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LEVEL OF ASSIMILATION OF NEWCOMERS TO
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Gwen H. Wolford, M.S.

*****

The Ohio State University
1998

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ABSTRACT

Organizational assimilation is the process by which organizational members become a part of an organization’s culture. It includes both the concept of socialization and the construct of personalization of the workplace. Assimilation expands the concept of socialization to include the organizational newcomer as an active participant in the process of becoming a part of the organization.

When employees join an organization and fail to assimilate into it’s culture, the end result is likely to be workers who voluntarily leave, are not satisfied with their positions, do not perform effectively, and/or are not committed to the organization. The preceding conditions result in the organization doing a less effective job of serving it’s customers.

The main purpose of this study is to identify whether or not the behavior and attitudes of OSU Extension employees who have supervisory roles for newcomers are associated with the level of assimilation of newcomers to the organization. This study also analyzed a number of demographic variables, including the newcomer’s prior familiarity with Extension before employment with OSU Extension and the similarity of lifestyle to their immediate supervisor.

Assimilation was measured on seven dimensions - history, people, politics, language, performance proficiency, organizational goals and values, and personalization. The population for the study was all county-level program personnel who began work
with OSU Extension between May 1, 1993 and April 30, 1997. A secondary population was individuals who were the immediate supervisors of the individuals in the primary survey population when those people began work for OSU Extension. Both populations received mail surveys. The newcomer's answered a series of questions designed to identify their level of assimilation on its seven dimensions. They also answered a series of questions about the supportiveness of their immediate supervisor, several questions about personal characteristics, and several open-ended questions about assimilation. The supervisors in the study population answered a series of seven attitudinal questions, several questions about personal characteristics, and several open-ended questions about assimilation. Information on other demographic characteristics of both groups was obtained from OSU Extension personnel records.

The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics, as well as three levels of correlational analysis - bivariate correlations, multiple regression analysis, and canonical correlation analysis. The final response rate was 80%.

The typical newcomer to OSUE during the study period was most likely to be a white female in a committed relationship who has a Bachelor's degree and has minor children living at home. The two variables most strongly associated with assimilation were perceived supervisory behavior toward the newcomer and tenure with the organization.

OSU Extension should consider increased training for individuals with supervisory roles and may also benefit from considering organizational structure changes that would serve to enhance the effectiveness of employee supervision.
Dedicated to Mike, Brad, and Nick;
whose love and support throughout this
graduate program will be forever cherished.
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Research and Statistics
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Organizational assimilation is the process by which organizational members become a part of, or are absorbed into, the culture of an organization (Jablin, 1982). Organizational assimilation is also known as organizational “role-taking” or “role-making” (Katz & Kahn; 1978, Graen, 1976). An additional term that is much more widely recognized is organizational socialization, or the process of “learning the ropes” (Schein, 1968). Although socialization is an important construct to facilitate an understanding of people’s behavior in organizations, assimilation is a concept which encompasses a broader range of behaviors, and is indicative of the interactive processes in which organizational members engage. Assimilation expands the concept of socialization by adding an additional dimension of personalization, which is a newcomer's attempt to individualize his or her roles and work environments to better satisfy personal needs, ideas, and values (Jablin, 1987).

The way in which people interact within the boundaries of organizations is of great interest to scholars and practitioners alike. Much research has been conducted in attempt to increase understanding of organizational culture (Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983;
Sheridan, 1992; Gundry & Rousseau, 1994); as well as employee turnover (Mobley, 1977; Porter & Steers, 1973), motivation (Mitchell & Wood, 1980; Griffin, 1983), performance (Berlew & Hall, 1966; Lee, 1994), and socialization (Schein, 1968; Feldman, 1981; Chao, G.T., O’Leary-Kelly, A.M., Wolf, S., Klein, H.J., & Gardner, P.D., 1994). Identifying what makes organizations successful is important - whether that success is defined as the profit margin in a for-profit corporation or fulfillment of mission for a non-profit organization. In today’s organizations people are one of the most critical success factors. The quality of choices made in selection of employees often affects organizations for decades (Milkovich & Boudreau, in Gatewood & Feild, 1994). In addition to selecting employees, organizational success at developing and retaining employees is extremely important. Initial work assignments in the organization were an indicator of future performance in one study (Berlew & Hall, 1966).

Organizational assimilation and organizational socialization have been studied in conjunction with four primary outcomes - retention or turnover (Kirchmeyer, 1995; Feldman, 1981; Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Evan 1963) satisfaction, (Chao, 1989; Feldman, 1981; Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Hess, 1993, Adkins, 1995; Graen, Orris, & Johnson, 1973), organizational commitment (Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Chao, 1989; Adkins, 1995; Kirchmeyer, 1995), and effectiveness (Hess, 1993; Kirchmeyer, 1995) or performance (Adkins, 1995; Chao, 1989; Graen, Orris, & Johnson, 1973). Although Feldman (1981) points out that “it is still unclear which criteria... can be used to judge the success of organizational socialization...” (p. 309), these four outcomes are most widely used in evaluating the success of the socialization process.
Statement of the Problem

When employees join an organization and then fail to assimilate into its culture, the end result is likely to be workers who voluntarily leave, are not satisfied with their positions, do not perform effectively, and/or are not committed to the organization. The preceding outcomes result in the organization doing a less effective job of serving its customers. Level of assimilation is associated with several variables, which warrant further study in specific organizational settings. These variables include:

- The newcomer’s relationship with his/her immediate supervisor (Jablin, 1982; Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992),
- personal characteristics of the newcomer (Hess, 1993; Louis, 1980),
- expectations of the job and organization upon entry as a new hire (Wanous, 1980),
- demographic similarity to work group (Kirchmeyer, 1995),
- previous work experience (Adkins, 1995),
- interaction with co-workers (Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992),
- task and role mastery (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992),
- gender (Posner & Powell, 1985), and
- race (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990).

This study attempts to identify whether or not a newcomer’s relationship with his/her immediate supervisor is related to the assimilation of program personnel into Ohio State University Extension (Figure 1). This study also attempts to identify which
demographic variables identified in previous literature are related to the assimilation of program personnel into OSUE (Figure 1).
Figure 1: A model of Assimilation of OSU Extension Program Personnel
Background

Ohio State University Extension (OSUE) is a decentralized, non-profit organization with approximately 1,400 employees. OSUE is a department of The Ohio State University (OSU) which has offices in each of Ohio's 88 counties. In addition, the organization is staffed in five district offices and in a central office on the university campus. The organization is the educational outreach arm of OSU, which provides educational programs arising from local needs throughout the state in four broad program areas - agriculture and natural resources, community development, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H youth development.

Program personnel who work in Ohio's counties delivering educational programs are part of a system where supervision is provided by teams for individuals who have the job title “Extension Agent” and by Extension agents for newcomers who have the job titles “program assistant” or “nutrition educator.” The district director is the administrator responsible for the organization in his/her geographic region of the state. However, the county chairperson or the subject matter agent are the individuals in supervisory roles with whom other county staff have daily contact, and who are located in the county offices. To a newcomer, defined as one who has only recently arrived (American Heritage Dictionary, 1992), identifying who his/her immediate supervisor is may not be clear in this complex system. An immediate supervisor is the individual to whom the newcomer is responsible for the tasks and duties of the position on a day-to-day basis. In this study, the researcher identified immediate supervisors of all newcomers in the study population with the assistance of OSU Extension district directors.
Relationship with one's immediate supervisor has been shown to be important to organizational commitment among a group of Chinese males (Putti, Aryee, & Phua, 1990). Quality of information obtained from the supervisor was found to be most important to positive socialization outcomes for newcomers (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Better leader-member exchanges tend to moderate the effects of unmet expectations when newcomers receiving support in the form of quality information were compared to newcomers lacking such support (Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardener, 1995). Although newcomers actively seek information, superior learning takes place when supervisors and coworkers are also active socialization agents (Major, et al., 1995).

**Purpose and Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to identify whether or not the behavior and attitudes of OSU Extension employees who have supervisory roles for newcomers are associated with the level of assimilation of the newcomers into the organization. The behaviors and attitudes of the supervisor are hypothesized to be associated with assimilation most strongly during the organizational entry phase, which is the first one to two months on the job, but have lasting effects on the individuals organizational and professional career (Jablin, 1987).

This study also attempted to identify demographic variables that may be associated with assimilation, including whether or not the newcomer has a background that is traditional or non-traditional for Extension employees. Dissimilarity to one's work group in terms of age, education, and lifestyle meant lower job challenge and poorer work group
fit in a previous study (Kirchmeyer, 1995). In addition to level of familiarity with
Extension before employment, other demographic variables identified in this study were
gender, race, age, position, marital status, level of educational attainment, whether or not
the employee has children living at home, length of time the individual has been employed
by OSUE, whether or not they were still employed at the time of the study, and whether
the individual is classified as a faculty employee or an administrative and professional
employee. Other demographic type variables included whether or not the county where
the newcomer was located was classified by OSUE as an urban county and length of
supervisor’s tenure in a supervisory role.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Describe newcomers who joined OSU Extension between May 1, 1994 and April 30,
   1997 on the following characteristics: gender, race, age, marital status, position,
   level of educational attainment, employment classification, current employment
   status, length of time worked for OSUE, whether or not they were located in an
   urban county, how long their supervisor had been in a supervisory role, their level
   of familiarity with Extension before beginning employment for OSUE, and
   whether or not they have children living at home.

2. Describe the newcomers in regard to the seven constructs of assimilation, which are
   history, language, politics, people, organizational goals and values, performance
   proficiency, and personalization.
3. Describe the newcomer's supervisor in the study in terms of the following characteristics:
   a. attitudes toward the importance of the supervisor's role in facilitating assimilation of newcomers into the organization
   b. level of support for organizational newcomers by the supervisor as perceived by the newcomer
   c. length of supervisor's supervisory experience
   d. level of demographic similarity to newcomer being supervised.

4. Identify relationships between the seven constructs of assimilation and the following independent variables:
   a. supervisor's behavior toward the newcomer, as reported by the newcomer
   b. supervisor's self-reported attitude toward the importance of their supervisory roles
   c. demographic characteristics of the newcomer
   d. level of similarity of demographic characteristics between the newcomer and his/her supervisor.

5. Identify relationships that exist between the set of constructs that compose assimilation and the set of predictor (independent) variables.

The hypotheses this study tested are:

1. County-level program personnel are more likely to assimilate into OSU Extension when their respective supervisors exhibit behaviors that are supportive of them as organizational newcomers (Jablin, 1982; Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983;
2. County-level program personnel are more likely to assimilate into OSU Extension when their respective supervisors hold positive attitudes towards the importance of the supervisor’s role in facilitating assimilation of newcomers into the organization (Jablin, 1984).

3. County-level program personnel having backgrounds similar to their supervisors are more likely to assimilate into OSU Extension than county-level program personnel who have dissimilar backgrounds. Newcomers who were dissimilar in age, education, and lifestyle from their workgroup were more likely to leave the organization than those newcomers who were similar to their work group on these characteristics (Kirchmeyer, 1995).

4. County-level program personnel who have traditional Extension backgrounds are more likely to assimilate into OSU Extension than are county-level program personnel with non-traditional Extension backgrounds.

Rationale for the Study

By discovering whether or not the attitudes and behavior of a newcomer’s immediate supervisor has a relationship to whether or not the newcomer becomes assimilated into the organization will allow OSU Extension to identify if the current administrative structure is optimally supportive of newcomers, and whether further training of employees with supervisory roles would facilitate assimilation. Identification of demographic variables that are related to organizational assimilation of newcomers would
allow the organization the opportunity to identify newcomers who might be less likely to assimilate, and provide the organization an opportunity to intervene to positively further facilitate the assimilation process for those individuals.

Saks and Ashforth (1997) propose a multi-level process model or organizational socialization which provides a theoretical framework for this study (Figure 2). The focus of this model is information and learning, since organizational socialization is primarily a learning process (Chao, et al., 1994; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Although the present study is about assimilation, and the model is one of socialization, the model adequately depicts assimilation since it includes individual proactive strategies and behavior as one of the socialization factors.

This study focuses on specific socialization factors depicted both directly and indirectly in Saks and Ashforth's model, proximal outcomes, and the process between these inputs and outcomes. The socialization factors are the supervisory attitudes and behaviors, which best fit under the category of socialization tactics. The proximal outcome is the level of assimilation, which could be included under the factor of person-job/organization fit. The demographic data could be considered as moderating variables, which are not specifically identified in the model.
FIGURE 2: A MULTI-LEVEL PROCESS MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION
Definition of Terms

Level of Assimilation

Assimilation is the process of integrating a newcomer into the reality or culture of an organization. Assimilation has two parts - socialization of the newcomer and personalization of the workplace by the newcomer (Jablin, 1984). For the purposes of this study, assimilation will be defined by the scores obtained on an instrument measuring seven different dimensions of assimilation: performance proficiency, politics, language, people, organizational goals and values, history, and individualization. The mean score for the responses to items measuring each construct will identify an individual’s level of assimilation on that construct.

Newcomers

Newcomers are individuals who have recently become a part of the organization. Parallel terms used in this body of literature include novices (Katz, 1980), recruits (Jablin, 1984), and neophytes (Gundry & Rousseau, 1994). For the purposes of this study, newcomers will include all program personnel who were hired by OSU Extension and began work between May 1, 1993 and April 30, 1997.

Immediate Supervisor

A supervisor is defined as one who has the charge and direction of an individual, department or unit (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1992).

For the purposes of this study, an immediate supervisor will be defined as the individual responsible for day-to-day supervision of a newcomer when that newcomer began work for OSUE identified by this researcher with the help of OSU Extension district directors.
County-level program personnel

County-level program personnel are individuals whose primary assigned geographic area is a specific county or counties, and whose primary job responsibility is to work directly with external customers by providing educational programs. For the purposes of this study, county level program personnel will be identified as any Extension employee assigned to a county, who completes a Plan of Work for OSU Extension including Extension agents, program assistants, and nutrition educators.

Non-Traditional or Traditional Background

A background is a person’s experience, training, education, circumstances, and life events leading up to the present time (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1992). An individual may have a traditional or non-traditional background relative to Extension, which will be defined by their amount of involvement with and/or exposure to Extension programs before becoming a part of OSU Extension. For the purposes of this study, a participant’s background was determined through use of a 10-item list to identify the level of their experiences related to Extension. Items on the list included length of 4-H membership, and if they had sought information from an Extension office, volunteered for Extension, participated in Extension programs, or come from a family that used Extension services. A summed score of these responses was used to identify level of familiarity with Extension prior to OSUE employment.

History

History in an organizational context is an organization’s traditions, customs, myths, and rituals; as well as the personal background of certain organizational members (Chao, et al.,
For the purposes of this study, history was defined as the mean score of newcomer's responses to a series of five questions about this construct.

**People**

Assimilation involves establishing successful and satisfying work relationships with organizational members (Chao, et al., 1994). Personality traits, group dynamics, similarity of outside interests, on the job interaction and organizational relationships affect how an individual is accepted by organizational members (Chao, et al., 1994). For the purposes of this study, people was defined as the mean score of newcomer's responses to a series of six questions about this construct.

**Politics**

Organizational politics are how people function in the organization's formal and informal structures, including distribution of power and interpersonal relationships (Chao, et al., 1994). For the purposes of this study, politics was defined as the mean score of newcomer's responses to a series of six questions about this construct.

**Language**

This construct includes the profession's technical language; and the acronyms, slang, and jargon that are unique to an organization (Chao, et al., 1994). For the purposes of this study, language was defined as the mean score of newcomer's responses to a series of five questions about this construct.

**Performance Proficiency**

This dimension includes how well an individual masters the required knowledge, skills, and abilities. It also includes the ability to identify what needs to be learned (Chao, et al., 1994).
For the purposes of this study, performance proficiency was defined as the mean score of newcomer’s responses to a series of five questions about this construct.

Organizational Goals and Values

This construct includes the rules or principles that maintain organizational integrity. Unwritten, informal, tacit goals and values of organizational members in powerful positions are also included in this construct (Chao, et al., 1994). For the purposes of this study, organizational goals and values were defined as the mean score of newcomer’s responses to a series of seven questions about this construct.

Personalization

This dimension is the newcomer’s attempt to individualize his or her roles and work environments to better satisfy personal needs, ideas, and values (Jablin, 1987). For the purposes of this study, personalization was defined as the mean score of newcomer’s responses to a series of five questions about this construct.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Organizational assimilation has been defined as the ongoing behavioral and cognitive processes that occur when an individual joins, integrates with, and exits an organization (Jablin & Krone, 1987). This review of literature will address two distinct facets of the assimilation process: socialization and individualization. Both factors are addressed in this study. Stages of the socialization process, dimensions of socialization, and strategies for socialization will be summarized. Individualization, as well as sources of information used by newcomers, will be considered. Rationale for the importance of assimilation and identification of the results of the assimilation process will be identified. The newcomer's relationship with his or her immediate supervisor will be identified as a primary variable that is relevant to the level of success of the assimilation process.

