

Exploring How Relational Motivations of Extension Educators Influence Mentoring Relationships

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Abstract

The purpose of this grounded theory qualitative research study was to explore how relational motivations influenced mentoring relationships for Extension educators at a Midwestern land-grant university. This study was part of a larger research study that focused on the construction of a theoretical framework that described the mentoring processes experienced by Extension educators. The findings revealed the relational motivations of mentees and mentors that influenced mentorship in Extension, providing new insight about positive work relationships in a specific organizational context. This research study has implications for new employee trainings, mentoring program designs, and professional development opportunities, and it supports further assessment of mentoring and positive work relationships in Extension and, more broadly, agricultural education. Keywords: mentoring; mentorship; extension; professional development

Introduction

Background

Mentoring is a phenomenon that is likely happening in Extension organizations. Mentoring, formal and informal, is one of many methods that Extension may use to prepare new employees for their work. Through mentoring, new professionals can gain important insight about the Extension organization as they develop relationships with key stakeholders and clientele, create their plans of work, and report annual accomplishments and impact (Place & Bailey, 2010). Despite its promising implications for Extension organizations, minimal research focus has been given towards mentoring in this context. Additionally, informal, relational mentoring has been an area in mentoring research that has been given little attention (Janssen et al, 2016; Haddock-Millar, 2017). Understudied areas of mentoring research include examining the underlying development mechanisms of mentoring and relational motivations of mentors and mentees (Janssen et al., 2016); “defining the mentoring concept as a theoretical basis for research” and “understanding context and the connectedness between multiple factors” (Haddock-Millar, 2017, p. 54); and exploring the antecedents, processes, and outcomes of high quality mentorships which is also known as relational mentoring (Ragins, 2012).

Positive workplace relationships are a cornerstone of mentoring research. The role that work plays in employees’ lives is evident more than ever before (Colbert et al., 2016), and organizations must acknowledge the relational aspects of their work environments and actively support positive relationships within them (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). Positive workplace relationships play a role in employee flourishing (Colbert et al., 2016) and facilitate employee attachment to the workplace and improve the organization life

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quality (Ehrhardt & Ragins, 2019). Mentoring relationships are examples of positive relationships in the workplace.

One of the primary purposes of mentoring is to support the development and growth of an employee's skills and career (Humberd & Rouse, 2016), and it is defined by its primary feature of being embedded within a workplace environment (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Mentoring episodes are single, developmental interactions between individuals in a career setting, and they can—but not always—lead to a sustained mentorship (Ragins, 2012). Mentoring research has changed over time, and the phenomenon has been assessed and studied across various professional settings that include education and business and for careers in science, technology, engineering, and math.

Relational mentoring explains the close bonds that members in a mentorship develop and nurture over time (Ragins, 2012; Ragins & Verbos, 2007), and there is no expectation from individuals to repay debts (Ragins, 2012). Research on relational mentoring has shown that it affected identity transformation (Gammel & Rutstein-Riley, 2016), facilitated commitment of mentorship members (Jones et al., 2014; Hernandez et al., 2017), and led to psychological empowerment in mentees (Fullick-Jagiela et al., 2015). Researchers and practitioners should broaden the theoretical lens of mentoring which would permit relational mentoring and its functions, characteristics, and outcomes to be better understood (Ragins, 2012).

Mentoring new employees in Extension organizations has promising implications for Extension professionals and their organizations, yet minimal research attention has been given towards this area of study in an Extension context. Denny (2016) concluded that existing research on mentoring in Extension was focused primarily on assessing perceived efficacy; however, there is a distinct lack of research on the mentor and mentee relationship and the behaviors of mentors and mentees. Extension organizations are inherently relational organizations, and they empower Extension professionals to build relationships with each other through team collaboration and with the stakeholders they serve. Extension organizations may rely on formal mentoring programs and promote informal mentoring to stimulate transformational learning in new professionals where the goal of these efforts is to grow employees' competencies and increase their socialization within the organization. Regarding positive workplace relationships in the Extension context, coworker and constituent relationships factored into employee success (Smith et al., 2011) and work relationships influenced employees' perceptions of their experiences (Harder et al., 2021). Research on mentoring in Extension showed that mentoring factors into employees' professional development experiences (Benge et al., 2011), their fit in the organization, and long-term retention (Vines et al., 2018). Keys to successful mentoring relationships were found to be trust, clarity for mentee and mentor roles, setting goals, and collaboration (Byington, 2010). Facilitative factors that contributed to mentorship success in Extension were similar programmatic responsibilities, geographic proximity, frequency and type of information shared, initiation of the relationship, and ability to establish mentee-mentor friendship (Mincemoyer & Thomson, 1998).

