Description of Job Embeddedness in Arkansas County Extension Agents

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Abstract

The Cooperative Extension System (CES) has had a long-standing problem with the retention of its county Extension agents (CEAs), who are in charge of running various programs in over 3,000 counties within the United States. When a CEA leaves a county, voluntarily or involuntarily, the community members are left without that leader, and their needs go unmet, which was proposed to increase voluntary turnover among CEAs even further. Arkansas CES has had its problems with turnover, and studying this issue through the lens of Job Embeddedness Theory was identified as a gap in the literature.

Job Embeddedness Theory is a relatively new theory that seeks to understand why employees stay in a job, rather than the traditional theories that seek to understand why employees leave their jobs. The quantitative survey was sent to all 197 CEAs employed by Arkansas CES, and 162 returned usable surveys.

The study found that Arkansas CEAs have a medium-high overall mean job embeddedness score (3.61 out of 5 on a Likert scale), which results from their high levels of fit within their community and organization, the high acknowledgment of what they would have to sacrifice if they left their job, along with the low amount of links within their community and organization. The majority of Arkansas CEAs were young (≤ 49 years old), female, and had spent 10 years or fewer in their county. Despite the high number of female CEAs, male CEAs had a consistently higher job embeddedness score across all dimensions. The most concern is the low number of links within the organization and the decrease in scores after approximately 10 years in the same county.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to all my amazing committee members, for helping lead me through the extensive process of writing a thesis and always being there to help me out. You all were incredible and I could have never gotten here without you.

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Thank you to my cats, PJ and Annabeth, who can’t read this, but have heard more about this topic than any other living being and somehow they still seem to love me. Thanks for being adorable little distractions who keep me grounded and keep me sane.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the following:

To my parents, for encouraging me to head out from California and find my own way. Getting to explore and live on my own is the best thing that has ever happened to me.

To my brothers, Justin and Brandon, thank you for not writing or defending a thesis before me, so I could be the first one in the family to defend their thesis! On a more serious note, thanks for being there for me and helping me out when I needed advice. Thanks.

To my sister, Holly, I don’t dedicate this to you. Well, actually thanks for giving me the strength to make it through my first semester here. Your perseverance through your own life is an inspiration. It’s great to see you happy.

To the Ice Treaders, The Band, Guild Traverner, and every other rag-tag group of adventurers my friends and I have made in our various D&D worlds (and other worlds!). You have helped distract me from this document when I needed it and help me focus on it when I needed that instead. Thank you for your never-ending support and love, even when I do stupid things. Thank you, a million times over, to Dennis, Jarod, Sammy, Anthony, Tish, David, and Kyle, you know I love you!
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) has a physical presence in over 3,000 counties in the United States and is making a difference in the lives of community members every day through scientifically sound programs related to agriculture, youth development, and personal and familial wellbeing (Franz & Townson, 2008; National Institute of Food and Agriculture [NIFA], 2020). Most states have Extension offices in every county or parish. Every county has different needs, but most focus on agriculture, 4-H & Youth Development programs (4-H), and family and consumer sciences (FCS) programs.

The Extension service has had a problem with the retention of county Extension agents (CEAs) in all program areas for a long time. Strong and Harder (2009) reported that agents are still leaving the CES prematurely, despite the extensive research into retention. Within Arkansas CES, 33% of agents hired after January 2012 left the organization by October 2020 (A. Freel, personal communication, November 9, 2020). According to Freel (A. Freel, personal communication, November 9, 2020), almost 37% of those who left did so within one year of being hired. Retention is a concern across all program areas, specifically the three most common areas of agricultural CEAs (who facilitate agricultural programs and help maintain agricultural commodities), FCS CEAs (who promote health and wellness), and 4-H CEAs (who devise and run programs related to youth development and leadership).

Agriculture and Natural Resources CEAs are in charge of the “research and educational programs [to] help individuals learn new ways to produce income through alternative enterprises, improved marketing strategies, and management skills” (University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture [UADA], 2020a, para. 8). By 1912, Arkansas had employed 36 county agents
dedicated to demonstrating scientifically sound farming practices (Reynolds, 2012). Those 36 agents preceded the official beginning of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service’s focus on agriculture around the state (Borden et al., 2014; Reynolds, 2012). When the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 was passed and formalized Cooperative Extension Service organizations around the country, more than 50% of the United States population lived in rural areas, and approximately 30% of the population was involved in farming (Mercier, 2018). Agriculture agents in Arkansas help people manage and understand pests, diseases, weather, crops, livestock, and the market (UADA, 2021).

The home economics program notably played a significant role in improving the quality of life for rural Arkansans during the Great Depression, later becoming known as the FCS program (Reynolds, 2012). Today, FCS CEAs focus on promoting personal, family, and financial health, along with prioritizing programs in the realms of health and wellness; aging; marriage, parenting, and family life; family and consumer economics; nutrition, food safety, and food preservation; as well as leadership (UADA, 2020c).

The third program area is 4-H, where any youth can become involved and learn to be active members and leaders not only in their local community but up to the global level (Borden et al., 2014). Arkansas 4-H was founded in White County, Arkansas, in October 1908 (Herald Leader, 2019). Approximately 65 boys joined together to form the White County Corn and Cotton Club to learn new agricultural technology from someone other than their parents (Herald Leader, 2019). The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture had partnered with county 4-H programs to reach more than 133,000 members aged 5-19 in Arkansas since 1914, when the CES was established (Herald Leader, 2019; National 4-H Council, 2020; Wessel & Wessel, 1982).
Research studies across disciplines have categorized different factors related to retention—the percentage of employees who stay at an organization—and turnover—the percentage of employees who leave an organization (Sherman, 2020). Mitchell et al. (2001) constructed the Job Embeddedness Theory (JET), another retention research framework designed to allow researchers to study potential factors of feeling embedded in a job. On the other hand, identified factors related to turnover have not produced consistent predictions of employee turnover and require more attention as a research subject. As opposed to the traditional research framework of examining why employees choose to leave an organization, JET seeks to explain why employees stay by studying the factors of links, fit, and sacrifice and their connection to the organization and community.

The National Research Agenda outlines the American Association for Agricultural Education’s Research Priority Areas, where the need for resilient county Extension programs and embedded CEAs fit into two areas (Roberts et al., 2016). It includes Research Priority 3 (RP3): sufficient scientific and professional workforce that addresses the challenges of the 21st century as well as Research Priority 6 (RP6): vibrant, resilient communities (Graham et al., 2016; Stripling & Ricketts, 2016). RP3 calls for youth development programs (such as 4-H and FFA) to expose youth to agriculture (Stripling & Ricketts, 2016). The expectation of this exposure would be more graduates from higher education institutions with agricultural knowledge. Educational settings are becoming outdated, and all educational settings need reforms, including non-formal settings such as 4-H programs (Roberts et al., 2016). Extension agents who are highly embedded have a better ability to increase continuity between program implementations and perform program updates. RP6 builds upon the understanding that rural communities are experiencing loss of identity as members migrate to urban communities and populations dwindle.
Reinforcing connections between community members and community structures (such as schools, volunteer programs, and community leaders) into long-term personal relationships that are resilient to change and shocks to the community are keys to helping rural communities thrive (Graham et al., 2016). Graham et al. (2016) specified that community leaders need to be skilled in navigating crises. Extension personnel and agricultural educators often teach crisis and risk management skills and therefore need to remain in their position long-term, creating a need to increase retention of those community members (Graham et al., 2016).

Need for the Study

When CEAs leave their position in a county—voluntarily or involuntarily—it results in “disrupted educational programs, unmet citizen needs, low morale among remaining Extension professionals, and wasted financial and material resources dedicated to Extension agent on-boarding and in-service training” (Safrit & Owen, 2010, p. 2). In 1982, approximately 10% of county Extension agents across the United States resigned annually, though that statistic has not been updated (Church & Pals, 1982).

Retention of employees has long been a topic of research across many disciplines and professions to reduce wasteful financial decisions and material costs, especially concerning training new employees. In 2006, the Aberdeen Group surveyed 800 enterprises regarding factors related to the employee retention. It found that 90% of new employees decide to stay with an organization before their first six months end (Johnson & Senges, 2010). CES faces challenges retaining new and existing employees. CEAs who remained after other CEAs left the organization reported decreased quality of programs, job satisfaction, productivity, and a further loss of CEAs (Burnett et al., 2000). Over 20 years ago, the cost of CEA turnover was estimated.
to be $80,000 per agent, reflecting only the financial cost of hiring replacements and lost salaries (Kutilek, 2000).

According to Vines et al. (2018), when agents leave voluntarily or involuntarily, the community they were serving would be hurt the most. Programs created to fulfill the needs of the community members are put on hold when a CEA leaves (Vines et al., 2018). Often, the agents who have to fill in the gaps often face low morale, which may, in turn, lead to increased voluntary turnover (Safrit & Owen, 2010).

Most studies on agent retention focus on turnover and why CEAs leave a position to identify ways an organization can correct the environment to prevent leaving. On the other hand, Job Embeddedness Theory seeks to explain why employees stay rather than why they leave a company (Mitchell et al., 2001). Mitchell et al. (2001) sought to draw on the theories of embedded figures and field theory to “describe job embeddedness as like a net or a web in which an individual can become stuck…Moreover, the content of the parts vary considerably, suggesting that one can be enmeshed or embedded in many different ways” (p. 1104). The reasons why employees stay can be classified into three categories: links, fit, and sacrifice. These three categories are intertwined and can be studied via their association with the employee’s organization and community.

Can job embeddedness help Arkansas CES determine the factors related to why CEAs stay with the organization? Research has not yet been conducted on Arkansas CEAs and their level of job embeddedness, as described by Mitchell et al. (2001). A higher level of job embeddedness (JE) is proposed to correlate to a higher likelihood of an employee staying with the organization. Therefore, if Arkansas CEAs have a low level of job embeddedness, their risk of leaving Arkansas CES is higher.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to identify the levels of job embeddedness among Arkansas CEAs to try and better understand the reasons why CEAs stay in their positions. Recommendations will be made to Arkansas Extension administrators on which areas of job embeddedness CEAs are lowest in, emphasizing areas the agents need more support. Recommendations may include proposals to increase embeddedness through activities such as professional development workshops, awards, or onboarding activities (Church & Pals, 1982; D. Graham, personal communication, September 14, 2020; Harder et al., 2016).

Objectives

1. Describe selected demographics of Arkansas County Extension Agents.
2. Describe the level of job embeddedness across all job embeddedness dimensions.
3. Describe the relationships between Arkansas County Extension Agent demographics and job embeddedness dimensions.

Assumptions

• It was assumed that the participants in the study responded to all questions truthfully.
• It was assumed that study participants could list their position titles and split appointment responsibilities accurately and in sufficient detail.

Limitations

• This study was conducted and written during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. This limitation affected the researcher’s ability to access participants. Many county Extension offices were closed during the data collection period of January 2021, and the researcher notes that working out of the office may have impacted CEAs ability to respond and possible impacted their responses to the instrument.
• The researcher recognized the controversies in the literature regarding the effectiveness of the Job Embeddedness Scale as published by Mitchell et al. (2001), especially about predicting employee retention; however, a significant amount of literature supports the JE scale. Ultimately, merit was found in the scale, and this research was conducted under the assumption that Mitchell’s scale was appropriate to assist in accomplishing the objectives of this study.

• To increase the survey response rate, communication was sent from the Associate Vice President of Family & Consumer Sciences and 4-H Youth Development in connection with the researcher’s initial contact with the participants. This was noted to have potentially caused participants to respond with artificially positive responses.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The subject of employee retention—and the factors leading to voluntary and involuntary turnover—has been a research topic across many disciplines and professions. Researchers and administrators can view employees through several lenses, including looking at the reasons why any given employee might leave, the reasons why the employee might stay, or examining their inner intent (not necessarily their actions) to leave the company or stay. Cooperative Extension experiences high turnover of Extension agents across all program areas and locations (Church & Pals, 1982; Extension Committee on Organization and Policy [ECOP], 2005; Vines et al., 2018). This study focused on why Extension agents would stay and the extent to which they felt embedded into their role as a CEA.

