

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Joseph Leonard Donaldson entitled “A Survey of Tennessee Extension Agents’ Perceptions of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Educational Psychology and Research.

Russell L. French, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Gary J. Skolits

Judith A. Boser

Shirley Hastings

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges
Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate
School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

A Survey of Tennessee Extension Agents' Perceptions of the Tennessee
Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System

A Dissertation Presented for
the Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Joseph Leonard Donaldson
December 2011

Copyright © 2011 by Joseph Leonard Donaldson
All rights reserved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I appreciate Dr. Russell French for his scholarship, guidance, and friendship in my doctoral program, especially the preparation of this dissertation. I am grateful to Dr. Judy Boser, Dr. Shirley Hastings, and Dr. Gary Skolits for their expertise and assistance with this dissertation. I appreciate the faculty and staff of the University of Tennessee Extension, especially Dr. Tim Cross, and the extension agents who participated in this study.

I thank my sister, brother-in-law, and nephew, Joan, Mark and Wes Grace for their support. Most of all I thank my parents, Leonard J. Donaldson and the late Virginia H. Donaldson to whom I dedicate this work.

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to describe extension agent perceptions of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. A survey instrument was developed to address the research questions. The instrument had two sections: Satisfaction with the Current Appraisal System (14 items) and Satisfaction with Appraiser Performance (7 items). The instrument was reviewed by an expert panel and pilot tested with a group of 39 extension agents. The instrument was deployed online to the study population.

The population studied consisted of all extension agents employed by the University of Tennessee and Tennessee State University in January, 2010 (N=312). The total completed responses were 218 for a completed response rate of 69%.

In this study, seven in ten respondents (78.8%) felt that the current appraisal system should be improved. The desired improvements included: (a) The extension agents' desire to have direct, annual appraisal interviews with the regional director; (b) The extension agents' desire for a performance appraisal rubric that more accurately reflects their actual job duties; (c) The extension agents' desire to make the performance appraisal system less time-consuming and efficient; and (d) The need for more instruction in performance appraisal for county directors.

Overall, extension agents were satisfied with the roles and behaviors of their appraisers (county directors), and county directors were equally satisfied with the roles and behaviors of their appraisers (regional directors). The majority of extension agents and county directors viewed their appraiser's performance in conducting the appraisal with positive judgment, fairness, and trust by their subordinates.

The major recommendations emerging from this study are the provision of professional development for all appraisers to ensure accurate and effective performance appraisal, and exploration of strategies to require less effort on the part of the extension agent to prepare the appraisal materials.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Performance Appraisal Historical Context	1
Performance Appraisal Uses and Outcomes	3
Employee Perceptions of Performance Appraisal	7
Employee Job Satisfaction	8
Cooperative Extension System	9
Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Process	10
Problem	11
Purpose/Research Questions	12
Methodology	12
Importance of the Study	13
Limitations	14
Assumptions	15
Delimitations	15
Definitions	15
Organization of the Study	18
Chapter 2: Literature Review	19
Employee Perceptions of Performance Appraisal	20
Extension Agents' Perceptions of Performance Appraisal	22
Appraisers	25
Roles and Behaviors of Appraisers	25
Appraiser Errors	26
Instruction for Appraisers	29
Performance Appraisal of County Extension Agents	30
Extension Performance Appraisal and Litigation	33
Job Satisfaction	36
Job Satisfaction of Extension Agents	39
Literature Review Summary	42
Chapter 3: Methodology	44
Population	44
Design of the Study	48
Instrumentation	48
Instrument Development	48
Satisfaction with the Current Appraisal System Items	49
Satisfaction with Appraiser Performance Items	52
Pre-Testing	54
Panel Review	54
Instrument Pilot Test	55
Data Collection	59
Data Analysis	63
Summary	63
Chapter 4: Findings	66

Purpose of the Study	66
Population	66
Research Question One – What are the extension agents’ perceptions of the current performance appraisal system?	69
Research Question Two – What are the extension agents’ perceptions of any needed improvements to the performance appraisal system?	73
Research Question Three – What are the extension agents’ perceptions of the roles and behaviors of their appraisers (specific to the performance appraisal process)?.....	77
Respondents’ Perceptions of Appraisers	78
Respondents’ Perceptions of Appraisers by Job Title	81
Summary of the Key Findings	84
Satisfaction with Current Appraisal System	84
An Improved Appraisal System.....	84
Perceptions of Roles and Behaviors of Appraisers	85
Chapter 5: Conclusions, discussion and recommendations	87
Purpose of the Study	87
Conclusions	87
Discussion	90
Recommendations for Improvement of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System	92
Appraisal Interview.....	92
Performance Dimensions	93
Merit Raises	94
Performance Appraisal System Efficiency	94
Training in Conducting Performance Appraisal	94
Employee Contributions to County Director Performance Appraisal	95
Additional Recommendations.....	95
Recommendations for Future Research	96
bibliography	98
Appendixes	111
Appendix A: Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Form.....	111
Appendix B: Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Rubric.....	114
Appendix C: Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Form in the System for University Planning, Evaluation and Reporting.....	142
Appendix D: Correspondence.....	144
Appendix E: Participant Questionnaire	156
Appendix F: Additional Tables.....	166
Appendix G: Encoding for Written Comments	170
VITA.....	185

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Performance Appraisal's Positive Outcomes	5
Table 2. Performance Appraisal's Negative Outcomes	7
Table 3. UT and TSU Extension Agent Positions Per County	46
Table 4. Tennessee Extension Agent and County Director Positions	47
Table 5. Theoretical Framework for Satisfaction with the Current Appraisal System Items	51
Table 6. Theoretical Framework for Satisfaction with Appraiser Performance Items	53
Table 7. Pilot Test Response Rates by Contact	58
Table 8. T-Test Results for Differences Between Pilot Test Participants and Population	61
Table 9. Participant Response Rates by Contact	62
Table 10. Respondents' Years of Employment and Institutional Status	68
Table 11. Respondents' Employment Statuses, Base Program Assignments and Job Titles	69
Table 12. Respondents' Perceptions of the Current Appraisal System	72
Table 13. Respondents' Perceptions of the Roles/Behaviors of Appraisers.....	80
Table 14. Respondents' Perceptions of the Roles/Behaviors of Appraisers by Job Title.	83
Table 15. Respondents' Perceptions of the Current Appraisal System (Frequencies) ...	167
Table 16. Respondents' Perceptions of the Roles/Behaviors of Appraisers (Frequencies)	168
Table 17. Respondents' Perceptions of the Roles/Behaviors of Appraisers by Job Title (Frequencies).....	169

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study surveyed county extension agents (including those who serve as county directors) regarding their perceptions of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. The study research questions explored extension agents' perceptions of the current performance appraisal system including needed improvements, and perceptions of the roles and behaviors of their appraisers. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the study. In regard to performance appraisal, this chapter includes a discussion of the historical context, uses/outcomes, and employee perceptions of performance appraisal. The chapter further discusses employee job satisfaction, the Cooperative Extension System, and the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. The study itself is defined through descriptions of the problem, purpose and research questions, methodology, importance of the study, limitations, assumptions, delimitations, and definitions. The chapter concludes with a section on the organization of the study.

Performance Appraisal Historical Context

It is important to understand the historical context of performance appraisal, as contemporary practices have been influenced by a wealth of factors, including industry, litigation, legislation, and research, among others. Appraisal, as a social phenomenon, is a basic human behavior of evaluating the work performance of oneself and others (Dulewicz, 1989). Performance appraisal is a process of interpreting and measuring the degree of effectiveness, standards achieved, or performance goals met (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984). Performance appraisal, and the associated angst it creates for supervisors

and employees alike (Davis, 1991), has a long history that dates to ancient China. A philosopher of the Wei Dynasty, Sin Yu (221-265 A.D.), wrote that “the Imperial Rater of Nine Grades seldom grades men according to their merits, but always according to their likes and dislikes” (Patten, 1977, p. 352).

The earliest industrial performance appraisals are attributed to Robert Owen who used appraisals to evaluate workers in Scottish cotton mills (Devries, Morrison, Shullman & Gerlach, 1981). In the United States, the earliest recorded performance appraisal was prepared by General Lewis Cass, Commanding Officer of the 27th Infantry Regiment of the United States Army. In 1813, he prepared a narrative appraisal with characterizations of the soldiers in his charge and submitted it to his superior officers (Lopez, 1968).

Besides performance appraisal for military personnel, the first formal performance appraisal process for the federal government was instituted by the United States Congress in 1842. Congress required every department head to prepare narrative reports, known as annual employee service reports, to describe the performance of federal employees.

In the early 20th century, industrial psychologists at Carnegie-Mellon University espoused performance appraisal for selection of prolific sales staff (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). The specific performance appraisal technique was to rank the employees from least to most productive, also known at that time as “man-to-man” rating. “Man-to-man” rating was used extensively by the United States military throughout World Wars I and II (Devries, et al., 1981). This technique spread to industry where its major contribution was determining the order of employee layoffs during company downsizing (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Patten, 1977).

In the 1960s and 1970s, researchers and practitioners rapidly pursued performance appraisal improvement initiatives, spurred by the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and resulting federal legislation (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Throughout government, business and industry, and education, "man-to-man" appraisals and the narrative appraisal reports were replaced in the drive to produce more objective techniques through rating scales and management by objectives (MBO). Modern-day performance appraisal has its roots in these two approaches. MBO is characterized by the supervisor and employee setting mutually-agreed performance goals. The supervisor monitors goal progress and attainment using objective measures. Both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced rating scales have been applied to performance appraisal (Devries, et al., 1998; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

Today, performance appraisal is ubiquitous in the public and private sector. Reynolds and Rupp (2010) have described the rapid growth of technology-facilitated performance appraisal due to the "availability, affordability, and usability" of computers (p. 611), the need for business efficiency and the increasing speed of the Internet. McPhail and Stelly (2010) have observed that performance appraisal validation studies are increasingly popular for both legal and scientific purposes. Another current trend in performance appraisal is utilization-focused evaluation, in other words, evaluating the appraisal system considering its usefulness to the organization (Davidson, 2010).

Performance Appraisal Uses and Outcomes

Employees and their management represent a competitive advantage for organizations, since other competitive factors are less powerful (Pfeffer, 1994; Squires &

Adler, 1998), and organizations do not thrive without highly-performing employees. Performance appraisal is one of the most important influences in developing a high-performing, satisfied workforce. In addition, performance appraisals of educators must establish whether the clientele and society's educational needs are satisfied (Stufflebeam, 1988). Organizations depend on performance appraisal for a number of uses. Performance appraisal is necessary for organizations to: make merit-pay decisions, make promotions, help employees to improve performance, assign work more effectively, and identify instructional needs of employees (Baker, 1988; Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000; Bennett, 1981; Bernardin & Beatty, 1984; Daley, 1992; Patterson, 1987).

There are several potential positive outcomes of performance appraisal systems. In a study of one company's performance appraisal system, Bennett (1981) found numerous benefits including increased communication between managers and their subordinates and improved action plans. Wright and Evans (2008) discuss one major benefit of performance appraisal as setting work plans for the coming year. Performance appraisal systems are used to encourage employees to sustain and adopt behaviors that will build up the organization (Daley, 1992). Performance appraisal is often used to distinguish employees for merit pay as opposed to length of service (tenure) and knowledge and skills (Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000); see Table 1.

Table 1.

Performance Appraisal's Positive Outcomes

Outcomes	Sources
Distinguish employees for merit pay	Bamberger & Meshoulan, 2000
Increase communications between supervisors and employees	Bennett, 1981
Set action plans for the coming year	Wright & Evans, 2008; Bennett, 1981
Promote overall organizational and employee effectiveness	Daley, 1992
Improve the quality of decisions for promotions, layoffs and transfers	Murphy & Cleveland, 1995
Increase employee engagement in and commitment to their jobs	Gilliland & Langdom, 1998; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995
Improve employee self-development and recognition	Brown & Larson, 1962
Improve employee job performance	Gilliland & Langdom, 1998

Smither (1998) has described the relationship between performance appraisal score and compensation as an essential element of a performance appraisal system; yet, the literature reflects highly divergent thoughts on the criteria and overall aims of performance appraisal. In a study of 114 secondary teachers in England, Middlewood

(2001) found that over 85 percent of the teachers disagreed with merit pay on the basis of performance appraisal. Interestingly, the study population was composed of equal numbers of teachers who were identified as best and worst performers by school administrators.

One major argument against performance appraisal systems is that they reportedly expound unfairness. The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 requires all federal agencies to develop and implement employee performance appraisal systems, yet Lewis (1997) found federal performance appraisals to discriminate against government workers representing racial minority groups. Lewis used a 1% sample of federal performance appraisal records from 1990 to 1995 to examine supervisory rating differences among employees of similar education and experience levels who were in comparable positions. He employed logit analysis where the dependent variable (represented by one) represented those who received “outstanding” ratings (the highest level) and compared those to all other employees (represented by zero). Lewis found that white women were rated higher than other groups, controlling for length of service in federal government, federal job grade, and federal agency. Asian men were less likely than white men in comparable positions to receive the highest rating. Other researchers have found that employee gender, race, and ethnicity has no influence on appraisal ratings (Bretz, Milkovich & Read, 1992).

Walton (1986) reported that Deming argued to discontinue the annual merit ratings for American manufacturing. He (Deming) indicated that performance appraisals divide the employees in an organization based on merit ratings, and that division is

counter to organizational development. Deming argued that 95% of all employees were reaching or exceeding expectations, and only 5% had unproductive behaviors. According to Walton, Deming indicated that performance appraisal was at its very core a flawed system because its aim was to address unproductive behaviors, yet, it was applied to every employee rather than the 5% who most needed correction (Table 2).

Table 2.

Performance Appraisal's Negative Outcomes

Outcomes	Sources
Creates inequality by favoring white women	Lewis, 1997
Discriminates against racial minorities	Lewis, 1997
Creates conflict between employees and supervisors	Baker, 1988
Creates misunderstanding between employees and supervisors	Baker, 1988
Reduces teamwork	Middlewood, 2001; Walton, 1986
Creates division between groups of employees rated similarly	Middlewood, 2001

Employee Perceptions of Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal research has expanded from a primary focus on performance measurement and accuracy to include more human factors, especially

employee perceptions of performance appraisal (Fletcher, 2001). However, the desire by managers, administrators and researchers to understand employee perceptions of performance appraisal is not new. One of the early studies of employee perceptions of performance appraisal was conducted with employees of the State of California.

Researchers assessed the degree to which both employees and supervisors were satisfied with the performance dimensions; and more than two-thirds of both groups thought the system was satisfactory or improving (Lopez, 1968).

An effective performance appraisal system should be viewed as such by both supervisors and employees (Schuman & Olufs, 1988). Gaby (2004) asserts that ascertaining employee perceptions toward performance appraisal is useful for scientific and practical reasons. Also, employee perceptions toward performance appraisal can be used to evaluate an organization's appraisal system implementation and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, research in employee perceptions contributes to the body of appraisal research in actual field settings.

Employee Job Satisfaction

Research has shown that the employees' perception of the performance appraisal system is related to job satisfaction (Lawler, 1994; Taylor et al., 1995). Locke (1976) defines job satisfaction as "a positive emotional state resulting from an appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p.1300). Employees with high job satisfaction provide high-quality work, low absenteeism, and low turnover (Bruce & Blackburn, 1992). Job satisfaction is so crucial to economic stability and quality of life that national governments have conducted investigations, conferences, and research to gain a greater

understanding, including large-scale population surveys in Canada, United States, Japan and the United Kingdom (Barbash, 1976). From a contemporary viewpoint, the need for researchers and supervisors to understand employee job satisfaction has increased because of the changes produced from knowledge-based economies and the need to understand all factors that influence productivity (Ezell, 2003).

Cooperative Extension System

The Cooperative Extension System is the nationwide network of land-grant university extension programs and their Federal partner, the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA, 2010). Land-grant institutions were established by the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 provided federal funds for land-grant universities to provide non-formal education to all citizens not enrolled in formal, college instruction. The Smith-Lever Act established that this non-formal education was to be primarily in agriculture and natural resources and family and consumer sciences. The organization is described as “Cooperative” because the additional needed funds are provided by state and local governments.

The system employs Extension Agents who serve as educators in the community and act as change agents to improve the nation’s economy, quality of life, and environment. Extension Agents – typically assigned to one county or geographic region – deliver non-formal education through multiple means including: demonstrations, farm, home and workplace visits, and mass media. Rogers, Burdge, Korsching and Donnermeyer (1988) describe Cooperative Extension as “one of the most important

government agencies,” and they further explain that while rural, farm families were the traditional Cooperative Extension audience, the organization has shown innovation in serving rural, nonfarm families and urban audiences.

Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Process

In Tennessee, the 1862 land-grant institution is the University of Tennessee, headquartered in Knoxville, and the 1890 land-grant institution is Tennessee State University, headquartered in Nashville. The University of Tennessee Extension (UT Extension) has agents and extension programs in 95 counties, while the Tennessee State University Cooperative Extension Program (TSU Extension) has agents and programs in 22 counties. Both organizations utilize the same appraisal system for extension agent and county director positions.

Tennessee’s present performance appraisal system for Extension Agents includes a rubric delineating 27 criteria in the broad categories of program development, program accountability and professionalism (Appendix A). In addition to the 27 criteria, county directors have an additional category of nine criteria describing administrative performance such as guidance of personnel and financial management (Appendix A). In each criterion, except those relative to program development, the rubric delineates performance as exemplary (E), achieves expectations (A) and unsatisfactory (U). The scores on the program development section are either achieves expectations (A) or unsatisfactory (U). In program development, the exemplary rating is not used. The rubric descriptions are shown in Appendix B.

Prior to November 1 of every year, the extension agent prepares an annual plan for the coming year. The plan is rated by a regional program leader for program development competence. The ratings are populated on the appraisal form (Appendix C) for the coming year by the UT Extension custom reporting solution, System for University Planning, Evaluation and Reporting, SUPER (Donaldson, 2010).

After the year has passed, the actual appraisal is initiated by the county director, the front-line supervisor for the organization. The extension agent prepares materials to demonstrate competence and performance in the criteria during the past year. The extension agent may attach any number of documents or any amount of text to his/her electronic appraisal form in SUPER. The appraisal form is due to the county director on or about December 1 of every year. The county director completes the rating form in a one-on-one meeting with the extension agent. The county director then forwards the rating form and materials prepared by the extension agent to the regional director who makes the final rating in one-on-one consultation with the county director. The exception is that every third year, the regional director meets directly with the extension agent (Byrd, 2007). The rating form showing the final rating is shared with the extension agent for his/her signature and the forms are forwarded to UT Human Resources (Cross, 2009).

Problem

No studies exist which describe Tennessee extension agents' perceptions of their performance appraisal system. Yet, a performance appraisal system influences job satisfaction, performance and the attainment of the organization's goals. UT Extension annually spends over \$40 million in federal, state, and local government funding on

personnel salaries and benefits (University of Tennessee, 2009); therefore, effective performance appraisal is necessary for stewardship of public funds. An understanding of extension agent views toward the existing performance appraisal system may inform future decisions about the use of this particular system and the use of non-numeric systems in general, both in Tennessee and elsewhere. An understanding of employee perceptions may contribute to more effective personnel administration, specifically more effective appraisal.

Purpose/Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine extension agents' perceptions of the Tennessee Extension Performance Appraisal System. Specific research questions follow:

1. What are the extension agents' perceptions of the current performance appraisal system?
2. What are the extension agents' perceptions of any needed improvements to the performance appraisal system?
3. What are the extension agents' perceptions of the roles and behaviors of their appraisers (specific to the performance appraisal process)?

Methodology

This research study used a survey instrument that measured the extension agents' perceptions of the current appraisal system and perceptions of the role and behavior of their appraiser (appraiser performance). The instrument was created by the researcher, drawing upon the current appraisal process and the literature review conducted for this study. It was reviewed by an expert panel. The entire population of 312 extension agents

employed by the University of Tennessee and Tennessee State University was invited to complete the survey. In data analysis, the descriptive statistics used were mean, mode, and percentage. Written comments were analyzed by looking for key themes, and these themes were reported in tabular form and described.

Importance of the Study

This study was needed to assess extension agents' perceptions of the current appraisal system. Such information can be useful to UT Extension and TSU Extension administrators in making decisions about the use of the current system and the use of non-numeric systems in general.

Very few studies of extension agent perceptions of their performance appraisal system have been completed; in fact, a search of 46 years (1963 – 2009) of issues of the *Journal of Extension* found only eight studies of performance appraisal systems (Davis & Verma, 1993; Heckel, 1978; Kuchinke, Correthers & Cecil, 2008; Patterson, 1987; Peterson & McDonald, 2009; Rice, 2001; Terry & Israel, 2004; Zoller & Safrit, 1999). Of these eight studies, only one (Davis & Verma, 1993) was exclusively from the agent's viewpoint. Performance appraisal has received only a peripheral glance, being mentioned briefly in studies of job satisfaction, management and employee retention. Clearly, more understanding is needed. For example, Terry and Israel (2004) found that the level of client satisfaction did not coincide with employee performance ratings, but there are few such studies, and the specific relationships between client or employee satisfaction and performance appraisal have received minimal attention.

This study was important in assisting extension administrators to establish how the current appraisal system does or does not contribute to a satisfied workforce. The study served to benchmark perceptions of the current appraisal system so that any changes in perceptions could be tracked. It is important to note that this study was consistent with Baker's (1988) suggestion that "the appraisal system must be maintained continuously, repaired when it breaks down, and updated occasionally to maintain efficiency" (p.75), and that Kuchinke et al. (2008) has suggested that effective performance appraisal contributes to employee satisfaction, retention and engagement. In addition, one study of Ohio State University extension agents found that the cost of replacing a departing employee was 150% of their salary (Ensle, 2004). Finally, extension agents have more positive perceptions of the performance appraisal when the system itself is periodically reviewed (Davis & Verma, 1993). The current study may be used to address these issues, since the performance appraisal system under study was originally implemented in 2002.

Limitations

1. The study was limited to extension agents (including those who also served as county directors) employed by the University of Tennessee or Tennessee State University during January, 2010.
2. Findings were limited to the content of the survey instrument.
3. Findings are only applicable to Tennessee extension agents.

Assumptions

1. It was assumed that a response rate of at least 65% was representative of the population of Tennessee extension agents.
2. It was assumed that the names and email addresses from the UT Extension personnel directory were accurate.
3. It was assumed that the researcher would maintain a lack of bias in conducting the study, as the researcher is an employee of the UT Extension. The researcher works as an extension specialist in program development and evaluation with no supervisory responsibility for any members of the study population. Oversight of the performance appraisal system was not part of the researcher's job description.

Delimitations

All county directors of Extension Offices in Tennessee also serve as county extension agents. The focus of this study was limited to the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System used since 2002; a survey of this type had never been completed. The results cannot be generalized to extension agents in other states. The study results are also limited to the results of the survey instrument created for the study. No other data were collected.

Definitions

1. Change Agent – The individual who influences the adoption decision by making deliberate attempts to inform/educate/persuade clients (Havelock & Zlotolow, 1995; Rogers, 1995).
2. UT Extension – refers to the University of Tennessee Extension.

3. TSU Extension – refers to the Tennessee State University Cooperative Extension Program.
4. Extension System – refers to the Cooperative Extension System, the National network of land-grant university extension programs and their Federal partner, the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA).
5. County Directors – refers to the front-line supervisors of the UT Extension and TSU Extension county offices. All county directors are extension agents who supervise agents, secretaries, and other personnel assigned to one of Tennessee's 95 county extension offices.
6. Extension Agent – refers to the front-line educators employed by UT Extension or TSU Extension in every county in Tennessee. Extension agents deliver non-formal education through multiple means including demonstrations, farm, home, and workplace visits, and mass media. In this study the term extension agent refers to the population, except in cases where county directors are excluded, as noted.
7. Dual Role Extension Agent – refers to extension agents assigned to 4-H youth development and either agriculture and natural resources or family and consumer sciences (Tritt, 1990).
8. Regional Program Leader – refers to the regional coordinators for UT and TSU Extension. They typically serve approximately 30 counties in a given program area (i.e., agriculture and natural resources). Their main job functions are to link

- agents with University resources and coordinate regional Extension events, including staff development.
9. Regional Director – refers to the executive directors of UT and TSU Extension regions. They oversee personnel in approximately 30 Tennessee counties. Among other duties, they finalize performance appraisals for all Extension personnel in the region.
 10. Subject Matter Expert – refers to the subject matter specialists with job titles such as State Extension Specialist or Area Extension Specialist who provide curricula and publications to extension agents in conducting various programs. Subject matter specialists are typically faculty of university academic departments with terminal degrees in agricultural sciences, natural resources, community development, family and consumer sciences, or youth development.
 11. Perceptions of Current Performance Appraisal System – refers to judgments about or disposition toward the performance appraisal system.
 12. Roles and Behaviors of Appraisers (or Raters) – refers to the conduct of appraisers (raters) during the performance appraisal process; these items describe the perception of competence in conducting the appraisal.
 13. Performance appraisal – The interpretation of a performance measurement in terms of relative or absolute levels of effectiveness and/or the standards of performance met (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984).