Conceptual Framework

Kram's (1985) theoretical work, which is focused on what mentees receive from a mentoring relationship, was an initial guiding concept for our study. Mentees receive guidance and support from mentors through career and psychosocial functions (Kram, 1985). For the career function, mentors help mentees increase competence in their roles through coaching, exposure to opportunities, and providing challenging assignments. For the psychosocial function, mentors support mentees through counseling and friendship (Kram, 1985).

Scholarship on mentoring has evolved since Kram's (1985) foundational work, and it includes new approaches to view and study mentoring relationships. Ragins' and Verbos' theoretical work challenges the traditional, one-sided approach to mentoring. Relational mentoring broadens the scope of mentoring to

explain mentorships that exhibit close bonds and mutual learning and growth for mentees and mentors alike (Ragins, 2012; Ragins & Verbos, 2007). Relational mentoring explains high quality workplace relationships that rely on communal norms instead of exchange or transactional norms which are typical in traditional mentorship (Ragins & Verbos, 2007). With communal norms, there is no obligation for repayment of debts in the mentoring relationship. Benefits are given in response to the needs of another person instead. Although both exchange and communal norms can be present in mentoring relationships, communal norms are the foundation for relational mentoring and fostering close mentoring bonds (Ragins & Verbos, 2007).

Due to the relational nature of Extension organizations, relational mentoring was the focal point and core conceptual framework for our study. Ragins (2012, p. 527) emphasized that relational functions include both members of a mentorship and can be observed through “personal learning and growth, inspiration, affirmation of selves, reliance on communal norms, shared influence and mutual respect, and relational trust and commitment.” Researchers and practitioners have been challenged to broaden the theoretical lens of mentoring which would permit relational mentoring and its functions, characteristics, and outcomes to be better understood (Ragins, 2012).

Purpose

The purpose of this grounded theory qualitative study was to explore how relational motivations influenced mentoring relationships for Extension educators. This study was part of a larger research study that focused on the construction of a theoretical framework that described how Extension educators at a Midwestern land-grant university experienced mentoring processes. The theoretical framework from the larger study is included in this article to provide context and greater understanding of the concepts presented herein. By exploring the factors that influence mentoring processes for Extension employees, social science researchers and Extension practitioners may gain a deeper understanding of the mentoring phenomenon that occurs in their organizations. This study supports the AAAE Research Value of Ensuring Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (AAAE, 2023).

Methods

Mentoring is a social phenomenon, and the processes of mentoring require human involvement and interaction. We used grounded theory methodology to gain understanding about the relational motivations of Extension educators. Our study aligned with the emergent design of grounded theory because of the exploratory nature of the research purpose. We viewed this study with ontological and philosophical assumptions and with a social constructivist interpretative framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The population for our study was all Extension educators at a Midwestern land-grant university, and the sample was Extension educators who experienced mentoring and who were willing to share their experiences. We recruited participants directly through email. We selected participants through the initial sampling technique, using organizational data and participants’ self-identification of specific attributes. Participants had at least one year of employment with the Extension organization under study, and they had experience with mentoring in their organization. As the study progressed, we selected additional participants based on emergent categories and themes in the collected data. We used the theoretical sampling technique (Charmaz, 2014) until our data was saturated and there were no new properties of categories that emerged. Therefore, we deliberately selected participants who could add insight and perspective to a tentative theory, which aligns with grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014). Past research on high-quality relationships in the workplace has focused on the experiences of most employees (Ragins, 2012) which captured the range of experiences. In this study, the participants’ focused and similar experiences provided clarity on how specific mentoring processes occurred.

