the respondents to the instruments was reported in Table 2. Of the 33 responses, the greatest percentage of the participants were classified as undergraduates ($n = 24$, 72.7%) (see Figure 6). An additional 9.1% were classified as postgraduates seeking only certification ($n = 3$). Those classified as postgraduates seeking certification and a second degree represented 9.1% ($n = 3$), and 9.1% were classified as graduate students seeking certification and a graduate degree ($n = 3$).

Table 2

Distribution of Academic Classification of Student Teachers at Texas A&M, Fall 2004

Academic Classification	<i>n</i>	%
Undergraduate	24	72.7
Postgraduate seeking certification only	3	9.1
Postgraduate seeking certification and second B.S. degree	3	9.1
Graduate student seeking certification and graduate degree	3	9.1
Total	33	100.0

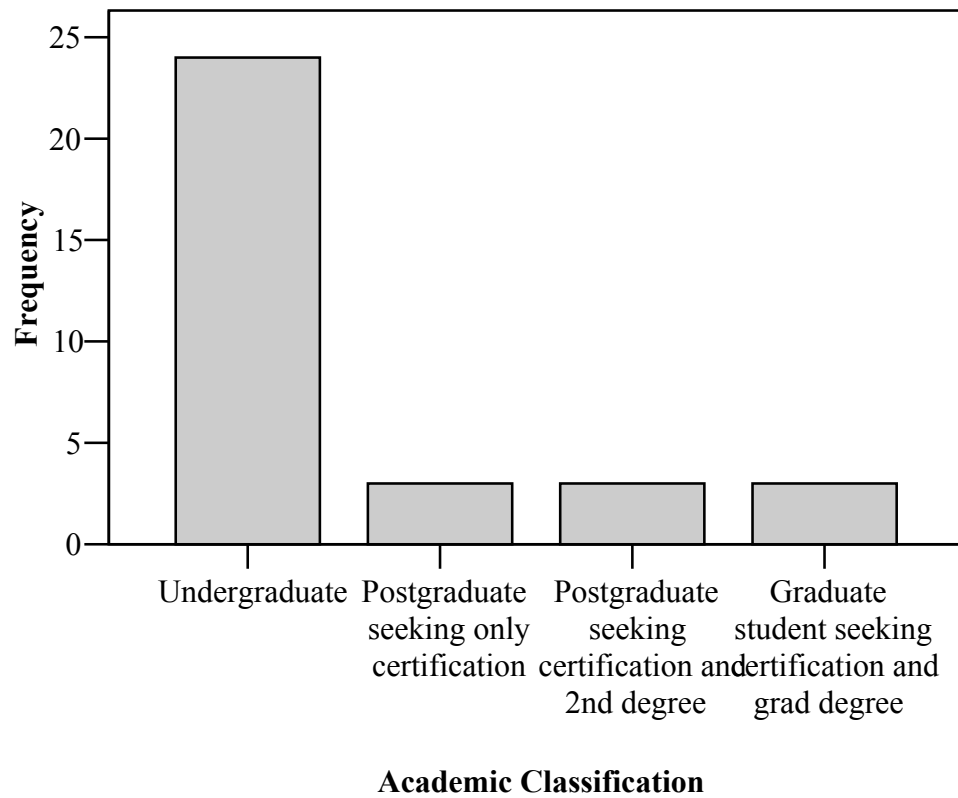


Figure 6. Distribution of Academic Classification of Student Teachers at Texas A&M, Fall 2004

Race/Ethnicity

The race/ethnicity of the participants are reported in Table 3. Of the 33 respondents, 90.9% indicated their race/ethnicity as White. An additional two respondents (6.1%) indicated Hispanic/Latino, and one respondent (3%) indicated Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (see Figure 7).

Table 3

Distribution of Race/Ethnicity of Student Teachers at Texas A&M, Fall 2004

Race/Ethnicity	<i>n</i>	%
White	30	90.9
Hispanic/Latino	2	6.1
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	3.0
Total	33	100.0

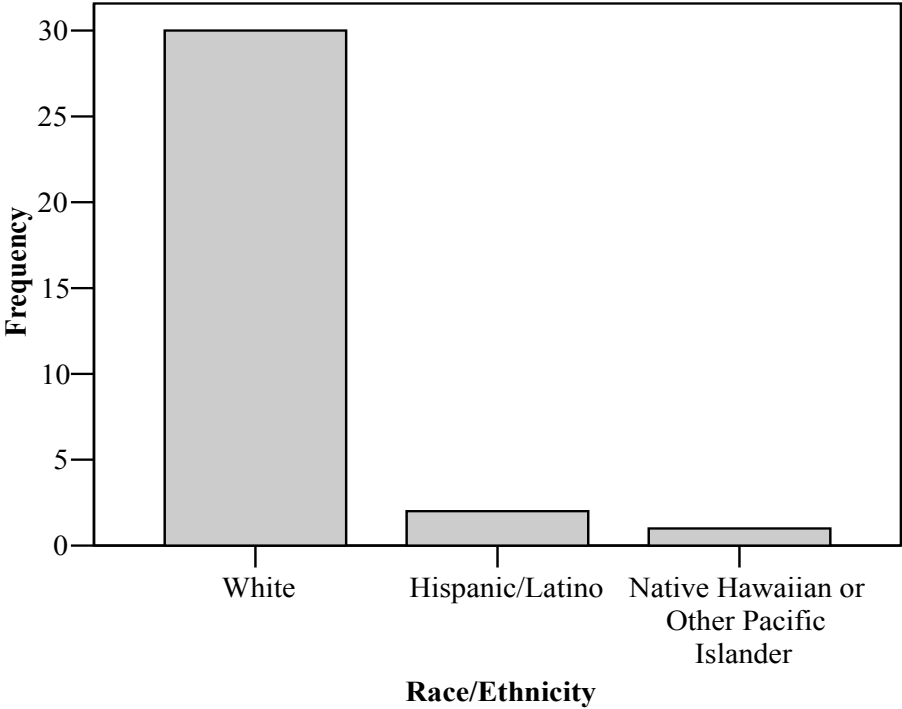


Figure 7. Distribution of Race/Ethnicity of Student Teachers at Texas A&M, Fall 2004

Previous Agricultural Work Experience

Participants were asked to indicate if they had previous agricultural work experience, and if so, to further describe the nature of the experience. The range of responses ranged from no previous agricultural work experience to full-time employment for more than six months in an agricultural industry (see Table 4). Roughly 30% of the participants in this study ($n = 10$) indicated that their previous experience was mostly avocational (e.g., assisting a friend “feeding cows” on an occasional weekend, planting and caring for a garden). An additional 27.3% ($n = 9$) had full-time temporary employment for one or more summers in a production or agribusiness setting (see Figure 8). Two respondents (6.1%) indicated that they had no agricultural work experience.