14. Performance dimension – A conceptually defined area of work ranging in specificity from tasks, behaviors, or elements to more generic classifications such as clerical, interpersonal, or supervisory (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984).
15. Performance – Those outcomes that are produced or behaviors that are exhibited in order to perform certain job activities over a specific period of time (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the subject matter and the investigation, including statement of the problem and purpose, methodology, research questions, and importance of the study. The second chapter reviews the literature in performance appraisal outcomes; appraiser errors; instruction for appraisers; performance appraisal of county extension agents; Tennessee Extension Agent performance appraisal process; and job satisfaction. Chapter Three provides the methodology used in this investigation, and includes the population, study design, instrumentation, data collection and analysis. The study findings are in Chapter Four, organized by the study's three research questions. The final chapter, Chapter Five, contains the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for improvement of the current Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System and for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study surveyed Tennessee county extension agents (including those who serve as county directors) regarding their perceptions of the performance appraisal system used by UT Extension and TSU Extension. The study research questions examined extension agents' perceptions of the current performance appraisal system including needed improvements and perceptions of the roles and behaviors of their appraisers. The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature in topics germane to the research questions.

The performance appraisal literature is wide-ranging across many disciplines and of an extremely large volume. In contrast, few studies have been completed of extension agents' perceptions of performance appraisal. The sheer volume prevented an exhaustive review; therefore, an exhaustive and comprehensive review was pursued in topics reflective of the research questions. Additional parameters for the literature review were studies involving exempt employees (the same job classification as extension agents) and studies in peer-reviewed journals except commentaries and best practices where noted. This literature review primarily used the following databases: University of Tennessee Libraries Catalog, Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations, Business Source Premier, Ebsco Host, Google Scholar, and Educational Resources Information Center. This literature review is divided into sections as follows: employee perceptions of performance appraisal, roles and behaviors of appraisers, appraisers' problems, appraisers' instruction, performance appraisal of extension agents, and job satisfaction.

Employee Perceptions of Performance Appraisal

For most of the 20th century, research in performance appraisal focused primarily on performance measurement and accuracy, with an emphasis on the instruments used for appraisal. Few research resources were invested in studies that explored the human aspects of appraisal, specifically, employee perceptions (Lopez, 1968; Meyer, Kay & French, 1965). Today, research in the employee perceptions of performance appraisal is a strategy for organizations to better manage human resources (Fletcher, 2001).

Ilgen, Peterson, Martin, and Boeschen (1981) studied 60 pairs of supervisors and employees in the wood products industry regarding their perceptions of and reactions to the performance appraisal interviews. The supervisors and employees answered questionnaires about the appraisal system and their work performance both before and after the actual performance appraisal ratings and interview. The researchers used dependent t-tests to show that employees rate their performance higher than their supervisor's rating of them, both before and after the appraisal interview. In addition, researchers found that employees had more positive perceptions of performance appraisal when the feedback they receive about their job is frequent and specific.

Employee perceptions of performance appraisal have also been studied from a qualitative orientation. Narcisse and Harcourt (2008) conducted 20 interviews with Saint Lucian public service employees. Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts demonstrated that employees evaluate the fairness of the appraisal system based on training for themselves and their supervisors, performance dimensions relevant to the job, and consistency in rewards.

Moussavi and Ashbaugh (1995) deployed a performance appraisal system based on employees and supervisors setting goals together. The study involved 352 state government employees, in a Western state, across six departments. They found that the system had no relationship to employees' perception of supervision, whether participatory or authoritative, nor the employees' perception of the organization's decision-making policies (whether positive or negative perceptions).

Mani (2002) researched employee perception of the Performance Management Program at East Carolina University through a survey of 69 paraprofessional University employees. Mani found that nearly one-half of the employees were neither satisfied with nor trusted their supervisor. Logistic regression was used where the independent variables were the employees' satisfaction with their supervisor and trust in their supervisor and the dependent variable was satisfaction with the East Carolina performance appraisal system. Mani concluded that employee satisfaction with the performance appraisal system was related to the employee's satisfaction with and trust in his/her direct supervisor. Employees in this study who were satisfied with the supervisor were 1.59 times more likely to be satisfied with the performance appraisal system.

Mayer and Davis (1999) studied two performance appraisal systems at a manufacturing firm in the Midwest. They measured employee perceptions, including trust in management and accuracy of the appraisal system, over a 14-month period during which one performance appraisal system was replaced with a new system. Through focus groups with employees, the researchers established that employees viewed the existing appraisal system as not reflective of the actual jobs. Employee surveys were used to

measure the level of trust in top management. The surveys used a five-part scale with agree and disagree as the anchors. An example of a trust item was, “I would be comfortable giving top management a task or problem which was critical to me, even if I could not monitor their actions” (p.136). The new performance appraisal system involved an employee self-appraisal, a supervisory appraisal, and a meeting between the employee and supervisor to reconcile the two ratings before the appraisal was shared with top management. This new appraisal system was viewed as more accurate by employees, but it did not change their trust levels in management.

From the research discussed above, several conclusions can be drawn relative to employee perceptions. Employees perceive the appraisal system more favorably when the feedback they receive is specific and frequent. Employees perceive the appraisal system more favorably to the extent that they trust their supervisor. An important factor in the employee perception of fairness is the degree to which employees view the performance dimensions as reflective of their actual jobs. Research has also been conducted to explore employee perceptions of performance appraisal and its relationship to overall job satisfaction. This discussion is found in the job satisfaction section of this chapter.

Extension Agents' Perceptions of Performance Appraisal

Wolford (1985) surveyed the population of 380 extension agents employed by Virginia Cooperative Extension Service and conducted 12 interviews with agents to analyze perceptions toward performance appraisal, especially relevancy and value. The survey included the performance dimensions and a Thurston scale for rating relevancy and value. While the agents viewed all of the performance dimensions as relevant to their

jobs, they differed on the degree of relevancy by race, gender, program area, and position. Supervisors, African-Americans, males, and those assigned to agriculture viewed the performance dimensions as much more relevant than agents who did not have supervisory assignments, whites, females, and those assigned to 4-H and/or family and consumer sciences. No differences for race, gender, program area, and position were found in value ratings. In the interviews conducted with 12 agents, Wolford found that agents perceive a lack of communication with their supervisors. They viewed the present performance appraisal system with a lack of trust, questionable accuracy and questionable adequacy.

On January 1, 1987, the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service expanded the responsibilities of county directors to include extension agent performance appraisal. Formerly, the regional directors conducted the agent performance appraisal, and county directors conducted the appraisal of county-based employees other than extension agents, such as secretaries. Vogt and Van Tilburg (1989) studied employee perceptions of this change through a questionnaire completed by a sample of 54 county directors and 71 agents. The researchers measured satisfaction with this new approach to performance appraisal. The county directors were significantly more satisfied than the extension agents. The researchers found that satisfaction was not related to age combination, gender combination, or program assignments combination of the extension agents and county directors. The researchers also found a significant change in satisfaction with the office relationship regarding communication. The county directors were significantly more satisfied with communication among coworkers than the extension agents.

Davis and Verma (1993) compared extension agents' views of their numeric performance appraisal to the agents' perception of the ideal performance appraisal system in a seven-state study of 602 agents. The study found that agents perceive the ideal performance appraisal as one in which their appraisers had adequate instruction, and plan of work (or personal job objective) was incorporated into the appraisal. This is consistent with Heckel (1978) who proposed that performance appraisals for extension agents should include a review of the current Extension plan of work and include outputs, such as the number of people reached through the individual agent's programming.

Research has suggested that agents prefer a performance appraisal system in which a team of appraisers is used rather than a single appraiser (Davis & Verma, 1993; Zoller & Safrit, 1999). Davis and Verma (1993) suggested that the trio of appraisers be the county directors, regional director and state/regional specialist. The Ohio State University Extension has utilized such a trio to conduct the agent performance appraisal (Zoller & Safrit, 1999).

Zoller and Safrit (1999) surveyed a census of 298 extension agents in Ohio regarding their experiences with agent support teams, composed of agents, the county extension director, subject matter specialist, and the regional (or district) director. The teams were organized as self-directed work groups, but they evolved to include the concepts of both 360 degree feedback and quality circles. Prior to the establishment of support teams, only the county director and regional director completed the agent's performance appraisal. Using a scale of one to four where one equaled not important and four equaled very important, the respondents rated the importance of the work teams to

eight constructs (personal and interpersonal skills, program promotion and public relations, program implementation and teaching, supervisor and support team responsibilities, program planning and development, professional growth, program evaluation, and research and scholarly activities). The findings showed that agents viewed the constructs as important, but they wanted more involvement from the support team to achieve their professional and programmatic goals.

Appraisers

Much research has been focused on appraisers. The literature review for the present study explored three appraiser variables consistent with the study research questions. This literature review focused on the appraiser's roles and behaviors, errors, and needed instruction.

Roles and Behaviors of Appraisers

Meyer, Kay and French (1965) studied 92 professionals employed by General Electric. The employees completed two appraisal interviews conducted by their immediate supervisor. The first interview focused on performance during the past year, and salary decisions (i.e., a merit raise) based on performance. The second interview focused on planning and goal-setting for the future. Before and after the interviews, both supervisors and employees were surveyed to determine their overall attitude toward appraisal and their perceived work performance. In addition, college psychology students were taught to observe every interview for defensiveness, praise, criticism, employee's reactions and employee's participation in goal-setting. The findings suggested that both employees and supervisors perceive better job performance from an interview focused on

goals and plans. According to Meyer, et al., when the appraiser has the role of counselor rather than the role of judge, performance appraisal contributes to better employee performance. Furthermore, the researchers suggested that employee performance could not adequately be evaluated in a single interview which was aimed at improving performance, and they suggested that supervisors take an active, coaching role every day.

In a survey study of 474 professionals at a research and development firm, Dipboye and de Pontbriand (1981) found three factors that determined positive employee perceptions of performance appraisal. First, employees who had a positive perception of performance appraisal felt that the performance dimensions used to assess their job were relevant to their actual job responsibilities. Second, positive employee perceptions of appraisal were related to employees having time to state their perspective on any issues raised. Third, positive perceptions were related to a discussion of specific job objectives and plans with their supervisor.

Appraiser Errors

The literature review demonstrated these major appraiser errors:

- leniency effect (Baker 1988; Lewis, 1997; Shore & Strauss, 2008),
- central tendency effect (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984; Daley, 1992),
- halo effect (Broadwell, 1985; Guion, 1998; Lambert, 1984; Thorndike, 1920),
- recency effect (Broadwell, 1985),
- contrast errors (Broadwell, 1985; Daley, 1992), and

- interpersonal effect (Daley, 1992; Guion, 1998; Robbins & DeNisi, 1998; Varma & Pichler, 2007; Wilson & Jones, 2008).

The leniency effect is evident when appraisers make only high ratings of employees, even those who did not earn high ratings. Baker (1988) has described the leniency effect as problematic because inflated ratings do not help the organization to distinguish different performance levels of employees. Lewis (1997) found a 20% increase in the top rating category of performance appraisal scores over a five-year period that could not be explained through use of a logit model. He attributed this increase to the leniency effect.

Shoe and Strauss (2008) conducted an experiment to determine how organizational goals may or may not influence appraisers when conducting employee appraisals. They had 143 undergraduate students rate fictional subordinates using employee information such as tardiness, absenteeism, and accuracy of work. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups. One group was told that the company's major goals were related to high morale. The second group was told the firm's goal was to improve the organization's performance. The first group tended to provide higher ratings for the same employee than the second group indicating that appraisers tend to be lenient given the influence of organizational goals.

Daley (1992) described central tendency effect as an appraiser's tendency to rate all employees using the middle rating. Guion (1998) noted that central tendency was caused by appraisers who wanted to "avoid unpleasant consequences by avoiding

extreme ratings” (p. 578). Central tendency is especially problematic when appraisal ratings are used for personnel decisions, including merit pay (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984).

The halo effect, first named by Thorndike (1920), occurs when appraisers are impressed with some personal or performance traits, but assign positive ratings to all performance traits because they were unduly influenced by a few traits (Guion, 1998; Broadwell, 1985; Bernardin & Beatty, 1984; Lambert, 1984). Guion (1998) points out that while the halo effect is a real error validated by research; all observed correlations in performance appraisal ratings should not be viewed as errors.

The term “recency effect” describes appraisal errors produced when appraisers are too heavily influenced by recent performance of an employee without consideration for the entire rating period (Broadwell, 1985).

Contrast errors occur when appraisers compare employees to each other, rather than objectively comparing all employees to prescribed performance standards (Daley, 1992). Broadwell (1985) points out the unfairness of contrast errors after supervisors and employees have agreed to the job’s performance standards, but the standards are not considered in the appraisal. The performance standards (or criteria) used for performance appraisal should be based on research and best practice literature, job description, and agreement regarding the standards between employees and their appraisers (French & Malo, 1987).

Interpersonal errors occur when the employee’s likeability (Varma & Pichler, 2007), race, ethnicity, gender, and/or religion are considered in the rating (Guion, 1998). Interpersonal errors differ from leniency errors where appraisers assign high ratings to all

employees and halo effects where appraisers are unduly influenced by one or very few performance dimensions. Daley (1992) has described how appraisers will often give higher ratings to employees they fear will disagree with the appraisal and use the organizational grievance process. Another example of interpersonal error occurs when the appraiser's career advancement depends on the performance of the employee. The appraiser provides a higher rating than the employee earned to keep the employee happy and performing.

Some research has identified bias based on gender in appraisal ratings (Lewis, 1997) while other research has shown that gender has no influence on appraisal ratings. Bretz, Milkovich, and Read (1992) analyzed 11 field studies and six laboratory studies of performance appraisal conducted from 1985 to 1990. They found no common conclusions in the study findings related to gender.

Instruction for Appraisers

The literature points to instruction for appraisers as a key to a fairer and more reliable performance appraisal system. The literature points to training appraisers in three concepts: employee behaviors/practices representing the appraisal standards; valid, reliable assessment procedures; and interpretation of data (Broadwell, 1985; Daley, 1992; Grote, 2008; Guion, 1998; Rasch, 2004; Vasset, Marnburg, & Furunes, 2010). Daley (1992) suggests that instruction is effective at reducing appraiser errors. Middlewood (2001) proposed, based on results of a teacher appraisal study, that appraisers need experience and instruction in the overall aim and values behind a performance appraisal system. Regarding performance appraisals in higher education, Rasch (2004) proposed

that appraisers needed instruction on understanding continuous improvement and leadership. Krayter (1987) described effective appraiser training as one in which communication skills for the performance appraisal interview were stressed. Krayter further described that appraisers ought to role play both the interviewer (appraiser) and interviewee role as part of their instruction. The Alabama Professional Education Personnel Evaluation Program (Morton, 2008) includes standards for appraisers, including a knowledge test and performance skills. French and Malo (1987) have identified appraiser training as an essential component to a performance appraisal system in creating career ladder programs for several state Departments of Education.

Performance Appraisal of County Extension Agents

The literature regarding the performance appraisal of extension agents includes both commentary and research. The commentaries specific to extension personnel reflect the development of performance appraisal practices and concepts across disciplines and organizations. The first commentaries on the subject were made more than 40 years ago by Warner (1967) who proposed that Cooperative Extension programs would be strengthened if supervisors would provide frequent feedback to employees and Bruce and Carter (1967) who noted the need for employee recognition and self-appraisal through program statistics. This thought was echoed by Durfee (1970) who implored Extension administrators to adopt a management by objectives approach and to more effectively coach extension agents for better performance. Buford (1990) posited that Cooperative Extension performance appraisal systems were subjective and ambiguous. In an information age, Buford proposed, Cooperative Extension needed to devote more effort

to employee recognition and career advancement opportunities. Likewise, Boone (1990) noted that Cooperative Extension performance appraisal systems completely ignored interdisciplinary work, despite the fact that modern-day societal problems need solutions from interdisciplinary teams.

Ladewig and Shiao (1983) described the historical approaches to appraise county extension agents: personal interviews, subjective ratings, and knowledge testing. In 1977, the United States Department of Agriculture contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop instruments to assist land-grant universities in appraising extension agent performance. AIR managed a nationwide study that yielded a “Performance-Against-Standards Form” with 200 items in six broad categories: program planning, program promotion and public relations, program implementation, program support, interpersonal and personal, and supervisory performance. In a follow-up study with Ohio State University extension agents, Ladewig and Shiao (1983) found about 20% of the items not applicable to an extension agent’s job. Additional reliability analysis (using item score to total score correlation) reduced the instrument to 60 items (Ladewig and Shiao, 1983).

Another line of research has been clientele feedback and satisfaction regarding the effectiveness of extension agents. Terry and Israel (2004) explored relationships between clientele satisfaction and the extension agents’ performance appraisal rating. The researchers used clientele satisfaction surveys from 1997 to 2000; a total of 2,028 satisfaction surveys were included in the analysis. The survey was composed of five questions related to experiences with Florida Cooperative Extension (i.e., “Was the

information accurate and up-to-date?” and “Did the information solve your problem or meet your need?”). The answer categories were yes, no, and don’t know. Surveys were conducted approximately 30 days after the clients contacted their local Florida Cooperative Extension offices. Terry and Israel found that customer satisfaction was not related in any way to the extension agents’ performance appraisal score, a finding that “contradicts conventional wisdom that Extension’s top performers...generate the greatest benefits for clients” (p.8).

Lackman, Nieto and Gliem (1997) studied the validation and use of an instrument for clientele to rate the teaching effectiveness of extension agents. The instrument had nine statements that covered learning, enthusiasm, organization, group interaction, individual rapport and an overall rating. Example statements included “I learned a lot from this teacher” (learning) and “The teacher made me feel welcome” (rapport). The instrument was validated through the use of a panel of experts, field tests, and reliability analysis. The Flesh-Kincaid readability index was used to demonstrate that the instrument could be easily read at the fifth grade reading level. Lackman et al. (1997) proposed that this information on teaching effectiveness should be part of an employee portfolio for appraisal that would also include information from peers, experts and supervisors.

Kuchinke et al. (2008) studied 16 performance appraisal systems used by State Extension organizations. They found that it was acceptable for the regional director to conduct the annual performance appraisal and the performance appraisal interview with extension agents. Yet, they also viewed this lack of input from multiple appraisers as a weakness of the performance appraisal system used for 10 years by the University of

Illinois Extension. They also found a need for alignment between the performance appraisal system and the Extension organization's strategic goals.

Rice (2001) studied the relationships between extension county director performance appraisal and ratings by an assessment center. Assessment centers consider multiple information sources and observations to rate employees for promotion or readiness for a given job assignment. Assessment centers typically use assessors who identify the employees' strengths and weaknesses, using observations and interviews, among other possible information sources. In the Rice study, the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service assessment center ratings were focused on specific skills, including leadership, planning and organizing. The assessment center ratings had been used to select county directors from among the ranks of extension agents. Rice compared assessment center ratings to the performance appraisal scores for the administrative performance dimension. He found that the assessment center scores could be used to predict the appraisal rating for the administrative performance dimension for two out of the first three years of county director service.

Extension Performance Appraisal and Litigation

The 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination in employment practices on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Appraisers must receive instruction in conducting appraisals, and employees must know the criteria upfront for the performance appraisal system to pass a test of litigation (Sherman, Bohlander & Snell, 1998). For the present study, two key cases are of interest: *Wade vs. Mississippi*

Cooperative Extension Service (1976) and *Elliott v. University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service* (1985).

In *Wade vs. Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service* (1976), Charlie Wade alleged that during his employment with Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service (MCES) he was not promoted from associate extension agent to extension agent because of racial discrimination. Wade, an African-American, held a Master's degree in Agriculture and had 15 years of experience as a MCES employee. He was passed over for promotion to extension agent in Holmes County, Mississippi for an area cotton specialist who had earned a Bachelor's degree and had two years of experience with the organization. In this case, MCES argued that the promotion decision was based on sound appraisal information, and that the appraisal system had been validated by an internal process at MCES. The appraisal system considered five factors:

- degree held, with preference given to individuals with Master's degree or above;
- length of service with MCES;
- technical knowledge as measured by tests at agent inservice training;
- performance on the job; and
- the individual's concept of the job.

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi and the United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, found that the standards for MCES appraisal were vague and highly subjective, especially the performance dimensions known as the individual's concept of the job (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984; Nathan &

Cascio, 1986), outlook on life, and loyalty (Nathan & Cascio, 1986; Olson, 1981). The performance appraisal ratings were subject to the “whim or fancy” of the appraiser (Olson, 1981, p. 60), and the courts found that the evaluation form had been used to deny promotions to employees representing racial minority groups. Testimony indicated that the evaluation form’s questions had too many factors to provide a sound measure of any one criterion. The courts further found that the MCES was incorrectly applying the same evaluation form to every job in the organization. One other agent (an African-American female), assigned to family and consumer sciences, was a plaintiff in the case. Through the court order, both she and Wade received promotions and back pay (*Wade vs. Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service*, 1976).

In the case of *Elliott v. University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service* (1985), Robert Elliott, a Madison County extension agent, argued racial discrimination in his termination from the Agricultural Extension Service (AES). (AES was the name of the University of Tennessee Extension prior to 2001.) The AES Dean informed Elliott that he was terminated due to “inadequate work performance, inadequate job behavior, and incidents of gross misconduct.” Elliott presented to the court various claims of racial discrimination during his employment, including a racial slur by a judge at an AES livestock event. As part of the AES termination decision, the Madison County Agricultural Committee had held a vote in regard to Elliott’s continued employment. The committee was composed of seven members with five white committee members voting to recommend termination and two black committee members abstaining. The court

papers indicate that two of the white Agricultural Committee members were related to the livestock judge by marriage.

Days after his termination, Elliott had requested due process through the Tennessee Administrative Review in which an administrative judge (a chancery court judge review without a jury) hears arguments in employment matters and issues a ruling. Before the hearing, Elliott filed his case with the United States Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit. The court allowed the Tennessee Administrative Review to continue. The administrative judge ruled that Elliott should retain employment, but in Shelby County rather than Madison County. The Sixth Circuit Court ruled in Elliott's favor (*Elliott v. University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service*, 1985). This matter was later appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States which upheld the original Tennessee Administrative Review (*University of Tennessee v. Elliott*, 1986). Interestingly, the court rulings did not mention the AES performance appraisal system.

Job Satisfaction

Research has shown that the employees' perception of the performance appraisal system is related to job satisfaction (Lawler, 1994; Taylor et al., 1995). Previous research has identified nine areas that determine job satisfaction: pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, performance-based rewards, required rules and procedures, coworkers, nature of work and communication (Spector, 1985; Spector, 1997). Bruce and Blackburn (1992) summarized research findings on job satisfaction from 11 studies and found that employees who are satisfied with their jobs have greater motivation which produces

greater employee productivity, greater employee longevity and greater efficiency for the entire organization.

Hill (2009) studied job satisfaction of 300 counselor-educators using the Occupational Stress Inventory with a total of 140 items measuring job stress and coping mechanisms. Hill found that non-tenured female and minority faculty members experienced the most stress on the job, yet multiple analyses of variance revealed that neither minority status nor gender contributed to significant differences in job satisfaction. Non-tenured faculty experienced unclear job expectations and lower overall job satisfaction than tenured faculty members.

Giles and Mossholder (1990) studied 102 textile industry professionals' perceptions of their performance appraisal system. The researchers examined the overall satisfaction of the employees with the performance appraisal system and (1) their last appraisal rating, (2) satisfaction with their supervisor, (3) satisfaction with the appraisal interview with their supervisor, (4) satisfaction with salary, and (5) overall job satisfaction. Using hierarchical regression analysis, the researchers found that the most recent appraisal rating did not correlate with satisfaction with the appraisal system, nor with any of the other variables. The employees' satisfaction with their salary was positively correlated with their overall satisfaction with the appraisal system. The employee's overall job satisfaction was also positively correlated with their overall job satisfaction.

Swiercz, Icenogle, Bryan and Renn (1993) studied 230 professional rehabilitation counselors regarding perceptions of their performance appraisal. Using a questionnaire

that focused on fairness of the appraisal process and job satisfaction, the study found that employees were more interested in a fair performance appraisal process than their actual performance appraisal rating, a finding that is consistent with research by Greenberg (1987) and Lind and Tyler (1988). Using hierarchical regression analysis, the researchers found that the employee's perception of fairness regarding the performance appraisal process was related to job satisfaction; the higher their perception of fairness, the higher their overall job satisfaction (Swiercz et al., 1993).