Twenty-one Extension educators participated in our study, and the range of their Extension experiences was one year to over 30 years. We conducted focus groups and individual interviews over a four-month period during the global coronavirus pandemic. The public health crisis may have impacted the sample population's ability to participate in our study. Furthermore, we recognized that the pandemic may have impacted participants' reflections on their mentorship experiences in Extension. Participants' pseudonyms, pronouns, and program areas are presented in Table 1.

Table 1*Descriptions of Participants*

Pseudonym	Pronouns	Program Area
Aiden	They/their/theirs	Food, nutrition, and health
Alexis	She/her/hers	Youth, family, and community
Betsy	She/her/hers	Food, nutrition, and health
Bruce	He/him/his	Agriculture and natural resources
Chad	He/him/his	Agriculture and natural resources
Chloe	She/her/hers	Youth, family, and community
Courtney	She/her/hers	Youth, family, and community
Elaine	She/her/hers	Youth, family, and community
Evan	He/him/his	Agriculture and natural resources
Gracie	She/her/hers	Agriculture and natural resources
Hermione	She/her/hers	Food, nutrition, and health
Jonathan	He/him/his	Youth, family, and community
Kellie	She/her/hers	Youth, family, and community
Leslie	She/her/hers	Youth, family, and community
Lindsey	She/her/hers	Agriculture and natural resources
Martha	She/her/hers	Food, nutrition, and health
Missy	She/her/hers	Agriculture and natural resources
Norah	She/her/hers	Youth, family, and community
Tori	She/her/hers	Youth, family, and community
Ty	He/him/his	Youth, family, and community
Valerie	She/her/hers	Youth, family, and community

We applied several qualitative research validation strategies in this study. We used more than one data source to present corroborating evidence through data triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Consistent with grounded theory methodology, we continually evaluated our data based on parameters that Charmaz (2014) emphasized that included collecting enough data to have ready recall, gaining views and detailed descriptions from multiple participants over a range of experiences, and having enough data to make comparisons, inform ideas, develop analytic categories, and construct a theoretical model. We also sought participant feedback through the process of member checking (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

We used rigorous procedures to collect rich, descriptive data from multiple sources that included focus groups, individual interviews, and documents like award nominations and exit interview narratives. We held focus groups and individual interviews using a video web conference platform. We generated transcripts and research memos (Charmaz, 2014) from the focus groups and interviews to help us bridge data collection to analysis. Participants chose their pseudonyms and their preferred pronouns. We used focus groups because the topic was not sensitive, the interactions between participants – who were colleagues who naturally interacted with each other – would likely lead to discussion on new or unexpected topics, and it was likely to help participants generate and share their thoughts. During focus groups, we asked participants a series of questions using a semi-structured interview approach. We also interviewed participants who attended focus group sessions and could provide further clarity on emerging topics. We

asked participants a series of questions using a semi-structured interview approach, and we followed up on emerging themes from focus groups and other interview sessions.

For grounded theory studies, the coding and analysis processes are emergent and not linear. Throughout data analysis, we used the constant comparative method (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and we engaged in theoretical sorting, diagramming, and integrating practices to find clarity in the data (Charmaz, 2014). We used process coding as an initial coding method because it is open-ended and builds a foundation for future coding cycles (Saldaña, 2016), and we used focused coding to concentrate on initial codes that appeared more frequently or had more significance. Throughout the coding process, we used “-ing” words to convey the action-orientation of mentoring.