Table 4

Distribution of Previous Agricultural Work Experience of Student Teachers at Texas A&M, Fall 2004

Previous Agricultural Work Experience	<i>n</i>	%
None	2	6.1
Mostly avocational	10	30.3
Part-time employment	7	21.1
Full-time temporary employment	9	27.3
Full-time employment	5	15.2
Total	33	100.0

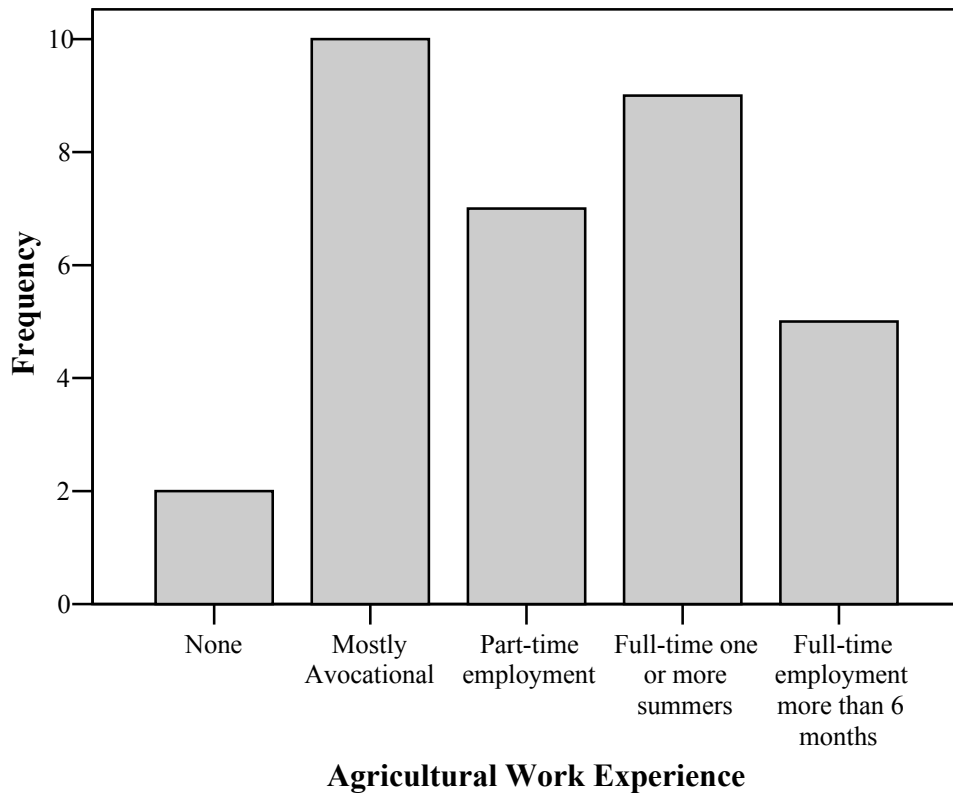


Figure 8. Distribution of Previous Agricultural Work Experience of Student Teachers at Texas A&M, Fall 2004

Semesters of High School Agricultural Science Courses Completed

The number of semesters of high school agricultural science courses that participants had previously taken was categorized into five categories (none, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, and 7-8 semesters completed). Respondents ranged from having taken no semesters of high school agricultural science courses, to those who had taken 7-8 semesters of agricultural science courses (see Table 5). Thirty-three percent ($n = 11$) of the

participants had taken 7 or 8 semesters of high school agricultural science courses. Eight participants (24.2%) had not taken any high school agriculture courses (see Figure 9).

Table 5

Distribution of Student Teacher Semesters of High School Ag Courses Completed at Texas A&M, Fall 2004

Semesters of High School Agricultural Science Courses Completed	<i>n</i>	%
None	8	24.2
1-2 semesters	4	12.1
3-4 semesters	7	21.1
5-6 semesters	3	9.1
7-8 semesters	11	33.3
Total	33	100.0

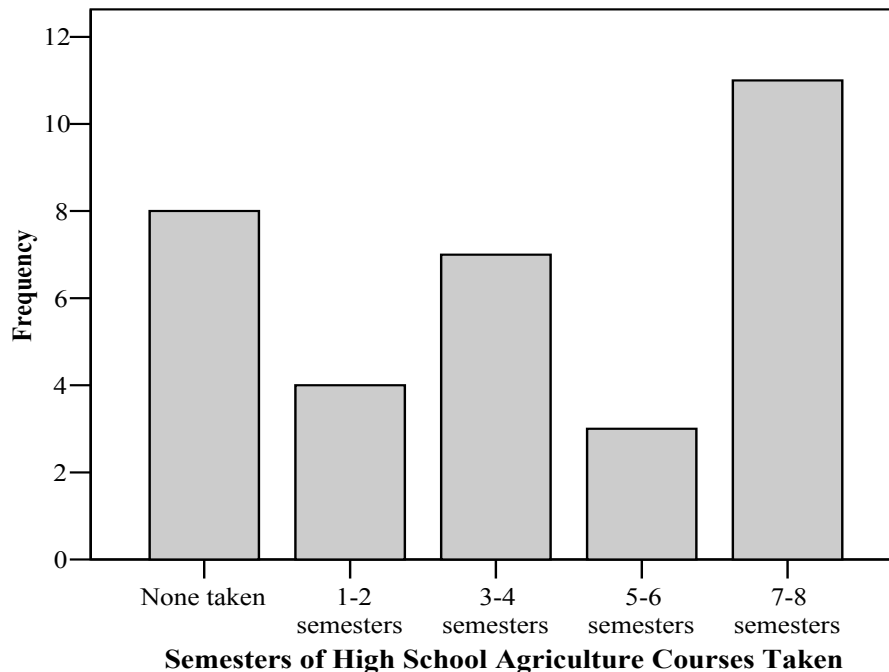


Figure 9. Distribution of Student Teacher Semesters of High School Ag Courses Completed at Texas A&M, Fall 2004

Findings Related to Research Objective Two

Student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship were measured at four points during the student teaching semester. At each data collection point, student teachers were asked to evaluate their perceptions of the importance of the trait and the current level of that trait possessed by their cooperating teacher. The scale ranged from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Findings are presented for each of the four times of data collection.

Time 1 (First Round Data Collection)

On average, participants rated the importance of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship at 4.58 ($n = 33$, $SD = .41$) (see Figure 10). When asked to rate the current level of their cooperating teacher, participants responded with a mean of

4.22 ($n = 32$, $SD = .54$) (see Figure 11). Both importance and level for Time 1 can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6

Time 1 Student Teacher Perceptions of Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship

Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship	Mean	SD
Importance	4.58	.41
Current Level of Cooperating Teacher	4.22	.54

Note. 1 = Low, 2 = Moderately Low, 3 = Average, 4 = Moderately High, 5 = High

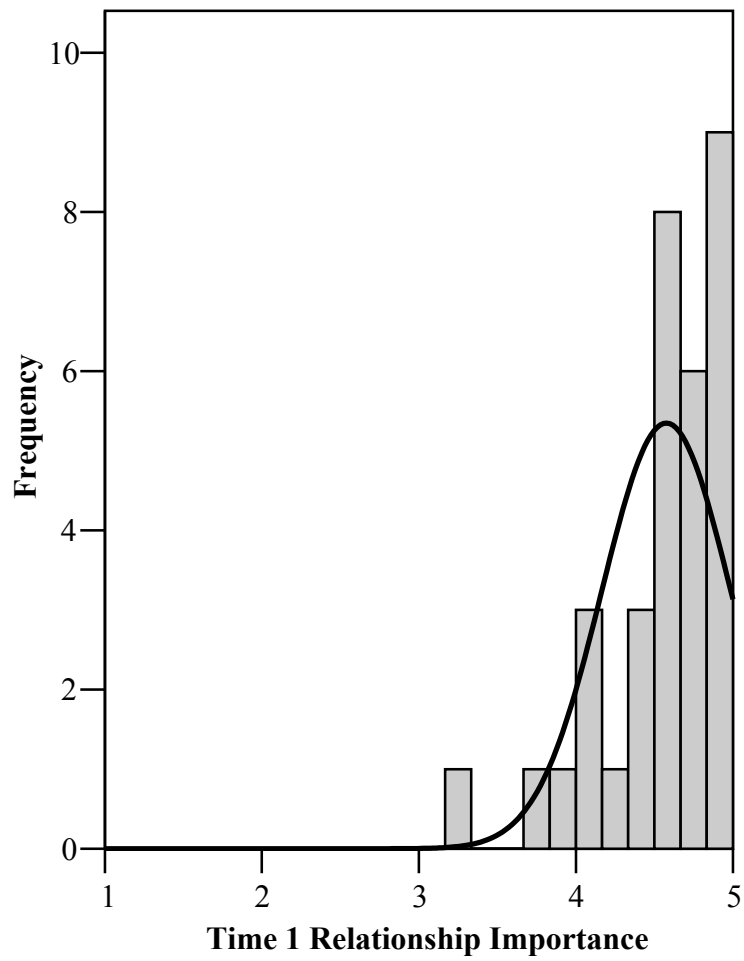


Figure 10. Time 1 Distribution of Student Teacher Importance Rating of Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship

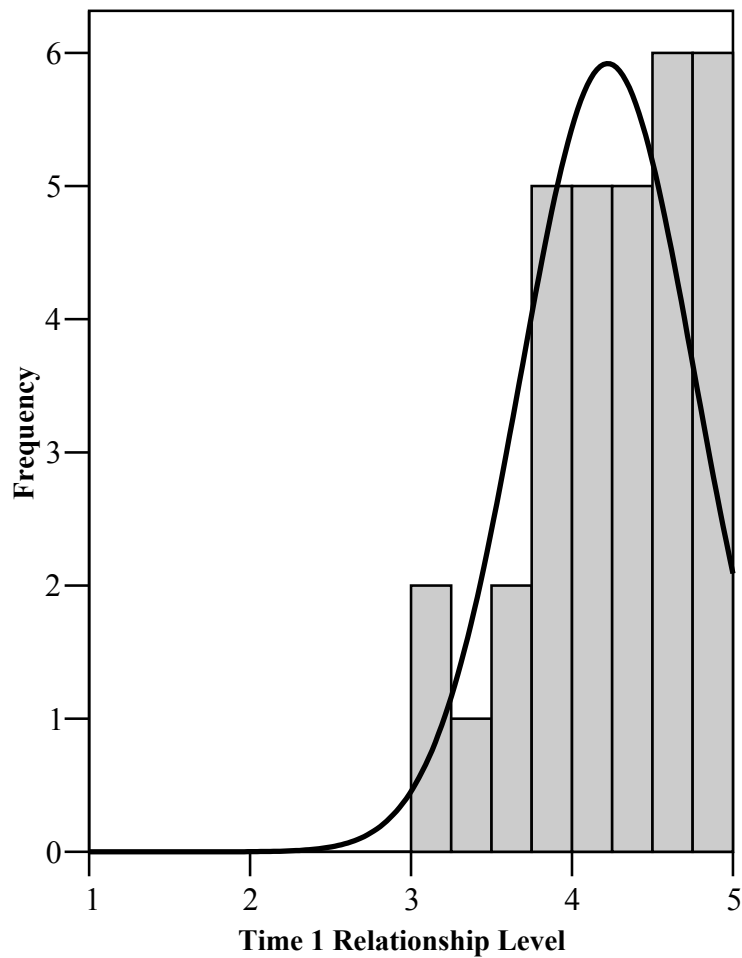


Figure 11. Time 1 Distribution of Student Teacher Rating of Current Level of Cooperating Teacher

Time 2 (Second Round Data Collection)

At the second data collection, participants rated the importance of the relationship between student teacher/cooperating teacher 4.67 ($n = 32$, $SD = .48$) (see Figure 12). Participants rated the current level of their cooperating teacher 4.27 ($n = 32$, $SD = .71$) (see Figure 13). Current level and importance of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7

Time 2 Student Teacher Perceptions of Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship

Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship	Mean	SD
Importance	4.67	.48
Current Level of Cooperating Teacher	4.27	.71

Note. 1 = Low, 2 = Moderately Low, 3 = Average, 4 = Moderately High, 5 = High

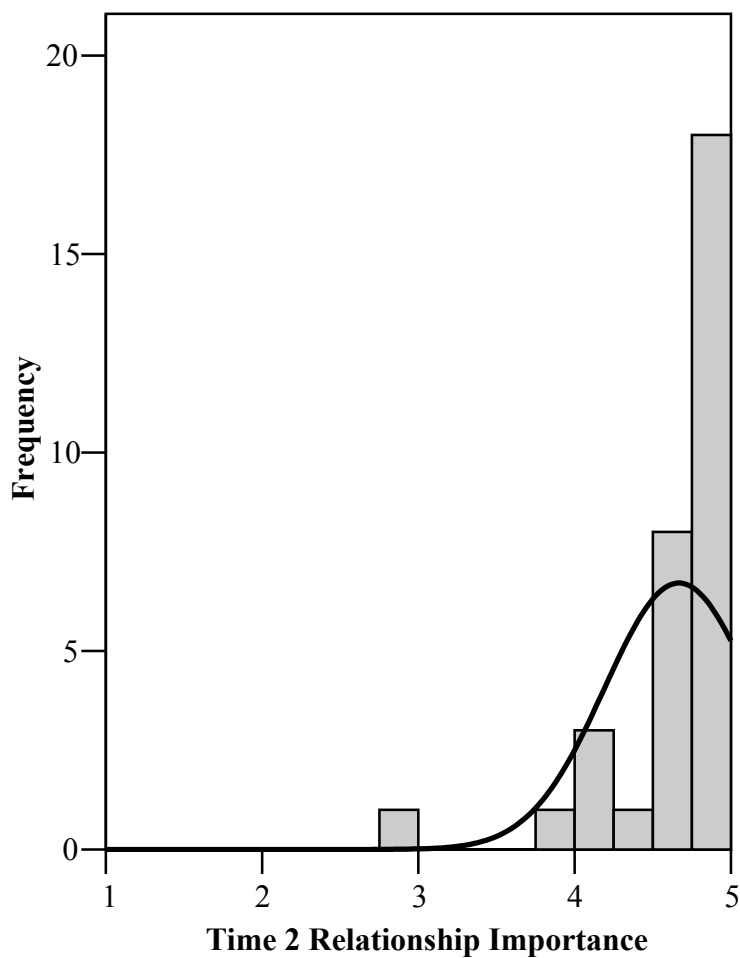


Figure 12. Time 2 Distribution of Student Teacher Importance Rating of Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship

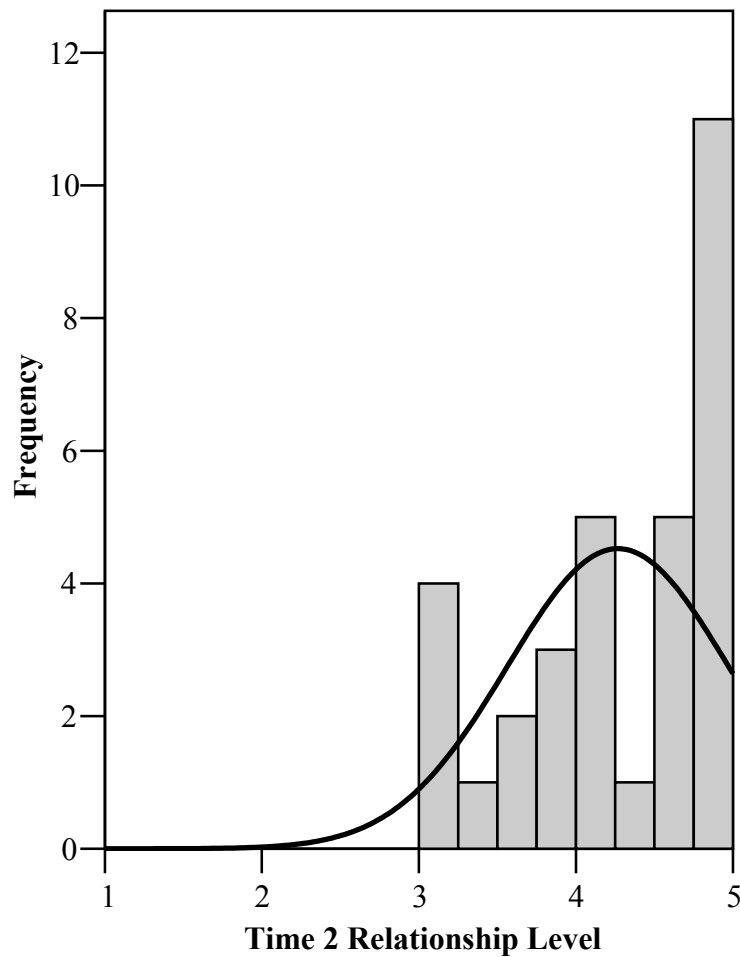


Figure 13. Time 2 Distribution of Student Teacher Rating of Current Level of Cooperating Teacher