Conceptual Framework

Employee Retention

Regarding improving retention, Arnold and Place (2010a) said, “Organizational initiatives must be directed at understanding employees. This will require administrators to become more knowledgeable about personal and professional influences on agents’ careers. Having an understanding of factors that affect critical career decisions is invaluable” (p. 11). Maintaining employees in an organization requires effort and focus on the part of administrators and supervisors to know their employees through both an organizational and personal lens (Arnold & Place, 2010a).

According to Holtom et al. (2006) and Spencer (1986), employee retention takes effort to maintain and cannot be simplified to an employee not choosing to leave but must be examined under a more complicated lens. The lens Holtom et al. (2006) used examines factors such as
accumulated social capital—a critical social network that exists within any given organization—of both the employer and the employee. Spencer (1986) posited that the more mechanisms through which employees can voice dissatisfaction within the organization, the more likely employees are to stay with the organization. Social capital would presumably be interrupted if an employee to leave abruptly. Holtom et al. (2006) acknowledge that people have complex lives inside and outside their workplace. When organizations show, through their actions, that employee lives are valued, employees tend to stay with that organization for an extended period and be more productive overall (Holtom et al., 2006).

Merely measuring job satisfaction is not an exact way to determine future turnover, as empirical research has consistently returned low correlations between the two points (Spencer, 1986). However, in a broad sense, measuring motivation may be a way to predict employee retention. Motivation is the tendency to behave in a purposive manner to achieve specific unmet needs, a willingness to expend energy toward a goal or reward, and a psychological process that gives behavior purpose and direction (Buford et al., 1995; Harder et al., 2014; Kreitner, 1995; Mamoria, 1995). Motivators can include fulfillment from the profession, such as accomplishments, awards, individual development, accountability, and a stimulating vocation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Herzberg et al., 1959; Lindner, 1998; Strong & Harder, 2009). Internal motivations may include positive and emotional fulfillment from the work itself, while external motivators include recognition and respect from the surrounding community (Arnold & Place, 2010b).

The Motivation-Hygiene Theory details two categories of factors related to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction—motivation factors and hygiene factors (Herzberg et al., 1959). Motivators are the factors that “serve to bring about the kind of job satisfaction
and...improvement in performance that industry is seeking from its work force” (Herzberg et al., 1959, p. 114). Motivation is “a person’s intensity, direction and persistence of efforts to attain a specific objective” (Yusoff et al., 2013, p. 18). Conversely, hygiene factors relate to the context of an employee’s work environment and serve the same purpose as a water purification device; hygiene factors do not cure an individual’s dissatisfaction with their job but work to prevent dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Hygiene factors include the individual’s position, compensation, and benefits. The findings from Bowen and Radhakrishna (1991) were consistent with the proposal of Herzberg (1968) that employees tend to be less encouraged by hygiene factors than motivation factors.

Motivation within agricultural education careers can be found through their responsibilities, according to Castillo et al. (1999), and, to lesser extents, through responsibilities, achievements, recognition, and advancement. Low retention among secondary agricultural teachers has shown that shortages in the discipline create negative consequences within the agricultural education programs, specifically regarding the students’ ability to learn effectively (Edwards & Briers, 2001). Additionally, motivational factors were a better indicator of job satisfaction for agricultural education faculty than maintenance factors, as defined by the Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959; see also Bowen & Radhakrishna, 1991; Castillo & Cano, 2004).

Demographic factors have long been utilized as a method for human resource researchers to find predictors of turnover among employees (Mitchell et al., 2001; Scott et al., 2005). Factors that have been identified as significant relationships include a positive statistical relationship with both age (Ableson, 1987; Bowen et al., 1994; Bedeian, 1992; Long & Swortzel, 2007; Nestor & Leary, 2000) and the length of time spent employed by an organization (Arnold &
Place, 2010a; Bedeian et al., 1992; Bertz & Judge, 1994; Boltes et al., 1995; Bowen et al., 1994; Fetsch & Kennington, 1997). Factors that have been statistically inconclusive include gender (Nestor & Leary, 2000) or have not been highly researched include community size (Young & Jones, 2015).

Employee Retention in Cooperative Extension

Retention of CEAs has been a concern for a long time, and in 2005, the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy's Leadership Advisory Council of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges formally identified CEA retention as a challenge to Cooperative Extension (ECOP, 2005). Beyond the community needs and financial difficulties, one reason to focus on retaining CEAs is that Extension agents are the key to maintaining a positive public image as the “eyes, ears, and face of Extension” (Smith et al., 2011, p. 2).

Safrit and Owen (2010) proposed a conceptual model designed to help Extension administrators improve agent retention with the acronym R.E.T.A.I.N.S. Each letter stands for a different topic or approach, and the researchers proposed strategies specific to each approach for Extension administrators to implement. ‘R’ stands for Recruit Authentically, supported by Arnold and Place (2010c) as well as Angima and Carroll (2019). Recruitment of potential Extension agents requires all involved to speak accurately and authentically of the responsibilities and commitments, including the job description that should describe the job rather than sell it (Safrit & Owen, 2010).

‘E’ stands for Expand on New Employees’ Experiences and Abilities, or place program professionals in an area where there would be substantial overlap with their personal goals, needs, and interests with CES goals, needs, and interests (Arnold & Place, 2010a). Along with
that first step, mentors should be assigned to new employees, while the new employee’s training should be individualized to fit their personal needs and goals to facilitate their professional and personal growth (Blacklaw-Freel, 2020; Eastman & Williams, 1993). Zimmer and Smith (1992) evaluated the Ohio Extension System mentoring arrangement and discovered a positive experience reported from both mentors and protégés. Creating and encouraging a mentoring arrangement, especially for new employees, has been found to help increase new employee’s confidence in planning and implementing programs and increasing job satisfaction (Bowen et al., 1994; Kutilek & Earnest, 2001; Strong & Harder, 2009).

‘T’ represents the need to *Train, Train, Train*. It is supported within Extension literature that training is a major element, if not the major element of displaying the commitment of an organization to employee retention and professional development (Ferrer et al., 2004; McCann, 2007; Safrit & Owen, 2010; Storey, 1995). By incorporating training and professional development opportunities into performance review systems, training should become a day-to-day expectation for professionals. ‘A’ stands for *Advocating for Both the Employee and the Position*, which means that the professional and the position should grow and change at the same pace at which the organization changes and grows (Safrit & Owen, 2010). Professional development plans should be created with the employee, with all parts clearly defined and supported (Safrit & Owen, 2010; Vines et al., 2018).

‘I’ considers that administrators must *Inspire, Invest In, and Empower Employees*, meaning that supervisors must dedicate time to getting to know their employees individually to support them and their work environment. Performance appraisals are one area where supervisors can easily incorporate this idea, while agents are receptive to it and supervisors implement the evaluations consistently (Arnold & Place, 2010a; Davis & Verma, 1993).
Additionally, Extension has been concerned with burnout among employees and has found that implementing programs to reduce stress and utilizing specific time management procedures has reduced reports of burnout among employees (Ensle, 2005). ‘N’ speaks to the need to **Nurture Connectivity among Employees** by building links between people and ideas and each permutation of those two categories. Employees with a solid connection to an extensive network of people are less likely to leave the organization, and nurturing relationships was a key factor in being a successful agent in all stages (Mitchell et al., 2001; Safrit & Owen, 2010; Smith et al., 2011). These connections include the employee’s community, to which Safrit and Owen (2010) suggested hosting events where employees bring and connect to their family and friends. The last letter of the R.E.T.A.I.N.S. model, ‘S’, illustrates that employers must **Show Appreciation through Effective Recognition**. Employees who were recruited authentically, connected successfully to proper job responsibilities, people, and ideas, and were trained and inspired by their superiors, have a greater need to feel appreciated and recognized for their work (Rousan & Henderson, 1996; Safrit & Owen, 2010). Gibson (2008) found that 40% of employees who had left their jobs did so at least partially due to lack of recognition.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) identified 10 themes new agents (< 3 years of experience) of all ages recognized as critical to employee retention (Vines et al., 2018). Concerns of new agents included: (1) collaboration environment (or lack thereof); (2) work-life balance; (3) access to specialists; job (4) satisfaction and (5) expectations; professional development (6) plans, (7) associations, and (8) training preferences; (9) mentoring; and (10) special situations, such as constant turnover in the same location, prolonged vacancies, ineffective predecessors, and multicounty roles. New CEAs expressed that they were concerned about being employed in a county with negative connotations attached to the agent position. Vines et al. (2018)
recommend that administrators be aware of these situations and be proactive in supporting new agents who are hired and must tackle that unique circumstance.

It seems accepted that embedding employees into an organization would be a positive action, ultimately benefiting both employer and employee, and it is commonly assumed that embeddedness begins at the start of a new job. Rubenstein et al. (2018) suggested that the process of embedding starts at or before hiring, not after. Factors such as the length of time worked at the employee’s most recent previous job, frequency of thoughts about leaving the most recent previous job, social capital, and distance from work all contribute to their embeddedness from the beginning of their new job. The disruption of social capital would be felt from both the employee who left one job and began another, and both the company the employee left and the company the employee was hired into (Holtom et al., 2006). These findings support the proposal that embedding does not start over at the beginning of a new job, but rather that employers should be aware of and compensate for its employee’s level of embeddedness from the start instead of waiting for any amount of time (Rubenstein et al., 2018).

Certain demographic factors should be measured in research studies to understand possible relationships between the factors and employee retention frameworks, such as job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1957; Scott et al., 2005). The most significant factors include employee’s age and the length of time worked in a job (Herzberg et al., 1957). Herzberg et al. (1957) identified that in terms of age, job satisfaction was high from the beginning of a new job then decreased steadily until the employees were in their late 20s and early 30s when it began to rise again. Additionally, the length of time served in a job follows the same trend of starting high, dropping down after an unspecified amount of time until it rises as the employee’s length of service increases (Herzberg et al., 1957). Further demographic factors identified that were
found to have little to no impact on job satisfaction include gender, educational level, and marital status (Andrews, 1990; Berns, 1989; Bowen et al., 1994; Cano & Miller, 1992a, 1992b; Castillo et al., 1999; Fetsch & Kennington, 1997; Grady, 1985; Griffin, 1984; Herzberg et al., 1957; Nestor & Leary, 2000; Riggs & Beus, 1993).

Young et al. (2013) looked at CEAs through the lens of Job Embeddedness Theory, which examines employee’s perceptions of their personal and professional fit to their community and employer, how many links employees have in their community and organization, and how much they would have to sacrifice if they left their community or their job (Mitchell et al., 2001). The researchers compared two states on their agent’s level of job embeddedness. The study found that while the retention rates were consistently high, the variable intent to stay was unexpectedly low compared to the retention rate (3.25 on a 5-point Likert scale). That difference indicated that while CEAs were likely to stay for the time being, any significant changes in an employee’s life or the local or national economy may result in CEAs leaving voluntarily. The study proposed possible action Extension administrators can take to improve retention, including increasing salaries to stay competitive with similar jobs, exploring new delivery methods, and providing recruits with realistic expectations about the job (Mowbray, 2001; Young, 2013; Young et al., 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Job Embeddedness Theory

Mitchell et al. (2001) proposed a new construct to help explain and improve employee retention, called Job Embeddedness Theory. This construct flipped the perspective on employee retention, which previously focused on why employees left companies, while job embeddedness focused on why employees stay. According to Mitchell et al. (2001), the previous literature
stemmed primarily from March and Simon (1958). March and Simon wrote about the “perceived ease and desirability of leaving one’s job” (Mitchell et al., 2001, p. 1102). Holtom et al. (2006) said recent literature had been more focused on why employees leave, and relatively little research on employee turnover had concentrated on describing the factors that determine whether an employee will remain in an organization. Mitchell et al. (2001) described why one would stay at their current job, focusing on the employee’s links, fit, and sacrifices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links</th>
<th>Fit</th>
<th>Sacrifice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discernable connections between:</td>
<td>Compatibility with:</td>
<td>Perceived cost of leaving:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Co-workers</td>
<td>• Personal goals</td>
<td>• Safe neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Managers</td>
<td>• Career goals</td>
<td>• Commute</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Industry peers</td>
<td>• Future plans</td>
<td>• Flexible schedule</td>
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<td>• Family</td>
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<td>• Perks</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1**
*Job Embeddedness Theory Model*

*Note.* Solid blue arrows connect examples of links, fit, and sacrifice to the organization, while dashed green arrows connect examples of links, fit, and sacrifice to the community.