Assimilation into organizations is a process that has two reciprocal parts (Hess, 1993; Jablin, 1982). The first is socialization, which is the process by which an individual comes to understand the values, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge that are essential for assuming organizational roles and for participating as an organization
member (Louis, 1980). Socialization includes both deliberate and unintentional actions by
the organization (Jablin, 1987). Schein (1968, p.2) refers to socialization as the “process
of ‘learning the ropes,’ the process of being indoctrinated and trained, the process of being
taught what is important in an organization.”

The second part of assimilation is individualization of the workplace, also referred
to as personalization. Personalization can be explained as the newcomer’s attempts to
individualize his or her roles and work environments to better satisfy personal needs, ideas
and values (Jablin, 1987). The dialectical approach proposed by Zeichner (as cited in Hess,
1993) supports the view that the interaction of the individual and the organization needs to
be considered in the process of transforming a newcomer from outsider to insider. As a
result of constant change in organizations and instability in the identity of individuals,
Forward and Scheerhorn (1996) further propose that there must be adequate diversity
within the organization to manage the changes in both the organization and the individual
during the assimilation process.

Graen, Orris, and Johnson (1973) claim to have published the first study on
organizational assimilation of new employees. However, the predominant focus of
literature in this area has been specifically on the socialization portion of assimilation.
Many authors (Berlew & Hall, 1966; Feldman, 1976; Posner & Powell, 1985; Jones,
1986) have considered socialization as if the newcomer was a passive recipient of the
process. Only more recent writings consider the active role of the newcomer as a
participant in the assimilation process (Bullis & Bach, 1989; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992;
Chao, et al., 1994; Gundry & Rousseau, 1994). As a result of the existence of minimal
literature about the concept of assimilation, and the fact that, by definition socialization is an extremely significant part of assimilation, literature on socialization was considered in the development of this research proposal with the recognition that socialization provides only a partial picture of the assimilation process. Bullis (1993) proposes that future studies should focus on the dynamic interplay of these two facets of assimilation, socialization and individualization, rather than addressing one or the other as has often been the focus of research studies in the past.

Constructs of the Assimilation Process

A recent literature review identified six dimensions of socialization, which are the basis for instrumentation used in this study (Chao, et al., 1994). These dimensions are history, language, politics, people, organizational goals and objectives, and performance proficiency.

Most discussions of organizational socialization include performance proficiency. The identification of what needs to be learned and how well the individual masters the needed knowledge and skills can be directly influenced by the socialization process (Chao, et al., 1994).

Socialization involves establishing successful and satisfying work relationships with organizational members. This process is identified through the construct “people” in this set of dimensions.

Socialization in organizational politics involves the individual’s level of success in gaining information regarding formal and informal work relationships, as well as
organizational power structures. The dimension of language identifies the newcomer's knowledge of the profession's technical language, as well as knowledge of the acronyms, slang and jargon that are unique to the organization (Chao et al., 1994). Awareness of organizational history, as well as knowledge about the background of certain organizational members, provides the newcomer with insight into appropriate behaviors in varying sets of circumstances (Chao et al., 1994).

The dimension of organizational goals and values links the individual to the larger organization, beyond the immediate work group. Organizational goals and values includes the unwritten, informal policies and goals of the organization, as well as formal, stated, or implicit goals and values (Chao et al., 1994).

Individualization is not included in this socialization model, but is included in the measurement and modeling of assimilation in this study. Individualization is also referred to as personalization, which is a newcomer's attempt to individualize his or her roles and work environments to better satisfy personal needs, ideas, and values (Jablin, 1987).

Phases of the Socialization Process

The process of socialization into an organization is generally depicted as including three sequential phases, anticipatory, encounter and metamorphosis stages (Jablin, 1984). Although many authors (Feldman, 1976; Jablin, 1984; Jablin, 1985; Chatman, 1991) approach these phases sequentially, Hess (1993) supports use of these three concepts in a non-linear fashion. The rationale for non-linearity is that, although there typically is some sequence to the stages, there is also overlap that will continue throughout an individual's
organizational membership as environmental conditions change over time. Although this research focuses primarily on the metamorphosis phase, understanding all phases and consideration of the potential overlap is important in examining the concepts of both socialization and assimilation.

**Anticipatory Stage of Socialization**

In the anticipatory stage of socialization, the newcomer has not yet begun his or her work role with the organization. During this stage the major activity that takes place is the development of expectations about the job and about what life will be like in the organization (Feldman, 1976). The selection interview is an important tool for this process of developing expectations. Selection processes assess job-related characteristics and may also serve the subtle function of selecting individuals whose values are compatible with the organization (Chatman, 1991). In addition to selection by the organization, the potential newcomer must make a decision whether or not to accept a job offer. During this decision-making process the potential newcomer develops expectations of what life will be like in the organization.

**Encounter Stage of Socialization**

When the newcomer begins work, the encounter phase of socialization begins. During this phase, two different processes are thought to occur, dependent upon whether or not the newcomer's expectations developed during the anticipatory socialization phase were accurate. If these expectations were accurate, the encounter phase involves a series of experiences that reinforces the policies and practices of the organization and its members (Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975). If the newcomer's expectations were not
congruent with the organizational reality, the encounter phase serves to detach the individual from his/her former expectations (Van Maanen, 1976).

**Metamorphosis Stage of Socialization**

The final stage of newcomer socialization is metamorphosis. During this phase new members of the organization who become successfully assimilated attempt to become accepted, participating members of the organization (Jablin, 1984). Caplow (1964) suggests four parts to this process of socialization - developing a new self-image, establishing new interpersonal relationships, acquiring new values, and learning a new set of behaviors.

During the metamorphosis stage of assimilation the newcomer who is successfully assimilating into the organization “attempts to become an accepted, participating member of the organization by learning new attitudes and behaviors or modifying existing ones to be consistent with the organization’s expectations” (Jablin, 1984, p.596). Metamorphosis is a time when the newcomer and supervisor begin negotiating and defining the nature of their communication relationship (Jablin, 1987). Research on metamorphosis has focused on the dyadic mode of communication between the newcomer and the supervisor. No information is available on how other communication channels, such as the supervisor’s communications with the work group, influence the newcomer’s metamorphosis from outsider to insider.

Louis (1980) points out an important limitation in the study of socialization stages. She reminds us that becoming a part of a new organization almost always involves letting
go of former roles as well as adopting new roles. Most researchers and theorists have not
considered socialization as a process of change that involves both releasing of old roles
and integrating new ones. She further suggests that the content of the socialization process
can be divided into two basic categories. The first is role-related learning and the second is
a general appreciation of the organization’s culture.

Graen and Ginsburgh (1977) offered a different model of assimilation that
illustrates dual attachments of a member to an organizational role. These two attachments
are member-task coupling (whether or not the member sees the position as relevant to
one’s future work goals) and vertical dyad linkage (also called leader acceptance). Graen
and Ginsburgh’s model basically proposed that the organization member must be satisfied
both in the work domain of his or her position and in the leader-member exchange domain
to exhibit a tendency to remain on the job. The study was not limited exclusively to
newcomers, but was longitudinal in focus. Graen and Ginsburgh found interaction
between member-task coupling and vertical dyad linkage, such that satisfaction in either
one or both of the domains appeared to encourage individuals to remain in their current
position. Only when both attachments were weak did a disproportionate number of
employees resign. Graen and Ginsburgh explained 23% of the variance in resignation with
these factors, which exceeded past studies that attempted to explain turnover through
analysis of job attitudes or organizational commitment.
Dimensions of the Socialization Process

Van Maanen (1978) identified six major dimensions which characterize the structure of organizational socialization. These tactics may be implemented consciously, unconsciously, or both consciously and unconsciously by an organization. These six dimensions are: a) collective versus individual, b) formal versus informal, c) sequential versus random, d) fixed versus variable, e) serial versus disjunctive, and f) investiture versus divestiture.

Collective socialization involves taking a group of new employees and putting them through a common set of experiences together. Individual socialization involves working with newcomers one at a time, and providing a set of more or less unique experiences.

Formal socialization refers to processes where the newcomer or newcomers are segregated from the rest of the members of the organization and involved in a set of experiences designed specifically for individuals in the role of new employee. Informal socialization refers to situations that do not specifically differentiate the newcomer's role from the roles of other organizational members.

Sequential steps in the socialization process occur when the organization specifies a given set of steps, to be completed in a prescribed order which lead to a specific, predetermined role. Random socialization occurs when the sequence of steps is not known, changeable, or ambiguous.
A fixed socialization process includes a timetable for necessary events that is both specific and known to the newcomer. A variable process provides little information about when certain events will occur.

When the socialization process is serial, experienced members of the organization who hold similar positions to the position intended for the newcomer are primary role models in the socialization process. When the process is disjunctive, no one specifically models the role which the newcomer will assume.

The final dichotomy of the socialization process is that of investiture versus divestiture. Processes that emphasize investiture reinforce the identity the newcomer brings to the organization, potentially including skills, values, and attitudes. Divestiture processes seek to deny and reject certain characteristics of a newcomer, typically to provide the opportunity to begin the process of rebuilding the individual’s self-image in a new way.

These six dichotomies represent the major facets of the socialization process. Examples of each extreme of the dichotomous characteristics can be identified among organizations in our society, but practices that fall near the middle of the dichotomy’s continuum are likely to be most common among organizations. These six tactics are defined separately, but obviously interact with one another to create a cumulative effect upon a newcomer to an organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Organizations can make conscious decisions about the characteristics of some aspects of their socialization process to obtain desired results. For example, a socialization process that is sequential, variable, serial, and involves divestiture is most likely to result in a custodial role.
orientation (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), where an individual performs his or her role in ways very similar to how established organizational members perform their roles. In an innovative role orientation, newcomers have the opportunity to define their role in creative and unique ways. Allen and Meyer (1980) suggest that organizations may be able to tailor newcomer’s socialization experiences to foster a desired role orientation.

Jones (1986) suggests that the six dichotomies reflect a single construct, which he terms institutionalized versus individualized. However, Allen and Meyer (1980) suggest that more research is needed to establish the validity of this broad construct. Allen and Meyer (1980) conclude that the socialization tactics used to establish role orientation (disjunctive versus serial) and those used to foster organizational commitment (investiture versus divestiture) are very different, so that organizations could design socialization processes that support a desired commitment - role orientation profile.

Baker (1995) reanalyzed Allen and Meyer’s 1980 data to examine the effects of interactions between job incumbents and role certainty on organizational commitment and role orientation. Baker (1995) found that interaction with incumbents had a strong early impact on the organizational commitment of newcomers, but this interaction was absent after a year of organizational membership. Baker (1995) also disagreed with Allen and Meyer’s position that organizations could design socialization processes that support a desired commitment - role orientation profile. Baker (1995) cautions that tactics utilizing interactions with incumbents will increase commitment, but also result in custodial role orientations. Jones (1986) found that the type of role orientation obtained from socialization practices was moderated by the newcomer’s self-efficacy, with those
individuals possessing low levels of self-efficacy more likely to develop custodial role orientations than individuals possessing high levels of self-efficacy.

**Personalization of the Work Place**

Although less research has focused on personalization of the work place, what has been conducted indicates that newcomers can take an active part in defining their organizational roles (Jablin, 1984). Research on personalization further indicates that the primary set of individuals who negotiate this set of expectations with recruits are their immediate supervisors. To the new hire, the supervisor is equated to the organization (Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975).

Personalization of the work place is a relevant consideration in both the task and social dimensions of the newcomer’s world (Hess, 1993). Each newcomer brings a style of working which will be at least slightly different from that of other organizational members. Hess indicates that the goal of assimilation is good person-organization fit, not just forcing conformity of the person to the organization, and that the personalization facet of assimilation should be encouraged. Katz (1978) found that the more workers can influence the work environment, the more satisfied they are likely to be.

Jablin (1984) found further support indicating the importance of the supervisor’s role in assimilation of a group of newly-hired nursing assistants. He concludes that a newcomer’s job performance rating is closely associated with the relationship with his or her superior.
Strategies for Socialization

Most of the strategies proposed for socializing newcomers focus on effective communication (Hess, 1993). Three key sources of communication by which a newcomer learns about what the organization considers to be acceptable behaviors and attitudes are the organization/management, the immediate supervisor, and work group members (Jablin, 1987).

Socialization and the immediate supervisor

Studies have consistently indicated that “a newcomer’s relationship with his or her initial supervisor can have long-term consequences on the success of the individual’s organizational and professional career,” (Jablin, 1987, p. 699). This relationship was recognized early in the research on organizational socialization as evidenced in Berlew and Hall (1966). The supervisor’s involvement with newcomers is seen as affecting their job satisfaction, level of organizational commitment, and intent to stay (Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983).

“Interactions between newcomer and supervisor during the encounter period appear to focus on the supervisor communicating task, performance, and interpersonal expectations or goals to the recruit, and to some degree on the newcomer’s seeking feedback about his or her performance and the meaning of unclear, ambiguous events and expectations,” (Jablin, 1987 p. 701). This communication not only includes direct messages, but also the supervisor’s communication to the work group as a whole, the newcomer’s modeling of co-workers interactions with the supervisor, and the newcomer’s modeling of the superior’s behavior (Jablin, 1987).
Unmet expectations by a newcomer entering an organization can have detrimental effects (Major, Kozlowski, Chao & Gardner, 1995). However, these detrimental effects can be overcome by a quality relationship between the newcomer and supervisor. Major, et al. (1995) found that newcomers who experienced better quality leader-member exchanges tended to perceive their unmet expectations less detrimentally than newcomers lacking such support. Although newcomers actively seek information in learning their organizational and work roles, superior learning takes place when supervisors and co-workers are active socialization agents (Major, et al., 1995).

A study of attributions as potential causes of turnover in the organizational entry phase of assimilation showed that supervisor’s positive feedback was negatively related to turnover (Parsons, Herold, & Leatherwood, 1985). Additionally, supervisors were not able to predict which employees were likely to leave the organization. Parsons, et al. interpreted this lack of predictive ability on the part of the supervisors as a lack of awareness that their behavior as supervisors was related to turnover.

Personality match of new managers in one large corporation with the personality of their first supervisors was identified as an important variable contributing to success of the newcomer after five to seven years on the job (Vicino & Bass, 1978). Relationship with one’s immediate supervisor has been shown to be an important contributor to development of organizational commitment among a group of Chinese males (Putti, Aryee, & Phua, 1990). Jablin (1984) concludes that a recruit’s job performance rating is closely associated with his or her relationship with his or her immediate superior. Early in the recruit’s organizational tenure, dependency on the supervisor for information was
deemed most important. After 18 weeks of organizational membership, the most
important factor was identified as the degree to which the recruit perceives the supervisor
as supportive of him or her and influential in the organization (Jablin, 1984).

Much of the organizational socialization literature proposes that the informal
sources of socialization including communication between superiors and other workers are
the most powerful sources of influence on the newcomer’s adaptation to the job (Chao,
1988). The quality of information obtained from the newcomer’s supervisor was found to
be the most important variable studied by Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) to positive
socialization outcomes. Receiving informal recognition was identified as producing the
greatest change in organizational identification among new graduate students (Bullis &
Bach, 1989). This result, along with the importance attributed by the students to gaining
formal recognition, indicates the value of evaluative information, including that given by
superiors.

Additional Socialization Strategies

Information-seeking behavior by newcomers entering an organization is of critical
importance to the assimilation process (Miller & Jablin, 1991). Organizational level issues
are much more distant to newcomers than are tasks and roles related to the job and work
group (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Over time, different contextual features and/or
sources of information may become more or less salient as individuals assimilate into the
environment. Four content domains appear important in the assimilation process and have
different time frames for learning: job-related tasks, work roles, group processes, and
organizational attributes (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).
Lee (1994) concluded that social ties among a group of young engineers enrolled in a cooperative program were an important influence on job performance. Social ties with a broad network of company employees was positively related to job performance. However, social ties with other engineers in the cooperative program were negatively related to job performance. This outcome lends support for socialization programs that are informal and individual rather than formal and collective when high performance on the job is a desired outcome. Lee also concluded that high-performing engineers were more quickly assimilated into the organization than low-performing engineers in his study. He proposes that managers need to develop methods to facilitate positive relationships between experienced employees and newcomers.

An investigation of socialization experiences of males and females indicated that availability of various socialization events were similar. However, the perceived usefulness of these socialization events, particularly formal orientations, other newcomers and the immediate supervisor, was significantly greater for men than for women (Posner & Powell, 1985). Gender of the supervisor-newcomer dyad did not show a significant influence on the perceived usefulness of socialization events.