Time 3 (Third Round Data Collection)

Participants rated the importance of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship an average of 4.56 ($n = 32$, $SD = .50$) (see Figure 14). They rated their cooperating teachers' current level at 3.79 ($n = 32$, $SD = .96$) (see Figure 15). Both current level and importance of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8

Time 3 Student Teacher Perceptions of Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship

Student Teacher Perceptions of Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship	Mean	SD
Importance	4.56	.50
Current Level of Cooperating Teacher	3.79	.96

Note. 1 = Low, 2 = Moderately Low, 3 = Average, 4 = Moderately High, 5 = High

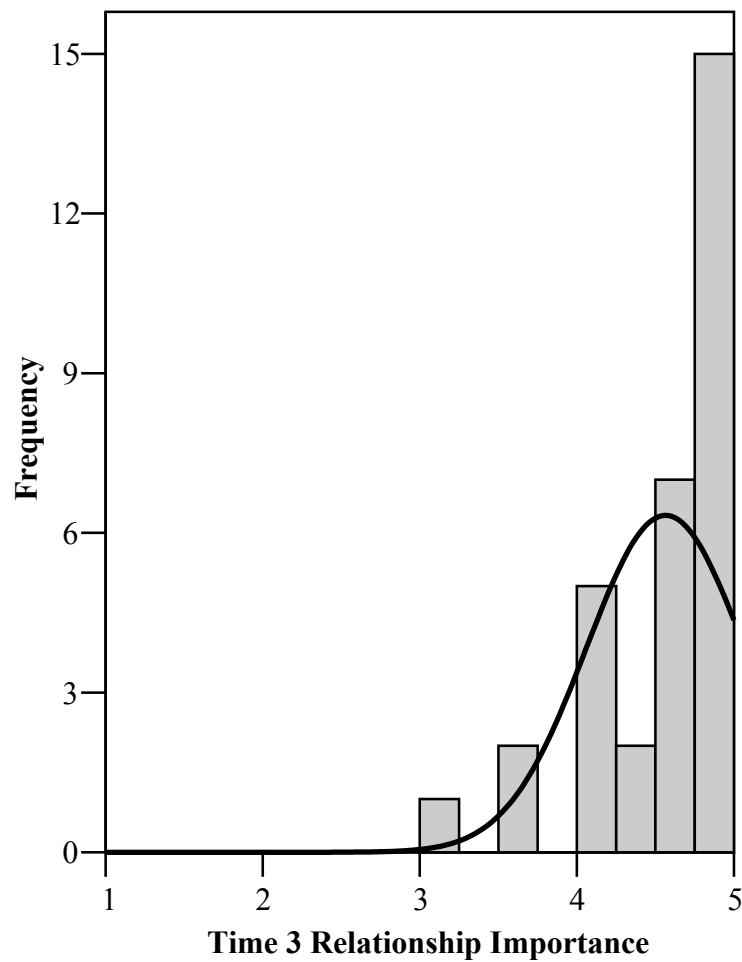


Figure 14. Time 3 Distribution of Student Teacher Importance Rating of Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship

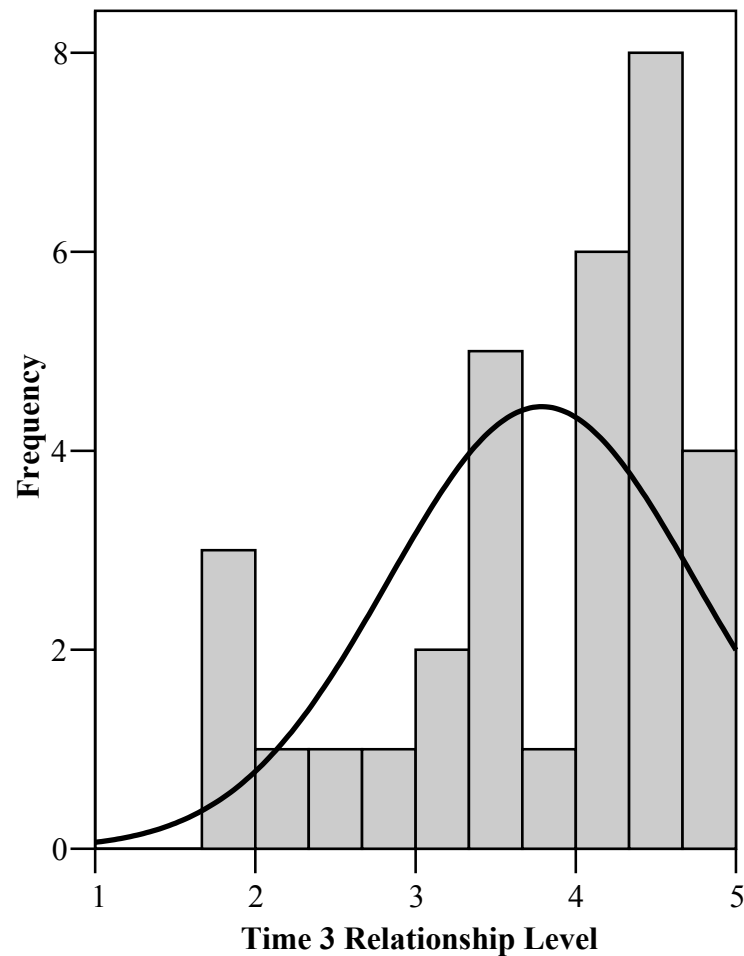


Figure 15. Time 3 Distribution of Student Teacher Rating of Current Level of Cooperating Teacher

Time 4 (Fourth Round Data Collection)

The importance level of participants reported in Figure 16. Students teachers rated the importance of the student teacher/cooperating teacher 4.72 ($n = 33$, SD .33). Participants rated their cooperating teachers at a level of 3.85 ($n = 33$, SD = 1.05) (see Figure 17). Both importance and cooperating teacher current level can be seen in Table 9.

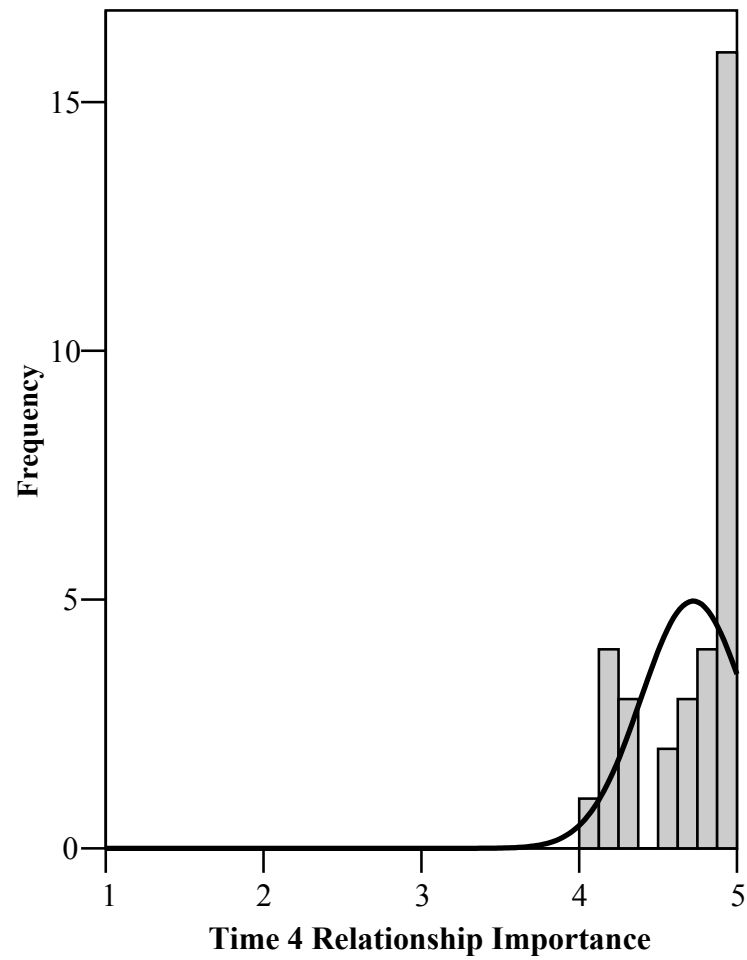


Figure 16. Time 4 Distribution of Student Teacher Importance Rating of Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship

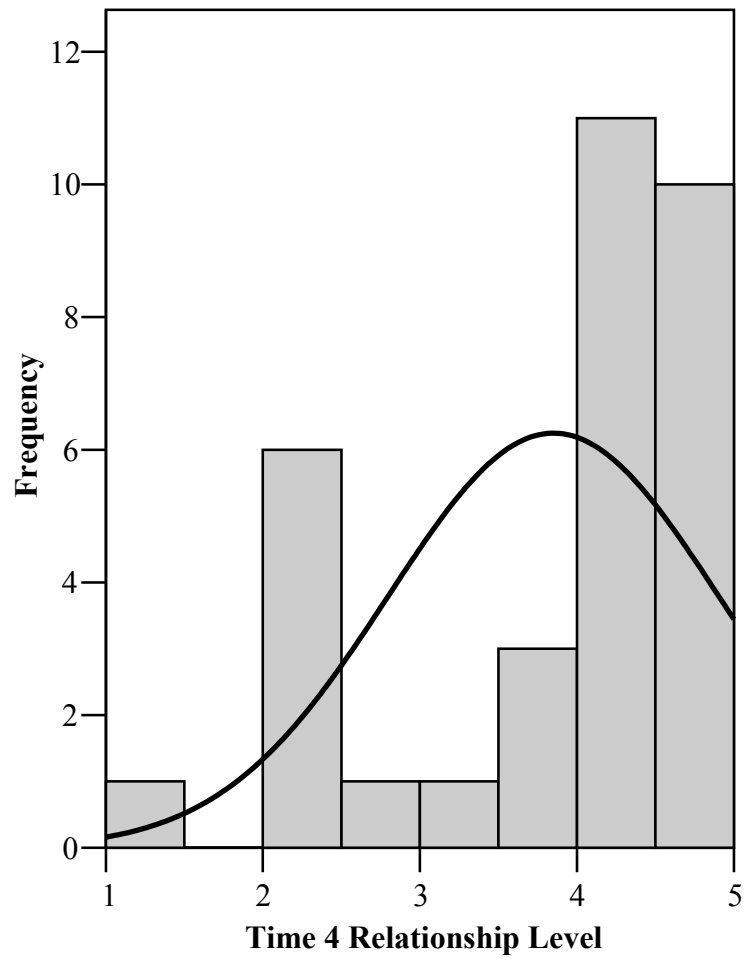


Figure 17. Time 4 Distribution of Student Teacher Rating of Current Level of Cooperating Teacher

Relationships Between Variables

As part of describing the student teacher perceptions of the relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher, correlations were calculated using the procedure CORRELATE. The strength of the correlations is described using terminology by Davis (1971). A correlation between .01 and .09 are negligible, correlations between .10 and .29 are low association, correlations between .30 and .49 are moderate association, correlations .50 and .69 are substantial, and correlations of .70 or higher are very strong association. Table 10 presents the correlation coefficients between variables.

Moderate correlations were found between high school ag classes completed and decision to teach ($r = .442$), and agricultural work experience and decision to teach ($r = .359$).

Table 9

Time 4 Student Teacher Perceptions of Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship

Student Teacher Perceptions of Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship	Mean	SD
Importance	4.72	.33
Current Level of Cooperating Teacher	3.85	1.05

Note. 1 = Low, 2 = Moderately Low, 3 = Average, 4 = Moderately High, 5 = High

Table 10

Correlations Between Variables (Demographic Variables, Importance, Current Level, and Discrepancy)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. HS Ag Classes	--	.312	.152	-.091	.173	-.003	.241	-.274	-.045	.185	-.210	-.011	.396*	-.354*	.442*
2. Ag Experience		--	.130	.124	-.039	-.015	.268	-.256	-.089	.374*	-.401*	-.132	.230	-.117	.359*
3. Importance 1			--	.351*	.353*	.746*	.214	.215	.575*	.093	.110	.454*	.039	.066	.074
4. Level 1				--	-.744*	.242	.459*	-.275	.248	.447*	-.231	.107	.240	-.067	.179
5. Discrepancy 1					--	.291	-.291	.456*	.178	-.357*	.289	.207	-.212	.114	-.131
6. Importance 2						--	.187	.368*	.793*	-.130	.345	.645*	-.134	.224	-.030
7. Level 2							--	-.834*	.039	.480*	-.461*	.007	.405*	-.289	.271
8. Discrepancy 2								--	.430*	-.490*	.620*	.308	-.474*	.397*	-.265
9. Importance 3									--	-.046	.370*	.496*	-.068	.052	-.085
10. Level 3										--	-.903*	-.294	.717*	-.604*	.277
11. Discrepancy 3											--	.412*	-.657*	.575*	-.247
12. Importance 4												--	-.220	.391*	.046
13. Level 4													--	-.933*	.136
14. Discrepancy 4														--	-.064
15. Dec. to Teach															--

Findings Related to Research Objective Three

In order to determine if the student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship changed during the student teaching experience, the SPSS feature REPEATED MEASURES was used. Descriptive statistics were used to find the mean and standard deviation of importance and level for each of the four data collection points.

Overall means and standard deviations are reported in Table 11 for importance, level, and the discrepancy between importance and level respectively. The means for each are also displayed in Figures 18 and 19.

Table 11

Summary of Student Teacher Perceptions of the Importance, Current Level, and Discrepancy Variable, N = 33

Variable	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3		Time 4	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Importance	4.58	.41	4.67	.48	4.57	.50	4.72	.33
Level	4.22	.54	4.27	.71	3.79	.96	3.85	1.05
Discrepancy	109.92	14.96	112.62	22.97	132.63	54.86	137.65	60.60

