STAKEHOLDER EXPECTATIONS OF COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS IN TEXAS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if differences exist in the way stakeholder groups perceive job tasks county extension agents routinely perform. The study also sought to determine the presence or absence of role conflict and role ambiguity among county extension agents and their relationship to work and personal characteristics. The study consisted of an online or paper survey instrument distributed to county extension agents, extension administrators, and county judges and commissioners.

Findings revealed differences between groups related to the level of importance placed upon certain tasks. Differences were greatest for tasks related to 4-H and youth development, where judges and commissioners viewed tasks as more important, and for tasks related to family and community health where AgriLife Administrators viewed tasks as more important. While there were fewer differences in tasks related to agriculture and natural resources, where they did occur, AgriLife Administrators tended to view the tasks as more important.

Correlational analysis revealed there is a statistically significant relationship between the way county judges and commissioners and the way county extension agents view tasks related to 4-H and youth development. A strong relationship is also present between AgriLife Administrators and county extension agents, but not between AgriLife administrators and county judges and commissioners, suggesting that county extension

agents are working to perform tasks that are important to both groups. The same findings were present for tasks related to agriculture and natural resources. Population size was determined to have less influence in stakeholder response than hypothesized.

Role conflict and role ambiguity as determined by level of agreement statements was observed in respondents, albeit at a lower level than hypothesized. Role ambiguity was somewhat influenced by length of employment while role conflict was somewhat influenced by county population size. All agents largely disagreed with work-life balance statements suggesting that work-life balance is an issue the CES needs to address.

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CHAPTER I

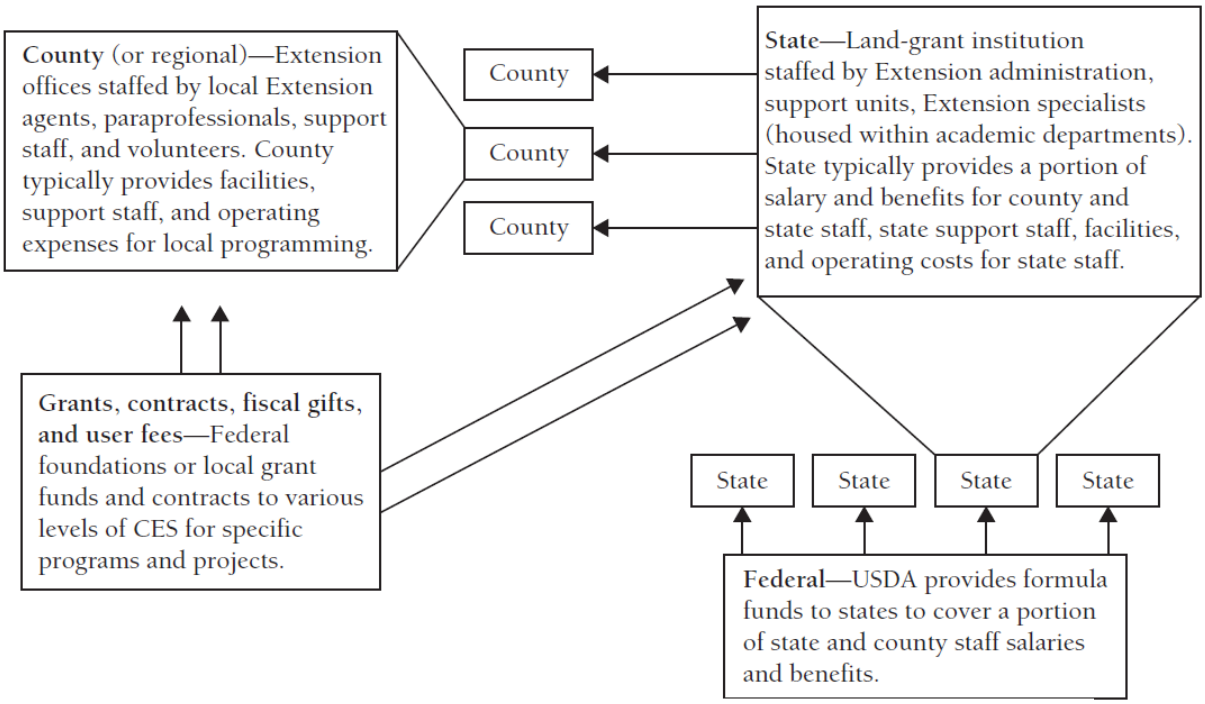
INTRODUCTION

Background and Setting

As early as the 1980's, the Cooperative Extension System (CES) was facing challenges with employee turnover (Whaples, 1983). The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy's leadership advisory council (ECOP) stated that retention of extension employees continued to be an issue in 2005, citing low salaries, downsizing, and increased workload as factors influencing the turnover rate of extension employees (Strong & Harder, 2009). Strong and Harder went on to say that extension agents continue to leave the CES prematurely, even while great attention and research has been dedicated to the issue.

Although high turnover rates among county extension agents have received special attention, one factor has remained largely ignored. The CES consists of a partnership between federal, state, and county government (Wang, 2014). This partnership is often referenced as one of the strengths, which has helped extension survive for over 100 years (Gould et al., 2014). This shared responsibility is a strength of extension, but it also has the potential to lead to conflicting expectations placed upon county extension agents (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997). During annual employee performance reviews, county extension agents in Texas have expressed the fact that they feel pulled in multiple directions by county elected officials and their administrators at the district and state level.

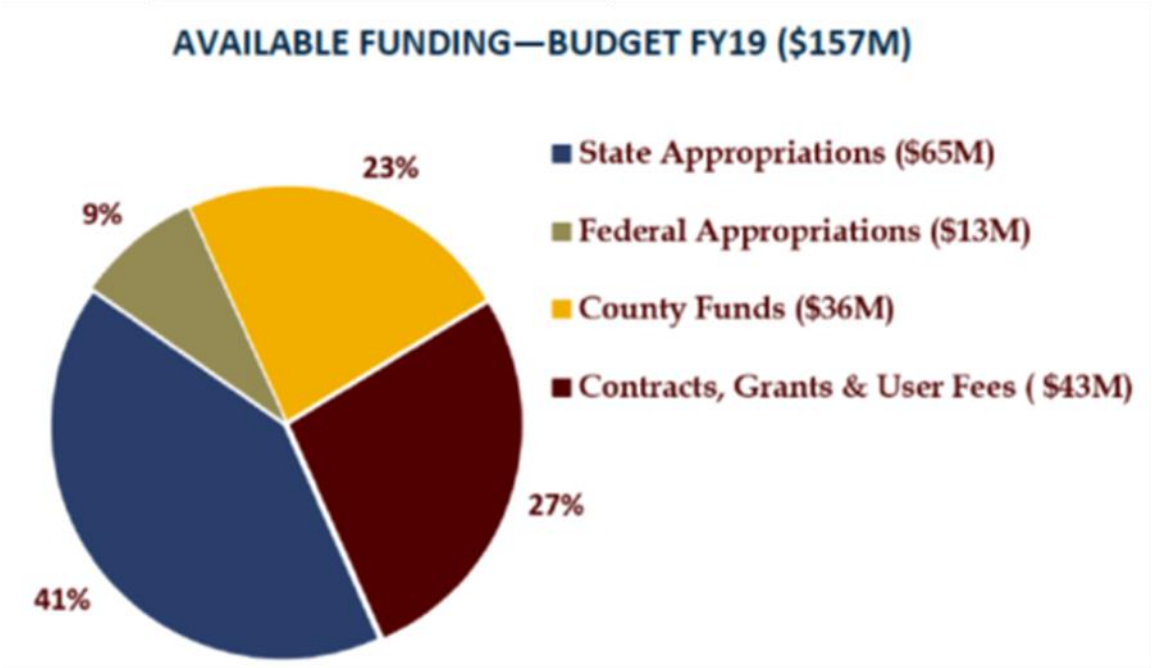
Figure 1



The Cooperative Extension System Partnership (Franz and Townson, 2008)

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (AgriLife Extension) is the nation's largest CES agency. Like all CES agencies, it receives funding from federal, state, and county government, as well as grant funding (Rosson, 2019). If there is disagreement between these funding partners, or between AgriLife administrators, related to what tasks county extension agents should perform or how tasks should be prioritized, the result could lead to increased stress and eventually increased turnover (Őnday, 2016). The sources of funding to AgriLife Extension as outlined by (Rosson, 2019) in the Texas A&M AgriLife Agency overview are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

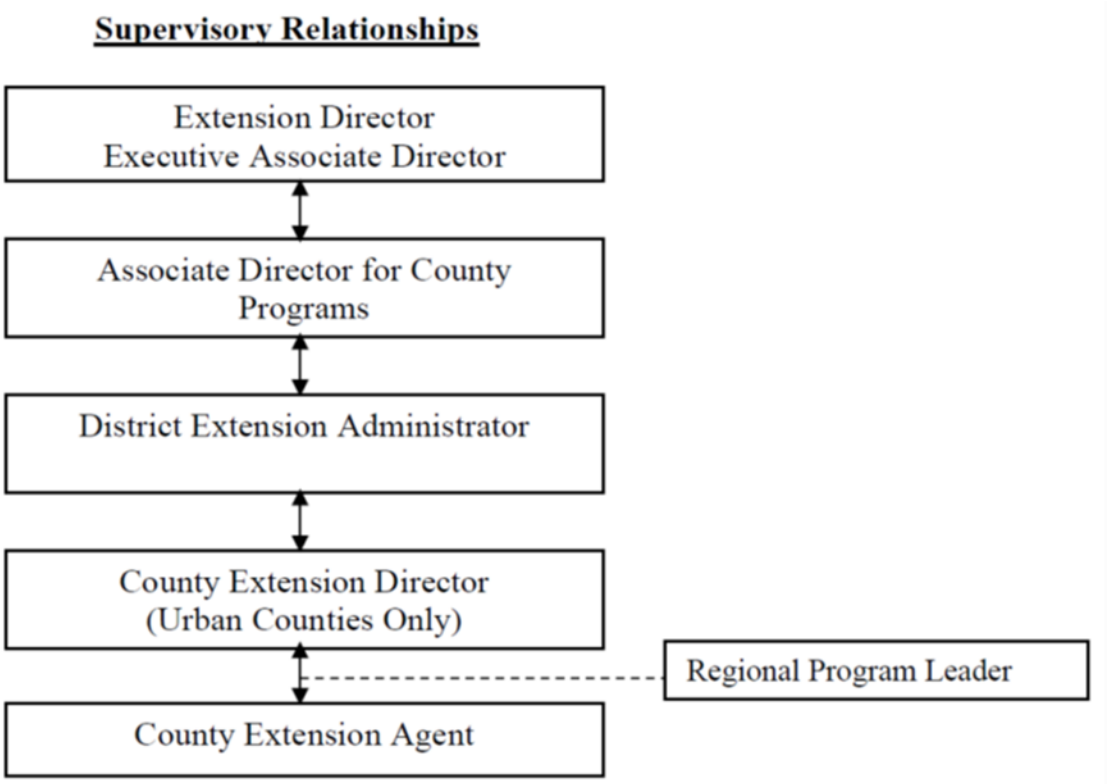


Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Available Funding, Fiscal Year 2019

Within classic organizational theory, chain of command and unity of command are two principles that play important roles in organizational success. Chain of command structure is based on a hierarchy with a single flow of authority. This is more efficient and results in higher employee satisfaction (Rizzo et al., 1970). A single line of authority results in greater coordination of human and material resources. Unity of command specifies that for all actions, employees should receive instruction from only one superior. Furthermore, there should be a course of action agreed upon by the employee and their superior with clear objectives (Rizzo et al., 1970).

While AgriLife Extension does not technically consider itself a dual command system, one could argue that it is a tri-command system as it relates to the supervision of county extension agents: (a) District Extension Administrator (DEA), (b) Regional Program Leader (RPL), and (c) County Judges and Commissioners. This Tri-command violates the principle of unity of command outlined by Fayol (1949). County extension agents in Texas are directly supervised by District Extension Administrators (DEA's) (Ripley, 2019). DEA's are responsible for the supervision, recruitment, orientation, staff development, and personnel management within a specified district (Ripley, 2019). The DEA conducts a performance review of county extension agents annually with input from county judges and commissioners. County governments also play an important role in providing funding and other support for county extension offices. In many instances, they provide a portion of the county extension agents salary, as well as travel expenses and office supplies (Franz & Townson, 2008). This support comes in addition to providing office space and facilities, as well as having input on goals and performance of county extension agents (Ripley, 2016). Furthermore, agents are given programmatic goals and expectations from Regional Program Leaders (RPL's) who are responsible for guiding programmatic activity conducted at the county level. RPL's provide leadership in their respective regions for identification of overarching program priorities, program development, and creating new partnerships (Burkham, 2019). The supervisory relationships within AgriLife Extension as displayed by Rosson (2019) in AgriLife Extension's agency overview document are illustrated in Figure 3. This diagram does not include the input from county judges and commissioners.

Figure 3



Supervisory Relationships for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service County Extension Agents

Need for the Study

To have a successful career with Extension, employees must be prepared for new and varied experiences every day (Seevers, Graham, & Conklin, 2007). No specific model defines the role of an extension agent in every situation and every location. Agents must approach each county and situation individually and fulfill the role suitable for that environment (Oakley & Garforth, 1985). They must also balance demands placed on them from each of their funding partners. The agency's funding partnership, in combination with the nature of extension work, has the potential to lead different groups of stakeholders to have different expectations of what an extension agent's role should

be. The nature of AgriLife Extension's organizational structure provides further opportunity for stakeholders to place conflicting demands on county extension agents (Chambers, Moore, & Bachtel, 1998).

No specific studies have been designed to determine if differences exist in the way county extension agents, extension administrators, and county judges and commissioners perceive the importance of tasks routinely performed by county extension agents.

Statement of the Problem

County Extension Agents in the state of Texas are employed by AgriLife Extension at the county level. Each stakeholder may hold similar or different expectations of the work an extension agent should do on a daily basis (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997). If differences in expectations exist, the stress encountered by Extension Agents could increase, resulting in higher turnover rates or decreased job satisfaction. Furthermore, the role of an extension agent has many commonalities with factors outlined by a benchmark study of Kahn et al. (1964) which are known to increase the likelihood of role conflict and role ambiguity: "(a) roles in changing organizations; (b) roles for which there are considerable differences in expectations among various members of the role set; (c) roles that require innovative solutions to non-routine problems; (d) roles that require coordination across departmental or organizational boundaries; (e) roles with responsibility to more than one supervisor; and (f) roles that require the supervision of others." Therefore, it is necessary to determine if current employees are experiencing role stress because of differing expectations. Determining

how stakeholder groups view job responsibilities is important to developing training tools, building baseline knowledge for new employees, and interpreting the work of county extension agents in the future.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to measure and compare the level of importance three stakeholder groups (county judges and commissioners, county extension agents, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service administrators) place on job tasks county extension agents routinely perform. Furthermore, the study sought to determine the presence or absence of role conflict and role ambiguity of county extension agents in Texas. Finally, the study sought to explore the relationships between role conflict, role ambiguity, and work-related characteristics of county extension agents.

The objectives of this study were:

1. To compare differences in how three stakeholder groups (county judges and commissioners, county extension agents, and AgriLife extension administrators) perceived job tasks routinely performed by county extension agents.
2. To compare differences in how stakeholder groups in four population categories (county populations under 25,000, between 25,001 and 100,000, between 100,001 and 1,000,000 and over 1,000,000) perceived job tasks routinely performed by county extension agents.
3. To determine the presence or absence of role conflict and role ambiguity in county extension agents in Texas.

4. To determine if there was a relationship between role conflict and role ambiguity based on work-related characteristics such as type of county extension agent, length of service, region of service, and county population size.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the evaluation of data that was self-reported through an online and paper survey. There was no further attempt to verify the accuracy and objectivity of the data. There is no method of measuring the validity of subjective responses on the data collected from the survey instrument. The study is also limited to individuals who are current employees of AgriLife Extension and current County Judges and Commissioners in the State of Texas.

Basic Assumptions

The administration of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension service provided access to the email addresses of the entire population of current county extension agents in the state, as well as access to current administrators in the organization. The Texas Association of Counties provided email addresses to all current county Judges and Commissioners, providing access to the full range of perceptions and attitudes affecting the research. It was assumed that the database of email addresses provided was accurate and all-inclusive. It was assumed that respondents answered survey questions honestly and to the best of their ability.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are important for AgriLife Extension and the CES nationwide in several ways. First, this study provided a baseline set of data related to the

importance county extension agents, extension administrators, and county judges and commissioners place on job tasks that county extension agents routinely perform. Not only will this lead to the identification of areas where enhanced communication between the three stakeholder groups is needed, but it will also identify subject matter areas where improved professional development is required, and greater resource allocation is merited. The study also identifies areas which could be targeted for de-emphasis or elimination. Finally, by identifying the presence or absence of role conflict and role ambiguity, AgriLife Extension leaders will better understand what expectations need to be presented more clearly and what policies, procedures, or organizational strategies could help alleviate role stress. This benchmark study will lead to recommendations of further studies designed to pinpoint policy changes that can improve the service and relevance of AgriLife Extension.

Definition of Terms

1. Cooperative Extension System (CES) - An organizational entity of the United States Department of Agriculture and the Land-Grant University system created under provisions of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 and subsequent legislation, which conducts educational programs of a non-formal nature.
2. County Extension Agent - County professional staff with responsibility to plan, implement, evaluate, and interpret Extension programs at the county level. This does not include clerical staff, support staff, paraprofessionals, or specialists.

3. Competency – Knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors which are necessary to effectively and efficiently complete a task or job. In extension, it is the set of core attributes that an agent or educator must possess to be successful.
4. District Extension Administrator (DEA) - District-based administrators with the responsibility to supervise and manage Extension educational programs on the district level. The DEA provides leadership in program development, staff recruitment, hiring, annual performance review, and provides leadership to county extension agents to accomplish program goals and objectives.
5. Evaluation – Assessment designed to determine how well a program is working. They measure customer satisfaction, knowledge gained, skills developed, behavior changed, and economic impact of extension programs.
6. Interpretation – A formal or informal event or written documentation sharing the results and impact of an extension sponsored program or event.
7. Professional Development - Professional development is a planned experience designed to change behavior and result in professional and personal growth and improve organizational effectiveness.
8. Program - A sequence of significant educational experiences with a focus on the main purpose of improving the lives of participants. Each teaching event leads to another as the program develops. The educational program is aimed at helping people achieve important results.
9. Regional Program Leader (RPL) - Administrator with the responsibility to provide regional leadership to county extension agents in program development,

program design, and subject matter development to accomplish program goals and objectives.

10. Retention - Policies and practices used by companies to prevent valuable employees from leaving their job. Retention involves using methods and techniques that encourage employees to stay with the organization for the maximum number of years (Hong et al., 2012).

1. Role – A set of connected behavior, rights, obligations, beliefs, and norms as conceptualized by actors in a social situation (Kumar et al., 2013).
2. Role Ambiguity – Employee uncertainty about their job task/responsibility within a certain role.
3. Role Conflict - The simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult.
4. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (AgriLife Extension) – The Cooperative Extension Service in the state of Texas, part of the Texas A&M University System. Charged with providing non-formal education to youth and adult audiences in Texas. Programs address one of four broad programmatic areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family Community Health, 4-H and Youth Development, and Community Resource and Economic Development.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

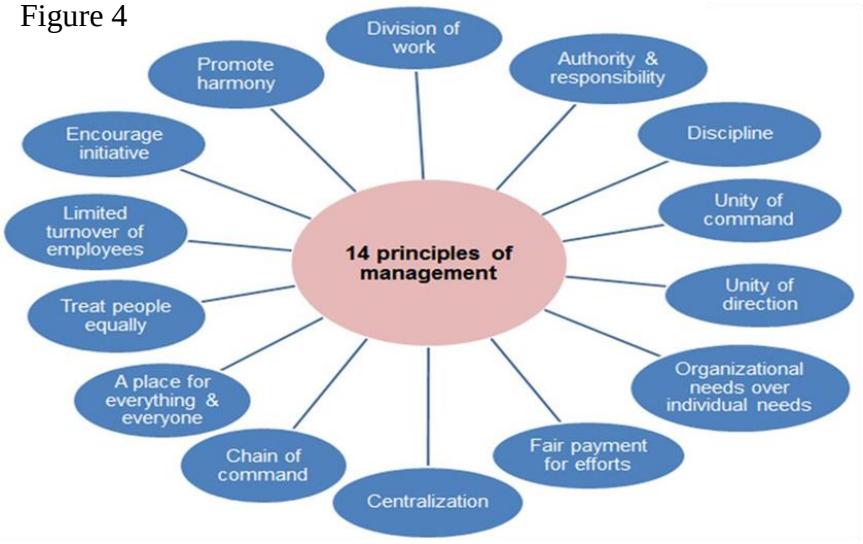
Overview

The review of literature provides a summary of the history of the CES, organization, and staffing within the CES and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, the role of an extension agent, and a basic understanding of role stress factors, employee turnover, and their dynamics within the agency. The literature explains role conflict, role ambiguity, work-life balance, and employee turnover.

Theoretical Framework

Henry Fayol listed fourteen principles of management in the book, *'General and Industrial Management'* (Fayol, 1949). The principles are summarized in Figure 4 below (Mullins & Christy, 2013).

Figure 4



Fayol's 14 Principles of Management

While these principles are nearing 100 years old, they remain in use today (Őnday, 2016). Of the fourteen principles, two are central to this study: unity of command and unity of direction. Unity of command: Fayol emphasized that an individual employee should receive orders from only one manager and should be accountable only to that manager. In organizations, dual command is often the main source of conflict and confusion (Fayol, 1949). Unity of Direction: Fayol expressed unity of direction as "one head and one plan for a group of activities" (Fayol, 1949). Employees should deliver the activities that can be linked to the same objectives, and activities should be carried out by one group that forms a team.

Additionally, modern systems organizational theory was used conceptually for this study. Katz and Kahn (1978) first applied the open systems approach by applying general systems theory to organizational behavior. Modern systems organizational theory suggests that organizations operate as open systems in dynamic equilibrium as they constantly adjust and adapt to changes in their environment. Katz and Kahn (1978) went on to say that an organization's components are connected and interrelated in a non-linear manner. By making a small change to one variable, impacts will occur to many others (Wright, 2017). Meadows (2008) suggested that managers should learn how to identify leverage points or areas of the system where small adjustments can lead to big changes in the behavior of the system. Meadows went on to describe twelve ways to identify leverage points: numbers, buffers, stock, and flow structures, delays, balancing feedback loops, reinforcing feedback loops, information flows, rules, self-organization, goals, paradigms, and transcending paradigms. Leverage points are often not easily visible, and determining what direction to push a leverage point can be difficult (Meadows, 2008).

History of the Cooperative Extension System

The CES has its roots in agricultural clubs and societies which took rise in the early 1800s. The establishment of Land-Grant Universities by the Morrill Act of 1862 was the first formal step in a process that would eventually lead to the creation of the CES. President Abraham Lincoln signed the act which granted each state 30,000 acres of public land (Hayden-Smith & Surls, 2014). Most states sold their property for prices ranging from fifty cents to one dollar per acre and used the funds to establish agriculture and mechanical colleges (Rasmussen, 1989).

In 1887 the Hatch Act was signed into law and established experiment stations by providing a yearly grant to each state in support of such stations. Only a year after the act passed, every state accepted the provisions to receive the grant, and within ten years, experiment stations devoted to agriculture research were established in each state (Rasmussen, 1989). Leaders at Land-Grant Universities and Experiment stations soon began disseminating information about their research recognizing the need for their discoveries to be adopted by farmers and ranchers. A lapse in communication between those who had the knowledge and those who needed the information was recognized, and discussions ensued about how the failure might be overcome (Franz & Townson, 2008). Many proposals involved the idea of one on one contact between researchers and farmers. Farm organizations were soon established and called on college professors, those doing ag research, and farmers with specialized training to be speakers at their meetings (Rasmussen, 1989).

In Texas, Seaman Knapp is credited as being the "Father of Extension," for his work on the Porter Farm in Kaufman County in 1903 (Gould, Steele, & Woodrum, 2014). On this farm, Dr. Knapp used on-farm demonstrations to show the best practices in crop production. He emphasized cultivation, crop diversity, and crop rotation to enhance soil health (Stoltz, 1992). Extension youth programs have their roots in Jack County Texas, where Tom Marks' frustration with the rate at which agriculture producers were adopting new and innovative management practices led him to begin working with young people through the establishment of a Boys Corn Club (Shackelford, 2014). Corn clubs, like the one established by Marks in Texas, W.B. Otwell in Illinois, and others gave rise to 4-H Clubs and were a major influence on A.B. Graham who was one of the founders of 4-H (Uricchio et al., 2013).