In a longitudinal study of 256 employees, Jawahar (2006) matched employee survey reactions to their appraisal ratings to describe how the appraisal ratings did or did not influence job performance. After controlling for the employees' overall job satisfaction and the influence of past appraisals, Jawahar found that the employees' reactions to their appraisals explained 11% of the variance in performance after the appraisal.

In another study, Jawahar (2010) found that employees who were satisfied with their performance appraisal system have greater overall job satisfaction, lower turnover intention, and increased commitment to the organization. Jawahar suggested that the employee's perception of the degree to which the performance appraisal is a fair system is a major contributor to employee job satisfaction. Likewise, in a study of 216,852 federal employees who completed the 2006 Federal Human Capital Survey, Yang and Kassekari (2009) found job satisfaction to be significantly higher for employees who perceived the performance appraisal system as effective and fair compared to employees who perceived the appraisal system as ineffective and unfair. The researchers stipulate

that government agencies would be more attractive work environments if performance appraisal were more effective.

Job Satisfaction of Extension Agents

Job satisfaction and factors related to job satisfaction have been studied among extension agents. The major factors studied have included job satisfaction and its relationship to turnover intentions, gender and program area assignments. Job satisfaction of extension agents has demonstrated that low salary is a major factor in poor job satisfaction.

Church and Pals (1982) surveyed 112 agents and former agents regarding job satisfaction and factors associated with turnover intentions. The sample included 56 active extension agents in Idaho who were randomly selected from all agents with four or more years of experience, and 56 former agents who were randomly selected from all resignations from 1974 to 1978. Respondents were asked to rate 25 factors as influencing their decision to stay or leave Extension employment. They rated these factors based on a five-part scale where 1=no influence, 2=little influence, 3=some influence, 4=much influence, and 5=very much influence. The factors that most influenced a decision to leave Extension were a lack of promotion opportunities, required evening and weekend work, and low salary. The factors that most influenced a decision to remain an Extension employee were the autonomy to plan and conduct a program, diversity of day-to-day tasks (“no day is the same in Extension”), and their community’s location and lifestyle. Interestingly, the performance appraisal system was ninth on the list of factors that influenced agents to quit, and 23rd on the list of factors that influenced agents to stay.

In their study, Church and Pals (1982) found differences among extension agents based on program area assignments. An analysis of variance demonstrated that agents assigned to agriculture and natural resources were more influenced to leave the job because of low salary and a lack of promotion opportunities than agents assigned to other program areas. Agents assigned to either family and consumer sciences or 4-H youth development were more influenced to leave based on required evening and weekend work than their colleagues assigned to agriculture and natural resources.

Tritt (1990) studied the population of University of Tennessee extension agents (n=363) regarding their job satisfaction and differences in job satisfaction relative to personal and job characteristics. The constructs studied included: status and prestige, job security, paperwork time, energy required for the job, quality of relationship with clients, pay for the job, level of enjoyment, clarity of evaluation standards, autonomy in job, employee benefits, and recognition from supervisors. She found that agents assigned to agriculture and natural resources had a significantly higher job satisfaction than those assigned to 4-H youth development, as shown by independent t test analysis. In addition, she found that agricultural agents had a higher satisfaction with the clarity of performance appraisal standards than 4-H agents, family and consumer sciences agents, and dual-role agents.

Ezell (2003) studied a random sample of 411 UT and TSU Extension employees, including secretaries and extension agents, regarding job stress and turnover intentions. Ezell found that the employee's job satisfaction was one of the intervening variables, along with organizational commitment and possibly coping skills or social support that

reduced the effects of job pressure on the employee's decision to resign from UT or TSU Extension.

Vlosky and Aguilar (2009) studied the job satisfaction of Extension personnel and relationships to job autonomy, challenges, performance measures, feedback from supervisors, instrumentality and stability. Instrumentality referred to the degree to which the employee expected to achieve some promotion or reward for higher job performance. The researchers invited more than 18,000 Cooperative Extension employees at land-grant universities to complete a job satisfaction survey. They received 2,749 useable surveys. The findings showed that 48% of respondents were female and 52% of respondents were male. The results showed no differences between males and females for job satisfaction or for any of the factors studied. The results demonstrated that job satisfaction comes from multiple and varied workplace factors. All of the factors studied (job autonomy, challenges, performance measures, feedback from supervisors, instrumentality and stability) were found to be related to overall job satisfaction.

Even though the present study does not focus on the job satisfaction of Tennessee extension agents, the major conclusions from job satisfaction research underscore the import of understanding employee perceptions of performance appraisal. Lawler (1994) and Taylor et al. (1995) have shown that the employees' perceptions of performance appraisal are related to job satisfaction. The organizational rewards of higher employee job satisfaction are greater employee productivity, greater employee longevity, and greater efficiency (Bruce & Blackburn, 1992).

Literature Review Summary

Employee perceptions of the performance appraisal system are important. Employees are more interested in a fair performance appraisal process than their actual appraisal rating (Greenberg, 1987; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Swiercz et al., 1993). Employee satisfaction with the appraisal system is dependent on satisfaction and trust in the direct supervisor (Mani, 2002). An important factor in employee perception of fairness in the performance appraisal system is the degree to which employees perceive the performance dimensions as reflective of their actual jobs (Narcisse & Harcourt, 2008). Performance dimensions must reflect research and best practices, job description, and employee and appraiser agreement in the standards (French & Malo, 1987).

The literature demonstrates that employee and organizational success with performance appraisal is closely tied to effective execution by the appraiser, and the literature indicates the need for appraiser training in performance appraisal (Davis & Verma, 1993; French & Malo, 1987), including communication skills, ratings of pre-rated materials, observations and role plays for appraisers (Krayner, 1987). As an example of these findings, the Alabama Professional Education Personnel Evaluation Program has established standards for appraisers' knowledge and skills in conducting the appraisal (Morton, 2008).

Employees who are satisfied with the appraisal system have greater overall job satisfaction (Jawahar, 2006). Previous research has identified nine areas that determine job satisfaction: pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, performance-based rewards, required rules and procedures, coworkers, nature of work and communication (Spector,

1985; Spector, 1997). Job satisfaction studies of extension agents have shown that low salary is a major contributor to poor job satisfaction (Church & Pals, 1982).

Nationally, very few studies have been completed regarding extension agent performance appraisal, and Ladewig and Shiao (1983) show that the need for appraisal tools and best practices for extension agents is a long-standing need in the National Cooperative Extension System. Agricultural agents have been shown to have higher job satisfaction (Tritt, 1990) and higher satisfaction with the relevancy and clarity of the appraisal standards (Tritt, 1990; Wolford, 1985). County directors who conduct appraisal interviews with extension agents are more satisfied with overall office communication than extension agents (Vogt & Van Tilburg, 1989). Research indicates that extension agents prefer a team of appraisers rather than a single appraiser (Davis & Verma, 1993; Zoller & Safrit, 1999). Research is needed to assess the present Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System, especially employee perspectives of the process and their appraisers.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The study was designed to survey county extension agents (including those who serve as county directors) regarding their perceptions of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. Study research questions were:

1. What are the extension agents' perceptions of the current performance appraisal system?
2. What are the extension agents' perceptions of any needed improvements to the performance appraisal system?
3. What are the extension agents' perceptions of the roles and behaviors of their appraisers (specific to the performance appraisal process)?

This chapter outlines the methods used to address these research questions. It includes a description of: (1) population, (2) design of the study, (3) instrumentation, and (4) data analysis.

Population

The population of extension agents employed by UT Extension and TSU Extension in January, 2010 was 312. The total number of positions was 338; UT had 309 total positions and TSU had 29 total positions. The two institutions had 26 vacancies among all allocated extension agent positions. Extension agents were employed in every county of the state. Job qualifications include undergraduate degrees in agriculture, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, or youth development education, depending on position assignments. Many extension agents had Master's degrees in their field or in extension education.

County Extension offices are organized into geographic regions: Western, Central and Eastern with regional offices located in Jackson (Western), Nashville (Central), and Knoxville (Eastern), Tennessee. Regional offices are led by one regional director, two program leaders, and one 4-H specialist. The regional director is responsible for all administrative and personnel oversight including fiscal responsibilities, performance appraisal and hiring. Regional program leaders support the county extension agents by organizing staff development, coordinating regional programs, and connecting agents to university experts. The regional 4-H specialists serve as an educational resource to the county extension agents, conduct regional educational programs, and organize youth activities.

UT Extension staffs agents in 95 counties, and TSU staffs agents in 22 counties. UT Extension staffing ranges from one agent (Lake County) to seven agents (Shelby County). TSU Extension staffing ranges from one agent (Hardemen, Haywood, Lauderdale, Dyer, Henderson, Montgomery, Giles, Maury, Wilson, Cheatham, Moore, Franklin, Scott, Claiborne, Knox, Loudon, and Monroe Counties) to three agents (Davidson and Rutherford Counties). The criteria for deciding the number of agents per county and their assignments vary, but typically include: total county population, number of farms, number of personal bankruptcies, percentage of households below the poverty level, and enrollment in 4-H youth development programs. Agent positions per county for both UT and TSU are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

UT and TSU Extension Agent Positions Per County

Number of Extension Agent Positions Per County ^a	UT Agents Number of Counties	TSU Agents Number of Counties
1 Extension Agent Position	1	17
2 Extension Agent Positions	25	3
3 Extension Agent Positions	33	2
4 Extension Agent Positions	26	0
5 Extension Agent Positions	6	0
6 Extension Agent Positions	3	0
7 Extension Agent Positions	1	0

^aIncludes vacant positions as of September 28, 2010

Among dual-role extension agents assigned to agriculture and natural resources and resource development, 35 of 43 positions (81%) are county directors. Among extension agent positions assigned to only 4-H youth development, five of 69 positions (7%) are county directors. Among extension agent positions assigned to only family and consumer sciences, four of 47 positions (9%) are county directors (see Table 4). The implication for performance appraisal is that most agents with any assignment other than agriculture and natural resources are supervised by a county director with at least one degree in agriculture and natural resources. County directors may be employed by either

UT or TSU, and they supervise all employees assigned to their county regardless of the employee institutional status (UT, TSU or 100% county-paid employee).

Table 4.

Tennessee Extension Agent and County Director Positions

Positions	Extension	County
	Agents	Directors
	(n=217)	(n=95)
Agriculture and Natural Resources	18	2
Agriculture and Natural Resources & 4-H Youth Development	25	2
Family and Consumer Sciences	47	4
Family and Consumer Sciences & 4-H Youth Development	37	10
4-H Youth Development	64	5
Agriculture and Natural Resources & Resource Development	8	34
Family and Consumer Sciences & Resource Development	2	2
Agriculture and Natural Resources; 4-H Youth Development & Resource Development	13	33
Family and Consumer Sciences; 4-H Youth Development & Resource Development	0	3
4-H and Resource Development	3	0

Extension agents are classified as exempt professionals, and they do not hold tenured appointments. Therefore, they do not participate in the same promotion and tenure process as university faculty. As Ezell (2003) has described, they are, paradoxically, university educators outside of the faculty promotion and tenure process.

Design of the Study

This study was a survey of extension agent perceptions of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. The survey is descriptive in nature.

Instrumentation

Instrument Development

The instrument development process for this study included the following elements: literature review, pre-testing, expert panel review, and pilot testing. The survey instrument used in this study had a total of 47 items with 27 items being used for the present study. Of the 27 items, five were demographic questions. The instrument addressed Satisfaction with the Current Appraisal System (14 items) and Satisfaction with Appraiser Performance – views toward the roles/behavior of the appraiser relative to the performance appraisal process (7 items). The instrument also included a section for Overall Job Satisfaction (20 items), but this section was excluded for the present study. The instrument employed a Likert scale to measure these constructs to reflect that the instrument is evaluative in scope and purpose (Colton & Covert, 2008). The instrument was developed to measure the constructs from the vantage point of Tennessee extension agents.

The items used these six response categories: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, and don't know. A final open-ended question asked the participants to mention anything else they wanted to share regarding the performance appraisal system. This questionnaire, shown in Appendix E, was administered in only the online format. The text of the online version is the same as the version shown in the Appendix with one exception. The first three pages of the printed version (the study information sheet) were shown on one screen in the online version.

To write and arrange the items, the researcher first conducted a thorough literature review. In preparing the instrument, the researcher read and re-read the survey items aloud (Colton & Covert, 2007).

Satisfaction with the Current Appraisal System Items

To measure the satisfaction with the current appraisal system, 13 studies provided the basis for 14 questions as shown in Table 5. The studies indicated that the major factors relative to employee satisfaction with an appraisal system were:

- F – Fairness (Kuchinke, et al., 2008; Lewis, 1997; Swiercz, et al., 1993);
- JD – Job Description (Baker, 1998; Broadwell, 1985; French & Malo, 1987)
- MA – Multiple Appraisers (Davis & Verma, 1993; Kuchinke et al., 2008; Mani, 2002; Vogt & Van Tilberg, 1988); and
- PD – Professional Development (Baker, 1998; Broadwell, 1985; Daley, 1992; French & Malo, 1987).

- E – Overall Effectiveness (Davis & Verma, 1993; Jawahar, 2006; Jawahar, 2010)

These factors were translated into the 14 items shown in Table 5.

Table 5.

Theoretical Framework for Satisfaction with the Current Appraisal System Items

Perception Items (Donaldson, 2010)	Factor ^a	Theoretical Framework/Source(s)
1. Is fair.	F	Kuchinke, et al., 2008; Lewis, 1997; Swiercz, et al., 1993
2. Has helped me improve my professionalism.	PD	Daley, 1992
3. Has discouraged me.	E	Jawahar, 2006
4. Is unbiased.	F	Lewis, 1997; Swiercz, et al., 1993
5. Represents what I do on the job.	JD	Baker, 1998; Broadwell, 1985; French & Malo, 1987
6. Is implemented fairly.	F	Lewis, 1997; Swiercz, et al., 1993
7. Helps me understand my job duties.	JD	Baker, 1998; Broadwell, 1985; French & Malo, 1987
8. Needs to be improved.	E	Jawahar, 2010
9. Is close to ideal.	E	Jawahar, 2010; Davis & Verma, 1993
10. Reflects my major job responsibilities.	JD	Baker, 1998; Broadwell, 1985; French & Malo, 1987
11. Causes me confusion about job responsibilities.	JD	Baker, 1998; Broadwell, 1985; French & Malo, 1987
12. Would be more accurate if a subject matter specialist served as a rater.	MA	Davis & Verma, 1993; Kuchinke, et al., 2008; Vogt & Van Tilberg, 1988
13. Would be more accurate if County Directors did NOT serve as raters.	MA	Mani, 2002
14. Would be more accurate if a team of the County Directors, regional director and subject matter specialist served as raters.	M	Davis & Verma, 1993; Kuchinke, et al., 2008; Zoller & Safrit, 1993

^aThe factors were abbreviated as follows: F – Fairness, JD – Job Description, MA – Multiple Appraisers, PD – Professional Development, and E – Overall Effectiveness.

Satisfaction with Appraiser Performance Items

To measure perceptions of appraiser performance (views of the behavior of the appraiser relative to performance appraisal), seven questions were developed from eight studies as shown in Table 6. The studies indicated the major factors relative to appraiser performance were:

- J – Appraisers' Judgment/Fairness/Trust (Mani, 2002);
- U – Appraisers' Understanding of the Job Being Appraised (Mani, 2002);
and
- S – Appraisers' Skill/Instruction in Performance Appraisal (Broadwell, 1985; Daley, 1992; French & Malo, 1987; Grote, 2008; Guinn, 1998; Krayner, 1987; Rasch, 2004).

Table 6.

Theoretical Framework for Satisfaction with Appraiser Performance Items

Appraiser Performance Items (Donaldson, 2010)	Factor ^a	Theoretical Framework/Source(s)
1. Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	J	Mani, 2002
2. Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	J	Mani, 2002
3. Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	J	Mani, 2002
4. Understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.	U	Mani, 2002
5. Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.	S	Broadwell, 1985; Daley, 1992; French & Malo, 1987; Grote, 2008; Guinn, 1998; Krayner, 1987; Rasch, 2004
6. Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.	S	Broadwell, 1985; Daley, 1992; French & Malo, 1987; Grote, 2008; Guinn, 1998; Krayner, 1987; Rasch, 2004
7. Showed no appreciation for the work I do.	U	Mani, 2002

^aThe factors were abbreviated as follows: J – Appraisers’ Judgment/Fairness/Trust, U – Appraisers’ Understanding of the Job Being Appraised, and S – Appraisers’ Skill/Instruction in Performance Appraisal.

Pre-Testing

Pre-testing was used to test understanding of the instrument's information sheet, directions, and items and to arrange the items. The pre-test was conducted with four graduate students (pursuing either M.S. or Ph.D.) enrolled in Educational Psychology 583, "Survey Research" during the Spring semester of 2008 at the University of Tennessee. The students reviewed the instrument and research questions and completed the instrument with the researcher present. They provided feedback about the individual items, directions, flow, and overall effectiveness. They only suggested one change. The change was to institute branching prior to the Appraiser Performance items. Branching clarified that extension agents were responding based on their county director's performance and county directors were responding based on their regional director's performance. The instrument shown in Appendix E reflects this branching.

Panel Review

The instrument and research questions were reviewed by an expert panel who reviewed the instrument's effectiveness for answering the research questions discussed in this paper. This expert panel was asked to assess the degree to which the research instrument covered the constructs and addressed the research questions. The panel was composed of eight members as follows: five panel members were state extension administrators and three panel members were regional extension directors. The expert panel received the survey and research questions via email. They were asked to provide any feedback regarding the instrument's look and content and to judge the instrument's effectiveness in addressing the research questions. The panel met together during a

regularly scheduled, monthly administrative meeting to share their insights on the instrument.

The expert panel validated the instrument's face validity, and they found that the instrument supported the research questions. The panel members indicated that the instrument was clear, and that they did not anticipate that respondents would encounter any problems completing it. The panel indicated that the findings would be valuable, and that the findings should be widely shared. The Dean of UT Extension and TSU Extension, key stakeholders for this study, both found that the research questions and instrument were consistent with administrative needs to understand agent perceptions on this subject.

The panel did not suggest any changes. The panel expressed support for the study and support for an anonymous survey to encourage response. As there are only three regional directors, collecting data on location would serve to identify those individuals. Therefore, location information (county and region) were not collected, and the panel endorsed this decision.

Instrument Pilot Test

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee (Appendix D). The Institutional Review Board did not require signed consent forms from participants to participate in this study. An "Information Sheet" that includes all of the information found on the first three pages of the instrument (Appendix E) was required in lieu of signed consent forms. If the respondent began the survey, that action indicated their consent (as described in the information sheet).

The sampling procedure used for the pilot test administration was simple random sampling. The population of extension agents employed by UT Extension and TSU Extension in January, 2010 was 312. A simple random sample of 30 agents (10% of the population) was drawn for the pilot test. The agents were selected by using the UT Extension personnel directory (this directory includes TSU Extension personnel), which is available to the public and accessible online. The agents' names were numbered sequentially starting at one. Haahr's (2008) random number generator was used to select the 30 agents in the pilot test group. List serve discussion groups, specifically, two groups, were created for this study; one with all email addresses for the pilot test group and a second with all email addresses for the population with pilot test members omitted. This was done to protect anonymity, so that an individual participant would not know the addresses or identities of others involved in the study.

The researcher secured permission from the Dean of UT Extension for personnel to complete the instrument during work hours from their offices. Given that the survey was administered online, participants were informed that they could complete the instrument from anywhere with a reliable Internet connection. The cover letter, sent via email to invite participation in the study, explained to the respondent that the instrument would inquire about the performance of their direct supervisor in conducting the performance appraisal process. The letter further explained that the instrument could be completed in a private location, for example, from the respondent's home computer (Appendix D).

The mrInterview software, a commercial product that is part of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, was used to develop and deploy the survey (SPSS, 2008). The software established a universal resource locator (URL) to the instrument, and the link was sent via email to agents in the pilot group. The software allowed for only one response per user name and password which alleviated one of the major disadvantages of online surveys which is duplicate responses per respondent (Colton & Covert, 2007). Individual respondents used their University of Tennessee netID and netID password to access the instrument. (TSU personnel also have a UT-issued netID and netID password.) The netID and netID password authenticate using the University of Tennessee lightweight directory access protocol (known as LDAP).

The pilot survey was available for four weeks, beginning on February 15, 2010, and reminders were shared with non-respondents at the end of every week. A modified Tailored Design Method (Dillman, 2006) was followed to elicit the highest possible response rate. The Tailored Design Method suggests three follow-ups at one week, three weeks, and seven weeks from the date of the initial invitation to participants in the study. The pilot test for this study used two follow-ups at one week and two weeks. After two weeks, an additional 10 pilot test members were drawn for the reasons described below.

Of the original 30 pilot test members, one declined participation due to a lack of knowledge about the appraisal process, providing a sample of 29. Of the first 18 responses received, three did not respond to the scale about appraiser performance. Therefore, an additional 10 names were drawn for the pilot group; again, Haahr's (2008) random number generator was used to select pilot test members. The additional 10 names

were contacted on March 4, 2010, and no follow-ups were made to these individuals. Of the 39 pilot test members (a sample of 12% of the population of extension agents), 28 completed the survey. The completed response rate was 72% (Table 7).

Table 7.

Pilot Test Response Rates by Contact

Contact	Date	N (28)	%
Initial Contact	February 15, 2010	11	39.3
First Follow-Up	February 22, 2010	6	21.4
Second Follow-Up	March 1, 2010	5	17.9
Additional Pilot –			
Initial Contact	March 4, 2010	6	21.4

The researcher noted no problems in branching or survey completion. The responses to the question, “Is there anything else you would like to share about the performance appraisal system, please type it in the box below” were analyzed. Since no common statements were made by the pilot test respondents, the comments were not incorporated into survey items.

Data Collection

The researcher secured permission from the Dean of UT Extension for personnel to complete the instrument during work hours from their offices. Given that the survey was administered online, participants were informed that they could complete the instrument from anywhere with a reliable internet connection. The cover letter, sent via email to invite participation in the study, explained to the respondents that the instrument would inquire about the performance of their direct supervisor in conducting the performance appraisal process. The letter further explained that the instrument could be completed in a private location, for example, from the respondent's home computer (Appendix D). The cover letter included a URL to the instrument.

The instrument was sent to the study population (with email addresses for pilot test members omitted) on April 15, 2010. It was available for four weeks with weekly email reminders (Appendix D). A modified TDM was followed to elicit the highest possible response rate (Dillman, 2006). The non-responders were not tracked; and therefore, they could not be contacted personally. This was done to provide complete anonymity. As employees might feel intimidated in rating the performance of their direct supervisors in conducting the appraisal process, such anonymity was necessary.

While the TDM was followed for the questionnaire construction, cover letter construction, survey administration, and follow-up letter construction, it was not followed in terms of tracking non-respondents due to the need for complete anonymity. Rather than four or more follow-up contacts, only three follow-up emails were made because after the third week of the study, parts of Tennessee were faced with massive flooding,

including a 100-year flood of the Cumberland River. A total of 42 Tennessee Counties were declared Federal Disaster Areas by the Federal Emergency Management Agency of the United States Department of Homeland Security (FEMA, 2010). Several County Extension Offices were closed during this time and/or had no Internet connection due to flooding. Many extension agents took on additional job responsibilities in response to the flooding, including securing stray livestock and teaching food safety programs. Since the survey response rate was already 69%, additional follow-up emails were not sent, and data analysis began.

Data from the pilot test and population were compared. Independent samples t-tests were used to determine any differences between the pilot test and population participants. The independent samples t-tests were performed on all of the applicable variables in the survey, that is, all of the items with a mean score, including years employed. The results demonstrated no significant differences for any variables except three: “The Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System needs to be improved”, “The Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System is fair” and the number of years employed.

There was a significant difference (two-tailed) in the means for “needs to be improved” between the pilot test group ($M=3.85$, $SD=.662$) and the population ($M=4.20$, $SD=.835$); $t(-2.44)$, $p=.02$. These results suggest that the population viewed the current appraisal system less favorably than the pilot test group.

There was a significant difference (two-tailed) in the means for “is fair” between the pilot test group ($M=3.48$, $SD=.935$) and the population ($M=3.09$, $SD=1.158$);

$t(1.994)$, $p=.04$. These results suggest that the population tended to view the current appraisal system as less fair than the pilot test group.

There was a significant difference in the means for years employed in Extension between the pilot test group ($M=13.07$, $SD=9.64$) and the population ($M=17.28$, $SD=10.19$); $t(-2.048)$, $p=.04$. The population tended to have been employed more years (mean = 4.21 additional years) than the pilot test group (Table 8).