Knowledgeable newcomers were found to be more readily accepted by groups which had a history of failure than by groups that had a history of success in a laboratory study conducted by Ziller and Behringer (1960). This finding is supported by Schein’s (1985) work on organizational culture. Schein proposes that successful organizations develop strong organizational cultures, and it is more difficult for newcomers entering organizations with a history of success to become a part of well-established cultures.
Chao (1988) suggests that organizations would benefit from expanding selection criteria used in hiring employees to include systematically and validly selecting those candidates who would most likely be successful at socializing into the organization. Chao cautions that using her proposed selection criteria of likelihood of success at socializing into the organization does not mean selecting applicants who are demographically similar to the existing work force, but means focusing on the potential hire’s ability to learn new role demands.

Sources of Information Used by Newcomers

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) propose that what newcomers learn about their work roles is closely related to how they learn about their new role. Organizational newcomers use a variety of information sources to gain information about salient aspects of their new role, including supervisors, coworkers, and mentors. Other, non-interpersonal strategies, such as written materials, observation, and experimentation are also employed (Feldman, 1976; Miller & Jablin, 1991). Both formal and informal communication between supervisors and subordinates have been found to be of importance to newcomers in learning work roles. Stohl (1986) found that informal messages received from superiors were most memorable.

Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) concluded that newcomers rely primarily on observation of others, followed by supervisors and co workers to acquire information. They further found that the focus of information acquisition is primarily task and role-related. Less importance appeared to be placed on group processes and organizational
attributes. The most useful sources for obtaining knowledge were identified as observation and experimentation. However, supervisors as a source of information, along with learning about tasks and roles, are most important for positive socialization outcomes. Further, acquiring more information from supervisors or more task knowledge is related to positive changes in socialization outcomes over time. Supervisors and coworkers as information sources are likely to provide benefits such as satisfaction, commitment, and feelings of adjustment (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). "Supervisors may be the most potent source for facilitating newcomer’s adjustment to and satisfaction with the organization," (Berlew & Hall, 1966; Graen, 1976 as cited in Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, p. 868). This contention may be most true as the newcomer’s focus shifts from the work group to task mastery. "Additional work is needed to more clearly define the roles of supervisors and coworkers in the development of new organization members,” (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, p. 868).

Social communication is also an important part of the supervisor - subordinate relationship. "Supervisors who take the time to get to know employees (to an appropriate degree) may help them feel more comfortable with and positive toward the organization," Hess (1993, p. 205). Although excessive social interaction interferes with the work to be done, the absence of social interaction leads to decreased levels of satisfaction and effectiveness.

Daily interaction with peers was found to be the most important factor in helping newcomers perceive that they were effective on the job (Louis, Posner & Powell, 1983). Daily interaction with peers was also the most available socialization aid. Louis, Posner, and Powell (1993) also found that the supervisor’s involvement with newcomers was seen
as affecting the newcomer’s job satisfaction, commitment, and desire to remain on the job. Both peers and supervisors were found to have a greater impact on job tenure plans than mentors, orientation programs, and on-the-job training programs.

Importance of Assimilation

Assimilation of newcomers is of critical importance to organizations as a condition that enhances the likelihood that employee retention, effectiveness, and job satisfaction will be maximized. Porter and Steers (1973) suggest that employees who have “met expectations” have a lower turnover rate than employees whose expectations are not met. “There is considerable evidence indicating that employees who have realistic expectations of their job duties and environments are more satisfied with their jobs and have a lower turnover rate than employees who do not have realistic expectations...” (Jablin, 1984, p. 598). Gomersall and Myers (1966) demonstrated that individuals who have realistic expectations about the job tend to have better on-the-job performance than individuals who do not have realistic expectations. Jones (1983) proposed that newcomers who receive the necessary information for task performance, but do not assimilate into the organization’s culture are unlikely to ever reach their full potential.

Results of the Assimilation Process

What happens as a result of assimilation is a construct that does not appear clearly established. In 1976, Feldman stated that few studies existed which identify both the outcomes of the socialization process and specify what variables determine whether or not
individuals obtain desired outcomes. Hess (1993) suggests that personalization has received less study than socialization at least in part because the level of analysis when studying personalization must be the organization, which provides significant practical and methodological challenges.

Feldman (1981) proposes that remaining with an organization and general satisfaction are two criteria for measuring outcomes of the socialization process. In addition, he proposes a number of individual and group level antecedents to the socialization process. Individual level antecedents include role definition, which is defined as clarifying one's role within the work group, management of outside-life conflicts, acquisition of group norms and values, realistic expectations of the organization and the job, and appropriate knowledge and skills for the job. Group level antecedents include adjustment to group norms and values and job involvement.

Satisfaction and effectiveness are the two outcome variables proposed by Hess (1993) in his study of assimilation. These variables are not linear results of the assimilation process, but are conditions having mutual influence with the assimilation process. Hess also indicates that individual differences and attributions are moderators of the process of assimilation. Graen, Orris and Johnson (1973) utilized similar outcomes of performance and satisfaction.

Adkins (1995) proposed three outcomes of socialization - job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance. Louis, Posner and Powell (1983) proposed that job satisfaction, commitment, and intent to remain on the job are positively related to the availability and degree of helpfulness attributed to each socialization practice.
A link between socialization and turnover was proposed by Evan (1963), who hypothesized that the level of peer-group interaction was negatively associated with turnover. This turnover-socialization link was considered to be an indirect exploration of the proposed relationship between organizational socialization and integration into a peer group. Evan’s hypothesis was supported, leading to the inference that integration into a peer group reduced stress among newcomers, therefore increasing the likelihood of becoming socialized into the organization.

Individual differences have received attention as possible influences on assimilation. Race was not found to be a significant predictor of organizational experiences (Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Wormley, 1990).

Chao (1988) proposes an organizational socialization model that indicates positive outcomes of organizational commitment, job/career satisfaction, motivation, performance, and tenure. She also proposes negative outcomes of role strain, obsolete socialization, and over-conformity.
Commitment, turnover, and promotion were outcomes utilized in a study by Kirchmeyer (1995) that analyzed whether or not demographic similarity to the work group in terms of race, age, education, gender and life style influenced early-career managers. Kirchmeyer found little evidence of treatment discrimination among women and minority newcomers. Work group fit at three months was a strong indicator of organizational commitment and future turnover. Individuals who were dissimilar to the work group in terms of age, education, and lifestyle reported the least job challenge (thought to be important for professional growth and development) and the poorest integration with the work group.

Many of the preceding constructs are summarized in Saks and Ashforth’s multi-level process model of organizational socialization (Figure 1). The outcomes in this model are classified as proximal and distal. Proximal outcomes include role clarity, person-job/organization fit, skill acquisition, social integration, social identification, motivation, personal change, and role orientation. The distal outcomes include outcomes for the individual, the organization, and the work group. Individual distal outcomes include lower stress, higher job satisfaction, higher organizational commitment, lower absenteeism, and turnover, higher organizational citizenship behaviors, higher performance, and role conformity/role innovation. Group distal outcomes include a stronger subculture, stronger cohesion, more stable group membership, higher effectiveness, and reputation. Organizational distal outcomes are stronger culture, higher morale, more stable membership, higher effectiveness, and reputation.
Summary

Organizational assimilation is the ongoing behavioral and cognitive processes which occur when an individual joins, integrates with, and exits an organization (Jablin & Krone, 1987). Assimilation has two parts. The first part is socialization, where an individual gains knowledge needed to assume organizational roles and participate as an organizational member. The second part of assimilation is individualization, also referred to as personalization. Individualization is the newcomer’s attempt to individualize work roles and environments.

Constructs of assimilation used in this study were identified. They were history, language, politics, people, organizational goals and values, performance proficiency, and individualization.

The phases of the assimilation process were reviewed. They are the anticipatory, encounter, and metamorphosis stages (Jablin, 1984). These phases have typically been viewed as sequential, but an argument is made to view them in a non-linear fashion (Hess, 1993). This study focuses primarily on the metamorphosis stage of socialization.

Van Maanen’s (1978) six dimensions categorizing the structure of organizational socialization were explained. They are: a) collective versus individual, b) formal versus informal, c) sequential versus variable, d) fixed versus variable, e) serial versus disjunctive, and f) investiture versus diversiture. A case is made to consider these six dichotomies as reflecting a single construct: institutionalized versus individualized socialization (Jones, 1986). Personalization of the workplace was discussed as the concept that distinguished assimilation from socialization.
The importance of the immediate supervisor's role in the assimilation process was identified. Much of the organizational socialization literature proposes that the informal sources of socialization including communication between superiors and other workers are the most powerful sources of influence on the newcomer's adaptation to the job (Chao, 1988). A variety of strategies for socialization and the sources of information typically used by newcomers were identified.

The importance and results of the assimilation process were highlighted. Jones (1983) sums the importance of the assimilation process with the proposal that newcomers who receive the necessary information to perform job tasks, but do not assimilate into the organization's culture, are unlikely to ever reach their full potential as employees. Outcomes of assimilation are not clearly established constructs. Many potential outcomes are identified in Saks and Ashforth's multi-level process model of organizational socialization (Figure 2).

The relationship between the seven constructs of assimilation and supervisory attitudes, supervisory behaviors, individual characteristics, and demographic similarity to supervisor were examined to fulfill the purpose of this study. That purpose is to determine the relationship between 1) the level of assimilation of OSU Extension program personnel and 2) the newcomer's relationship with their first supervisor and the newcomer's personal characteristics. Identifying factors associated with level of assimilation will provide an opportunity for OSU Extension to evaluate existing practices that support assimilation, and identify potential ways in which to create a more effective assimilation process. These outcomes could result in more effective employees and reduced organizational costs.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research was a relational study which employed a descriptive/correlational design. This study focused on selected influences on organizational assimilation - relationship with immediate supervisor, demographic similarity between newcomer and immediate supervisor, and demographic characteristics of the newcomers. Relationship with immediate supervisor was measured by self-reported attitude of that supervisor and perceived behaviors of the supervisor reported by newcomers.

Population

The population for this study was all county-level program personnel who began work for OSU Extension between May 1, 1993 and April 30, 1997. Both individuals who are still employed by the organization and those who have left the organization voluntarily were included in this population. Since the entire population of Extension program personnel hired during the designated study period (218 people) was included in the population, sampling and selection errors did not pose threats to external validity. The frame was obtained from the OSU Extension personnel records, which reduced the
likelihood of frame error. A number was assigned to each subject for the purposes of
coding and matching with the supervisor.

A secondary population for this study was OSU Extension personnel with
supervisory responsibilities who were the supervisors for county-level program personnel
in the study when they began work for OSU Extension. Since the entire population of
supervisors (120 individuals) of county-level program personnel hired during the
designated study period was utilized, sampling and selection errors will not pose threats to
external validity. The frame was obtained from the OSU Extension personnel data base,
which reduced the likelihood of frame error. A number was assigned to each subject for
the purposes of coding and matching with the newcomer.

Instrumentation

This study utilized four separate instruments, which are included in Appendix A.
The four instruments were:

1. A mail questionnaire consisting of three sections sent to organizational
   newcomers during the study period. This instrument measured the seven
   constructs of assimilation, identified newcomer’s perceptions of their
   supervisor’s behavior, and identified individual characteristics of the
   newcomer.

2. A mail questionnaire sent to the supervisors of organizational newcomers in the
   study when they began work for OSU Extension. This instrument
   measured the supervisor’s attitudes toward their supervisory roles and
   identified individual characteristics of the supervisor.
3. A demographic instrument for newcomers, which was used with data gathered from OSU Extension personnel records.

4. A demographic instrument for supervisors, which was used with data gathered from OSU Extension personnel records.

Both mail questionnaires also included three open-ended questions that allowed study participants to express their opinions about assimilation of newcomers into OSU Extension.

The mail questionnaire that was sent to organizational newcomers during the study period includes three sections. The first section was a measure of the level of assimilation currently identified by study participants. The first 34 items of this instrument replicate an instrument used in an earlier study of socialization (Chao, et al., 1995). This instrument measures six dimensions of socialization - performance proficiency, politics, language, people, organizational goals and values, and history. Reliabilities of the six dimensions were obtained from four prior uses of the instrument and indicated Cronbach's alpha greater than or equal to .78 (Table 1). Validity of the instrument was established through prior testing and revision from an original 39 item questionnaire to the final 34 item instrument. The first section of the questionnaire also included five questions on the individualization aspect of assimilation. These five questions were developed from the literature reviewed for this study. Validity and reliability of these items were determined through review by a panel of experts and calculation of Cronbach's alpha. The post-hoc reliability analysis of the five individualization questions indicated $\alpha = .53$. 

42
Time Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>.82</td>
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<td>Perf. Proficiency</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org. Goals/ Values</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Reliability of Socialization Scales - Cronbach’s α

The second part of the first instrument was a seven-item scale which measured the extent to which the newcomer’s supervisor provided various forms of support including encouragement to succeed, advice, and feedback. Kirchmeyer (1995) obtained internal reliability levels of alpha = .89 and alpha = .91 in two uses of the scale. Post-hoc reliability of the scale in this study indicated Cronbach’s α = .93.

The final section of the first instrument gathered information on the background of respondents not available from OSU Extension personnel records. These data included highest educational degree earned, questions about personal and family experience with Extension services prior to employment with the organization, length of employment with OSU Extension, marital status, and whether or not the newcomer had children living at home.

The second instrument had two sections and was sent to supervisors of newcomers in the study. The first section was a brief attitudinal survey about supervisory roles. This
part of the first instrument and was used to gather information about the reported attitudes of the county chairpersons toward the importance of their role in assimilation of the new employees. Validity and reliability of this instrument were established through review by a panel of experts and calculation of Cronbach's alpha. The post-hoc reliability analysis of the seven attitudinal questions indicated $\alpha = .49$

The second section of the second instrument gathered information on the background of respondents not available from OSU Extension personnel records. These data included highest educational degree earned, questions about personal and family experience with Extension services prior to employment with the organization, length of employment with OSU Extension, length of experience in a supervisory role, marital status, and whether or not the supervisor had children living at home.

The third instrument was used by the researcher to gather demographic information about the participants in the study from OSU Extension personnel records, including gender, race, age, and position, faculty status, and whether or not the individual was located in an urban county. Gathering data directly from personnel records was an effort to decrease measurement error.

The fourth instrument was used by the researcher to gather demographic information about the supervisors from OSU Extension personnel records, including gender, race, age, position, and faculty status. These data were used for comparative purposes to the primary population of the study. Gathering this information directly from personnel records was an effort to decrease measurement error.

Content validity for both mail questionnaires was established by a panel of experts (Appendix B). The following items were examined by the panel: item content and clarity,
wording, length of the instrument, format, and overall appearance. In addition, the instruments were field tested with groups of Extension employees in similar roles who were not part of the survey populations (Appendix B). These agents were asked to make comments and suggestions in the same manner as the panel of experts, and to identify whether or not the content was appropriate for the intended survey population.

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection was two mail survey questionnaires. The first survey was sent to program personnel hired by OSU Extension during the study period. This includes both individuals who have remained with the organization and those who left the organization voluntarily. The second survey was sent to the first supervisor of the newcomers who were a part of the study. Demographic information on the individuals in both categories was obtained through OSU Extension’s personnel records.

The survey packet was sent to all subjects on May 14, 1998, with a requested return date of May 26, 1998. The survey packet included a cover letter (Appendix C), questionnaire coded with the subject’s identification number (Appendix A), and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. A reminder postcard was mailed to non-respondents on May 29, 1998. A second packet including the survey instrument, a revised cover letter, and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope were sent to the remaining non-respondents on June 18, 1998. The final deadline for data collection was July 2, 1998. Dillman’s (1978) total design method for survey research was used for both mail questionnaires to maximize response rate. Survey packets sent to subjects no longer employed by OSU Extension were sent via U.S. mail. Survey packets sent to subjects still employed by the
organization were sent via a weekly shipment of printed materials sent by the organization to all field offices.

As an incentive to all subjects receiving the instrument, those who returned useable questionnaires by the first deadline date were entered into a drawing for a $50 gift certificate to Conrad's, a store specializing in OSU memorabilia. One gift certificate was given away to a member of each sample population. In addition, participants received an opportunity to request a summary of results of the study following its completion.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using version 7.5 of the SPSS computer program. For all significance tests, the alpha level was set a priori at .05 Descriptive statistics were calculated on all variables to summarize and preview data. These descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency, and measures of dispersion. Nominal data, which included gender, race, marital status, educational level, position, faculty status, and whether or not the subject had children living at home, were described using percentages and frequencies. Interval data were analyzed using means and standard deviations. This included scores on the seven constructs of assimilation, supervisory attitude and behavioral scores, age, tenure, length of time holding supervisory responsibilities, score on the level of similarity in backgrounds between newcomer and supervisor, and level of familiarity with OSU Extension prior to employment.