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 formally established the CES. The Smith-Lever Act stated that the CES would "aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the application of the same" (Smith-Lever Act, 1914). Furthermore, the act specified that resources would be provided to improve access to education by bringing Land-Grant University research to people in their local environment (Rasmussen, 1989).

Throughout World War I and World War II, the CES established a link with rural America that made it a valuable resource for promoting and fostering increased food and fiber production and conservation. In the years following World War II, advances in agricultural research brought about the need for facilitation of the adoption of new farming techniques and uses of farm equipment. The CES played an integral role by

conducting on-farm demonstrations that led to the adoption of new and innovative practices (Seevers et al., 2007).

Throughout the 1980s and ’90s, the CES agents led efforts to help farmers and ranchers better understand business practices and profitability due to harsh economic conditions. Efforts were also made during this time to expand 4-H to a broader audience and increase urban initiatives. Family life, health and wellness, and family financial management have all become vital components of extension education (Seevers et al., 2007).

At the turn of the 21st century, the CES began to face serious budgetary difficulties, which led to a restructuring in many states. While Texas remains very traditional in its structure, AgriLife Extension was also forced to downsize (Dromgoole, 2007). As the internet and other technological tools became commonplace, many challenged the validity of conventional extension educational methods employed by the CES. As a result, educational delivery methods shifted, and significant efforts were made to train employees to use technology to reach their audiences (Seevers et al., 2007).

Today, the CES is still adapting to the changes that came about during the information age. Extension programs continue to face budgetary difficulties at the federal, state, and county levels (Wang, 2014). Extension professionals continue to rely on the same principles outlined in the Smith-Lever Act. These principles include: (a) dissemination of science-based information and techniques developed by ag research and universities in the areas of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Community Health, Youth Development, and Community Development; (b) connection with local

communities, both rural and urban; and (c) development of innovative approaches to the delivery of information (Henning et al., 2014).

Organizational Structure and Staffing in the Cooperative Extension System

Although the CES is organized in different ways, similarities exist among all states. Senior-level administrators and administrative teams, usually housed at the Land-Grant Universities, are responsible for the oversight and management of the extension program within that state (Franz & Townson, 2008). Mid-level managers are responsible for the direct supervision of extension specialists and county extension agents. These individuals often oversee a district or region within a state or supervise specialists within an academic department of the university.

Extension specialists have expertise in specific subject matter areas. They provide a critical link between researchers and county extension agents in the effort to distribute science-based, accurate information. Some extension specialists are housed within academic departments on campuses, while others are housed in district and regional offices off-campus (Seevers et al., 2007).

Additionally, the CES employs local educators known as county extension agents or county extension educators. County extension agents address a wide range of needs in urban and rural parts of the nation. They perform their duties in a county, or geographic region, providing science-based education and technical assistance through a variety of educational methods including result demonstrations, lectures, individual consultations, site visits, newsletters, mass media, and social media (Miller, 2015). County extension

agents work in local communities as an “extension” of the Land-Grant University (Rasmussen, 1989).

The number of counties having extension agents began to increase rapidly after the passage of the Smith-Lever Act. In 1914 there were 928 counties with a staff of 2,601 agents. By 1918 the numbers had risen to 2,435 counties with 6,728 agents (Rasmussen, 1989). Today the CES operates in most of the 3,142 counties and county-equivalents in the United States (Franz & Townson, 2008). In the past 15 years, changes have occurred in how the CES is staffed at the local level, and that staffing varies among the states (Clark, 2005). In many instances, county units have been combined, and agents/educators cover a larger geographic area. In other cases, employees are hired with the understanding that they must acquire operating funds through grants and contracts (Seevers et al., 2007).

In the early 1990s, Harriman and Daugherty (1992) noted that State Extension Systems all have differences in structure, with some states moving to more specialized roles for county staff and others sharing staff through clustering. Their study also stressed the importance of staffing to maintain the CES’s traditional strengths which they identified as (a) grassroots approach to program development, (b) the ability to accurately identify and address issues, (c) respect for the integrity of the extension employee and volunteer, and (d) the distribution unbiased research-based information (Harriman & Daugherty, 1992).

In Texas, the base staffing in counties with a population under 25,000 residents is one county extension agent for agriculture and natural resources and one county

extension agent for family and community health, with each agent sharing responsibilities in 4-H and youth development. In some counties with very low populations, a single county extension agent for agriculture and natural resources covers the entire county and has responsibilities for all subject matter areas. In counties with a population of 25,000 to 100,000, base staffing includes the addition of a third county extension agent focusing on 4-H and youth development. Counties with a population greater than 100,000 often have more specialized county extension agents in horticulture, nutrition, marine, and other disciplines. (Ripley, 2018).

Ployhart (2006) defined staffing as "the process of attracting, selecting, and retaining competent individuals to achieve organizational goals." Staffing involves recruitment, selection, and retention of talented employees. Although effective staffing should be a key strategy for organizations striving to obtain a competitive advantage, many leaders within organizations do not understand staffing or use it effectively to move their organization forward (Ployhart, 2006).

Chapman et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis which summarized a diverse literature on the subject of staff recruitment. They found that perceptions of person-organization fit (PO fit) and job/organizational attributes were strong predictors of recruiting outcomes. This suggests that defining the role of a county extension agent and specifying what tasks are important in a specific county during the recruitment stage is important to help the applicant and the recruiter make a determination about PO fit.

In 2018, Dr. Jeff Ripley, Associate Director for County Operations suggested that DEA's recruit employees using principles outlined in Patrick Lencioni's book the *'Ideal*

Team Player' for selecting employees (Lencioni, 2016). These principles can be summarized as (a) humble - willing to recognize that they cannot accomplish tasks alone, willing to ask for help when needed, and willing to recognize the contributions of others; (b) hungry – willing to do what it takes to get the job done, willing to work the hours necessary to accomplish a task, and willing to do more than what is required for the good of the organization; (c) smart – having people smarts, knowing how to interact with others in a positive way, and having emotional intelligence (Lencioni, 2016). A set of interview questions was developed to identify these traits, and recruits were informed of the importance of these factors in an effort to determine PO fit. By identifying which tasks stakeholders place high levels of importance on, this study will allow DEA's to recruit employees with the right PO fit and allow DEA's and RPL's to carry out professional development that enhances the PO fit of current employees.

The Role of a County Extension Agent

Kumar et al. (2013) defined role as "a set of connected behavior, rights, obligations, beliefs, and norms as conceptualized by actors in a social situation." Furthermore, they went on to document several dimensions within the context of role expectations. Kumar explained that generality or specificity represent two ends of the role expectation spectrum. On one end, some positions very specifically define the required behavior for completing a task, when that behavior should be exerted, and the penalty for non-compliance. On the other end of the spectrum, some role expectations consist of broad or even vague outlines, resulting in those occupying such positions having the opportunity to complete the task or role in the way he or she prefers (Kumar et

al., 2013). The role of an extension agents leans heavily toward the generality end of this spectrum. Under general supervision, agents work within a subject matter area such as agriculture, family and community health, 4-H, or community development (Seevers et al., 2007).

Another spectrum discussed by Kumar et al. (2013) is the degree of consensus among others regarding what the role should be. This dimension is particularly interesting in the context of this study. Job descriptions spell out the role of a county extension agent in each discipline, albeit on the generality end of the spectrum. Employees of the CES must be leaders in education and display a high level of competence and expertise in their subject matter area to accomplish the mission of extension. Their primary role is to be an educator (Stone & Coppernoll, 2004). However, many other stakeholders have their own perception of what the role of an extension agent is to them. This led Oakley and Garforth (1985), to surmise that agents must approach each county and situation differently and fulfill the role suitable for that environment.

Finally, Kumar et al. (2013) summarized the dimension they titled "degree of clarity or uncertainty." This dimension can be further broken down into two components, direction, and intensity. The direction of the expectation means that every expectation is for or against something, while the intensity of the expectations means that something is permissive, preferential, or mandatory. Clarity then is a measure of how well the employee understands what they should do and how well they understand the importance of the expectation.

Because the role of an extension agent falls on the general side of the generality/specificity dimension, and because many individuals have input into what the expectations of agents are, the CES has focused on identifying competencies necessary for county extension agents to be successful in fulfilling their role. From 2003 to 2008, AgriLife Extension utilized a competency-based professional development system titled "You, Extension, and Success" (Stone & Coppernoll, 2004). Thirty-five competencies were broadly categorized into seven areas: subject matter expertise, integrating technology, organizational effectiveness, develop and involve others, communications, action orientation, and personal effectiveness (Dromgoole, 2007). Cooper and Graham (2001) summarized fifty-seven identified competencies into the seven categories: (a) program planning, implementation, and evaluation; (b) public relations; (c) personal and professional development; (d) faculty and staff relations; (e) personal skills; (f) management responsibility; and (g) work habits.

In the past two decades, circumstances dictated administrative and organizational changes in the agency which have impacted the ability of extension to address emerging issues (Dromgoole, 2007). Pressures on budgets from all funding sources have resulted in reductions in force and frequent administrative reorganizations (Seevers et al., 2007). Shifts in population, technological advances, easier access of information by the public, and the necessity to work across subject matter boundaries to find solutions to complex issues all result in changing expectations on employees (Chambers et al., 1998). Agents shift their methodologies to reach new audiences and address emerging issues. Pressure from different groups of stakeholders requires agents to prioritize their time to serve the vast and differing needs of their clientele (Seevers et al., 2007).

Programming and Education in the Cooperative Extension System

The goal of local dissemination of science-based information was a basis for the formation of the CES and remains the core objective of extension educational efforts today (Henning et al., 2014). The partnership of Land-Grant Universities with federal, state, and local governments allows information to be delivered at the grassroots level through a variety of educational methods (Bull et al., 2004).

The CES offers a variety of educational programs in agriculture, community development, nutrition and health, financial planning, and natural resources (Franz & Townson, 2008). The number of direct teaching contacts reached each year, make the CES the largest provider of adult education in the United States (Griffith, 1991). In Texas, the educational outreach of AgriLife Extension touches every county in Texas, with over twenty-five million direct teaching contacts each year (Rosson, 2019).

Extension "Programs" are the foundation of information dissemination for the CES. A program refers to a series of educational events resulting in a change that benefits the end-user (Ripley et al., 2011). In the educational environment of today, extension agents are required to anticipate change, be proactive in their educational efforts, prioritize emerging issues, efficiently deploy educational resources, and provide educational programs that result in specific clientele change The current program change model used by AgriLife Extension consists of three phases: plan, implement, and evaluate Figure 5 (Cummings et al., 2018).

Figure 5

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Change Model

During the planning phase, agents/educators meet with local advisory boards, commodity groups, elected officials, and other key community leaders to identify issues, analyze current trends and situations, discuss methods of addressing those issues, and set goals and outcomes. Phase two of the program development model is program implementation. Agents and educators use a variety of educational methods such as workshops, seminars, tours, lectures, field days, and demonstrations, in addition to

newsletters, radio, social media, television, and print media to educate the public on the topics identified (Ripley et al., 2011). The goal of all educational efforts is to induce a change in the clientele being served (Cummings et al., 2018).

Finally, agents and educators evaluate the results of their educational efforts using surveys, tests, interviews, or observing behavior changes in the target audience (Cummings et al., 2018). Changes in knowledge, skill level, behaviors, and economic impact are all critical elements measured in determining the effects of the program (Ripley et al., 2011). The results are then shared with stakeholder groups as an accountability measure (Dromgoole, 2007).

The program change model puts great emphasis on the identification of local issues (Cummings et al., 2018) While this is a strength of extension and ensures relevant issues are being addressed, it also results in agents juggling multiple requests from clientele and stakeholders (Seevers et al., 2007).

Job Satisfaction

Every two years, employees of AgriLife Extension participate in the survey of employee engagement administered by the Institute of Organizational Excellence. In 2016 the survey revealed that 28% of employees were highly engaged, 30% were engaged, 32% were moderately engaged, 10% were disengaged, and 4% intended to leave the job within the year Areas of strength for AgriLife Extension included: strategic, supervision, and employee engagement. However, areas of concern included: pay, internal communication, and job satisfaction (Landuyt, 2016).

Job satisfaction has been a source of interest and concern for decades (Stumpf, 2003). Job satisfaction is defined as the pleasurable emotional state caused by believing one's occupation is facilitating the achievement of one's values (Locke, 1969). Jackson (2018) studied job satisfaction of early and mid-career county extension agents in Texas. Jackson's study stated, "The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service should seek ways to decrease stress of county Extension agents. When an agent's stress is reduced, their occupational commitment to the organization will be higher. When an agent's occupational commitment is higher, their job satisfaction is higher" (Jackson, 2018). Understanding when and what differences occur between stakeholder groups can be a major factor, decreasing stress and improving occupational commitment of county extension agents.

A great deal of research in the area of job satisfaction has been centered around the Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory which states that there are factors in the workplace that result in job satisfaction, and separate factors which result in job dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg referred to the factors that result in employee satisfaction as motivators and factors that result in dissatisfaction hygiene factors or maintenance factors.

Herzberg (1968) identified motivators as a stimulating job, accountability, awards, accomplishment, and individual development. Maintenance factors were identified as position, employment, income, and benefits. Maintenance factors alone do not provide affirmative satisfaction, though dissatisfaction occurs when they are lacking (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Bowen et al. (1994) found that the job satisfaction of county extension agents was related to age, gender, and marital status. Agents who were female, married, and experienced in their field were more satisfied than those who were younger, male, single, and less experienced in their field. Factors that were found to have no effect on job satisfaction of 4-H agents included: education level, geographic area of responsibility, and source of salary funding (Bowen et al., 1994).

Scott et al. (2005) found that county extension agents in Mississippi were largely satisfied with their jobs. Agents were most satisfied with the opportunity that the Mississippi CES provided for growth and learning in their job. Agents were least satisfied with the construct of "general satisfaction" meaning that they were least satisfied by their jobs in general. A study by Harder et al. (2014) agreed by suggesting that over 80% of Colorado extension agents were mostly or somewhat satisfied with their jobs. Jackson, (2018) found that new and mid-career agents in AgriLife Extension were also largely satisfied with their jobs. The fact that many county extension agents reported high job satisfaction caused Harder et al. (2014) to believe that job satisfaction was not responsible for employee turnover within the CES. Scott et al. (2005) suggested that the key to employee job satisfaction lies in the agency's ability to change the areas of work that employees want to be changed, and not the areas that journalists or behavioral scientists believe employees want to be changed. Therefore, county extension agents were included as one of the key stakeholder groups in this study. The importance county extension agents place on tasks should not be overlooked in the larger discussion related to their satisfaction (Scott et al., 2005).

Employee Stress

Jex et al. (1992) referred to occupational stress as, “a condition that is experienced when certain variables in the workplace (stressors) are perceived as demanding and exceeding the employee's resources, thereby causing a high level of anxiety and concern (strain) and negatively affecting the individual's normal behavior or performance.” Sears et al. (2000) stated that certain aspects of the work environment including: “excessive workloads, interactions with clientele, and lack of administrative support” could result in occupational stress impeding an employee's ability to fulfill agency goals. Occupational stressors could result in negative consequences that affect the employee, the clientele served, and the agency (Sears et al., 2000).

Factors such as overcommitment, continuous multi-tasking, long working hours, and the feeling of “always racing” contributed to higher levels of stress among county extension faculty in Florida. Dealing with a variety of stakeholders and clientele groups as well as varied program requirements ensures there will always be a certain level of stress resulting from extension work (Place et al., 2000). Place and Jacob (2001) suggested that agents who have greater skills and experience in time management and workday planning experience lower levels of job-related stress when compared to those lacking these skills.

Stress was found to be one of the top reasons county extension agents in Ohio were leaving their positions (Kutilek, 2000). Ezell (2003) conducted a study of county extension agents in Tennessee and reported that stressors such as: working overtime, inadequate salary, frequent interruptions, excessive paperwork, meeting deadlines, and

poorly motivated co-workers, were major factors influencing their decision to leave the agency as well.

Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

Two specific types of employee stress important to this study were role conflict and role ambiguity. Role conflict is defined as "the simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult" (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Therefore, role conflict occurs when an employee is exposed to conflicting sets of expectations and demands in the organization, or when the chain of command or unity of command principles are violated (Rizzo et al., 1970). Role conflict is affected by the following factors relative to their defined role(s): (a) personal values; (b) organizational rules and policies; and (c) cues from others in similar roles (House & Rizzo, 1972). This conflict may lead employees to negotiate with the conflicting senders of information on task priority or the proper methodology for completing a work assignment (Gilboa et al., 2008). A situation involving role conflict induces negative emotional reactions, reduces productivity, and diminishes job satisfaction (Rizzo et al., 1970).

Classic organizational theory also indicates each position within an organization's structure should have specific tasks or responsibilities, which in turn should be used by management to hold individuals accountable for performances (Rizzo et al., 1970). Role ambiguity occurs when vagueness replaces specificity in rules, policies, responsibilities, and objectives. Katz and Kahn (1978) defined role ambiguity as uncertainty about what an employee is supposed to do. Role ambiguity incorporates the idea of deficiencies in

"the existence or clarity of behavioral requirements serving to define role behavior" (House & Rizzo, 1972). Communication lapses between supervisor and employee or unexpected occurrences in the workplace outside of normal day-to-day activities may lead to increased role ambiguity (Kemery, 2006). Role ambiguity has been linked to low employee performance because when ambiguity is high, an employee has difficulty pursuing job assignments (Gilboa et al., 2008). The inability to pursue assignments occurs because the employee cannot determine how to modify the tasks (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Conversely, when role ambiguity is low, and role clarity is high, employees have knowledge of their job requirements and how to achieve those requirements resulting in higher performance (Griffin et al., 2007).

The CES is a unique institution in its funding and accountability system (Franz & Townson, 2008). While county extension agents have a named supervisor, the District Extension Administrator, they also receive demands from Regional Program Leaders, Extension Specialists, and County Judges and Commissioners. According to interviews with county extension agents, the demands of these stakeholders conflict at times. The difficulties associated with reconciling conflicting and incompatible demands, as well as dealing with unclear expectations, often lead to role conflict and role ambiguity, which are significant factors influencing stress in the workplace. Dysfunctional effects on an employee's well-being and the organization may be present at higher levels due to role conflict and role ambiguity (Lamble, 1980).

Job requirements that are likely to cause role conflict, role ambiguity, and role stress include: "(a) roles in changing organizations; (b) roles for which there are

considerable differences in expectations among various members of the role set; (c) roles that require innovative solutions to non-routine problems; (d) roles that require coordination across departmental or organizational boundaries; (e) roles with responsibility to more than one supervisor; and (f) roles that require the supervision of others" (Kahn et al., 1964). Chambers et al. (1998) surmised that the job description of a county extension agent encompassed each of these six indicators, suggesting that role conflict, role ambiguity, and role stress are likely factors affecting extension employees.

Work-Life Balance

Gutek et al. (1991) studied two important domains in adult lives: work and family. Gutek found that the two roles are often in conflict. Work conflicts with family when long hours are required, reducing the time spent with family at home. Family conflicts with work when illnesses or activities with children and spouses result in absenteeism. Furthermore, when employees are preoccupied, and their effectiveness is reduced, a higher level of work-family conflict exists (Gutek et al., 1991). Cinamon and Rich (2005) stated that employees with more job experience see fewer work-life conflicts. They believed that greater experience led to the ability of an employee to make appropriate adjustments to their job responsibilities to accommodate family circumstances. Employees who are work-oriented plan to meet their need for challenges while allowing for career enhancement. Additionally, employees who are family-oriented will seek avenues to minimize family conflicts (Cinamon & Rich, 2005). In a study of extension employees who left Ohio Cooperative Extension, Rousan and Henderson (1996) reported agents left the agency due to in part to the fact they had too many job

responsibilities and too many late-night meetings. When a county extension agent's supervisors, judges and commissioners, and clientele groups place different demands on their time, the likelihood of them experiencing work-family conflict goes up tremendously. As a result, agents spend longer hours fulfilling the demands of each of these groups, increasing stress.

Jackson (2018) suggested that the first variable influencing stress that should be investigated is work interfering with family. She stated that AgriLife Extension should seek to create an environment where county extension agents can develop a balance between their personal life and professional responsibilities.

Retention and Turnover

Retention of employees has been identified as a major challenge facing the CES for some time (Safrit & Owen 2010). Organizational reasons that Extension agents leave included: (a) low pay, (b) excessive work responsibilities, (c) excessive requirements for promotion, and (d) lack of recognition for a job well done (Rousan and Henderson, 1996). Non-work related factors included: (a) another job offer, (b) family obligations, (c) more money elsewhere, and (d) no time for personal relationships. Personal work-related factors included: (a) other priorities in life, (b) too many late-night meetings, and (c) conflicts with values. Chandler (2005) analyzed data from Texas Cooperative Extension employees who left the agency and found that the major factors in rank order were: (a) better job, (b) personal reasons, (c) retirement, (d) return to school, (e) poor performance, and (f) health.

Strong and Harder (2009) utilized Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory to examine turnover in county extension agents. The study suggested that maintenance factors were more often lacking than motivators and that the CES "should be concerned about agents leaving the organization due to a lack of adequate maintenance factors." Strong and Harder also found that low salary, balancing work and family, long work hours, and job dissatisfaction all influenced a county extension agent's decision to leave the agency.

In addition to these reasons, the relationship between role ambiguity and voluntary turnover have been reported in the literature (Lamble, 1980). Role clarity has a positive impact on the length of time employees stay in a job or role (Lyons, 1971). House and Rizzo (1972), found a positive correlation between employees who stated they were likely to leave a position and also scored high in a survey measuring role ambiguity. However, the same study found no correlation between the employees stating they were likely to leave a position and also scored high in a survey measuring role conflict. Hamner and Tosi (1974) found no significant relationship between role ambiguity and employees who stated they were likely to leave a position, yet Johnson and Graen (1973) observed statistically significant relationships between both role conflict and ambiguity and voluntary turnover. Lamble (1980) surmised there is evidence that both role conflict and role ambiguity were associated with a greater propensity to leave an organization or exhibit lower performance while in the job.

Analyzing Likert-Type Data

Clason and Dormody (1994) observed the common practice of using individual Likert-type questions or statements as a tool for comparing data from different groups in agriculture education research. They further observed both parametric and non-parametric methods of analyzing individual Likert-type questions. They surmised that it was not a question of right and wrong ways of data analysis, but rather a question of if the research questions are answered in a meaningful way.

Norman (2010) stated that the belief an analysis of variance test or t-test could not be used unless data is normally distributed was a myth. Norman cited sources dating as far back as Pearson (1931), where ANOVA was found to be robust with highly skewed data and small sample sizes. Norman also cited Carifio and Perla (2008) stating that those who do not support the use of parametric methods to analyze ordinal data fail to acknowledge the robustness of many studies which employ such methods. This information along with his analysis of past studies caused Norman to conclude, "parametric statistics can be used with Likert data, with small sample sizes, with unequal variances, and with non-normal distributions, with no fear of coming to the wrong conclusion. These findings are consistent with empirical literature dating back nearly 80 years."

The debate surrounding the analysis of Likert-type data leads to the conclusion that when presenting results from parametric analysis (means and standard deviations) for individual Likert questions or statements, one should also present frequency data for

individuals who selected each option, so readers can make their own determinations about how they should interpret the results at the Likert-item level (Brown 2011).

Summary

The CES has enjoyed a long history of carrying out educational programs in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, family and community health, 4-H and youth development, and community and economic development (Rosson, 2019). The funding partnership that makes up the CES (federal, state, and county government) is a strength of the system, but also provides the opportunity for funding partners, administrators, and employees to differ in the way they view job tasks county extension agents routinely perform. Evidence is present in the literature to suggest that employee stress, employee engagement, work-life balance, and agent retention, continue to be factors impacting the CES in a negative manner (Place & Jacob, 2001). Differences in the way county extension agents, extension administrators, and county judges and commissioners view the job tasks of county extension agents could contribute to greater employee stress, lower employee engagement, increased work-family conflict, and ultimately higher turnover rates among county extension agents. This study sought to fill gaps in the literature as it relates to differences in stakeholder views and their impact on these important factors.

