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The Effects of Leader-Member Exchanges on the Relationships Between Extension Agents and County Extension Directors in Florida

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The relationship between a supervisor and employee has a direct effect on the employee's job satisfaction, work productivity, and efficiency. Understanding the interactions between Extension agents and County Extension Directors is critical to maintaining positive relationships and providing adequate support to Extension supervisors through professional development and training opportunities. This article examined the dyadic relationships between Extension agents and County Extension Directors in Florida. The majority of Florida Extension agents have high-quality relationship with their County Extension Directors. In addition, over half of relationships of five years or less are in the partner phase, suggesting new employees of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service progress through the leadership making process in a relatively short amount of time. UF/IFAS Extension Administration should provide increased leadership training for County Extension Directors to ensure all dyads progress through the leadership-making process to the partner phase, such as relationship building, and management and supervisory training.

Keywords: Extension, job satisfaction, leader-member exchanges, relationships, supervisors

Introduction

Extension agents carry out the mission of the Cooperative Extension Service at the county level. Providing valuable knowledge and skills to clientele, Extension agents take the research conducted at a land-grant university and create educational programs in program areas such as 4-H youth development, agriculture, horticulture, natural resources, families, and communities. The educational programs of Extension are research-based and teach people to identify problems, analyze information, decide among alternative courses of action for dealing with those problems, and locate the resources to accomplish the preferred course of action (Rasmussen, 1989; Seevers, Graham, Gamon, & Conklin, 1997).

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County Extension Directors (CEDs) serve as the administrative leaders of the county Extension offices in Florida. CEDs are Extension agents who have a split appointment between their educational programming and administrative duties. CEDs perform administrative functions such as developing and evaluating county Extension programs, coordinating personnel functions, serving as the link between the county Extension office and upper-level Extension administration, communicating and maintaining relationships with county stakeholders, providing leadership and mentorship to the Extension agents in their office, and administering performance reviews to Extension agents in their county Extension office (Elizer, 2011; Radhakrishna, Yoder, & Baggett, 1994).

The relationship between a CED and an Extension agent is dynamic and multidimensional, serving in both a supervisory and collegial capacity. A positive working relationship between a CED and an Extension agent increases the success of Extension programming and performance, job satisfaction, and retention (Elizer, 2011; Owen, 2004). Negative interaction and trust between employers and employees are factors that can lead to premature turnover and Extension agent burnout (Branham, 2005; Safrit & Owen, 2010). Coomber and Barriball (2007) explained the leadership of an employer positively influences the job satisfaction of the employee.

Cooperative Extension must focus on high-quality interactions between Extension agents and their supervisors (Borr & Young, 2010). Safrit and Owen (2010) stated, "Extension supervisors must also dedicate individual time and energies to better understand each individual county program professional to support him or her in developing and sustaining a workplace environment within which she or he thrives and succeeds" (para 15). Understanding the interactions between Extension agents and CEDs is critical to maintaining positive relationships and providing adequate support to Extension supervisors through professional development and training opportunities.

Extension agents face many challenges, such as burnout, long hours, increased workloads, unrealistic expectations, lack of resources, and supervision (Bradley, Driscoll, & Bardon, 2012; Ensle, 2005; Peters, Zvonkovic, & Bowman, 2008). Burnout and turnover of Extension agents are significant problems for the Extension organization, leading to a loss of knowledge, experience, community relationships, educational programming, and volunteers (Arnold, 2008; Bradley et al., 2012; Ensle, 2005; Strong & Harder, 2009). The turnover rate for UF/IFAS Extension is more than twice that of the national public workforce average. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national turnover rate is 3.7% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015) when compared to 8.7% of for Florida Extension agents (T. Obreza, personal communication, February 3, 2015). In addition, turnover intentions of employees yield a decrease in work productivity, output, and efficiency (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012; Liden & Maslyn, 1998).