JET grew out of two central ideas: the theory of embedded figures and field theory (Lewin, 1951). When used in psychological tests, the theory of embedded figures is that the figures are attached to their backgrounds, and it is hard to separate the figure from what surrounds them. Embedded employees should be similarly hard to separate from their work and community environment. Mitchell et al. (2001) describe field theory as the idea that aspects of people’s lives exist within a perceptual “life space” represented and connected closely or
distantly, with many or few connections (p. 1004). Mitchell et al. also describe how job embeddedness draws on these two theories:

Drawing on these ideas, we can describe job embeddedness as like a net or a web in which an individual can become stuck. One who is highly embedded has many links that are close together (not highly differentiated). Moreover, the content of the parts [of the theory] vary considerably, suggesting that one can be enmeshed or embedded in many different ways. (p. 1104)

Links, fit, and sacrifices are the three categories Mitchell et al. (2001) used to establish reasons why employees stay in their current jobs. Each category can be viewed through its connection to the employee’s organization and community.

Broadly defined, links are the discernable connections between a person and their organization and community. These links can be formal (official) connections between a person and institutions or other people, and informal connections to the same or different institutions/people. JET proposes that each person has several strands which connect them (along with their family) in a web of social, psychological, and financial threads. This web includes work and non-work friends, groups the person—and/or their family—is involved in, and the community and the physical environment where they live. Mitchell et al. (2001) described the research studies that influenced JET’s construction, including the studies suggesting that there is normative pressure to stick with jobs (Maertz et al., 1996; Prestholdt, 1987). “Social integration” is described as part of the linking process at work (O’Reilly et al., 1989). Ableson (1987) found that there multiple factors were associated with an employees’ intent to stay, including satisfaction and commitment, that was related to voluntary turnover. Additionally, Cohen (1995) proposed that hobbies and religious activities can increase commitment to the organization. If an
employee leaves their job or their home, Job Embeddedness Theory proposes that previously established links would have to be severed or require rearrangement, which may prevent an employee from leaving to avoid severing those interpersonal relationships.

Fit is the employee’s perception of their compatibility with their organization and community, as organizational culture values and desires to create interpersonal relationships in the community may contribute to retention rates (Mears, 2017; Sheridan, 1992). Organizations and communities have unique demands, goals, and values that individuals must consider how well their personal values, goals, and plans fit into. O’Reilly et al. (1991) stated that “‘misfits’ terminated slightly faster than ‘fits’” (p. 1104), and research concluded that when poor person-organizational fit occurs as a result of poor organizational entry, employees were more likely to leave (Cable & Parsons, 1999; Chatman, 1991). Chan (1996) suggested that turnover may decrease when individuals’ personal attributes fit closely with their job. Other research studies concluded that lack of job compatibility can predict turnover and that people select jobs based on the perceived congruence of values (Cable & Judge, 1996, 1999; Villanova et al., 1994; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). Mitchell et al. (2001) proposed that when the individuals’ goals, values, and plans are closely matched with the organizations or community’s goals, values, and plans, the individual would be more likely to feel “stuck” within the organization or community both professionally and personally (p. 1104).

If an individual was to leave the job or community, there are certain tangible and intangible benefits that they would sacrifice to leave. These benefits are proposed to further embed individuals into their organization and community by virtue of the individual being unwilling to give the benefits up (Shaw et al., 1998). Benefits within the organization that may make it difficult for employees to leave if asked to sacrifice those benefits include salary, health
care, stock options, pension plans, job stability, and job advancement opportunities (Gupta & Jenkins, 1980; Shaw et al., 1998). Potential benefits from an individual’s community include safe and attractive neighborhoods, giving up tickets or seats to their favorite sport that took many years to receive, and quick or easy commutes (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Work-life balance is often used but not often highlighted or encouraged. Job Embeddedness Theory emphasizes that employees must be embedded in their organization and community (Mitchell et al., 2001). Individuals who are only embedded in their organization, but not their community, are half as embedded as individuals who have strong connections to both their organization and community. This concurrent embeddedness requires employees to have access to an appropriate level of work-life balance.

This study used the JET instrument to determine the level to which CEAs in the state of Arkansas felt embedded into Arkansas CES, both in the organization and the community in which the agent worked. Employees who scored higher on a 5-point Likert-type scale were more likely to stay in their current organization than those who scored lower on the scale (Holtom & O’Neill, 2004).

Summary

Job Embeddedness Theory states that employees who have more discernible and not highly differentiated connections among both their organization and community are more likely to feel “stuck” in their job, though Mitchell et al. (2001) used that term in a positive light (p. 1104). Research that has looked into employee retention has often concluded that voluntary turnover is a complicated subject and can be viewed through the lenses of factors related to demographics, personal and professional elements, and the uncertainty of the local and national economy, alongside multiple theoretical frameworks including job satisfaction and Job
Embeddedness Theory. Both administrators and employees are responsible for the rate of turnover in a given organization.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to identify the levels of job embeddedness among Arkansas CEAs to try and better understand the reasons why CEAs stay in their positions. Recommendations will be made to Arkansas Extension administrators on which areas of job embeddedness CEAs are lowest in, emphasizing areas the agents need more support. Recommendations may include proposals to increase embeddedness through activities such as professional development workshops, awards, or onboarding activities (Church & Pals, 1982; D. Graham, personal communication, September 14, 2020; Harder et al., 2016).

Objectives

The following objectives guided the study:

1. Describe selected demographics of Arkansas County Extension Agents.
2. Describe the level of job embeddedness across all job embeddedness dimensions.
3. Describe the relationships between Arkansas County Extension Agent demographics and job embeddedness dimensions.

Design of the Study

This study used a quantitative design approach that integrated the Job Embeddedness instrument by Mitchell et al. (2001). The instrument is a 40-question Likert-type scale quantitative survey. Respondents were asked to respond to the quantitative survey through Qualtrics. Surveys are a systematic method that allows researchers to construct quantitative descriptions of a population or infer descriptions back to a larger population by gathering information from members of the population (Groves et al., 2009). The survey was created and
distributed electronically to enable the researcher to reach a larger number of participants than a traditional paper survey would have. Adams and Cox (2008) stated:

Questionnaires are usually paper-based or delivered online and consist of a set of questions which all participants are asked to complete. Once the questionnaire has been created, it can be delivered to a large number of participants with little effort (p. 20).

Subjects

Subject Selection

The subjects of this study included all Arkansas CEAs, as qualified by the job title of County Extension Agent, who were employed by the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture when the survey was sent out. As of January 4, 2021, 197 employees within the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Research & Extension system fit the above criteria (UADA, 2020b). The researcher conducted a census survey. Census surveys are a “Complete count of a population. Where a survey is based on a partial count, or sample, a census tries to include all members” (Priest, 1996, p. 238).

Communication was established with the Vice President of Family & Consumer Sciences and 4-H, who sent out an introductory email that validated the study to all participants and requested their participation.

Human Subjects Protection

In compliance with the University of Arkansas policies and federal regulations, research pertaining to human subjects was required to be submitted, reviewed, and approved before research completion. Following this policy, this study was approved as Exempt by the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) office and granted permission to proceed with
data gathering. The approval number provided for this research is IRB #2009286791. The IRB approval letter can be found in Appendix A.

**Instrumentation**

*Pilot Test*

This study used an adapted version of the instrument developed by Mitchell et al. (2001) to evaluate the levels of Job Embeddedness in Arkansas CEAs. To determine the validity and reliability of the instrument among Extension Agents, 14 Extension Agents from 11 states other than Arkansas participated in the pilot test. Each respondent timed how long it took them to complete the survey (four to 11 minutes) and took note of any areas or questions that were vague or unclear. Minor semantic changes were made to 13 questions to clarify the purpose of the question or tailor the wording toward CEAs.

Adaptions include item 4 within the *fit: organization* dimension, “I feel I am a good match for this company,” which was changed to “I feel I am a good match for Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.” Additionally, questions 6, “How many work teams are you on?”, and 7, “How many work committees are you on?”, within the *links: organization* were changed to “How many work/project teams are you on?”, and “How many administrative/organizational committees are you on?”, respectively, to clarify the difference between teams and committees. Similar edits were made to 11 other items within the instrument. The adapted instrument can be seen in Figure 2.

Demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey. Demographic information asked of the participants included their age, gender, job title, whether or not they have a split appointment—if the participant answered yes, then they were asked to account for all areas of their split appointment—how long they have worked in the county/counties they currently work,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit: Community</th>
<th>Links: Organization (continued)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I really love the community where I live.</td>
<td>2. How long have you worked for Arkansas CES?***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The weather where I live is suitable for me.</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. This community is a good match for me.</td>
<td>3. How long have you worked in Extension???</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I think of the community where I live as home.</td>
<td>4. How many coworkers do you interact with regularly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The area where I live offers the leisure activities that I like.</td>
<td>5. How many coworkers are highly dependent on you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha coefficient for dimension (.82).</td>
<td>6. How many work/project teams are you on????</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit: Organization</th>
<th>Links: Organization (continued)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like the members of my work group.</td>
<td>2. How long have you worked for Arkansas CES?***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My coworkers in my office are similar to me.***</td>
<td>3. How long have you worked in Extension??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My job utilizes my skills and talents well.</td>
<td>4. How many coworkers do you interact with regularly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel like I am a good match for Arkansas CES.***</td>
<td>5. How many coworkers are highly dependent on you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I fit with culture of Arkansas CES.***</td>
<td>6. How many work/project teams are you on????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I like the authority and responsibility I have within Arkansas CES.***</td>
<td>7. How many administrative/organizational committees are you on????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My values are compatible with the organization’s values.</td>
<td>Alpha coefficient for dimension (.58).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I can reach my professional goals working for this organization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel good about my professional growth and development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha coefficient for dimension (.89).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links: Community*</th>
<th>Links: Organization (continued)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are you currently married?</td>
<td>2. How long have you worked for Arkansas CES?***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If you are married, does your spouse work outside the home?</td>
<td>3. How long have you worked in Extension??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you own the home you live in?</td>
<td>4. How many coworkers do you interact with regularly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My family roots are in the community I live in.</td>
<td>5. How many coworkers are highly dependent on you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How many family members live nearby?</td>
<td>6. How many work/project teams are you on????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How many of your close friends live nearby?</td>
<td>7. How many administrative/organizational committees are you on????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha coefficient for dimension (.76).</td>
<td>Alpha coefficient for dimension (.58).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links: Organization**</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How long have you been in your present position in Arkansas CES?***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2**

**Job Embeddedness Theory Instrument**


*Questions 1–3 for links: community were standardized by assigning the numerical value of “2” to the answer of “No” and the value of “4” to the answer of “Yes”.

**Questions 1-3 for links: organization were standardized by taking the range of the self-reported answers and organizing them into 5 equal ranges. The range with the lowest range of years was assigned the numerical value of 1, up to the category with the highest range of years was assigned the numerical value of 5.

***Minor semantic change made to this item based off of pilot test recommendations.*
and the size of the county in which they currently work. The instrument can be found in Appendix B.