CHAPTER III

MATERIALS AND METHODS

General Approach

This study investigated the level of importance key stakeholders place on selected job tasks and responsibilities of county extension agents in Texas and the degree to which these stakeholders agreed with each other. This study also sought to determine the presence or absence of role conflict and role ambiguity in county extension agents. Finally, this study explored the relationships that may exist between role conflict, role ambiguity, and work-related characteristics of county extension agents. This study was conducted using descriptive correlational research methodology to explore the relationships that exist between one or more variables, without any attempt to influence them (Fraenkel et al., 2011).

Quantitative data were collected with survey instrument (Appendix A) using a Likert-type 5-point scale to compare the level of importance each stakeholder group placed on specific job requirements of county extension agents and to compare level of agreement statements for role conflict and role ambiguity. Demographic and general use data were also collected.

Population and Sample

The target population consisted of three stakeholder groups in Texas (county judges and commissioners, county extension agents, and AgriLife administrators). The study was approved by the Director of Extension. In the case of this study, each stakeholder group represents a different population size (*N*). The total population of county judges and commissioners in Texas is 1,270, while the total number of county extension agents is 574, and the total number of AgriLife administrators is 51. Dillman et al. (2014) suggested using the finite population correction (*fpc*) to determine the survey responses needed (*n*) using a 95% confidence interval and 0.05 error.

$$\boldsymbol{n = \frac{N * p * q}{\left\{(N-1) * \left(\frac{MoE}{z}\right)^2 + p * q\right\}}}$$

Where N is the total size of the population, p is the proportion being tested, q is 1-p, MoE is the desired margin of sampling error and z is the critical value for the desired level of confidence. For 95% confidence, the critical z value is 1.96 (Dillman et al., 2014).

$$\boldsymbol{n_{county\ judges\ and\ commissioners} = \frac{1,270 * .5 * .5}{\left\{(1,270-1) * \left(\frac{0.05}{1.96}\right)^2 + (.5 * .5)\right\}} = 295}$$

$$\boldsymbol{n_{county\ extension\ agents} = \frac{574 * .5 * .5}{\left\{(574-1) * \left(\frac{0.05}{1.96}\right)^2 + (.5 * .5)\right\}} = 230}$$

$$\boldsymbol{n_{administration} = \frac{51 * .5 * .5}{\left\{(51-1) * \left(\frac{0.05}{1.96}\right)^2 + (.5 * .5)\right\}} = 45}$$

Based on the calculations, the survey was distributed as a census to all county judges and commissioners, county extension agents, and AgriLife administrators, with goals for response rates set at 45% for county judges and commissioners, 50% for county extension agents, and 95% for AgriLife Administrators.

Survey Instrument

The instrument used to collect data consisted of 14 questions in four sections. Questions in the first three sections were designed to inform and collect demographic, and work/personal characteristics and determine the level of importance each group placed on job tasks county extension agents routinely perform. Questions in the fourth section were designed to determine the presence or absence of role conflict and role ambiguity of county extension agents.

The first section informed the respondent of their option to consent to the survey. This was followed by questions that helped clarify their personal and work characteristics. Respondents selected their role: county judge or commissioner, type of extension agent, or type of administrator. Respondents also answered questions related to the length of time served in their current role, the region of the state in which they reside, and the population of the county in which they live.

The second section of the survey used a 5-part, Likert-type scale (1 = no importance, 2 = low importance, 3 = moderate importance, 4 = high importance, and 5 = very high importance). Respondents identified how important they felt various job tasks of county extension agents were to their job. Eleven job responsibilities related to 4-H and youth development were listed along with 10 job responsibilities related to family

and community health, 13 job responsibilities related to agriculture and natural resources, and nine job responsibilities classified as “other responsibilities of county extension agents.” Respondents were also asked to select the five most important program areas in each category. Finally, respondents were asked an open-ended question allowing them to report any other job responsibilities they felt were essential to the role of a county extension agent.

The final section was completed only by county extension agents and was an adaptation of a survey for extension agents in Georgia utilized by Chambers et al. (1998). That survey was based on a questionnaire developed by Rizzo et al. (1970) and utilized by Fisher and Gitelson (1983), Jackson and Schuler (1985), Lamble (1980), and Lovell (1980). The survey consisted of a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) in which respondents indicated how they agreed or disagreed with 13 statements related to role conflict, role ambiguity, and role stress. While a recent study called into question the reliability of Rizzo et al. (1970) and the questions utilized, the same study suggested that “despite being the target of criticism, the Rizzo et al. role ambiguity scale appears to be an effective measure and researchers should not dismiss results obtained using that scale” (Bowling et al., 2017).

Data Collection

This study included a large geographical area. Therefore, an electronic, online questionnaire was the most reasonable means of dissemination and data collection. The online survey was emailed to the stakeholder groups following procedures for email and online survey delivery (Dillman et al., 2014). All prospective participants in the study

(N=1,895) were provided with a web link to the survey instrument. Groups were contacted separately, and responses were tracked independently.

Of the 1,270 county judges and commissioners contacted by email, 39 responded within three weeks of the initial notice being sent, for a response rate of 3%. Then, a follow-up email was sent along with the survey link to non-respondents. This was repeated six weeks after the initial distribution. After a period of eight weeks, 192 individuals had returned the survey for a response rate of 15%. Since the response rate was below the desired level for county judges and commissioners, paper surveys were utilized and distributed in-person at two judges and commissioners' conferences in Austin, Texas and Amarillo, Texas to increase the response rate. The paper survey was identical to the online survey instrument. An additional 111 respondents participated in the survey when distributed in-person, bringing the total to 303 respondents for an overall response rate of 24%, meeting the goal for response rate within this group.

Of the 51 senior and central administrators contacted by email, 32 responded within three weeks, for a response rate of 63%. Then, a follow-up email was sent along with the survey link to the non-respondents. This was repeated six weeks after the initial distribution. After a period of eight weeks, 48 individuals had responded to the survey for an overall response rate of 94%, meeting the goal for response rate within this group.

There were 574 county extension agent positions existing at the time the survey was distributed; however, only 495 positions were filled at the time (McConnell, 2019). All 495 individuals were contacted by email, and 180 responded within three weeks of the initial notice being sent, for a response rate of 36%. Then, a follow-up email was sent

along with the survey link to the non-respondents. This was repeated six weeks after the initial distribution. After eight weeks, 319 individuals responded to the survey for a response rate of 64%, meeting the goal for response rate within this group.

IRB Proposal and Permission

A proposal, along with the instrumentation to be used, was prepared and submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) asking for permission to administer the survey. Permission was granted by the IRB on October 3, 2017. Permission to conduct the survey was granted for one year. All survey data were collected by March 2018.

Validity and Reliability

A panel of experts reviewed the evaluation instrument to establish face and content validity. The evaluation panel of 10 experts consisted of retirees of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and members of the graduate committee. Validity is defined as "evidence that a study allows correct inferences about the question it was aimed to answer or that a test measures what it set out to measure conceptually" (Field, 2015). The purpose of testing the validity of an evaluation instrument is to make sure that an instrument is truly measuring what it is supposed to measure (Field, 2015). The panel examined the survey for clarity of instructions, readability of sentences, wording, and overall appearance of the instrument. Suggestions were provided, and changes were made to the wording of agreement statements and number of questions per page.

The pilot test was administered to 100 retired county extension agents and administrators as well as graduate committee members. The data from the pilot test survey was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version

24. Pilot testing was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument. Reliability is the second method to eliminate measurement error and to ensure that an instrument can be translated consistently in different situations. (Field, 2015). Twenty-one individuals completed the pilot survey.

Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to test for reliability resulting in a coefficient 0.85, indicating that there is good reliability of the instrument (Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Santos, 1999). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients range from zero to one, and the closer to one, the higher the reliability (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). George and Mallery (2010) created a general rule of thumb to follow for reliability scores: $\alpha > .9$-excellent, $\alpha > .8$-good, $\alpha > .7$-acceptable, $\alpha > .6$-questionable, $\alpha > .5$-poor, $\alpha < .5$-unacceptable. Gall et al. (2007) stated: "Cronbach's alpha is a widely used method for computing test score reliability." The reliability of .85 was deemed acceptable for the purpose of this study.

Data Analysis

Raw data were downloaded from Qualtrics and imported to SPSS. The data in this study were analyzed using version 24 of SPSS. Analysis began by performing a post hoc Cronbach's alpha test to further validate the survey's reliability. Analysis continued with calculating descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, number of responses) of dependent variables (job responsibilities) by independent variables (stakeholder groups).

Mean comparison was conducted using one-way ANOVA to identify significant differences among stakeholder groups for dependent variables in the broad subject matter areas of 4-H and youth development, agriculture and natural resources, and family and

community health. All tests for statistical significance were set at an *a priori* alpha of .05. Where differences were identified ($p<.05$), means were separated using Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test. While there is debate in the literature regarding appropriate analysis of Likert-type data, Norman (2010) stated, "Parametric statistics can be used with Likert data, with small sample sizes, with unequal variances, and with non-normal distributions, with no fear of coming to the wrong conclusion," Finally, to control for non-response error, responses from the Judges and Commissioners online survey (early responders) were compared to responses from the Judges and Commissioners in-person survey (late responders) (Linder et al., 2001).

Research objective one. Stakeholders were divided into three groups: county judges and commissioners (n = 303), AgriLife administrators (n = 48), and county extension agents (n = 319). The independent variable, stakeholder group, was used to analyze the level of importance placed on the tasks. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare means of job responsibilities between those serving in the three identified stakeholder groups. A Spearman rho correlational analysis was conducted on the mean level of importance scores each stakeholder group placed on the forty-three tasks analyzed.

Next, the county extension agent group was further broken down into four sub-groups, agriculture and natural resource agents (n = 130), family and community health agents (n = 78), 4-H and youth development agents (n = 30), and other (n = 26) to compare the level of importance they placed on their job tasks and responsibilities. The independent variable, agent group, was used to analyze the level of importance placed on

the tasks. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare means of job responsibilities between those serving in the four agent sub-groups. A Spearman rho correlational analysis was conducted on the mean level of importance scores each agent subgroup placed on the forty-three tasks analyzed.

Finally, AgriLife administration was divided into four sub-groups, senior administration (n = 3), District Extension Administrators and County Directors (n = 17), Regional Program Leaders (n = 12), and Associate Department Heads (n = 10), to compare the level of importance they placed on the job tasks and responsibilities. The independent variable, administrative group, was used to analyze the level of importance placed on the tasks. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare means of job responsibilities between those serving in the four agent sub-groups. A Spearman rho correlational analysis was conducted on the mean level of importance scores each administrative subgroup placed on the forty-three tasks analyzed.

Research objective two. This objective sought to compare the responsibilities in 4-H and youth development, family and community health, agriculture and natural resources, and office/administrative work. The county population groups for this study were divided into four groups: county population under 25,000, 25,001 to 100,000, 100,001 to 1,000,000 and over 1,000,000. County judges and commissioners were divided into the four population groups, and the independent variable, population group, was used to analyze the level of importance placed on the tasks. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare means of job responsibilities between those serving in the four identified population groups. A Spearman rho correlational analysis

was conducted on the mean level of importance scores each population subgroup placed on the forty-three tasks analyzed. Next, the county extension agent group was further broken down into the four population categories and analyzed independently using the same methodology.

Research objective three. Determining the presence or absence of role conflict and role ambiguity was accomplished by analyzing responses to level of agreement statements. Some questions were worded in such a way that frequency of agreement or strong agreement indicated the absence of role conflict and role ambiguity/ Other statements were worded in such a way that frequency of agreement or strong agreement indicated the presence of role conflict and role ambiguity.

Research objective four. The fourth objective of this study sought to determine if there is a relationship between role conflict and role ambiguity based on work-related characteristics such as type of county extension agent, county population size, length of service, and region of service.

The agent groups for this study were divided into four categories: family and community health, agriculture and natural resources, 4-H and youth development, and other. The independent variable, agent group, was used to analyze the level of agreement statements. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare means of level of agreement statements between those serving in the four agent groups.

The population groups for this study were divided into four categories: county population under 25,000, 25,001 to 100,000, 100,001 to 1,000,000 and over 1,000,000. The independent variable, population group, was used to analyze the level of agreement

statements. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare means of level of agreement statements between those serving in the four population groups.

The length of service groups for this study were divided into six categories: 0-6 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years, 26-30 years, and over 30 years. The independent variable, length of service, was used to analyze the level of agreement statements. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare means of level of agreement statements between those serving in the six length of service groups.

The region of service groups for this study were divided into six categories: North, Central, East, West, South, and Southeast. The independent variable, region of service, was used to analyze the level of agreement statements. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare means of level of agreement statements between those serving in the six region of service groups.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Population and Sample

The target population consisted of three stakeholder groups in Texas (county judges and commissioners, county extension agents, and AgriLife administrators). The study was approved by the Director of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Since there was no cost associated with collecting data using the online questionnaire, a census of the three stakeholder groups was attempted. The email list of all county extension agents and AgriLife Extension administrators was utilized with permission from the Director of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. The email list for county judges and commissioners was utilized with permission from the Associate Director for County Operations of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. In the case of this study, each stakeholder group represents a different population size (N). The total population of county judges and commissioners in Texas is 1,270, while the total number of county extension agents employed at the time of this study was 495, and the total number of AgriLife administrators is 51. The accessible population was considered to be N = 1,816 with 670 individuals participating in the study for a response rate of 36.89%. However, response rates varied between stakeholder groups. The response rate was highest among the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension administration group at 94% (48 surveys returned from 51 emails sent). County extension agents responded at a rate of 55% (319 surveys

returned from 574 emails sent). County judges and commissioners responded at the lowest rate of 24% (303 surveys returned from 1,270 emails sent). Twenty-nine respondents opted not to complete the survey leaving 644 usable responses. Table 1 contains personal and professional characteristics of those who completed surveys.

Table 1
Description of Survey Participants (n = 644)

Characteristic	*n*	*%*
Stakeholder Role		
County Judge	116	18.0
County Commissioner	170	26.4
Extension Senior Administrator	3	0.5
Extension Middle Manager	43	6.7
County Extension Agent	308	47.9
Length of Time in Current Role		
0-5 years	230	35.7
6-10 years	150	23.3
11-15 years	75	11.6
16-20 years	66	10.2
21-25 years	49	7.6
26-30 years	39	6.1
Over 30 years	26	4.0
Region of Residence		
North	167	25.9
Central	108	16.8
East	90	14.0
West	76	11.8
South	70	10.9
Southeast	115	17.9
Not Indicated	14	2.2
County of Residence Population		
A - Population Under 5,000	114	17.7
B - Population 5,001 - 10,000	88	13.7
C - Population 10,001 - 25,000	149	23.1
D - Population 25,001 - 50,000	89	13.8
E - Population 50,001 - 100,000	62	9.6
F - Population 100,001 - 500,000	90	14.0
G - Population 500,001 - 1,000,000	21	3.3
H - Population Over 1,000,000	26	4.0

Research Objective One

The first objective of this study was to measure and compare how three stakeholder groups perceive the level of importance of job tasks county extension agents routinely perform. The type of stakeholder was divided into three groups, (a) county judges and commissioners *(n = 303),* (b) county extension agents *(n = 319),* and (c) AgriLife administrators *(n = 48).* Eleven task statements were developed and treated as dependent variables associated with a county extension agents' tasks related to 4-H and youth development with input from the graduate committee and other experts. Means, standard deviations, and number of responses by each of the stakeholder groups were collected for the question, "For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you believe the job responsibility listed has [1 = no importance, 2 = low importance, 3 = moderate importance, 4 = high importance, or 5 = very high importance]. All variables combined resulted in a post hoc Cronbach's alpha of 0.92, confirming good reliability of the survey instrument. Table 2 records the frequency of response to each statement.

Table 2
Number of Respondents Stating Task was Important or Very Important (4-H & Youth Development)

	County Judges and Commissioners	County Extension Agents	Extension Administrators
	%	%	%
Conducting 4-H Community Club Meetings	86.9	50.5	50.0
Conducting 4-H Project Meetings (Specific to a single project)	80.2	59.1	61.9
Conducting In-School 4-H Activities	70.3	43.0	47.6
Conducting 4-H After School Programs	83.0	33.0	42.9
Having a wide variety of 4-H projects for youth to participate in	83.8	62.0	52.3
Offering fewer 4-H projects, but a higher quality experience in those project areas	46.3	58.1	78.5
Training and Utilizing 4-H volunteers who organize and lead clubs and projects	89.1	85.3	92.8
Training 4-H members for individual and team competitive events	81.6	65.9	57.2
Conducting youth livestock validations	78.8	54.9	38.1
Advising youth livestock projects	85.1	66.3	64.3
Conducting Ag Literacy Training for Youth	80.5	62.8	83.3

Mean comparisons were conducted using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The independent variable, stakeholder group, was used to analyze the participants self-reported level of importance placed on job tasks county extension agents routinely perform related to 4-H and youth development. Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each stakeholder group are recorded in Table 3.

Only one task, "Training and Utilizing 4-H volunteers who organize and lead clubs and projects," was not statistically different between stakeholder groups. In general, judges and commissioners placed a higher level of importance on job tasks related to 4-H and youth development than did county extension agents or AgriLife administrators.

Judges and Commissioners rated, "Conducting 4-H community club meetings," significantly higher (4.22±.72) than county extension agents (3.45±1.15) or AgriLife administrators (3.50±1.15) who were not significantly different from one another. Judges and Commissioners rated, "Conducting 4-H project meetings specific to a certain project," significantly higher (4.09±.783) than county extension agents (3.63±1.00) but did not differ from AgriLife administration (3.83±1.03). County extension agents and AgriLife administrations did not differ in response. Judges and Commissioners rated the task "Conducting In-School 4-H activities," significantly higher 3.91±.918) than county extension agents (3.25±1.10) and AgriLife administration (3.38±1.15). Judges and Commissioners rated the task, "Conducting 4-H after-school programs," significantly higher (4.16±.778) than AgriLife administration (3.38±1.06), and AgriLife administration placing higher importance on the task than county extension agents (2.99±1.15). Judges and commissioners rated the task, "Having a wide variety of 4-H projects for youth to participate in," significantly higher (4.25±.767) than county extension agents (3.81±1.04)

and AgriLife administration (3.63. ±938). AgriLife administrators rated the task, "Offering fewer 4-H projects, but a higher quality experience in those project areas," significantly higher (4.00±.988) than county judges and commissioners (3.40±.907) and county extension agents (3.66±1.01) who did not differ from one another. County Judges and Commissioners rated the task, "Training 4-H members for individual and team competitive events," significantly higher (4.27±.692) than county extension agents (3.82±1.00) and AgriLife administration (3.55±.1.04) who did not differ from one another. Judges and Commissioners rated the task, "Conducting youth livestock validations" significantly higher (4.08±.850) than county extension agents (3.51±1.26) and county extension agents placed higher importance on the task than AgriLife administration (3.07±1.22). Judges and Commissioners rated the task, "Advising livestock projects" significantly higher (4.23±.740) p than county extension agents (3.80±1.10) and AgriLife administration (3.83. ±853) who did not differ from one another. Finally, County Extension agents rated the task, "Conducting Ag Literacy Training for Youth" significantly lower (3.75±.971) than Judges and Commissioners (4.10±.761) and AgriLife administration (4.14. ±843) who did not differ from one another.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for 4-H and Youth Development Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	County Judges and Commissioners			County Extension Agents			Extension Administrators		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting 4-H Community Club Meetings	4.22[a]	0.72	283	3.46[b]	1.15	279	3.50[b]	1.15	42
Conducting 4-H Project Meetings (Specific to a single project)	4.09[a]	0.78	283	3.64[b]	1.00	279	3.83[a,b]	1.02	42
Conducting In-School 4-H Activities	3.91[a]	0.92	283	3.25[b]	1.08	279	3.38[b]	1.13	42
Conducting 4-H After School Programs	4.16[a]	0.78	283	2.99[b]	1.13	279	3.38[c]	1.05	42
Having a wide variety of 4-H projects for youth to participate in	4.25[a]	0.77	283	3.81[b]	1.04	279	3.62[b]	0.90	42
Offering fewer 4-H projects, but a higher quality experience in those project areas	3.40[a]	0.91	283	3.66[a]	1.00	279	4.00[b]	0.98	42
Training and Utilizing 4-H volunteers who organize and lead clubs and projects	4.26	0.67	283	4.29	0.89	279	4.57	0.79	42
Training 4-H members for individual and team competitive events	4.27[a]	0.69	283	3.82[b]	1.00	279	3.55[b]	1.03	42
Conducting youth livestock validations	4.08[a]	0.85	283	3.52[b]	1.26	279	3.07[c]	1.20	42
Advising youth livestock projects	4.23[a]	0.74	283	3.79[b]	1.10	279	3.83[b]	0.84	42
Conducting Ag Literacy Training for Youth	4.10[a]	0.76	283	3.75[b]	0.97	279	4.14[a]	0.83	42

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed upon the task.

There were no differences between Judges and Commissioners responding to the online survey and those responding to the in-person survey for the job responsibilities, "Conducting 4-H Community Club Meetings," (p=.990), "Conducting 4-H project meetings," (p=.515), "Conducting 4-H after-school activities," (p=.536), "Having a wide variety of 4-H projects to participate in," (p=.165), "Offering fewer projects, but a higher quality experience in those project areas," (p=.117), "Training and utilizing 4-H volunteers who organize and lead clubs and projects," (p=.587), "Training 4-H members for individual and team competitions," (p=.650), "Conducting youth livestock validations," (p=.055), "Advising youth livestock projects," (p=.195), and "Conducting Ag literacy training for youth," (p=.521), indicating that responders were not different than non-responders. However, respondents to the online survey did differ from respondents to the in-person survey for the job responsibility, "Conducting In-School 4-H activities," (p=.016) indicating that responders could be considered different from non-responders.

Means, standard deviations, and number of responses by each stakeholder group were collected for the question, "For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you believe the job responsibility listed has [1 = no importance, 2 = low importance, 3 = moderate importance, 4 = high importance, or 5 = very high importance] for ten tasks related to family and community health. Frequency of response is recorded in Table 4.

Table 4
Number of Respondents Stating Task was Important or Very Important (Family and Community Health)

	County Judges and Commissioners	County Extension Agents	Extension Administrators
	%	%	%
Conducting nutrition education	71.2	73.9	92.3
Conducting exercise education	52.5	46.3	66.7
Conducting personal financial education	71.8	47.2	58.9
Conducting parenting education	65.6	40.6	51.3
Conducting chronic disease prevention education	47.0	52.2	84.6
Conducting education on sewing, clothing, and textiles	33.1	24.6	42.1
Conducting car seat safety checks	41.6	39.5	43.6
Conducting education related to where food comes from	63.3	75.4	79.5
Conducting food safety education and certification	65.3	58.8	74.4
Advising and providing education for the Texas Extension Education Association	59.5	24.8	12.9

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each stakeholder group are recorded in Table 5. Only two tasks, "Conducting car seat safety checks," and "Conducting food safety education and certification," were not statistically different between stakeholder groups.

AgriLife administration rated the task, "Conducting Nutrition Education," significantly higher in importance (4.59±.637) than county extension agents (4.00±.998) and Judges and Commissioners (3.93±.829) who did not differ from one another. AgriLife administration rated the task, "Conducting exercise education" significantly higher (3.90±.940). than county extension agents (3.35±1.15). Judges and Commissioners (3.58±.829) did not differ from either group. Judges and Commissioners rated the task, "Conducting personal financial education," significantly higher (3.97±.901) than county extension agents (3.43±1.05) and AgriLife administration (3.49±1.14) who did not differ from one another. Judges and Commissioners rated the task, "Conducting parenting education," significantly higher (3.82±.978) than county extension agents (3.22±1.07) and AgriLife administration (3.28±1.12) who did not differ from one another. AgriLife Administration placed a higher level of importance (4.28±.724) on the job task, "Conducting chronic disease prevention education," than county extension agents (3.50±1.12) and Judges and Commissioners (3.47±.928) who did not differ from one another. Judges and Commissioners rated the task, "Conducting education on sewing, clothing, and textiles," significantly higher (3.19±.875) than county extension agents (2.85±1.04) and county extension agents rated the task significantly higher than AgriLife administration (2.37±.675). AgriLife Administration rated the task, "Conducting education related to where food comes from" significantly higher (4.15±.812) than

Judges and Commissioners (3.75±.907). County extension agents (4.05±.908) did not differ from either group. Finally, Judges and Commissioners rated the task, "Advising and providing education for the Texas Extension Education Association," significantly higher (3.68±.926) than county extension agents (2.71±1.13) and AgriLife Administration (2.44±.940) who did not differ from one another.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics for Job Responsibilities of County Extension Agents Pertaining to Family and Community Health

	County Judges and Commissioners			County Extension Agents			Extension Administrators		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting nutrition education	3.93[a]	0.83	277	4.00[a]	0.99	268	4.59[b]	0.63	39
Conducting exercise education	3.58[a,b]	0.95	280	3.35[b]	1.14	266	3.90[a]	0.93	39
Conducting personal financial education	3.97[a]	0.90	280	3.43[b]	1.04	267	3.49[b]	1.13	39
Conducting parenting education	3.82[a]	0.98	279	3.22[b]	1.06	268	3.28[b]	1.11	39
Conducting chronic disease prevention education	3.47[a]	0.93	279	3.50[a]	1.12	268	4.28[b]	0.71	39
Conducting education on sewing, clothing, and textiles	3.19[a]	0.87	278	2.85[b]	1.04	268	2.37[c]	0.67	38
Conducting car seat safety checks	3.29	1.06	279	3.13	1.11	268	3.31	0.96	39
Conducting education related to where food comes from	3.75[a]	0.91	278	4.05[a,b]	0.90	268	4.15[b]	0.80	39
Conducting food safety education and certification	3.79	0.88	279	3.73	1.03	267	4.08	0.89	39
Advising and providing education for the Texas Extension Education Association	3.68[a]	0.92	279	2.71[b]	1.13	267	2.44[b]	0.93	39

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed upon the task.