The relationship between a supervisor and his/her employee has a direct effect on the employee's level of job satisfaction and decision whether or not to remain in the organization (Guinot, Gomez, & Puig, 2014). Positive relationships between supervisors and employees increase employee job satisfaction and work productivity, whereas negative relationships yield the opposite (Castillo & Cano, 2004; Cumbey & Alexander, 1998; Dulebohn et al., 2012; Thobega, 2007). Clemens, Milsom, and Cashwell (2009) determined high-quality relationships between principals and school counselors were positively correlated to increased job satisfaction, more decision sharing, increased program implementation, and lower turnover intentions.

High-quality relationships between supervisors and employees also lead to increased communication, exchanges of ideas, and fairness. Lee (2001) examined the quality of leader member exchanges in the work group and determined low-quality work relationships between supervisors and employees resulted in decreased job performance, communication, and fairness than the high-quality relationships. Mayfield and Mayfield's (2009) study confirmed positive communication between the leader and member influences positive leader-member exchanges, recommending supervisors participate in communication and relationship-building training.

The process of building relationships is dyadic in nature, requiring effort on both the supervisor and employee (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001). The quality of work relationship increases when both the supervisor and employee initiate effort, strengthening the quality of interaction. In addition, the increase in effort by one member positively impacts the effort of the other. The amount of effort each provides affects the respect that is present in the relationship. Maslyn and Uhl-Bien (2001) stated, "respect is greater when individuals see effort on the part of the dyad partner, but if they have to work too hard to develop the relationship, they have less respect for the other person" (p. 706). Liden and Maslyn (1998) explained professional respect is a significantly related to high-quality relationships, job satisfaction, and employee turnover.

Theoretical Framework


The theoretical framework for this study was Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) Leader-Member Exchange Theory. Many leadership theories emphasize leadership from one point of view, either the leader, the follower, or the context. Leader-Member Exchange Theory explains leadership as "a process that is centered on the interactions between leaders and followers" (Northouse, 2007, p. 151). Leader-Member Exchange Theory is unique because it allows for an interaction between participants, as well as incorporates a change in interaction over time from transaction to transformation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory is a relationship-based approach that explains leadership as an interaction between both the leader and follower (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Leadership from this approach is characterized by trust, respect, and mutual obligation that generate

influence between parties. Building strong relationships, mutual learning, and teamwork are behaviors that constitute relationship-based leadership (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Leader-member exchanges with high-quality interactions yield less employee turnover, more positive performance evaluations, greater organizational commitment, more attention and support from the leader, and greater participation. In contrast, low-quality interactions between leaders and members yield minimal communication and less influence, confidence, and concern from the leader (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993).

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) postulated leadership making occurs in three stages over time: (a) the stranger phase, (b) the acquaintance phase, and (c) the partner phase (see Figure 1). The goal of leader-member exchanges is to allow dyads to move from the stranger to partner phase over a span of time. Each phase is characterized by specific roles, influences, exchanges, and interests. All interactions begin in the first phase and over time should develop into reciprocal interactions forming a mature relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Northouse, 2007).

Figure 1. Phases in Leadership Making (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995)

	Phase 1 <u>Stranger</u>	Phase 2 <u>Acquaintance</u>	Phase 3 <u>Partner</u>
Roles	Scripted	Tested	Negotiated
Influences	One way	Mixed	Reciprocal
Exchanges	Low quality	Medium Quality	High Quality
	Time 		

Stranger Phase

The stranger phase is characterized by rule-bound interactions between the leader and member (Northouse, 2007). Leader-member interactions occur on a formal basis, are lower-quality exchanges, and are purely contractual. In this respect, “leaders provide followers only with what they need to perform, and followers behave only as required and do only their prescribed job” (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995, p. 230). Northouse (2007) additionally explained members’ actions are directed by their own self-interest rather than that of the group or the organization. Some dyads do not advance past the stranger phase. Over time, the leadership process becomes nonexistent as exchanges between the leader and member are limited and usually occur in a contractual nature (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Acquaintance Phase