Validity & Reliability

All items, other than the fill in the blank questions (questions 1-3 of links: community and questions 1-3 of links: organization), were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The alpha reliability for the overall measure was .87, as reported by Mitchell et al. (2001). Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for each dimension with the collected data as a part of the current study, as shown in Figure 2.

Construct validity was established in Mitchell et al. (2001) through convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was established through the relationship from the fit to community dimension being positively and strongly correlated with job satisfaction (r = .52 and .72, p < 0.1) and organizational commitment (r = .58 and .52, p < 0.1), as hypothesized by Mitchell et al. (2001). Discriminant validity was established as expected as the nonaffective dimensions of embeddedness appear weakly related to traditional measures of employee attachment, as demonstrated where organizational links were not highly correlated with job satisfaction (r = .03 and .10, n.s.) or organizational commitments (r = .15, p < .05 and .28, p < .01) (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Data Collection

The survey was sent out via a Qualtrics link from the researcher’s University of Arkansas email account to all identified Arkansas CEAs through their University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture email addresses over four weeks. Email addresses were collected from the employee directory one week before the survey was sent to the population (UADA, 2020b). Reminder
emails were sent out weekly from the initial notice until the end of the four weeks, following previous research showing that multiple contacts are a reliable method of increasing response rate (Dillman, 1991; Linsky, 1975; Schaefer & Dillman, 1998; Scott, 1961). The email templates can be found in Appendices C and D.

Data Analysis Procedures

Descriptive statistics were run using the latest version of SAS software available. Mean scores and standard deviations were run for all demographic questions and job embeddedness dimensions. The overall level of job embeddedness was calculated for each demographic level. The overall JE mean and the mean of each JE dimension were then compared across each demographic level.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The purpose of this research is to identify the levels of job embeddedness among Arkansas CEAs to try and better understand the reasons why CEAs stay in their positions.

Recommendations will be made to Arkansas Extension administrators on which areas of job embeddedness CEAs are lowest in, emphasizing areas the agents need more support.

Recommendations may include proposals to increase embeddedness through activities such as professional development workshops, awards, or onboarding activities (Church & Pals, 1982; D. Graham, personal communication, September 14, 2020; Harder et al., 2016).

This chapter contains the results attained through quantitative analysis of the data collection. A census survey was conducted on Arkansas County Extension Agents. At the time of the survey, 197 employees were identified as CEAs (University of Arkansas, 2020b). A total of 162 surveys were completed at the end of the response time, an 83% response rate.

Research Objective 1: Describe Selected Demographics of Arkansas County Extension Agents

The first objective that guided this study was to describe selected demographics of Arkansas CEAs. The selected demographics were age, gender, job title, split appointment, length of time employed in the current county, and the approximate population of the county (or counties) currently employed. Table 1 outlines the demographics of Arkansas CEAs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Categories</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (n = 158)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Categories</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (n = 158)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender (n = 159)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>37.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>60.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Listed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose not to Respond</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Reported Job Title (n = 150)</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-H Youth Development</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Extension Agent</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Consumer Sciences</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Chair</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Quality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-H Youth Development/Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-H Youth Development/Family &amp; Consumer Sciences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Horticulture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Staff Chair</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Extension Agent/Staff Chair</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Consumer Sciences/Staff Chair</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appointment Split (n = 156)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>74.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Time in Current County (n = 158)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ 5 years</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>46.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 31 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approximate Population of Current County (n = 158)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ 5,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,001-10,000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001-20,000</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,001-50,000</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,001-100,000</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,001-150,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150,001-200,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 200,001</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* N = 162.

<sup>a</sup> Fill in the blank question.
As seen in Table 1, the majority of CEAs were between the ages of 20 and 49, while the largest age group was between 50 and 59 years old \((n=37)\). The majority of agents were female \((n=96)\). The largest number of respondents listed their job title as either “Staff Chair” \((n=42)\) or County Extension Agent \((n=41)\). Conversely, the job titles reported the least was CES \((n=1)\), Water Quality \((n=1)\), 4-H/Agriculture \((n=1)\), and Agriculture/Horticulture \((n=1)\). As seen in Table 1, most agents had been employed in their current county for five years or less \((n=73)\), while one agent reported having been in their current county for 31 years or more \((n=1)\). The majority of participants reported being employed in a county (or counties) with a population of 20,001 to 50,001 people \((n=38)\).

Participants were asked whether they had been hired with a split appointment—whether or not they formally split their time between multiple job responsibilities—to compare JE mean scores of those with a split appointment to those without a split appointment in research objective 3. Of those who responded, 116 (75.36%) responded “Yes.” The results of their written response regarding their specific split appointments are presented in Table 2, which also shows the percentage of time allotted to that role. Table 2 presents the number of agents who self-reported their split appointment responsibilities by the average time devoted to each responsibility.

### Table 2

**Self-Reported Split Appointment Responsibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Split Appointment Responsibilities</th>
<th>(n)</th>
<th>(M) (%)</th>
<th>(SD)</th>
<th>Min. (%)</th>
<th>Max. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-H Youth Development</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>28.94</td>
<td>18.79</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9.11</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65.74</td>
<td>19.41</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Economic Development</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (Cont.)

Split Appointment Responsibilities | n  | M (%) | SD   | Min. (%) | Max. (%) |
-----------------------------------|----|-------|------|----------|----------|
Family & Consumer Sciences         | 41 | 64.88 | 20.29| 10       | 90       |
Natural Resources                  | 1  | 10.00 | -    | 10       | 10       |
SNAP-Ed                           | 2  | 52.50 | 53.03| 15       | 90       |
Staff Chair                        | 4  | 7.50  | 2.89 | 5        | 10       |

Note. N = 162. All split appointment percentages per respondent equal to 100%. Minimum and Maximum report the lowest and highest percentage of time allotted to each responsibility per respondent.

Participants were invited to fill in their specific split appointment responsibilities if they responded “Yes,” when asked the question, “Do you have a specific split position appointment?” Out of the 116 participants who responded “Yes,” 14 participants did not fill in the blank. Six participants included partially completed responses; these responses were not counted in the analysis detailed in Table 2 (example responses: “95/5”; “FCS/4-H”). Out of the 96 written complete responses, 94 agents reported at least 5% and up to 90% of their responsibilities in the 4-H Youth Development program area. The mean percentage of time dedicated to 4-H Youth Development was 28.94% (SD = 18.79). Out of the 54 participants who indicated responsibilities within the Agriculture program area, the mean percentage was 65.74% (SD = 19.41).

Additionally, 41 participants reported a mean percentage of 64.88% (SD = 20.29) of their time dedicated to Family & Consumer Sciences responsibilities.

Research Objective 2: Describe the Levels of Job Embeddedness across all Job Embeddedness Dimensions

The second research objective was to analyze and describe the levels of job embeddedness in Arkansas CEAs. To support this objective, the mean score was calculated for
each dimension of job embeddedness (fit: community; fit: organization; links: community; links: organization; sacrifice: community; and sacrifice: organization) as well as the Overall Job Embeddedness Score (OJES). The mean scores and standard deviations are reported in Table 3.

### Table 3
**Means and Standard Deviations of Job Embeddedness Dimensions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Embeddedness Dimension</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fit: Community</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit: Organization</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links: Community</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links: Organization</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice: Community</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice: Organization</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Job Embeddedness Score</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 162. Questions were answered using a 5-point Likert scale with: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = strongly agree.*

The lowest mean score was concerning *links: organization* 
\( (M = 1.81) \), with the next lowest score concerning *links: community*  
\( (M = 3.23) \). Conversely, the highest mean scores were in *fit: organization*  
\( (M = 4.28) \), *fit: community* \( (M = 4.25) \), and *sacrifice: community*  
\( (M = 4.21) \). The overall job embeddedness score of \( (M = 3.61) \) was calculated from all respondents and showed a relatively high job embeddedness for Arkansas CEAs.

Table 4 outlines the means and standard deviations of the participant responses to the statements related to *fit: community*. *Fit* is the individual’s perception of how compatible their values, morals, and goals are with their *community* or the *organization* they are employed by. The *fit: community* dimension was composed of five items \( (\alpha = .82) \).
Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations of Items Related to Fit: Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit: Community Statements</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I really love the community where I live.</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The weather where I live is suitable for me.</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This community is a good match for me.</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think of the community where I live as home.</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The area where I live offers the leisure activities that I like.</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 162. Questions were answered using a 5-point Likert scale with: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = strongly agree.

As seen in Table 4, participants had relatively high mean scores for all statements. Participants reported the lowest score in response to whether or not “The area where I live offers the leisure activities that I like” (\(M = 3.85\)). The highest mean scores were in response to the statements, “I really love the community where I live” (\(M = 4.42\)), and “I think of the community where I live as home” (\(M = 4.43\)).

Table 5 outlines the means and standard deviations of participant responses to statements related to fit: organization (\(\alpha = .89\)). Fit: organization was composed of nine items.

Table 5
Means and Standard Deviations of Items Related to Fit: Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit: Organization Items</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like the members of my work group.</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My coworkers in my office are similar to me.</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My job utilizes my skills and talents well.</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I am a good match for Arkansas CES.</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I fit with the culture of Arkansas CES.</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (Cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit: Organization Items</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like the authority and responsibility I have within Arkansas CES.</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My values are compatible with Arkansas CES.</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can reach my professional goals working for Arkansas CES.</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good about my professional growth and development.</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* N = 162. Questions were answered using a 5-point Likert scale with: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = strongly agree.

As shown in Table 5, participants had the lowest mean scores in response to the statements, “My coworkers in my office are similar to me” ($M = 3.78$), “I feel good about my professional growth and development” ($M = 4.10$), and “I can reach my professional goals working for Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service” ($M = 4.11$). Respondents had the highest mean score in response to the statements, “I like the members of my work group” ($M = 4.58$), and “I feel like I am a good match for Arkansas CES” ($M = 4.55$).

*Links* are the connections that an individual has to other people, either through formal or informal connections within their *community* or *organization*. Table 6 details the means and standard deviations of the questions related to *links: community*. The original instrument from Mitchell et al. (2001) did not specify answer scales, so the researcher chose to assign the numerical value of “2” to respondents who answered “No” and the numerical value of “4” to respondents who answered “Yes.” The values reflect the assumption in JET that employees who are not married, whose spouse does not work outside the home, and/or who do not own their own

---

Note. N = 162. Questions were answered using a 5-point Likert scale with: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = strongly agree.
house are less embedded within their community as compared to those who are married, whose spouse works outside the home, and/or who own their house (Mitchell et al., 2001). Links: community was composed of six items, shown in Table 6 (α = .76).

**Table 6**

Means and Standard Deviations of Items Related to Links: Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links: Community Items</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My family roots are in the community I live in.</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many family members live nearby?</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many of your close friends live nearby?</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you currently married?</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your spouse work outside the home?</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you own the home you live in?</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 162. Question were answered using a 5-point Likert scale with: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = strongly agree. a Response scale was as follows: 1 = 0 [family/friends]; 2 = 1 - 5 [family/friends]; 3 = 6 - 10 [family/friends]; 4 = 11 - 15 [family/friends]; 5 = 16 or more [family/friends]. b Response scale was as follows: No = 2; Yes = 4.*

Participants had relatively moderate mean scores for each statement and question related to links: community, with the highest mean score in response to, “Do you own the home you live in” (M = 3.73). The lowest mean scores were in response to the questions, “How many family members live nearby?” (M = 2.61), and “How many of your close friends live nearby?” (M = 2.73).