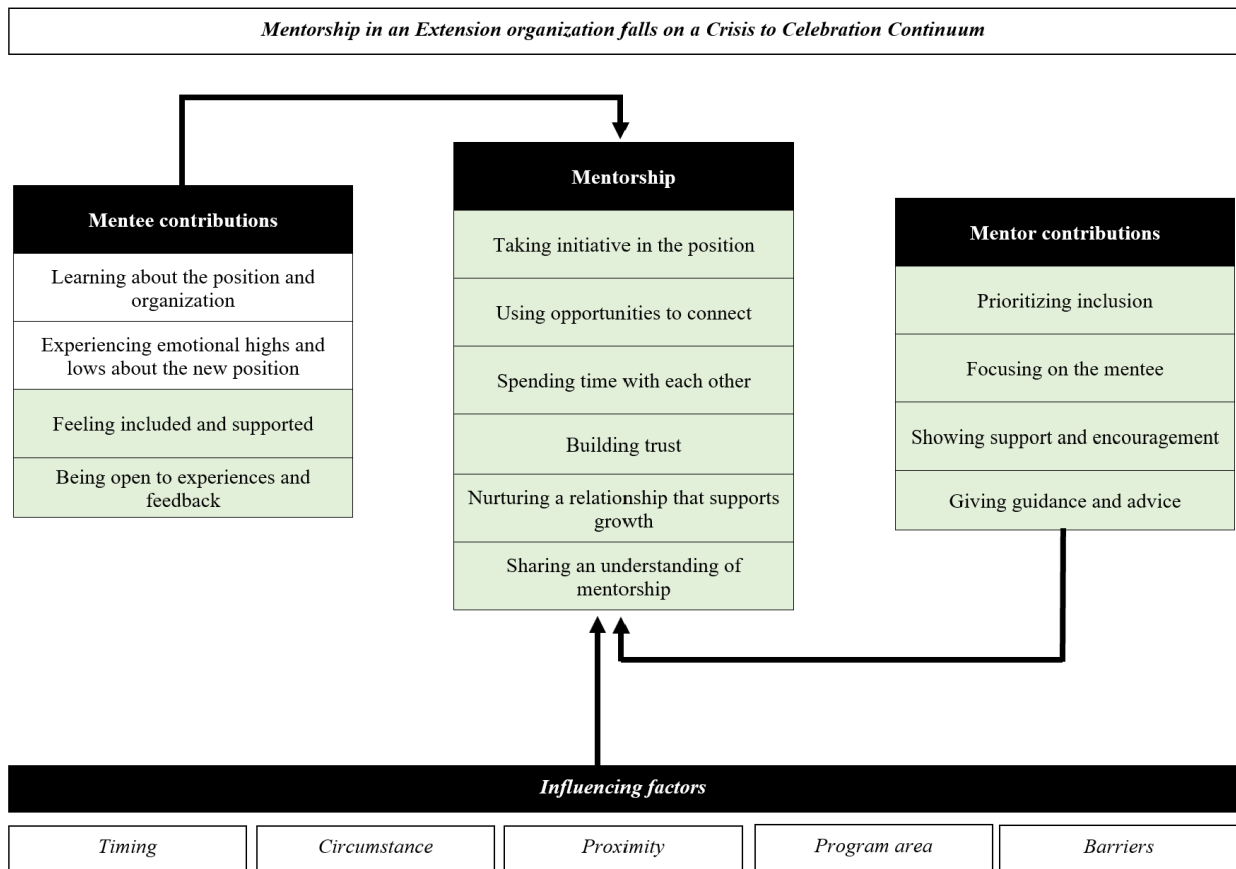
Findings and Discussion

Theoretical Model

As part of a larger research study, we constructed the *Mentorship in Extension: An organization model*, and it explained how mentorship occurred in the Extension organization we studied. The model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Mentorship in an Extension organization falls on a Crisis to Celebration Continuum



Through mentor and mentee lenses, participants reflected on certain contributions that explained how mentorship in Extension occurred. Mentees and mentors uniquely contributed to mentorship, and we

identified these contributions as relational motivations that influenced mentoring in the organization. We depicted the relational motivations as key elements of our constructed theoretical model.

In the lateral center of the model, the three people-centered theoretical codes were placed, from left to right: *Mentee Contributions*, *Mentorship* (shared contributions), and *Mentor Contributions*. Arrows were used from both the *Mentee Contributions* and *Mentor Contributions* theoretical codes that went towards *Mentorship* to describe how the inputs of both mentees and mentors led to and impacted mentorship. On the theoretical model, highlighted in green are the contributions of mentees and mentors to mentorship which were relationally motivated.

Mentee Contributions

The relational contributions of mentees to mentorship in Extension included *Feeling included and supported* and *Being open to experiences and feedback*. Participants described *Feeling included and supported* which was characterized by reflections as mentees about feeling connected to their colleagues, particularly to people in mentor roles, and about being included or getting involved in professional activities like working groups, teams, and grant projects. Some participants like Hermione, a food, nutrition, and health educator, reflected on the ways that they felt immediate support from their office colleagues, and they expressed gratitude for those experiences.