The acquaintance phase is marked by an improved professional relationship involving career-oriented exchanges. Both personal and work-related exchanges occur between the leader and member, including both contractual and in-kind interactions. Contractual exchanges begin to decrease, roles begin to be redefined, and new ways of relating to each other begin to happen (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). It is a period where both the leader and member test each other and assess “whether the subordinate is interested in taking on more roles and responsibilities and to assess whether the leader is willing to provide new challenges for subordinates” (Northouse, 2007, p. 156). Leaders and members begin to focus less on their self-interests and begin to align themselves with the mission of the group and organization. The acquaintance phase is a critical stage in the leadership-making process. The dyads that do not develop into mature relationships will devolve back to the stranger phase rather than progressing to the partner phase (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Partner Phase

During the partner phase, a leader and member experience mutual trust, respect, and obligation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The relationship between the leader and member has become mature with high-quality interactions. Loyalty and support are reciprocated between one another, where leaders and members depend on each other for favors. During this stage, both leaders and members maintain a mature relationship producing beneficial and positive outcomes for the group and the organization. According to Northouse (2007), “partnerships are transformational in that they assist leaders and followers in moving beyond their own self-interests to accomplish the greater good of the team and organization” (p. 157).

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the study was to understand the dyadic relationships between Extension agents and Extension supervisors in Florida. The objective of the study was to describe the level of leader-member exchanges between Extension agents and CEDs based on participant demographics.

Methods

The findings presented in this article are part of a larger study investigating the relationships between Extension agents and County Extension Directors in Florida. A census was conducted of county Extension agents. The population of interest for this study was Florida extension agents who were not County Extension Directors or Regional Specialized Agents (RSAs). RSAs were removed from the population of interest because they report to a state administrator rather

than a CED. A list of current Florida Extension agents ($N = 351$) was obtained from the Florida Extension County Operations office. The target population ($N = 274$) was achieved after removing the researcher, CEDs, and RSAs from the list.

The section of the instrument pertaining to this study included the seven questions from the LMX-7 Scale and eleven demographic questions. The LMX-7 is a seven-item questionnaire which determines the phase of leadership making between a supervisor and his/her subordinate (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001). Some of the items were reworded to better fit Cooperative Extension and because they were double-barreled. Some of the scales were adjusted to more accurately reflect the updated items. Four different Likert-type scales were provided, and one of the scales was used for four different items. Respondents indicated their responses on a Likert-type scale of one to five (1 = *Rarely*, 2 = *Occasionally*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Fairly often*, 5 = *Very often*), (1 = *Not a bit*, 2 = *A little*, 3 = *A fair amount*, 4 = *Quite a bit*, 5 = *A great deal*), (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *Agree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*), and (1 = *Extremely ineffective*, 2 = *Worse than average*, 3 = *Average*, 4 = *Better than average*, 5 = *Extremely effective*). Maslyn and Uhl-Bien (2001) reported the LMX-7 Questionnaire is a valid instrument for assessing the working relationship between a supervisor and his/her subordinate with a Cronbach's alpha of .90 (Cronbach, 1951).

Prior to conducting the study, the questionnaire was reviewed and assessed by a panel of experts who evaluated the instrument for construct and face validity. The panel consisted of county and state Extension faculty from the University of Florida. The job satisfaction survey was pilot-tested prior to administering the survey to Florida Extension agents. The pilot study included 40 Extension professionals in the program areas of agriculture, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H youth development. Extension agents were from the state Extension systems of Kentucky, Louisiana, Georgia, New Mexico, Washington, Utah, Arizona, Ohio, Oklahoma, Maryland, Nebraska, and Texas. Twenty-four of the 40 individuals completed the pilot, resulting in a 60% response rate, with a Cronbach's alpha of .94.

Approval from the University of Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was acquired. The Tailored Design Method (TDM) was followed because the method yields high response rates, reduces sampling error, develops trust with the respondents, and allows the researcher to follow survey procedures that are scientifically founded (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). A total of 274 online questionnaires were sent to the population via Qualtrics to Florida Extension agents. One hundred eighty-seven questionnaires were completed for an overall response rate of 68% ($n = 187$). Other studies using Florida Extension agents as the target population reported similar responses rates of 58% (Brain, Irani, Hodges, & Fuhrman, 2009), 69.09% (Benge, Harder, & Carter, 2011), and 62% (Adams, Place, & Swisher, 2009).