Three levels of correlation were calculated. Pearson product-moment and point-biserial correlation coefficients were obtained as simple correlations. Then a multiple regression analysis was conducted upon each of the seven dependent variables, identifying
the unique variance in each dependent variable accounted for by the independent variable set. Standardized partial regression coefficients were examined to obtain information on the relative importance of each variable in the independent variable set. Finally, at the third and most generalized level of correlation, a canonical correlation analysis was performed. At this stage, all the variables were grouped into two sets, the dependent variables and the independent variables, and the analysis determined the relationship between the two variable sets. Structure coefficients then provided information on the relative importance of each variable in the multivariate relationship.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter supplies information about the levels of assimilation of OSU Extension newcomers and the relationship between assimilation and the other variables measured in the study. The findings are presented in the following order: sample information, description of newcomers in the study, description of supervisory attitudes, behaviors, and prior experience with Extension, description of newcomer's scores on the seven constructs of assimilation, demographic similarity between newcomers and supervisors, correlational analysis of dependent and independent variables, multiple regression analyses of all independent variables on each dependent variable, canonical correlation of the dependent variable set with the independent variable set, and responses to the open-ended questions included with both surveys.

Data Sample

Data were collected during late spring and early summer 1998. Mailing of the first surveys occurred on May 18, 1998. Approximately 60% of the subjects returned usable questionnaires in response to the first mailing. A reminder post card was mailed on May 29, 1998 generating usable surveys from an additional 15% of the respondents.
A second survey packet was mailed on June 18, which resulted in usable surveys from an additional 5% of respondents. A total of 171 of 218 possible newcomers responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of 78% for the sample of newcomers. A total of 100 of 120 possible supervisors responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of 83% for the sample of supervisors. July 2 was set as the cut off date for return of the questionnaires.

Non-response error was controlled by comparing respondents to non-respondents on a selected set of demographic characteristics. These characteristics were gender, race, age, position title, and whether or not the individual was still employed by OSUE. This information was obtained from OSUE personnel records and an analysis conducted comparing responding newcomers to non-responding newcomers. A second analysis was conducted comparing responding supervisors to non-responding supervisors. Difference between respondents and non-respondents on the variable age was compared using a t-test. Neither the group of newcomers or the group of supervisors differed significantly in their age. Gender, race, position title, and whether or not still employed by OSUE were compared through a Chi-square analysis. Cramer's V statistic was examined to identify significance of the difference between respondents and non-respondents. Alpha level was set a priori at .05. Neither newcomer or supervisor respondents and non-respondents differed on race, gender or title. Newcomers differed on the variable whether or not still employed by OSUE. Newcomers who were still employed were more likely to respond to the survey. Supervisors were not compared on the variable whether or not still employed by OSUE since all but four members of this population still worked for the organization.
by OSUE since all but four members of this population still worked for the organization.

The results of this study can be generalized to the population. Respondents and non-respondents did not differ on any characteristic except likelihood of newcomers to respond to the survey. This difference is expected and is not a concern due to the nature of the data.

Description of Newcomers

Gender

Table 2 shows that 70% of the newcomers in the sample were female and 30% were male.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Gender of Newcomers
Race

Table 3 illustrates that 83% of the respondents are white. Of the remaining 17%, 7% did not disclose their race. The remainder included ten African Americans, three Hispanics, one Asian, and one Native American.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't Disclose</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Race of Newcomers
Marital Status

Table 4 indicates that 76% of the newcomers were married or living with a domestic partner, compared to 24% who were single.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single, No Domestic Partner</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married or Domestic Partner</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Marital Status of Newcomers

Educational Attainment

Table 5 indicates that the greatest number of respondents had earned a Bachelor’s degree (n=68), closely followed by the number of respondents who had earned a Master’s degree (n=62). These two categories accounted for almost 80% of the respondents. Ten respondents indicated the response choice “other.” Of those ten, nine had obtained an associate degree and one had received a nursing degree.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate Degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Level of Educational Attainment

Position

Table 6 indicates that the majority of respondents (n=85) held the position of Extension agent. Of the remaining respondents, 61 were program assistants, 17 were nutrition educators, and one indicated the title “Extension Associate.” Program assistants include, but are not limited to, individuals employed as nutrition educators through the Family Nutrition Program.
## Table 6: Position or Job Title

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extension Agent</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Assistant</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition Educator</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faculty Status

Table 7 identifies that almost the entire sample (96%) did not have faculty status, which is primarily a reflection of changes in hiring practices by OSU Extension when compared to the past. The only county-level program personnel hired as faculty could be those hired as Extension agents. However, Extension now offers a two-track system, where individuals are hired as unclassified personnel, and may choose whether or not to switch to the faculty track later. Due to the lack of variance in this characteristic, faculty status was not analyzed further.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Faculty Status

Children Living at Home

Tables 8, 9, and 10 identify the various situations of newcomers related to children. Slightly more than one half of the respondents (53%) had minor children living at home. An additional 12% had non-minor children living at home. About 44% had no children, or no children living at home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Minor Children Living at Home
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Adult Children Living at Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: No Children, or None Living at Home

**County Type**

Table 11 identifies the percentage of newcomers who worked in rural and urban counties. The counties identified as urban by OSU Extension are Allen, Butler, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lorain, Lucas, Mahoning, Montgomery, Richland, Stark, Summit, Trumbull, and Washington. Of the newcomers in the study, 23% worked in urban counties and 77% in rural counties.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Type of County

**Age of Newcomers**

Table 12 identifies the newcomer’s ages at the time of the study. Of the 131 newcomers, 86% were between the ages of 20 and 49. Of those, the greatest number (n=41) were between the ages of 30 and 39. The mean age of the respondents was 33 years old. One individual in the sample was age 70.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Interval</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
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<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>51</td>
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<td>40-49</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \mu = 33 \quad \text{S.D.} = 10.88 \quad \text{Min.} = 23 \quad \text{Max.} = 70 \]

Table 12: Age of Newcomers

Length of Employment

Table 13 shows that the mean length of time worked for OSU Extension by newcomers in the study was 3.4 years. The greatest number of respondents \((n=38)\) had worked for the organization for two years. The frame of the study was established to select individuals who had worked for OSU Extension between one and five years. Of the respondents, 93% meet this criteria. Two respondents indicated employment for less than one year. Twelve individuals indicated that they had worked for Extension between six and 29 years. It is likely that those newcomers had worked for another Extension system before coming to work for OSU Extension, or had previously worked for OSU Extension,
left, and returned to work. All survey participants were listed in OSU Extension personnel records as having started to work for the organization between May 1, 1993 and April 30, 1997.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than 1 year</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 5 years</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\mu=3.36$ S.D.=3.42 Min.=0 Max.=29

Table 13: Length of Newcomer's Employment with OSU Extension
Newcomer’s Current Employment Status with OSUE

Table 14 illustrates that 81% of the newcomers in the study population who responded to the survey are still employed by OSUE. Nineteen percent of the newcomers in the sample have left OSUE voluntarily. The entire population for the study included 26% who had left voluntarily and 74% who were still employed. A greater proportion of individuals who were still employed by OSUE responded to the survey than those who had left voluntarily.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Still Employed</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Employed</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Newcomer’s Current Employment Status with OSUE

Newcomer’s Previous Experience with Extension

A score was calculated identifying the extent of familiarity newcomers had with Extension before beginning work. Respondents who indicated having no significant contact prior to beginning work received a score of 0. Those who indicated membership in 4-H for five years or less, contacted an Extension office a few times, participated in programs or workshops, was a member of a family who used Extension services, and other each received a score of one for each of those items selected. Respondents who
indicated 4-H membership for more than five years, sought information from Extension on a regular basis, were previously employed by Extension somewhere else, and served in the role of an Extension volunteer each received a score of two for each of those items selected. The scores were then summed, obtaining an indicator of the level of familiarity with Extension prior to beginning work for the organization. The minimum score that could be obtained was 0 (no familiarity). The maximum possible score (highest level of familiarity) was 14.

Table 15 illustrates that the level of familiarity ranged from 0 to 12. Of the 165 survey respondents, 31 (19%) had no prior experience with Extension. The remaining responses were distributed throughout the range of possible scores, with a cluster of 38 respondents (23%) scoring either five or six points.

The respondents who indicated "other" as a response to prior familiarity with Extension had a variety of experiences. Most common was exposure to Extension through college course work or internships (n=9), followed by family members who worked for the organization (n=4), summer work experiences (n=2), family members who were involved in programs (n=2), personal acquaintance with Extension personnel (n=1), and involved in a community grant where Extension was a partner (n=1).

\[ \mu=4.58 \quad \text{S.D.}=3.35 \quad \text{Min.}=0 \quad \text{Max.}=12 \]

Table 15: Newcomers Prior Familiarity with Extension (N= 165)
Description of Supervisory Attitudes, Behavior and Experience

Attitudes of Supervisors

Table 16 illustrates the strength of attitudes of immediate supervisors of the newcomers toward their role in supporting assimilation of newcomers (n=100). The supervisors responded to a seven-question scale and the responses were summed. Possible summed responses could range from 7 (least supportive attitude toward their role in supporting assimilation of newcomers) to 42 (most supportive attitude toward their role in supporting assimilation of newcomers). The actual range of responses was 26 to 41. The mean response was 36.

\[ \mu = 35.51 \quad \text{S.D.} = 2.96 \quad \text{Median} = 36 \quad \text{Mode} = 36 \quad \text{Min.} = 26 \quad \text{Max.} = 41 \]

Table 16: Attitude of Supervisors Toward Their Role in Supporting Assimilation of Newcomers (N=100)

Supervisory Behavior as Reported by Newcomers

Table 17 identifies the strength of supervisory supportiveness toward newcomers, as perceived by the newcomers. The newcomers responded to a seven-item scale and the responses were summed. Possible summed responses could range from 7 (least supportive behavior toward their role in supporting assimilation of newcomers) to 42 (most supportive behavior toward their role in supporting assimilation of newcomers). The actual range of responses was 9 through 42. The mean response was 33.
Relationship of Supervisory Behavior and Attitudes

A correlational analysis between the two variables perceived behavior of supervisors by newcomers and supervisors self-reported attitudes toward the importance of their role in assimilation of newcomers indicated a negligible correlation of $r = .14$. Although calculation of this statistic was not a part of the original data analysis plan, the two distinct dispersions of these variables prompted this analysis to identify level of relationship.

Supervisory Experience

Table 18 illustrates the experience supervisors of the newcomers in this study had in supervisory roles. The most frequently given response was four years experience, with a range from one year to 27 years. The mean number of years of supervisory experience was 8.7.

Table 18: Length of Supervisor’s Experience in Supervisory Roles (N= 100)
Supervisor's Familiarity with Extension before Employment

A score was calculated identifying the extent of familiarity supervisors had with Extension before beginning work. This scale was identical to the one used to calculate extent of familiarity for newcomers.

Table 19 indicates that the level of familiarity ranged from 0 to 11, with a possible range of scores from 0 to 14. Of the 100 survey respondents, 15 (15%) had no prior experience with Extension. The remaining responses were distributed throughout the range of possible scores, with a cluster of 63 respondents (63%) scoring between two and seven points.

\[ \mu = 4.66 \quad \text{S.D.} = 3.11 \quad \text{Min.} = 0 \quad \text{Max.} = 11 \]

Table 19: Supervisors Prior Familiarity with Extension (N=100)

Description of Newcomer's Scores on the Seven Constructs of Assimilation

This section describes newcomer's self-identified level of assimilation on its seven constructs. Each construct received a score that is the mean of the respondent's answers to a series of questions relevant to that construct. Each question asked in this section of the instrument was ranked by the respondents on a five-point scale, with values of 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree or disagree, 4= agree, 5=strongly agree.

History

Table 20 identifies newcomer's assimilation scores on the dimension of organizational history. The mean score on this construct was 3.63 (S.D. = .64), which
indicates a slight level of agreement that the individuals have assimilated in terms of their knowledge and integration of organizational history and background of organizational members.

**Language**

Table 20 identifies newcomer’s assimilation scores on the dimension of language. The mean score on this construct was 3.68 (S.D. = .68), which indicates a slight level of agreement that the individuals have assimilated in terms of their knowledge of the profession’s technical language, as well as of the organization’s acronyms, slang, and jargon.

**Politics**

Table 20 identifies newcomer’s assimilation scores on the dimension of politics. The mean score on this construct was 3.55 (S.D. = .55), which indicates a slight level of agreement that the individuals have assimilated in terms of their understanding of the organization’s formal work relationships, informal work relationship, and power structures. This was the lowest mean score received by any of the seven assimilation constructs.

**People**

Table 20 identifies newcomer’s assimilation scores on the dimension of people. The mean score on this construct was 3.72 (S.D. = .54), which indicates a slight level of agreement that the individuals have assimilated in terms of establishing successful and satisfying work relationships with other organizational members.
Organizational Goals and Values

Table 20 identifies newcomer’s assimilation scores on the dimension of organizational goals and values. The mean score on this construct was 3.91 (S.D.= .54), which indicates a moderate level of agreement that the individuals have assimilated in terms of their knowledge of and agreement with the implicit and explicit goals and values of OSU Extension.

Performance Proficiency

Table 20 identifies newcomer’s assimilation scores on the dimension of performance proficiency. The mean score on this construct was 4.03 (S.D.= .61), which indicates a moderate level of agreement that the individuals have assimilated in terms of knowledge and skills needed to complete job tasks and duties. This was the highest mean score generated on any of the seven constructs of assimilation.

Personalization

Table 20 identifies newcomer’s assimilation scores on the dimension of personalization of the work place. The mean score on this construct was 4.01 (S.D.= .47), which indicates a moderate level of agreement that the individuals have assimilated in terms of their ability to individualize their roles and work space within their general job description.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assimilation Construct</th>
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<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalization</td>
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<td>.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational Goals and Values</td>
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<td>.54</td>
</tr>
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<td>People</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

μ based on a five-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Table 20: Level of Assimilation to OSU Extension (N = 165)

Demographic Similarity Between Newcomer and Supervisor

The demographic characteristics of newcomers in the study and their first supervisors were compared to identify whether or not the two individuals had similar life styles (Table 21). The characteristics compared were race, age, gender, highest education level attained, marital status, whether or not they had children living at home, and organizational tenure. Each of these variables that were the same for both individuals received a value of one. If the two were in different categories, the variable received a value of 0. These categories were summed to obtain an overall similarity score. The lowest possible score was 0, where the individuals shared no common characteristics. The highest possible score was 9, indicating the individuals shared all characteristics in common.
The largest number of newcomers had a similarity score of 2 (n=44). Twenty-eight of the newcomers (17%) had a similarity score of 0 with their supervisors. Of the total sample, 70% had similarity scores ranging between 1 and 3.

| μ = 1.98 | S.D. = 1.33 | Median = 2 | Mode = 2 | Min. = 2 | Max. = 5 |

Table 21: Similarity of Newcomer and Supervisor (N=165)

**Correlational Analysis of Variables**

Pearson’s r was used in calculation of a correlational analysis of the dependent and independent variables with one another (Table 22). A number of the calculations are actually point-biserial coefficients, since the variables are dichotomous and coded 0 and 1. These dichotomous variables include whether or not the newcomer is still employed, gender, race, marital status, whether or not the newcomer has minor children at home, whether or not the newcomer has adult children living at home, whether or not the newcomer has no children or none living at home, and whether or not the newcomer is located in an urban county. Two of the variables in the correlational matrix are ordinal variables, but are treated as interval variables in this analysis since they must be treated as interval variables in the multiple regression and canonical correlation analyses. These variables are educational level and job title.
Examination of the correlational matrix (Table 22) indicates relationships between individual dependent variables and individual independent variables in the study. Although there are a number of statistically significant correlations, the practical significance of any relationships in this matrix between individual variables is negligible. Since the associations among individual variables are either low or negligible and lacking practical significance, no further discussion of these relationships will be included.
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<tr>
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<th>.068</th>
<th>.165</th>
<th>.124</th>
<th>.223*</th>
<th>.219*</th>
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<td>.035</td>
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<td>.061</td>
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<td>-.012</td>
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* indicates statistically significant correlations (α = .05)

Table 22: Correlations of Individual Dependent Variables to Individual Independent Variables
Multiple Regression Analyses of All Independent Variables on Each Dependent Variable

Introduction

The following section includes seven separate regression analyses, one conducted on each of the independent variables in the study. The seven dependent variables and 15 independent variables are identified in Figure 1. Each regression analysis conducted a simultaneous analysis of the variables, where all independent variables are entered in the regression equation at the same time.

Variables with an interval or ratio level of measurement did not need altered for the regression analysis. Categorical variables with two categories were dummy-coded to carry values of 0 and 1 for the purpose of this analysis. Three categorical variables were a part of the analysis that had more than two categories. One of these variables, race, was recoded for the regression analysis into values of 0 = white, 1 = non-white. The other two categorical variables were rank-ordered for the purpose of regression analysis. These variables were position title and educational level.