Participants like Jonathan, a family, youth, and community educator, and Martha, a food, nutrition, and health educator, shared about times when colleagues reached out to invite them to join a team or a project, and in some cases the invitations led to mentorships. Lindsey, an agriculture and natural resources educator, described how she met two experienced educators in a farmer's field on her first day. She explained that their meeting helped her learn the relational aspect of Extension education and that it underscored the importance of having collaborative relationships with her colleagues.

Participants also described *Being open to experiences and feedback*, which was characterized by their reflections about mentees being open to new experiences and receiving counsel from experienced educators. Participants like Missy and Evan, both agriculture and natural resources educators, and Betsy, a food, nutrition, and health educator, shared about the value in mentees hearing about lessons learned from mentors. When Alexis, a youth, family, and community educator, started her position, she had many questions about the expectations placed on her. Through an intentional conversation with her mentor, she received important feedback that helped her build programmatic partners.

Mentor Contributions

The relational contributions of mentors to mentorship in Extension included *Prioritizing inclusion*, *Focusing on the mentee*, *Showing support and encouragement*, and *Giving guidance and advice*. Ty and Courtney, youth, family, and community educators, and other participants recalled experiences where *Prioritizing inclusion* was evident. They felt like they were being dragged along by their mentors, but they viewed those experiences as "success journeys." They reflected on those experiences as being valuable to their Extension careers. Ty shared that "I feel like almost every success I've ever been given has been, ever had, it has been a gift from somebody and just lots of opportunities." Courtney described that her mentor "...dragged me into everything. She'd be like, 'Yeah, I'm writing a grant. And I want you to be a part of it,' or, you know, 'I'm doing this program, come join me.'"

In their reflections, participants described *Focusing on the mentee* which was characterized by their specific examples when experienced educators showed selflessness towards new or less experienced educators. They recalled scenarios in which mentors would make themselves available to mentees who were in need. In the mentor role, Gracie, an agriculture and natural resources educator, shared "...that if [my mentee] is under stress, like I'm immediately like, well, 'How can I help you?' And then I'm there."

Participants described the personality characteristics of mentors with words like kind, caring, unselfish, and self-aware.

Participants like Valerie, a youth, family, and community educator, shared about the ways in which mentors were *Showing support and encouragement* through narratives that centered on when mentors shared positive sentiments, praise, affirmations with mentees, and by “being there” for mentees. Valerie shared that “...[mentors] walk the talk, right? [They are] the person that’s advising you, supporting you, there for you.” Chad, an agriculture and natural resources educator, talked about self-efficacy, a person’s belief in themselves and that they can succeed in a particular situation. He aligned his thoughts with the roles mentors played in fostering self-efficacy in mentees, even sometimes in situations that mentors created for mentees.

As they recalled their experiences, participants talked about mentors *Giving guidance and advice* through lessons learned, sharing wisdom, and when mentors made themselves available to mentees for counsel. When they discussed the support provided by mentors, participants noted the complexity of both their organization and university. Participants like Bruce, an agriculture and natural resources educator, reflected on the commonalities that educators in his program area shared and how that led to more experienced educators offering advice to new or less experienced educators through storytelling techniques.

Shared Contributions to Mentorship

The relational contributions of both mentees and mentors to mentorship in Extension included *Taking initiative in the position, Using opportunities to connect, Spending time with each other, Building trust, Nurturing a relationship that supports growth, and Sharing an understanding of mentorship.*

In their reflections, participants described *Taking initiative in the position* which was characterized by mentees’ and mentors’ willingness to seek out the other person in the mentorship. They recalled scenarios when mentees or mentors were self-starters or showed dedication to take action regarding a particular situation. Lindsey explained that, “...somebody has to take initiative. So somebody has to contact [the other] person and show an interest and take the time.” Participants like Ty described initiative as “showing up,” and they reflected on the intentionality that led to their mentorships.

Participants discussed how *Using opportunities to connect* led to mentorships. Participants described the ways in which mentees or mentors met other people, the mentorship structure itself (formal or informal), and the opportunities that were available to grow a mentorship. Evan, an agriculture and natural resources educator, described that “...I just kind of put myself in positions where I had opportunity to interact with [people I wanted to learn from].” Several participants discussed that organization-wide events were opportunities that educators used to get to know each other better. They talked about the informal hallway discussions that took place and shared how mealtimes provided valuable opportunities for educators to build connections.