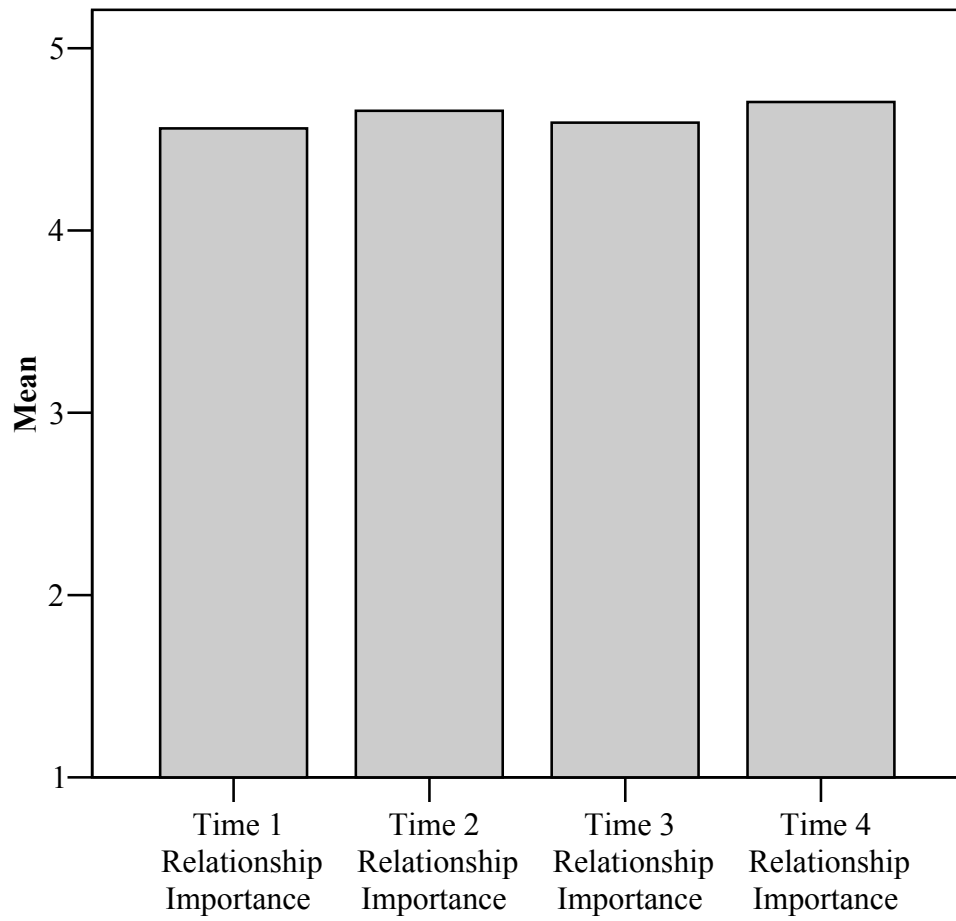


Figure 18. Summary Distribution of Student Teacher Perceptions of the Importance

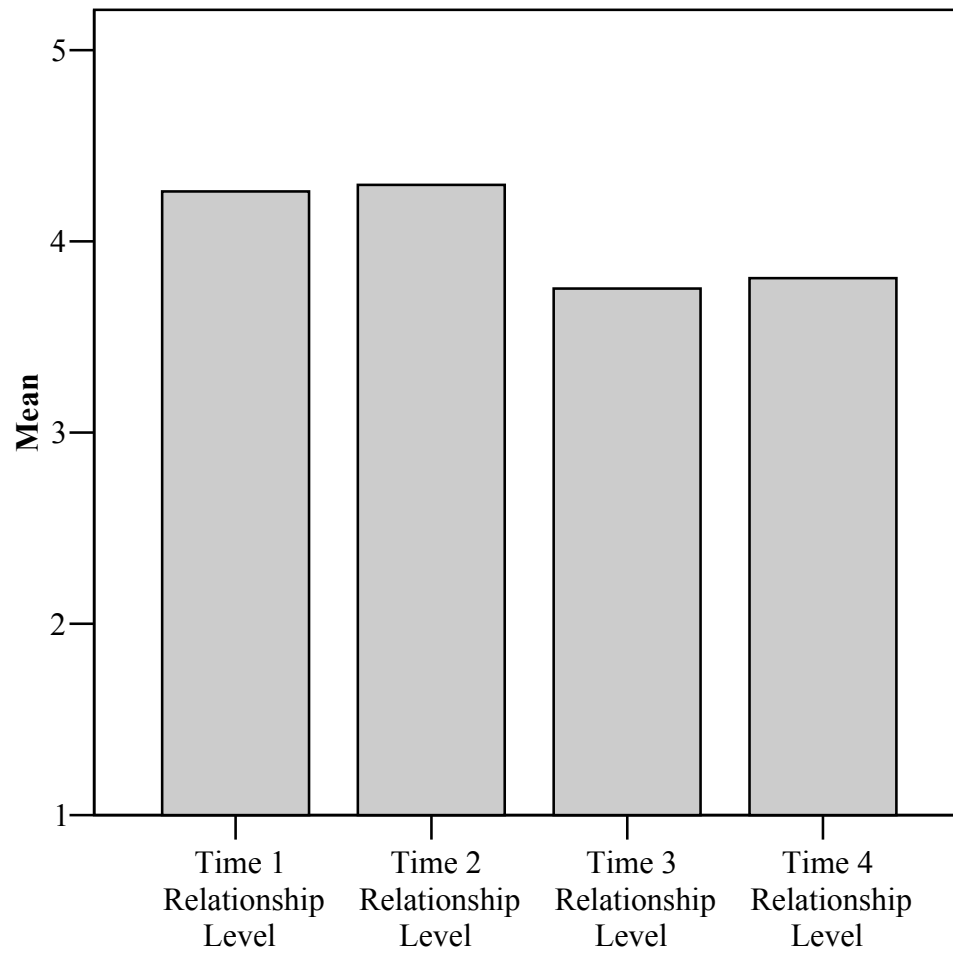


Figure 19. Summary Distribution of Student Teacher Perceptions of Cooperating Teacher Current Level

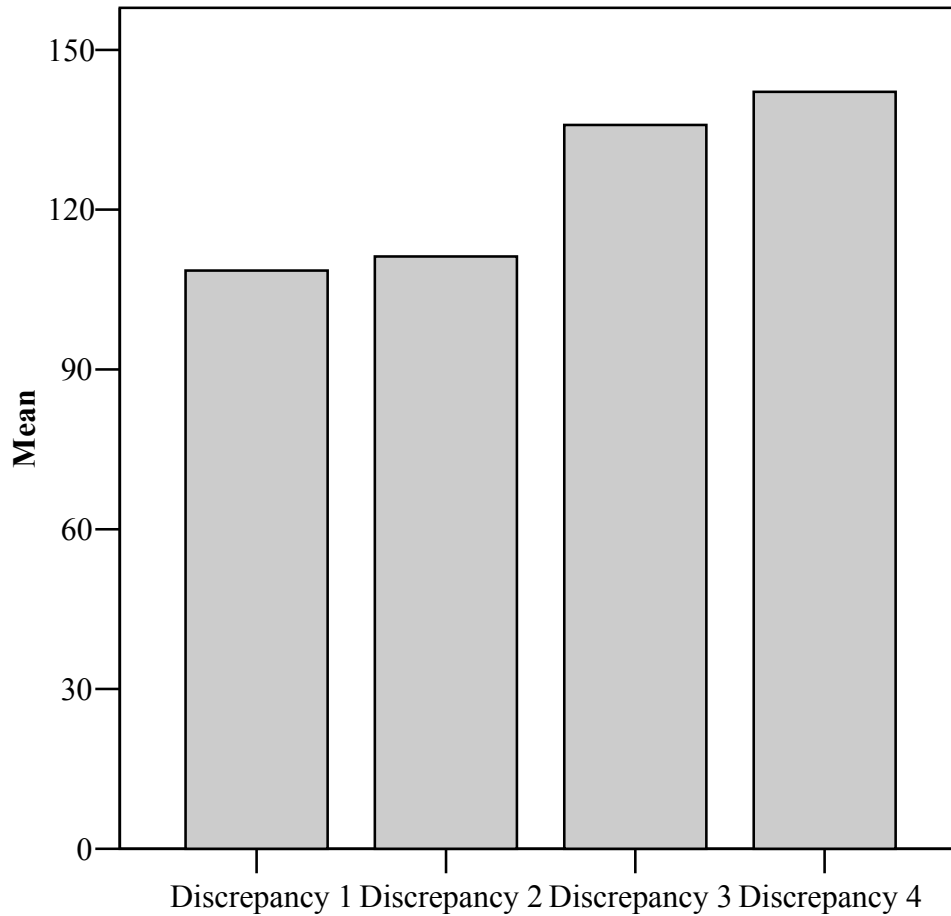


Figure 20. Summary Distribution of Discrepancy Between Importance and Level

The repeated measures analysis for the student teacher perception of the importance of the relationship between student teacher/cooperating teacher produced a significance level of $p = .134$ ($F_{3,90} = 1.91$). In this case, the sphericity assumption was met. Mauchly's test tests the hypothesis that the variances of the differences are equal (Field, 2000). If Mauchly's W is significant ($p < .05$), there are differences between the variances, therefore sphericity is met. The significance level of $p = .134$ suggests that there were no differences in the importance throughout the four data collection points (see Table 12).