Table 7 outlines the means and standard deviations for questions related to links: organization. Cronbach’s alpha for this dimension was (α = .58), which is a poor reliability score. Poor reliability scores may increase the error associated with the measure, potentially resulting in larger standard deviations in descriptive statistical analyses. The original instrument
from Mitchell et al. (2001) did not specify answer scales, so the researcher chose to allow participants to write their answers to questions 1-3 and create a standardized scale based the answers’ range. For question 1, “How long have you been in your current position in Arkansas Cooperative Extension System”, the self-reported answers ranged from one to 30 years. Answers were standardized into a scale as follows: one year to six years = 1; seven years to 12 years = 2; 13 years to 18 years = 3; 19 years to 24 years = 4; 25 years to 30 years = 5. For questions 2 and 3, the self-reported answers ranged from one to 40 years. Answers were standardized as follows: one year to eight years = 1; nine years to 15 years = 2; 16 years to 23 years = 3; 24 years to 31 years = 4; 32 years to 40 years = 5. The values reflect the assumption in JET that employees who have spent less time in an organization are less embedded than those who have spent more time within the organization (Mitchell et al., 2001). Links: organization was composed of seven items, as seen in Table 7.

**Table 7**

Means and Standard Deviations of Items Related to Links: Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links: Organization Items</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long have you been in your current position in Arkansas CES?</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you worked for Arkansas CES?</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you worked in Extension?</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many peers do you interact with regularly?</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many coworkers are highly dependent on you?</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many work/project teams are you in within Arkansas CES?</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many administrative/ organizational committees are you on within Arkansas CES?</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 162.

a Items were standardized as follows: one year to six years = 1; seven years to 12 years = 2; 13 years to 18 years = 3; 19 years to 24 years = 4; 25 years to 30 years = 5.
b Items were standardized as follows: one year to eight years = 1; nine years to 15 years = 2; 16 years to 23 years = 3; 24 years to 31 years = 4; 32 years to 40 years = 5.
c Response scale was as follows: 1 = 0 – 5 [peers/coworkers]; 2 = 6 – 10 [peers/coworkers]; 3 = 11 – 15 [peers/coworkers]; 4 = 16 – 20 [peers/coworkers]; 5 = 21 or more [peers/coworkers].
d Response scale was as follows: 1 = 0 [teams/committees]; 2 = 1 - 3 [teams/committees]; 3 = 4 - 6 [teams/committees]; 4 = 7 - 9 [teams/committees]; 5 = 10 or more [teams/committees].
Respondents had consistently low responses to questions related to *links: organization*. The highest mean score was in response to the question, “How many work/project teams are you in within Arkansas CES?” (*M* = 2.12). Participants had the lowest mean score in response to the question, “How many coworkers are dependent on you?” (*M* = 1.41).

*Sacrifice* is the tangible or intangible items that an individual would have to give up or restructure to leave their current position. Table 8 details the means and standard deviations of questions related to *sacrifice: community*. Cronbach’s alpha for this dimension was (*α* = .50), which is a poor reliability score. Poor reliability scores increase the error associated with the measure, resulting in larger standard deviations in descriptive statistical analyses. *Sacrifice: community* was composed of three items.

**Table 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sacrifice: Community Items</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving this community would be very hard.</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People respect me a lot in my community.</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My neighborhood is safe.</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* N = 162. Questions were answered using a 5-point Likert scale with: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Participants reported relatively high mean scores for all three questions, with the lowest in response to the statement, “Leaving this community would be very hard” (*M* = 3.91), and the highest mean score in response to the statement, “My neighborhood is safe” (*M* = 4.51).

Table 9 outlines the means and standard deviations for questions related to *sacrifice: organization* (*α* = .86). *Sacrifice: organization* was composed of 10 items.
Table 9  
Means and Standard Deviations of Items Related to Sacrifice: Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sacrifice: Organization Items</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a lot of freedom on this job to decide how to pursue my goals.</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The perks on this job are outstanding.</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that people at work respect me a great deal.</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would sacrifice a lot professionally if I left this job.</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My promotional opportunities are excellent in Arkansas CES.</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am well compensated for my level of performance.</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits, in general, are good in this job.</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The healthcare benefits provided by Arkansas CES are excellent.</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The retirement benefits provided by Arkansas CES are excellent.</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My likelihood for continuing employment with Arkansas CES are excellent.</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 162. Questions were answered using a 5-point Likert scale with: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Participants had relatively high mean scores for nine out of the 10 questions related to sacrifice: organization. The lowest mean scores were in response to the following statements: “My promotional opportunities are excellent in Arkansas CES” (M = 2.95), “I am well compensated for my level of performance” (M = 3.23), and “I would sacrifice a lot professionally if I left this job” (M = 3.66). The highest mean scores were in response to the following statements: “The retirement benefits provided by Arkansas CES are excellent” (M =
4.37), “My likelihood for continuing employment with Arkansas CES are excellent” \((M = 4.35)\), and “I have a lot of freedom on this job to decide how to pursue my goals” \((M = 4.35)\).

**Research Objective 3: Describe Relationships between Arkansas County Extension Agent Demographics and Job Embeddedness Dimensions**

The third objective guiding this research was to analyze the relationships between each demographic and its corresponding job embeddedness mean score, both at the overall level and across each of the six dimensions \(fit: \text{community}, \ fit: \text{organization}, \links: \text{community}, \links: \text{organization}, \ sacrifice: \text{community}, \text{ and \ sacrifice: \text{organization}}\). Table 10 outlines the demographic information of Arkansas CEAs and the corresponding Overall Job Embeddedness Score for that demographic. The OJES was calculated as the mean score of all 40 items pertaining to Job Embeddedness.

**Table 10**

*Overall Job Embeddedness Level of Arkansas County Extension Agents by Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Categories</th>
<th>(n)</th>
<th>(M)</th>
<th>(SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age ((n = 153))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender ((n = 153))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Listed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose not to Respond</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Title ((n = 146)^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-H</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-H/Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Horticulture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Staff Chair</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Extension Agent</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 10, OJES consistently went up as age increases, except for the participant in the 70-79 age group ($M = 3.80$), from the 20-29 age group ($M = 3.36$) to the 60-69 age group ($M = 3.89$). Males ($M = 3.75$) and females ($M = 3.53$) had similar JE mean scores, though the male agents had slightly higher OJES scores. The reported job titles with the lowest overall scores were CES ($M = 3.35$), 4-H ($M = 3.45$), and Family & Consumer Sciences ($M = 3.53$).
Conversely, the job titles with the highest mean scores were FCS/Staff Chair ($M = 4.07$), Agriculture/Horticulture ($M = 3.93$), and Water Quality ($M = 3.80$).

As seen in Table 10, participants who reported a split appointment had a higher mean score ($M = 3.63$) than those who did not have a split appointment ($M = 3.55$). The overall JE mean scores increased as time spent in a county increased—from $\leq 5$ years ($M = 3.44$) to $\geq 31$ years ($M = 4.18$)—except for a decrease in the participants who had been in the same county for 11-15 years ($M = 3.53$). The lowest mean score for the total population of the county (or counties) where the respondents work was in connection to counties with a population of 200,001 or more ($M = 3.41$). The highest mean score was for the participant who worked in a county (or counties) with a total population of 150,001-200,000 ($M = 4.18$), with the next highest mean score in the populations of 10,001-20,000 ($M = 3.74$).

In order to describe one aspect of the relationship between demographics and Job Embeddedness dimensions, a correlation analysis was run, as seen in Table 11. The demographics were coded as Age (1 = 20-29; 2 = 30-39; 3 = 40-49; 4 = 50-59; 5 = 60-69; 6 = 70-79; 7 = 80+), Gender (1 = Male; 2 = Female; 3 = Not Listed; 4 = Choose Not to Respond), Split Appointment (1 = Yes; 2 = No), Length of Time in Current County (1 = $\leq 5$ years; 2 = 6-10 years; 3 = 11-15 years; 4 = 16-20 years; 5 = 21-25 years; 6 = 26-30 years; 7 = $\geq 31$ years), and the Population of Current County or Counties (1 = $\leq 5,000$, 2 = 5,001-10,000; 3 = 10,001-20,000; 4 = 20,001-50,000; 5 = 50,001-100,000; 6 = 100,001-150,000; 7 = 150,001-200,000; 8 = 200,001).
Table 11
Correlation between Job Embeddedness Dimensions and Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Embeddedness Dimensions</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Split Appointment</th>
<th>Length of time in County</th>
<th>Population of County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FITCOM&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>-10&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.001&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.15&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FITORG&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td>-17*</td>
<td>-08&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>-.16&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINCOM&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.07&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-.04&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.02&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINORG&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.51***</td>
<td>-.20**</td>
<td>.14&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.76***</td>
<td>.05&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACCOM&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>-.05&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>-.10&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACORG&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td>-.06&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>-.14&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OJES&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.37***</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>-.09&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>-.11&lt;sup&gt;NS&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 162.
<sup>a</sup>FITCOM = Fit: Community; FITORG = Fit: Organization; LINCOM = Links: Community; LINORG = Links: Organization; SACCOM = Sacrifice: Community; SACORG = Sacrifice: Organization; OJES = Overall Job Embeddedness Score
<sup>NS</sup> Not Significant
* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

As seen in Table 11, several significant relationships between JE and demographic characteristics existed. Three of the most significant relationships (p < .001) occurred with the age demographic, including age and fit: organization, age and links: organization, and age and OJES. Length of time in current county and links: organization was also highly correlated (p < .001), and the length of time in the current county and OJES.

Eight relationships significant at the (p < .01) level occurred with age, gender, split appointment, and length of time in the current county. Age was significantly correlated with fit: community, sacrifice: community, and sacrifice: organization. Links: organization and OJES had a significant negative relationship with gender. Whether or not agents had a split appointment
was negatively significantly correlated with \textit{links: community} and length of time in the current county had a significant relationship with \textit{fit: community} and \textit{sacrifice: community}.

Several other relationships were significant at the \((p \leq .05)\) level. Gender had a negative correlation with \textit{fit: community} and \textit{sacrifice: organization}. \textit{Sacrifice: organization} also had a negative correlation with a split appointment. Two significant relationships occurred with the length of time in the current county and \textit{fit: organization} and \textit{sacrifice: organization}. The approximate population of the agents’ current county was negatively correlated with \textit{fit: organization} and positively correlated with \textit{links: community}.

Table 12 details the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the six Job Embeddedness dimensions (\textit{fit: community}, \textit{fit: organization}, \textit{links: community}, \textit{links: organization}, \textit{sacrifice: community}, and \textit{sacrifice: organization}) by the demographic of age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>FITCOM (^a)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>FITORG (^a)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>LINCOM (^a)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>LINORG (^a)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SACCOM (^a)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SACORG (^a)</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.97 .77</td>
<td>4.21 .61</td>
<td>2.89 .80</td>
<td>1.33 .17</td>
<td>3.86 .72</td>
<td>3.83 .78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.27 .85</td>
<td>4.14 .74</td>
<td>3.41 .67</td>
<td>1.60 .39</td>
<td>4.26 .68</td>
<td>3.83 .66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.29 .71</td>
<td>4.11 .74</td>
<td>3.44 .63</td>
<td>1.87 .58</td>
<td>4.30 .49</td>
<td>3.92 .63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.31 .62</td>
<td>4.35 .55</td>
<td>3.27 .63</td>
<td>2.09 .71</td>
<td>4.28 .64</td>
<td>4.06 .56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.52 .40</td>
<td>4.72 .24</td>
<td>3.14 .54</td>
<td>2.20 .60</td>
<td>4.32 .56</td>
<td>4.27 .51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.80 -</td>
<td>4.67 -</td>
<td>2.83 -</td>
<td>2.86 -</td>
<td>4.67 -</td>
<td>3.50 -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\geq) 80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Note.} \(N = 162\).


42
The following narrative lays out each of the highest and lowest mean scores in each JE dimension by age range. The highest mean scores for each dimension were as follows: *fit: community* in the 70-79 age group ($M = 4.80$), *fit: organization* in the 60-69 age group ($M = 4.72$), *links: community* in the 40-49 age group ($M = 3.44$), *links: organization* in the 70-79 age group ($M = 2.83$), *sacrifice: community* in the 70-79 age group ($M = 4.67$), and *sacrifice: organization* in the 60-69 age group ($M = 4.27$).