Table 8.

T-Test Results for Differences Between Pilot Test Participants and Population

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	Sig.**
Is Fair ^a	Pilot	27	3.48	0.93	.04
	Population	188	3.09	1.15	
Needs to be Improved ^a	Pilot	27	3.85	0.66	.02
	Population	187	4.20	0.83	
Years Employed	Pilot	28	13.07	9.64	.04
	Population	183	17.28	10.19	

^aScale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

**Differences were significant at the .05 level

Despite the three significant differences described above, no significant differences were found using independent sample t-tests between the pilot test group and the population in regard to 24 other variables. Given the similarities of the two groups, the data were combined into a single data file for analysis. The total completed responses

were 218 for a completed response rate of 69%. The 218 completed responses, classified by contact are as follows: 28 responses from the pilot test (12.9%); 91 responses from the initial contact (41.7%); 66 responses from the first follow-up (30.3%); 14 responses from the second follow-up (6.4%); and 19 responses from the third and final follow-up (8.7%). The completed responses per contact are shown in Table 9.

Table 9.

Participant Response Rates by Contact

Contact	Date(s)	N (218)	%
Pilot Test	February 15 – March 15, 2010	28	12.9
Initial Contact	April 15, 2010	91	41.7
First Follow-Up	April 23, 2010	66	30.3
Second Follow-Up	May 4, 2010	14	6.4
Third Follow-Up	May 10, 2010	19	8.7

A total of 218 completed surveys were received in the database. The database recorded 73 individuals who read the information sheet and elected to not participate in the study, or started the questionnaire and stopped before completing it. The software used to administer the online survey instrument was not configured to distinguish between respondents who declined participation and respondents who stopped.

Data Analysis

The data set was constructed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 2008). The researcher ignored missing values through pairwise deletion, deleting only missing values for a case rather than excluding the case from the entire data set.

Descriptive statistics used were mean, mode, and percentage. The demographic information included was employee role (extension agent or extension agent/county director), employee status (active or post-retirement), number of years employed, and program assignment (agriculture and natural resources; family and consumer sciences; resource development; and 4-H youth development).

Because this study was a survey of a population, inferential statistics were not used for data analysis. The last open-ended question on the survey asked, “If there is anything else you would like to share about the performance appraisal system, please type it in the box below.” Of the 218 respondents, 96 provided written comments. The comments offered by participants were analyzed by looking for key themes. Key themes were reported in tabular form and described (Appendix G).

Summary

This study used a survey instrument developed specifically to address the research questions. The instrument addressed Satisfaction with the Current Appraisal System (14 items) and Appraiser Performance – views toward the roles/behavior of the appraiser relative to the performance appraisal process (7 items). The instrument employed a Likert

scale, and it used six response categories: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, and don't know.

The instrument was developed using a literature review, pre-testing, expert panel review, and pilot testing. The pilot test was conducted with 12% of the population of extension agents (n=312) employed by both UT Extension and TSU Extension. The pilot test members were selected using a random number generator. The survey instrument was deployed online. Based on the pilot test, no changes were made in the instrument. The response rate for the pilot test group was 72% (28 of 39).

The entire population of extension agents was invited to participate in the survey. The survey instrument was deployed online. Despite a historic, 100-year flood that caused many members of the population to assume other job duties and/or have limited Internet access, the survey had 188 respondents. The pilot test group and population were compared using independent samples t-tests on all of items on the survey with a mean score. The results demonstrated significant differences on three variables, yet no differences were found on any other variables. Therefore, given the similarities of the two groups, data from the pilot test were combined with the data from the population into a single data file for analysis. The total responses were 218 of 312 for a response rate of 69%.

The data set was constructed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 2008). The researcher ignored missing values through pairwise deletion, deleting only missing values for a case rather than excluding the case from the entire data set. Descriptive statistics used were mean, median, mode, and percentage.

Because this study was a survey of a population, inferential statistics were not used for data analysis. The comments in response to the final, open-ended question were analyzed by looking for key themes which were reported in tabular form and described.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter is organized into sections as follows: (a) purpose of the study, (b) population, (c) extension agents' perceptions of the current appraisal system, (d) extension agents' suggestions for improvement of the appraisal system, (e) roles and behaviors of appraisers, and lastly, (f) summary of key findings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine extension agents' perceptions of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. Specific research questions follow:

1. What are the extension agents' perceptions of the current performance appraisal system?
2. What are the extension agents' perceptions of any needed improvements to the performance appraisal system?
3. What are the extension agents' perceptions of the roles and behaviors of their appraisers (specific to the performance appraisal process)?

Population

The population serving as a basis for this study consisted of 312 Tennessee extension agents. Demographic information collected was: years employed by Extension, institutional status, employment status, and base program assignment. The average years of employment for respondents in this study was 16.7 years with a range of less than one year to 38 years. The mode was two years of employment for 15 (6.9%) respondents. Regarding institutional status, 202 (93.9%) respondents were employed by the University

of Tennessee and 12 (5.6%) respondents were employed by Tennessee State University while one (0.5%) was employed exclusively (100% of salary paid) by a Tennessee county government (Table 10).

Respondents were asked to indicate their assignments in the organization using one or more of the four Extension base programming areas: 4-H youth development, agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, and/or resource development. The largest number, 106 (48.6%) respondents, indicated 4-H youth development, followed by agriculture and natural resources (n=89; 40.8%) and family and consumer sciences (n=71; 32.5%). Only 44 respondents (20.1%) indicated an assignment to resource development (Table 11). In 2009, the Board of Trustees of the University of Tennessee offered a retirement incentive to eligible UT Extension employees that included the option to return to their present appointments on a one-half time basis (also known as limited or post-retirement appointment). All of the respondents except two (n=214; 99%) were on an active employment status, rather than post-retirement status.

Of the study population of 312 people, 217 were extension agents and 95 were county directors. The response rates differed for these two groups; 135 extension agents responded (62% of 217) and 83 county directors responded (87% of 95). See Table 11.

Table 10

Respondents' Years of Employment and Institutional Status

Characteristic	N	%
Years Employed ^a (N=211)		
0-5 years	44	20.9
6-10 years	17	8.0
11-15 years	43	20.4
16-20 years	34	16.1
21-25 years	25	11.8
26-30 years	21	10.0
31 or more years	27	12.8
Institutional Status (N=215)		
University of Tennessee	202	93.9
Tennessee State University	12	5.6
100% County-Paid Employee	1	0.5

^aMean=16.7; Mode=2; Range=<1 to 38

Table 11

Respondents' Employment Statuses, Base Program Assignments and Job Titles

Characteristic	N	%
Employment Status (N=216)		
Active	214	99.0
Post-Retirement Appointment	2	1.0
Base Program Assignment ^a (N=218)		
4-H Youth Development	106	48.6
Agriculture and Natural Resources	89	40.8
Family and Consumer Sciences	71	32.5
Resource Development	44	20.1
Job Title (N=218)		
Extension Agent	135	61.9
Extension Agent and County Director	83	38.1

^aTotals more than 100% as respondents could select multiple base programs.

Research Question One – What are the extension agents' perceptions of the current performance appraisal system?

Perceptions of the current appraisal system were measured on a five-point scale where: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. The instrument had a total of 14 items for perceptions of the current appraisal system representing five major factors relative to employee satisfaction: fairness, job description, multiple appraisers, professional development, and overall effectiveness. Percentages for item responses are shown in Table 12. For the purpose of this discussion, the data have been collapsed, so that disagreement is represented by

strongly disagree and disagree responses and agreement is represented by strongly agree and agree responses. Frequencies for the items are shown in Appendix F. A sixth answer category for “don’t know” was provided on the instrument. Respondents were also allowed to skip questions (provide no answer). In calculating the percentage of responses, the “don’t know” and no answer responses were collapsed and included.

Appraisal System with Overall Effectiveness – The item with the strongest agreement among all items regarding satisfaction with the current appraisal system was, “the performance appraisal system needs to be improved” (78.9%). The majority of respondents disagreed that the performance appraisal system is “close to ideal” (60.2%). Both of these findings indicate that the majority of extension agents perceive that the present performance appraisal system lacks overall effectiveness.

Appraisal System with Multiple Appraisers – The majority of respondents (64.4%) expressed approval for having the county director as an appraiser by disagreeing that the appraisal system “would be more accurate if county directors did NOT serve as raters.” The concept of multiple appraisers was explored. For the item, “would be more accurate if a subject matter specialist served as a rater,” 49.1% disagreed; and for the item, “would be more accurate if a team of the county directors, regional director and subject matter specialist served as raters,” 42.4% disagreed.

Appraisal System Fairness – Regarding fairness, 49.1% agreed that the performance appraisal system “is fair” and 43.1% agreed that the appraisal system “is implemented fairly.” Conversely, four in ten respondents (41.3%) disagreed that the appraisal system “is unbiased.”

An Appraisal System Based on Job Description – Regarding job description, four in ten agreed that the appraisal system “reflects my major job responsibilities” (45.4%) and “helps me understand my job duties” (44.9%). About equal numbers of respondents agreed (41.3%) and disagreed (42.2%) that the appraisal system “represents what I do on the job.”

An Appraisal System that Provides Professional Development – Four in ten respondents (45.8%) agreed that the performance appraisal system “has helped me improve my professionalism.” The percentage of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements regarding their perceptions of the current performance appraisal system ranged from 15.6% to 28%. Nearly one-third of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the appraisal system “causes me confusion about job responsibilities” (27.9%), “is unbiased” (27.1%), and “is close to ideal” (28.0%).

Table 12.

Respondents' Perceptions of the Current Appraisal System

Perceptions (N=218)	%Strongly Disagree	%Disagree	%Neither Agree Nor Disagree	%Agree	%Strongly Agree	%Don't Know/ No Answer
Needs to be improved.*	0.0	3.6	15.6	40.8	38.1	1.8
Is fair.	9.2	23.9	16.5	42.6	6.4	1.3
Has discouraged me.*	5.9	22.9	22.0	28.4	18.8	1.8
Has helped me improve my professionalism.	9.2	22.9	20.1	38.5	7.3	1.8
Reflects my major job responsibilities.	7.3	23.4	22.5	42.2	3.2	1.3
Helps me understand my job duties.	7.8	23.9	22.5	38.5	6.4	1.0
Is implemented fairly.	9.2	23.9	22.0	38.1	5.0	1.8
Represents what I do on the job.	13.8	28.4	15.6	36.2	5.0	1.0
Would be more accurate if a team of the county directors, regional director and subject matter specialist served as raters.*	12.4	30.0	16.5	26.6	9.1	5.5
Causes me confusion about job responsibilities.*	4.1	35.3	27.9	26.2	4.5	1.8
Is unbiased.	12.4	28.9	27.1	26.1	3.2	2.3
Would be more accurate if a subject matter specialist served as a rater.*	17.4	31.7	24.0	16.9	4.5	5.5
Would be more accurate if county directors did NOT serve as raters.*	28.4	36.0	19.2	7.3	6.4	2.7
Is close to ideal.	18.8	41.4	28.0	7.3	1.3	2.7

Note. Row percentages may not total 100.0 due to rounding.

*Items with an asterisk have reverse polarity whereby disagreement is the positive response.

Research Question Two – What are the extension agents’ perceptions of any needed improvements to the performance appraisal system?

The last open-ended question on the survey asked, “If there is anything else you would like to share about the performance appraisal system, please type it in the box below.” All comments are shown in Appendix G. Of the 218 respondents, 96 provided written comments. Of these 96 commenters, 68 (31%) of 218 respondents suggested improvements. In coding, 126 different comments were noted, and 72 comments fit six major themes. Analysis of the written comments revealed these key themes relative to an improved performance appraisal system, as follows:

- *Inefficiency Issues* – Several respondents (n=17) noted that the current appraisal process is too time-consuming and inefficient.
- *Rubric More Closely Reflecting Job* – Several respondents (n=12) described the need to make the rubric more representative of the job.
- *Appraisal Interview* – Several respondents (n=11) noted that extension agents should have a direct appraisal interview with the regional director rather than being represented by the county director at this appraisal interview.
- *County Directors’ Appraisal Skills* – Several respondents (n=12) discussed how county directors needed additional skills in performance appraisal.
- *Merit Raises* – Several respondents (n=11) described the need to implement, improve, and/or strengthen merit raises.

- *Input for the County Directors' Appraisal* – Several respondents (n=9) wrote about the need to allow extension agents to have input into the appraisal of the county directors.

Inefficiency Issues – Several respondents noted that the current appraisal process is too time-consuming and inefficient. Respondents shared that the time of the year when appraisal form and evidence is due to the county director (December 1) is very stressful due to many other activities, including administrative closing dates for holidays and the employees' desire to request annual leave near holidays. Respondents felt that the appraisal process required the agent to compile too much information. Some felt that they were not provided adequate time to discuss the ratings received from the appraisal interview between regional directors and county directors. They described that they were asked to sign their appraisal, yet there was not a formal interview scheduled in which they could receive feedback and understand how to improve. Comments from two respondents were representative of this need:

“It is entirely too time consuming. We as county based agents should not be required to write a ‘thesis’ on ourselves each year. Our supervisors know the level that we are performing, and they should be able to fairly evaluate us using a very simple form.”

“One thing I do not like about it is that it takes a great deal of time to compile the information. This is frustrating because it takes away from time to teach and serve clients.”

Rubric More Closely Reflecting Job – Several respondents described the need to make the rubric more representative of the job. The most common need identified was to

expand recognition for work, as one respondent described, "...beyond the priority program area". One respondent described the need this way:

"The appraisal system does not always seem to accurately reflect the work that we do. We have to spend much of our time planning and conducting events that sometimes do not accurately feed into the appraisal, and while it may be easy to say we can cut some things out, that may not be possible in the county in which we work, if we want to continue to have a positive relationship with the people and agencies in our counties."

Appraisal Interview – Several respondents noted that extension agents should have a direct appraisal interview with the regional director rather than being represented by the county director at this appraisal interview. Respondents indicated that the county directors could not be knowledgeable about all extension programs conducted in the county. Some respondents noted that UT Extension formerly used direct appraisal interviews between regional directors and extension agents. One respondent described the following:

"I think employees should be able to represent themselves at Performance Appraisals with their Regional Director, versus the County Director trying to justify your work. There is NO WAY for the County Director to be able to be familiar with everything that everyone in his/her office has done throughout the year."

Another respondent wrote:

"The lack of agent input on performance appraisals is a key issue. The report submitted sometimes needs further explanation or questions answered, and County Directors often assume they know, when, in all actuality they do not. Being able to explain performance first hand is a benefit this organization is truly lacking."

County Directors' Appraisal Skill – Several respondents described the need to improve performance of the county directors in conducting the appraisal. The written comments from respondents in this study identified all of the most common appraiser errors identified in the literature except for leniency effect and recency effect. The respondents expressed that the role of the county directors should be on improving performance, especially in encouraging high quality performance, yet they felt that many times the county directors place emphasis on finishing the appraisals. Representative comments included the following:

“I have a County Director who has never met with me before or after performance appraisals. I simply receive the form and am told to sign it. Thank goodness for Regional staff who look out for me.”

“In the eyes of our County Director he puts more importance on having something in the boxes versus helping us evaluate and improve our job performance.”

One respondent expressed that training was needed for all employees regarding the appraisal process:

“It might be helpful to provide a review/refresh type training for everyone from time to time in an effort to communicate expectations and ensure positive outcomes for the employee [and for] UT Extension.”

Merit Raises – Several respondents described the need to implement, improve, and/or strengthen merit pay raises. Some described the need to implement a merit pay system that would recognize performance with pay, as one respondent described, “Receiving an E on the performance appraisal offers the same opportunities as receiving a U.”

Respondents also questioned the fairness of past merit pay implementations. One respondent described the past implementation this way:

“Although there have not been merit raises in a long time that is what I find most unfair about the process. How can I score the highest (E) my co-worker score an E, and she gets a raise and I not because ‘somebody’, ‘somewhere’ assigned points to determine who gets the raises and who does not.”

Input for the County Directors’ Appraisal – Several respondents wrote about the need to allow extension agents to have input into the appraisal of the county directors.

One respondent expressed:

“I feel that the county agents and other workers should have an opportunity to provide feedback about the County Directors. In a past life this was called a 360 review and gave the supervisor an opportunity for confidential feedback from direct reports, peers and other co-workers. This is badly needed in Extension.”

Research Question Three – What are the extension agents’ perceptions of the roles and behaviors of their appraisers (specific to the performance appraisal process)?

Perceptions of the roles and behaviors of appraisers (specific to the performance appraisal process) were measured on a five-point scale where: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Appraiser performance was measured with seven items representing three major factors relative to appraiser performance: appraisers’ judgment/fairness/trust, appraisers’ understanding of the job being appraised, and appraisers’ skill/instruction in performance appraisal.

Percentages for item responses are shown in Tables 13 and 14. For the purpose of this discussion, the data have been collapsed so that disagreement is represented by strongly disagree and disagree responses and agreement is represented by strongly agree and agree responses. Frequencies for the items are shown in Appendix F. A sixth answer category

for “don’t know” was provided on the instrument. Respondents were also allowed to skip questions (provide no answer). In calculating the percentage of responses, the “don’t know” and no answer responses were collapsed and included (Tables 13 and 14).

Respondents’ Perceptions of Appraisers

The two items with the strongest agreement were relative to the appraisers’ understanding of the job being appraised and the appraisers’ judgment/fairness/trust. Seven in ten respondents (70.7%) showed their approval for the appraisers’ performance by disagreeing with the statement “showed no appreciation for the work I do.” Also, seven in ten respondents (70.6%) agreed that the appraisers’ “exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.” See Table 13.

Six in ten respondents (66.5%) agreed that appraisers “gave an honest assessment of their job performance” and were “unbiased in making appraisal ratings” (65.1%). Six in ten respondents (60.5%) also showed approval by disagreeing with the statement that their appraiser “provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.”

Respondents identified two areas for improving appraisers’ performance. Regarding skill/instruction in performance appraisal, one-third of respondents (31.2%) agreed that their appraiser “needed more instruction in performance appraisal.” One-third of respondents (35.3%) indicated that appraisers needed a better understanding of the job being appraised by disagreeing that the appraiser “understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.”

The percentage of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements regarding their perceptions of the roles and behaviors of their appraisers

ranged from 12.4% to 22.9%. One-fifth of respondents (22.9%) neither agreed nor disagreed that their appraiser “needed more instruction in performance appraisal,” and 18.8% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the appraisers “provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.” See Table 13.

Table 13. Respondents' Perceptions of the Roles/Behaviors of Appraisers

Perceptions (N=218)	%Strongly Disagree	%Disagree	%Neither Agree Nor Disagree	%Agree	%Strongly Agree	%Don't Know/ No Answer
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	4.1	7.8	14.6	48.6	22.0	2.8
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	4.6	12.4	13.3	45.9	20.6	2.8
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	6.4	7.8	16.1	45.4	19.7	4.6
Understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.	14.2	21.1	19.3	27.1	15.5	2.8
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.*	8.7	34.9	22.9	19.7	11.5	2.3
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.*	10.6	50.0	18.8	12.8	5.9	2.2
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.*	36.7	34.0	12.4	8.7	6.4	2.3

Note. Row percentages may not total 100.0 due to rounding.

*Items with an asterisk have reverse polarity whereby disagreement is the positive response.

Respondents' Perceptions of Appraisers by Job Title

Branching was used in the survey instrument so that extension agents who were not county directors described their perceptions of county directors in conducting appraisals, and county directors described their perceptions of regional directors in conducting appraisals. Overall, extension agents and county directors had similar viewpoints regarding their appraisers.

The majority of extension agents (68.9%) and county directors (73.5%) expressed their positive perception of appraisers' performance by disagreeing with the statement, "showed no appreciation for the work I do." Likewise, the majority of extension agents (62.7%) and county directors (68.8%) agreed that their appraiser "was unbiased in making appraisal ratings." Equal proportions of extension agents (66.7%) and county directors (66.3%) perceived that their appraiser "gave an honest assessment of my job performance."

The biggest difference between extension agents and county directors regarding perceptions of their appraisers was for the item, "needed more instruction in performance appraisal." Among extension agents, 37.8% expressed approval by disagreeing that their county director "needed more instruction in performance appraisal" compared to 53.0% of county directors who expressed approval by disagreeing that their regional director needed more instruction. Among extension agents, 30.6% disagreed that their county director "understands my work better than anyone else in this organization" compared to 43.4% of county directors who disagreed regarding their regional director. Nearly 10%

more county directors (76.0%) than extension agents (67.4%) agreed that their appraiser “exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.”

As shown in Table 14, the percentage of extension agents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the appraiser performance statements ranged from 11.8% to 23%. One in five extension agents neither agreed nor disagreed that their county director “needed more instruction in performance appraisal” (23%) and “provided confusing instructions about the appraisal (20%). The percentage of county directors who neither agreed nor disagreed with the appraiser performance statements ranged from 12% to 23%. One in five county directors neither agreed nor disagreed that their regional director “understands my work better than anyone else in the organization,” (23%) and “needed more instruction in performance appraisal” (23%).

Table 14.

Respondents' Perceptions of the Roles/Behaviors of Appraisers by Job Title

Perceptions	%Strongly Disagree	%Disagree	%Neither Agree Nor Disagree	%Agree	%Strongly Agree	%Don't Know/ No Answer
Extension Agents (N=135)						
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	3.7	8.2	16.3	42.2	25.2	4.4
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	4.4	11.9	12.6	43.0	23.7	4.4
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	6.7	6.0	17.0	37.8	25.2	7.4
Understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.	15.0	15.6	17.0	28.2	20.7	3.7
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.*	6.7	31.1	23.0	20.7	14.8	3.7
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.*	10.4	49.0	20.0	8.9	8.9	3.7
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.*	37.0	31.9	11.9	9.6	6.7	3.7
County Directors (N=83)						
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	4.8	7.2	12.0	59.0	17.0	0.0
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	6.0	10.8	14.5	58.0	10.0	0.0
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	4.8	13.3	15.7	50.6	15.7	0.0
Understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.	13.3	30.1	23.0	25.3	7.2	1.2
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.*	12.0	41.0	23.0	18.1	6.0	0.0
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.*	10.8	51.8	16.9	19.3	1.2	0.0
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.*	36.1	37.4	13.3	7.2	6.0	0.0

Note. Row percentages may not total 100.0 due to rounding.

*Items with an asterisk have reverse polarity whereby disagreement is the positive response

Summary of the Key Findings

Following is a summary of the key findings of this study, organized by research question.

Satisfaction with Current Appraisal System

Extension agents perceive an overall lack of effectiveness with the performance appraisal system as the vast majority of respondents (78.9%) agreed that “the performance appraisal system needs to be improved,” and the majority disagreed (60.2%) that the present system is “close to ideal”. Regarding fairness, four in ten respondents (41.3%) disagreed that the appraisal system “is unbiased”.

Extension agents positively perceive some aspects of the present performance appraisal system, specifically the role of county directors as appraisers and the professional development factor. The majority (64.4%) expressed approval for having the county director as an appraiser by disagreeing that the appraisal system “would be more accurate if county directors did NOT serve as raters.” Four in ten respondents (45.8%) agreed that the performance appraisal system “has helped me improve my professionalism.”

The percentage of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements regarding the current performance appraisal system ranged from 15.6% to 28%. Nearly one-third of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the appraisal system causes them confusion about job responsibilities (27.9%), is unbiased (27.1%), and is close to ideal (28.0%).

An Improved Appraisal System

An analysis of written comments provided six key themes for improving the appraisal system:

- the extension agents' desire to have a direct, annual appraisal interviews with the regional directors;
- the extension agents' desire for a performance appraisal rubric that more accurately reflects their actual job duties;
- the need for a fair, understandable system for merit pay raises;
- the extension agents' desire for a more efficient, less time-consuming performance appraisal system;
- the need to improve the county directors' skills in performance appraisal; and
- the extension agents' desire to contribute to the performance appraisal of their county director to establish more accountability for county directors.

Perceptions of Roles and Behaviors of Appraisers

Despite unfavorable views toward many aspects of the current appraisal system, the results showed that respondents had an overall positive perception and strong support for the continued role of county directors and regional directors in the appraisal process. The two items with the strongest agreement were relative to the appraisers' understanding of the job being appraised and the appraisers' judgment/fairness/trust. Seven in ten respondents (70.7%) showed their approval for the appraisers' performance by disagreeing with the statement "showed no appreciation for the work I do." Also, seven in ten respondents (70.6%) agreed that the appraisers "exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings." Six in ten respondents (66.5%) agreed that appraisers "gave an honest assessment of their job performance" and were "unbiased in making appraisal ratings" (65.1%).