The researchers used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.0. The LMX-7 Questionnaire consists of seven items with four different Likert-type scales. The LMX-7 is interpreted by adding the scores of each respondent, creating a total score. Table 1 displays the quality of leader-member exchange and the phase to which the exchange belongs.

Table 1. Strength of Leader-Member Exchange and LMX Phase of Leadership Making

Score	Quality of Leader-Member Exchange	Phase of Leadership Making
30 to 35	Very High	Partner
25 to 29	High	Partner
20 to 24	Moderate	Acquaintance
15 to 19	Low	Stranger
7 to 14	Very Low	Stranger

Respondents reported having an appointment in the following program areas: agriculture/livestock ($n = 28$), 4-H ($n = 46$), family and consumer science ($n = 34$), horticulture ($n = 41$), natural resources ($n = 19$), and sea grant ($n = 3$). There were more female respondents ($n = 124$) than male respondents ($n = 52$). Seventy-nine (42%) respondents reported 5 years or less of experience, while only 15 (8%) had more than 25 years of experience. The majority of respondents ($n = 152$, 81%) had a post-graduate degree. Respondents' Extension district was also reported, with 26% ($n = 49$) working in the Central district, 20% ($n = 38$) working in the Northeast district, 14% ($n = 27$) working in the Northwest district, 17.0% ($n = 32$) working in the South district, and 14% ($n = 27$) working in the South Central district.

Demographic characteristics were also reported on the Extension agents' CEDs. Sixty-two percent ($n = 117$) of respondents reported a working relationship with his/her CED 5 or fewer years, whereas 1% ($n = 2$) of respondents reported a working relationship of more than 20 years. The reported gender of CEDs was almost equal. Of the respondents reporting their CED's years of experience, 48% ($n = 78$) had a CED with 5 years or fewer of CED experience, 33% ($n = 54$) had a CED with 6 to 10 years of CED experience, 11% ($n = 18$) had a CED with 11 to 15 years of CED experience, 6% ($n = 9$) had a CED with 16 to 20 years of CED experience, 1% ($n = 1$) had a CED with 21 to 25 years of experience, and 1% ($n = 1$) had a CED with more than 25 years of CED experience.

There were two limitations of this study. Respondents may have misinterpreted the questions, which would result in decreased validity. In addition, it was assumed the respondents in the study provided honest and accurate answers while self-reporting their responses to the survey. Nonresponse was addressed by comparing early to late respondents. No significant differences existed between early and late respondents. Therefore, the results can be generalized to the entire population (Lindner, Murphy, & Briers, 2001). Prior to handling nonresponse error, twenty-six unusable responses were discarded due to incomplete data, yielding a usable response rate of 68% ($n = 187$).

Findings

Over 28% ($n = 53$) of respondents reported very high leader-member exchanges with their CED, and 31% ($n = 58$) reported high leader-member exchanges. Eighteen percent ($n = 35$) of respondents had moderate leader-member exchanges, while the remaining 21% ($n = 40$) of respondents reported having very low or low quality leader-member exchanges with their CED. Table 2 identifies the leader-member exchange classifications of Florida Extension agents.

Table 2. Frequencies of Leader-Member Exchanges Between Extension Agents and CEDs

Quality of LMX			
Relationship	Phase of Leadership Making	<i>f</i>	%
Very Low	Stranger	13	7
Low	Stranger	27	14.5
Moderate	Acquaintance	35	18.8
High	Partner	58	31.2
Very High	Partner	53	28.5

Forty percent ($n = 14$) of Extension agents with less than 5 years of experience scored in the stranger phase, whereas 1% ($n = 1$) of Extension agents with 21 to 25 years and more than 25 years of experience scored in the stranger phase. Regarding the respondents who were 50 to 59 years old, 33% ($n = 11$) were in the stranger phase, 36% ($n = 12$) were in the acquaintance phase, and 25% ($n = 27$) were in the partner phase. Table 3 identifies the phases of leadership making based on respondent demographic characteristics.