The lowest mean scores for each Job Embeddedness dimension were as follows: *fit: community* in the 20-29 age group ($M = 3.97$), *fit: organization* in the 40-49 age group ($M = 4.11$), *links: community* in the 70-79 age group ($M = 2.83$), *links: organization* in the 20-29 age group ($M = 1.33$), *sacrifice: community* in the 20-29 age group ($M = 3.86$), and *sacrifice: organization* in the 70-79 age group ($M = 3.50$).

Table 13 details the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the six Job Embeddedness dimensions (*fit: community, fit: organization, links: community, links: organization, sacrifice: community, and sacrifice: organization*) by each gender.

### Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>FITCOM.a</th>
<th>FITORG.a</th>
<th>LINCOM.a</th>
<th>LINORG.a</th>
<th>SACCOM.a</th>
<th>SACORG.a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.40 .67</td>
<td>4.43 .43</td>
<td>3.30 .71</td>
<td>1.98 .69</td>
<td>4.28 .61</td>
<td>4.12 .49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4.18 .73</td>
<td>4.21 .74</td>
<td>3.19 .67</td>
<td>1.72 .55</td>
<td>4.15 .66</td>
<td>3.87 .71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 162

aFITCOM = *Fit: Community*; FITORG = *Fit: Organization*; LINCOM = *Links: Community*; LINORG = *Links: Organization*; SACCOM = *Sacrifice: Community*; SACORG = *Sacrifice: Organization.*

The mean scores for each Job Embeddedness dimension were consistently higher for males than females. The largest difference between the mean scores for males over females was
links: organization, with males (M = 1.98) and females (M = 1.72). The smallest difference was

links: community, with males (M = 3.30) and females (M = 3.19).

Table 14 details the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the six Job Embeddedness dimensions (fit: community, fit: organization, links: community, links: organization, sacrifice: community, and sacrifice: organization) by each reported job title.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title of Arkansas CEAs by Job Embeddedness Dimensions</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>FITCOM.a</th>
<th>FITORG.a</th>
<th>LINCOM.a</th>
<th>LINORG.a</th>
<th>SACCOM.a</th>
<th>SACORG.a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-H</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-H/ Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/ Horticulture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/ Staff Chair</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEA</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEA/Staff Chair</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCS</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCS/4-H</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCS/Staff Chair</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Chair</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Quality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 162

aFITCOM = Fit: Community; FITORG = Fit: Organization; LINCOM = Links: Community; LINORG = Links: Organization; SACCOM = Sacrifice: Community; SACORG = Sacrifice: Organization.

The following narrative lays out each of the highest and lowest mean scores in each Job Embeddedness dimension by reported job title. The highest mean scores for each Job Embeddedness dimension were as follows: fit: community was the Agriculture/Horticulture agent
(M = 5.00), fit: organization were the Agriculture/Horticulture and Water Quality agents (M = 4.78), links: community were the Family & Consumer Sciences/Staff Chair agents (M = 4.00), links: organization were the Staff Chair agents (M = 2.14), sacrifice: community were the 4-H/Agriculture and Agriculture/Horticulture agents (M = 5.00), and sacrifice: organization were the FCS/Staff Chair agents (M = 4.67).

The lowest mean scores for each Job Embeddedness dimension were as follows: fit: community was the CES agent (M = 3.80), fit: organization was the 4-H/Agriculture agent (M = 3.89), links: community were the 4-H/Agriculture and Water Quality agents (M = 2.67), links: organization were the CES and Water Quality agents (M = 1.29), sacrifice: community were the FCS agents (M = 3.93), and sacrifice: organization was the CES agent (M = 3.30).

Table 15 details the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the six Job Embeddedness dimensions (fit: community, fit: organization, links: community, links: organization, sacrifice: community, and sacrifice: organization) by whether or not the agent had a split appointment.

Table 15
Split Appointment of Arkansas CEAs by Job Embeddedness Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FITCOMᵃ</th>
<th>FITORGᵃ</th>
<th>LINCOMᵃ</th>
<th>LINORGᵃ</th>
<th>SACCOMᵃ</th>
<th>SACORGᵃ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>n</strong></td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 162*

ᵃFITCOM = Fit: Community; FITORG = Fit: Organization; LINCOM = Links: Community; LINORG = Links: Organization; SACCOM = Sacrifice: Community; SACORG = Sacrifice: Organization.

As seen in Table 15, the mean scores for those with and without a split appointment were the same for fit: community (M = 4.27). In one instance, for links: organization, the mean score
was higher for those without a split appointment \((M = 1.95)\) than those with a split appointment \((M = 1.76)\). Conversely, the mean scores for those with a split appointment were higher than those without a split appointment for the other four Job Embeddedness dimensions (\(fit: \text{organization}, \ links: \text{community}, \ sacrifice: \text{community}, \ \text{and} \ sacrifice: \text{organization}\)).

Table 16 details the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the six Job Embeddedness dimensions (\(fit: \text{community}, \ fit: \text{organization}, \ links: \text{community}, \ links: \text{organization}, \ sacrifice: \text{community}, \ \text{and} \ sacrifice: \text{organization}\)) by each the number of years the agents had spent in the county where they were employed.

### Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Time of Arkansas CEAs in Current County by Job Embeddedness Dimensions</th>
<th>FITCOM(^a)</th>
<th>FITORG(^a)</th>
<th>LINCOM(^a)</th>
<th>LINORG(^a)</th>
<th>SACCOM(^a)</th>
<th>SACORG(^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-20 yrs.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 yrs.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 yrs.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ 5 years</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 yrs.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30 yrs.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* \(N = 162\)

\(^a\)FITCOM = \(Fit: \text{Community}\); FITORG = \(Fit: \text{Organization}\); LINCOM = \(Links: \text{Community}\); LINORG = \(Links: \text{Organization}\); SACCOM = \(Sacrifice: \text{Community}\); SACORG = \(Sacrifice: \text{Organization}\).

As seen in Table 16, the following narrative lays out each of the highest and lowest mean scores in each Job Embeddedness dimension by the length of time the agent had spent in the current county where they were employed. The highest mean scores for each Job Embeddedness
dimension were as follows: *fit: community* was the agent who had been in the same county for $\geq 31$ years ($M = 5.00$), *fit: organization* was the agent who had been in the same county for $\geq 31$ years ($M = 4.89$), *links: community* were those who had been in the same county for 6-10 years ($M = 3.48$), *links: organization* were those who had been in the same county for 26-30 years ($M = 2.98$), *sacrifice: community* was the agent who had been in the same county for $\geq 31$ years ($M = 4.67$), and *sacrifice: organization* was the agent who had been in the same county for $\geq 31$ years ($M = 4.90$).

The lowest mean scores for each Job Embeddedness dimension were as follows: *fit: community* were those who had been in the same county for $\leq 5$ years ($M = 4.12$), *fit: organization* were those who had been in the same county for 26-30 years ($M = 4.03$), *links: community* was the agent who had been in the same county for $\geq 31$ years ($M = 2.50$), *links: organization* were those who had been in the same county for $\leq 5$ years ($M = 1.41$), *sacrifice: community* were those who had been in the same county for $\leq 5$ years ($M = 4.01$), and *sacrifice: organization* were those who had been in the same county for 11-15 years ($M = 3.75$).

Table 17 details the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the six Job Embeddedness dimensions (*fit: community, fit: organization, links: community, links: organization, sacrifice: community, and sacrifice: organization*) by the approximate population of the county (or counties) where the agent was currently in.

**Table 17**

*Approximate Population of Current County of Arkansas CEAs by Job Embeddedness Dimensions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approx. Population</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>FITCOM.a</th>
<th>FITORG.a</th>
<th>LINCOM.a</th>
<th>LINORG.a</th>
<th>SACCOM.a</th>
<th>SACORG.a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\leq 5,000$</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.90 .51</td>
<td>4.51 .40</td>
<td>3.10 .64</td>
<td>1.64 .63</td>
<td>4.12 .67</td>
<td>4.14 .48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,001-10,000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.15 .77</td>
<td>4.24 .60</td>
<td>3.53 .69</td>
<td>1.54 .37</td>
<td>4.39 .65</td>
<td>3.92 .72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001-20,000</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.33 .51</td>
<td>4.40 .54</td>
<td>3.34 .65</td>
<td>2.04 .71</td>
<td>4.21 .53</td>
<td>4.14 .47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following narrative lays out each of the highest and lowest mean scores in each Job Embeddedness dimension by the approximate population of the county (or counties) in which the agent was currently employed. The highest mean scores for each Job Embeddedness dimension occurred with the agent in a county with a population of 150,001-200,000. In regard to all other population sizes, the highest mean scores for each dimension were as follows: fit: community were the agents in a county with a population of 100,001-150,000 (M = 4.45), fit: organization were the agents in a county with a population of \( \leq 5,000 \) (M = 4.51), links: community were the agents in a county with a population of 5,001-10,000 (M = 3.53), links: organization were the agents in a county with a population of 100,001-150,000 (M = 2.05), sacrifice: community were the agents in a county with a population of 5,001-10,000 (M = 4.39), and sacrifice: organization were the agents in counties with a population of \( \leq 5,000 \) and 10,001-20,000 (M = 4.14).

The lowest mean score for each Job Embeddedness dimension was as follows: fit: community were the agents in a county with a population of \( \leq 5,000 \) (M = 3.90), fit: organization were the agents in a county with a population of \( \geq 200,001 \) (M = 3.92), links: community were
the agents in a county with a population of ≥ 200,001 (M = 2.91), links: organization were the agents in a county with a population of 5,001-10,000 (M = 1.54), sacrifice: community were the agents in a county with a population of ≥ 200,001 (M = 4.04), and sacrifice: organization were the agents in a county with a population of ≥ 200,001 (M = 3.70).

Summary

The majority of CEA respondents were female, less than 49 years old, and had spent less than 15 years in the same county. Males were consistently more embedded than females across all Job Embeddedness dimensions. Overall, agents felt the highest levels of embeddedness in three of the six JE dimensions, namely fit: organization (M = 4.28), fit: community (M = 4.25), and sacrifice: community (M = 4.21). The lowest mean score of the six JE dimensions was in links: organization (M = 1.81).

Within links: organization, the question with the lowest mean score was “How many coworkers are highly dependent on you?” (M = 1.41). Responses to this question resulted in the lowest mean score out of all items across the six JE dimensions. Relative to the high mean scores for the other items in sacrifice: organization (M ≥ 4.00), agents indicated they do not feel that they have excellent promotional opportunities within Arkansas CES (M = 2.95), that they are well compensated for their level of performance (M = 3.23), or that they would sacrifice a lot professionally if they left their current job (M = 3.66).

The Overall Job Embeddedness Score (OJES) rose as age increased, which was a significant correlation at the (p ≤ .001) level. Two other significant relationships at that level occurred with age, including age and fit: organization and age and links: organization. Additionally, the length of time spent in an agent’s current county had a significant relationship (p ≤ .001) with both links: organization and OJES. Older agents tended to have the highest or
higher JE levels across all dimensions, while younger agents tended to have the lowest levels of JE across all dimensions.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research is to identify the levels of job embeddedness among Arkansas CEAs to try and better understand the reasons why CEAs stay in their positions. Recommendations will be made to Arkansas Extension administrators on which areas of job embeddedness CEAs are lowest in, emphasizing areas the agents need more support. Recommendations may include proposals to increase embeddedness through activities such as professional development workshops, awards, or onboarding activities (Church & Pals, 1982; D. Graham, personal communication, September 14, 2020; Harder et al., 2016).

The research objectives that guided this study included describing selected demographics of Arkansas CEAs, describing the levels of job embeddedness among Arkansas CEAs, and describing the relationships between job embeddedness dimensions and Arkansas CEAs. A total of 197 County Extension Agents were identified via the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture directory (UADA, 2020b), and 162 usable surveys were completed. The following conclusions are a result of the data analysis.