There was no difference between Judges and Commissioners responding to the online survey and those responding to the in-person survey for the job responsibilities, "Conducting nutrition education," (p=.594), "Conducting exercise," (p=.880), "Conducting personal financial planning," (p=.953), "Conducting parenting education," (p=.198), "Conducting education on sewing, clothing, and textiles," (p=.554), "Conducting car seat safety checks," (p=.745), "Conducting education on where food comes from," (p=.540), "Conducting food safety education and certification," (p=.402), and "Advising and providing education for the Texas Extension Education Association," (p=.186). However, respondents to the online survey did differ from respondents to the in-person survey for the job responsibility, "Conducting chronic disease prevention education," (p=.050) indicating that responders could be considered different from non-responders.

Means, standard deviations, and number of responses by each stakeholder group were collected for the question, "For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you believe the job responsibility listed has [1 = no importance, 2 = low importance, 3 = moderate importance, 4 = high importance, or 5 = very high importance] for 13 tasks related to agriculture and natural resources.. Frequency of response is recorded in Table 6.

Table 6
Number of Respondents Stating Task was Important or Very Important (Agriculture and Natural Resources)

	County Judges and Commissioners	County Extension Agents	Extension Administrators
Conducting row crop education	40.9	54.6	79.6
Conducting ranching and livestock education	63.3	77.2	73.7
Conducting education for confinement feeding operations (feedlot, dairy, poultry & swine Industries)	34.3	25.3	34.2
Conducting water conservation education	82.4	71.0	83.4
Conducting wildlife education	58.2	49.8	60.5
Conducting home horticulture education	43.8	58.8	59.4
Conducting Farm Bill education	50.5	37.2	50.0
Conducting result demonstrations	46.9	50.0	71.0
Offering CEU's for pesticide applicators	72.8	72.6	76.3
Offering pesticide applicator certification trainings	73.8	59.4	68.4
Advising and providing education for the Master Gardener Association	38.9	39.3	47.4
Standing up livestock supply points during emergency situations	62.6	61.1	73.7
Making site visits to assist clientele identify pest or disease issues	73.1	71.7	86.9

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each stakeholder group are recorded in Table 7. AgriLife Administration rated the task, "Conducting Row Crop Education," significantly higher (4.24±.883) than county extension agents (3.46±1.169) and Judges and Commissioners (3.26±1.033) who did not differ from one another. AgriLife administration also rated the task, "Conducting ranching and livestock education" significantly higher (4.21±.905) in importance than Judges and Commissioners (3.86±.817). County extension agents (4.07±.898) did not differ from AgriLife Administration or Judges and Commissioners. Judges and commissioners (3.44±.818) rated the task, "Conducting home horticulture education" significantly lower than AgriLife Administration (3.86±1.004). County extension agents (3.66±.931) did not differ from either group. AgriLife Administration (3.50±1.084) placed higher importance on the job responsibility, "Advising and providing education for the Master Gardener Association," than county extension agents (3.10±1.219). Judges and Commissioners (3.29±. 921) did not differ from AgriLife Administration or county extension agents.

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics for Job Responsibilities of County Extension Agents Pertaining to Agriculture and Natural Resources

	County Judges and Commissioners			County Extension Agents			Extension Administrators		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting row crop education	3.26[a]	1.03	269	3.46[a]	1.17	251	4.24[b]	0.88	38
Conducting ranching and livestock education	3.86[a]	0.82	272	4.07[a,b]	0.90	250	4.21[b]	0.91	38
Conducting education for confinement feeding operations (feedlot, dairy, poultry & swine Industries)	3.18[a]	0.96	271	2.84[b]	1.09	249	2.92[b]	1.08	38
Conducting water conservation education	4.15	0.76	273	3.96	0.98	251	4.25	0.73	36
Conducting wildlife education	3.63	0.78	273	3.48	0.96	251	3.68	0.84	38
Conducting home horticulture education	3.44[a]	0.82	272	3.66[a,b]	0.93	252	3.86[b]	1.00	37
Conducting Farm Bill education	3.51	0.92	271	3.25	1.06	250	3.55	1.25	38
Conducting result demonstrations	3.48	0.93	271	3.49	1.06	250	3.76	1.10	38
Offering CEU's for pesticide applicators	3.96	0.85	272	3.98	0.98	252	3.87	0.94	38
Offering pesticide applicator certification trainings	3.97	0.86	271	3.69	1.06	249	3.76	0.88	38
Advising and providing education for the Master Gardener Association	3.29	0.92	272	3.10	1.22	252	3.50	1.08	38
Standing up livestock supply points during emergency situations	3.82	0.92	273	3.74	1.06	252	3.97	0.94	38
Making site visits to assist clientele identify pest or disease issues	3.95	0.81	271	3.99	0.92	251	4.05	0.73	38

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed upon the task.

There was no difference between Judges and Commissioners responding to the online survey and those responding to the in-person survey for the job responsibilities, "Conducting row crop education," (p=.275), "Conducting ranching and livestock education," (p=.326), "Conducting education for confinement feeding operations," (p=.249), "Conducting water conservation education," (p=.235), "Conducting wildlife education," (p=.188), "Conducting home horticulture education," (p=.836), "Conducting Farm Bill education," (p=.093), "Conducting result demonstrations," (p=.412), "Offering CEU's for pesticide applicators," (p=.480), "Offering pesticide applicator certification trainings," (p=.451), "Advising and providing education for the Master Gardener Association," (p=.217), "Standing up livestock supply points in emergency situations," (p=.093), and "Making site visits to assist clientele with pest or disease issues," (p=.683) indicating that responders were not different than non-responders.

Means, standard deviations, and number of responses by each stakeholder group were collected for the question, "For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you believe the job responsibility listed has [1 = no importance, 2 = low importance, 3 = moderate importance, 4 = high importance, or 5 = very high importance] for nine tasks related to "other" responsibilities. These tasks related to office work, information dissemination, accessibility, and community events. Frequency of response is recorded in Table 8.

Table 8
Number of Respondents Stating Task was Important or Very Important (Other Responsibilities of County Extension Agents)

	County Judges and Commissioners	County Extension Agents	Extension Administrators
	%	%	%
Being in the County Office 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	16.5	21.3	9.7
Being accessible via cell phone when away from the office	87.9	72.8	92.7
Disseminating a monthly or quarterly newsletter	44.7	38.9	41.5
Conducting planning group meetings made up of local citizens	53.8	60.4	87.8
Conducting a series of face to face meetings on a specific topic	55.0	66.3	73.2
Conducting online meetings	19.5	20.2	51.2
Planning community events and meetings	62.2	70.7	67.5
Preparing reports for county judges and commissioners	57.9	52.9	78.1
Preparing reports for AgriLife Administration	61.5	46.5	75.6

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each stakeholder group are recorded in Table 9. Statistical differences occurred for all tasks except for, "Being in the County Office 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.," "Planning community events and meetings," and "Disseminating a monthly or quarterly newsletter."

AgriLife Administration rated the task, "Being accessible via cell phone when away from the office," significantly higher (4.41±.706) task than county extension agents (3.98±.983). Judges and Commissioners (4.25±.730) did not differ from either group. AgriLife Administration (4.37±.829) placed higher importance on the job responsibility, "Conducting planning group meetings made up of local citizens," than county extension agents (3.69±.944) and Judges and Commissioners (3.59±.793) who did not differ from one another. AgriLife Administration rated the task, "Conducting a series of face to face meetings," significantly higher (4.00±.866) than Judges and Commissioners (3.61±.793). County extension agents (3.88±.900) did not differ from either group. AgriLife Administration (3.54±1.002) placed higher importance on the job responsibility, "Conducting online meetings," than county extension agents (2.78±.991) and Judges and Commissioners (2.86±.850) who did not differ from one another. AgriLife Administration rated the task, "Preparing reports for county judges and commissioners," significantly higher (4.12±.927) than county extension agents (3.56±1.060) and Judges and Commissioners (3.63±.903) who did not differ from one another. Finally, AgriLife Administration rated the task, "Preparing reports for AgriLife Administration," significantly higher (4.05±.865) than county extension agents (3.38±1.085) and Judges and Commissioners (3.70±.923) who did not differ from one another.

Table 9
Descriptive Statistics for Job Responsibilities Pertaining to Other Responsibilities of County Extension Agents

	County Judges and Commissioners			County Extension Agents			Extension Administrators		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Being in the County Office 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	2.77	0.87	273	2.85	0.93	272	2.71	0.74	41
Being accessible via cell phone when away from the office	4.25[a,b]	0.73	272	3.99[a]	0.97	272	4.41[b]	0.70	41
Disseminating a monthly or quarterly newsletter	3.41	0.78	273	3.22	1.03	273	3.37	1.08	41
Conducting planning group meetings made up of local citizens	3.59[a]	0.79	270	3.70[a]	0.94	273	4.37[b]	0.82	41
Conducting a series of face to face meetings on a specific topic	3.61[a]	0.79	273	3.88[a,b]	0.90	273	4.00[b]	0.86	41
Conducting online meetings	2.86[a]	0.85	273	2.79[a]	0.98	273	3.54[b]	0.99	41
Planning community events and meetings	3.69	0.84	272	3.86	0.92	273	3.65	1.09	40
Preparing reports for county judges and commissioners	3.63[a]	0.90	273	3.55[a]	1.06	272	4.12[b]	0.92	41
Preparing reports for AgriLife Administration	3.70[a]	0.92	273	3.38[a]	1.08	273	4.05[b]	0.85	41

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed upon the task.

There was no difference between Judges and Commissioners responding to the online survey and those responding to the in-person survey for the job responsibilities, "Being in the county office 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.," (p=.754), "Being accessible via cell phone when away from the office," (p=.980), "Disseminating a monthly or quarterly newsletter," (p=.070), "Conducting planning group meetings made up of local citizens," (p=.457), "Conducting online meetings," (p=.921), "Planning community events and meetings," (p=.591), "Preparing reports for County Judges and Commissioners," (p=.083), and, "Preparing reports for AgriLife Administration," (p=.468), indicating that responders were not different than non-responders. However, respondents to the online survey did differ from respondents to the in-person survey for the job responsibility, "Conducting a series of face to face meetings on a specific topic," (p=.013) indicating that responders could be considered different from non-responders.

Table 10 depicts the relationship between stakeholder group and 4-H and youth development tasks.

Table 10. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of 4-H and Youth Development

	1.	2.	3.
1. Judges and Commissioners	-	-	-
2. County Extension Agents	.664*	-	-
3. AgriLife Administrators	.210	.676*	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

A statistically significant correlation was present between Judges and Commissioners and County Extension Agents views of job tasks related to 4-H and youth

development. There is also a statistically significant correlation between AgriLife administrators and County Extension agents' views of job tasks related to 4-H and youth development. However, the correlation is not statistically significant between AgriLife administrators and Judges and Commissioners views of job tasks related to 4-H and youth development.

Table 11 depicts the relationship between stakeholder group and tasks related to family and community health.

Table 11. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of Family and Community Health

	1.	2.	3.
1. Judges and Commissioners	-	-	-
2. County Extension Agents	.491	-	-
3. AgriLife Administrators	.345	.903*	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

A statistically significant correlation exists between the way that AgriLife administrators and county extension agents view tasks related to family and community health. However, correlations are not significant between Judges and commissioners and county extension agents or judges and commissioners and AgriLife administrators.

Table 12 depicts the relationship between stakeholder group and job tasks related to agriculture and natural resources.

Table 12. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of Agriculture and Natural Resources

	1.	2.	3.
1. Judges and Commissioners	-	-	-
2. County Extension Agents	.797**	-	-
3. AgriLife Administrators	.492	.732**	-

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

A statistically significant correlation is present in the way that Judges and Commissioners and county extension agents view job tasks related to agriculture and natural resources. There is also a statistically significant correlation between the way AgriLife administrators and county extension agents view job tasks related to agriculture and natural resources. However, the correlation between the way AgriLife administrators and Judges and Commissioners view job tasks related to agriculture and natural resources is not statistically significant.

Table 13 depicts the relationship between stakeholder groups and other responsibilities of county extension agents.

Table 13. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of Other Responsibilities of County Extension Agents.

	1.	2.	3.
1. Judges and Commissioners	-	-	-
2. County Extension Agents	.733*	-	-
3. AgriLife Administrators	.733*	.700*	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Statistically significant correlations exist in the way that all three stakeholder groups view other responsibilities of county extension agents.

To further understand the perceived importance of job tasks, the county extension agent stakeholder group was organized into four subgroups: (a) Agriculture and Natural Resource Agents (Ag/NR) (*n = 133*), (b) Family and Community Health Agents (FCH) (*n = 85*), (c) 4-H and Youth Development Agents (4-HYD) (*n = 33*), and (d) Other Extension Agents (Other) (*n = 28*). County extension agents in the "other" category reported the following job titles: health, horticulture, marine, integrated pest management, and expanded nutrition program.

Identical procedures were utilized to collect means, standard deviations, and the number of responses by each of the agent subgroups. The independent variable, agent group, was used to analyze the participants self-reported level of importance placed on job tasks county extension agents routinely perform. Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each stakeholder group are recorded in Table 14. Significant differences were observed for six of the job tasks ($p<.05$) related to 4-H and youth development.

4-H agents rated the task, "Having a wide variety of 4-H projects for youth to participate in," significantly higher (4.33±.890) than agents in the "other" category (3.39±1.397) and FCH agents (3.75±1.011). ANR agents (3.80±.965) did not differ from other groups. FCH agents rated the task, "Offering fewer 4-H projects, but a higher quality experience in those project areas," significantly higher (3.84±.937) than "other" agents (3.21±1.315). ANR agents (3.66±.968) and 4-H agents (3.55±.905) did not differ from other groups. 4-H agents rated the task, "Training and utilizing volunteers who organize and lead clubs and projects," significantly higher (4.70±.529) than FCH agents

(4.20±.910) and FCH agents rated the task significantly higher than “other” agents (3.17±1.410). ANR agents (4.37±.754) did not differ from 4-H or FCH agents. 4-H agents (3.85±1.064) and ANR agents (3.72±1.245) rated the task, “Conducting youth livestock validations,” significantly higher than “other” agents (2.89±1.343). FCH agents (3.27±1.229) did not differ from other groups. Finally, ANR agents (4.15±.883) and 4-H agents (3.94±.864) rated the task, “Advising youth livestock projects,” significantly higher than “other” agents (3.11±1.343). FCH agents (3.39±1.186) did not differ from other groups.

Table 14
Descriptive Statistics for 4-H and Youth Development Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Agriculture & Natural Resource Agents			Family & Community Health Agents			4-H & Youth Development Agents			Other County Extension Agents		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting 4-H Community Club Meetings	3.60	1.058	133	3.29	1.193	85	3.61	1.116	33	3.07	1.386	28
Conducting 4-H Project Meetings (Specific to a single project)	3.68	.934	133	3.65	1.043	85	3.79	.893	33	3.29	1.243	28
Conducting In-School 4-H Activities	3.20	1.041	133	3.25	1.068	85	3.45	1.063	33	3.25	1.378	28
Conducting 4-H After School Programs	2.84	1.072	133	3.01	1.129	85	3.33	1.109	33	3.21	1.371	28
Having a wide variety of 4-H projects for youth to participate in	3.80[a,b]	.965	133	3.75[b]	1.011	85	4.33[a]	.890	33	3.39[b]	1.397	28
Offering fewer 4-H projects, but a higher quality experience in those project areas	3.66[a,b]	.968	133	3.84[a]	.937	85	3.55[a,b]	.905	33	3.21[b]	1.315	28
Training and Utilizing 4-H volunteers who organize and lead clubs and projects	4.37[a,b]	.754	133	4.20[a]	.910	85	4.70[b]	.529	33	3.71[c]	1.410	28
Training 4-H members for individual and team competitive events	3.95	.864	133	3.68	1.071	85	3.97	.951	33	3.46	1.319	28
Conducting youth livestock validations	3.72[a]	1.245	133	3.27[a,b]	1.229	85	3.85[a]	1.064	33	2.89[b]	1.343	28
Advising youth livestock projects	4.15[a]	.883	133	3.39[a,b]	1.186	85	3.94[a]	.864	33	3.11[b]	1.343	28
Conducting Ag Literacy Training for Youth	3.86	.877	133	3.67	1.040	85	3.76	.936	33	3.43	1.136	28

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 15 depicts the relationship between agent subject matter type and job tasks related to 4-H and youth development.

Table 15. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of 4-H and youth development by County Extension Agents working in four subject matter categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Agriculture and Natural Resources	-	-	-	-
2. Family and Community Health	.645*	-	-	-
3. 4-H and Youth Development	.882**	.636*	-	-
4. Other County Extension Agents	.497	.633*	.465	-

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Statistically significant correlations were present between the way ANR, FCH, and 4-H agents view job tasks related to 4-H and youth development. The correlation between ANR agents and "other" agents was not statistically significant. Statistically significant correlations were present between FCH agents and 4-H agents as well as FCH agents and "other" agents view job tasks related to 4-H and youth development. The correlation between 4-H agents and "other" agents was not statistically significant.

Table 16 depicts means, standard deviations, and number fo responses for task related to family and community health. Statistical differences occurred between groups for five of the tasks related to family and community health: FCH agents rated the task, "Conducting nutrition education," significantly higher (4.52±.651) than ANR agents (3.73±.967) 4-H agents (3.90±1.012) and "other" agents (3.82±1.335) who did not differ from one another. FCH agents rated the task, "Conducting exercise education," significantly higher (3.76±1.139) than ANR agents (3.07±1.079). 4-H agents

(3.76±1.139) and “other” agents (3.39±1.315) did not differ from other groups. FCH agents rated the task, “Conducting chronic disease prevention education,” significantly higher (4.18±.913) than ANR agents (3.20±1.004) 4-H agents (3.06±1.063) and “other” agents (3.32±1.362) who did not differ from one another. FCH agents rated the task, “Conducting car seat safety checks,” significantly higher (3.54±1.016) than “other” agents (2.82±1.335). ANR agents (2.96±1.098) and 4-H agents (2.97±.948) did not differ from other groups. Finally, FCH agents rated the task, “Conducting food safety education and certification,” significantly higher (4.13±.880) than 4-H agents (3.42±.958) and “other” agents (3.54±1.138) who did not differ from one another. ANR agents (3.59±1.048) did not differ from other groups.

Table 16
Descriptive Statistics for Family and Community Health Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Agriculture & Natural Resource Agents			Family & Community Health Agents			4-H & Youth Development Agents			Other County Extension Agents		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting nutrition education	3.73[a]	.967	128	4.52[b]	.651	83	3.90[a]	1.012	31	3.82[a]	1.335	28
Conducting exercise education	3.07[a]	1.079	125	3.76[b]	1.139	82	3.32[a,b]	.979	31	3.39[a,b]	1.315	28
Conducting personal financial education	3.34	1.039	125	3.45	1.096	83	3.45	.850	31	3.79	1.101	28
Conducting parenting education	3.11	1.045	126	3.25	1.069	83	3.42	.958	31	3.36	1.224	28
Conducting chronic disease prevention education	3.20[a]	1.004	126	4.18[b]	.913	83	3.06[a]	1.063	31	3.32[a]	1.362	28
Conducting education on sewing, clothing, and textiles	2.87	.999	126	2.77	1.063	83	3.19	.910	31	2.64	1.224	28
Conducting car seat safety checks	2.96[a,b]	1.098	126	3.54[a]	1.016	83	2.97[a,b]	.948	31	2.82[b]	1.335	28
Conducting education related to where food comes from	4.18	.880	126	4.00	.826	83	3.87	.885	31	3.79	1.166	28
Conducting food safety education and certification	3.59[a,b]	1.048	125	4.13[a]	.880	83	3.42[b]	.958	31	3.54[b]	1.138	28
Advising and providing education for the Texas Extension Education Association	2.72	1.097	125	2.59	1.169	83	3.06	1.124	31	2.61	1.133	28

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 17 depicts the relationship between agent subject matter type and job tasks related to family and community health.

Table 17. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of Family and Community Health by County Extension Agents working in four subject matter categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Agriculture and Natural Resources	-	-	-	-
2. Family and Community Health	.758*	-	-	-
3. 4-H and Youth Development	.811*	.390	-	-
4. Other County Extension Agents	.912**	.657*	.899**	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

There was a statistically significant correlation between the way all agent groups view tasks related to family and community health with the exception of FCH agents and 4-H agents.

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each agent group for tasks related to agriculture and natural resources are recorded in Table 18. Significant differences were observed for two of the thirteen job tasks. ANR agents rated the task, "Conducting ranching and livestock education," significantly higher (4.31±.783) than FCH agents (3.74±.950) and "other" agents (3.62±1.235) who did not differ from one another. 4-H agents (4.04±.706) did not differ from other groups. ANR agents rated the task, "Offering CEU's for pesticide applicators," significantly higher (4.13±.957) than "other" agents (3.50±1.273). FCH agents (3.83±.970) and 4-H agents (3.81±.786) did not differ from other groups.

Table 18
Descriptive Statistics for Agriculture and Natural Resource Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Agriculture & Natural Resource Agents			Family & Community Health Agents			4-H & Youth Development Agents			Other County Extension Agents		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting row crop education	3.39	1.227	132	3.48	1.113	66	3.59	.931	27	3.46	1.272	26
Conducting ranching and livestock education	4.31[a]	.783	131	3.74[b]	.950	66	4.04[a,b]	.706	27	3.62[b]	1.235	26
Conducting education for confinement feeding operations (feedlot, dairy, poultry & swine Industries)	2.61	1.031	132	3.09	1.109	64	3.15	.907	27	3.00	1.265	26
Conducting water conservation education	3.86	1.001	133	4.00	1.067	66	4.11	.698	27	4.08	.954	25
Conducting wildlife education	3.52	.926	133	3.33	.966	66	3.59	.888	27	3.44	1.193	25
Conducting home horticulture education	3.60	.912	133	3.68	.914	66	3.85	.864	27	3.62	1.235	26
Conducting Farm Bill education	3.24	1.067	133	3.38	1.000	64	3.30	1.103	27	2.92	1.197	26
Conducting result demonstrations	3.54	1.083	131	3.39	.959	66	3.44	.892	27	3.38	1.416	26
Offering CEU's for pesticide applicators	4.13[a]	.957	133	3.83[a,b]	.970	66	3.81[a,b]	.786	27	3.50[b]	1.273	26
Offering pesticide applicator certification trainings	3.70	1.108	133	3.71	.991	63	3.78	.801	27	3.31	1.192	26
Advising and providing education for the Master Gardener Association	2.94	1.248	133	3.20	1.180	66	3.33	.961	27	3.35	1.325	26
Standing up livestock supply points during emergency situations	3.75	1.076	133	3.83	1.046	66	3.74	1.059	27	3.27	1.079	26
Making site visits to assist clientele identify pest or disease issues	4.19	.809	133	3.68	.986	65	3.74	.813	27	3.85	1.223	26

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 19 depicts the relationship between agent subject matter type and job tasks related to agriculture and natural resources. Statistically significant correlations in the way agent groups rated job tasks related to agriculture and natural resources were present between all groups with the exception of FCH agents and "other" agents.