The most notable difference between extension agents and county directors regarding perceptions of their appraisers was for the item, “needed more instruction in performance appraisal.” More than one-half (53.0%) of county directors showed approval by disagreeing that their appraiser “needed more instruction in performance appraisal” compared to 37.8% of extension agents. The written comments from respondents in this study identified all of the most common appraiser errors identified in the literature except for leniency effect and recency effect.

The percentage of extension agents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the appraiser performance statements ranged from 11.8% to 23%, and the percentage of county directors who neither agreed nor disagreed with the appraiser performance statements ranged from 12% to 23%.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's conclusions, discussion, and recommendations are included in this chapter. It is organized into five parts: purpose of the study, conclusions, discussion, recommendations for improvement of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System and recommendations for future research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine Tennessee extension agents' perceptions of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. Specific research questions were:

1. What are the extension agents' perceptions of the current performance appraisal system?
2. What are the extension agents' perceptions of any needed improvements to the performance appraisal system?
3. What are the extension agents' perceptions of the roles and behaviors of their appraisers (specific to the performance appraisal process)?

Conclusions

This study has five conclusions organized by research questions.

Research Question 1. What are the extension agents' perceptions of the current performance appraisal system?

Conclusion. Extension agents perceive that the performance appraisal system lacks overall effectiveness.

Support. Extension agents perceive an overall lack of effectiveness with the performance appraisal system as the vast majority of respondents (78.9%) agreed that "the performance

appraisal system needs to be improved,” and the majority disagreed (60.2%) that the present system is “close to ideal”.

Conclusion. Extension agents perceive the most positive aspects of the current performance appraisal system to be the involvement of county directors as appraisers, fairness, and the improvement of the extension agents’ professional development by having participated in the appraisal system.

Support. The majority (64.4%) expressed approval for having the county director as an appraiser by disagreeing that the appraisal system “would be more accurate if county directors did NOT serve as raters.” Nearly one-half of respondents (49%) agreed that the appraisal system is fair. Four in ten respondents (45.8%) agreed that the performance appraisal system “has helped me improve my professionalism.”

Research Question 2. What are the extension agents’ perceptions of any needed improvements to the performance appraisal system?

Conclusion. The current appraisal system needs improvement as perceived by extension agents. Extension agents identified six areas for improvement:

- extension agent appraisals to include a direct, annual appraisal interview with the regional director;
- a performance appraisal rubric that more accurately reflects extension agent job duties;
- a fair, understandable system for merit raises;
- a more efficient, less time-consuming performance appraisal system;
- additional training for county directors in conducting a performance appraisal; and

- a means for extension agents to contribute to the performance appraisal of their county directors.

Support. Of the 218 respondents, 96 provided written comments. Of these 96 commenters, 68 (31%) of 218 respondents suggested improvements.

Research Question 3. What are the extension agents' perceptions of the roles and behaviors of their appraisers (specific to the performance appraisal process)?

Conclusion. The majority of extension agents have positive perceptions of the performance of the county directors in conducting the performance appraisal, and the majority of county directors have positive perceptions of the performance of the regional directors in conducting the performance appraisal. Appraisers are viewed as exercising positive judgment and fairness, and they are trusted by their subordinates.

Support. The majority of respondents (70.6%) agreed that the appraisers “exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.” Six in ten respondents (66.5%) agreed that appraisers “gave an honest assessment of their job performance” and were “unbiased in making appraisal ratings” (65.1%).

Conclusion. County directors and extension agents differ in perceptions of the performance appraisal instruction needed by their appraisers, with more extension agents than county directors expressing that their appraiser needs more instruction.

Support. Almost one-fourth (24.1%) of county directors showed agreement that their appraiser “needed more instruction in performance appraisal” compared to 35.4% of extension agents.

Discussion

Satisfaction with Current Appraisal System

Previous research may help to understand the respondents' perceptions that the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System lacks overall effectiveness and needs improvement. Narcisse and Harcourt (2008) demonstrated that employees evaluate the fairness of their appraisal system based on training for themselves and their supervisor and consistency in rewards. In addition, employees who feel that performance dimensions used to assess their job are relevant to their actual job responsibilities have a more positive perception of their performance appraisal system (Dipboye & de Pontbriand, 1981; Narcisse & Harcourt, 2008). Key themes from the respondents' written comments are consistent with these insights from previous research.

Regarding satisfaction with the current appraisal system, four in ten respondents expressed agreement that the current system has helped them to improve professional development. Extension may be able to capitalize on this perception by setting employee development as an organizational goal. Doing so may improve both the employee and organizational effectiveness (Daley, 1992).

The number of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements regarding their perceptions of the current performance appraisal system ranged from 15.6% to 28%. While the reason for this is not known, this is an interesting finding for several reasons. First, the expert panel that evaluated the instrument used in this study supported an anonymous survey to elicit greater response. The respondents may fear reprisal for sharing negative perceptions (even though the survey was completely confidential with no names or locations being collected). Second, previous research has identified central tendency effect as a major

appraiser error (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984; Daley, 1992). The considerable number of responses in the middle of the scale on this survey, coupled with the previous research, may indicate an organizational culture that avoids the extremes to avoid unpleasant consequences as Guion (1998) has suggested. Another explanation is that this may be due to the fact that one in five respondents (20.9%) had worked five years or less, and these respondents have had limited experience with the performance appraisal system.

An Improved Appraisal System

The six major suggestions for improving the appraisal system provided by respondents certainly provide keys to reviewing and improving the appraisal system. The literature points to instruction for appraisers as a key to a fairer and more reliable performance appraisal system, and extension agents in this study identified the need for more instruction. The six major suggestions for improving the appraisal system may also provide keys to improving extension agent job satisfaction as previous research has shown that employees' perception of performance appraisal is related to job satisfaction (Lawler, 1994; Taylor et al., 1995).

Satisfaction with Appraiser Performance

The respondents disagree with using subject matter specialists as appraisers. This is inconsistent with all previous research by Zoller and Safrit (1999) and Davis and Verma (1993) that found extension agents favor a team of appraisers that includes a subject matter specialist. This finding may have been influenced by the different response rates between county directors and extension agents. While the overall response rate to the survey was 69%, 135 extension agents responded (62% of the 217 extension agents who are not county directors) and 83 county directors responded (87% of 95).

Both county directors and regional directors were shown by a majority of respondents in this study to “exercise good judgment,” “be unbiased,” and provide an “honest assessment” in conducting the annual performance appraisal. This finding is inconsistent with previous research of paraprofessionals in a university setting where nearly one-half of employees were neither satisfied nor trusted their supervisor (Mani, 2002). With 65.1% of the respondents agreeing that the appraisers are unbiased, some other part of the system is apparently responsible for bias since less than one-half of that number (29.3%) agreed that the performance appraisal system is biased.

Recommendations for Improvement of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System

The findings of this study, as well as previous research, suggest that changes in the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System are warranted. The recommendations for improvement of the performance appraisal system are organized according to the six major suggestions that respondents in this study offered for improvement with an additional section to reflect recommendations drawn mostly from the literature review. The recommendations should be viewed with a caveat. The key themes from the written comments represent a relatively small group of respondents. In addition, one in five respondents (20.9%) had worked five years or less, and their perceptions may represent limited experience with the performance appraisal system.

Appraisal Interview

Respondents indicated their desire for an annual appraisal interview with the regional director, and Kuchinke et al. (2008) found it acceptable for the regional director to conduct the annual appraisal and appraisal interview with extension agents. However Kuchinke et al. found that the lack of multiple raters for Illinois extension agent appraisal to be a weakness of appraisal.

Therefore, it is recommended that county directors continue to contribute to the annual performance appraisal of extension agents, but, as the findings of this study suggest, extension administrators should explore approaches to annual appraisal interviews of extension agents being conducted by the regional directors.

Performance Dimensions

The literature on performance appraisal systems indicates that validation and reliability studies are essential. There is no evidence of such studies in relationship to the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. The Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System, in its present format or in a new format, should have validation and reliability studies. At a minimum, a team of accomplished extension personnel should be asked to rate each appraisal criterion based on appropriateness, importance, and clarity, consistent with the process for developing performance evaluation systems for career ladders outlined by French and Malo (1987). This is an essential step for the success of an appraisal system because it verifies the criteria (French & Malo, 1987) and adds credibility to the appraisal process in the eyes of those subject to it.

Extension administrators should explore strategies to streamline the categories and the accompanying rubric to reduce redundancy and clarify the descriptions. Examples of redundancy can be found in the present program accountability section which includes a criterion called “teaching method effectiveness,” and the professionalism section which includes a criterion for “effective teaching methods”. Also, the professionalism section includes two very similar criteria: “trained in high priority program areas” and “seeks appropriate professional development” (Appendix B).

Merit Raises

Respondents indicated that they were unaware how the performance appraisal system contributes to administrative decisions on awarding merit raises. Professional development in the appraisal process for both appraisers and extension agents is particularly important given Lewis' (1997) findings that performance appraisal favors white women and discriminates against racial minorities. Extension administrators should consider providing employees professional development in the entire appraisal process, including how the final ratings are used for merit pay purposes.

Performance Appraisal System Efficiency

Extension administrators should explore strategies to require less effort on the part of the extension agent to prepare the appraisal materials. Metrics for the number of educational contacts, teaching methods, courses/events facilitated and professional development are already shown automatically on the appraisal form (Appendix A). In addition, the agents' annual plans and impact statements are automatically shown on this form consistent with Heckel (1978). A revised performance appraisal process could place greater reliance on these measures to reduce the employee's need to make additional attachments to demonstrate their work.

Training in Conducting Performance Appraisal

Almost one-fourth (24.1%) of county directors and more than one-third (35.4%) of extension agents showed agreement that their appraiser "needed more instruction in performance appraisal." Therefore, it is recommended that every appraiser have professional development courses to implement the performance appraisal system more efficiently and more effectively, consistent with research findings of Middlewood (2001) and Davis and Verma (1993).

It is further recommended that the professional development courses help appraisers understand that the performance appraisal process does affect job satisfaction which influences employee performance, employee retention, and ultimately, organizational effectiveness. Recommended resources for appraisers include an appraiser manual, hands-on practice in rating sets of materials and role play (Krayner, 1987), and reliability checking through the use of the practice materials.

Once improvements to the system are made, every employee ought to receive an “appraisal manual” detailing the standards for every position, the evaluation procedures, feedback procedures and a section on appraiser training. This would create more trust in the system and show extension agents what has been improved.

Employee Contributions to County Director Performance Appraisal

Several respondents expressed the need for agent perceptions of the county director’s performance to be considered in the county director’s performance appraisal. It is recommended that extension administrators identify competencies needed to be an effective county extension director. These competencies should be used as the basis for an instrument that would collect evaluative data regarding county director performance from extension agents. The instrument should be used in a pilot study whereby extension agents would rate their county directors, and those ratings would inform the performance appraisal of the county director.

Additional Recommendations

The instrument used in this study could be used for benchmarking employee satisfaction with the appraisal system and employee satisfaction with their appraiser. It could be administered every five years, or whenever the appraisal system is changed (if more often than five-year

intervals). This practice would be consistent with research by Davis and Verma (1993) that showed agents have a more positive perception of the performance appraisal process when the system itself is periodically reviewed. The instrument would need appropriate field testing, reliability and validation studies.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research using online surveys should include a feature in the survey that allows respondents to state that they do not intend to participate in the research study. In this study, 73 visits were made to the online survey, but it is not known if these visits are attributable to different individuals. The database recorded these as individual visitors who started the survey, but did not finish it. This could be due to many factors related to the respondent and/or the technology.

For future research regarding employee perceptions of performance appraisal, the first survey question should ascertain if the employee has worked long enough to have experienced the performance appraisal system. In the present study, one member of the pilot group declined participation because they had been employed less than 12 months, and they were not familiar with the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. This is a weakness of the present study, as it is not known how many members of the population were unfamiliar with the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System.

Research is needed to identify best practices, including instruments and processes, in performance appraisal for extension agents. This is particularly important given the small research base in extension agent appraisal. The Ladewig and Shiao (1983) study indicates that this has been a long-standing need for Cooperative Extension organizations.

For future research, the gender of the person being appraised and the gender of the appraiser should be recorded. Likewise, race and ethnicity of the appraiser and appraisee should be recorded, to address the challenges identified by Lewis (1997).

This research was limited to a survey of extension agent perceptions, and a more robust assessment of the performance appraisal system should examine the degree to which the system achieves the major positive outcomes of performance appraisal, including increasing communication between supervisors and employees (Bennett, 1981) and setting action plans for the coming year (Bennett, 1981; Wright & Evans, 2008). Research is needed to identify the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System performance dimensions that may or may not need to be changed. Future research should also explore relationships between extension agents' perceptions of the performance appraisal system and their overall job satisfaction considering the findings of Lawler (1994) and Taylor et al. (1995).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baker, Jr., J. (1988). *Causes of failure in performance appraisal and supervision: A guide to analysis and evaluation for human resources professionals*. New York: Quorum Books.
- Bamberger, P. & Meshoulam, I. (2000). *Human resource strategy: Formulation, implementation and impact*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Barbash, J. (1976). *Job satisfaction attitudes surveys*. Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Bennett, R. (1981). *Managing personnel and performance*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Bernardin, H.J. & Beatty, R.W. (1984). *Performance appraisal: Assessing human behavior at work*. Boston: Kent Publishing.
- Boone, E.J. (1990). Crossing lines. *Journal of Extension*, 28 (3). Retrieved from:
<http://www.joe.org/joe/1990fall/tp1.php>
- Broadwell, M.M. (1985). *Supervisory handbook: A management guide to principles and applications*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Brown, G.E., Jr. & Larson, A.F. (1962). Current trends in appraisal and development. In T.L. Whisler & S.F. Harper (Eds.), *Performance appraisal: Research and practice* (pp. 13-19). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Bruce, R. L. & Carter, Jr., G L. (1967). Administrative climate. *Journal of Extension*, 5 (1).
 Retrieved from: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1967spring/1967-1-a1.pdf>
- Bruce, W.M. & Blackburn, J.W. (1992). *Balancing job satisfaction & performance: A guide for human resource professionals*. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.
- Buford, Jr., J.A. (1990). Extension management in the information age. *Journal of Extension*, 28 (1). Retrieved from: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1990spring/fut2.php>

- Byrd, H. (2009). UT Extension proposed regional review schedule (version 2). University of Tennessee Extension. Retrieved from:
<http://agweb.ag.utk.edu:8090/eesd/EESD.nsf/PerformanceAppraisalReviewSchedule.pdf>
- Church, L.J. & Pals, D.A. (1982). Before you resign. *Journal of Extension*, 20 (5). Retrieved from: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1982september/index.php>
- Colton, D. & Covert, R.W. (2007). *Designing and constructing instruments for social science research and evaluation*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Cross, T.L. (2009, October 12). Personal Communication.
- Daley, D.M. (1992). *Performance appraisal in the public sector: Techniques and applications*. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.
- Davidson, E.J. (2010). Strategic evaluation of the workforce assessment program. In J.C. Scott & D.H. Reynolds (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace assessment: Evidence-based practices for selecting and developing organizational talent* (pp. 729-756). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Davis, J.A. (1971). *Elementary survey analysis*. Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Davis, W.L. (1991). *Perceptions of performance appraisal by Cooperative Extension Service agents in selected southern states* (Doctoral Dissertation). Louisiana State University. Baton Rouge.
- Davis, W.L. & Verma, S. (1993). Performance appraisal: How extension agents view the system. *Journal of Extension*, 31 (4). Retrieved from: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1993winter/a3.html>
- Devries, D.L., Morrison, A.M., Shullman, S.L. and Gerlach, M.L. (1981). *Performance appraisal on the line*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

- Dillman, D.A. (2006). *Mail and Internet surveys: The tailored design method* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Dipboye, R.L. & de Pontbriand, R. (1981). Correlates of employee reactions to performance appraisals and appraisal systems. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 66(2) 248-251.
- Donaldson, J.L. SUPER: Change is good, innovation is better. University of Tennessee Extension. Retrieved from:
<http://agweb.ag.utk.edu:8090/eesd/eesd.nsf/SUPER%20brochure.pdf>
- Dulewicz, V. (1989). Performance appraisal and counseling. In P. Herriot (Ed.), *Assessment and selection in organizations: Methods and practices for recruitment and appraisal* (pp. 645-649). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Durfee, A.E. (1970). Helping others improve. *Journal of Extension*, 8 (2). Retrieved from:
<http://www.joe.org/joe/1970summer/1970-2-a2.pdf>
- Elliott v. University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, 766 F2d 982 (1985).
- Ensle, K.M. (2005). Burnout: How does Extension balance job and family? *Journal of Extension*, 43(3). Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2005june/a5p.shtml>
- Ezell, P.A. (2003). *Job Stress and turnover intentions among Tennessee Cooperative Extension System employees* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- FEMA (2010). Twelve more counties designated for disaster assistance. Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States Department of Homeland Security. Retrieved from
<http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=51311>
- Fletcher, C. (2001). Performance appraisal and management: The developing agenda. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 74, 473-487.

- French, R.L. & Malo, G.E. (1987). Developing performance evaluation systems for career ladders. *Thresholds in Education*, 13 (1) 16-19.
- Gaby, S.H. (2004). *Summarizing and measuring participants' perceptions related to performance appraisal effectiveness* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- George, D. & Mallery, P. (2007). *SPSS for windows step by step: A simple guide and reference 14.0 update*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Giles, W.F. & Mossholder, K.W. (1990). Employee reactions to contextual and session components of performance appraisal. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75(4) 371-377.
- Gilliland, S.W. & Langdon, J.C. (1998). Creating performance management systems that promote perceptions of fairness. In J. W. Smither (Ed.), *Performance appraisal: State of the art in practice* (pp. 209-243). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Greenberg, J. (1987). Reactions to procedural injustice in payment distributions: Do the means justify the ends? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 72(1) 55-61.
- Grote, D. (2008). Passing judgment: Why we still can't get performance appraisal right. *The Conference Board Review*, pp. 36-43.
- Guion, R.M. (1998). *Assessment, measurement, and prediction for personnel decisions*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Haahr, M. (2008). Random number generator 2.0, beta. Retrieved from: <http://www.random.org/>
- Havelock, R.G. & Zlotolow, S. (1995). *The Change Agent's Guide* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.
- Heckel, M.C. (1978). Measuring the performance of extension educators. *Journal of Extension*, 16(6). Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/1978november/78-6-a1.pdf>

- Hill, N.R. (2009). An empirical exploration of the occupational satisfaction of counselor educators: The influence of gender, tenure status and minority status. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, (87) 55-61.
- Huck, S.W. (2008). *Reading statistics and research*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Ilgen, D.R., Peterson, R.B., Martin, B.A. and Boesch, D.A. (1981). Supervisor and subordinate reactions to performance appraisal sessions. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 28, 311-330.
- Jawahar, I. M. (2010). The mediating role of appraisal feedback reactions on the relationship between rater feedback-related behaviors and ratee performance. *Group & Organization Management*, 35(4), 494-526.
- Jawahar, I. M. (2006). Correlates of satisfaction with performance appraisal feedback. *Journal of Labor Research*, 27(2), 213-236
- Krayer, K. J. (1986). Using training to reduce role conflict and ambiguity. *Training & Development Journal*, 40(11), 49.
- Kuchinke, K.P., Correthers, G. and Cecil, K. (2008). Managing performance in Extension: Redesigning the performance evaluation system at Illinois. *Journal of Extension*, 46 (4). Retrieved from: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2008august/a5.php>
- Lackman, L., Nieto, R.D. and Gliem, R. (1997). Instrument development for low literacy audiences: Assessing extension program personnel teaching effectiveness. *Journal of Extension*, 35 (1). Retrieved from: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1997february/rb1.php>

- Ladewig, H. & Shiao, K.S. (1983). *Development of personnel appraisal procedures to measure the job performance of county Extension Agents*. Ohio State University Department of Agricultural Education, 35 pages. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED 230712)
- Lambert, C. (1984). *The complete book of supervisory training*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lawler III, E. E. (1994). Total quality management and employee involvement: Are they compatible?. *Academy of Management Executive*, 8(1), 68-76.
- Lewis, G.B. (1997). Race, sex, and performance ratings in the federal service. *Public Administration Review*, 57 (6), 479-489.
- Lind, E.A. & Tyler, T.R. (1988). *The social psychology of social justice*. New York: Plenum.
- Locke, E.A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In M.D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 1297-1349). Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Lopez, F.M., Jr. (1968). *Evaluating employee performance*. Chicago: Public Personnel Association.
- Mani, B.G. (2002). Performance appraisal systems, productivity, and motivation: A case study. *Public Personnel Management*, 31 (2), 141-160.
- Mayer, R.C. & Davis, J.H. (1999). The effect of the performance appraisal system on trust for management: A field quasi-experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84 (1), 123-136.
- McPhail, S.M. & Stelly, D.J. (2010). Validation strategies. In J.C. Scott & D.H. Reynolds (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace assessment: Evidence-based practices for selecting and developing organizational talent* (pp. 671-710). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Meyer, H.H., Kay, E. & French, Jr., J.R.P. (1965). Split roles in performance appraisal. *Harvard Business Review*, 123-129.

- Middlewood, D. (2001). *Managing teacher appraisal and performance: A comparative approach*. London: Routledge/Falmer.
- Morton, J.B. (2008). *Teacher evaluation system manual: professional education personnel evaluation program of Alabama*. Alabama State Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.alabamapepe.com/teacher/altchrmln050108.pdf>
- Moussavi, F. & Ashbaugh, D.L. (1995). Perceptual effects of participative, goal-oriented performance appraisal: A field study in public agencies. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 5 (3), 331-343.
- Murphy, K.R. & Cleveland, J.N. (1995). *Understanding performance appraisal: Social, organizational and goal-based perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Narcisse, S. & Harcourt, M. (2008). Employee fairness perceptions of performance appraisal: A Saint Lucian case study. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(6), 1152-1169.
- Nathan, B.R. & Cascio, W.F. (1986). Technical and legal standards. In R.A. Berk (Ed.), *Performance assessment: Methods and applications* (pp. 1-52). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Olson, R.F. (1981). *Performance appraisal: A guide to greater productivity*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Patten, T.H., Jr. (1977). *Pay: Employee compensation and incentive plans*. London: Free Press.
- Patterson, T.F. (1987). Refining performance appraisal. *Journal of Extension*, 25 (4). Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/1987winter/a5.html>

- Pfeffer, J. (1994). *Competitive advantage through people: Unleashing the power of the work force*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Rasch, L. (2004). Employee performance appraisal and the 95/5 rule. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 28, 407-414.
- Reynolds, D.H. & Rupp, D.E. (2010). Advances in technology-facilitated assessment. In J.C. Scott & D.H. Reynolds (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace assessment: Evidence-based practices for selecting and developing organizational talent* (pp. 609-641). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Rice, R. D. (2001). An examination of the relationships between the Alabama Cooperative Extension System assessment center ratings and subsequent county agent-coordinators' job performance ratings. *Journal of Extension*, 39 (2). Retrieved from:
<http://www.joe.org/joe/2001april/rb1.php>
- Robbins, T.L. & DeNisi, A.S. (1998). Mood vs. interpersonal affect: Identifying process and rating distortions in performance appraisal. *Journal of Business & Psychology* 12, 313-325.
- Rogers, E.M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovations* (4th ed.). New York: Free Press.
- Rogers, E.M., Burdge, R.J., Korsching, P.F., and Donnermeyer, J.F. (1988). *Social change in rural societies: An introduction to rural sociology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Schuman, D. & Olufs, D.W., III. (1988). *Public administration in the United States*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company.
- Sherman, A., Bohlander, G., & Snell, S. (1998). *Managing human resources* (11th ed.). Cincinnati: South-Western College Publishing.