Conclusions

Research Objective 1: Describe Selected Demographics of Arkansas County Extension Agents

Demographic variables are often studied to provide a context for understanding possible factors affecting employee turnover in employee retention frameworks, including job satisfaction and job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001; Scott et al., 2005). Data were collected on several demographic variables, including the respondents’ age, gender, job title, split appointment, length of time spent in their current county, and the approximate population of the county or counties in which they currently work. The majority of participants \((n = 96)\) were less than age 49, female \((n = 96)\), and had spent 10 years or less in their current county \((n = 108)\). There have
been no studies examining the demographics of Arkansas CEAs, but the finding that the majority of CEAs indicating they were female was consistent with the demographics of CEAs in both Kansas and Kentucky (Young, 2012). On the other hand, most respondents from Young (2012) were over 44 years of age, which was not consistent with the findings of Arkansas CEAs.

Research Objective 2: Describe the Levels of Job Embeddedness across all Job Embeddedness Dimensions

The second research objective was focused on describing the mean scores of each job embeddedness dimension and each item within the survey instrument. First, the overall mean scores for each of the six dimensions (fit: community; fit: organization; links: community; links: organization; sacrifice: community; and sacrifice: organization) were calculated along with the overall job embeddedness score for all respondents.

The overall job embeddedness score of 3.61 indicates a medium to low risk of turnover among Arkansas CEAs. Much like “misfits,” as identified by Chan (1996) have a higher chance of leaving an organization voluntarily, employees with an overall job embeddedness score of 4 or lower (out of a 5-point Likert-type scale) have higher chances of voluntarily leaving an organization if suitable opportunities presented themselves to employees (Mitchell et al., 2001). The population of Arkansas CEAs is primarily female, young, and the agents have spent 10 years or less in their current county, all of which increases their likelihood of experiencing burnout, a decrease in job and life satisfaction, and an increase in stress levels (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997). Research supports conducting exit interviews to identify reasons why employees leave to implement changes related to those identified reasons (Kutilek, 2000; Mowbray, 2001; Young et al., 2013). Identifying why agents leave, especially those who are female, young, or are leaving
after ten years or less in a county, will be beneficial in identifying methods to increasing the rate of retention of those demographics in the future.

The dimensions of job embeddedness with the highest overall mean scores, and therefore the areas where agents likely need the least support from administrators, were fit: community ($M = 4.25$), fit: organization ($M = 4.28$), and sacrifice: community ($M = 4.21$). Arkansas CEAs have the easiest time, relative to the mean scores in the other four dimensions, in experiencing a sense of belonging and recognizing compatibility of their goals and values to their community and Arkansas CES. These scores were higher than the scores reported in Young (2012), and they indicate the areas where Arkansas CEAs were excelling at the time of the survey. A high mean score within sacrifice: community was in line with Young et al. (2013), where they noted that this score is expected to be high “given the high profile that most Extension agents occupy within their local communities” (p. 9). This high profile is consistent with the proposal by Herzberg et al. (1959) that professional accomplishments are an essential motivator for employees and may be due in part to the improvements that CEAs make in conjunction with their clients. These improvements are tangible and intangible benefits that would be sacrificed if the agent left their job (Arnold & Place, 2010a).

The job embeddedness dimensions with the lowest mean scores were links: organization ($M = 1.81$), followed by links: community ($M = 3.23$), and sacrifice: organization ($M = 3.96$). These are the three areas where agents require more support from administration and each other (Arnold & Place, 2010a; Church & Pals, 1982; Safrit & Owen, 2010; Smith et al., 2011; Vines et al., 2018). The links: organization score was much lower than any other dimension, a consistent result with Young (2012), where both links: community and links: organization exhibited lower scores than any other dimension. The CEAs appeared to have a consistently low number of
personal connections in their communities and their Extension system. Agents need support to increase the number and strength of interpersonal relationships between agents in their county office, in their district, and within their state (Safrit & Owen, 2010). Herzberg et al. (1959) proposed that hygiene factors, such as interpersonal relationships and supervision, do not provide positive job satisfaction but rather dissatisfaction occurs from their absence. Disregarding interpersonal relationships, or the employees’ links to the organization and the community, serves to increase employees’ dissatisfaction with their job. Support, such as mentor programs and collaborative projects, historically has not been present in other state Extension systems, including in Virginia, where new agents expressed concerns about partnering with senior agents or agents outside their program area (Vines et al., 2018). Ensle (2005) found that, at the national level and across several decades, Extension systems do not provide help or support directly to county agents at the level county agents expressed a wish for, leading to burnout and increased turnover. Implications and recommendations to increase the number and depth of these relationships will be discussed later in this chapter.

The sacrifice: organization dimension revealed some interesting responses: the most important was that agents disagreed with the statement that their promotional opportunities are excellent within Arkansas CES ($M = 2.95$) and that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that they are well compensated for their level of performance ($M = 3.23$). Additionally, agents somewhat agreed with the statement that “I would sacrifice a lot professionally if I left this job” ($M = 3.66$). Conversely, the mean score for their likelihood of staying with Arkansas CES was 4.35, showing a high possibility of agents staying within Arkansas unless a “shock” occurred, which is a precipitating event that “jars an employee toward deliberate judgments about his/her job and may lead the employee to voluntarily quit” (Holtom et al., 2005, p. 341).
The theme of CEAs feeling that they do not have good promotional opportunities has been noted in several studies, including Arnold and Place (2010a), Church and Pals (1982), Davis and Verma (1994), and Safrit and Owen (2010). Many of those same studies noted that compensation was a similar contention, where agents were disappointed with low salaries or salary disparity (Arnold & Place, 2010a; Church & Pals, 1982; Gibson, 2008; Kutilek, 2000; Strong & Harder, 2009), and that agents respond positively to properly implemented reward systems or merit pay (Arnold & Place, 2010a; Davis & Verma, 1994; Safrit & Owen, 2010; Strong & Harder, 2009).

Research Objective 3: Describe the Relationships between Arkansas County Extension Agent Demographics and Job Embeddedness Dimensions

The third research objective was to describe the relationships between the demographics of Arkansas CEAs and the corresponding levels of job embeddedness. Age was an important factor in job embeddedness levels, as the overall job embeddedness score (OJES) went progressively up from agents 20-29 years ($M = 3.36$) to those 60-69 years old ($M = 3.89$). The correlation between age and OJES was significant at the ($p < .001$) level. Over time, agents become more embedded in their job, which coincides with findings on job satisfaction’s relationship with age (Ableson, 1987; Bowen et al., 1994; Bedeian, 1992; Long & Swortzel, 2007; Nestor & Leary, 2000).

There was a negative correlation between gender and OJES at the ($p \leq .01$) level, as the males ($M = 3.75$) had a higher mean score than females ($M = 3.53$). This trend continued through every JE dimension, where the mean score for males was consistently higher than for females. Although females ($n = 95$) were more numerous than males ($n = 55$), the male agents were still more embedded in their job than their female counterparts. The research on the relationship
between gender and job embeddedness or job satisfaction was unclear on its effectiveness as a predictor of job satisfaction among Extension faculty (Nestor & Leary, 2000).

Some factors that have been noted as significant predictors of job satisfaction include the length of time an employee has spent in an organization, where fewer years spent in a county was associated with lower overall life satisfaction and building up community respect over an extended period was a significant motivator for continued employment with Extension (Arnold & Place, 2010a; Bedeian et al., 1992; Bertz & Judge, 1994; Boltes et al., 1995; Bowen et al., 1994; Fetsch & Kennington, 1997). The length of time that a CEA within Arkansas spent in their county had a significant relationship with their OJES at the (p ≤ .001) level. OJES consistently increases from those who had spent five years or less in their county (M = 3.44) to 31 years or more (M = 4.18). However, there is a decrease in those employed in a county for 11 to 15 years (M = 3.53), as compared to six to 10 years (M = 3.77) that went back up after 16 years (M = 3.75). The decrease is consistent with the results of Herzberg et al. (1957), where employees had high levels of job satisfaction at the beginning of their early 20s, then decreased over time, particularly between their late 20s and early 30s, when job satisfaction began to rise steadily until the end of their careers. Staying put in one county for an extended period had a high correlation with the level of embeddedness in Arkansas CEAs, even if that feeling drops for some time.

When looking at the impact that staying in one county can have on each of the JE dimensions, it can be said that the longer an agent stays in one county, the more embedded they typically become. The agent who had been in their county for 31 years or more had the highest mean score for four of the six JE dimensions, excluding links: community (M = 2.50)—which was the lowest mean score for that dimension—and links: organization (M = 2.86). The agents who had been in their counties for six to 10 years had the highest mean score for links:
community ($M = 3.48$), while the next highest mean score was from the agents employed in their counties for 21 to 25 years ($M = 3.29$). Spending more time in the same county does not automatically correlate with a higher level of job embeddedness, at least not in the dimension of being linked to their community or organization.

Age and the length of time an agent had spent in their current county had significant relationships with five of the six JE dimensions and OJES, excluding links: community. In each statistically significant relationship, as age and length of time increase, job embeddedness also increases. Younger agents, and agents who recently started working in a new county, needed more support and training on how to build relationships within and around Extension to decrease feelings of burnout and low satisfaction with life and to increase the number of relationships that an agent can utilize in their day-to-day responsibilities (Fetsch & Kennington, 1997; Herzberg et al., 1959).

The county’s population in which agents were employed was not correlated with four of the six JE dimensions or OJES. However, population size was negatively correlated with fit: organization as well as positively correlated with links: community. CEAs working in smaller counties may experience an easier time feeling like they fit within Arkansas CES, while conversely, agents working in larger counties may feel like they are better able to form links with other employees. Studies examining the impact of community size on retention of Extension employees are limited, but Young and Jones (2015) did find a significant negative relationship between community size and fit: organization as well as identified potential retention concerns existing for CEAs working in the most rural—a concern of new agents in Virginia (Vines et al., 2018)—and most urban communities.
For Extension to succeed in its mission, it relies heavily on strong interpersonal relationships at the local level, depending on its CEAs to build and maintain those relationships (Anigma & Carroll, 2019). The positive relationship between community size and links: community shows that agents working in larger counties are already successfully building those relationships, while agents in smaller counties need more support in establishing the kind of local solid interpersonal relationships on which Extension relies.

**Implications and Recommendations**

**Implications and Recommendations for Practice**

Administration within Arkansas CES at the overall view has provided the level of support that the CEAs felt was needed, but there are a few areas where communication and backing could be improved from the state, district, and county level. The area that requires the most improvement is encouraging agents to build links within the organization, their office, and across counties throughout the state. Agents should not feel like islands within their counties but should feel linked to their colleagues across the state and be comfortable collaborating with them on projects (Arnold & Place, 2010a; Herzberg et al., 1959; Young et al., 2013). The effort to create these links should begin with the onboarding process, where new agents are encouraged to build relationships with other new agents and with more experienced agents, and should be made aware of the opportunities to build those relationships (Arnold & Place, 2010a; Safrit & Owen, 2010; Smith et al., 2011; Vines et al., 2018; Young et al., 2013). Research supports the use of mentorship systems within Extension as a way to start a network of strong relationships and should be continued to be implemented and encouraged within Arkansas CES (Arnold & Place, 2010a; Blacklaw-Freel, 2020; Eastman & Williams, 1993; Kutilek & Earnest, 2001; Zimmer & Smith, 1992). Other opportunities to encourage these links can come in the form of professional
development activities that bring together agents from counties across the state or in the development of activities across different program areas that require agents to collaborate from their counties (Arnold & Place, 2010a; Herzberg et al., 1959).

Three demographic categories indicated the most risk at experiencing low job embeddedness in this study. Support from Arkansas CES needed to improve for them to feel embedded in the organization and their communities. Agents who are new to a county (even if they have worked in Extension before), agents who are 39 years old or younger, and female agents are all at a higher risk of leaving Arkansas CES voluntarily due to potential low job embeddedness. Agents that fit into one of these categories may require more support from their organization, and agents that fill two or more of the demographic categories carry increased risk and require increased support. As agents near their tenth anniversary in a county, it would be worth reinforcing aspects of embeddedness and reestablishing their connections to both their community and Arkansas CES as a whole. This support may come in the form of the following recommendations from Mowbray (2001, p. 142) and others cited below:

- Examine and implement new ways to shift workloads or share them, including shared positions, flexible work time, and compensatory time.
- Keep starting salaries and pay raises over time competitive with similar jobs (Herzberg et al., 1959).
- Ensure recruits are provided with realistic expectations about the job.
- Develop a formal exit interview process.