Table 3. Frequencies of Leadership Making Phases Between Extension Agent and CEDs Based on Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Stranger		Acquaintance		Partner	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Years as an Extension Agent</i>						
5 years or less	14	40	14	41	51	47
6-10 years	9	26	5	15	21	19
11-15 years	7	20	4	11	11	10
16-20 years	3	8	3	9	12	11
21-25 years	1	3	3	9	5	5
More than 25 years	1	3	5	15	9	8
<i>Gender</i>						
Male	8	23	11	32	32	30
Female	26	77	23	68	75	70
<i>Age</i>						
20-29 years	2	6	3	9	13	12
30-39 years	11	33	8	23	32	30

(Table 3 continued)	<u>Stranger</u>		<u>Acquaintance</u>		<u>Partner</u>	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
40-49 years	6	19	8	23	22	20
50-59 years	11	33	12	36	27	25
60-79 years	3	9	3	9	14	13
<i>Program Area</i>						
4-H	11	35	4	13	30	28
Agriculture/Livestock	4	14	8	26	16	15
Family and Consumer Science	5	16	6	19	23	21
Horticulture/Natural Resources	11	35	13	42	39	36
<i>Extension District</i>						
Central	13	39	7	23	29	27
Northeast	5	15	11	37	21	19
Northwest	5	15	3	10	19	17
South	3	9	3	10	26	24
South Central	7	22	6	20	14	13
<i>Education Level</i>						
Bachelor's Degree	6	18	4	12	16	15
Post-Graduate Degree	28	82	30	88	93	85

The phase of leadership making between Extension agents and CEDs was impacted by specific characteristics of the CED. A larger percentage of Extension agents with male CEDs ($n = 24$, 68%) scored in the stranger phase compared to other Extension agents with female CEDs ($n = 11$, 32%). Regarding partner phase relationships, 38% ($n = 41$) of respondents had CEDs with 5 years or less of experience, 33% ($n = 35$) had CEDs with 6 to 10 years of experience, 12% ($n = 13$) had CEDs with 11 to 15 years of experience, 7% ($n = 7$) had CEDs with 16 to 20 years of experience, 2% ($n = 2$) had CEDs with 21 to 25 years of experience, and 8% ($n = 8$) had CEDs with more than 25 years of experience. Extension agents with a longer working relationship with his/her CED tended to be in the partner phase of leadership making. Table 4 identifies the phases of leadership making based on CED demographic characteristics.

Table 4. Frequencies of Leadership Making Phases Between Extension Agent and CEDs Based on Demographic Characteristics of CEDs

	<u>Stranger</u>		<u>Acquaintance</u>		<u>Partner</u>	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Gender of CED</i>						
Male	24	68	18	53	47	43
Female	11	32	16	47	61	57
<i>Years of CED Experience</i>						
5 years or less	20	57	17	51	41	38
6-10 years	8	23	11	33	35	33
11-15 years	3	9	2	6	13	12
16-20 years	1	3	1	4	7	7
21-25 years	2	6	1	4	2	2
More than 25 years	1	3	1	4	8	8
<i>Years of Working Relationship</i>						
5 years or less	29	80	25	75	63	59
6-10 years	6	17	6	18	27	25
11-15 years	0	0	1	4	9	9
16-20 years	1	3	1	4	7	7

Note: Years of working relationship is defined as the number of years an Extension agent and CED have worked together.