As they recalled their experiences, participants discussed *Spending time with each other* which focused on the ways in which mentees and mentors were present for each other, both in person and at a distance. Alexis scheduled a visit with her mentor and referred to that time, which she used to learn about her role and all the nuances of it, as a “total game changer,” while Chloe, a youth, family, and community educator, described how the time she spent with her formal mentor gave her clarity and confidence in her role.

Participants described *Building trust* in mentorships. Participants talked about the ways in which mentees and mentors got to know each other on deeper levels; their truthfulness with, openness with, and beliefs in each other; and the quality time they spent together over an extended period of time. As Norah, a youth, family, and community educator, explained, “...it takes time to connect and build trust and getting

to know that person's character and understand them.” As a mentee, Missy shared that getting to know her mentor’s character was a key component of the trust that was built in her mentorship.

In their reflections, participants described examples in mentorships where mentees and mentors were *Nurturing a relationship that supports growth*. They discussed how mentees and mentors grew and developed in mentorships, how they built a strong future together, and the ways in which individual roles in the mentorship were transformed. Participants described the decrease in dependence of mentees as an indicator of growth and development. Courtney equated it to “...you start with the training wheels, and then you start like taking the training wheels off, and you’re just like, let them go.” Participants also indirectly described the concept of relational mentoring when they discussed the mutual growth aspect of their mentorships. They used words like “transform” and “evolve.”

Sharing an understanding of mentorship was evident in participants’ explanations about mentees’ and mentors’ common interests and similar preferences towards mentorship approaches and their shared values for and compatibility in mentorship. Participants discussed the value of mentorship, and they conveyed the importance that both mentees and mentors placed on mentorship. As they reflected on why mentorship was important, some participants talked about the jumpstart that mentorship provided new educators. Chad said, “First off, it sort of gives I think, a more rapid start to new employees. You know, giving them information skills, feedback to help them sort of get up and moving faster.” Some participants, like Jonathan, described the necessity of mentorship in an Extension organization because it provided a solid foundation for new educators. He stated, “For me, mentoring in Extension is necessary. It just, you just have to, because there's no other way to learn this stuff, and I worked for the university before.”

Discussion

As mentees, the participants shared experiences in their mentorships where they desired to feel included and supported in their roles. Hermione talked about her office environment, the welcoming colleagues who were ready to assist, and how they contributed to feelings of comfort and empowerment. These findings supported Fullick-Jagiela et al.’s (2015) conclusion that relational mentoring episodes empowered mentees to establish high-quality relationships in the workplace. Participants like Jonathan and Martha shared about what it felt like to be included in team projects and how they were able to contribute to the organization early in their tenures. They reflected on the reciprocity of interactions with more experienced colleagues, including those who were willing to learn from them, too. These findings aligned with Ragins’ (2012) emphasis that relational mentoring functions included but were not limited to both members engaging in personal learning and growth and relying on communal norms.

Extension mentor contributions were exclusively relationally motivated. Although their organization’s administrators encouraged them to mentor others, participants expressed that they were not required to be mentors. Therefore, the participants who served as mentors fulfilled the role out of their own care and concern for their new colleagues. Participants’ recollections centered on their engagement in mentoring episodes (Ragins, 2012) and established mentorships to share knowledge, guidance, and insights with mentees as ways to support their developing skills and careers (Humberd & Rouse, 2016).

As mentors, participants discussed experiences in their mentorships where they prioritized including new employees and focused on mentees’ unique, specific needs. Gracie offered her practical philosophy by reflecting on how she reached out to new employees very soon after their start dates, and she noted that it was difficult as a new Extension educator to know who to reach out to for introductions. Ty, Courtney, and other participants discussed the power of an invitation and how it reinforced to new Extension educators that they were welcome, belonged, and added value to the organization. These findings supported Joshi and Sikdar’s (2015) evidence that characteristics of an effective informal mentor included

organizational ascendancy and impact, a concept that pertained to inclusivity and giving visibility and exposure to the mentee.