Table 12

Student Teacher Perceptions of the Importance of the Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationship, N = 33

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Eta Squared	Power
Importance	3	1.905	.134	.06	.478
Error	90				
Total	93				

Note. Sphericity assumption met (*Mauchly's W* = .861, *p* = .506)

The repeated measures analysis for the student teacher perception of the current level of their cooperating teacher produced a significance level of $p = .03$ (*Mauchly's W* = .640). In this case, the sphericity assumption was not met; therefore, the Greenhouse-Geisser Adjustment was used. The significance level of $p = .002$ ($F_{2,275, 65.966} = 6.674$) suggests that there were differences in the student teachers perceptions of their cooperating teachers current level throughout the student teaching semester and at the four data collection points (see Table 13). An examination of the means (see Table 11) shows the perceptions of the level decreased as the student teaching experience progressed.

Table 13

Student Teacher Perceptions of Their Cooperating Teachers' Current Level, N = 33

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Eta Squared	Power
Level ¹	2.275	6.674	.002	.187	.927
Error	65.966				
Total	68.241				

Note. Sphericity assumption not met (*Mauchly's W* = .640, *p* = .03) ¹Greenhouse-Geisser Adjustment Used

The repeated measures analysis for the discrepancy between the importance and level produced a significance level of $p = .000$ (*Mauchly's W* = .217). In this case, the sphericity assumption was not met; therefore, the Greenhouse-Geisser Adjustment was used. The significance level of $p = .003$ ($F_{2,019, 56.535} = 6.557$) suggests that there were differences in the discrepancies obtained from calculating the difference between importance and level during the student teaching semester at the four data collection points (see Table 14). An examination of the means of the discrepancy variable (see Table 11) shows an increase as the student teaching experience progressed, thus indicating great discrepancy between student teacher perceptions of importance and current level possessed by their cooperating teachers.

Table 14

Discrepancy Between Importance and Level, N = 33

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Eta Squared	Power
Discrepancy ¹	2.019	6.557	.003	.190	.897
Error	56.535				
Total	58.554				

Note. Sphericity assumption not met (*Mauchly's W* = .640, *p* = .03) ¹Greenhouse-Geisser Adjustment Used

Findings Related to Research Objective Four

The REGRESSION function within SPSS was used to select the best model for predicting a student's decision to enter the teaching profession. Multiple regression was used to determine if the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship (discrepancy 4) was related to decision to teach. Previous agricultural work experience and semesters of high school agricultural classes completed were included in the model based on their correlations to decision to teach. Regression analysis showed that a combination of discrepancy 4, previous agricultural work experience, and semesters of high school agricultural classes completed significantly predicted decision to teach, *F* (3.394) and significance of *p* = .031. *R*² for this model was .260 and adjusted *R*² was .183. Table 15 shows the regression coefficients. The student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship (discrepancy 4) value (*t* = .633, *p* = .532) and previous agricultural work experience (*t* = 1.464, *p* = .154) did not contribute significantly beyond the variable semesters of agricultural science completed to predicting the decision to teach. However, semesters

of high school agricultural courses taken ($t = 2.259, p = .032$) did significantly contribute to the decision to teach. These three variables accounted for 18.3% of the variance (adjusted) in the student teachers' decision to teach.

Table 15

Regression Analysis to Predict Decision to Teach, N = 33

Variable	β	Standard Error	t	p
Discrepancy 4	.003	.005	.633	.532
Ag Experience	.394	.269	1.464	.154
HS Ag Courses	.484	.214	2.259	.032

Summary

This chapter presented the major findings of the study. Findings were organized around the research objectives of the study. The objectives were: (1) describe student teachers from the Fall semester 2004 at Texas A&M University; (2) describe student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship; (3) determine if student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship changes during the student teaching semester; and (4) determine if a relationship exists between student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and the student's decision to enter the teaching profession.

Chapter V will provide conclusions and recommendations based on these findings.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Chapter I outlined the significance of the study. A brief history of teacher education research was presented and the current situation was laid out. The purpose of the study was established, along with the research objectives which guided the study. Key definitions were provided, and assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were outlined.

Chapter II set up the theoretical and conceptual framework for studying teacher preparation. Relevant and current information about the student teaching experience and teacher preparation was presented.

Chapter III presented the specific research methodology used in this study. The research design, population and sample, instrumentation, pilot test, data collection procedures, and data analysis were presented in great detail.

Chapter IV presented the major findings of the study. The findings were organized based on the research objectives established to achieve the purpose of the study.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and the decision to enter the teaching profession. The following research objectives were used to guide the study:

1. Describe student teachers from the Fall semester 2004 at Texas A&M University.
2. Describe student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship.
3. Determine if student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship changes during the student teaching semester.
4. Determine if a relationship exists between student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and the student's decision to enter the teaching profession.

This study was designed to address the shortage of agricultural education graduates entering the teaching profession. The researcher investigated the relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher and how that relationship relates to the student teacher's decision to enter teaching.

Student teachers completing student teaching during the Fall semester 2004 at Texas A&M University were asked to participate in the study. There were 33 student teachers who participated.

The instrument consisted of three parts. Part I of the instrument contained six background/demographic variables (gender, age, semesters of high school agricultural science courses completed, academic classification, race/ethnicity, and agricultural work experience). Part II of the instrument contained the 14 items measuring the student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship. For each item, participants were asked to indicate the importance of each characteristic and the current level of their cooperating teacher using a modified five point Likert-type scale.

Part III of the instrument consisted of a single item, “Do you plan to teach agricultural science when you graduate?” accompanied by a seven point response scale ranging from definitely yes to definitely no.

The researcher collected data at four points during the semester: the first day of the student teaching block, the last day of the student teaching block, at the midsemester conference, and at the end of the student teaching experience.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 12.0. Descriptive statistics were used to report frequencies and percentages of the background/demographic variables. Repeated Measures ANOVA was used to determine if the student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship changed during the experience. Regression was used to build a model that explained the greatest amount of variance in the decision to teach.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this study determined if there was a relationship between the student teacher perceptions of the relationship between student teacher/cooperating teacher and the decision to teach. Each conclusion will be stated, followed by the major findings that support/do not support it. Each conclusion will be stated in relation to its related research objective.

Conclusions Related to Research Objective One

Research objective one was to describe the student teachers from the Fall semester 2004 at Texas A&M University. The background/demographic characteristics included gender, age, academic classification, race/ethnicity, previous agricultural work experience, and semesters of high school agricultural courses completed. Conclusions related to this objective are as follows:

1. A majority of respondents were female. The mean age of student teachers was 23.61 years old, with a mode of 22 years of age. The ages ranged from 21 to 47. A majority of participants were undergraduate students completing a Bachelor of Science degree. A majority of participants identified themselves as White. So, the profile of a “typical” student teacher in agricultural education would be a 22 year old white female completing an undergraduate degree.
2. Approximately one-third of the participants indicated that they had mostly avocational work experience (assisting a friend ‘feeding cows’ on an occasional weekend or planting/caring for a garden). Nine other participants indicated that they had full time temporary employment in the agricultural industry.
3. One-third of the participants indicated that they had completed 7-8 semesters of agricultural science courses. Eight participants had not taken any high school agricultural science courses.