Conclusions and Implications

Low and high quality interactions are important for an organization to understand because the relationship quality determines the phase of leadership making and relationship outcomes, such as work productivity, job satisfaction, and employee turnover (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). All new relationships are expected to begin the leadership-making process in the stranger phase. Employee turnover causes relationships between Extension agents and CEDs to begin anew, impacting the leadership-making process of both the agent and CED. New relationships are also formed when Extension agents are promoted to become CEDs. Findings revealed less than 25% of agents are in the stranger phase of leadership-making. In addition, agents and CEDs with a working relationship of more than five years consisted of less than 20% of relationships in the stranger phase. Though the turnover rate for UF/IFAS Extension is more than twice the national average of public employees, the majority of new working relationships and long-term relationships have progressed past the stranger phase, suggesting high-quality relationships between Extension agents and CEDs (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), resulting in positive communication, exchanges of ideas, fairness, and respect (Lee, 2001; Liden & Maslyn, 1998).

Graen and Uhl Bien (1995) explained the acquaintance phase is the critical phase in the leadership-making process as the dyads that do not progress to the partner phase will regress back to the stranger phase. Agents and CEDs are both testing each other and still forming assessments and opinions (Northouse, 2007). Findings revealed a minority of relationships are in the acquaintance phase of leadership-making; however, over half of agents in the acquaintance phase have been employed by Florida Extension for six years or more. The high turnover rate of the organization could be a major factor of experienced agents' relationships with their CED not progressing to the partner phase (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Another factor could be that experienced agents are promoted to CED, whereby the leadership-making process begins anew in the stranger phase due to the promoted agents' new administrative roles. The leadership-making process is dependent on both the agent and CED staying in their positions long enough to allow the transition from stranger to partner to come to fruition.

The majority of relationships between Extension agents and CEDs in Florida are in the partner phase of leadership making. High-quality relationships are important for employees to remain satisfied, work productively and efficiently, and decrease their intentions to leave (Castillo & Cano, 2004; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001). Over half of the working relationships of five years or less are in the partner phase, suggesting new employees of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service progress through the leadership making process in a relatively short amount of time. This is very positive as high quality work relationships are characterized by high fairness and respect between the leader and member, resulting in decreased turnover and high job satisfaction (Liden & Maslyn, 1998).

Recommendations

The dynamic relationship of CEDs and Extension agents makes it imperative that trust research continue to be conducted to enhance the Extension organization. More relationship and research between Extension agents and Extension supervisors needs to be conducted. Outside of this study, there is no Extension literature related to the impact of relationships between Extension agents and their supervisors. A qualitative study could be conducted in order to find the specific reasons why the quality of relationships between Extension agents and their supervisors are important to the Extension organization. Further research in the area of supervision and management of Extension agents could be conducted in Florida. Future research should be conducted on the abilities of Extension agents to develop relationships with their Extension directors as the current study focused on Extension agents' perceptions regarding their CEDs. The impact of generational differences between CEDs and Extension agents should be researched to provide a better understanding of its effect on leader-member relationships in Extension.

The annual rate of turnover for Florida Extension is 8.7% which is more than twice that of the national economy at 3.7% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). UF/IFAS Extension should be concerned about the 40% (n = 75) of Extension agents that have low leader-member exchanges. Gerstner (1997) explained an organization will suffer lower organizational commitment and increased turnover when its employees are in the out-group. UF/IFAS Extension Administration should provide increased leadership training for County Extension Directors to ensure all dyads progress through the leadership-making process to the partner phase, such as relationship building, and management and supervisory training. Increased development of its employees will allow Florida Extension to retain Extension agents and help them move through the leadership-making process which will yield high-quality interactions, less employee turnover, more positive performance evaluations, greater organizational commitment, more attention and support from the leader, and greater participation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1993).

UF/IFAS Extension should focus increased attention on agents who have moderate-quality relationships with their CEDS (acquaintance phase). This is the critical stage of the leadership-making process, and agents who do not progress to the mature partner stage will revert back to the stranger phase. UF/IFAS Extension administration and CEDs should pay extra attention to newly-hired Extension agents. It is important for new agents to progress to the partner phase in order to be an efficient and productive member of the Extension workforce. Effective supervision affects employee job satisfaction (Castillo & Cano, 2004), and Extension administration should ensure CEDs are being effective by providing supervision and leadership training. Due to the distinct needs of the Extension districts, specialized professional development trainings should be offered to both CEDs and Extension agents on relationship management.

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