- Shore, T., & Strauss, J. (2008). The political context of employee appraisal: Effects of organizational goals on performance ratings. *International Journal of Management*, 25(4), 599-612
- Smither, R. (1998). *The psychology of work and human performance* (3rd ed). New York: Harper-Collins.
- Spector, P. E. (1985). Measurement of human service staff satisfaction: Development of the job satisfaction survey. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 13, 693-713.
- Spector, P. E. (1997). *Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, causes, and consequences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- SPSS, Inc. (2008). mrInterview fact sheet. Retrieved from: <http://www.spss.com/mrInterview/>
- Squires, P. & Adler, S. (1998). Linking appraisals to individual development and training. In J. W. Smither (Ed.), *Performance appraisal: State of the art in practice* (pp. 445-495). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Stufflebeam, D.L. (1988). *The personnel evaluation standards*. Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. Newbury Park, GA: Corwin Press.
- Swiercz, P. M., Icenogle, M. L., Bryan, N. B., & Renn, R. W. (1993). Do perceptions of performance appraisal fairness predict employee attitudes and performance? *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 304-308.
- Taylor, M., Tracy, K. B., Renard, M. K., Harrison, J., & Carroll, S. J. (1995). Due process in performance appraisal: A quasi-experiment in procedural justice. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40(3), 495-523

- Terry, B.D. & Israel, G.D. (2004). Agent performance and customer satisfaction. *Journal of Extension*, 42(6). Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2004december/a4.shtml>
- Thorndike, E.L. (1920). A constant error in psychological ratings. *Journal of Applied Psychology* (4)25-29.
- Tritt, M.W. (1990). *Tennessee Extension Agents' perceptions of selected job conditions and their level of satisfaction with those conditions* (Master's thesis). University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures. (1978). *Federal Register*, 43(66), 38209-38309.
- University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service v. Elliott, 478 U.S. 788 (1986).
- University of Tennessee Extension. (2009). FY 2009 report of accomplishment and results. Retrieved from <http://agweb.ag.utk.edu:8090/eesd/eesd.nsf/Federal%20Reports>
- USDA-NIFA (2010). Extension. Retrieved from <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/qlinks/extension.html>
- Varma, A. & Pichler, S. (2007). Interpersonal affect: Does it really matter in performance appraisals? *Journal of Labor Research* 28(2), 397-412.
- Vlosky, R.P. & Aguilar, F.X. (2009). A model of employee satisfaction: Gender differences in Cooperative Extension. *Journal of Extension*, 47(2). Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2009april/a2.php>
- Vasset, F., Marnburg, E. & Furunes, T. (2010). Employee's perceptions of justice in performance appraisals. *Nursing Management – UK*, 17(2), 30-34.

- Vogt, B. & Van Tilberg, E. (1988). Ohio Cooperative Extension Service agents perceptions of the agent rating method of the performance appraisal system. *Journal of Agricultural Education* 30 (1), 60-67.
- Wade v. Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service, 528 F2d 508 (1976).
- Walton, M. (1986). *The Deming management method*. New York: Dodd.
- Warner, W.K. (1967). Feedback in administrative. *Journal of Extension*, 5 (1). Retrieved from: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1967spring/1967-1-a5.pdf>
- Watty, K., Bellamy, S. & Morley, C. (2008). Changes in higher education and valuing the job: The views of accounting academics in Australia. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 30 (2), 139-151.
- Wilson, K.Y. & Jones, R.G. (2008). Reducing job-irrelevant bias in performance appraisals: Compliance and beyond. *Journal of General Management* 34(2), 57-70.
- Wolford, A.K. (1985). *An analysis of the effects of race and gender in scoring extension agent performance standards* (Doctoral dissertation). Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg.
- Wright, W., & Evans, C. (2008). How to conduct an effective appraisal. *Manager: British Journal of Administrative Management*, (63), iii-iv.
- Yang, K. & Kassekert, A. (2009). Linking management reform with employee job satisfaction: Evidence from federal agencies. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 20 (2), 413-436.

Zoller, C. & Safrit, R.D. (1999). Ohio State University extension agents' perceptions of agent support teams. *Journal of Extension*, 37 (1). Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/1999february/rb4.html>

APPENDIXES**Appendix A: Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Form**

Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Form

Name: **Test Extension Agent**Title: **Extension Agent II and County Directors**County: **Example County**Date of Review: **10/01/2002**Years on Staff: **5**Years in Present Position: **5**

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT Needs Assessment Communicates Program Issues Networking Funding Appropriate Delivery Methods Clear Implementation Steps Plans for Evaluation(Tools/Methods) Reaches Diverse Audience/ CR Parity Outcomes / Impacts Clearly Defined	E	A	U	<u>Action Agenda One</u> <u>Action Agenda Two</u> <u>Action Agenda Three</u> <u>Goals</u>
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
Program Development Rating	E	A	U	

PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY Impacts/Outcomes/Goals from Plan Effectively Marketed Programs Teaching Method Effectiveness Utilized Planned Evaluation Methods Reported Program Progress Reported Accomplishments Networking Utilized Available Funding Sources Civil Rights Parity and Diversity	E	A	U	☐ Direct and Indirect Outputs Summary ☐ Contact Data Summary <u>Documentation</u> <u>Comments</u> <u>Goals</u>
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
Program Development Rating	E	A	U	

PROFESSIONALISM Effective Internal Relationships Effective External Relationships Trained in High Priority Program Areas Seeks Appropriate Professional Development Work Habits Knows/Follows Policy and Procedure Oral and Written Communication Effective Teaching Skills Markets UT/TSU Extension	E	A	U	☐ Training Completed ☐ Courses/Events Facilitated <u>Documentation</u> <u>Comments</u> <u>Goals</u>
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
	E	A	U	
Program Development Rating	E	A	U	

COUNTY DIRECTORS	E	A	U	☐ Recommended Percentage ☐ Actual Percentage ☐ Total County Contacts for the Year ☐ Total County Population Makeup <u>Documentation</u> <u>Comments</u> <u>Goals</u>
Total County Program Leadership	E	A	U	
Guidance of Personnel	E	A	U	
Evaluation of Personnel	E	A	U	
Financial Management	E	A	U	
Management of Facilities/Equipment	E	A	U	
Public Relations	E	A	U	
Communications/Office Management	E	A	U	
Knows Policies/Meets Deadlines	E	A	U	
EEO/CR/AA/ADA Policy and Implementation	E	A	U	
County Directors Rating	E	A	U	

OVERALL PERFORMANCE RATING	E	A	U	
-----------------------------------	---	---	---	--

Employee Signature _____
Supervisor Signature _____

Date _____
Date _____

Appendix B: Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Rubric

Descriptions and Explanations for the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal

PLEASE NOTE: *The following information is offered as a general guideline only. The descriptions of performance offered below are not (and therefore should not be considered as) an all-inclusive checklist or recipe for a particular rating. County and Regional Directors are responsible for defining specific applications of each standard to unique county needs and situations.*

Program Development Rating Section

Communicates Program Needs - Agent(s) communicates program needs to appropriate internal and external stakeholders. Upcoming priority program plans are shared through available channels to communicate the circumstances which dictate the program, how you plan to deliver the program and what outcomes are expected.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	
Program needs are discussed or shared at a minimal level. (i.e. County Directors, Program Leader, Regional Director)	Program needs were discussed or shared with County Directors, Program Leader, Regional Director, Ag. Committee, program committee, collaborators and external stakeholders.	

Needs Assessment - The priority program is developed based upon clientele needs and priorities. A needs assessment documents reasons that the program should be conducted by Extension and serves to justify expenditure of agent and other resources in addressing the problem.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	
Little or no information in the plan that identifies the issue(s) being addressed as a need or problem that should be addressed by Extension. Information identifying the issue(s) as a need or a problem is outdated, insufficient or otherwise inappropriate. A functional and demographically representative county advisory committee was not utilized.	The needs assessment includes appropriate sources and information. The needs assessment provides evidence of a priority issue which can, and should, be addressed in the county by a planned Extension educational program. Advisory Committee input was obtained as a part of the process.	

Appropriate Delivery Methods - Delivery methods are appropriate for the intended audience(s), subject matter, and learning outcomes involved.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	
Planned program delivery methods are not specified. Audience, teaching environment or resources are inappropriate or insufficient to meet clientele needs. No plan for use of volunteers.	Proposed delivery methods are listed that are audience and program content appropriate. Planned use of volunteers as a resource. Where state-developed curriculum is available, the curriculum and program name is utilized.	

Clear Implementation Steps - Planning includes program implementation steps which clearly address the issues identified and that have reasonable potential to lead to desired program outcomes.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	
Implementation steps planned are illogical, insufficient or inappropriate to achieving expected outcomes.	Program implementation steps follow a logical progression (time-line) which lead to achievement of identified program outcomes.	

Reaches Diverse Audiences / Civil Rights Parity - Program planning identifies strategies for reaching diverse and underrepresented audiences. Plans are made for reaching potential audiences by race/ethnicity and gender. Planning groups are representative of the community's diversity.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	
Diverse or underrepresented stakeholders or clientele were not included in the assessment of needs, the development of the plan or as the targeted audience for programs in the plan.	Diverse or underrepresented stakeholders or clientele were included in the needs assessment. The planned program addresses needs of and reaches underrepresented / underserved clientele.	

Networking - The program plan identifies and plans for the involvement of other program partners.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	
Plan does not identify possible partners to be involved in programs.	Program partners are identified and their expected role in the program is clearly defined. Multi-county programming is encouraged when appropriate.	

Resources/Funding - Alternative or supplemental funding sources are explored when appropriate.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	
Planning process ignores opportunities for extramural funding.	Appropriate program funding sources are identified and plans for alternative, fee-based, or additional funds are formulated.	

Outcomes/Impacts Clearly Defined - Measurable outcomes and impacts are planned which demonstrate clearly defined expectations for program results.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	
Outcomes and impacts are poorly identified, are not clearly stated, and/or are unmeasurable. Or, outcomes and impacts listed are not reflective of problems and needs identified for the program.	Program outcomes are clearly stated, measurable, and at the KASA level or above. Existing state-wide outcome indicators are utilized when available. If accomplished, desired impacts on the problem or need identified are achieved. Multi-year educational programs include long-term outcomes at program maturity.	

Plans for Evaluation (Tools/Methods) - Evaluation methods are planned for ongoing and end-of-program impact and outcome determination.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	
No evidence provided of the methods or tools that will be used to evaluate program processes and outcomes.	Appropriate program evaluation methods are identified for measuring program outcomes and impacts identified in the plan. Utilizes standard state-wide evaluation instruments, if available.	

Program Accountability Rating Section

Impacts/Outcomes/Goals from Plan - Impacts, outcomes and goals which were projected in the Individual Annual Plan were accomplished or surpassed.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Impacts/outcomes/goals reported do not match program impacts/outcomes/goals in annual plan. If program accomplishments are less than expected in annual plan, no explanation provided of extenuating circumstances/situations resulting in the lower accomplishment level or evidence that differences were discussed and resolved with supervisor. Outcomes and impacts are not reflective of identified needs.	Documented measurable outcomes and impacts of planned program efforts at the KASA level. Achieved desired impacts related to identified needs or problems.	Program impacts/outcomes/goals from annual plan are met and documented at the Practice Change or SEEC levels of the Bennett/Rockwell Targeting Outcomes of Programs (TOP) model. Annual plan expectations are met with documented measurable outcomes and impacts. Program accomplishments above and beyond expected annual plan impacts/outcomes/goals are also documented.

Effectively Marketed Programs - Collaborating agencies, appropriate stakeholders, clientele and the general public are familiarized with Tennessee Extension and its specific programs through planned marketing efforts.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Marketing outlets were underutilized. Little or no effort was made to deliver information to decision makers and/or general public. There was little or no visibility of Extension through collaborative efforts with organizations. Program impacts were not disseminated to stakeholders.	Planned efforts increased awareness of Extension programs in the community. The current Extension logo was used effectively in educational and marketing materials to increase recognition. Program accomplishment reports were prepared which reflected a team effort, showed impact of the total Extension program and were distributed to a wide segment of the county. Regular mass media efforts are made and documented. Available outlets were utilized to market Extension programs and to recognize successes and results. County web pages were utilized for marketing purposes and kept up-to-date.	An aggressive marketing program was in place to inform all in the county of program availability and results. Professionals in the office utilized a team effort in promoting Extension. Innovative strategies were utilized to inform...ie, supporting materials, graphs, pictures, videos, documentation of major program impacts. Was recognized within the community as a resource for advancement of total community and their collaboration, cooperation and/or facilitation was sought by individuals and organizations. Effectively used all available mass media outlets to highlight extension programs, advertise current events, and /or show program impact.

Teaching Method Effectiveness - Teaching methods utilized were those most effective for the subject matter being taught and the audience involved.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Rarely assumed the role of an educator in a public setting. Program scope did not include appropriate mix of one-on-one vs group contacts or single-session vs multi-session programming. Teaching methods utilized were not conducive to optimum learning.	Utilized accurate, timely, quality, research-based educational materials based on local needs. Demonstrated the ability to effectively present ideas, information and programs verbally and in writing, both to groups and one-on-one. A variety of effective teaching strategies were implemented to maximize participant learning; i.e. demonstrations, tours, workshops, multi-session, and group meetings, etc. Proper use of available technology in teaching was apparent.	Educator utilized a variety of teaching methods within each program to stimulate learning. Prepared professional quality, well organized educational materials that were used beyond county level. A variety of methods were under development and use to evaluate their effectiveness. Agent was a member of a team working together in developing educational materials. Contributed to a state-wide product and his or her name was listed as an author. Equipped leaders with materials to enable them to effectively transmit programs to others.

Utilized Planned Evaluation Methods - Appropriate and adequate evaluation methods were used and results were reported.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Formal evaluation of program was not conducted. Evaluation methods used were not those described in annual plan. No evidence that evaluation results were included in program reports.	Evaluation methods described in annual plan were conducted. If evaluation methods were modified, they were discussed and agreed upon with supervisor and/or Regional program leader. Results of information collected through evaluation was utilized for future planning.	Both quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (anecdotal) evaluation results included in reports. Long-term program evaluation was utilized.

Reported Program Progress - Extension program progress reported within the Extension system and to program partners.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Reports were not adequate to inform of activities during program year or no program report completed and submitted. Did not cooperate with coworkers on joint reports. Program delivery contacts and impacts were not reported or were incomplete in SUPER and other reporting mechanisms.	Some program progress with adequate information to inform reader of what took place during program year. Made reports through Extension reporting process, available media and personal contact. Performed as a team member for joint reports. Program delivery contacts and impacts are entered in SUPER in a timely manner.	Made reports to appropriate clientele and/or stakeholders through available media, personal contacts, and group meetings. Shared specific information with resource providers. Reports were timely, audience appropriate, complete and accurate. Instituted a system for maintaining records for reporting purposes. Program delivery contacts and impacts are entered in SUPER on a monthly or more regular basis.

Reported Accomplishments - Program impact statements are included in reports to Extension organization, stakeholders, and general public.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Program impact statements were not completed in SUPER and were not communicated to stakeholders. Program accomplishments reported did not match program impacts/outcomes/goals in annual plan.	Program impact statements reported in SUPER were directly related to the impacts/outcomes/goals of annual plan. Impact statements represent planned programs and base programs. Mass media outlets were utilized effectively in reporting accomplishments.	Highly visible special impact reports or informational pieces were created for and disseminated to program stakeholders and media. Reports include additional program accomplishments above and beyond expected impacts/outcomes/goals described in annual plan.

Networking - Identifies and cooperates with program partners in providing cooperative educational programs.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Inadequate effort to work with other Agencies or organizations in implementing educational programs.	Program partners are regularly involved in planning, implementing and evaluating Extension educational programs. Program partner roles and contributions are clear.	Most educational programs are conducted with the cooperation of other agencies or organizations. Multi-county and/or multi-state professionals are involved in delivery of effective Extension Programming.

Utilized Available Funding Sources - Alternative, fee-based, or supplemental funding sources were sought to enhance programs where applicable.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
External funding sources were not explored. Inappropriate use of existing funding.	Alternate funding sources were explored and efforts were made to secure external program funding. Letters soliciting funding, grant pre-proposals and/or grant proposals were submitted. Fee-based funding strategies were utilized where appropriate.	Agent has worked to develop ongoing sources of external funds (e.g. grants, donations, etc.). New funding sources have been secured, enabling replacement of, or enhancement to traditional funds. External funds were secured and utilized appropriately to implement programs.

Civil Rights Parity and Diversity - Planned programs are successful in reaching clientele which reflect the diversity of the community, county or area in which they are conducted or for those needing to be served.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Program participation did not meet the 80 percent of the potential audience as identified by race/ethnicity or gender. Participants are not reflective of the diversity of the area served.	Program participants included the expected mix of clientele by race and gender. The diversity of the potential audience was reflected in participants. Alternative delivery methods were offered/utilized to serve disabled participants. Planned strategies for reaching the potential of a diverse audience were utilized.	Planned outreach efforts were expanded and modified to maximize participation of a diverse audience. Special efforts were made which resulted in the participation of underrepresented or non-traditional audiences. The diversity of participants reflects that no group was marginalized or excluded.

Maintenance of Base Programming - Providing educational programs or special interest programs in response to county needs. These programs are outside of the Annual Plan program areas.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Educational program needs were poorly addressed outside of Annual Plans. Unplanned time not effectively utilized.	Special emphasis educational program efforts were developed and implemented, to address base program needs of the county. Contacts, impact statements, and outcomes were reported in SUPER. Impact of base program effort was included in the county's annual report and other extension reporting mechanisms as appropriate.	Proactively developed and implemented several special emphasis educational programs in response to county needs. The program efforts were timely and based on immediate needs of clientele. Cooperated with other agencies.

Professionalism Rating Section

Effective Internal Relationships - Promotes teamwork by supporting and communicating with co-workers. Partner in extension team on county, region, and state levels.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Will work with team only when specifically asked or directed. Works only with agents in their respective program area. Does not work with others on the team to maximize resources. Does not recognize and work on Region and State initiatives, priorities, or program teams.	The agent willingly works and communicates with co-workers within the county and also on an area/region basis. Regularly is a participating member of interdisciplinary teams. Uses available resources wisely (including specialists), efficiently, and shares with others. Active on multi-County/Region/State program teams and priorities.	Readily supports county and area team efforts and offers to assist co-workers. Offers information of similar efforts in programming to co-workers to help them avoid possible problems in program implementation. Assists others in development of resources which are available to all. Regularly serves on multi-county, region, statewide, multi-state or national initiative and planning teams, search committees and taskforces. Seeks leadership roles on area and region activities and program teams.

Effective External Relationships - Actively involved in county and community activities to cultivate relationships which increase the agent's effectiveness in an educational role. Relates well with all types of clientele. Collaborates with community groups and agencies to increase program effectiveness.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
The agent is not involved in any organizations outside of Extension. Openly takes sides in controversial issues in the community and becomes personally involved in supporting one of the opposing views of an issue. Evidence of prejudice in working with diverse audiences. Agent creates conflict or is demeaning to others. Does not meet with other groups or agencies or there is no evidence of significant collaboration as a result of the investment of time.	Connected to the county in which they work through being a member of community organizations, i.e. civic clubs, inter-agency committees, chamber of commerce, etc. as an Extension representative. Uses good judgment in response to controversial issues, maintains objectivity, serves in an educational role, and avoids personal involvement and taking sides. Works well with all clientele groups and actively seeks to reach non-traditional, new and diverse audiences. Does programming in collaboration with community agencies and other groups with proper recognition of Extension's role maintained. Actively recruits and works with volunteers.	Receives recognition as outstanding leader in community. Is actively sought out by other groups and organizations to give guidance and collaboration in community activities. Actively participates in conflict resolution, works to find root cause and seeks proper information and advice to help resolve conflict. Seeks out joint programs with community groups leading to a total comprehensive plan that has impact on community. Collaborates with community groups to secure additional program resources. An organized volunteer program includes training and recognition for volunteers. Reports volunteer time and contacts in SUPER.

Trained in High-Priority Program Areas - Prepared to deliver Regional, State and National Priority Programs which are applicable to county needs.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Did not pursue training or participate in training offered in high-priority program areas.	Expertise was developed in high-priority program areas through in-service or other applicable training including CECP.	Experience and training have been attained such that individual is able to teach other professionals. Is a contributing member to a Community of Practice in eXtension.

Seeks Appropriate Professional Development - Demonstrates professional skills. Builds personal capacity to address local program needs. Involvement with professional associations and societies. Develops a professional development plan with both short and long-term goals.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
The agent's image as an informed educational resource is inconsistent with expectations for the employees of Extension and that of the clientele they serve. Does not join or participate in professional associations. Makes little or no effort to remain competent through reading program related resources available. Registers for inservice training session but does not attend or level of participation is undesirable. Fails to attend inservice which would expand expertise base. Chooses inservice which offers little challenge or growth.	Presents a professional image in the community and reflects self-confidence to the clientele. Conducts programs that are professional, reflective of the quality of resources available. Is an active member of a professional association related to their respective area of program work. Attends inservice training sessions to become more knowledgeable in areas of on-going or emerging program needs. Seeks to stay current and competent through reading journals, periodicals, magazines and other resources available. Effectively uses the Internet, libraries, and other sources for information.	Demonstrates contagious enthusiasm for job performance which inspires others. Serves as a role model/mentor for others in appearance, attitude, and job performance. Is recognized as a leader, drawing praise from clientele and co-workers. Accepts leadership roles in professional association at area and state levels. Receives program awards through professional associations. Innovative programs reflect growing personal competence levels. Uses skills, abilities and knowledge to assist in the development of co-workers. Is recognized as an expert in one or more program areas.

Daily Work Habits - Maintains a functional, efficient, appealing office that presents a positive image. Demonstrates appropriate work habits, adequate punctuality, and time management.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Agent's office does not look professional and little effort is done to make office more professional in appearance. Exhibits inappropriate work habits, is not punctual, or inefficient use of time which is detrimental to job performance. Work style and lack of office communication creates difficulty in maintaining accessibility and accountability to clientele. Planning is done on an "as needed" basis. Fails to appropriately develop volunteers to assist in the delivery of educational programs.	Agent's office area is neat, clean, organized, and projects a professional image. Gets the job done in a timely and professional manner, working extra hours when necessary. Keeps others informed of location in order to stay in touch with colleagues and clientele. Keeps appropriate office hours to serve clientele. Delivers programs at opportune times for traditional and non-traditional audience participation. Advanced planning is conducted with leaders. Strong volunteer-led programs complement agent involvement.	Extension staff and leaders continually upgrade and evaluate office space and equipment. People of the community use the Extension office, feel at ease in seeking information there and find educational information easily accessible. Maintains a heavy work load while exhibiting efficient work habits and conducting high quality programs. Plans are in place that allow for handling emergencies as they arise. Agent's use of volunteers and innovative program delivery serves as a model for others.

Knows/Follows Policy & Procedures - Agent keeps up-to-date in knowledge and follows the policies and procedures of The University of Tennessee/Tennessee State University, USDA and county government relative to employment, program delivery and financial management which are appropriate to the exercise of duties and responsibilities.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Agent demonstrates lack of policy knowledge as seen in performance or formal audit or review. Agent is found in violation of one or more policies during the year and is given oral and/or written warning.	Responsibilities are conducted within the policies and procedures of The University of Tennessee/Tennessee State University, USDA and county governments as appropriate.	Agent is recognized as an authority on the application of policy and procedure in the conduct of job responsibilities and is frequently sought out for advice and clarification.

Oral & Written Communication - Presents and organizes ideas effectively and in an audience-appropriate manner both orally and in writing.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Presents educational information which may contain errors, is of poor quality, does not relate to target audience, or is often untimely. Is ineffective in a public speaking role and in delivering education programs. Is not usually viewed in a teaching role. Another agent or specialist usually teaches educational programs.	Prepares accurate, timely, quality educational materials based on local needs. Demonstrates the ability to effectively present ideas, information and programs orally and in writing, both to groups and one-on-one. Uses a variety of educational techniques; i.e. demonstrations, tours, workshops, multi-session programs and group meetings.	Agent's programs are considered models and are duplicated by others. Program efforts result in greater than expected outcomes. Joint efforts of agents and specialist lead to <u>new</u> programs that address local and state needs. Explores multiple/alternative means of program delivery which are "cutting edge."

Effective Teaching Skills - Assists clientele with issues and concerns; provides sound, research based information that aides clientele in decision making. Effective working relationship with volunteer leaders. Recruits, educates and recognizes volunteers.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Clientele requests for service are not answered in a timely manner. Volunteers are given little or no education, which limits their effectiveness in program implementation. Leaders only do what agent instructs them to do. No recognition is given to leaders. The same programs and resources are used year after year.	Responds to requests for assistance are addressed within a reasonable amount of time. Formal leader education programs are conducted. Leaders are provided instruction and are assigned responsibilities. Informal recognition, that is appropriate to the community, is given to volunteers and leaders. Utilizes appropriate teaching methods in the delivery of programs and uses evaluation information for program improvement.	Uses a pro-active approach rather than only responding to clientele questions. Trained leaders assume responsibility/ownership of program. Leadership development programs are provided to clientele. The program has reached a level of interdependence with leaders assuming a teaching role in selected segments of community. Contributions of leaders and volunteers are publicized and promoted with a formal recognition. Utilizes innovative program delivery methods.