Table 19. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of Agriculture and Natural Resources by County Extension Agents working in four subject matter categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Agriculture and Natural Resources	-	-	-	-
2. Family and Community Health	.846**	-	-	-
3. 4-H and Youth Development	.837**	.870**	-	-
4. Other County Extension Agents	.677*	.523	.759**	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each agent group for job tasks related to "other responsibilities of county extension agents" are recorded in Table 20. Significant differences were observed for two tasks. 4-H agents rated the tasks, "Disseminating a monthly or quarterly newsletter," significantly higher (3.77±.920) than ANR agents (3.21±1.008) and FCH agents (3.00±1.042) who did not differ from one another. "Other" agents (3.30±1.031) did not differ from one another. FCH agents (3.65±1.023) and 4-H agents (3.68±1.013) rated the task, "Preparing reports for AgriLife Administration," significantly higher than "other" agents (3.04±1.160). ANR agents (3.21±1.080) did not differ from other groups.

Table 20
Descriptive Statistics for Other Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Agriculture & Natural Resource Agents			Family & Community Health Agents			4-H & Youth Development Agents			Other County Extension Agents		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Being in the County Office 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	2.92	.981	132	2.79	.939	82	2.94	.814	31	2.56	.801	27
Being accessible via cell phone when away from the office	4.06	.994	132	3.89	.956	82	3.81	1.014	31	4.19	.879	27
Disseminating a monthly or quarterly newsletter	3.21[a]	1.008	133	3.00[a]	1.042	82	3.77[b]	.920	31	3.30[a,b]	1.031	27
Conducting planning group meetings made up of local citizens	3.68	.924	133	3.68	.954	82	3.87	.922	31	3.59	1.010	27
Conducting a series of face to face meetings on a specific topic	3.83	.906	133	3.96	.936	82	3.84	.860	31	3.89	.847	27
Conducting online meetings	2.59	.993	133	3.01	.936	82	3.06	.814	31	2.78	1.086	27
Planning community events and meetings	3.71	1.006	133	4.09	.834	82	3.87	.718	31	3.89	.801	27
Preparing reports for county judges and commissioners	3.47	1.105	133	3.73	.982	82	3.61	1.022	31	3.31	1.050	26
Preparing reports for AgriLife Administration	3.21[a,b]	1.080	133	3.65[a]	1.023	82	3.68[a]	1.013	31	3.04[b]	1.160	27

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 21 depicts the relationship between agent subject matter type and other responsibilities of county extension agents. Statistically significant correlations in the way all agent groups rated "other responsibilities" were present.

Table 21. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of "Other Responsibilities" by County Extension Agents working in four subject matter categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Agriculture and Natural Resources	-	-	-	-
2. Family and Community Health	.854**	-	-	-
3. 4-H and Youth Development	.773*	.720*	-	-
4. Other County Extension Agents	.975**	.879**	.811**	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each administrative group related to job tasks for 4-H and youth development are recorded in Table 22. DEA/CED's rated the task, "Conducting In-School 4-H Activities," significantly higher (4.00±.866) than ADH's (2.30±.823). Sr. Administration (3.67±.577) and RPL's (3.33±1.231) did not differ from other groups. DEA/CED's rated the task, "Conducting 4-H After School Programs," significantly higher (3.94±.659) than ADH's (2.50±.850). Sr. Administration (3.67±1.155) and RPL's (3.25±1.215) did not differ from the other groups.

Table 22
Descriptive Statistics for 4-H and Youth Development Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Sr. Admin			DEA/CED			RPL			ADH		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting 4-H Community Club Meetings	4.67	.577	3	3.71	1.160	17	3.33	1.231	12	3.00	.943	10
Conducting 4-H Project Meetings (Specific to a single project)	4.00	1.000	3	4.29	.849	17	3.83	1.115	12	3.00	.816	10
Conducting In-School 4-H Activities	3.67[a,b]	.577	3	4.00[a]	.866	17	3.33[a,b]	1.231	12	2.30[b]	.823	10
Conducting 4-H After School Programs	3.67[a,b]	1.155	3	3.94[a]	.659	17	3.25[a,b]	1.215	12	2.50[b]	.850	10
Having a wide variety of 4-H projects for youth to participate in	3.67	1.155	3	3.76	.752	17	3.75	1.055	12	3.20	.919	10
Offering fewer 4-H projects, but a higher quality experience in those project areas	3.67	1.528	3	4.06	1.144	17	4.00	.953	12	4.00	.667	10
Training and Utilizing 4-H volunteers who organize and lead clubs and projects	5.00	.000	3	4.65	.493	17	4.83	.389	12	4.00	1.333	10
Training 4-H members for individual and team competitive events	4.67	.577	3	3.76	1.033	17	3.25	.965	12	3.20	1.033	10
Conducting youth livestock validations	3.67	1.155	3	3.24	1.480	17	2.75	1.055	12	3.00	.943	10
Advising youth livestock projects	3.67	1.155	3	4.06	.659	17	3.67	.985	12	3.70	.949	10
Conducting Ag Literacy Training for Youth	3.33	.577	3	4.35	.606	17	4.25	.754	12	3.90	1.197	10

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 23 depicts the relationship between administrative subgroups and tasks related to 4-H and youth development. Statistically significant correlations were present between the way DEA's and RPL's view job tasks related to 4-H and youth development. Statistically significant correlations were also present between the way RPL's and ADH's view these tasks. Interestingly, Sr. Administration was not correlated with other administrative subgroups in the way they viewed 4-H and youth development tasks.

Table 23. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of 4-H and Youth Development by four administrative subgroups.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Senior Administration	-	-	-	-
2. District Extension Admin.	-.035	-	-	-
3. Regional Program Leader	.005	.846**	-	-
4. Associate Department Head	.043	.535	.715*	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each administrative group for tasks related to family and community health are recorded in Table 24. Statistical differences did not occur between groups.

Table 24
Descriptive Statistics for Family and Community Health Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Sr. Admin			DEA/CED			RPL			ADH		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting nutrition education	4.67	.577	3	4.76	.437	17	4.73	.467	11	4.00	.926	8
Conducting exercise education	4.00	1.000	3	4.12	.697	17	4.09	1.044	11	3.13	.991	8
Conducting personal financial education	3.67	1.528	3	3.24	1.251	17	3.55	1.036	11	3.88	.991	8
Conducting parenting education	3.67	1.528	3	3.06	1.114	17	3.27	1.191	11	3.63	.916	8
Conducting chronic disease prevention education	4.33	.577	3	4.29	.686	17	4.64	.505	11	3.75	.886	8
Conducting education on sewing, clothing, and textiles	2.67	.577	3	2.29	.686	17	2.30	.483	11	2.50	.926	8
Conducting car seat safety checks	3.00	1.00	3	3.24	1.200	17	3.55	.688	11	3.25	.886	8
Conducting education related to where food comes from	3.33	1.528	3	4.06	.659	17	4.55	.820	11	4.13	.641	8
Conducting food safety education and certification	3.00	1.000	3	4.29	.772	17	4.18	.751	11	3.88	1.126	8
Advising and providing education for the Texas Extension Education Association	2.33	.577	3	2.18	.883	17	2.73	.905	11	2.63	1.188	8

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 25 depicts the relationship between administrative subgroups and tasks related to family and community health. Statistically significant correlations in the way administrative groups view tasks related to family and community health were present between all groups except for Sr. Administration and ADH's.

Table 25. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of family and community health by administrative subgroups.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Senior Administration	-	-	-	-
2. District Extension Admin.	.727*	-	-	-
3. Regional Program Leader	.728*	.942**	-	-
4. Associate Department Head	.502	.661*	.777**	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each administrative group related to job tasks for agriculture and natural resources are recorded in Table 26. There were no significant differences observed.

Table 26
Descriptive Statistics for Agriculture and Natural Resource Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Sr. Admin			DEA/CED			RPL			ADH		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting row crop education	4.00	1.000	3	4.24	.970	17	4.33	1.000	9	4.22	.883	9
Conducting ranching and livestock education	4.33	1.155	3	4.18	1.015	17	4.44	.726	9	4.00	.866	9
Conducting education for confinement feeding operations (feedlot, dairy, poultry & swine Industries)	3.00	1.000	3	2.82	1.185	17	3.44	.882	9	2.56	1.014	9
Conducting water conservation education	4.00	1.000	3	4.35	.606	17	4.50	.535	8	3.88	.991	8
Conducting wildlife education	3.33	.577	3	3.71	.772	17	4.11	.782	9	3.33	1.000	9
Conducting home horticulture education	3.67	1.155	3	3.94	1.088	17	4.50	.535	8	3.22	.833	9
Conducting Farm Bill education	3.67	1.528	3	3.71	1.047	17	3.67	1.323	9	3.11	1.537	9
Conducting result demonstrations	4.33	.577	3	3.59	1.326	17	3.89	.928	9	3.78	.972	9
Offering CEU's for pesticide applicators	4.00	.000	3	3.71	1.105	17	3.78	.972	9	4.22	.667	9
Offering pesticide applicator certification trainings	4.00	.000	3	3.59	1.064	17	3.89	.782	9	3.89	.782	9
Advising and providing education for the Master Gardener Association	3.33	.577	3	3.59	1.004	17	3.89	1.167	9	3.00	1.225	9
Standing up livestock supply points during emergency situations	3.67	.577	3	3.82	.883	17	4.44	.726	9	3.89	1.269	9
Making site visits to assist clientele identify pest or disease issues	4.33	.577	3	3.94	.899	17	4.11	.782	9	4.11	.333	9

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 27 depicts the relationship between administrative subgroups and tasks related to agriculture and natural resources. Statistically significant correlations were present in the way that Sr. Administration and ADH's view agriculture and natural resource tasks and in the way that RPL's and DEA/CED's view such tasks.

Table 27. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of agriculture and natural resources by four administrative subgroups.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Senior Administration	-	-	-	-
2. District Extension Admin.	.429	-	-	-
3. Regional Program Leader	.268	.809**	-	-
4. Associate Department Head	.720**	.547	.302	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each administrative group for other responsibilities of county extension agents are recorded in Table 28. No significant differences were observed.

Table 28
Descriptive Statistics for Other Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Sr. Admin			DEA/CED			RPL			ADH		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Being in the County Office 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	3.33	1.528	3	2.76	.664	17	2.67	.651	12	2.44	.726	9
Being accessible via cell phone when away from the office	4.33	.577	3	4.41	.870	17	4.42	.515	12	4.44	.726	9
Disseminating a monthly or quarterly newsletter	3.67	1.155	3	3.53	1.179	17	3.33	1.155	12	3.00	.866	9
Conducting planning group meetings made up of local citizens	4.67	.577	3	4.35	.786	17	4.67	.492	12	3.89	1.167	9
Conducting a series of face to face meetings on a specific topic	4.67	.577	3	3.82	.951	17	4.25	.866	12	3.78	.667	9
Conducting online meetings	4.00	1.00	3	3.59	1.004	17	3.67	1.155	12	3.11	.782	9
Planning community events and meetings	3.67	.577	3	3.59	1.121	17	4.08	.996	12	3.13	1.246	8
Preparing reports for county judges and commissioners	4.00	1.000	3	4.24	.903	17	4.17	.937	12	3.89	1.054	9
Preparing reports for AgriLife Administration	3.67	.577	3	4.12	.857	17	4.08	.996	12	4.00	.866	9

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 29 depicts the relationship between administrative subgroups and other responsibilities of county extension agents. Statistically significant correlations were present in the way that all administrative groups view other responsibilities of county extension agents except for between Sr. Administration and ADH's.

Table 29. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of "other responsibilities" by four administrative subgroups.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Senior Administration	-	-	-	-
2. District Extension Admin.	.717*	-	-	-
3. Regional Program Leader	.867**	.912**	-	-
4. Associate Department Head	.532	.941**	.798**	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Research Objective Two

The second objective of this study was to measure and compare how county extension agents and county judges and commissioners in counties of different population sizes perceived job tasks routinely performed by county extension agents. First, county extension agents were divided into four population groups, (a) less than 25,000 in population *(n = 132)*, (b) between 25,001 and 100,000 in population *(n = 77)*, and (c) between 100,001and 1,000,000 in population *(n = 53)*, and (d) over 1,000,000 in population *(n = 17)*.

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each population group for tasks related to 4-H and youth development are recorded in Table 30. Significant differences were observed for one of the job tasks. Agents in counties with a population over 1,000,000 rated the task, "Advising youth livestock projects,"

significantly lower (3.06±1.345) than agents in counties with a population under 25,000 (3.92±1.077) agents in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 (3.71±1.122) and agents in counties with a population between 100,000 and 1,000,000 (3.81±.982) who did not differ from one another.

Table 30
Descriptive Statistics for 4-H and Youth Development Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Under 25,000 Population			25,001 to 100,000 Population			100,001 to 1,000,000 Population			Over 1,000,000 Population		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting 4-H Community Club Meetings	3.64	1.107	132	3.21	1.185	77	3.45	1.102	53	3.18	1.334	17
Conducting 4-H Project Meetings (Specific to a single project)	3.73	.980	132	3.39	1.041	77	3.85	.886	53	3.41	1.121	17
Conducting In-School 4-H Activities	3.20	1.082	132	3.13	1.128	77	3.55	.932	53	3.18	1.286	17
Conducting 4-H After School Programs	2.86	1.158	132	2.86	1.109	77	3.38	.925	53	3.35	1.367	17
Having a wide variety of 4-H projects for youth to participate in	3.83	.958	132	3.77	1.025	77	3.92	1.141	53	3.47	1.375	17
Offering fewer 4-H projects, but a higher quality experience in those project areas	3.68	1.006	132	3.53	.968	77	3.74	.944	53	3.76	1.300	17
Training and Utilizing 4-H volunteers who organize and lead clubs and projects	4.23	.825	132	4.31	.990	77	4.45	.748	53	4.18	1.334	17
Training 4-H members for individual and team competitive events	4.00	.900	132	3.65	1.097	77	3.72	1.026	53	3.53	1.068	17
Conducting youth livestock validations	3.56	1.332	132	3.62	1.193	77	3.51	1.137	53	2.71	1.160	17
Advising youth livestock projects	3.92[a]	1.077	132	3.71[a]	1.122	77	3.81[a]	.982	53	3.06[b]	1.345	17
Conducting Ag Literacy Training for Youth	3.72	.991	132	3.70	.947	77	4.00	.832	53	3.41	1.176	17

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 31 depicts the relationship between population group and job tasks related to 4-H and youth development. Statistically significant correlations were observed in the way agents in all population groups under 1,000,000 rated tasks related to 4-H and youth development. Agents in counties with a population over 1,000,000 are not correlated to other groups.

Table 31. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of 4-H and Youth Development by County Extension Agents working in four population categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Under 25,000 Pop.	-	-	-	-
2. 25,001 to 100,000 Pop.	.836**	-	-	-
3. 100,001 to 1,000,000 Pop.	.745**	.800**	-	-
4. Over 1,000,000 Pop	.553	.388	.566	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each population group for job tasks related to family and community health are recorded in Table 32. Statistical differences occurred between groups for two tasks. County extension agents living in counties with a population over 1,000,000 rated the task, "Conducting exercise education," significantly higher (4.19±1.167) than those living in counties under 25,000 in population (3.26±1.255) and those living in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 (3.19±1.029) who did not differ from one another. Agents in counties with a population between 100,000 and 1,000,000 (3.53±.868) did not differ from other population groups. County extension agents working in counties with a population over 1,000,000 rated the task, "Conducting personal financial education," significantly higher (3.94±1.181) than agents living in counties with a population under 25,000 (3.31±1.074). Agents in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 (3.34±1.011) and in

counties with a population between 100,000 and 1,000,000 (3.70±.909) did not differ from the other population groups.

Table 32
Descriptive Statistics for Family and Community Health Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Under 25,000 Population			25,001 to 100,000 Population			100,001 to 1,000,000 Population			Over 1,000,000 Population		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting nutrition education	3.91	1.083	128	3.99	.986	74	4.10	.707	50	4.56	.892	16
Conducting exercise education	3.26[a]	1.255	127	3.19[a]	1.029	74	3.53[a,b]	.868	49	4.19[b]	1.167	16
Conducting personal financial education	3.31[a]	1.074	127	3.34[a,b]	1.011	74	3.70[a,b]	.909	50	3.94[b]	1.181	16
Conducting parenting education	3.07	1.066	128	3.28	1.079	74	3.40	.969	50	3.50	1.155	16
Conducting chronic disease prevention education	3.35	1.112	128	3.51	1.173	74	3.72	.991	50	3.94	1.181	16
Conducting education on sewing, clothing, and textiles	2.79	1.070	128	2.82	1.025	74	2.98	1.040	50	3.06	.854	16
Conducting car seat safety checks	3.20	1.118	128	3.14	1.186	74	2.90	1.035	50	3.19	.981	16
Conducting education related to where food comes from	4.16	.900	128	4.01	.944	74	3.94	.793	50	3.69	1.014	16
Conducting food safety education and certification	3.72	1.021	127	3.70	1.056	74	3.88	.981	50	3.50	1.211	16
Advising and providing education for the Texas Extension Education Association	2.69	1.206	127	2.64	1.080	74	2.84	1.057	50	2.81	.981	16

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 33 depicts the relationship between population group and job tasks related to family and community health. Statistically significant correlations were observed between all population groups.

Table 33. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of Family and Community Health by County Extension Agents working in four population categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Under 25,000 Pop.	-	-	-	-
2. 25,001 to 100,000 Pop.	.964**	-	-	-
3. 100,001 to 1,000,000 Pop.	.952**	.964**	-	-
4. Over 1,000,000 Pop	.689*	.652*	.744*	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each population group for job tasks related to agriculture and natural resources are recorded in Table 34. Significant differences were observed in three of the thirteen tasks. County extension agents in counties with a population over 1,000,000 rated the task, "Conducting ranching and livestock education," significantly lower (3.33±1.113) than those in counties with a population under 25,000 (4.12±.909) those in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 (4.09±.910) and those in counties with a population between 100,001 and 1,000,000 (4.07±.800) who did not differ from one another. County extension agents in counties with a population under 25,000 rated the task, "Advising and providing education for the Master Gardener Association," significantly lower (2.55±1.147) than those in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 (3.34±1.166) those in counties with a population between 100,001 and 1,000,000 (3.96±.759) and those in counties with a population over 1,000,000 (3.60±1.056) who did not differ from one another. County extension agents in counties with a population over 1,000,000 rated the

task, “Standing up livestock supply points during emergency situations,” significantly lower (3.13±1.302) than did agents in counties under 25,000 in population (3.86±1.067) and those in counties 100,001 to 1,000,000 in population (3.83±.825) who did not differ from one another. Agents in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 in population (3.54±1.125) did not differ from the other three groups.

Table 34
Descriptive Statistics for Agriculture and Natural Resource Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Under 25,000 Population			25,001 to 100,000 Population			100,001 to 1,000,000 Population			Over 1,000,000 Population		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting row crop education	3.40	1.235	121	3.33	1.196	69	3.76	.848	46	3.27	1.280	15
Conducting ranching and livestock education	4.12[a]	.909	121	4.09[a]	.910	68	4.07[a]	.800	46	3.33[b]	1.113	15
Conducting education for confinement feeding operations (feedlot, dairy, poultry & swine Industries)	2.74	1.088	120	2.90	1.059	69	3.02	1.138	45	2.73	1.033	15
Conducting water conservation education	3.85	1.062	121	3.97	.985	69	4.09	.865	46	4.13	.640	15
Conducting wildlife education	3.45	1.008	121	3.48	.885	69	3.52	.937	46	3.40	1.056	15
Conducting home horticulture education	3.47	1.009	121	3.73	.850	70	3.91	.755	46	3.93	1.100	15
Conducting Farm Bill education	3.38	1.172	119	3.06	.976	70	3.28	.834	46	3.00	1.195	15
Conducting result demonstrations	3.54	1.092	120	3.43	.977	69	3.50	1.090	46	3.07	1.223	15
Offering CEU's for pesticide applicators	3.98	1.033	121	3.96	.955	70	3.96	.893	46	3.67	1.234	15
Offering pesticide applicator certification trainings	3.69	1.138	118	3.64	1.022	70	3.74	.880	46	3.47	1.187	15
Advising and providing education for the Master Gardener Association	2.55[a]	1.147	121	3.34[b]	1.166	70	3.96[b]	.759	46	3.60[b]	1.056	15
Standing up livestock supply points during emergency situations	3.86[a]	1.067	121	3.54[a,b]	1.125	70	3.83[a]	.825	46	3.13[b]	1.302	15
Making site visits to assist clientele identify pest or disease issues	4.06	.916	121	4.00	.955	69	3.85	.816	46	3.53	1.187	15

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 35 depicts the relationship between population group and job tasks related to agriculture and natural resources. Statistically significant correlations in the way population groups rated job tasks were observed between agents in all populations groups over 25,001 in population. Agents in counties with a population under 25,000 were not correlated to agents in counties with a population over 100,001.

Table 35. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of Agriculture and Natural Resources by County Extension Agents working in four population categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Under 25,000 Pop.	-	-	-	-
2. 25,001 to 100,000 Pop.	.890**	-	-	-
3. 100,001 to 1,000,000 Pop.	.523	.754**	-	-
4. Over 1,000,000 Pop	.313	.654*	.795**	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each population group for other responsibilities of county extension agents are recorded in Table 36. Significant differences were observed in one task. County extension agents in counties with a population over 1,000,000 rated the task, "Conducting online meetings," significantly higher (3.41±1.228) than did agents in counties with a population under 25,000 (2.66±1.058) and agents in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 (2.77±.798) who did not differ from one another. Agents in counties with a population between 100,001 and 1,000,000 (2.94±.867) did not differ from other groups.

Table 36
Descriptive Statistics for Other Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Under 25,000 Population			25,001 to 100,000 Population			100,001 to 1,000,000 Population			Over 1,000,000 Population		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Being in the County Office 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	2.84	.979	130	2.81	.881	75	2.90	.863	50	2.88	1.110	17
Being accessible via cell phone when away from the office	4.11	1.005	131	3.80	.959	75	3.96	.935	49	4.00	.866	17
Disseminating a monthly or quarterly newsletter	3.15	1.031	131	3.48	1.070	75	3.14	.990	50	2.88	.781	17
Conducting planning group meetings made up of local citizens	3.57	.977	131	3.71	.851	75	4.02	.892	50	3.65	.996	17
Conducting a series of face to face meetings on a specific topic	3.82	.907	131	3.85	.940	75	4.08	.877	50	3.82	.728	17
Conducting online meetings	2.66[a]	1.058	131	2.77[a]	.798	75	2.94[a,b]	.867	50	3.41[b]	1.228	17
Planning community events and meetings	3.85	.965	131	3.91	.918	75	3.86	.808	50	3.71	.920	17
Preparing reports for county judges and commissioners	3.70	.990	131	3.30	1.119	74	3.58	1.090	50	3.41	1.064	17
Preparing reports for AgriLife Administration	3.35	1.102	131	3.33	1.095	75	3.36	1.064	50	3.82	.951	17

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 37 depicts the relationship between population group and other responsibilities of county extension agents. A statistically significant correlation in the way agents in population groups rated tasks was observed between agents in all population groups with the exception of those in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000.

Table 37. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of "Other Responsibilities" by County Extension Agents working in four population categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Under 25,000 Pop.	-	-	-	-
2. 25,001 to 100,000 Pop.	-.500	-	-	-
3. 100,001 to 1,000,000 Pop.	.800**	-.600	-	-
4. Over 1,000,000 Pop	.734*	-.118	.709*	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Identical procedures were followed to collect means, standard deviations, and the number of responses by each of the population subgroups for county judges and commissioners. Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each population group are recorded in Table 38. County judges and commissioners living in counties with a population between 100,001 and 1,000,000 rated the task, "Conducting in-school 4-H activities," significantly higher (3.00±.778) than did those living in counties with a population over 1,000,000 (4.36±1.414). Judges and commissioners living in counties with a population under 25,000 (3.80±.900) and those in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 (3.98±.956) did not differ from other population groups.