Three questions were asked on the survey about status of children in the newcomer's home. These questions identified whether minor children lived in the home, whether adult children lived at home, or whether the newcomer had no children or none living at home. The questions about minor children and no children were very highly correlated (r = -.85). This was a concern in regression analysis. Further, only 10 respondents indicated that they had both adult and minor children living at home. For purposes of the regression analysis, the three variables related to children were recoded into a single variable that indicated whether or not the newcomer had children living at
home. This variable was coded "0" for no children, or none living at home and "1" for children living at home.

For each regression analysis, the coefficient of determination (R-squared) was examined to determine the amount of variance in the dependent variable predicted by the independent variable set. The test statistic (F) was examined to determine if the percent of variance explained by the coefficient of determination was statistically significant. Alpha level was set a priori at .05 and all 15 independent variables were simultaneously entered into the regression equations. Standardized partial regression coefficients were examined. These coefficients were used to identify the relative importance of each of the independent variables.

The Durbin-Watson statistic was examined for each regression analysis to determine whether or not the assumption of no autocorrelation among the variables had been violated. This is a test for independence of the independent variables from one another. Each regression analysis was also examined for potential concerns of multicollinearity. Multicollinearity is the condition when one independent variable is a linear combination of the other independent variables, which effects the soundness of results obtained from the regression analysis. To check for this condition, tolerance and VIF statistics were examined for each regression. Tolerance values close to 1 indicate that multicollinearity is not a problem. Tolerance values near 0 indicate multicollinearity. A VIF value which exceeds 10 also indicates a likelihood of multicollinearity.

Sample size is an issue of potential concern, particularly since this study is examining 15 independent variables. The sample size used in multiple regression analysis is 72.
possibly the most influential element under the researcher's control (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995). A range of 15-20 cases per independent variable is most desired, which, for this study, would mean a range of 225-300 cases. However, in this census study, that many participants did not exist. A minimum number of cases allowable for each independent variable is five (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995), meaning the minimum number of acceptable cases for this research is 75. The number of study participants in this research (n=165) is well over the acceptable minimum, resulting in a ratio of 11 cases per independent variable.

**History**

The multiple regression analysis of history on the 15 independent variables resulted in an explanation of 30% of the variance in “history” by the linear combination of the 15 independent variables (Table 23). The test statistic (F=3.27, α<.05) indicates that the variance explained by the full model is statistically significant.

An examination of the standardized partial regression coefficients identifies the relative contribution of the four independent variables explaining a significant amount of the variance in history (α=.05). Length of time worked for OSU Extension was the strongest contributor to explaining the variance in history (Beta=.41). The next most significant contributor to explaining the variance in history was perceived behavior of supervisor (Beta=.38). Prior experiences with Extension (Beta=.20) and having children living at home (Beta=.19) were other variables that were statistically significant.

The Durbin-Watson statistic was examined to check for independence of the residuals. DW=1.96, and values near two indicate no auto-correlation. The results were
examined to check for potential multicollinearity concerns. The tolerance and VIF statistics indicate no cause for concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ind. Variable</th>
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<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<td>.00</td>
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<td>children living at home</td>
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<td>.19</td>
<td>.03</td>
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R Square = .295, F= 3.27, Standard Error of the Estimate = .57, Durbin-Watson = 1.96

Table 23: Regression of the Independent Variables on Dependent Variable “History”
People

The multiple regression analysis of "people" on the 15 independent variables resulted in an explanation of 35% of the variance in "people" by the linear combination of the 15 independent variables (Table 24). The test statistic ($F = 4.12, \alpha < .05$) indicates that the variance explained by the full model is statistically significant.

An examination of the standardized partial regression coefficients identifies the relative contribution of the two independent variables explaining a significant amount of the variance in people ($\alpha = .05$). Perceived supervisory behavior was the strongest contributor to explaining the variance in people (Beta = .52), followed by length of time worked for OSUE (Beta = .25).

The Durbin-Watson statistic was examined to check for independence of the residuals. DW=1.96, and values near two indicate no auto-correlation. The results were examined to check for potential multicollinearity concerns. The tolerance and VIF statistics indicate no cause for concern.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ind. Variable</th>
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<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>.42</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

R Square = .35  
F = 4.12  
Standard Error of the Estimate = .45  
Durbin-Watson = 1.96

Table 24: Regression of the Independent Variables on Dependent Variable “People”
Politics

The multiple regression analysis of "politics" on the 15 independent variables resulted in an explanation of 20% of the variance in politics by the linear combination of the 15 independent variables (Table 25). The test statistic (F = 1.94, α < .05) indicates that the variance explained by the full model is statistically significant.

An examination of the standardized partial regression coefficients identifies the relative contribution of the two independent variables explaining a significant amount of the variance in politics (α = .05). Perceived supervisory behavior was the strongest contributor to explaining the variance in politics (Beta = .36). The next most significant contributor was length of time worked for OSUE (Beta = .29).

The Durbin-Watson statistic was examined to check for independence of the residuals. DW = 1.87, and values near two indicate no auto-correlation. The results were examined to check for potential multicollinearity concerns. The tolerance and VIF statistics indicate no cause for concern.
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R Square = .20
F = 1.94
Standard Error of the Estimate = .52
Durbin-Watson = 1.87

Table 25: Regression of the Independent Variables on Dependent Variable "Politics"
Language

The multiple regression analysis of "language" on the 15 independent variables resulted in an explanation of 28% of the variance in language by the linear combination of the 15 independent variables (Table 26). The test statistic (F=3.09, α<.05) indicates that the variance explained by the full model is statistically significant.

An examination of the standardized partial regression coefficients identifies the relative contribution of the five independent variables explaining a significant amount of the variance in language (α=.05). Length of time worked for OSU Extension was the strongest contributor to explaining the variance in language (Beta= .35). The next most significant contributor was age (Beta= -.28). Having children at home (Beta= .27), supervisory behavior scores (Beta= .21), and whether or not the county was urban (Beta= .17) were other statistically significant contributors to explaining the variance in language.

The Durbin-Watson statistic was examined to check for independence of the residuals. DW= 1.95, and values near two indicate no auto-correlation. The results were examined to check for potential multicollinearity concerns. The tolerance and VIF statistics indicate no cause for concern.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ind. Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1.55</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>supervisor's behavior</td>
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<td>supervisor's prior experience</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.19</td>
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<td>still work for OSUE</td>
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<td>gender</td>
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<td>.46</td>
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<td>tenure</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>urban county</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>marital status</td>
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<td>.14</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>children at home</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R Square = .28  
F= 3.09  
Standard Error of the Estimate = .60  
Durbin-Watson = 1.95

Table 26: Regression of the Independent Variables on Dependent Variable “Language”
Organizational Goals and Values

The multiple regression analysis of “organizational goals and values” on the 15 independent variables resulted in an explanation of 27% of the variance in organizational goals and values by the linear combination of the 15 independent variables (Table 27). The test statistic (F = 2.89, α < .05) indicates that the variance explained by the full model is statistically significant.

An examination of the standardized partial regression coefficients identifies the relative contribution of the three independent variables explaining a significant amount of the variance in organizational goals and values (α = .05). The supervisory behavior score was the strongest contributor to explaining the variance in organizational goals and values (Beta = .34). The next most significant contributor was tenure (Beta = .25), followed by having children at home (Beta = .24).

The Durbin-Watson statistic was examined to check for independence of the residuals. DW = 1.79, and values near two indicate no auto-correlation. The results were examined to check for potential multicollinearity concerns. The tolerance and VIF statistics indicate no cause for concern.
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<th>Beta</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<td>.01</td>
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<td>children at home</td>
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<td>.09</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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</table>

R Square = .27  F= 2.89  Standard Error of the Estimate = .49  Durbin-Watson = 1.79

Table 27: Regression of the Independent Variables on Dependent Variable “Organizational Goals and Values”
Performance Proficiency

The multiple regression analysis of “performance proficiency” on the 15 independent variables resulted in an explanation of 27% of the variance in performance proficiency by the linear combination of the 15 independent variables (Table 28). The test statistic (F = 2.95, α<.05) indicates that the variance explained by the full model is statistically significant.

An examination of the standardized partial regression coefficients identifies the relative contribution of the four independent variables explaining a significant amount of the variance in performance proficiency (α=.05). Tenure was the strongest contributor to explaining the variance in performance proficiency (Beta = .30). The other three significant contributors in explaining the variance in performance proficiency were supervisory behavior scores (Beta = .22), having children living at home (Beta = .22), and urban (Beta = .18). All of these variables were statistically significant contributors to explaining the variance in performance proficiency.

The Durbin-Watson statistic was examined to check for independence of the residuals. DW = 2.15, and values near two indicate no auto-correlation. The results were examined to check for potential multicollinearity concerns. The tolerance and VIF statistics indicate no cause for concern.
<table>
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<th>Beta</th>
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<td>.18</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td>marital status</td>
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<tr>
<td>children at home</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R Square = .27  
F= 2.95  
Standard Error of the Estimate = .56  
Durbin-Watson = 2.15

Table 28: Regression of the Independent Variables on Dependent Variable “Performance Proficiency”
Personalization

The multiple regression analysis of "personalization" on the 15 independent variables resulted in an explanation of 36% of the variance in personalization by the linear combination of the 15 independent variables (Table 29). The test statistic ($F = 4.53$, $\alpha < .05$) indicates that the variance explained by the full model is statistically significant.

An examination of the standardized partial regression coefficients identifies the relative contribution of the four independent variables explaining a significant amount of the variance in personalization ($\alpha = .05$). Supervisory behavior scores was the strongest predictor of personalization (Beta = .41). The next two most significant predictor of personalization were tenure (Beta = .27) and urban (Beta = .24). Supervisory experience was also a statistically significant variable (Beta = .17), although it's standardized regression coefficient was less than .20.

The Durbin-Watson statistic was examined to check for independence of the residuals. DW = 1.81, and values near two indicate no auto-correlation. The results were examined to check for potential multicollinearity concerns. The tolerance and VIF statistics indicate no cause for concern.
<table>
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<th>Beta</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<td>.41</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
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<td>newcomer's prior experience</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.07</td>
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<td>.23</td>
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<td>supervisor's prior experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>still work for OSUE</td>
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<td>.15</td>
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<td>educational level</td>
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<td>tenure</td>
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<td>.00</td>
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<td>urban county</td>
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<td>.09</td>
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<td>marital status</td>
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<td>children at home</td>
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<td>.08</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.11</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

R Square = .36  
F = 4.53  
Standard Error of the Estimate = .41  
Durbin-Watson = 1.81

Table 29: Regression of the Independent Variables on Dependent Variable "Personalization"
Summary of Regression Analysis

The seven regression analyses included all 15 independent variables, which were regressed on each of the seven dependent variables. All independent variables were entered in the equation simultaneously. All seven regression analyses indicated that the independent variable set explained a statistically significant portion of the variance in the dependent variables. The independent variable sets explained between 20 and 36% of the variance in the seven dependent variables.

The independent variable set most strongly explained the variance in personalization (36%). This was closely followed by the amount of explained variance in people (35%). History (30%), language (28%), organizational goals and values (27%), performance proficiency (27%), and politics (20%) also had statistically significant amounts of variance explained by the independent variable set.

Perceived supervisory behavior and tenure were significant predictors of the total model in all seven regression equations. All were positive relationships and were the two most significant contributors to explaining variance in all of the regression equations except one. Individuals who have worked for OSUE longer and who perceive their supervisors as supportive tend to have higher assimilation scores on all seven dimensions. Having children was a predictor in three of the seven equations (language, organizational goals and values, and performance proficiency), and all relationships were positive. Newcomers who have children living at home tend to have higher assimilation scores on these three dimensions. Urban was a significant predictor of language, performance
proficiency and personalization. These relationships were positive, indicating that individuals in urban counties tend to have higher scores on these assimilation dimensions.

Newcomers who are younger tended to have higher scores on the dimension of language. Newcomers who had higher familiarity scores tended to have higher scores on the dimension of history. Newcomers who had supervisors with more experience tended to have higher scores on the dimension of personalization.

All Durbin-Watson statistics were values near two, which indicated no autocorrelation. This finding indicates that there is no relationship between the independent variables. Multicollinearity was not a concern in any of the seven regression equations. The tolerance and VIF statistics in each of the seven regression equations were close to the desired values not close to one and less than 10 respectively, indicating no multicollinearity.

**Canonical Correlation Analysis of the Variable Sets**

**Introduction**

Canonical correlation analysis is a generalized multivariate procedure which allows identification of possible relationships between two sets of variables. In this case, the dependent variable set is the seven dependent variables that compose the concept of assimilation. The independent variable set includes the 17 independent variables that have been studied throughout this research (Figure 1). The question to be answered through use of canonical correlation is whether there is a relationship between the dependent variable set, the seven constructs that compose assimilation, and the independent variable.
set, which includes variables related to supervision and individual characteristics of the newcomers in the study. This question is answered in canonical correlation analysis through calculation of a linear composite of variables from each of the variable sets, such that the correlation between the two linear composite scores is maximized. These linear composites are called canonical variates, and the correlational statistic is the canonical correlation coefficient ($R_c$).

The maximum number of canonical roots which can be generated is equal to the number of variables in the smaller of the two variable sets. In this case, seven canonical roots were generated. The statistical significance of each of the seven roots was determined through examination of the $F$ statistic. A redundancy index for all statistically significant canonical roots was also calculated to determine the amount of variance in the dependent variable set explained by the independent variable set. This index allows the researcher to identify the practical significance of the statistical findings.

The nature of the relationship between the two variates was interpreted through use of the canonical structure coefficients. The relative importance of each variable in the variate was determined from the standardized canonical structure coefficients. The proportion of variance in the dependent variable set explained by each dependent variate ($PV$) was calculated by summing the squares of the structure coefficients and dividing the sum of the squared structure coefficients by the number of variables in the dependent variable set.

Sample size is a relevant issue in canonical correlation. Recommended sample size is 10 or more cases per variable (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995), which would
dictate a sample size of 240. Sample size in this census study is significantly lower than that \( n=165 \), resulting in approximately seven cases per variable. This relatively small sample size is a limitation of the study, indicating that the results of the canonical correlational analysis should be interpreted cautiously.

**Interpretation**

Six of the seven squared canonical correlation coefficients had values greater than .10, which is the typically accepted value to warrant interpretation (Table 29). The F statistic was examined for all canonical correlation coefficients, indicating only the first three were statistically significant \( (\alpha=.05) \). A redundancy statistic was calculated for each of the canonical roots to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable set that is explained by the independent variable set. This statistic is calculated by multiplying the proportion of variance \( (PV) \) by the squared canonical correlation \( (R_c^2) \). The redundancy statistic for the first canonical dependent variate is .19. The second canonical dependent variate has a redundancy index of .05, while the third and fifth have redundancy indexes of .03. The fifth root will be eliminated from further analysis because it is not a statistically significant canonical correlation coefficient. The second canonical roots will be interpreted since it contribute both practical and statistical explanations of variance, the second canonical root explains 5% of the variance in the dependent variable set. The third canonical root will be eliminated from further analysis because it carries information about variables that is repetitious of the information carried in the first two variates.
The first canonical root indicated that the independent variate shared 35% of its variance with the dependent variate. Standardized canonical correlation coefficients were analyzed for the first variate, to identify the relative importance of individual variables included in the variate. Constructs of assimilation that are most strongly associated with the independent variable set are personalization (standardized coefficient = .63), history (standardized coefficient = .54), people (standardized coefficient = .47), and performance proficiency (standardized coefficient = -.41).

Examination of the standardized canonical correlation coefficients for the independent variable set indicates that the greatest relative importance in explaining the variance in the dependent variable set for assimilation constructs are supervisor's perceived behavior (standardized coefficient = .79), tenure (standardized coefficient = .52), and level of prior experience with Extension (standardized coefficient = .42). The remaining independent variables made negligible contributions to explaining the variance in the dependent variate.

Examination of the structure coefficients provides information about which variables contribute meaningfully to the variate. Structure coefficients are product-moment correlation coefficients indicating the magnitude and direction of relationship between each variable in the independent or dependent variable set and the variate (the linear composite of all variables in the set). Structure coefficients are used to describe (name) the information being carried by the variate. The rule of thumb used is that any coefficient greater than .30 is treated as meaningful (Warmbrod, 1996). In examining the dependent variable set, all seven variables contribute meaningfully to the variate.
In examining the independent variable set, only three of the 17 variables contribute meaningfully if this rule of thumb is followed. These variables are supervisor’s behavior (.49), newcomer’s experiences with Extension prior to beginning work for OSUE (.44), and length of time working for OSUE (.42). The first independent variate is primarily carrying information about these three variables in the independent variable set.

The second canonical root indicated that the independent variate shared 15% of its variance with the dependent variate. Standardized canonical correlation coefficients were analyzed for the second variate, to identify the relative importance of individual variables included in the variate. Constructs of assimilation that are most strongly associated with the independent variable set are performance proficiency (standardized coefficient = .99), politics (standardized coefficient = -.54), and organizational goals and values (standardized coefficient = .51).