Conclusions Related to Research Objective Two

Research objective two was to describe the student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship. The conclusions based on this objective are as follows:

1. During the first round of data collection (Time 1), the average importance of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship was moderately high to high. The current level of their cooperating teachers was also moderately high, but lower than the importance.
2. At the second data collection, the average importance level was moderately high to high. The current level of cooperating teachers was also moderately high, but lower than importance.
3. The importance mean for the third round of data collection was moderately high to high. The current level of cooperating teachers was average to moderately high.
4. At the final round of data collection, participants indicated their importance level as high, while current level of their cooperating teacher was average to moderately high.
5. Correlations were found between semesters of high school agricultural science courses completed and the decision to teach and between previous agricultural work experience and the decision to teach.

Conclusions Related to Research Objective Three

Research objective three was to determine if student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship changes during the student teaching semester. The conclusions related to this objective are as follows:

1. The student teacher perception of the importance of the relationship between student teacher/cooperating teacher did not change.
2. The student teacher perception of their cooperating teacher's current level decreased during the student teaching experience.
3. The discrepancy value (the difference between the importance and level) increased during the student teaching experience.

Conclusions Related to Research Objective Four

Research objective four was to determine if a relationship exists between student teacher perceptions of the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship and the student's decision to enter the teaching profession. Conclusions based on this objective are as follows:

1. There is not a relationship between student teaching/cooperating teacher relationship and decision to teach.
2. Semesters of high school agricultural sciences courses completed is predicative of decision to teach.

Programmatic Recommendations

The following programmatic recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions of the study:

1. Agricultural Education programs should recruit students who have taken and completed high school agricultural science courses. Participants in this study who had taken more high school agricultural courses were more likely to decide to enter teaching.
2. High school Ag Science teachers should encourage program completers (those students who complete 3 or more years of instruction in agriculture) to pursue a career in agricultural education.

Recommendations for Additional Research

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for research were made:

1. For this study, the sample was purposely selected and implications could only be made regarding the group of student teachers at Texas A&M University. To provide more generalizability, this study should be replicated using a larger population and sample.
2. Only a small percentage of the variance in decision to teach was explained using the variables in this study. The study should be replicated and include other variables (such as number of cooperating teachers, size of school, and number of

student teachers at the center) that may help explain more of the variance in a student teacher's decision to teach.

3. This study was one of the first in the field of agricultural education attempting to identify characteristics that affect a student's decision to teach. This study should be replicated at Texas A&M University and other institutions to see if the results of this study hold true.

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APPENDIX A
INSTRUMENT

Cooperating Teacher/Student Teacher Relationship

Importance					Cooperating Teacher Characteristics	Current Level of Cooperating Teacher				
Low				High		Low				High
1	2	3	4	5	Encourages student teacher	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Gives student teacher freedom to try things	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Turns classes over to student teacher	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Supports decisions made by student teacher	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Helps student teacher plan lessons and activities	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Routinely observes student teacher	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Provides constructive feedback to student teacher	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Provides a variety of experiences for student teacher	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Assists student teacher when needed	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Treats student teacher as a fellow professional	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Anticipates needs of student teacher	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Provides clear expectations to student teacher	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Shares resources with student teacher	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Assists student teacher in finding a job	1	2	3	4	5

Background/Demographics

1. Participant Number _____
2. Do you plan to teach Agriscience when you graduate? A. Definitely Yes B. Yes C. Probably Yes D. Unsure E. Probably No F. No G. Definitely No
3. In high school, how many semesters of agricultural science courses did you complete? A. None B. 1-2 C. 3-4 D. 5-6 E. 7-8
4. Are you currently a/an? A. undergraduate B. postgraduate seeking only certification C. postgraduate seeking certification and second undergraduate degree D. graduate student seeking certification, but not a graduate degree E. graduate student seeking certification and graduate degree
5. Gender A. Male B. Female

6. Age (Years) _____
7. Race/Ethnicity A. American Indian or Alaskan Native B. Asian C. Black or African American D. Hispanic/Latino E. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander F. White
8. Besides your formal education, which would best describe your agricultural work experience? A. None B. Mostly avocational (e.g., assisting a friend “feeding cows” on an occasional weekend, planting and caring for a garden) C. Part-time employment (e.g., working at the local feed store after school and on weekends) D. Full-time temporary employment, one or more summers, in a production or agribusiness setting E. Full-time employment, for more than six months, in agricultural industry

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Student Teacher Perceptions of Characteristics Important in Cooperating Teachers

I have been asked to participate in a research study that seeks my opinions about the important characteristics of cooperating teachers. I was selected to be a possible participant because I am student teaching. A total of 500 people have been asked to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to see if my perceptions of important characteristics of cooperating teachers change over time.

If I agree to be in this study, I will be asked to complete a similar questionnaire five times, twice before, twice during, and once after my student teaching experience. This study will only take about 15 minutes to complete each questionnaire. There are no risks associated with this study. There are no benefits of participation.

I will receive no reimbursement for participation.

I understand that this study is confidential and that the records of this study will be kept private. Data will not be analyzed until after the conclusion of my student teaching experience and grades have been assigned and turned in. No identifiers linking me to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Dr. Grady Roberts, Dr. Julie Harlin, and Ms. Holly Kasperbauer will have access to the records.

My decision whether or not to participate will not affect my current or future relations with Texas A&M University. If I decide to participate, I am free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make me uncomfortable. I can withdraw at any time without my relations with the university, job, benefits, etc., being affected. I can contact Dr. Grady Roberts, 979-862-3707, groberts@tamu.edu with any questions about this study.

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board- Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, I can contact the institutional Review Board through Ms. Angela M. Raines, Director of Research Compliance, Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 458-4067 (araines@vprmail.tamu.edu).

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this consent document for my records. By signing this document, I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Office of Research Compliance

Academy for
Advanced
Telecommunications
and Emerging
Technologies

Center for Information
Systems and Security

Computer Science Program

Institute for
Security, Cryptology,
and Privacy

Institute for Educational
and Instructional Technology

Institute of Center for
Human Security

Interdisciplinary Center

Office of Business Administration

Office of Distance Education

Office of Graduate Studies

Office of International
Development and Outreach

Office of Personal Development

Office of Sponsored Programs

Professional Development Group

Technology Communication
Center

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February 17, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. T. Grady Roberts
Agricultural Education
MS 2116

FROM: Dr. E. Murl Bailey, CIP, Advisor
Institutional Review Board
MS 1186

SUBJECT: IRB Protocol Review

Title: A Longitudinal Study of Student Teacher Perceptions of the Important Characteristics of Cooperating Teachers

Protocol Number: 2004-0396
Review Category: Exempt from Full Review
Approval Date: July 19, 2004 to July 18, 2005

The approval determination was based on the following Code of Federal Regulations:
<http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm>

<u> </u> 46.101(b)(1)	<u> </u> 46.101(b)(4)
<u> </u> 46.101(b)(2)	<u> </u> 46.101(b)(5)
<u> </u> 46.101(b)(3)	<u> </u> 46.101(b)(6)

Remarks: Approval of amendment to add Co-Principal Investigator, Holly Kasperbauer.

The Institutional Review Board - Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University has reviewed and approved the above referenced protocol. Your study has been approved for one year. As the principal investigator of this study, you assume the following responsibilities:

Renewal: Your protocol must be re-approved each year in order to continue the research. You must also complete the proper renewal forms in order to continue the study after the initial approval period.

Adverse Events: Any adverse events or reactions must be reported to the IRB immediately.

Amendments: Any changes to the protocol, such as procedures, consent/assent forms, addition of subjects, or study design must be reported to and approved by the IRB.

Informed Consent/Assent: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent document approved by the IRB for use in your study.

Completion: When the study is complete, you must notify the IRB office and complete the required forms.

VITA

Candidate: Holly Jo Kasperbauer

Address: 216 4th Street
Dedham, Iowa 51440

Education: Carroll High School, 1999

B.S., Agricultural Education, Iowa State University, 2003

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Professional: Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Agricultural
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January 2004 – August 2005

Leadership Training Intern, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation
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Youth Counselor, Iowa Agricultural Youth Institute
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