The areas and ways agents can be promoted should be made more apparent to agents. Advancements to agent’s careers can include:

- Provide and encourage participation in professional development training, which
provides career growth opportunities (Arnold & Place, 2010a; Herzberg et al., 1959).

- Discuss career goals and opportunities during performance appraisals (Davis & Verma, 1994).
- Commit to advocating for an agent’s growth within their position according to the agent’s career goals and workplace environment (Safrit & Owen, 2010).

Providing or reinforcing the clear paths to more advanced positions within an organization has been linked to higher job embeddedness scores, as it encourages the employees to remain in their current job to advance their careers. Agents recognized that the benefits they currently receive from Arkansas CES are excellent, but areas of improvement or clarification were indicated by the relatively lower mean scores concerning monetary compensation and healthcare benefits. Compensations and benefits are hygiene factors that, if deficient, increase an employee’s dissatisfaction with their job (Herzberg et al., 1959). Compensation was an aspect that was rated as relatively low for the agents in connection with their level of performance. Other benefits, including healthcare benefits, represent an area where the administration can emphasize what benefits are available to agents and the level of quality of those benefits. Some recommendations for increasing compensation include:

- Be generous with praise and recognition for jobs well done (Gibson, 2008; Safrit & Owen, 2010).
- Implement a reward system for agents working extra hours and follow through with the system (Lindner, 1998; Strong & Harder, 2009).
- Utilize performance appraisal scores in a merit pay system (Davis & Verma, 1994).
- Adjust existing agent’s salaries along with new agent’s salaries (Arnold & Place, 2010a).
- Adjust pay relative to the level of work an agent achieves (Rousan & Henderson, 1996;
Implications and Recommendations for Further Research

If this study were to be repeated, it is recommended to increase the population to include surrounding states and compare the job embeddedness levels between states. Each Cooperative Extension Service is unique and provides insight on many aspects of job embeddedness, so a comparative study across multiple states can provide guidance on ways to increase job embeddedness for Extension employees.

Additional studies should be conducted to define the organizational culture of Arkansas CES, which is a necessary factor in describing how employees fit into the organization. Another area of focus is to describe the potential factors that led to a decrease in job embeddedness levels at approximately 10 years of working in the same county. Additionally, there was no connection between the length of time worked in a county and the number of links formed in the CEAs community or Arkansas CES, which is the opposite of what might be expected. Examining the factors that lead to interpersonal relationships within counties and potential barriers and opportunities to forming those interpersonal relationships is the final recommended study.

Summary

This study set out to describe the demographics of County Extension Agents within the Arkansas Cooperative Extension System and their Job Embeddedness levels to describe the relationships that may or may not exist to increase retention within Arkansas CES. The 197 employees of Arkansas CES identified as CEAs formed the population for this study. One hundred and sixty-two CEAs returned usable surveys, which were analyzed and comprised the findings and results of this paper.
CEA within Arkansas CES had a relatively high level of job embeddedness, which shows their ability to fit into their communities and into Arkansas CES and their ability to perceive and acknowledge what benefits they would have to sacrifice if they left their job. They require more organizational support in building strong interpersonal relationships within their communities, and especially within the organization. The majority of agents were young, female, and/or have worked in their current county for 10 years or less. Each of those demographics had lower job embeddedness levels than their counterparts, which places the young, female, and/or new agents were at a greater risk of voluntarily leaving Arkansas CES. CEAs require more opportunities for promotion and advancement within the organization, and better compensation and benefits.

It is recommended that administration and county directors examine their current forms of promotional and advancement opportunities as well as compensation and benefits and add opportunities as necessary to increase their employee’s feelings of embeddedness. Further studies include describing the organizational culture of Arkansas CES, examining the factors that led to a decrease in JE levels after about 10 years of working in a county, and the potential barriers and opportunities for agents in establishing strong connections to their communities.
References


National 4-H Council. (2020). *4-H History*. https://4-h.org/about/history/

https://www.jstor.org/stable/2392984


https://archives.joe.org/joe/1993summer/a5.php


Appendix A: Research Compliance Protocol Approval Letter

To: Anika Parks
    BELL 4188
From: Douglas J Adams, Chair
      IRB Expedited Review
Date: 11/23/2020
Action: Exemption Granted
Action Date: 11/23/2020
Protocol #: 2009286791
Study Title: Description of Job Embeddedness in Arkansas County Extension Agents

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKJ Building, 5-2200, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Jefferson D Miller, Investigator
    Cassandra K Cox, Investigator
    Donna L Graham, Investigator
Appendix B: Job Embeddedness Instrument

This survey contains a series of questions that relate to the theory of Job Embeddedness. The questions will delve into your fit (the compatibility of your goals and values), links (your connections to other people), and sacrifices (tangible and intangible rewards that would be given up if you left your current job) as related to both your community and Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. Please select the answer you most closely agree with according to the scale provided for each question. Additionally, there are a few demographic questions at the end of the survey.

This survey is anonymous and all information collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. Your individual answers will not be linked with your name in any reports of the data. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time during the survey process. If you come to a question you prefer not to answer, you may skip it and proceed to the next question. Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact Anika Parks at anp022@uark.edu or Dr. Jefferson Miller, thesis director, at jdmiller@uark.edu

By selecting "Yes" below, you consent to participate in this study.

○ Yes

○ No

Skip To: End of Survey If This survey contains a series of questions that relate to the theory of Job Embeddedness. The questions... = No

End of Block: Consent Form

Start of Block: Fit: Community
I really love the community where I live.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

The weather where I live is suitable for me.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree
This community is a good match for me.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I think of the community where I live as home.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree
The area where I live offers the leisure activities that I like.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

End of Block: Fit: Community

Start of Block: Fit: Organization

I like the members of my work group (those that work in my office).

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree
My coworkers in my office are similar to me.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

My job utilizes my skills and talents well.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree
I feel like I am a good match for Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I fit with the culture of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree
I like the authority and responsibility I have within Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

My values are compatible with Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service's values

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree
I can reach my professional goals working for Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I feel good about my professional growth and development.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

End of Block: Fit: Organization

Start of Block: Links: Community
My family roots are in the community I live in.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

How many family members live nearby?

- [ ] 0
- [ ] 1-5
- [ ] 6-10
- [ ] 11-15
- [ ] 16 or more
How many of your close friends live nearby?

○ 0

○ 1-5

○ 6-10

○ 11-15

○ 16 or more

Are you currently married?

○ Yes

○ No

Does your spouse work outside the home? (Skip if not married)

○ Yes

○ No
Do you own the home you live in?

☐ Yes

☐ No

End of Block: Links: Community

Start of Block: Links: Organization

How long have you been in your current position in Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service? Please round to the nearest year.

________________________________________________________________

How long have you worked for Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service? Please round to the nearest year.

________________________________________________________________

How long have you worked in Extension? Please round to the nearest year.

________________________________________________________________
How many peers do you interact with regularly?

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21 or more

How many coworkers are highly dependent (professional and/or personally) on you? Include those in your office and statewide.

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21 or more
How many work/project teams are you on within Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service?

- [ ] 0
- [ ] 1-3
- [ ] 4-6
- [ ] 7-9
- [ ] 10 or more

How many administrative/organizational committees are you currently on within Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service?

- [ ] 0
- [ ] 1-3
- [ ] 4-6
- [ ] 7-9
- [ ] 10 or more

End of Block: Links: Organization

Start of Block: Sacrifice: Community
Leaving this community would be very hard.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

People respect me a lot in my community.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree
My neighborhood is safe.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

End of Block: Sacrifice: Community

Start of Block: Sacrifice: Organization

I have a lot of freedom on this job to decide how to pursue my professional goals.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree
The perks on this job are outstanding.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I feel that people at work respect me a great deal.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree
I would sacrifice a lot professionally if I left this job.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

My promotional opportunities are excellent in Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree
I am well compensated for my level of performance.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

Benefits, in general, are good in this job.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree
The healthcare benefits provided by Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service are excellent.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

The retirement benefits provided by Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service are excellent.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Somewhat disagree
- [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
- [ ] Somewhat agree
- [ ] Strongly agree
My likelihood for continuing employment with Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service are excellent.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

End of Block: Sacrifice: Organization

Start of Block: Demographic Questions
What is your age?

- [ ] 20-29
- [ ] 30-39
- [ ] 40-49
- [ ] 50-59
- [ ] 60-69
- [ ] 70-79
- [ ] 80 or older

What is your gender?

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Not listed; please specify below

- [ ] Choose not to respond
What is your current job title?

________________________________________________________________

Do you have a split position appointment? For example, you were hired to split your time between 4-H and Agriculture Agent responsibilities.

○ Yes

○ No

Display This Question:
If Do you have a split position appointment? For example, you were hired to split your time between... = Yes

What is your specific position appointment split? Please include the position titles and percentage of time allocated to each; percentage must add up to 100%
How long have you worked in the county (or counties) where your current position is located?

○ 5 years or less

○ 6-10 years

○ 11-15 years

○ 16-20 years

○ 21-25 years

○ 26-30 years

○ 31 years or more
What is the approximate total population of the county (or counties) you work in? If you work in two or more counties, please add the approximate populations together.

- 5,000 people or less
- 5,001 - 10,000
- 10,001 - 20,000
- 20,001 - 50,000
- 50,001 - 100,000
- 100,001 - 150,000
- 150,001 - 200,000
- 200,001 or greater

End of Block: Demographic Questions
Appendix C: Initial Communication with Participants

January 4th, 2021

Dear Cooperative Extension Agent:

My name is Anika Parks, a Master’s student at the University of Arkansas in the Agricultural and Extension Education program. I am seeking your help with my study on Job Embeddedness of Arkansas County Extension Agents. Job Embeddedness is a relatively new theory that seeks to understand why employees stay in their current jobs, instead of why they leave.

This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. If you agree to participate in this brief survey, simply follow this link: https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4ZMmdiVzBKas6yx
I ask that you complete this survey by January 29th, 2021.

This survey is anonymous and all information collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. Your individual answers will not be linked with your name in any reports of the data. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time during the survey process. If you come to a question you prefer not to answer, you may skip it and proceed to the next question. Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact me at anp022@uark.edu or Dr. Jefferson Miller, my thesis director, at jdmiller@uark.edu. IRB approval has been granted for this project (#2009286791), and you may contact Ro Windwalker (iwindwal@uark.edu) with any questions you may have about the IRB process.

Thank you in advance for providing your input.

Many thanks,

Anika N. Parks, Graduate Student

Dr. Jefferson D. Miller, Professor
Appendix D: Survey Reminder

Dear Cooperative Extension Agent:

My name is Anika Parks, a Master’s student at the University of Arkansas in the Agricultural and Extension Education program. I sent you a link to a survey (1/2/3/4) week(s) ago asking for your participation in my study. If you have already completed this survey, then no further action is needed on your part.

If you have not completed this survey, it will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please follow this link: https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4ZMmdiVzBKas6xx
I ask that you complete this survey by January 29th, 2021.

This survey is anonymous and all information collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. Your individual answers will not be linked with your name in any reports of the data. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time during the survey process. If you come to a question you prefer not to answer, you may skip it and proceed to the next question. Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact me at anp022@uark.edu or Dr. Jefferson Miller, my thesis director, at jdmiller@uark.edu. IRB approval has been granted for this project (#2009286791), and you may contact Ro Windwalker (iwindwal@uark.edu) with any questions you may have about the IRB process.

Thank you in advance for providing your input.

Many thanks,

Anika N. Parks, Graduate Student                     Dr. Jefferson D. Miller, Professor