Examination of the standardized canonical correlation coefficients for the independent variable set indicates that the greatest relative importance in explaining the variance in the dependent variable set for assimilation constructs are no children or none living at home (standardized coefficient = -.40), adult children living at home (standardized coefficient = .38), and supervisor’s experience (standardized coefficient = .34). The remaining independent variables made negligible contributions to explaining the variance in the dependent variate.

Examination of the structure coefficients provides information about which variables contribute meaningfully to the variate. Structure coefficients are product-moment correlation coefficients indicating the magnitude and direction of relationship
between each variable in the independent or dependent variable set and the variate (the linear composite of all variables in the set). Structure coefficients are used to describe (name) the information being carried by the variate. The rule of thumb used is that any coefficient greater than .30 is treated as meaningful (Warmbrod, 1996). In examining the dependent variable set, three of the seven variables contribute meaningfully to the variate. These three variables are performance proficiency (.77), organizational goals and values (.51), and personalization (.38).

In examining the independent variable set, 10 of the 17 variables contribute meaningfully if this rule of thumb is followed. These variables are the demographic information, which includes title (-.49), no children at home (-.49), educational level (-.48), gender (.38), urban (.37), sum of prior Extension experiences (-.34), race (.34), marital status (.33), and adult children living at home (.32). The second independent variate is primarily carrying information about these demographic variables in the independent variable set.

Summary of Canonical Correlation Analysis Results

In summary, the first pair of canonical variates (Canonical Root 1) share 35% of their variance. The canonical correlation analysis indicated that the newcomer's perception of his/her supervisor's behavior, length of employment with OSUE, and prior experiences with Extension before employment with OSUE were the strongest contributors to explaining the variance of assimilation. The second pair of canonical variates (Canonical Root 2) share 15% of their variance. The canonical correlation analysis indicated that the individual characteristics title, no children or none home, adult children living at home,
educational level, gender, whether or not the newcomer is located in an urban county, race, marital status, and prior familiarity with Extension before OSUE employment were significant contributors to explaining the variance of three dimensions of assimilation - performance proficiency, organizational goals and values, and personalization.

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<td></td>
<td>Variate 2</td>
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</tr>
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For the Independent Variable Set

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Table 30: Summary of Canonical Correlation Analysis

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\( b = \) canonical structure coefficient, \( s = \) standardized canonical structure coefficient, \( PV = \) proportion of variance explained in the dependent variable set, \( Rd = \) redundancy, \( Rd = \) total redundancy
Qualitative Responses to Open-Ended Questions

This section summarizes information provided by survey respondents to three open-ended questions and an opportunity to make further comments. A complete list of open-ended responses is included in Appendix D.

**Question 1 - Do you have any suggestions on how OSU Extension could make the assimilation process easier for new employees?**

The most frequently stated response was about mentoring. More than 30 respondents indicated the importance of mentoring for newcomers, recommended expansion of the mentoring program, or made suggestions to increase its effectiveness. An additional 15 respondents suggested shadowing or internships for newcomers and/or potential employees.

The second most frequently mentioned category was new personnel orientation. More than 20 suggestions were made about the orientation process. Four respondents suggested district orientation. Several suggestions for consolidation of orientation materials and more detailed information on benefits were made.

Other suggestions were increased clarity of job descriptions, enhanced training opportunities, a written training manual, and a list of organizational acronyms. Supervisors, support teams and co-workers were mentioned by a number of respondents as important to facilitating assimilation of the newcomer.

The importance of supervisors was highlighted by comments such as, “supervisors at all levels need encouragement of how important their role is in supporting, encouraging,
and training newcomers,” “better training for chairs,” and “allot more time for chair - it takes a lot of time to do the job right.” The importance of co-workers was identified by comments such as “make sure county offices understand what they need to do or how they can make a new employee feel comfortable when they start,” “make sure to include the new employee in decision making, social events, etc.,” and have some training for the whole office ...what to expect, what each person’s role is, etc.”

The challenges of lack of familiarity with Extension prior to employment were mentioned by several respondents. Comments included “not assuming everyone who comes to work for OSUE has a history with OSUE or Extension,” and “don’t assume we’ve all been here for 20 years and just know things or people.”

Other comments focused on a variety of approaches, including effective communication with the newcomer, a proactive attitude by the newcomer, and work with more tenured employees to broaden their acceptance of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

**Question 2 - In your opinion, what are the major barriers new employees face in assimilating into OSU Extension?**

The most prevalent type of comments in response to this question referred to the complexity of the organization and the job, the uniqueness of each position from others, multiple roles and expectations, challenges faced by those without prior Extension familiarity, and vagueness of job requirements. Related issues were the challenges faced in setting priorities and balancing the expectations of local constituents, office team, and organization. One individual identified work with OSUE as “a very different type of job.”
The second most common theme was lack of time, training, or support by supervisor to support the newcomer. One individual stated, “new employees need a good county chair.” Lack of time and support from co-workers was also frequently mentioned, as was a frustration with the extreme time commitment many newcomers felt the job required to be successful. “I try to be a reference for new folks as most offices... haven’t even offered a tour to new hires to help them understand basic office procedures,” highlights the concern with lack of support from office team.

Other barriers to assimilation included the organization’s culture and differences in philosophy from many employees, lack of training for newcomers, and long-term vacancies in local positions. Additional issues were racism, organizational hierarchy, a class system that was perceived negatively by program assistants and nutrition educators, and territorialism of established workers. Several individuals mentioned feeling disconnected from OSU as a result of the distance from their work location to the university, and several mentioned requirements of obtaining a master’s degree and promotion and tenure expectations as the greatest barriers to assimilation.

Question 3 - What should the role of a new employee’s immediate supervisor be in facilitating the assimilation process? If you are an agent, please consider how the role of immediate supervisor fits in relation to your support team and your mentor. If you are not in an agent position, consider just the role of your immediate supervisor.

Responses to this question focus primarily on three key areas - availability and giving freely of time by supervisor, supportiveness of supervisor, and concrete supports such as explaining specific issues, procedures, expectations, introductions to key
individuals, etc. "The immediate supervisor is vital to the new employees position..." and "can make or break employee if employee has no Extension background" highlight the extreme importance attached by some respondents to the supervisors role. Several respondents indicated that the supervisor's responsibility is to help the newcomer succeed.

The challenges supervisors face were mentioned by several respondents, including concerns about giving time to program areas other than their own and need for more training in working with newcomers. Also, several respondents mentioned challenges in identifying who the newcomer's true supervisor was and the importance of that person being in daily contact with the newcomer.

Please provide any additional comments about the levels of assimilation into OSU Extension.

The greatest number of respondents used this section to provide positive comments about co-workers, supervisors, and others who had facilitated their assimilation into the organization. Several individuals also focused on pro-active strategies that the newcomer can use, such as asking questions and networking. Challenges faced by individuals having no prior familiarity with Extension was mentioned by several, as were challenges related to individuals working in non-traditional positions and individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Comments such as "...so many people are willing to help and guide you," "commodity team involvement has also aided my assimilation," and regarding the county chair person "I would have made it without that person, but it would have been miserable" indicate the importance of both peers and supervisors in facilitating the assimilation process.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is organized in the following manner: a) problem statement, b) purpose and objectives of the study, c) methodology and limitations, d) summary of findings, and e) conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

Problem Statement

When employees join an organization and then fail to assimilate into its culture, the end result is likely to be workers who voluntarily leave, are not satisfied with their positions, do not perform effectively, and/or are not committed to the organization. The preceding outcomes result in the organization doing a less effective job of serving its customers. Level of assimilation is associated with several variables which warrant further study in specific organizational settings.

This study attempts to identify whether or not a newcomer’s relationship with his/her immediate supervisor is related to the assimilation of program personnel into Ohio State University Extension (Figure 1). This study also attempts to identify which demographic variables identified in previous literature are related to the assimilation of
program personnel into OSUE. These variables are supervisor's behavior, supervisor's attitude, newcomer's prior Extension experience, supervisor's prior supervisory experience, demographic similarity between supervisor and newcomer, whether or not the individual was still employed by OSUE, tenure, age, race, gender, position title, educational level, marital status, whether or not the newcomer has children living at home, and whether or not the newcomer works in an urban county.

**Purpose and Objectives**

The main purpose of this study is to identify whether or not the behavior and attitudes of OSU Extension employees who have supervisory roles for newcomers are associated with the level of assimilation of the newcomers into the organization. The behaviors and attitudes of the supervisor are hypothesized to be associated with assimilation most strongly during the organizational entry phase, which is the first one to two months on the job, but have lasting effects on the individuals organizational and professional career (Jablin, 1987).
This study also attempts to identify demographic variables that may be associated with assimilation, including whether or not the newcomer has a background that is traditional or non-traditional for Extension employees. Dissimilarity to one’s work group in terms of age, education, and lifestyle meant lower job challenge and poorer work group fit in a previous study (Kirchmeyer, 1995). Demographic variables identified in this study were gender, race, age, position, marital status, level of educational attainment, whether or not the employee has children living at home, and whether the individual is classified as a faculty employee or an administrative and professional employee.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Describe newcomers who joined OSU Extension between May 1, 1993 and April 30, 1997 on the following characteristics: gender, race, age, marital status, position, level of educational attainment, employment classification, traditional or non-traditional background, and whether or not they have children living at home.

2. Describe the newcomers in regard to the seven constructs of assimilation, which are history, language, politics, people, organizational goals and values, performance proficiency and personalization.

3. Describe the newcomer’s supervisors in the study in terms of the following characteristics:

   a. attitudes toward the importance of the supervisor’s role in facilitating assimilation of newcomers into the organization

   b. level of support for organizational newcomers by the supervisor as perceived by the newcomer.
4. Identify relationships between the seven constructs of assimilation and the following independent variables:
   a. supervisor's behavior toward the newcomer
   b. supervisor's self-reported attitude toward the importance of their supervisory roles
   c. demographic characteristics of the newcomer
   d. level of similarity of demographic characteristics between the newcomer and his/her supervisor.

5. Identify relationships that exist between the set of constructs that compose assimilation and the set of predictor (independent) variables.

**Methodology**

This research was a relational study which employed a descriptive/correlational design. This study focused on selected influences on organizational assimilation - relationship with immediate supervisor, demographic similarity between newcomer and immediate supervisor, and demographic characteristics of the newcomers. The population for this study was all county-level program personnel who began work for OSU Extension between May 1, 1993 and April 30, 1997. A secondary population for this study was OSU Extension personnel with supervisory responsibilities who were the supervisors for county-level program personnel in the study when they began work for OSU Extension.

This study utilized four separate instruments, which are included in Appendix A. The four instruments included two mail questionnaires and two instruments used by the
researcher in gathering demographic data from OSUE personnel records. Of the mail
surveys, one was sent to organizational newcomers during the study period. The other
was sent to supervisors of those individuals. Complete and useable responses were
obtained from 78% of the newcomers and 83% of the supervisors, resulting in a useable
data set of 257 responses.

Data were analyzed using version 7.5 of the SPSS computer program. For all
significance tests, the alpha level was set a priori at .05. Descriptive statistics were
calculated on all variables to summarize and preview data.

Three levels of correlation were calculated. Pearson product-moment and point-
biserial correlation coefficients were obtained as simple correlations. Then a multiple
regression analysis was conducted upon each of the seven dependent variables, identifying
the unique variance in each dependent variable accounted for by the independent variable
set. Finally, at the third and most generalized level of correlation, a canonical correlation
analysis was performed. At this stage, all the variables were grouped into two sets, the
dependent variables and the independent variables, and the analysis determined the
relationship between the two variable sets. The three types of correlational analyses
provided an opportunity to identify relationships among the variables in the study at levels
ranging from individual to group. Canonical correlation is the most general analysis,
where the 24 variables are grouped into only two sets, the dependent and independent
variables. The complexity of the research question lends itself to the more generalized
types of analysis, which allow the researcher to identify variables that work together to
explain levels of assimilation. The negligible values obtained in the simple correlational
matrix may be indicators of the complexity of the research question. The more generalized regression analyses and canonical correlation analysis provide more useful information by combining factors that influence assimilation levels.

Several limitations of this study need recognized. First, sample size is adequate for the statistical techniques used, but is slightly smaller than desirable, indicating that the findings should be interpreted cautiously. Also, this study was specific to OSU Extension, and although the concepts can be applied elsewhere, the results can not be generalized to any other organization.

A third concern is about the scale used to measure supervisory attitudes. The high level and narrow range of responses indicate that socially desirable answers may be influencing supervisor’s responses. This scale was adapted from Kirchmeyer’s (1995) scale used to measure perceived supervisory behavior, but the validity of the attitudinal scale is not established and the reliability indicated a Cronbach’s alpha of .49, raising further concerns about the usefulness of this scale. These concerns are strengthened by the discrepancy between the newcomer’s perception of supervisor support and the supervisor’s self-reported attitude toward their role in newcomer assimilation, indicated by a low relationship of $r = .14$.

The portion of the instrument used to measure the seven constructs of assimilation had pre-established validity and reliability for six of the seven constructs. The construct of personalization was added specifically for this study and lacked pre-established validity and reliability. Cronbach’s alpha indicated a reliability coefficient of .53 for the personalization questions included in this instrument.
Another limitation of this study relates to specification error. Specification error is the inclusion of irrelevant variables or the exclusion of relevant variables from the set of independent variables (Hair, et al., 1995). Since a large number of independent variables (15) were used in the regression analysis, and since many of them contributed no statistical significance to the multiple regression models, the proposed variable set may have been too inclusive. This concern is balanced in part by the fact that 12 of the independent variables contributed significantly to the variance explained by the first two canonical roots. Extraneous variables may make the testing of significance of the independent variables less precise, and reduce the statistical and practical significance of the analysis (Hair, et al., 1995). This reduction of precision and significance is a concern, however the variables included were all supported theoretically as illustrated in the review of literature (Chapter 2)

Summary of Findings

Objective 1: Describe newcomers who joined OSU Extension between May 1, 1994 and April 30, 1997 on the following characteristics: gender, race, age, marital status, position, level of educational attainment, employment classification, traditional or non-traditional background, and whether or not they have children living at home.

The 165 newcomers who joined OSUE during the study period and responded to the survey were 70% female and 30% male. Examination of personnel records indicated that 80% of the respondents were white, and an additional 7% did not disclose their race. The remaining 10% includes 10 African Americans, three Hispanics, one native American,
and one Asian. The majority of newcomers (82%) were between the ages of 20 and 50 years. The highest percentage of respondents were in their thirties (31%). Those in their twenties (25%) and those in their forties (26%) were nearly equally divided. The mean age was 33 years.

Newcomers who were married or lived with a domestic partner made up 76% of the respondents. The other 24% were single. Newcomer’s had a variety of situations relating to children. Forty four percent had no children, or none living at home at the time of the survey. Almost 12% had non-minor children living at home and 53% had minor children living at home.

Almost 80% of the survey respondents indicated either a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree as their highest attained educational level. The remaining 20% included 20 individuals who had completed high school, 12 who had received associate degrees, and three who held doctorate degrees. Seven of the respondents had faculty status, as compared to 158 who did not. Of the survey participants, 52% were Extension agents, 37% were program assistants, and 10% were nutrition educators.

Twenty-three percent of the newcomers responding to the study worked in urban counties, while 77% worked in rural counties. The mean length of time newcomers in the study had worked for OSUE was 3.4 years. Approximately 20% of the sample fit into each of the categories of having worked one, two, three, or four years for OSUE. The remaining 20% had either worked less than a year, or five years or longer. Of the respondents, 81% were still employed, while 19% had left the organization voluntarily.
Level of familiarity with Extension before beginning work for OSUE was assessed through a series of questions. Responses were summed to create an overall score on familiarity. Possible scores ranged from 0 (no prior experience) to 12 (highest possible score on experience). Nineteen percent of the respondents had no significant experiences with Extension prior to their OSUE employment. The mean familiarity score was 4.6.

Objective 2: Describe the newcomers in regard to the seven constructs of assimilation: history, language, politics, people, organizational goals and values, performance proficiency and personalization.

Each survey respondent answered a series of five to seven questions about each of the seven constructs that form assimilation. A mean score of these responses was generated, ranging between one and five, with one being the lowest level of assimilation into the organization by the newcomer, and five being the highest level of assimilation into the organization by the newcomer. The constructs and their mean scores are:
Performance Proficiency | 4.06 | .60
---|---|---
Personalization | 4.02 | .49
Organizational Goals and Values | 3.92 | .52
People | 3.73 | .53
Language | 3.69 | .68
History | 3.65 | .66
Politics | 3.59 | .55

\( \mu \) based on a five-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Table 31: Level of Assimilation to OSU Extension

These responses indicate that newcomers in the study perceive their levels of assimilation as neutral (neither agree or disagree=3) to slightly positive (agree=4). The variation among the mean scores on the seven dimensions of assimilation was not great. Newcomers in the study reported the highest levels of assimilation on the dimension of performance proficiency (\( \mu = 4.06 \)). The newcomers in the study reported the lowest levels of assimilation on the dimension of politics (\( \mu = 3.59 \)).