Markets UT / TSU Extension - Conducts programs that generate positive impacts which increase the visibility of Tennessee Extension. Publicizes Extension activities through available mass media and maintains good rapport with media.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Makes little or no effort to deliver information to decision makers and general public. There is little to no exposure of extension programs through the mass media.	Makes planned efforts to increase awareness of Tennessee Extension in the community. Uses current Extension logo and marketing materials to increase recognition of Tennessee Extension. Program reports reflect a team effort, shows impacts of the total Extension program and is distributed to a wide segment of the county. Regular mass media efforts are made and documented.	Specific efforts are conducted by the total staff to increase the visibility of impacts of extension programs in the community. Program reports were enhanced, which may include supporting materials, graphics & pictures along with documentation of major program impacts. Recognized within the community as a resource for advancement of the total community and their collaboration, cooperation and/or facilitation and is sought by individuals and organizations. Effectively uses all available mass media outlets including releases or make contacts with mass media outlets as a means to highlight extension programs, advertise current extension events, and/or show impact.

County Directors Rating Section

Total County Program - The County Directors assumes responsibility for the development of an integrated county team effort to address local needs. All programs are represented to stakeholders.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Director not supportive of staff and/or their programs. Communication lacking among staff members. Programs not meeting accessed needs. Sporadic or infrequent office conferences.	Director maintains open channels of communications. Director guides and gives support to staff and their programs. Keeps staff informed. Director insures that programs meet needs of clientele. Holds regular office conferences.	Director holds weekly staff conferences. Receptive to and reacts positively to communication from staff. Director ensures various program assessment tools are utilized to make program adjustments to meet clientele needs. Director is considered an ambassador for all program areas and regularly communicates accomplishments to stakeholders. The county staff is regularly involved in multi-disciplinary team programming to address priority community needs.

Guidance of Personnel - The County Directors guides new and existing personnel in becoming established in the community, in development of effective programs and in professional growth/development.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Not supportive of personnel's needs for training, equipment, facilities and coaching.	Provides necessary support and direction of personnel. Completes new staff evaluation forms. Encourages positive staff relationship and teamwork. Coaches staff in inservice and other professional growth activities. Helps provide for appropriate staff growth outside of normal inservice channels.	Assists staff in documentation and preparation of dossier for promotion. Each staff member is informed of and assists with other program areas. Encourages staff to pursue advance degrees and professional rank.

Evaluation of Personnel - Personnel evaluation is performed in a manner consistent with organizational goals, resulting in an accurate appraisal of personnel performance and sustained professional growth.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Personnel evaluations are not done properly or on time.	Informal and formal evaluations are completed, reflect an accurate appraisal of staff performance, and are submitted on, or before, due date. Realistic and measurable performance and/or professional improvement goals are formulated for each staff member with appropriate follow-up. Performance problems are proactively addressed.	Director counsels with staff on a regular basis throughout year. Performance problems are addressed on an ongoing basis. The County Directors regularly seeks ways to reward desirable performance.

Financial Management - The County Directors manages, develops, and utilizes financial resources to support educational programs.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Budget management is ineffective in meeting program needs or demonstrates financial irresponsibility.	Regularly reviews Extension Accounts (monthly at a minimum). Maintains County Extension Budget (UT and TSU) at recommended level. Reviews operating budgets on a regular basis. County bank accounts meet all policies and procedures. Procurement cards managed well.	County Extension budget maintained at higher than recommended levels. Seeks external funding sources (grants, etc.) Maintains a technology upgrade fund. Provides supplemental funding for programs, travel, equipment, office operations and supplies.

Management of Facilities/ Equipment - Develops county office facilities which are adequate for effective delivery of programs and housing of staff.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Facilities and equipment do not meet education program and staff needs.	Efforts were exhibited to improve facilities and/or equipment. Adequate office space and equipment are allocated and available on an equitable basis to staff members. Office space is organized and clean. Maintains an office environment which presents a good public image.	Effective in managing the county's facilities, furnishings, equipment and other resources. Facilities and equipment are sufficient for the delivery of innovative programs. Technology-related equipment is state of art and includes a networked office and a computer for each regular staff member. Office and equipment upgrades are part of an overall long-term plan.

Public Relations - The County Directors leads a county team in marketing Extension programs in the community.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Minimal efforts are made to increase the visibility of the Extension program. Written materials prepared in the county regularly do not include the UT and/or TSU logo prominently placed. Mass media, group meetings, and other public relations avenues are used ineffectively.	Utilizes multiple efforts to increase awareness and/or visibility of the Extension program in the community. Uses marketing materials effectively. Networks with other group and agencies within community. Includes the UT / TSU logo on county-prepared materials. Office environment is customer friendly. Utilizes county web-site to increase awareness and/or visibility of Extension Program	Actively involved in leadership roles within the community. Regularly reports to community leaders on Extension programs and activities. Receives recognition from community for leadership roles. Innovative use of the county web-site.

Communication/Office Management - The County Directors creates an atmosphere of open communication. The operation of the office promotes effective and efficient delivery of educational programs.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Poor communication exists between office staff. Communication with Regional staff is lacking or otherwise inappropriate. Staff conferences are infrequent. Office functions below reasonable expectations.	Office runs efficiently. Director communicates appropriately and effectively with local, regional and state staff. Stakeholders are involved and informed. Office conferences are held no less frequently than monthly. Agricultural committee meets on legislated schedule, a minimum of 4 times per year. Advisory committee(s) support all program areas and are advisory in nature.	Outstanding communication and coordination is apparent in office efficiency and teamwork. Resolution of conflict is managed in a timely and positive manner. Regional Directors are informed and involved in problems and decisions at appropriate stages of the process.

Knows Policies/Meets Deadlines - The County Directors is familiar and regularly reviews policies, individually and with staff. Reports are accurate and submitted on time.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
Reports and correspondence are often late and/or must be returned often for corrections. Not familiar with policies and procedures and does not adequately inform staff.	Total staff is aware of HR and Financial policies and procedures and can access the web-based manuals. Regularly meets deadlines with few revisions or corrections needed. Notifies Regional Office if items due will be late or extensions of deadlines are needed. Regularly reviews policy and procedures with staff and trains new staff members.	Review policy and procedure change with staff as they occur. Meets all deadlines without exception. Reports and other materials serve as examples to others in quality of content and preparation.

EEO/CR/AA/ADA Policy and Implementation - Leads entire office staff in carrying out the equal employment, civil rights, affirmative action, and disability-related policies of UT/TSU Extension and USDA.

Unsatisfactory	Achieves Expectations	Exemplary
No current CR plan on file. Frequent compliance problems with CR regulations and EEO procedures. Efforts to involve new audiences in programing consistently fail to reach parity / potentials.	Civil Rights plan is current/updated, realistic and measurable. Implements procedures to insure compliance with EEO and Civil Rights policies. Make sure that all programs are held in handicapped accessible facilities or proper notification is provided. Uses multi-avenues to reach culturally diverse audiences . Parity has been reached in program participation. Provides access to educational programs regardless of disability (Brail, sign, etc.). Accurate records are maintained to monitor program participation. Data is utilized in program planning to improve participation of diverse audiences.	Involves underrepresented groups in the program planning process. Addresses key issues and needs of a diverse clientele. County programs meet the needs of all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, religion or veteran status. Proactive practices such as “All Reasonable Efforts” are successful in increasing participation from all eligible participants.

**Appendix C: Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Form in the
System for University Planning, Evaluation and Reporting**

Plans	Delivery	Profile	My Profile	Training/Registration	Enrollment	Operation	Reports
Appraisal							
Program Development							
Program Accountability							
Professionalism							
Overall							
Help							
Print Appraisal							
STATUS:							
■ New							
Submit To Approver							

Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal

2008

Employee Info:

Name: Extension01 1 User
Unit: Clay County
Years on Staff:

Title: Unknown 9
Date of Review: 12/19/2008
Years in Present Position: 9

Edit

Rating Elements:

Communicates Program Needs
Needs Assessment
Appropriate Delivery Methods
Clear Implementation Steps
Reaches Diverse Audience/CR Parity
Networking
Resources/Funding
Outcomes/Impacts Clearly Defined
Plans for Evaluation (Tools/Methods)
Program Development

E A U
E A U
E A U
E A U
E A U
E A U
E A U
E A U
E A U
E A U

Appendix D: Correspondence



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research
1534 White Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
Phone: 865.974.3466
Fax: 865.974.7400

Date: April 21, 2011

To: Donaldson, Joseph L.
Educational Psychology & Counseling
212-D Morgan Hall
Campus - 4519

From: Brenda Lawson
Compliances

Subject: Annual Review and Progress Report:
Project Involving Research with Human Subjects

IRB-APPROVED RENEWAL IRB #: 8095B

Project: An Assessment of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Process and
Relationships to Extension Agent Job Satisfaction

Initial Approval Date: 12/09/2009

Last IRB Approval Date: 04/21/2011

Approval Expires: 12/09/2011

In response to our request regarding annual review and a progress report of the above protocol, you indicated that the study is still active and that there have been no changes with regard to the use of human subjects in this project since the last date of review. Therefore, the Institutional Review Board has approved the protocol until **December, 2011**, which coincides with the anniversary month of your initial approval date.

If there should be any modifications in the project before the date of next annual review, please submit them, utilizing a Form D, to the Compliances Office immediately for review. Requests for your next annual review will be sent to you approximately one month prior to the expiration date.



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research
1134 White Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
Phone: 865/924-3466
865/974-3400

December 9, 2009

IRB#: 8095 B

TITLE: An Assessment of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Process and Relationships to Extension Agent Job Satisfaction

Donaldson, Joseph L.
Educational Psychology & Counseling
212-D Morgan Hall
Campus - 4519

French, Russell
Educational Psychology & Counseling
A510 Bailey Education Complex
Campus - 3400

Your project listed above was reviewed and has been granted IRB approval under expedited review.

This approval is for a period ending one year from the date of this letter. Please make timely submission of renewal or prompt notification of project termination (see item #3 below).

Responsibilities of the investigator during the conduct of this project include the following:

1. To obtain prior approval from the Committee before instituting any changes in the project.
2. If signed consent forms are being obtained from subjects, they must be stored for at least three years following completion of the project
3. To submit a Form D to report changes in the project or to report termination at 12-month or less intervals.

The Committee wishes you every success in your research endeavor. This office will send you a renewal notice (Form R) on the anniversary of your approval date.

Sincerely,

Brenda Lawson
Compliances

Enclosure



UT EXTENSION

Office of the Dean
121 Morgan Hall
2621 Morgan Circle
Knoxville, TN 37996-4530
Phone: 865/974-7114
865/974-1068
tlcross@tennessee.edu

November 5, 2009

Institutional Review Board
UT Knoxville Office of Research
1534 White Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529

Dear Institutional Review Board:

I hereby agree to allow Joseph L. Donaldson, a Ph.D. candidate in the University of Tennessee Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling, to conduct research for his study, "An Assessment of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Process and Relationships to Extension Agent Job Satisfaction."

Mr. Donaldson will contact Tennessee Extension Agents located in all 95 counties of the state. I understand that the purpose of the study is to describe the Agents' disposition toward their current appraisal process, their views toward an ideal system, and relationships, if any, to job satisfaction. Mr. Donaldson's research activities will be finished by December 31, 2010. Mr. Donaldson has agreed to provide my office a copy of any aggregate results.

If there are any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Tim L. Cross
Dean

Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

From: Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

Sent: Thursday, April 15, 2010 9:12 AM

To: appr-pop-surv-sp10@listserv.utk.edu

Cc: Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

Subject: Performance Appraisal Study

Dear Extension Agents and County Directors,

I am completing the requirements for a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. My dissertation study, *An Assessment of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Process and Relationships to Extension Agent Job Satisfaction* is important for understanding the appraisal process from the Extension Agents' (and Extension Agents/County Directors) viewpoint. I am asking:

- What is the employees' disposition toward the current performance appraisal system?
- How does the current system compare to the ideal performance appraisal system perceived by
- employees?
- What are the employees' viewpoints toward the roles and behaviors of their raters (specific to the performance appraisal process)?
- To what extent, if any, does the performance appraisal system relate to overall job satisfaction?

The answers to these questions may inform future decisions about the use of the current appraisal system and the use of non-numeric appraisal systems in general. All Tennessee Extension Agents (including those who also serve as County Directors) are invited to complete a questionnaire for this study. The questionnaire will take 5-10 minutes to complete. The questionnaire includes questions about your experiences with the current Extension performance appraisal system. Other questions will address your perceptions of proposed changes to the performance appraisal system and factors associated with your job satisfaction. I will also ask for some demographic information so that I can accurately describe the general traits of participants.

Your participation is very important. Your participation is voluntary. Your responses are anonymous, and responses will be kept completely confidential. I will NOT know your IP address when you respond to the Internet questionnaire. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to quit at any time your data will NOT be included in the study. Some questions will ask about actions or behaviors of the person who completed your performance appraisal (e.g., county extension director or regional extension director). This questionnaire may be completed from any Internet connection. It does not have to be

completed at your worksite. Your participation will contribute to knowledge about performance appraisals. After the study is completed and data is analyzed, group results will be available for you. Please complete the questionnaire on or before Thursday, April 29, 2010. The questionnaire is available at this URL:

<http://survey.utk.edu/mrIWeb/mrIWeb.dll?I.Project=APPRAISINGTHEAPP>

I would be happy to answer any questions. My phone number is 865-974-7245. I appreciate your participation in this important study.

Sincerely,

Joseph L. Donaldson
Ph.D. Candidate
jldonaldson@tennessee.edu
865-974-7245

Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

From: Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

Sent: Friday, April 23, 2010 8:19 AM

To: appr-pop-surv-sp10@listserv.utk.edu

Cc: Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

Subject: Performance Appraisal Study: Reminder/Thank You

Dear Extension Agents and County Directors,

Last week I wrote to you seeking information about the performance appraisal process from the Extension Agents' (and Extension Agents/County Directors) viewpoint. If you have completed the questionnaire, thank you very much, please disregard this letter. If you have not completed the questionnaire, I would appreciate your response.

The questionnaire will take 5-10 minutes to complete. The questionnaire includes questions about your experiences with the current Extension performance appraisal system. Other questions will address your perceptions of proposed changes to the performance appraisal system and factors associated with your job satisfaction. I will also ask for some demographic information so that I can accurately describe the general traits of participants.

Your participation is very important. Your participation is voluntary. Your responses are anonymous, and responses will be kept completely confidential. I will NOT know your IP address when you respond to the Internet questionnaire. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to quit at any time your data will NOT be included in the study.

Some questions will ask about actions or behaviors of the person who completed your performance appraisal (e.g., county extension director or regional extension director). This questionnaire may be completed from any Internet connection. It does not have to be completed at your worksite.

Your participation will contribute to knowledge about performance appraisals. After the study is completed and data is analyzed, group results will be available for you. Please complete the questionnaire on or before Friday, April 29, 2010. The questionnaire is available at this URL:

<http://survey.utk.edu/mrIWeb/mrIWeb.dll?I.Project=APPRAISINGTHEAPP>

I would be happy to answer any questions. My phone number is 865-974-3514. I appreciate your participation in this important study.

Sincerely,

Joseph L. Donaldson
Ph.D. Candidate
jldonaldson@tennessee.edu
865-974-7245

Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

From: Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

Sent: Tuesday, May 04, 2010 1:25 PM

To: appr-pop-surv-sp10@listserv.utk.edu

Cc: Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

Subject: Performance Appraisal Study: Reminder/Thank You

Dear Extension Agents and County Directors,

About two weeks ago, I wrote to you seeking information about the performance appraisal process from the Extension Agents' (and Extension Agents/County Directors) viewpoint. If you have completed the questionnaire, thank you very much, please disregard this letter. If you have not completed the questionnaire, I would appreciate your response.

The questionnaire will take 5-10 minutes to complete. The questionnaire includes questions about your experiences with the current Extension performance appraisal system. Other questions will address your perceptions of proposed changes to the performance appraisal system and factors associated with your job satisfaction. I will also ask for some demographic information so that I can accurately describe the general traits of participants.

Your participation is very important. Your participation is voluntary. Your responses are anonymous, and responses will be kept completely confidential. I will NOT know your IP address when you respond to the Internet questionnaire. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to quit at any time your data will NOT be included in the study.

Some questions will ask about actions or behaviors of the person who completed your performance appraisal (e.g., county extension director or regional extension director). This questionnaire may be completed from any Internet connection. It does not have to be completed at your worksite.

Your participation will contribute to knowledge about performance appraisals. After the study is completed and data is analyzed, group results will be available for you. The questionnaire is available at this URL:

<http://survey.utk.edu/mrIWeb/mrIWeb.dll?I.Project=APPRAISINGTHEAPP>

I would be happy to answer any questions. My phone number is 865-974-3514. I appreciate your participation in this important study.

Sincerely,

Joseph L. Donaldson

Ph.D. Candidate

jldonaldson@tennessee.edu

865-974-7245

Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

From: Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

Sent: Monday, May 10, 2010 7:52 AM

To: appr-pop-surv-sp10@listserv.utk.edu

Cc: Donaldson, Joseph Leonard

Subject: Performance Appraisal Study: Reminder/Thank You

Dear Extension Agents and County Directors,

About three weeks ago, I wrote to you seeking information about the performance appraisal process from the Extension Agents' (and Extension Agents/County Directors) viewpoint. If you have completed the questionnaire, thank you very much, please disregard this letter. If you have not completed the questionnaire, I would appreciate your response before Thursday, May 13.

The questionnaire will take 5-10 minutes to complete. The questionnaire includes questions about your experiences with the current Extension performance appraisal system. Other questions will address your perceptions of proposed changes to the performance appraisal system and factors associated with your job satisfaction. I will also ask for some demographic information so that I can accurately describe the general traits of participants.

Your participation is very important. Your participation is voluntary. Your responses are anonymous, and responses will be kept completely confidential. I will NOT know your IP address when you respond to the Internet questionnaire. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to quit at any time your data will NOT be included in the study.

Some questions will ask about actions or behaviors of the person who completed your performance appraisal (e.g., county extension director or regional extension director). This questionnaire may be completed from any Internet connection. It does not have to be completed at your worksite. Your participation will contribute to knowledge about performance appraisals. After the study is completed and data is analyzed, group results will be available for you. The questionnaire is available at this URL:

<http://survey.utk.edu/mrIWeb/mrIWeb.dll?I.Project=APPRAISINGTHEAPP>

I would be happy to answer any questions. My phone number is 865-974-3514. I appreciate your participation in this important study.

Sincerely,

Joseph L. Donaldson

Ph.D. Candidate

jldonaldson@tennessee.edu

865-974-7245

Appendix E: Participant Questionnaire

Appraising The Appraisal

*An Assessment of the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance
Appraisal Process and Relationships to Extension Agent Job
Satisfaction*

Information Sheet

Purpose of the study:

This is a study in educational psychology being conducted by Joseph L. Donaldson, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The purpose of this study is to determine Tennessee Extension Agents' disposition toward the Tennessee Extension Agent performance appraisal system, their views of an ideal system, and any relationships to job satisfaction.

Information about participants' involvement in the study:

You will complete a survey, which will take 15-20 minutes to complete. The survey includes questions about your experiences with the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. Other survey questions will address your perceptions of proposed changes to the performance appraisal system and factors associated with your job satisfaction. I will also ask for some demographic information (e.g., age, marital status, number of children, education level) so that we can accurately describe the general traits of participants.

Benefits of the study:

You will be contributing to knowledge about performance appraisals. After the study is completed and data is analyzed, group results will be available for you.

Risks or discomforts:

No risks or discomforts are anticipated from taking part in this study. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to quit at any time before you have finished the questionnaire, your answers will NOT be recorded. Some questions will ask about actions or behaviors of the person who completed your performance appraisal (e.g., county extension director or regional extension director). This survey may be completed from any Internet connection at your home or public library, for example, and it does not have to be completed at your worksite.

Confidentiality:

Your responses are anonymous, and responses will be kept completely confidential. I will NOT know your IP address when you respond to the Internet survey. The list of e-mail addresses of participants will be stored electronically in a password protected folder; a hard copy will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. After I have finished data collection and have sent you a copy of the results of the study, I will destroy the list of participants' e-mail addresses.

Decision to quit at any time:

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. If you do not want to continue, you can simply leave this website. If you do not click on the "submit" button at the end of the survey, your answers and participation will not be recorded. You also may choose to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

How the findings will be used:

The results of the study will be used for scholarly purposes only. The results from the study will be presented in educational settings and at professional conferences, and the results might be published in a professional journal in the field of Extension education or psychology.

Contact information:

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact:

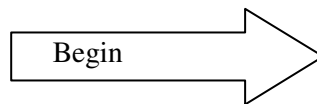
Joseph L. Donaldson, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
jldonaldson@tennessee.edu
865-974-7245

Or study advisor:

Dr. Russell French, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Rfrench2@utk.edu
865-974-6800

By beginning the survey, you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in this research, with the knowledge that you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

Click "begin" to start this survey.



1. Think about your experiences with the current Tennessee Extension Agent performance appraisal system. Also, consider the possibility of other appraisers in addition to or in place of the current appraiser. Please mark one answer to show your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

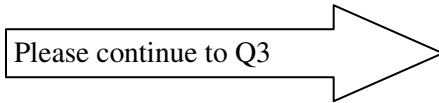
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
The Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System:						
Is fair.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has helped me improve my professionalism.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has discouraged me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is unbiased.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Represents what I do on the job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is implemented fairly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helps me understand my job duties.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Needs to be improved.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is close to ideal.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reflects my major job responsibilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Causes me confusion about job responsibilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Would be more accurate if a subject matter specialist served as an appraiser.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Would be more accurate if County Directors did NOT serve as appraisers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Would be more accurate if a team of the County Directors, regional director and subject matter specialist served as appraisers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please continue to Q2

2. What is your current job position?

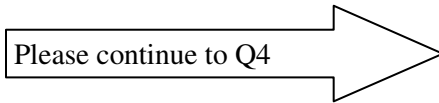
☐ AGENT

Please continue to Q3



☐ AGENT/COUNTY DIRECTOR

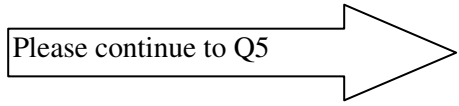
Please continue to Q4



3. Think about your experiences with the County Director who rated your job performance using the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. Please mark one answer to show your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
The County Director:						
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

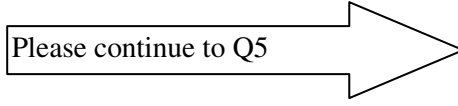
Please continue to Q5



4. Think about your experiences with the regional director who rated your job performance using the Tennessee Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. Please mark one answer to show your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
The Regional Director:						
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

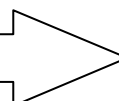
Please continue to Q5



5. Now, please describe your job satisfaction. Please mark one answer to show your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
I consider my salary to be fair.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have opportunities for promotion.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This is a dead-end job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My direct supervisor respects me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I consider my salary to be below that of others doing similar work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My direct supervisor is not interested in my professional growth.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am satisfied with my salary.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall, I am satisfied with my job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This job has too many standard procedures.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This is clearly the right job for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My coworkers are helpful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I consider my benefits to be above that of others doing similar work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This job needs more standard procedures.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication in my workplace is good.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The performance appraisal system contributes to my job satisfaction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would be more satisfied with my job if I was better suited for it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My supervisor and I have positive communication.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rewards here are not based on performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would be more satisfied with my job if the performance appraisal system changed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication among my coworkers is a big problem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please continue to Q6



6. What base program or programs best identifies your work? (Please mark all that apply.)

- ☐ AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
- ☐ FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES
- ☐ 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
- ☐ RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

7. What is your current employment status?

- ☐ ACTIVE
- ☐ POST-RETIREMENT

8. What is your current institutional status?

- ☐ 100% COUNTY-FUNDED EMPLOYEE
- ☐ UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE EMPLOYEE
- ☐ TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEE

9. How many years have you been employed with Extension?

_____ YEARS

10. If there is anything else you would like to share about the performance appraisal system, please type it in the box below:

Thank you.

Thank you very much for your participation.
Questions about this questionnaire may be directed to:
Joseph L. Donaldson
Phone: 865-974-7245
Email: jldonaldson@tennessee.edu

Submit

Appendix F: Additional Tables

Table 15. Respondents' Perceptions of the Current Appraisal System (Frequencies)

Perceptions (N=218)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know/ No Answer
Needs to be improved.*	0	8	34	89	83	4
Is fair.	20	52	36	93	14	3
Has discouraged me.*	13	50	48	62	41	4
Has helped me improve my professionalism.	20	50	44	84	16	4
Reflects my major job responsibilities.	16	51	49	92	7	3
Helps me understand my job duties.	17	52	49	84	14	2
Is implemented fairly.	20	52	48	83	11	4
Represents what I do on the job.	30	62	34	79	11	2
Would be more accurate if a team of the county directors, regional director and subject matter specialist served as raters.*	27	65	36	58	20	12
Causes me confusion about job responsibilities.*	9	77	61	57	10	4
Is unbiased.	27	63	59	57	7	5
Would be more accurate if a subject matter specialist served as a rater.*	38	69	52	37	10	12
Would be more accurate if county directors did NOT serve as raters.*	62	78	42	16	14	6
Is close to ideal.	41	91	61	16	3	6

*Items with an asterisk have reverse polarity whereby disagreement is the positive response.