Table 38
Descriptive Statistics for 4-H and Youth Development Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Under 25,000 Population			25,001 to 100,000 Population			100,001 to 1,000,000 Population			Over 1,000,000 Population		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting 4-H Community Club Meetings	4.17	.654	183	4.27	.868	59	4.31	.766	39	5.00	.000	2
Conducting 4-H Project Meetings (Specific to a single project)	4.01	.734	183	4.22	.832	59	4.26	.880	39	4.00	1.414	2
Conducting In-School 4-H Activities	3.80[a,b]	.900	183	3.98[a,b]	.956	59	4.36[a]	.778	39	3.00[b]	1.414	2
Conducting 4-H After School Programs	4.09	.775	183	4.25	.801	59	4.36	.707	39	4.00	1.414	2
Having a wide variety of 4-H projects for youth to participate in	4.20	.752	183	4.37	.807	59	4.36	.743	39	4.00	1.414	2
Offering fewer 4-H projects, but a higher quality experience in those project areas	3.35	.876	183	3.37	.983	59	3.64	.959	39	4.00	.000	2
Training and Utilizing 4-H volunteers who organize and lead clubs and projects	4.18	.676	183	4.41	.646	59	4.41	.677	39	4.50	.707	2
Training 4-H members for individual and team competitive events	4.22	.660	183	4.42	.724	59	4.26	.751	39	4.00	1.414	2
Conducting youth livestock validations	4.09	.787	183	4.05	.899	59	4.10	1.071	39	4.50	.707	2
Advising youth livestock projects	4.25	.695	183	4.25	.822	59	4.13	.833	39	4.50	.707	2
Conducting Ag Literacy Training for Youth	4.01	.756	183	4.24	.817	59	4.28	.647	39	4.50	.707	2

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 39 depicts the relationship between population group and job tasks related to 4-H and youth development. A statistically significant correlation was observed in the way agents in counties with a population under 25,000 and those in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 rated job tasks for 4-H and youth development.

Table 39. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of 4-H and Youth Development by County Judges and Commissioners working in four population categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Under 25,000 Pop.	-	-	-	-
2. 25,001 to 100,000 Pop.	.835**	-	-	-
3. 100,001 to 1,000,000 Pop.	.660	.475	-	-
4. Over 1,000,000 Pop	.364	.277	-.109	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each population group for tasks related to family and community health are recorded in Table 40. No statistical differences were observed between groups.

Table 40
Descriptive Statistics for Family and Community Health Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Under 25,000 Population			25,001 to 100,000 Population			100,001 to 1,000,000 Population			Over 1,000,000 Population		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting nutrition education	3.78	.823	179	4.23	.732	57	4.18	.823	39	4.00	1.414	2
Conducting exercise education	3.47	.930	180	3.83	.894	59	3.67	1.060	39	4.00	1.414	2
Conducting personal financial education	3.87	.893	180	4.12	.948	59	4.21	.801	39	4.00	1.414	2
Conducting parenting education	3.66	.971	179	4.10	.959	59	4.05	.916	39	4.50	.707	2
Conducting chronic disease prevention education	3.38	.892	180	3.59	.956	58	3.69	1.004	39	4.00	1.414	2
Conducting education on sewing, clothing, and textiles	3.15	.905	178	3.25	.902	59	3.26	.715	39	3.00	.000	2
Conducting car seat safety checks	3.22	1.047	179	3.49	1.089	59	3.28	1.099	39	3.00	.000	2
Conducting education related to where food comes from	3.69	.887	179	3.92	1.005	59	3.74	.828	38	4.50	.707	2
Conducting food safety education and certification	3.70	.897	179	3.97	.870	59	3.90	.821	39	4.50	.707	2
Advising and providing education for the Texas Extension Education Association	3.58	.947	179	3.86	.918	59	3.87	.767	39	4.50	.707	2

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 41 depicts the relationship between population group and job tasks related to family and community health. Statistically significant correlations were observed in the way that county judges and commissioners in all population groups under 1,000,000 view job tasks related to family and community health. County judges and commissioners in counties over 1,000,000 in population were not correlated to other groups.

Table 41. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area of Family and Community Health by County Judges and Commissioners working in four population categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Under 25,000 Pop.	-	-	-	-
2. 25,001 to 100,000 Pop.	.952**	-	-	-
3. 100,001 to 1,000,000 Pop.	.927**	.964**	-	-
4. Over 1,000,000 Pop	.519	.519	.519	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each population group for task related to agriculture and natural resources are recorded in Table 42. Statistically significant differences were observed for four tasks. Judges and commissioners in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 rated the task, "Conducting ranching and livestock education," significantly higher (4.14±.766) than those living in counties with a population over 1,000,000 (3.00±.000). Judges and commissioners living in counties under 25,000 (3.76±.795) and those living in counties with a population between 100,001 and 1,000,000 (3.97±.897) did not differ from the other two population subgroups. Judges and commissioners in counties with a population greater than 1,000,000 rated the task, "Offering pesticide applicator certification trainings," significantly lower (2.50±.707) than did judges and commissioners in in

counties under 25,000 in population (3.97±.831) those in counties between 25,001 and 100,000 in population (4.11±.985) and those in counties with a population between 100,001 and 1,000,000 in population (3.84±.727) who did not differ from one another.

Table 42
Descriptive Statistics for Agriculture and Natural Resource Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Under 25,000 Population			25,001 to 100,000 Population			100,001 to 1,000,000 Population			Over 1,000,000 Population		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conducting row crop education	3.18	1.027	175	3.45	.989	56	3.39	1.128	36	3.00	.000	2
Conducting ranching and livestock education	3.76[a,b]	.795	176	4.14[a]	.766	57	3.97[a,b]	.897	37	3.00[b]	.000	2
Conducting education for confinement feeding operations (feedlot, dairy, poultry & swine Industries)	3.08	.912	175	3.39	1.065	57	3.35	.949	37	3.00	.000	2
Conducting water conservation education	4.07	.802	177	4.30	.654	57	4.30	.661	37	4.50	.707	2
Conducting wildlife education	3.60	.828	177	3.72	.675	57	3.65	.716	37	4.00	.000	2
Conducting home horticulture education	3.34	.846	177	3.67	.764	57	3.61	.688	36	3.00	.000	2
Conducting Farm Bill education	3.49	.946	175	3.56	.907	57	3.59	.798	37	2.50	.707	2
Conducting result demonstrations	3.38	.924	176	3.70	.952	56	3.62	.861	37	3.00	.000	2
Offering CEU's for pesticide applicators	3.98	.814	176	4.02	.991	57	3.84	.764	37	2.50	.707	2
Offering pesticide applicator certification trainings	3.97[a]	.831	176	4.11[a]	.985	56	3.84[a]	.727	37	2.50[b]	.707	2
Advising and providing education for the Master Gardener Association	3.08	.862	177	3.46	.972	56	4.03	.687	37	3.50	.707	2
Standing up livestock supply points during emergency situations	3.74	.936	177	3.98	.916	57	3.97	.833	37	4.00	.000	2
Making site visits to assist clientele identify pest or disease issues	3.86	.837	176	4.07	.704	57	4.17	.775	36	4.50	.707	2

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 43 depicts the relationship between population group and job tasks related to agriculture and natural resources. Statistically significant correlations were observed in the way judges and commissioners in all population groups rated job tasks for agriculture and natural resources except for those in counties with a population over 1,000,000 who were not correlated with those in counties under 100,000 in population.

Table 43. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area Agriculture and Natural Resources by County Judges and Commissioners working in four population categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Under 25,000 Pop.	-	-	-	-
2. 25,001 to 100,000 Pop.	.924**	-	-	-
3. 100,001 to 1,000,000 Pop.	.612*	.738**	-	-
4. Over 1,000,000 Pop	.083	.222	.585*	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Means, standard deviations, and the number of observations in each population group for other responsibilities of county extension agents are recorded in Table 44. No statistical differences were observed between groups.

Table 44
Descriptive Statistics for Other Job Tasks County Extension Agents Routinely Perform

	Under 25,000 Population			25,001 to 100,000 Population			100,001 to 1,000,000 Population			Over 1,000,000 Population		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Being in the County Office 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	2.72	.846	176	2.81	.963	58	2.92	.829	37	2.50	.707	2
Being accessible via cell phone when away from the office	4.23	.690	175	4.19	.888	58	4.41	.644	37	4.50	.707	2
Disseminating a monthly or quarterly newsletter	3.32	.779	176	3.55	.799	58	3.62	.721	37	4.00	1.414	2
Conducting planning group meetings made up of local citizens	3.49	.767	173	3.64	.873	58	3.92	.682	37	4.50	.707	2
Conducting a series of face to face meetings on a specific topic	3.49	.763	176	3.74	.870	58	3.97	.687	37	3.50	.707	2
Conducting Online Meetings	2.72	.819	176	3.07	.876	58	3.16	.834	37	3.50	.707	2
Planning community events and meetings	3.60	.864	175	3.88	.818	58	3.78	.712	37	4.50	.707	2
Preparing reports for county judges and commissioners	3.59	.884	176	3.74	1.001	58	3.65	.824	37	4.00	1.414	2
Preparing reports for AgriLife Administration	3.72	.855	176	3.79	.987	58	3.43	1.094	37	4.00	1.414	2

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of importance placed on the task.

Table 45 depicts the relationship between population group and other responsibilities of county extension agents. Statistically significant correlations were observed in the way judges and commissioners in all population groups rated other responsibilities of county extension agents except for between those in counties with a population under 25,000 and those in counties with a population between 100,001 and 1,000,000 as well as those with a population between 100,001 and 1,000,000 and those in counties with a population over 1,000,000.

Table 45. Spearman rho correlation analysis of mean level of importance placed on tasks county extension agent routinely perform in the area "Other Responsibilities" by County Judges and Commissioners working in four population categories.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Under 25,000 Pop.	-	-	-	-
2. 25,001 to 100,000 Pop.	.966**	-	-	-
3. 100,001 to 1,000,000 Pop.	.605	.695*	-	-
4. Over 1,000,000 Pop	.708*	.700*	.641	-

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Research Objective Three

The third objective of this study was to measure the presence or absence of role conflict and role ambiguity in county extension agents. First, county extension agents were divided into four subgroups, (1) Agriculture and Natural Resource Agents (Ag/NR) (n = 133), (2) Family and Community Health Agents (FCH) (n = 85), (3) 4-H and Youth Development Agents (4-HYD) (n = 33), and (4) Other Extension Agents (Other) (n = 28). County extension agents in the "other" category reported the following job titles: health, horticulture, marine, integrated pest management, and expanded nutrition program. Table 46 depicts the work-related and demographic characteristics of respondents.

Means, standard deviations, and number of responses by each of the population groups were collected for the question, "For each of the following statements, indicate how you agree with each statement [1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, or 5 = strongly agree]. Table 47 illustrates the frequency of responses across all agent subgroups.

Table 46
Description of Survey Participants (N = 265)

Characteristic	*n*	*%*
Type of Extension Agent		
Agriculture and Natural Resource	129	49
Family and Community Health	78	29
4-H & Youth Development	32	12
Other	26	10
Length of Employment		
0-5 years	95	36
6-10 years	54	20
11-15 years	29	11
16-20 years	32	12
21-25 years	22	8
26-30 years	19	7
Over 30 years	14	5
Region of Residence		
North	64	24
Central	44	17
East	42	16
West	23	9
South	37	14
Southeast	52	20
Not Indicated	3	2
County of Residence Population		
A - Population Under 25,000	129	49
B - Population 25,001 - 100,000	68	26
C - Population 100,001 – 1,000,000	51	19
D - Population Over 1,000,000	17	6

Table 47
Participants Responses to Level of Agreement Statements

	SDA %	DA %	N %	A %	SA %
I know exactly what is expected of me	2.6	10.2	17.0	49.4	20.8
I have clear, planned, goals and objectives for my job	2.3	7.9	16.5	52.8	20.6
I know what my responsibilities are	1.1	3.0	12.4	55.8	27.7
I have to do things that should be done differently	0.4	5.2	25.8	43.8	24.7
I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	6.0	29.7	31.2	25.6	7.5
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	5.6	21.1	35.0	25.1	13.2
I do things that are apt to be acceptable to one person and not acceptable by others	4.9	19.9	24.0	34.5	16.9
I work on unnecessary things	3.0	19.9	19.9	38.2	19.1
There are some tasks required by my job that I cannot do well	4.9	19.9	28.6	35.3	11.3
I am expected to perform certain tasks in my county that are not considered important by state or district administration	4.9	23.0	18.5	34.0	19.6
I am expected to perform tasks by state and district administration that are not considered important in my county	2.2	10.6	15.5	39.3	32.5
The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable	10.9	32.0	23.7	29.0	4.5
My work environment supports a balance between work and personal life	18.1	33.5	19.9	22.2	6.4

Responses: SDA (strongly disagree)=1, DA (disagree)=2, N (neutral)=3, A (agree)=4, SA (strongly agree)=5

Role Conflict

Analysis of statements related to role conflict revealed that 68.5% agree or strongly agree with the statement, “I have to do things that should be done differently,” 33.1% agree or strongly agree that they, “have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment,” 38.3% agree or strongly agree that they, “receive incompatible requests from two or more people,” 51.4% agree or strongly agree that they, “do things that are apt to be acceptable to one person and not acceptable by others,” 57.3% agree or strongly agree with the statement, “I work on unnecessary things,” 53.6% agree or strongly agree that they are, “expected to perform certain tasks in their county that are not considered important by state or district administration,” 71.8% agree or strongly agree with the statement, “I am expected to perform tasks by state and district administration that are not considered important in my county.”

Role Ambiguity

Analysis of statements pertaining to role ambiguity revealed that 69.6% of agents responding agree or strongly agree with the statement, “I know exactly what is expected of me,” 73.4% agree or strongly agree with the statement, “I have clear, planned, goals and objectives for my job,” 83.5% agree or strongly agree that they, “know what their responsibilities are,” 46.6% agree or strongly agree that there are, “some tasks required by my job that I cannot do well,” 33.5% agree or strongly agree, “the amount to work I am asked to do is reasonable,” 28.6% agree or strongly agree, “my work environment supports a balance between work and personal life.”

Research Objective Four

Four separate one-way ANOVA's were conducted to determine if there were differences in role conflict and role ambiguity based on work-related factors.

Role Conflict – Type of County Extension Agent

Table 48 depicts the results of a one-way ANOVA conducted using role conflict and role ambiguity statements as dependent variables and type of county extension agent as the independent variable to determine if there were any differences between subgroups ($p<.05$). A difference in the level of agreement with the statement, "I am expected to perform tasks by state and district administration that are not considered important in my county," where ANR agents (4.15±.864) agreed with the statement more than "other" agents (3.42±1.270). FCH agents (3.63±1.163) and 4-H agents (3.83±.986) did not differ from other groups.

Role Ambiguity – Type of County Extension Agent

A difference was observed for the statement, "The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable." where "other" agents (3.42±1.137) agreed with the statement more than FCH agents (2.69±1.023) and 4-H agents (2.67±1.213) who did not differ from one another. ANR agents (2.85±1.079) did not differ from other groups.

Table 48
Descriptive Statistics for Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Statements by Type of County Extension Agent

	Under 25,000 Population			25,001 to 100,000 Population			100,001 to 1,000,000 Population			Over 1,000,000 Population		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
I know exactly what is expected of me	3.82	.930	130	3.68	1.038	78	3.63	.890	30	3.73	1.251	26
I have clear, planned, goals and objectives for my job	3.79	.938	130	3.82	.964	78	3.87	.730	30	3.85	1.047	26
I know what my responsibilities are	4.05	.838	130	4.09	.776	78	4.03	.556	30	4.0	.845	26
I have to do things that should be done differently	3.85	.849	130	3.60	.868	78	3.83	.913	30	3.77	.863	26
I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	3.13	1.067	130	2.87	1.109	78	2.90	.803	30	2.73	.962	26
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	3.25	1.020	130	3.09	1.261	78	3.13	.937	30	3.27	1.079	26
I do things that are apt to be acceptable to one person and not acceptable by others	3.48	1.156	130	3.23	1.194	78	3.50	.861	30	3.23	1.070	26
I work on unnecessary things	3.65	1.126	130	3.32	1.099	78	3.43	.935	30	3.42	1.137	26
There are some tasks required by my job that I cannot do well	3.41	1.069	130	3.15	1.033	78	3.30	.877	30	3.04	1.280	26
I am expected to perform certain tasks in my county that are not considered important by state or district administration	3.58	1.133	130	3.29	1.260	78	3.27	1.081	30	3.04	1.183	26
I am expected to perform tasks by state and district administration that are not considered important in my county	4.15[a]	.864	130	3.63[a,b]	1.163	78	3.83[a,b]	.986	30	3.42[b]	1.270	26
The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable	2.85[a,b]	1.079	130	2.69[a]	1.023	78	2.67[a]	1.213	30	3.42[b]	1.137	26
My work environment supports a balance between work and personal life	2.66	1.255	130	2.53	1.028	78	2.53	1.196	30	3.15	1.084	26

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of agreement with the statement.

Role Conflict – Length of Employment

Table 49 depicts the results of a one-way ANOVA conducted using role conflict and role ambiguity statements as dependent variables and length of employment as the independent variable to determine if there were any differences between subgroups ($p<.05$). No statistical differences were detected for role conflict statements.

Role Ambiguity – Length of Employment

A difference between years of service groups for the statement, "I know exactly what is expected of me," was observed, where agents with less than five years' experience (3.39±1.003) agreed with the statement less than those with 16 to 20 years' experience (4.31±.738) Agents in all other experience ranges did not differ. A difference was also observed for the statement, "I know what my responsibilities are," where agents with less than five years' experience (3.78±.827) agreed with the statement less than those with 16 to 20 years' experience (4.41±.560). Agents in all other experience ranges did not differ.

Table 49
Descriptive Statistics for Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Statements by Length of Employment

	0 to 5 years			6 to 10 years			11 to 15 years			16 to 20 years			21 to 25 years			26 to 30 years			Over 30 years		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
I know exactly what is expected of me	3.39[a]	1.003	95	3.81[ab]	.826	54	3.76[ab]	.951	29	4.31[b]	.738	32	4.00[ab]	1.113	22	4.05[ab]	.970	19	3.93[ab]	.997	14
I have clear, planned, goals and objectives for my job	3.65	.908	95	3.83	.927	54	3.86	.875	29	4.13	.609	32	3.95	1.174	22	3.89	.994	19	4.07	.730	14
I know what my responsibilities are	3.78[a]	.827	95	4.13[ab]	.616	54	4.17[ab]	.889	29	4.41[b]	.560	32	4.27[ab]	.631	22	4.26[ab]	.991	19	4.21[ab]	.579	14
I have to do things that should be done differently	3.92	.753	95	3.87	1.029	54	4.10	.900	29	3.72	.888	32	3.91	.811	22	3.68	.885	19	3.64	.745	14
I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	3.00	.911	95	2.98	1.168	53	3.07	1.163	29	2.84	1.051	32	2.82	1.220	22	3.26	.991	19	2.93	1.141	14
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	3.37	1.032	95	3.13	1.210	53	3.24	1.215	29	3.00	.880	32	3.05	1.214	22	3.00	.745	19	2.86	1.231	14
I do things that are apt to be acceptable to one person and not acceptable by others	3.39	1.055	95	3.52	1.193	54	3.45	1.242	29	3.28	.958	32	3.41	1.141	22	3.32	1.157	19	2.93	1.439	14
I work on unnecessary things	3.49	1.061	95	3.50	1.161	54	3.55	1.021	29	3.50	1.078	32	3.27	1.032	22	3.68	1.057	19	3.43	1.555	14
There are some tasks required by my job that I cannot do well	3.28	1.028	95	3.28	1.045	53	3.38	1.178	29	3.31	.998	32	3.32	1.171	22	3.11	.875	19	2.93	1.269	14
I am expected to perform certain tasks in my county that are not considered important by state or district administration	3.37	1.117	95	3.32	1.312	53	3.45	1.352	29	3.38	1.008	32	3.36	1.136	22	3.79	1.032	19	3.29	1.437	14
I am expected to perform tasks by state and district administration that are not considered important in my county	3.85	1.026	94	4.06	1.082	53	3.76	1.154	29	3.84	1.019	32	3.59	1.182	22	4.16	.765	19	3.93	1.072	14
The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable	2.92	1.078	95	2.81	1.144	53	2.66	1.010	29	2.94	1.162	32	2.86	1.283	22	2.79	1.084	19	2.71	.994	14
My work environment supports a balance between work and personal life	2.84	1.101	95	2.78	1.290	53	2.51	1.031	29	2.45	1.213	32	2.84	1.167	22	2.68	1.249	19	2.53	1.073	14

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of agreement with the statement.

Role Conflict – Region of Employment

Table 50 depicts the results of a one-way ANOVA conducted using role conflict and role ambiguity statements as dependent variables and region of employment as the independent variable to determine if there were any differences between subgroups ($p<.05$). No statistical differences were detected for role conflict statements.

Role Ambiguity – Region of Employment

No statistical differences were detected for role ambiguity statements based on region of employment.

Table 50
Descriptive Statistics for Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Statements by Region of Employment

	North			Central			East			West			South			Southeast		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
I know exactly what is expected of me	3.88	1.106	64	3.77	.985	44	3.88	.803	42	3.87	.968	23	3.49	.989	37	3.59	.981	54
I have clear, planned, goals and objectives for my job	3.81	.974	64	3.86	.878	44	4.05	.854	42	3.61	.891	23	3.59	1.066	37	3.83	.885	54
I know what my responsibilities are	4.08	.860	64	4.11	.754	44	4.14	.751	42	3.96	1.022	23	3.89	.699	37	4.07	.723	54
I have to do things that should be done differently	3.73	.840	64	3.98	.952	44	4.24	.821	42	3.70	.822	23	3.54	.767	37	3.98	.789	54
I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	2.88	1.031	64	2.93	1.108	44	3.21	1.001	42	3.32	1.086	22	3.00	1.000	37	2.83	1.005	54
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	3.16	1.211	64	3.11	1.125	44	3.60	.989	42	3.36	.953	23	3.19	1.023	37	2.94	.998	54
I do things that are apt to be acceptable to one person and not acceptable by others	3.44	1.097	64	3.43	1.246	44	3.26	1.191	42	3.74	.964	23	3.16	1.041	37	3.41	1.108	54
I work on unnecessary things	3.23	1.050	64	3.50	1.045	44	3.79	1.138	42	3.74	1.096	23	3.46	1.120	37	3.57	1.092	54
There are some tasks required by my job that I cannot do well	3.30	1.108	64	3.34	1.033	44	3.24	1.008	42	3.64	1.049	22	3.16	.986	37	3.22	1.110	54
I am expected to perform certain tasks in my county that are not considered important by state or district administration	3.48	1.098	64	3.40	1.198	44	3.43	1.272	42	3.32	1.249	22	3.57	1.094	37	3.48	1.098	54
I am expected to perform tasks by state and district administration that are not considered important in my county	3.94	.957	64	3.82	1.084	44	4.15	.910	42	4.18	1.097	22	3.62	1.139	37	3.94	.957	54
The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable	3.22	.983	64	2.68	1.029	44	2.76	1.078	42	2.73	1.352	22	2.81	1.198	37	2.67	1.046	54
My work environment supports a balance between work and personal life	2.97	1.208	64	2.32	1.177	44	2.69	1.199	42	2.45	1.299	22	2.78	1.158	37	2.48	1.077	54

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of agreement with the statement.

Role Conflict – County Population

Table 51 depicts the results of a one-way ANOVA conducted using role conflict and role ambiguity statements as dependent variables and length of employment as the independent variable to determine if there were any differences between subgroups ($p<.05$). A difference between agent population groups was observed for the statement, "I am expected to perform tasks by state and district administration that are not considered important in my county," where agents in counties with a population less than 25,000 (4.06±.957) and those in counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 (3.93±1.068) agreed with the statement more than those in counties with a population over 1,000,000 (3.29±1.105). Agents in counties with a population between 100,001 and 1,000,000 (3.61±1.115) did not differ from other groups.

Role Ambiguity – County Population

No statistical differences were detected for role ambiguity statements based on county population.