Objective 3: Describe the newcomers supervisors in the study in terms of the following characteristics: a) attitudes toward the importance of the supervisor’s role in facilitating assimilation of newcomers into the organization and b) level of support for organizational newcomers by the supervisor as perceived by the newcomer.
Supervisors attitudes toward their role in supporting newcomers were obtained from a seven-item questionnaire, from which a summed score was obtained. Possible scores ranged from 7 (lowest attitudinal score) to 42 (highest attitudinal score). The mean response was 36 (S.D. = 2.96), and response scores ranged from a low of 26 to a high of 41, indicating supervisors possess a positive attitude toward their role in assimilation of newcomers.

Newcomers’ perceptions of their supervisor’s behavior were gathered through a related scale with identical scoring to the attitudinal scale used with supervisors. In this case, the range of responses was much greater, with scores as low as nine and as high as 42 indicated. The mean response was 33 (S.D. = 7.73).

Objective 4: Identify relationships between the seven constructs of assimilation and the following independent variables: a) supervisor’s behavior toward the newcomer as reported by the newcomer on the supervisory behavior scale, b) supervisor’s self-reported attitude toward the importance of their supervisory roles, c) demographic characteristics of the newcomer, and d) level of similarity of demographic characteristics between the newcomer and his/her supervisor.

Each of the seven dimensions of assimilation will be reviewed below. The independent variable sets in all seven of the regression equations accounted for statistically significant portions of the variance in the dimensions of assimilation under analysis. Three of the 17 independent variables were combined into one for the regression analysis. The three variables combined were whether or not the newcomer had minor children at home, had adult children living at home, or had no children or none living at home. These three
variables were combined into one variable that identified whether or not the newcomer had children living at home. All 15 remaining independent variables were entered into the regression equation simultaneously in these analyses.

The perceived behavior of the supervisor and length of time worked for OSUE were statistically significant in all seven of the regression equations. The more supportive the newcomer perceived the behavior of their immediate supervisor, the higher their assimilation score on all constructs. Newcomers who had worked for Extension for longer periods tended to have higher assimilation scores on all constructs than newcomers who had worked for OSUE for a shorter time. Newcomers with children living at home tended to have higher assimilation scores on the dimensions of language, organizational goals and values, and performance proficiency. Working in an urban county was an indicator of higher scores on language, performance proficiency and personalization. Younger newcomers tended to have higher assimilation scores on language. Newcomer's who had higher levels of familiarity with Extension before OSUE employment tended to have higher assimilation scores on the dimension of language. Newcomer's who had experienced supervisors tended to have higher assimilation scores on the dimension of personalization.
Attitudes of supervisors toward the importance of their role in assimilation of newcomers and level of similarity on demographic characteristics of newcomers and their supervisors did not contribute significantly to explaining the variance in any of the regression equations. Individual characteristics which did not contribute significantly to explaining the variance in any of the regression equations were whether or not they were still employed by OSUE, gender, race, position, educational level, and marital status.

A total of 30% of the variance in history was explained by four variables in the independent variable set. History is awareness of organizational history, including knowledge about the background of certain organizational members (Chao, et al., 1994). These variables were tenure with OSUE, perceived behavior of supervisor, prior experience with Extension, and having children at home. Newcomers with higher assimilation scores on history tend to have worked for OSUE for a longer time, perceive their supervisor as having a higher level of support for them, tend to have been more familiar with Extension before beginning their OSUE employment, and have children living at home than newcomers with lower assimilation scores on history.

A total of 35% of the variance in people was explained by two variables in the independent variable set: perceived behavior of supervisor and tenure with OSUE. People as a socialization dimension focused on establishing successful and satisfying work relationships with other organizational members (Chao, et al., 1994). Newcomers with higher assimilation scores on people tend to perceive their supervisor as having a higher level of support for them and have worked for OSUE for a longer time than newcomers with lower assimilation scores on the people dimension.
A total of 20% of the variance in politics was explained by two variables in the independent variable set: perceived behavior of supervisor and tenure with OSUE. Politics is related to the individual’s level of success in gaining information regarding formal and informal relationships, and organizational power structures (Chao, et al., 1994). Newcomers with higher assimilation scores on politics tend to perceive their supervisor as having a higher level of support for them and have worked for OSUE for a longer time than newcomers with lower assimilation scores on the politics dimension.

A total of 28% of the variance in language was explained by five variables in the independent variable set: tenure with OSUE, age, having children living at home, perceived behavior of supervisor, and working in an urban county. Language is a socialization dimension concerned with acronyms, slang, and jargon of the organization, as well as a profession’s technical language (Chao, et al., 1994). Newcomers with higher assimilation scores on language tend to have worked for OSUE for a longer time, be younger, have children living at home, perceive their supervisor as having a higher level of support for them, and work in an urban county than newcomers with lower assimilation scores on language.

A total of 27% of the variance in organizational goals and values was explained by three variables in the independent variable set: perceived behavior of supervisor, tenure with OSUE, and having children at home. The dimension of organizational goals and values links the newcomer to the larger organization, beyond the immediate work group (Chao, et al., 1994). Newcomers with higher assimilation scores on organizational goals and values tend to perceive their supervisor as having a higher level of support for them,
have worked for OSUE for a longer time, and have children at home than newcomers with lower assimilation scores on organizational goals and values.

A total of 27% of the variance in performance proficiency was explained by four variables in the independent variable set: tenure with OSUE, perceived behavior of supervisor, having children living at home, and working in an urban county. Performance proficiency relates to identification of what needs to be learned and how well the individual masters needed task and job knowledge (Chao, et al., 1994). Newcomers with higher assimilation scores on performance proficiency tend to have worked for OSUE for a longer time, perceive their supervisor as having a higher level of support for them, were more likely to have children at home, and were more likely to be located in an urban county than newcomers with lower assimilation scores on performance proficiency.

A total of 36% of the variance in personalization was explained by four variables in the independent variable set: perceived behavior of supervisor, tenure with OSUE, urban, and supervisor's prior experience. Personalization is the newcomer's active participation in defining his or her organizational roles (Hess, 1993). Newcomers with higher assimilation scores on personalization tend to perceive their supervisor as having a higher level of support for them, have worked for OSUE for a longer period of time, were more likely to be located in an urban county, and have a supervisor with more supervisory experience than newcomers with lower assimilation scores on personalization.

Objective 5 - Identify relationships that exist between the set of constructs that compose assimilation and the set of predictor (independent) variables.
The canonical correlation analysis combined the seven constructs composing assimilation, to determine if the independent variable set, consisting of the 17 independent variables used throughout this research, explained a significant portion of the variance in the dependent variable set. The first three canonical roots extracted in the analysis were statistically significant. The first two of these roots had practical significance and were examined further. The first canonical root explained 35% of the variance in the dependent variable set “assimilation.” In this canonical root, three members of the independent variable set contribute significantly to the explanation of variance in the dependent variable set. These three variables are perceived supervisory behavior, tenure, and newcomer’s prior Extension experience before employment. Individuals with higher scores on the seven assimilation constructs tended to perceive their supervisor’s behavior more positively, have worked for OSU Extension for a longer period of time, and have had a higher level of Extension experience before employment than newcomers with lower scores on the seven assimilation constructs. Newcomers who perceive their supervisors behavior as supportive, have been employed longer, and were more familiar with Extension before OSUE employment tend to be more assimilated into the organization than newcomers without these characteristics.

The second canonical root explained 19% of the variance in the dependent variable set “assimilation.” In this canonical root, ten members of the independent variable set contribute significantly to the explanation of variance in the dependent variable set. These ten variables are demographic in nature and are title, status of children (none home, adult children at home), educational level, gender, race, age, whether located in an urban
or rural county, marital status, and prior familiarity with Extension. These characteristics were predictors of three dimensions of assimilation - performance proficiency, organizational goals and values, and personalization.

Conclusions and Implications

Description of Newcomers

The results of this study lead the researcher to conclude that female, white agents who have a Bachelor's degree, are married or living with a domestic partner, have minor children living at home and are between 30 and 39 years of age are most likely to be OSUE newcomers.

OSUE does not appear to be a racially diverse organization. Approximately 83% of the newcomers indicated they were white and an additional 7% did not disclose their race when completing university personnel records. These data lead to the conclusion that as few as 10% of OSUE newcomers in the study are members of racial minority groups.
Nearly three quarters of the newcomers in the study population were women. OSUE hired a disproportionate number of women during the study period. This fact can be attributed partially to the expansion of the family nutrition program, including the hiring of a number of program assistants, during the study period. The program assistants are nutrition educators, which is an occupation that appears to attract a greater number of women than men. OSUE filled more agent positions (52%) than the other two categories during the study period. These two findings combined indicate that women are not necessarily being hired for lower-level positions than men, but the number of women at all levels of OSUE's work force appears to be increasing.

The results indicated that 19% of the newcomers had no prior experience with OSU Extension. Most individuals who come to work for OSUE are familiar with the organization before beginning their OSUE employment. OSUE may need to consider additional support for the newcomers with no prior familiarity.

Further, 19% of the newcomers in the study no longer work for OSUE. This rate of turnover is costly to the organization in terms of resources expended recruiting, selecting, and training newcomers. Calculation of Pearson's r to identify whether or not a relationship exists between turnover and prior familiarity with Extension indicated that there was not a statistically significant relationship between these two variables (r = .08).
Nearly one fourth of the newcomers in the study are single individuals. Also, 44% of the newcomers in the study have no children, or none living at home. The organization needs to consider the number of single employees when establishing policies to help individuals balance work and personal life. Balancing the needs of individuals with varying family responsibilities with the needs of single individuals will be important.

**Description of Supervisors**

Supervisor’s attitudes and behaviors toward their role in facilitating newcomer assimilation were identified from two different sources in this study. The supervisors reported their attitude toward the importance of facilitating newcomer assimilation. The newcomers reported their perceptions of the supervisor’s behavior in supporting them as newcomers. A much greater dispersion of responses was observed in the supervisory behavior reported by newcomers than in the attitudes reported by supervisors. The relationship between the supervisor’s attitude and the supervisory behavior as perceived by the newcomers was low (r = .14). Supervisors may have responded in a socially-desirable manner to this scale rather than indicating their true attitudes. Supervisors and newcomers may also see the supervisory process very differently. This discrepancy is an important issue for OSUE, particularly since perceived supervisory support was one of the two most important variables in explaining the variance in the dependent variables in all of the multivariate analyses.

Demographic similarity between newcomers and their supervisors was weak. Out of a maximum possible score of nine, 70% of the similarity scores were between one and three. Newcomers and their supervisors are more likely to have dissimilar lifestyles. This
difference is a concern for OSUE since past research has indicated that dissimilarity to others in the work group is likely to result in lower levels of assimilation (Kirchmeyer, 1995). However, diversity within the work force is also desirable. This difference in lifestyles can also be viewed as an asset in enhancing the demographic diversity of the organization's membership.

**Multivariate Analyses of Assimilation Dimensions with Independent Variables**

The results of this study support the literature that exists on assimilation in that newcomers' relationships with their first supervisor is one of the most important variables in predicting organizational assimilation. This variable was significant in all seven of the multiple regression analyses, indicating that perceived supervisory support predicted a relatively significant portion of the variance in these seven dependent variables, the individual dimensions of assimilation. Perceived supervisory behavior was the greatest or second-greatest contributing variable in six of these seven regression equations when the members of the predictor variable set were compared.

The contention that a newcomer's relationship with his or her first supervisor is one of the most important variables in predicting organizational assimilation was further supported by the canonical correlational analysis. The first canonical root indicated that the independent variable set explained 35% of the variance in the dependent variable set "assimilation." In this predictor variable set, perceived supervisory behavior made the greatest relative contribution to explaining the variance of all the variables in the independent variable set. Clearly, OSUE newcomers who perceive their first supervisor's behavior as highly supportive are more likely to report higher levels of assimilation than
other newcomers in the population. This conclusion supports prior research findings that “a newcomer’s relationship with his or her initial supervisor can have long-term consequences on the success of the individual’s organizational and professional career,” (Jablin, 1987, p. 699). The quality of information obtained from the newcomer’s supervisor was found to be the most important factor influencing positive socialization outcomes (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Supervisor’s positive feedback was negatively related to turnover in an attributional study (Parsons, Herold, & Leatherwood, 1985).

Tenure was a significant contributor to the canonical correlation analysis in all seven regression equations. Newcomers who had worked for OSUE longer tended to have higher assimilation scores than newcomers who had worked a shorter period of time.

The results of this study provide limited support to the hypothesis that individuals who had a higher level of experience with Extension before employment with OSUE tended to report higher assimilation scores. Prior familiarity was a significant predictor of the variance in the first canonical root in the canonical correlation analysis, and was a statistically significant factor in the multiple regression analysis for the dimension of language. Prior familiarity with Extension was also a statistically significant contributor to the second canonical root, but this contribution was in a negative direction. This finding may support research in the area of organizational culture, which indicates that organizations with long and successful histories have stronger cultures (Schein, 1980). A long and successful history can be used to describe OSU Extension, and may make it more difficult for individuals from dissimilar backgrounds to culturally assimilate. Further, demographic similarity of newcomers to their supervisors was found to be a predictor of
assimilation in an earlier study (Kirchmeyer, 1995). As a group, supervisors tended to have a higher level of familiarity with Extension before beginning work than did newcomers. This characteristic of the supervisors further supports the concept that newcomers with higher levels of familiarity with Extension before beginning OSUE employment are more likely to assimilate.

Newcomers who had children living at home tended to have higher assimilation scores on the dimensions of language, organizational goals and values, and performance proficiency. Having children at home was also a significant contributor to the second canonical root, which explained 5% of the variance in the dependent variable set “assimilation” which carried information about performance proficiency, organizational goals and values, and personalization. Newcomers who had children living at home tended to have higher levels of assimilation in these areas.

Other variables that contributed significantly to the amount of variance in the seven assimilation dimensions individually tended to explain the variance in one or two of the dimensions of assimilation. These variables included whether or not the newcomer worked in an urban county, age, and experience of supervisor. The second canonical root carried information about a number of predictor variables that contribute at statistically significant but minor levels to explaining the variance in three members of the dependent variable set, performance proficiency, organizational goals and values, and personalization. These findings provide little information that aids in prediction of newcomer assimilation.

The independent variables which did not contribute significantly to explaining the variance in any of the assimilation dimensions, or of the overall construct of assimilation
provide perhaps more useful information through identification of factors that may not be important in assimilation. Whether or not an individual was still employed by OSUE and race were not significant factors in explaining the variance in assimilation when the constructs were considered individually or in totality. Supervisor’s attitude scores and similarity between newcomer and supervisor also did not contribute to explaining assimilation. Gender, marital status, job title, and educational level were minor predictors in the second canonical root, indicating that they had only a minimal influence on levels of assimilation.

Demographic similarity of newcomers to their supervisors was found to be a predictor of assimilation in an earlier study (Kirchmeyer, 1995), which differs from the findings in this study. Whether or not an individual was still employed was the measure of assimilation used in many prior studies (Jablin, 1987). Results of this research indicates that continued employment is not a predictor of assimilation in the study population. Prior studies had indicated an association between assimilation and race (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990), gender (Posner & Powell, 1985), and personal characteristics of the newcomer (Louis, 1980; Hess, 1993). These previous findings were not supported by the current study.

Qualitative Responses

The mentoring program for newcomers currently used by OSUE appears widely recognized and positively received. Many suggestions were made to expand or improve upon the mentoring process. This recognition implies that the mentoring process is perceived as extremely important in facilitating assimilation of new employees into OSUE.
The existing orientation program was also widely recognized as a tool aiding assimilation of newcomers. The number of suggestions made about the orientation program, orientation materials, and training for newcomers indicates that the assimilation process is not only important, but confusing or overwhelming to newcomers.

The importance of supervisors in facilitating the assimilation process was a thread throughout all of the qualitative items. Further training for supervisors, clarification of importance of supervisory roles, and clarification of who a supervisor is to newcomers were all identified as areas of concern. These conclusions further support previous literature identifying the critical role of the immediate supervisor to newcomer assimilation (Jablin, 1982; Louis, Posner & Powell, 1983; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).

Lack of prior familiarity with Extension was identified as a barrier to assimilation. Lack of understanding the organization's culture and dissimilarity in background were identified as challenges to newcomer assimilation. These findings support previous literature on both organizational culture (Schein, 1980) and similarity of background between newcomers and current workers (Kirchmeyer, 1995) which identified these issues as challenges facing newcomers to an organization.

Issues of racism and diversity were identified by several respondents as relating to assimilation of newcomers. Although the number of individuals indicating concern about racial issues was fairly small, the proportion of minority respondents was also small. Proportionally, these comments appear to indicate a significant concern.