Table 16. Respondents' Perceptions of the Roles/Behaviors of Appraisers (Frequencies)

Perceptions (N=218)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know/ No Answer
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	9	17	32	106	48	6
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	14	17	35	99	43	10
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	10	27	29	100	45	6
Understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.	31	46	42	59	34	6
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.*	19	76	50	43	25	5
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.*	23	109	41	28	13	5
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.*	80	74	27	19	14	5

*Items with an asterisk have reverse polarity whereby disagreement is the positive response.

Table 17. Respondents' Perceptions of the Roles/Behaviors of Appraisers by Job Title (Frequencies)

Perceptions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know/ No Answer
Extension Agents (N=135)						
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	5	11	22	57	34	6
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	6	16	17	58	32	6
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	9	8	23	51	34	10
Understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.	20	21	23	38	28	5
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.*	9	42	31	28	20	5
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.*	14	66	27	12	12	5
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.*	50	43	16	13	9	5
County Directors (N=83)						
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	4	6	10	49	14	0
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	5	9	12	48	9	0
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	4	11	13	42	13	0
Understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.	11	25	19	21	6	1
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.*	10	34	19	15	5	0
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.*	9	43	14	16	1	0
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.*	30	31	11	6	5	0

*Items with an asterisk have reverse polarity whereby disagreement is the positive response.

Appendix G: Encoding for Written Comments

Encoding for Written Comments

Codes:

1. *Inefficiency Issues* (n=17)
2. *Rubric More Closely Reflecting Job* (n=12)
3. *Appraisal Interview* (n=11)
4. *Merit Raises* (n=11)
5. *Input for the County Directors' Appraisal* (n=9)
6. *County Directors' Appraisal Skill* (n=8)
7. *Training Needed*
8. *Current System is an Improvement Over Predecessor*
9. *Three Levels is Too Few*
10. *Subjectivity/Perception That Ratings Are Not Based on Performance*
11. *Other*

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
1	This process is better than what we had with MIS.	8
3	I think that it is just a little bit too difficult to get into the Exempt classification for 50/50 agents. It is hard to fulfill your duties because of time restraints and calendar conflicts. It is hard for agents like myself to take advantage of the grants and other opportunities that come forth and it can make you look like you are doing your job(s) very well.	2
6	My first County Director told me that most everyone is "Average." I never settled for average until I started working for extension. When I look at the performance appraisal matrix, some requirements for "Excellent" are beyond my control, i.e., being recognized as an expert in my field. Also, we shouldn't have to apply for promotions. If we have made it enough years and met educational requirements, we should automatically be promoted. Those who don't deserve promotion should be fired before they have been here long enough to apply for it.	1, 6
7	I have a County Director who has never met with me before or after performance appraisals. I simply receive the form and am told to sign it. Thank goodness for Regional staff who look out for me.	1, 6
8	I think employees should be able to represent themselves at Performance Appraisals with their Regional Director, versus the County Director trying to justify your work. There is NO WAY for the County Director to be able to be familiar with everything that everyone in his/her office has done throughout the year.	3

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
9	I feel that there should be different criteria for 4-H Agents in terms of outcomes and impacts. It is a real challenge to truly measure youth practice change. Or perhaps, 4-H Agents need more training in how to assess this. Also, does the number of clubs an Agent is responsible for really play into the evaluation? Club work is where the majority of time is spent, leaving less time for some of the other things mentioned in the rubric that allow the 4-H Agent to move into the Exemplary categories	2
10	The standard descriptions are too vague. Some agents have characteristics that fit in more than one standard. The name of the standard does not logically correspond to the standard content. Overlapping of characteristics can be detrimental	2
11	I know and fully understand the importance of a good and fair performance appraisal system, for the administrators and employees alike. I came up in the system when performance evaluations were performed by county and district supervisors. I was always given an opportunity for input, but for the most part they were fairly accurate in their scores and I really prefer that system today	3
14	I began working with Extension in January 2010 so I have not completed a performance appraisal. The system has changed in the eight years since I temporarily worked for Extension so I do not know how the new performance appraisal system rates.	11
15	Although there have not been merit raises in a long time that is what I find most unfair about the process. How can I score the highest (E) my co-worker score an E and she gets a raise and I not because "somebody", "somewhere" assigned points to determine who gets the raises and who does not. What does the performance appraisal really mean if there are no more merit raises? I guess I should look at it as a way to improve my ability to serve my clientele but I am not sure that it truly does that and I am not sure how to fix that. Usually the suggestions on my review are not related to my programming but paperwork issues such as: Getting SUPER in more timely, Civil Rights done appropriately, updating a county web page, taking more graduate classes to get a Master's Degree, etc. However, I look at these items as things that hinder my performance to my clientele.	4, 6

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
17	The performance appraisal system is not working in this county as it was designed. My County Director never has had a formal performance appraisal with any of our county Extension staff. The UT staff fills out the evaluation and we never meet with our County Director to discuss. The 100% county staff DO NO EVALUATION at all of their performance which seems unfair to UT staff. Why is a county 4-H PA not evaluated? There is a great lack of leadership with UT Extension procedures and protocol are not being implemented and followed. Because of these reasons, the performance system lacks value and effectiveness. I know in some counties it is implemented correctly and job value and work satisfaction are greatly increased. If the system were working in all counties, I could see the great benefits. Unfortunately, just not here	2, 6, 11
19	The information entered into Super takes so long. I can't do it during regular office hours because it times out too quickly. If I take a phone call the data is gone if I don't save it often. It is just a slow system. Should be easier to grab previous years info and cut and paste for this year.	1
20	It might be helpful to provide a review/refresh type training for everyone from time to time in an effort to communicate expectations and ensure positive outcomes for the employee UT Extension.	4
22	very time-consuming, confusing, and broad--too generalized	1
24	I think the deadline for submission should be at the beginning of the new calendar year. It is due at a very inconvenient time when so many other things are due until one may not do their best at telling their accomplishments	1
28	I feel the current appraisal system has been a positive step as compared to some of the earlier mechanisms that were in use by our organization. However, a certain level of subjectivity will always exist among the raters, in my opinion. I think that improvement can be made via enhanced or new evaluation components that can help quantify many of the qualitative outcomes of our programs.	10

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
29	In our county we meet with our County Director 3 times a year related to performance appraisal. The first is in June to do a six month review. Although it is helpful to keep me on track, I don't have a history of not being on track with my plan. So, I sit in my director's office and tell her exactly what I have been doing since January. I feel she should be aware of what I am doing. Also, we meet in December and I spend 2 hours justifying everything I have added to my appraisal document. Then, after meeting with the regional staff, I sit with her again and talk about how I was rated. I feel this is way too much time committed to this process.	1, 6
30	County Directors should be made to see that encouraging and supporting their "team" would make them look better also. It should be part of their performance appraisal - and NOT done by the regional office but by the other agents in the office working with them	1,6, 11
32	The current system takes too long to fill out. The process is not an efficient use of our agents time. the same info could be analysed in a one page mbo style that would be objective and use the impact statements where needed.	11
33	If the system is to be used to draw lines beyond the three existing rating, points should be assigned to each area to do this more fairly. I am saying that I think some line in the appraisal are more important than others, for example the impacts from my plan should be more important than the professional training I have attended.	11
35	I do not believe that it is fair that agents do not get to rate nor have input into the County Directors's performance appraisal. Oftentimes the regional office does not know about the problems in the office where the director is concerned. We, as agents, do not have the option of rating our directors.	11
36	The lack of agent input of performance appraisals is a key issue. The report submitted sometimes needs further explanation or questions answered and County Directors often assume they know when in all actuality they do not. Being able to explain performance first hand is a benefit this organization is truly lacking.	2
41	When I was a student at UT we were taught that management by objective was a terrible way to do business. I go to work for UT and our appraisal process is known as MBO. I know the term and the instrument have changed over the years yet the basis is the same.	11

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
44	Our system is totally useless!!!! It has absolutely no bearing on our jobs as does not show in any way what agents are doing. When there are only 3 levels of ratings, agents feel there is no means of improving in their performance. If you get the middle rating - this means your are just "average." Agents do not like to think of themselves as just being average. 4 or 5 levels would be much greater. It would give agents more of a goal to shoot for. There is no respect for our current system.	3,9
45	Like the way the current system helps us reflect on the job we have done and the fact that it looks a a wide variety of aspects like involvement in the community and funding for programs. One thing I do not like about it is that it takes a great deal of time to compile the information. This is frustrating because it takes away from time to teach and serve clients. I preferred a system with we were evaluated by our regional program director.	14, 11, 2
47	I think agents should represent themselves to the Regional Directorsat the performance appraisal and not the County Directors.	2
50	There should be equal standards for equal positions. For example: a 4-H Agent who meets 70+ in-school clubs is expected to have the same number of additional activates going in the County as another Agent, in another county, who only meets 30 clubs. The appraisal should reflect the number of hours spent on this job, not just the number of clients who participate in activities. When an employ spends an average of 50+ hours per week they should be recognized at a higher level than agents who do only 40 hours each week. The appraisal system does not allow for showing differences between Agents who work with a just few cliants during "office hours" and others who contact hundreds on nights and weekends in addition to the "office hours".	11
51	3 levels of performance is not enough. When I rate the employees in this office there are some that should be between the A and E rating, while there are some that should be between the A and U rating. The latter is the one that need changing most. If an employee gets the U rating, then the proceedure is too cumbersome to deal with. I think that the rater could use an in-between rating to challenge the employee to improve without the hassle of developing an improvement plan. I think that the present plan and the time preparing for the performance appraisal is the most dreaded time in the year. I hope that something can be done to change that attitude. Thanks	11
53	It is much better than anything I can ever remember us having before. However, I still think some people get the same rating as me without half the work.	10

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
54	I have never had a County Director who was interested in or gave value to my position or programs. Every County Director has been a Ag. Agent as well	1, 6
58	It is too subjective. There are too many requirements for an excellent rating. There is no pay increase for a job well done.	4,5
59	In my opinion, the current appraisal system is a vast improvement over some in the past. As long as I have the ability to achieve the high marks and not have a quota or the bell-shaped curve of distribution imposed on the final outcome is fair. It is not the system that rewards me, it is my efforts that earn those rewards. The unfortunate thing is the lack of rewards, financial or otherwise.	10
61	Receiving an E on the performance appraisal offers the same opportunities as receiving a U.	5
63	Salary raises are inadequate at best and tend to cause good young agents to leave Extension. Some supervisors(regional and state)know very little about the scope of our job. Performance appraisal is too time consuming. Promotion procedures are ridiculous. If performance appraisal works then an agent should be promoted if he is doing the job he was hired to do without going through the promotion format and UT spending the money for peer review.	5,12
67	Expectations for Excellence is so subjective that it could be impossible. This system has improved. My Regional Supervisor has the approach that I can discuss my strengths and weaknesses which is good. That does help to keep it from feeling like a gotcha. Still have feeling that some employees that get the "E" are the pets. So I do my job and keep on.	11
68	Focuses too much on the negative / not positive. Employee should be involved in the face-to-face process not just the County Directors. Not even great directors know everything their employees accomplish.	2
71	I sometimes feel like those that are working the hardest may not put as much into the paper work. I also feel like some employees enjoy the paper work but do not do great programming.	11
72	Wish there was a pay incentive for great preformance	4

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
73	I feel the current system benefits the writers (those who can stretch the truth. A major flaw with this system is once you Regional Administrators stereotype you its hard to overcome that perception of you. In other words, I've basically have received average ratings all my twenty years. Achieve is as high as I'll ever get, when I know I out perform my peers that continually get Exemplary. Until we get back to the quanitative (1-5) approach like we had in the early nineties our system will only reward those who all considered to be the best agents in the Region.	11
74	It seems to be based on who you are rather than the impact you make. It seems unless you are certain informants you will remain an A until you finish your term with Extension. The bell curve is very discouraging to agents and I can see why they leave and why moral and burnouts are an ongoing problem.	11
77	I find the performance appraisal process very stressful and at a difficult time of year.	11
80	The regional staff should come to the county office and conduct performance review with the director and agent.	2
82	What good is a performance appraisal system if it is not used. To me a perfromance appraisal system is used in handing out raises, but it is not used as that and we do not get raises or at least in the last 4 and 1/2 years I've been working here. How do you expect to keep hard workers when they are not being paid for what they do. Look at other jobs that require 50 to 70 hours a week and look at their wages. We are under paid by atleast \$20,000. I don't want to get rich doing my job I just want to be able to make aliving and right now that is not happening.	5
87	I think there is too much repitition in that we put our numbers in SUPER, we put in our impact statements then we do a performance appraisal. I believe SUPER and impact statements should be enough. I think the Regional Office has too much say in the end results. The County Directors should know what is going on in the County, I believe the Regional staff should be involved however not have the final say	11
91	The entire evaluation and promotion system is racially biased and political. Low job performance is praised and top workers are cut down in every way possible. Morale is at an all time low because unqualified "workers", if you can call them that are praised, promoted, because they do not "rock the boat". Shoot the lead duck!	11
94	Thank you for conducting this research! I hope the results are utilized by Extension administration.	11

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
101	I don't always think my County Director does the best job representing me when appraisal is done with regional staff. Plus, regarding his appraisal, I never have the chance to evaluate his performance as a supervisor.	2,11
105	It is entirely too time consuming. We as county based agents should not be required to write a "thesis" on ourselves each year. Our supervisors know the level that we are performing and they should be able to fairly evaluate us using a very simple form. No organization should devote as much total time to the personel evaluation process as we do.	11
106	No motivation when less productive staff are rated and paid same as higher performing staff.	11
107	Is it really necessary to complete the questionnaire every year? I feel like raters sould know what I do without having to complete the written appraisal every year.	11
108	I believe the system is fair, just inefficient	11
111	I believe that many times folks with less service time come into Extension making more money then those who have been good employees over the years. I know of two County Directors with less time making more money. Also, raises should be linked to performance. Why should you work long hours when the person next to you get the same raises.	5
112	In 10a nut shell: I love my job and would love to make more money. I have a great2 office and staff. I really enjoy working for extension and with people in our organization. Yes, I would like to see the Per. App. System change somewhat. It is time consuming and does not take in to account many great things we do outside of our many program areas.	11
117	I like this system better than the number rated system. However, our region's reviews this year were rated by an interim supervisor and an interim program leader. Ratings were based soley on what the employee had put on paper with very little knowledge of the employees work otherwise. This is not the best procedure, although I understand it had to be that way.	10
118	The current system is fine with the exception that all agents do not get to visit with regional staff as we did several yesrs ago. The only change I would like to see is that the regional staff spend time in each county office with county staff for performance appraisal.	2

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
121	I feel agent have little input once the appraisal goes to the regional office. This could be due to lack of time or planning time to go over appraisal once returned to county office. Agents are asked to sign appraisal and return to director due to turn around time to Knoxville. I've asked for a meeting with director just for feedback, never enough time on both of our parts. I'm not trying to put all the blame on County Directors. Due to lack of time I feel regional program leaders don't give input or maybe don't really know unless agent has a major problem. It's hard to improve or be encouraged if you don't know what you are doing right or doing wrong. Thanks, for listening.	6, 11
125	I wish it didn't fall right at Christmas time, when we are trying to accomplish so many other tasks. It really puts the pressure on the County Directors. With people taking annual leave, they do not like being called in for their performance appraisal.	9
126	The only thing that bothers me is that Sometimes the evaluation does not cover what I have to do on my job and is more about the plan. Sometimes my plan is nothing to do with what I have to do.	3
129	In the eyes of our County Director he puts more importance on having something in the boxes verses helping us evaluate and improve our job performance. I feel that he does not represent us and what we do on a daily basis to the regional staff. Why can't agents not evaluate the County Directors on the job they do.	1,6,5
131	The current system is too time consuming. My biggest issue with the P.A. process is it tends to focus more on the art of creative reporting over creative and effective program implementation.	11
132	I would like to see the performance instrument changed to reflect what the Extension Agent really does in the county. In most rural counties the Extension Agent is a key leader. We do not evaluate that.	3
133	I feel that the TSU program leaders should play a more active role in our performance appraisals. Either that or just turn over the Extension Agents 100% to UT. I have more communication with my UT program leaders than I do TSU but then TSU will come in wanting me to do things not related to my plan of work...lack of communication.	11

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
134	Evaluations are important to determine if goals and missions are being accomplished and if the goals and missions continue to be valid. I just do not like taking the time to do these.	11
135	Thanks for what you do!	
138	The Performance Appraisal System is unfair because it all depends on how good you can write things up. As long as you can make it look good, it really doesn't matter.	11
139	Employees should be able to defend themselves. Regional staff should come to the county and evaluate the staff instead of relying on the County Directors	2
142	I feel that some of the guidelines under Exemplary sets the standard such that it is limiting to agents. Not all agents would have the opportunity to serve regularly on multi-county, district, and state planing teams. Do you have to serve on more than one to be exemplary? Many agents do outstanding work but may not achieve the guide lines for exemplary. Your own personal pride in your work is more of a motivator than the job performance. Many agents feel they do more than meet expectations, but at performance time you feel you are not rated much above unsatisfactory. There is a lot differences in each of the counties in Tennessee and Regional Directorsneed to understand that not every program fits each county.	4
144	I would like to see it go to a 2 or 3 year rotation as far as having to do the appraisal. It is an extreme amount of work to do every year. I would also like to have each agent present when their information is being discussed between County Director and regional staff. It is hard as a County Director to be able to answer every question that comes from regional staff about each agent. If the agent were present, they could help with the questions. It seems unfair that the agent cannot be present, when the main discussions are taking place about them that will eventually determine their rating. This looks to be especially difficult if the relationship between County Director and agent is not a very good one. The regional staff may just be hearing what the director wants them to hear. The present system we have is not terrible, but, placing it on a two or three year rotation and letting each agent be present during discussion with regional staff would be two things to help the overall process in my opinion.	11,2
146	I realize there is a need for performance appraisals, however, I do not think that the documentation we submit is the only way to appraise someone. Some people are just not successful at documenting their activities. A in-person evaluation at a program would be a plus if it could be conducted.	11

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
148	I don't think the appraisal system is an accurate rating of my job performance. It leaves too much room for someone's opinion.	11
149	I think the performance appraisal system, just like the dossier portion of the promotion process, requires me to duplicate work by entering data into SUPER and then entering it again at appraisal time.	11
156	The same info is often submitted more than once. A consolidated data system would be very helpful to prevent duplication and use of time.	11
160	I believe the Regional Staff are a key problem with the rating system.	11
162	Fairness - in my opinion, there can be no fairness in perf. app. unless all employees are evaluated by the same person/team. I know that's not possible but one person's opinion of job performance, will vary from county to county and region to region.	11
165	What is the point of having a Performance Appraisal System as it is, when there is no extra monies to reward agents who exceed expectations.	5
166	Having PEN used by ALL program areas will help with performance reporting. An "E" rating must be earned on a yearly basis; there is a belief that once an "E" is earned you get to keep it indefinitely. More experienced agents, I believe, think they should earn one by longevity alone. There is no way a program leader can manage to affectively evaluate so many counties when they are so far removed from county work. They rely on the County Directors who should have a working knowledge of the county programming for all areas. Some County Directors are so busy with their program work they may not know what other agents are accomplishing.	11
167	I feel that the county agents and other workers should have an opportunity to provide feedback about the County Directors. In a past life this was called a 360 review and gave the supervisor an opportunity for confidential feedback from direct reports, peers and other co-workers. This is badly needed in Extension.	11
168	The change from districts to regions has made it even more difficult for the regional staff to have time to get to know county staffs and the work that they do (because of limited time and increased geographic areas). There are also subtle differences in the application of the appraisal standards between the regions.	5

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
170	Why work to get an "E" rating when there is no reason other than the personal pride. I don't have to have money, give me a personl day off work, but at least recognize my effort.	11
172	This system is the best UT Extension has had. There are some things that could be done differently, but the people in your office have a better idea of what you do than others outside your county. We have been rating our staffs for more years than other organizations. That is a very good thing. Other organizations are now having to be accountable. I believe that is what has set us apart from other groups our accountability to UT Extension, State and Local government. That is what sets us apart to begin with is the uniqueness of our funding.	11
174	Super would be ok if it worked. I feel that Co. Directors should be able to rate their staff rather than the RS to rate employees as she sees fit.	11
179	You left out a major part of the performance appraisal system in the Western Region - the role of Program Leaders. They have more input than the Regional Supervisor.	11
181	i feel the appraisal system does not reflect the job that we do...i even told my regional director that if you are a good writer you can get good marks. it does not matter if you are doing the work as long as you are a good at lying.	3
182	Performance appraisal system we use is a joke! We need to get away from people having a final say in performance that are never in the county to see what job is being done. All they have to go on is what is turned in in reports no idea of real work happening. County Directors should be much more involved in giving final scores. At least they are in the county and have an idea of the programing taking place. It is also crazy that the UT performance appraisal system is so involved in providing documentation for whats already been done. An agent will spend days gathering information to send to someone to evaluate them on. The process need to be streamlined greatly. Most major businesses have a simple one page evaluation form they work from and get along just fine. UT's system is so outdated its funny. If Regional Directorsand program leaders are not going to spend time in the counties and know what work is going on, they shouldnt be involved in the evaluation process.	6, 12
184	Young County Directors should receive guidance in implementing this process for the first year or two. The regional staff should probably have more of a say in this process the first year or two as well.	6

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
185	I think there is way too much paperwork involved. Most organizations just have you sit down with your supervisor and go over a checklist. I would be happy with that. Also, I think it would be nice to let employees rate their supervisors.	11
186	county staff should be included in the County Directors's appraisal	11
193	The appraisal system does not always seem to accurately reflect the work that we do. We have to spend much of our time planning and conducting events that sometimes do not accurately feed into the appraisal, and while it may be easy to say we can cut some things out, that may not be possible in the county in which we work, if we want to continue to have a positive relationship with the people and agencies in our counties.	3
197	This questionnaire ignores the fact that Regional staff are the ones that determine a County agent's appraisal. There are no checks and balances to a system that reeks of bias and ignorance. Additionally, the performance evaluation system is based on a research model that has zero relevance to a County program. Also, an E rating is a quota rating, which automatically means that it can,t be earned but is given. Some agents truly deserve it and others know the right people.	15
199	Regional Directors just put comments in to cover themselves... such as do more related to civil rights, etc. the work load in extension is overwhelming... it is difficle to do outstanding programs because we are so rushed and over extended...i like my job and feel it is important but i am exausted working every several nights a week and on weekends	11
200	The rubrik is clunky. We were told that we would be rated according to progress reached toward achievement of planned work. It's that, alright, but so much, (too much) more. Preparation for the appraisal takes too much time, and I am told by others, that ratings depend on what ag commodities you focus on in your county. If you don't have those commodities, tough	4, 11
204	Performance appraisal does not include evaluation for many things a county extension agent does beyond the priority program area. Little to no value in the document for teamwork or following policy and procedures.	3
206	The current system is better than anything else that we have had in the past 27 years, but there is a lot riding on the County Directors and their opinion. This can be good or bad, depending on each situation...	10

<i>Case Number</i>	<i>Respondent Comments</i>	<i>Codes</i>
211	The current system needs major revision. Needs to be simplified. Whether I have a clean desk or not, does not reflect the quality of my work. Let's be professional. Under the current system, it is an "I'm going to get you system." County Directors do not know how to evaluate agents/employees. There is too much room for personal feelings and attitudes. To me the current system is not worth the time it takes to do it	1,2,6
214	County Directors, who see your work daily, have better opinions on your worth than someone just reading reports. Organizers and fluff writers have an advantage. And yes, I see the downside to director only appraisals, but they need more say-so. Our director just sits and nods. And too many times, it has been said that there is no money for improvement raises and yet, money appears for the water walkers / fluff writers – creating an even greater divide and morale crisis. Morale is at an all time low and it only gets worse when you are beaten up by regional staff, who, in my opinion, are only doing average performances or just a little better in their positions than you are in yours and where you are the rubber that meets the road. This chaps my hinny. Give me a chance to say what I see from the underside, bottom up. I have never been asked about the performance of the regional staff. Thank you for allowing me to vent and air some thoughts.	11, 5
216	Agents need to have input on directors appraisals.	5

VITA

Joseph Leonard Donaldson earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 1996. His major was Agricultural and Extension Education with a minor in Agricultural Economics. He earned a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Education from the Pennsylvania State University, in 1998. His major was Extension Education. He earned the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology and Research from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 2011. His concentration was Evaluation and Assessment. He is a native of Clay County, Tennessee.