Table 51
Descriptive Statistics for Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Statements by County Population

	Under 25,000 Population			25,001 to 100,000 Population			100,001 to 1,000,000 Population			Over 1,000,000 Population		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
I know exactly what is expected of me	3.67	1.010	129	3.81	.952	70	3.86	.960	51	3.71	1.047	17
I have clear, planned, goals and objectives for my job	3.74	.931	129	3.89	.910	70	3.92	.891	51	3.82	1.074	17
I know what my responsibilities are	4.02	.790	129	4.11	.713	70	4.12	.887	51	4.00	.791	17
I have to do things that should be done differently	3.80	.869	129	3.90	.903	70	4.02	.761	51	3.88	.857	17
I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	3.02	1.042	128	3.09	1.060	70	2.94	1.066	51	2.53	.943	17
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	3.23	1.140	128	3.20	1.030	70	3.18	.932	51	2.88	1.364	17
I do things that are apt to be acceptable to one person and not acceptable by others	3.50	1.126	129	3.43	1.098	70	3.24	1.069	51	2.76	1.251	17
I work on unnecessary things	3.48	1.076	129	3.64	1.204	70	3.55	.986	51	3.00	1.118	17
There are some tasks required by my job that I cannot do well	3.39	1.081	128	3.26	1.045	70	3.18	1.014	51	2.88	1.054	17
I am expected to perform certain tasks in my county that are not considered important by state or district administration	3.51	1.197	128	3.47	1.248	70	3.16	1.037	50	3.06	1.088	17
I am expected to perform tasks by state and district administration that are not considered important in my county	4.06[a]	.957	127	3.93[a]	1.068	70	3.61[ab]	1.115	51	3.29[b]	1.105	17
The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable	2.87	1.097	128	2.73	1.102	70	2.78	1.064	51	3.29	1.160	17
My work environment supports a balance between work and personal life	2.66	1.213	128	2.59	1.110	70	2.73	1.250	51	2.71	1.263	17

Note. Means in a row that share superscripts are not significantly different from one another $p < .05$. For all measures, higher means indicate higher level of agreement with the statement.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research Objective One

Based on the findings of this study, it was determined that out of the 43 job responsibilities examined, only six had an overall mean greater than 4.00.

Table 52
Job Tasks with Mean Level of Importance Greater than 4.00

	M
Training and utilizing 4-H volunteers who organize and lead clubs and projects	4.30
Being accessible via cell phone when away from the office	4.14
Conducting water conservation education	4.07
Conducting nutrition education	4.01
Offering a wide variety of 4-H projects for youth to participate in	4.01
Advising youth livestock project	4.01

Note: Higher means indicate higher level of importance placed upon the task

A second tier of job responsibilities, "conducting ranching and livestock education," (M=3.98), "making site visits to help clientele identify pest or disease issues" (M=3.98), "offering CEU's to pesticide applicators," (M=3.96), "conducting agriculture literacy training for youth," (M=3.94), and "conducting education on where food comes from," (M=3.91) also had higher overall means relative to other job responsibilities.

For job responsibilities related to 4-H and youth development, Judges and Commissioners tended to place higher importance on the tasks than did county extension

agents and AgriLife administrators. This supports research conducted by Sugg, (2017) who found that Judges and Commissioners placed a high value on 4-H programs and activities. Agents often focus on interpreting the impact of youth programing efforts, which likely contributes to the higher level of importance placed on youth tasks. The fact that judges and commissioners place higher importance on youth tasks is likely contributing to some degree of role conflict. When agents are more often asked about youth-related tasks by judges and commissioners in their communities, they are more apt to spend time on those tasks even if they are not being rewarded for them by their administrators.

For job responsibilities related to family and community health, AgriLife administration placed higher importance on the job responsibilities of, "providing nutrition education," and "providing chronic disease prevention education." Judges and Commissioners, on the other hand, placed a higher level of importance on the job responsibilities of, "providing personal financial education," and "providing parenting education." Agents and administrators should review messaging and interpretation efforts as it relates to family and community health tasks. Nutrition and chronic disease education are AgriLife Extension initiatives, yet judges and commissioners do not rate these tasks as high as AgriLife personnel. New methods of interpretation, such as video reporting in lieu of paper reporting, should be explored.

Stakeholder groups did not differ in the importance they placed on nine of the thirteen job responsibilities related to Agriculture and Natural Resources. Where they did differ, AgriLife Administration tended to place higher levels of importance on tasks such

as, “providing row crop education,” and “providing ranching and livestock education,” than county extension agents and Judges and Commissioners. Again, interpretation should be emphasized, and new methods of conveying program impact should be implemented.

For tasks that were classified as “other responsibilities of county extension agents,” AgriLife administrators and Judges and Commissioners placed higher importance on the responsibility of, “being accessible via cell phone when away from the office,” than county extension agents. AgriLife administrators also placed a significantly higher level of importance on, “conducting planning group meetings made up of local citizens,” and, “conducting online meetings,” than did Judges and Commissioners or county extension agents.

Findings indicate that county extension agents tended to place more importance on tasks related to the subject matter in which they work. This finding is not surprising, however, the fact that there were not large differences in the level of importance agriculture and natural resource agents, family and community health agents, 4-H and youth development agents, and other county extension agents placed on the tasks analyzed in this study is a good sign for AgriLife Extension as an agency. Most differences occurred for tasks in 4-H and youth development, where more specialized agents viewed tasks as less important. Differences were also observed for tasks related to family and community health where agriculture and natural resource agents viewed tasks as less important.

Findings also indicate that despite the common belief among county extension agents, and among extension administrators, there are very few differences in the way that members of senior and central level leadership view the importance of job tasks. In fact, in only two of the forty-three tasks, a statistical difference was observed. Both of the tasks were in 4-H and youth development, "Conducting In-School 4-H Activities," and "Conducting 4-H After School Programs," and in both instances, District Extension Administrators placed higher importance on the tasks than Associate Department Heads, with Regional Program Leaders and Senior Administrators not differing from other groups. This implies that the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension service is unified in direction, at least from an internal standpoint.

Findings show that there are differences in the way stakeholder groups perceive the importance of twenty-eight of the forty-three tasks analyzed. Furthermore, correlations present between importance scores for county extension agents and the other two subgroups, and the absence of correlation between importance scores for AgriLife administrators and judges and commissioners suggest that county extension agents are feeling pressure from different stakeholder groups as suggested by Seevers et al. (2007).

Each area of job responsibility where stakeholders differ, especially when judges and commissioners differ from AgriLife administration, creates an area that has the potential to violate Fayol's principle of unity of command (Őnday, 2016). Each area of job responsibility where stakeholder groups agree creates an area of opportunity to exert influence on the system for accomplishing greater results (Wright, 2017). Areas of differing expectations result in county extension agents attempting to satisfy Judges and

Commissioners on one side and AgriLife administrators on the other side. This is evidenced by the statistically significant positive correlations present between agents and judges and commissioners, as well as between agents and AgriLife administration, in the way groups scored level of importance statements for 4-H and youth development tasks and agriculture and natural resource tasks. The absence of statistically significant correlations between AgriLife administrators and judges and commissioners further emphasizes the fact that agents are trying to please both groups. This attempt to satisfy both funding partners leads to greater workload, reduced ability to find a work/life balance, and increased job stress. Differing expectations also have the potential to be a contributing factor to high levels of turnover cited by CES for many years (Safrit and Owen 2010).

The fact that there were differences between agent discipline type and importance placed on tasks for 4-H and tasks for family and community health suggests there is room for improvement in the area of, "cross subject-matter training." If employees do not feel that the tasks their co-workers are performing are important, the seeds of discord may be planted. Co-workers may turn against one another, or even suggest to judges and commissioners that efforts of their fellow employees are not worthwhile. In turn, this creates doubt in funding partners minds as to the relevancy of such tasks. Cross-training provides the opportunity for enlightenment regarding the tasks where co-workers are focusing their attention.

Since very few differences occurred between administrative subgroups, it can be determined that AgriLife Extension has accomplished "unity of direction," as defined by

Fayol (1949). Still, there is a perception among agents, as which will be discussed further with objective 3, that DEA's, RPL's, and ADH's are often in disagreement related to what is important. It could be that broader, philosophical differences are resulting in this perception, or it could be that these data need to be shared with agents to illustrate the lack of differences present. Cooperative extension agencies should be exploring opportunities to restructure middle management and senior administration to improve communication and efficiency of their agencies. One option to consider would be moving DEA's and RPL's under a single unit of supervision, thus eliminating the perception of a dual command system. A second option would be the designation of a single administrator to lead each region, with additional administrators operating under their supervision to serve as the liaison with county commissioner courts and other outside partners. The regional administrator would also have supervisory authority over program leaders for ANR, FCH, and 4-H.

Research Objective Two

County extension agents in four population categories differed in the level of importance placed on six of the forty-three tasks analyzed. These tasks included: (a) "Advising youth livestock projects," (b) "Conducting exercise education," (c) "Conducting personal financial education," (d) Conducting ranching and livestock education," (e) Advising and providing education for the Master Gardener Association," and (f) "Standing up livestock supply points during emergency situations." County judges and commissioners in four population categories differed in the level of importance placed on three of the forty-three tasks analyzed. These tasks included: (a) "Conducting In-School 4-H Activities" (b) Conducting ranching and livestock education"

(c) Offering pesticide applicator certification training." This was an unexpected finding as it was hypostasized that more differences would be present based on population. The low number of respondents in counties with a population over 1,000,000 could be contributing to the lack of statistical differences observed.

Stakeholders in all population groups agreed that training and utilizing volunteers is a very important job responsibility of county extension agents. In addition, all groups have the responsibility of offering a wide variety of 4-H projects rated as a top priority. Ag literacy training is ranked higher among those in counties with a population over 25,000 while advising youth livestock projects and training competitive teams is ranked higher in counties with a population under 1,000,000.

All stakeholder groups placed higher importance on nutrition education and food safety education and certification. Stakeholders in counties with a population under 1,000,000 ranked education on where food comes from higher than those in counties with a population over 1,000,000. Counties with a population over 1,000,000 ranked chronic disease prevention education and exercise education higher than those in counties with a population under 1,000,000.

All population groups placed water conservation as an important task. All population groups also place the task of providing CEU's to pesticide applicators as an important task. Population groups are also in agreement that providing education to confinement feeding operations has lower importance than other tasks, as does row crop education. Stakeholders in counties under 1,000,000 in population place higher importance on the tasks of providing ranching and livestock education and making site

visits than those living in counties with a population greater than 1,000,000, while stakeholders in the higher population counties placed a higher level of importance on home horticulture education and Master Gardener training than those in lower population counties.

Accessibility via cell phone when away from the office had a higher mean for all population groups than any other task in this category. Planning community events and activities were also high or each population group. Disseminating a monthly or quarterly newsletter, as well as being in the office from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. where lower in importance for all population groups. Conducting a series of face to face meetings on a specific topic was higher in importance for counties with a population under 1,000,000. Stakeholders in counties with a population over 25,000 placed higher importance on conducting planning groups made up of local citizens than did those in smaller population counties.

Correlational analysis using Spearman rho shows statistically significant correlations in the way that county extension agents in the four population subgroups see the importance of 4-H and youth development tasks. Agents in counties over 1,000,000 in population did not have a statistically significant correlation to the other population groups, suggesting that agents in those counties view tasks differently than agents in counties with lower populations. Statistically significant correlations were also present between all population groups in tasks for family and community health, suggesting that agents in counties of all sizes place similar levels of importance on those tasks. A statistically significant correlation was present between agents in counties with under 25,000 in population and counties with a population between 25,001 and 100,000 for

tasks in agriculture and natural resources. This suggests that counties with a population under 100,000 view tasks differently than those in counties with a population over 1,000,000.

AgriLife Administrators should be aware of areas where stakeholder groups agree on programming priorities regardless of population. These areas represent opportunities for statewide emphasis in programming. Volunteer management, training, and utilization offering a wide variety of 4-H projects, as well as water conservation education, and nutrition education represent subject matter areas where agreement is present among all stakeholder groups. Data also indicate that stakeholders place high importance on being able to reach the county extension agent via cell phone when they are away from the office in all population categories. These items should be areas of training and focus for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Decision-makers should also take note in areas where stakeholders in rural areas placed a higher level of importance on a task. Conducting community club meetings, advising youth livestock projects, training team members for competitive events, ranching and livestock education, conducting result demonstrations, and making site visits all received higher emphasis among stakeholders in counties with a population under 1,000,000. While performing these job responsibilities in urban areas may not resonate with stakeholders, eliminating, or de-emphasizing such responsibilities could result in a loss of stakeholder confidence in rural areas. The same can be said for job responsibilities that stakeholders from urban counties placed more importance upon. Conducting nutrition and exercise educational programs, disease prevention educational

programs, horticulture education, master gardener programs, planning group meetings, and online meetings received scores indicating urban stakeholders placed higher importance on these tasks than rural stakeholders. Administrators and decision-makers should carefully evaluate each of these areas before launching statewide initiatives.

These differences also support differences in staffing urban counties and rural counties. Chapman et al. (2005) suggested that person/organization fit was an important indicator of recruiting success, employee engagement, and ultimately, employee success. This study suggests that not only is person/organization fit important, but also person/county fit within AgriLife extension. Personnel must possess a skill set appropriate for the county where they live and work. Specialized personnel in horticulture and nutrition, rather than livestock and row crops should be placed in urban counties.

Finally, in areas where there is agreement that an item is a low priority for all population groups, AgriLife Administrators should evaluate if the task is necessary or relevant. Opportunities to de-emphasize trivial tasks or even remove them from the workload will allow County Extension Agents to fulfill higher priority tasks.

Research Objective 3:

The research revealed positive results for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension service as it relates to role conflict and role ambiguity of their employees. Responses indicate that county extension agents have a good understanding of expectations related to their position, as well as clear goals and objectives for their job. Additionally, they have a clear understanding of what their responsibilities are.

However, negative results were also documented in the research, as county extension agents feel that they are required to do things that are acceptable by some while not acceptable by others. Agents also feel they are burdened with working on unnecessary tasks. They also overwhelmingly indicated that state and district administration require tasks that are not considered important in their counties. Furthermore, most respondents indicate they are expected to do things by people in their counties when state and district administrators do not place importance on such tasks. In addition, agent responses to statements regarding workload and work/life balance indicated a discrepancy between what they feel is reasonable and what supervisors expect them to do.

Jackson (2018) suggested that work interfering with family was a source of dissatisfaction in county extension agents. This study further confirms that work/life balance is a source of role ambiguity in county extension agents.

This study confirms that county extension agents largely understand what their expectations and responsibilities are. Employees who know what they are expected to do should be more satisfied in their jobs and more likely to remain with the agency (Gilboa et al., 2008). From that aspect, role ambiguity does not seem to be a major factor within AgriLife Extension.

Stress was found to be one of the top reasons county extension agents in Ohio were leaving their positions (Kutilek, 2000) Ezell (2003) conducted a study of county extension agents in Tennessee and reported that stress was a major factor which influenced their decision to leave the agency. Poor work-life balance of county Extension

agents can lead to increased burnout, poor job satisfaction, and lack of commitment (Adams et al., 1996). Two out of five employees are dissatisfied with their work-life balance, often leading to a career change (Hanson, Hammer, & Colton, 2006). Jackson (2018) found that work interfering with family was moderately correlated to job stress. County extension agents in this study largely disagreed with the statements, "The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable," and "My work environment supports a balance between work and personal life." This study contributes to the body of literature, suggesting that work-life balance is an area of concern for the CES. Stress originating from workload issues appears to be the top issue influencing turnover within the CES. Dromgoole (2007) noted that downsizing in AgriLife Extension had resulted in the agencies need to "do more with less." This strategy has contributed to the work/life balance and workload problem. New technologies can alleviate the day to day demands on extension employees. The CES and AgriLife extension should develop an artificial intelligence (AI) strategy for the agency. AI has the potential to alleviate stress from an informational access standpoint. Basic questions that require time for agents to find the answer to could be accessed much more quickly with AI. AI also give the agency an opportunity to expand its reach by being accessible in the home of every Texan.

Place and Jacob (2001) suggested that agents who have greater skills and experience in time management and workday planning experience lower levels of job-related stress when compared to those lacking these skills. Providing training opportunities in these two areas early in an agent's career could help them better deal with stress and workload issues, resulting in improved retention.

Research Objective Four.

The fact that agent type caused differences in the statements, "I am expected to perform tasks by state and district administration that are not considered important in my county," and, "The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable," suggests that the subject matter area a county extension agent works in could be influencing job stress. Agriculture and natural resource agents are at greater risk of experiencing role conflict and Agriculture and Natural Resource agents, Family and Community Health agents, and 4-H and Youth Development agents are at greater risk of experiencing role ambiguity. The 4-H component of these jobs seems to be adding to a higher agreement with the role conflict statement and lower agreement with the role ambiguity statement. Job specialization can, therefore, be identified as a leverage point. Consideration should be given to drawing job responsibilities that offer agents the opportunity to specialize in an area rather than have broad responsibilities that encompass production agriculture and 4-H or health and nutrition in addition to 4-H. Specialization also offers the opportunity for greater work/life balance.

The fact that county population size caused a difference in the statement, "I am expected to perform tasks by state and district administration that are not considered important in my county," suggests that agents who are working in counties that are lower in population face greater risk of experiencing job stress due to role conflict. District Extension Administrators should work with county judges and commissioners in all counties with a population lower than 100,000 to establish an agreed-upon annual plan. This plan should contain the tasks an agent is expected to perform and the amount of time

the agent is expected to dedicate to each task. By performing this annually, role conflict due to conflicting demands should be eliminated.

Since length of employment caused a difference in the statements, “I know exactly what is expected of me,” and “I know what my responsibilities are,” it can be determined that agents with less than 5 years’ experience are at greater risk of experiencing job stress due to role ambiguity. New employee development is certainly a leverage point in the CES and AgriLife Extension. Helping new employees understand what they are expected to do and placing realistic expectations on new employees is very important. Developing action plans with new agents during their onboarding phase and communicating these action plans with county judges and commissioners will alleviate this type of stress.

The fact that region of employment did not cause differences in the level of agreement with role conflict or role ambiguity statements is a positive sign for AgriLife Extension. This indicates that agents are being managed in a consistent fashion statewide.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

There are several recommendations for practice based on this study’s findings, conclusions, and implications. First, there is now statistical evidence to support the idea that the nature of the CES’s structure and funding contribute to role conflict among county-level educators. This is an important fact to acknowledge and can be built into the onboarding process of new employees to help them understand and manage the many different directions they will be pulled as a county extension agent.

The need for improved communication between AgriLife administration at the district, regional, and state-level with county elected officials cannot be overemphasized. State and district advisory committees made up of county judges and commissioners should be established to both identify areas of focus for AgriLife Extension, and as a sounding board for agency strategic planning. This recommendation is not unlike the current program change model used by extension to identify issues at the county level.

AgriLife administration at all levels should analyze job tasks in this survey where agreement is present between all stakeholder groups. Areas where agreement is present when a job responsibility received a high importance score should be emphasized by the agency. Such job responsibilities include: (a) training and utilization of volunteers, (b) conducting food safety education, (c) water conservation education, and (d) offering CEU's to pesticide applicators. Furthermore, as AgriLife Administration and Judges and Commissioners agree that contacting agents when they are away from the office is a high priority, these two groups should discuss how a uniform cell phone stipend could be applied to an incentive package as a recruitment and retention tool.

Tasks where statistical differences existed between groups, yet all groups place a high level of priority on the job responsibility, should be emphasized by the agency as well. These items include: (a) offering a wide variety of 4-H projects, (b) advising youth livestock projects, (c) providing nutrition education, and (d) providing education on where food comes from.

Other tasks must be analyzed at the county level. For example, row crop education was not viewed as a priority by judges and commissioners, or by stakeholders

in more urban counties, however, it was viewed as a priority by AgriLife administration and by stakeholders in more rural counties. The CES must continue to rely on its strength and ability to conduct programs that are relevant at the local level. Remaining dedicated to the program change model and enhancing communication between judges and commissioners, administrators, and county extension agents is the only way to ensure relevant issues are being addressed.

Work-life balance is identified in this study as a factor contributing to role ambiguity. Other studies have cited the difficulty of extension employees to find a suitable work/life balance (Jackson, 2018). An internal review of expectations placed on county-level personnel should be conducted, and a determination made as to what realistic expectations are and how personnel can be trained in time management techniques which allow them to have a higher quality work/life balance.

Agents in the "other county extension agent," category tended to be more specialized in their focus. They also agreed with the statement, "The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable." This indicates that allowing agents to be more focused and more specialized could contribute to greater work/life balance. Although a statistical difference was not present, agents on the "other county extension agent" category also tended to agree with the statement, "My work environment supports a balance between work and personal life." As AgriLife Extension explores new and diverse staffing models, this information should be utilized. When this study is viewed in the larger body of literature surrounding the CES and work-life balance, it becomes clear that work-life balance more than any other factor is likely driving high turnover rates. Changes in the

staffing model that promote a greater work-life balance could lead to a reduction in turnover, a problem cited by extension professionals for decades. Since agents with a specialized focus displayed a more acceptable degree of work/life balance, staffing models should take this into account. Agents should be given larger geographic work areas with a narrower subject matter focus.

If changes in staffing are not performed, agents must be given tools by their administrators to combat job tasks areas where disagreement occurs and where role conflict and role ambiguity are observed. These tools include time management training, workday planning training, and support from administration to eliminate tasks that are not considered important in the agent's county.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

A number of recommendations can be made for future research based on the findings of this study. First, this study was limited to three major stakeholder groups. These groups were selected because of the funding and structure of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Many states share this structure and funding model, while others do not. Replication of this study in other states with a similar model can validate the findings of this study.

Secondly, although the three stakeholder groups surveyed for this study have the greatest level of supervisory authority to direct extension programming as well as the roles and responsibilities of agents, many other stakeholder groups have influence into what county extension agents do on a regular basis. Clientele groups such as 4-H parents and volunteers, 4-H members, community members, crop producers, livestock producers,

commodity group leaders, and underserved audiences all play a role in what an extension agent does. There is also a high degree of likelihood that these groups do not always agree on what tasks county extension agents should focus on. External partners such as school districts, commodity groups, and hospital districts also influence what roles and tasks are emphasized by AgriLife administration and county extension agents. Future research should determine how the views of clientele and external partners can be assessed and determine if differences are present and how those differences might further contribute to role conflict and role ambiguity.

Finally, while it can be surmised that differences in the level of importance placed on job responsibilities are contributing to role conflict, and role conflict is contributing to increased turnover, the connection between role conflict and turnover among extension employees is not clearly understood. Further research is needed to understand if role conflict contributes to early separation and to what degree this is occurring among extension agents in Texas. The statistical difference between agents with less than five years' experience and those with greater than 16 years' experience, for role ambiguity statements, suggests that further study is needed to explore new and innovative methods of training county extension agents, so they understand the job responsibilities earlier in their career.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Expectations of County Extension Agents

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS
CORRECT: ● INCORRECT: ⊘ ⊗ ⊟ ⊖

Your views and opinions related to the role and responsibilities of county extension agents is extremely important. Please take a moment and complete this survey to help our agency better understand your priorities and expectations as it relates to the job of County Extension Agents in your County.

1. Informed Consent. Please bubble in ALL of the following statements to ensure voluntary consent.
   - O I freely volunteer to participate in this study
   - O I understand that the responses will remain confidential and my rights as a human subject will be protected.
   - O I may withdraw consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice by exiting the survey.
   - O I am over the age of 18.

2. Personal and work characteristics: Select the position title that best describes you.
   O County Judge O County Commissioner

3. How long have you served in your current role?
   O - 0 to 5 years O - 6 to 10 years O - 11 to 15 years O - 16 to 20 years
   O - 21 to 25 years O - 26 to 30 years O – Over 30 years

4. In which Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service District do you reside?
   O North O Central O East O West O South O Southeast

5. Which Texas Association of Counties category county do you reside in?
   O A – Pop. Under 5,000 O B – Pop. 5,001 – 10,000 O C - Pop 10,001 – 25,000
   O D – Pop. 25,001 – 50,000 O E – Pop. 50,001 – 100,000 O F - Pop 100,001 – 500,000
   O G – Pop. 500,001 – 1,000,000 O H – Pop. Over 1,000,000

6. 4-H Youth Development: For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you believe the job responsibility listed has [no importance, low importance, moderate importance, high importance, or very high importance].

	No Importance	Low Importance	Moderate Importance	High Importance	Very High Importance
Conducting 4-H Community Club Meetings	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting 4-H Project Meetings (Specific to a single project)	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting In-School 4-H Activities	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting 4-H After School Programs	O	O	O	O	O
Having a wide variety of 4-H projects for youth to participate in	O	O	O	O	O
Offering fewer projects, but a higher quality experience in those project areas	O	O	O	O	O
Training and utilizing volunteers who organize and lead clubs and projects	O	O	O	O	O
Training 4-H members for individual and team competitive events	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting youth livestock validations	O	O	O	O	O
Advising youth livestock projects	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting Ag Literacy training for youth	O	O	O	O	O

7. Please select the five (5) 4-H project areas that county extension agents should ensure are offered to youth in your county.