Participants also described the ways in which they showed support and encouragement to mentees and gave them guidance and advice. Chad conveyed that Extension mentors played a role in fostering mentees' confidence and self-efficacy, and he noted that mentors' support and encouragement can help mentees realize that they are capable of fulfilling the obligations of their positions. These findings supported Byington's (2010) conclusion that open and supportive communication was an important facilitator of an effective mentorship, and they also illuminated Vines et al.'s (2018) argument that Extension organizations must provide a work environment where employees can envision themselves achieving success and being valued.

Several participants noted specific instances when their mentors provided them concrete and clear advice on how to navigate situations they faced. Betsy and Jonathan recalled in detail the practicality of their suggestions and noted that their mentors had experiences that they drew upon and learned from. Bruce discussed the commonalities of mentees and mentors in his Extension program area, and he shared that storytelling was an effective technique for mentors to use to offer guidance and advice to mentees. These findings aligned with Mincemoyer and Thomson's (1998) determination that frequency and type of information shared between mentees and mentors contributed to the success of Extension mentorships.

Implications and Recommendations

As part of a larger research study, we constructed the *Mentorship in Extension* model that clarified how Extension educators in one organization experienced mentoring processes. This theoretical model provided new understanding about the relational motivations of Extension educators that influenced mentoring. With regards to the transferability of the implications of the findings and recommendations, we encourage scholars and practitioners to consider the context of our study. Our findings can generate conversation within, reflection by, and action from the Cooperative Extension System.

Mentoring is a method that Extension organizations use to train, orient, and develop new professionals (Benge et al., 2011; Benge et al., 2015; Place & Baily, 2010). Research on mentoring in Extension has been primarily focused on assessing perceived mentoring efficacy and there has been distinct lack of research on the relationships between mentees and mentors (Denny, 2016). Our study addressed Janssen et al.'s (2016) calls for further study of the underlying development mechanisms of mentoring and relational motivations of mentors and mentees, and it also responded to Haddock-Millar's (2017) recommendation for additional research on the definition of mentorship as a theoretical basis for research and on the connectedness between multiple factors in specific mentorship contexts. The findings from our study illuminated how relational motivations of Extension educators influenced mentorship in one organization; however, the findings also underscored the need that remains to further understand the mentoring phenomenon in this specific context.

Participants in our study experienced relational mentoring. Relational mentoring supports the growth and development of mentors and mentees, and it results in close bonds between the mentorship pairs (Ragins, 2012). We found that the relational approach to mentorship was effective and was preferred by participants. We challenge Extension leaders and organization decision makers to expand their knowledge and understanding of relational mentoring. By having a deeper appreciation of the concept, Extension practitioners can better shape their own philosophies on mentorship and facilitate mentoring relationships in their organizations.

Relational mentoring provided the theoretical foundation for this research study. Extension is a relational organization, and the storied history of the Cooperative Extension System showed that its

professionals are committed to building relationships with the people they serve and with the people they work. Developing and nurturing relationships requires time, trust, shared understanding, inclusion, and selflessness. To promote a mentoring culture, we advise Extension leaders and human resources directors to build time into organization events for educators to build or maintain relationships with their colleagues.

To effectively design programs or adopt practices that address mentorship, Extension leaders and human resources directors should first explore how mentoring processes occur in their organizations. Additionally, we encourage Extension practitioners to welcome research opportunities and to collaborate with social science and Extension scholars to study professional development approaches in their organizations. Mentoring is one tool—in a toolbelt of many tools—that can be used to prepare Extension professionals for their highly complex, evolving, demanding, and impactful roles. Future evaluation and research in an Extension context may include the examination of mentorship as a complementary approach to other professional development methods.

Ragins (2012) acknowledged that past research on high-quality relationships in the workplace focused on the experiences of most employees. We urge social science and Extension scholars to investigate the range of mentorship quality that Extension educators have experienced. Additional research on how mentoring occurs in Extension organizations, or more broadly the agricultural education field, would further highlight an area of mentoring knowledge that has been given less attention over the years. To date, much of the mentoring literature has focused exclusively on the outcomes and impacts of mentorship. The findings we presented are a starting point for future research studies on the mentoring phenomenon.

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