O Career & Workforce Preparation	O Citizenship	O Clothing & Textiles	O Community Service
O Consumer Education	O Dog Care & Training	O Entomology	O Food & Nutrition
O Science Engineering & Technology	O Forestry	O Horse	O Interior Design
O Outdoor Education & Living	O Leadership	O Meat Science	O Natural Resources
O Theater & Performing Arts	O Plants & Gardening	O Public Speaking	O Range Science
O Water Conservation & Education	O Sportfishing	O Vet Science	O Wildlife & Fisheries
O Youth Entrepreneurship	O Robotics	O Rocketry	O Safety
O Livestock (Beef, Swine, Sheep, Goats, Poultry, & Rabbits)		O Companion Animals	O Photography
O Shootings Sports (Rifle, Shotgun, Pistol, Archery)			

8. Family and Community Health (Adult Education):
For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you believe the job responsibility listed has [no importance, low importance, moderate importance, high importance, or very high importance].

	No Importance	Low Importance	Moderate Importance	High Importance	Very High Importance
Conducting nutrition education	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting exercise education	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting personal finance education	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting parenting education	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting chronic disease prevention education	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting education for clothing, sewing, and textiles	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting car seat safety checks	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting education on where food comes from	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting food safety education and certification	O	O	O	O	O
Advising and providing education for the Texas Extension Education Association	O	O	O	O	O

9. Please select the five (5) most important program areas that County Education Agents should address in the area of Family and Community Health in your county.

O Physical Activity	O Nutrition	O Diabetes Management
O Weight Control	O Passenger & Community Safety	O Children & Families
O Older Adults & Aging	O Financial Management	O Worksite Wellness
O Texas Extension Education Association		

10. Agriculture and Natural Resources: For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you believe the job responsibility listed has [no importance, low importance, moderate importance, high importance, or very high importance].

	No Importance	Low Importance	Moderate Importance	High Importance	Very High Importance
Conducting row crop education	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting ranching and livestock education	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting education for confinement feeding operations (feedlot, dairy, poultry & swine industries)	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting water conservation education	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting wildlife education	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting home horticulture education	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting Farm Bill education	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting result demonstrations	O	O	O	O	O
Offering CEU's for pesticide applicators	O	O	O	O	O
Offering pesticide applicator certification trainings	O	O	O	O	O
Advising and providing education for Master Gardener Association	O	O	O	O	O
Standing up livestock supply points during emergency situations	O	O	O	O	O
Making site visits to assist clientele identify pest or disease issues	O	O	O	O	O

11. Please select the five (5) most important areas that County Extension Agents should address in the area of Agriculture and Natural Resources in your county.

O Crop Production	O Beef Production	O Sheep & Goat Production	O Poultry Production
O Swine Production	O Dairy Production	O Wildlife Management	O Crop Marketing
O Livestock Marketing	O Small Acreage Mgmt.	O Range/Pasture Mgmt.	O Gardening
O Ornamental & Landscape	O Turfgrass Mgmt.	O Water Conservation	O Pest Control

12. Other Responsibilities: For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you believe the job responsibility listed has [no importance, low importance, moderate importance, high importance, or very high importance].

	No Importance	Low Importance	Moderate Importance	High Importance	Very High Importance
Being in the County Office 8am to 5pm	O	O	O	O	O
Being accessible via cell phone when away from the office	O	O	O	O	O
Disseminating a monthly or quarterly newsletter	O	O	O	O	O
Conducing planning group meetings made up of local citizens	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting a series of meetings on a specific topic	O	O	O	O	O
Conducting online meetings	O	O	O	O	O
Planning community events and meetings	O	O	O	O	O
Preparing reports for county judges and commissioners	O	O	O	O	O
Preparing reports for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Administration	O	O	O	O	O

13. Please list any additional job roles and responsibilities of County Extension Agents that you feel are important in the space provided below.

14. The following section is for County Extension Agents only. For each of the following statements, indicate how you agree with each statement [strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree].

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I know exactly what is expected of me	O	O	O	O	O
I have clear, planned, goals and objectives for my job	O	O	O	O	O
I know what my responsibilities are	O	O	O	O	O
I have to do things that should be done differently	O	O	O	O	O
I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	O	O	O	O	O
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	O	O	O	O	O
I do things that are apt to be acceptable to one person and not acceptable by others	O	O	O	O	O
I work on unnecessary things	O	O	O	O	O
There are some tasks required by my job that I cannot do well	O	O	O	O	O
I am expected to perform certain tasks in my county that are not considered important by state or district administration	O	O	O	O	O
I am expected to perform tasks by state and district administration that are not considered important in my county	O	O	O	O	O
The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable	O	O	O	O	O
My work environment supports a balance between work and personal life	O	O	O	O	O

APPENDIX B

EMAIL INVITATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

Brandon Dukes

From: Brandon Dukes
Sent: Tuesday, January 02, 2018 9:41 AM
To: EXT - CEA ALL
Subject: *Important Survey Related to Job Expectations and Responsibilities of Extension Agents*

Dear Extension Agents,

I am seeking to gather information and conduct a study of key stakeholder groups of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Prairie View Cooperative Extension Program. I am asking for your help in gathering this information through completion of an online survey which can be accessed at the following link. https://agrilife.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bEM8lh2kdHUkjeR The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

The purpose of this survey is to determine perceptions related to the job expectations and responsibilities of Extension Agents. You represent one of three groups from which data will be gathered and compared. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and will remain strictly confidential. Confidentiality will be maintained in two ways. First, you will not provide your name at any point during the survey. Second, responses will be aggregated and stored on an encrypted drive to prevent individual participant identification and keep the data secure. This study poses no risk to you as a participant.

As a participant in this study, you will answer a series of questions related to the job responsibilities and expectations of Extension Agents. Each section of the survey highlights selected tasks Extension Agents routinely perform. You will indicate the level of importance you place upon each task. It is critical that you answer each question truthfully and thoughtfully. The responses from the survey will be aggregated and analyzed through a statistical software package and will not reveal specific responses from any individual respondent. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you have the right to terminate or withdraw your participation at any time during the survey process. Upon submitting your survey, you are providing your consent to the researcher to utilize your responses.

Your participation is greatly appreciated!

If you have specific questions about the survey, or the research itself, please call Brandon Dukes at (806) 664-3714 or email bkdukes@ag.tamu.edu.

Sincerely,

Brandon Dukes
District Extension Administrator
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Panhandle District 1
WTAMU Department of Agriculture Sciences

Brandon Dukes

From: Brandon Dukes
Sent: Tuesday, January 02, 2018 9:25 AM
To: EXT - Admin; EXT - Mgmt ADH; EXT - Mgmt CED; EXT - Mgmt DEA; EXT - Mgmt RPL; Carolyn Williams; Bill C. Lawton; Jacquelyn White; Jimmy Henry, II; Rukeia D. Draw-Hood
Subject: Survey

Dear Colleagues,

I am seeking to gather information and conduct a study of key stakeholder groups of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Prairie View Cooperative Extension Program. I am asking for your help in gathering this information through completion of an online survey which can be accessed at the following link. https://agrilife.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0dfsAQSsljKVTZb The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

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Your participation is greatly appreciated!

If you have specific questions about the survey, or the research itself, please call Brandon Dukes at (806) 664-3714 or email bkdukes@ag.tamu.edu.

Sincerely,

Brandon Dukes
District Extension Administrator
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Panhandle District 1
WTAMU Department of Agriculture Sciences

Brandon Dukes

From: Brandon Dukes
Sent: Tuesday, January 02, 2018 10:09 AM
To: 'daljudge@dallam.org'
Subject: Survey

Judge Ritchey,

Below is the form letter with link to the survey that we discussed. Thanks so much for assisting me in getting this out by posting it on the Judges and Commissioners listserv! Happy New Year!

Brandon Dukes
District Extension Administrator
Panhandle District 1
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

6500 Amarillo Blvd. West | Amarillo, TX 79106
p: (806) 677-5600 | c: (806) 664-3714
bkdukes@ag.tamu.edu | Twitter: @bkdukes

Dear Judges and Commissioners,

I am seeking to gather information and conduct a study of key stakeholder groups of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Prairie View Cooperative Extension Program. I am asking for your help in gathering this information through completion of an online survey which can be accessed at the following link. https://agrilife.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8puTAudTt020wSN The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

The purpose of this survey is to determine perceptions related to the job expectations and responsibilities of Extension Agents. You represent one of three groups from which data will be gathered and compared. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and will remain strictly confidential. Confidentiality will be maintained in two ways. First, you will not provide your name at any point during the survey. Second, responses will be aggregated and stored on an encrypted drive to prevent individual participant identification and keep the data secure. This study poses no risk to you as a participant.

As a participant in this study, you will answer a series of questions related to the job responsibilities and expectations of Extension Agents. Each section of the survey highlights selected tasks Extension Agents routinely perform. You will indicate the level of importance you place upon each task. It is critical that you answer each question truthfully and thoughtfully. The responses from the survey will be aggregated and analyzed through a statistical software package and will not reveal specific responses from any individual respondent. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you have the right to terminate or withdraw your participation at any time during the survey process. Upon submitting your survey, you are providing your consent to the researcher to utilize your responses.

Your participation is greatly appreciated!

If you have specific questions about the survey, or the research itself, please call Brandon Dukes at (806) 664-3714 or email bkdukes@ag.tamu.edu.

Sincerely,

Brandon Dukes
District Extension Administrator
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Panhandle District 1
WTAMU Department of Agriculture Sciences

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

West Texas A&M University

Academic Research Environmental Health and Safety

WTAMU Box 60217 Canyon, Tx 79016
806.651.2270

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS
Letter of Approval

October 3, 2017

Dear Brandon Dukes:

The West Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board is pleased to inform you that upon review, proposal **#02-09-17** for your study titled, **"Perceived Job Responsibilities of County Extension Agents"** meets the requirements of the WTAMU Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) No. 15.99.05.W1.01AR Institutional Review Board (Human Subject Research). Approval is granted for one calendar year. This approval expires on **10/2/18**.

Principal investigators assume the following responsibilities:

1. **Continuing Review:** The protocol must be renewed on or before the expiration date if the research project requires more than one year for completion. A Continuing Review form along with required documents must be submitted on or before the stated deadline. Failure to do so will result in study termination and/or loss of funding.
2. **Completion Report:** At the conclusion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a Close out form must be submitted to AR-EHS.
3. **Unanticipated Problems and Adverse Events:** Pursuant to SOP No. 15.99.05.W1.13AR, unanticipated problems and serious adverse events must be reported to AR-EHS.
4. **Reports of Potential Non-Compliance:** Pursuant to SOP No. 15.99.05.W1.05AR, potential non-compliance, including deviations from the protocol and violations, must be reported to the IRB office immediately.
5. **Amendments:** Changes to the protocol must be requested by submitting an Amendment form to AR-EHS for review by the IRB. The Amendment must be approved by the IRB before being implemented. Amendments do not extend time granted on the initial approval
6. **Consent Forms:** When using a consent form, only the IRB approved form is allowed.
7. **Audit:** Any proposal may be subject to audit by the IRB Administrator during the life of the study. Investigators are responsible for maintaining complete and accurate records for five years and making them available for inspection upon request.
8. **Recruitment**: All recruitment materials must be approved by the IRB. Recruitment materials distributed to potential participants must use the approved text and include the study's IRB number, approval date, and expiration dates in the following format: WTAMU IRB##-##-## Approved: ##/##/#### Expiration Date: ##/##/####.

9. **FERPA and PPRA:** Investigators conducting research with students must have appropriate approvals from the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) administrator at the institution where the research will be conducted in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) if applicable to the research being proposed. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) protects the rights of parents in students ensuring that written parental consent is required for participation in surveys, analysis, or evaluation that ask questions falling into categories of protected information.

Sixty days prior to the expiration of this proposal, you will receive a notification of the approaching expiration date at which time you will need to submit an Amendment/Continuation/Close out form.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gary Bigham
Chair, WTAMU IRB

Dr. Angela Spaulding,
Vice President of Research and Compliance

APPENDIX D

RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The following responses are from County Judges and Commissioners to the open-ended question. "Please list any additional job roles and responsibilities of County Extension Agents that you feel are important."
Establish a good working relationsjip with CC and be available to meet the wide variety of needs of the individual county
Continuing as a valued resource to stakeholders and community leadership
I can only say that Upshur county has been blessed with passionate and hard working agents. I can't begin to imagine how they could possible add to thier plate. I am amazed at how much time is spent reporting to A&M. I wish that the reports and the Monthly News letters to the county could count toward some of this and free up some or thier time. I try to be very active in our extension programs when possible. And I am sure we have the best. Thank You. Paula Gentry
In our particular county, we don't neccessarily need an agent to conduct health and wellness activities. I feel healthcare professionals, dieticians,etc. are better qualified and desired to perform those duties, rather thanan extension employee.
Leadership training and opportunities for young people
Reach out as speakers to organizations like Rotary Club, Lions Club, etc - Most members are former ranchers - business people who own land that might not keep up with changes that may benefit all
Economic Development
To be able and ready to meet the needs of the individual county they serve
Being a supporter for 4-H projects for the children and parents and or culbs
All of there dutiys are importaint.
Totally support Extension Program!
Being a team player with county
Feral Hog Eradication information/programs
Face to face with students in the program is of extreme importance, and interface with parents.
12a - needs to be in the office unless out on specific projects. Working from home is not acceptable unless there are mitigating circumstances (sick child etc). Residents need to be able to contact the agent at established locations and times.
Nothing additional - I believe our agents are doing a great job!
Being civic minded, being involved with city and county leaders and open and available when called on. Bold enough to stand up and notify their leaders when needed. Thank you fall all Texas A&M AgriLife does for our county,
Advise Commissioners Court of any unusual issues or incidents within the county, especially inpacts on public healty.

The most important Agriculture edcuation programs are - Risk Management/Marketing. The most important FCS program is Health/Wellness. Volunteerisim shoulld be emphasized. The only way to serve all Texans with limited staff is through volunteers.
Everything our two extension agents do is important, and could even be considered as being critical. They are one of our most valuable resources.
Everything our agents do is IMPORTANT. They work well beyond the scope of what is required. Both of our agents are making huge contributions - across the board - to our community in general with a new emphasis (and a lot of hard work) to our at risk-youth and their families. I cannot overstate the importance of the County Extension program. THANK YOU, Samye Johnson, San Augustine County Judge
I am just very greatful for their services, and they have been available and very informative on a couple of issues i have had in my precinct.
Getting our older citizens involved to interact with youth (mentors). To grow our young folks to be the people they need to be.
Attending Commissioners Court sessions at least quarterly; Developing mentor relationships with teens
Extension should be a model organization in recruiting, training, and empowering volunteers. Extension has lost significant capacity in the last 10 years because of the demphasis on volunteers. The promotion of agents is centered on the agent rather than the program outcomes. Extension should begin emphasizing volunteerism.
Economic Development
Provide assistance to Counties promoting financial skills and leadership
Be involved with community organizations. IE - Chamber, Service Clubs, etc. Be involved with commodity groups.
We are very proud of our program and agents. In my opinion they may provide the best return on investment of any county expenditure.
I think it is important for agents to be involved in community activities outside of AgriLife. It keeps them known in the community and involved to see the needs of our community.
just about the only remaining tie to ag or livestock for kids.
work with local livestock show association
If all or most of the previosly mentioned roles and jobs are implemented and maintained our AG Extension will remain one of the best in the land.
during weekly radio reports
Agents need to be evaluated on a yearly basis to be certain they are being held to the standards on which they agreed when taking the position.
Active in planning County Fair
Living in the county
Just be available for community.

I think it would be benifitial to have more projects for adults - sewing, nutrition, etc.
None

The following responses are from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Administrators to the open-ended question. "Please list any additional job roles and responsibilities of County Extension Agents that you feel are important."
Community Involvement
CEAs need to be specifically trained in cutting-edge teaching methods, child-development theories, and diversity skills.
Agents need to be focused more on relationship building and should be given the time to do so.
Building Community Partnerships, Securing outside funds.
Community and Economic Development activities
Tending to emerging issues
Being the central point of contact in a county for anyone looking for answers to a Ag/NR, FCH, 4H related question; and being able to answer, or track down an answer to that question
Building Community Capacity, Securing Outside Funding. Interpretation
Regular office hours, not 8 to 5, but hours and days of the week that clientele know you will be there.
Know the needs of the people in their county
Fort Bend is an urban co. with 80,000 acres of cropland. We feel that we are conducting 2 types of programs - rural & urban.
Serving the mmediate needs of elected officials as they arise, particularly US and state legislators and commissioners' court.
Establishing an advisory commitee to reflect the county and identify needs Extension can address; really promote diversity in committees, clubs and outreach programs.
The specific roles/responsibilities will depend on the local needs. For "most important" or "most frequently requested" subject matter areas, agents should become proficient enough to address local needs. For other subject matter they are going to have to rely on specialists or other experts.
Work with the local County Fair and or Junior Livestock Show as an advisor
In rural counties, the agent should make every effort to become an intergral part of the community.
Interacting in community efforts outside of asigned work
Teamwork

The following responses are from County Extension Agents to the open-ended question. "Please list any additional job roles and responsibilities of County Extension Agents that you feel are important."
County agriculture role model
Serving on county fair boards
To work together as a team of professionals at all times. Help one another across the board (whether CEP or Agrlife).
Accessibility, community involvement, dissemination of fact based information especially when requested, role model, educator
counselor, advisor
Serving on outside boards and committee, CRED programs
Being flexible regarding our plan of work - so we are able to respond to committee/community needs and requests for programming. Perhaps a blend of 2 to 3 specific program plans submitted in Fall with another 2 to 3 plans added within the year based on committee/community support.
Being readily available as a guest speaker to civic groups in the county.
Managing Volunteer Groups,
Emergency Situations as they arise
maintain visibility within the community so you are seen as a resource for people's questions/problems,
Connecting with the community by being present at events and seen.
We have so many job responsibilities that aren't listed here. I suppose these are "basics" but the little things take up so much time that we hardly have time do all of the real "educational" things anymore.
Team player and active in the community events and activities
Being a knowledgeable resource for the citizens of my county.
Participating in other networking groups; Interpretation to Stakeholders; Volunteer training and management
Having good people skills, being open to new ideas, working to help everyone - not just certain individuals/families, good at using social media, technology and computer skill
The most important part of the job that I personally think is taking care of your county and I believe it is getting harder and harder every year with everything that A&M keeps adding each year that has no relevance.
community service.

I feel like the main role is being accessible (within reason) and being available to counsel or consult with the clientele in a manner that is conducive to them, whether it is online or in person
Assisting families and stakeholders ina wide variety of activities and roles. Help people with anything they need help with or firnd the appropriate person to help them.
Validation of animals and texting youth to care for animals is something that is very important to developing the youth and making sure they are the ones actually caring for them is important. that is where validation comes in so we can keep track of those animals to make sure they are under the care of people who are responsible for them
Program interpretation to all elected officials.
Volunteer management
being in the Community and Marketing 4-H and Extension Programing.
professional development training and conferences
Public Relations
community partnerships/relationships with various agencies, schools, etc.
Adminsitrative Responsibilities (personnel and budget management), Program Interpretation, Volunteer Recognition, Partnership Recognition, Building Program Partnerships with Agriculture Agencies and Businesses
We are in the Service Business. Love The Job !!
Social media presence, print media presence
I think that is is important when you are the go to person in the community to get things done.
Working with community groups, agencies, organizations and the media.
Anything and all aspects of livestock, ag and community related programs
Providing assistance to walk in clientele
One on one contact with clientele is the most important part of the job of a county agent. Im in a county where that takes up most of my time.
I feel it is more important to allow agents to put on quality educational programs for their clientele in their counties, in some cases that means allowing them to put on fewer programs to allow more time to prepare.
Flexibility in job assignments as needed by the community
Liason between agriculture and local companies, commodity groups, organizations. Spokeperson for local producers in the agriculture field to larger commodity groups and organizations. Voice of agriculture education and promotion for local producers. Connection between local producers and legislators. The person who is called upon because I "know everything" even if not related to job. Mentor and role model for youth no matter what field of choice. sounding board to other agents for advice and help related to all aspects of job including computer work.

None at this time
Building Relationships with the people they serve is exxtremely important. You can't do thos job excelently sitting behind the desk all day. You have to be a part of the community. I also think the office should have good office hours but that needs to be the secrestary. The agents need to be working from 3:30 in the afternoon to 8:00 in the evening to reach the adults after work ad the children after school.n nThey are not available from 8:00-5:00. To me this is much more important and produces more results than working 8:00-5:00 You must be flexible.
Doing more than 1 agents job when you don't have a full office of agents.
training volunteers
Working with other community and government boards and committees (FSA, NRCS, SWCD, Chamber of Commerce, ETC
Building relationships, Marketing Extension programs, Leadership roles in the community, Mass Media, Community Involvement, Managing volunteers
individual farm visits,visits with elected officials, commodity group relationships,relationships with FSA,NRCS,TDA, other agencies
Being involved in the community/county...(Farm Bureau, Soil and Water Conservation Board, County Show Board etc.
You have to have a heart for this lifestyle. There are times it is very important to be in the office 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 pm. and times of the year it is very important to be accessible by cell phone. I did not select 5 4-H projects because there is NO way to narrow what has to be offered here. You have to care about your clients and have a sense of responsibility to them to do a good job.
Marriage education
training of new agents is critical and should be brought back in the form of assistant agent positions trained at the county level for a year under the direction of a high performing agent
Being a leader and resource to thier community. Facilitating groups to work together to solve community issues.
I feel it is important to be available for whatever our county residence need.
Managing Staff, Approving Expenses, Submitting Time Sheets and Leave Requests, Budgetting Issues, Involvement in Committees, Attending Health, Wellness, Resource Fairs, Professional Development
Being visible in the community is huge. Involvment in civic organizations, committees and school prgrams is high importance.
On the County level, Agents are asked to take on additional job responsibilities not always listed in the offical Extension job description. Just scheduling routine maintenance and repairs of our office building can sometimes take an entire afternoon. Increasingly, Agents are being asked to assist with non-Extension related county events and programming and I don't think there is an accurate way to track that time away from Extension job duties.

Communication of the value of educational opportunities available through Texas A&M AgriLife
A face for our County. Youth Dvelopment
It is very import for Agents to have the personal contact with their clients. Online is good but we can not rely on this to carry us. We have to stay with our grass roots on face to face educational activities.
I answered this with the job responsibilities for my job in mind. I have a 5% 4H appt, therefore I do not participate in many 4H activities. Those priorities would be important for a 4H agent, as would the FHS priorities for an FHS agent.
What ever our bosses want us to do
Being a positive and mature role model for the county. Willing to learn the jobs assigned. Willing to step out of our comfort zone.
Livestock shows
For the ag/nr agents, I don't think the current expectations are out of line. How ever DEA and RPL's across the state expect different things.
I feel having meetings is what we should be doing, staying with a in depth not necessarily.
County Coordinator (fiscal and administrative support & supervision of personel and volunteers
Public relations
Interpretation of job activities to key stakeholders.
Being part of the community, measuring program impact
Agents need to hold more certifications to assist in more specified/technical assistance to producers and local governments.
Taking care of the needs of my county. They change daily so it is difficult to narrow it down to just one thing.
In a small county the County Agent needs to be a community leader that can be called on to assist with whatever might come.
Collaborating with others. Being a resource to our county.
I feel it is the responsibility of the County Extension Agent to adjust to their specific county needs and build their programs from that not so much based on Texas as a whole bottom line each county is different.
conducting production programs on main ag commdities, addressing emetging needs when possible
School district relations, conflict management, teen health issues,
It is important to be at the local gathering places such as a salebarn, coffee shop, lunch or breakfast meeting place to keep up with needs of farmers and ranchers and to also provide visibility for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in those areas.
Office Management

Working directly with the general public and regional agencies to form partnerships
County coordinator has a lot of responsibility and liability without any bite or compensation; coordinating Master Naturalists programs, media requests/newscolumns, being a part of professional and affiliated organizations
Talking with elected officials and sharing results of programs with them.
Time spent working with county only livestock kids and county stock show....we don't get enough credit outside our counties for it
Reporting needs to be streamlined. There is no reason why one monthly report should not suffice for all concerned. There is way too much time spent on reporting.
being accessible to the public
Interpersonal/communication skills
With each county being so vastly different it is difficult to create a blanket program that covers the entire state effectively. In some counties, 4-H is the top priority, in others it is beef or cattle. It should be up to the Administrators and commissioners in each county to determine what their priorities are. I have been both an AG agent and IPM in multiple counties and they were all different. The one constant was that FCS played no significant role in any of them.
Networking in community
The role of an agent is forever changing and the need for change is never ending.
Updating social media
County livestock committees
Dispute moderator, Event Planner, Organized and Schedule orientated,
Outreach to communities and individuals other than programs. this is what makes us stronger, the personal touch.