The complexity of OSUE was an additional major issue identified in the qualitative responses. Comments infer a level of frustration on the part of many newcomers in
understanding the organization, their multiple roles, and the flexibility of day-to-day job
duties found in many positions.

Many positive responses about experiences of newcomers were included in the
qualitative items. Many good examples of assimilation exist among OSUE newcomers,
which implies the organization is having significant success in facilitating organizational
assimilation of newcomers.

Outcomes of the Hypotheses

The hypotheses this study tested and the decisions about them are:

1. County-level program personnel are more likely to assimilate into OSU Extension
   when their respective supervisors exhibit behaviors that are supportive of them as
   organizational newcomers (Jablin, 1982; Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Ostroff &
   Kozlowski, 1992). This hypotheses is not rejected. Perceived
   supervisory behavior was a significant contributor to explaining variance in all of
   the regression equations and in the canonical correlation analysis. Qualitative
   responses further supported this hypothesis.

2. County-level program personnel are more likely to assimilate into OSU Extension
   when their respective supervisors hold positive attitudes towards the importance
   of the supervisor's role in facilitating assimilation of newcomers into the
   organization (Jablin, 1984). This hypothesis is rejected. Supervisor's attitudes
   were not significant in any of the regression equations or in the canonical
   correlation analysis.

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3. County-level program personnel having backgrounds similar to their supervisors are more likely to assimilate into OSU Extension than county-level program personnel who have dissimilar backgrounds. Newcomers who were dissimilar in age, education, and lifestyle from their workgroup were more likely to leave the organization than those newcomers who were similar to their work group on these characteristics (Kirchmeyer, 1995). This hypothesis is rejected. Similarity in backgrounds was not a significant factor in any of the regression equations or in the canonical correlation analysis. However, similarity of background was identified in qualitative responses as a relevant issue, indicating that further study may be warranted.

4. County-level program personnel who have traditional Extension backgrounds are more likely to assimilate into OSU Extension than are county-level program personnel with non-traditional Extension backgrounds. This hypothesis is not rejected, but needs further examination. Level of prior extension experience before OSUE employment was a significant factor in one of the regression equations and in the interpretation of the first canonical root. Organizational culture research indicates that organizations with long and successful histories have stronger cultures (Schein, 1980). A long and successful history can be used to describe OSU Extension, and may make it more difficult for individuals from dissimilar backgrounds to culturally assimilate. Qualitative responses indicated the challenge faced by newcomers who had little Extension knowledge prior to employment. Further examination of this hypothesis is warranted by findings about background.
Recommendations for OSU Extension

OSUE has implemented many strategies to help newcomers be successful in assimilating into the organization including mentor programs, orientation sessions, training, and assignment of a faculty member responsible for new personnel development. Although these programs likely contribute to assimilation and are worthwhile, OSUE may want to review suggestions made by the population of this study and consider strengthening the existing programs and consider an additional focus on the supervisors of newcomers.

In the current system, individuals who are designated as supervisors are most often program personnel who are given the supervisory responsibility in addition to their already full-time responsibilities. More consideration may need to be given to selection of individuals for supervisory roles, as well as training of these individuals for the roles. Even steps as simple as helping the supervisor become aware of how to be supportive of newcomers, and how important that role is to both the newcomer and the organization, could be helpful. OSUE may also want to consider adapting its current county chair assessment center to provide this developmental opportunity for all individuals who have supervisory roles. The assessment center could be adapted using the seven dimensions of assimilation utilized in this study.

OSUE could also consider structure changes that would create additional organizational managers, who would be experienced and trained in supervision and other management functions rather than program delivery. These individuals could be placed at several organizational levels. A manager who took responsibility for three to four counties
would be a potential option. This individual could rotate among the offices for which he/she was responsible or an individual who was located at a district office and served as an assistant to the district director. Where financial resources allow, managers could be placed in single county offices. OSUE has adopted this strategy in Ohio's three most populated counties, and may wish to expand this concept.

Although many individuals with supervisory responsibility may recognize the importance of that role, these individuals also have many other important roles related to delivery of educational programs in their assigned geographic area. With the growth of OSU Extension in terms of number of employees to supervise and increasing local demand for educational programming, freeing the time of program personnel to conduct programs by including a structure of additional managers, could enhance the organization's effectiveness at carrying out its mission.

The lack of relationship between supervisor's attitudes toward their role in newcomer assimilation and their behavior as perceived by the newcomer also needs considered in strengthening support for supervisors. Training for supervisors needs to include a clear explanation of the importance of their role in facilitating a newcomer's assimilation, and how this role benefits the newcomer, the supervisor, and the organization. One study found that supervisors were not able to predict which employees were likely to leave the organization (Parsons, Herold, & Leatherwood, 1985). The authors interpreted this lack of predictive ability as lack of awareness on the part of the supervisors that their behavior as a supervisor was related to turnover.
OSUE may want to consider enhancing the support for supervisors of newcomers, as well as other individuals in the work group. When state and district personnel visit the county as selection interviews are conducted, they could discuss assimilation strategies and the importance of this process with the supervisor and office team. A reminder of the benefits to all concerned when newcomers are successful, as well as identification of concrete strategies to facilitate the assimilation process, could help set the stage for a newcomer’s successful assimilation. This type of setting could also be an avenue for promoting acceptance of individuals from diverse backgrounds, whether in terms of race, Extension familiarity, or lifestyle.

OSU Extension may also want to recognize the importance of time on the job to assimilation. The fact that tenure was a significant factor in predicting level of assimilation in all the analyses indicates that assimilation into OSUE is not a process that happens quickly. Currently, newcomers are supported through a formal mentor program for one year. The results of this study indicate that newcomers continued to increase their self-identified levels of assimilation between one year and five years. Support systems for staff for longer time periods may need to be considered. OSUE agents have a support team, but others in the study may benefit from a formal support team structure as well to support a continuing process of assimilation. The identification of the complexity of the job and the organization as a barrier to assimilation by many respondents to the qualitative items provides further support for the recommendation of continuing formal support systems for longer periods.
Newcomer's prior familiarity with Extension as it relates to assimilation may warrant further consideration. OSUE is attempting to increase diversity among its staff and customers. Individuals who are not familiar with Extension may have more difficulty assimilating into the organization and are more likely to bring the desired diversity to the organization. OSUE may want to consider additional support for newcomers who enter the organization but have little familiarity with Extension. In addition to the existing supports for newcomers, an employee who focuses on diversity, particularly on retention of newcomers with little prior Extension familiarity, may increase the likelihood of organizational assimilation by these individuals. Further, if OSUE wants to increase the number of racial minorities hired, continuation and expansion of programs targeted at diversifying the organization's workforce are appropriate. The organization appears to be achieving a diverse workforce in other areas such as gender, but expansion of diversity in racial minorities appears to be an area needing further attention.

The diversity of OSUE's workforce is also identified through the variety of family situations indicated by OSUE newcomers. A balance of single individuals and individuals in committed relationships, as well as a balance of individuals raising children and not raising children indicate the importance of inclusive and flexible policies related to work-life issues. OSUE should expand its current emphasis on supporting work/life balance for employees, and continue to strengthen its sensitivity to the varying needs of its workforce.
The many positive responses about assimilation by newcomers reported in the qualitative items indicate that Extension may benefit from identifying successful examples of assimilation and learning how less successful situations can be improved. Supervisors and newcomers who have been successful at facilitating the assimilation process could share their strategies with others.

Recommendations for Further Study

The findings of this research warrant further study in several areas. The combination of independent variables used in this study explained 49% of the variance in reported levels of assimilation when the canonical correlation analysis is examined, leaving 51% of the variance unexplained. Variables not considered in the current research, but which have been identified as important in prior studies include relationship with peers, particularly one's work group (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992); prior work experience (Adkins, 1995), and expectations of the job upon organizational entry (Wanouos, 1980). OSUE's mentoring and orientation programs are also based in sound research, and an analysis of these program's possible influence upon assimilation of newcomers would be useful. Performance on the job would be an additional factor worthy of study in relation to assimilation.

Replication of this research with employees who do not have program responsibilities (i.e. support staff) would provide interesting comparisons. In addition, a longitudinal study of the newcomers who were a part of the current study would be extremely appropriate in identifying whether individuals who indicated higher assimilation
scores are more likely to have remained with the organization five years from now. OSU Extension's exit interview data could also be tied to study participants who leave the organization in an effort to predict who is likely to leave the organization in the future.

A third area of possible study was identified from comments made by survey respondents, and by organizational leadership during the course of this research. Apparently not all OSUE personnel are clear on what constitutes their work group. Program personnel are part of teams in their county office, their assigned program area, and in some cases, specialization teams. Employees do not all seem to clearly understand how these different groups fit together, and the kinds of priorities that they, as newcomers, should establish for the various groups. A study of how these various teams effect assimilation of program personnel, as well as how the teams effect established personnel, would provide insight to organizational leadership.

Specific facets of the supervisor's relationship with the newcomer warrant study. These facets include supervisor's direct messages to the newcomer, communication to the work group as a whole, the newcomers modeling of co-workers interactions with the supervisor, and the modeling of the supervisor's behavior by the newcomer (Jablin, 1987).

Many OSUE supervisors are county chairpersons. These individuals participate in an assessment center early in their tenure in the chairperson's role to identify strengths and potential areas for professional development. Comparing the perceived effectiveness of supervisors who have participated in OSUE assessment centers and those who have not may provide useful information about the effectiveness of this developmental program.
Case studies of Ohio's three most populated counties where an administrator is present on a daily basis to supervise employees may provide insight to OSUE about the effectiveness of this strategy and its potential application in other counties. Although an administrator for each county office is a fairly new practice, comparing the three counties having full-time administrators with counties staffed by a part-time administrator who also has programmatic responsibilities may provide insight into whether or not the new approach can be effective in increasing the level of newcomer assimilation.

The lack of support for the contention that remaining with the organization is a method for measuring organizational assimilation indicates that caution should be used in identifying continued employment as an indicator of assimilation. Future research should focus on measurement of assimilation through other characteristics identified in the literature, such as relationship with first supervisor and relationship with peers (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1995).
APPENDIX A

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS
Level of Assimilation of New Program Personnel into Ohio State University Extension

Gwen Wolford
23023 Ringgold Southern Road
Stoutsville, Ohio 43154

All educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, age, disability or Vietnam-era veteran status.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Keith L. Smith, Director, Ohio State University Extension. TTY #1 (800)589-8292 (Ohio only) or (614) 292-1868
Part I - Assimilation into OSU Extension

Please respond to the statements in this section by circling the number that most accurately reflects what you think about your experiences in OSU Extension.

Circle the number which best identifies your level of agreement with the statement as explained below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I have learned how things &quot;really work&quot; on the inside of OSU Extension.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I know very little about the history behind my work group.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I would be a good representative of OSU Extension.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I do not consider any of my co-workers as my friends.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I have not yet learned &quot;the ropes&quot; of my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I have not mastered the specialized terminology and vocabulary of my profession.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. I know who the most influential people are in OSU Extension. 1 2 3 4 5

8. I have learned how to successfully perform my job in an efficient manner. 1 2 3 4 5

9. I am not familiar with OSU Extension's customs, rituals, ceremonies and celebrations. 1 2 3 4 5

10. I am usually excluded in social get-togethers given by other people in OSU Extension. 1 2 3 4 5

11. The goals of OSU Extension are also my goals. 1 2 3 4 5

12. I have not mastered OSU Extension's slang and special jargon. 1 2 3 4 5

13. Within my work group I would easily be identified as "one of the gang." 1 2 3 4 5

14. I know OSU Extension's long-held traditions. 1 2 3 4 5

15. I do not always understand OSU Extension's abbreviations and acronyms mean. 1 2 3 4 5

3. What should the role of a new employee's immediate supervisor be in facilitating the assimilation process? If you are an agent, please consider how the role of an immediate supervisor fits in relation to your support team and your mentor. If you are not in an agent position, consider just the role of your immediate supervisor.

Please provide any additional comments about the levels of assimilation into OSU Extension.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY!
Part IV:

1. Do you have any suggestions on how OSU Extension could make the assimilation process easier for new employees?

2. In your opinion, what are the major barriers new employees face in assimilating into OSU Extension?

16. I believe that I fit in well with my organization.

17. I do not always believe in the values set by my organization.

18. I understand the specific meanings of words and jargon in my profession.

19. I have mastered the required tasks of my job.

20. I understand the goals of OSU Extension.

21. I would be a good resource in describing the background of my work group/department.

22. I have not fully developed the appropriate skills and abilities to successfully perform my job.

23. I do not have a good understanding of the politics in OSU Extension.

24. I understand what all the duties of my job entail.
25. I would be a good example of an employee who represents OSU Extension's values.

26. I am not always sure what needs to be done in order to get the most desirable work assignments in my area.

27. I am usually excluded in informal networks or gatherings of people within OSU Extension.

28. I have a good understanding of the motives behind the actions of other people in the organization.

29. I am familiar with the history of OSU Extension.

30. I understand what most of the acronyms and abbreviations of my profession mean.

31. I am pretty popular in OSU Extension.

32. I can identify the people in this organization who are most important in getting the work done.

5. What was your level of experience or familiarity with Extension before beginning your employment with OSU Extension. Please check all that apply.

A) WAS A 4-H MEMBER FOR MORE THAN FIVE YEARS.

B) WAS A 4-H MEMBER FOR FIVE YEARS OR LESS.

C) HAD CONTACTED AN EXTENSION OFFICE ONCE OR A FEW TIMES TO SEEK INFORMATION OR HAVE QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

D) SOUGHT INFORMATION FROM AN EXTENSION OFFICE ON A REGULAR BASIS.

E) WAS PREVIOUSLY EMPLOYED BY EXTENSION SOMEWHERE ELSE.

F) SERVED IN THE ROLE OF AN EXTENSION VOLUNTEER

G) PARTICIPATED IN PROGRAMS AND/OR WORKSHOPS OFFERED BY EXTENSION

H) WAS A MEMBER OF A FAMILY THAT FREQUENTLY UTILIZED SERVICES OF EXTENSION.

I) I DON'T RECALL HAVING HAD ANY SIGNIFICANT CONTACT WITH AN EXTENSION OFFICE PRIOR TO BEGINNING WORK FOR OSU EXTENSION.

J) OTHER. PLEASE EXPLAIN: __________________________
Part III. Background Information

Please answer the questions in this section by circling the letter in front of the answer that most closely represents you.

1. What is the highest level of education you have obtained?
   A) HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
   B) BACHELOR'S DEGREE
   C) MASTER'S DEGREE
   D) DOCTORATE DEGREE
   E) OTHER, PLEASE EXPLAIN

2. Marital Status:
   A) SINGLE OR NOT LIVING WITH A DOMESTIC PARTNER
   B) CURRENTLY MARRIED OR LIVING WITH A DOMESTIC PARTNER

3. Do you have children? (Circle all that apply.)
   A) I currently have minor children living at home.
   B) I currently have non-minor children living at home.
   C) I have no children, or no children living at home.

4. How long have you worked (or did you work) for OSU Extension?
   ___ YEARS

33. I believe most of my co-workers like me.
   1 2 3 4 5

34. I support the goals that are set by OSU Extension.
   1 2 3 4 5

35. I am free to design the way in which I complete my job duties within the general guidelines of my job description.
   1 2 3 4 5

36. My immediate supervisor directs my day-to-day activities.
   1 2 3 4 5

37. I am comfortable personalizing my work area as I wish to do so.
   1 2 3 4 5

38. My suggestions for customizing job tasks are welcome.
   1 2 3 4 5

39. I don't have the opportunity to use my skills to meet organizational needs outside the realm of my job description.
   1 2 3 4 5
Part II. Supportiveness of Immediate Supervisor

In responding the items in this section, please consider the person who was your immediate supervisor when you began working for OSU Extension. Please circle the number that most accurately reflects your experiences in OSU Extension. If you aren't clear about who your immediate supervisor was, consider it to be the person with whom you had the greatest amount of regular contact, and who was your superior.

Circle the number which best identifies your level of agreement with the statement as explained below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Gave me helpful feedback about my job performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Cared whether or not I achieved my goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Didn't give me direction when I was unsure of myself on the job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My immediate supervisor when I began work:

1. Gave me a lot of support and encouragement.                             |   |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |

2. Expressed confidence in me and my abilities.                            |   |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |

3. Gave me sound advice on improving my performance when I needed it.     |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |

4. Failed to stand behind me.                                              |   |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |
Supervisory Role of Program Personnel in Ohio State University Extension
Part I. Supervisory Priorities

Please answer the questions in this section by circling the answer that most correctly reflects your honest opinion.

In my role as a supervisor:

1. Providing support and encouragement to new employees in the office is a high priority for me.  
   - Strongly Disagree  - Disagree  - Slightly Disagree  - Slightly Agree  - Agree  - Strongly Agree

2. Expressing confidence in new employees and their abilities is not my role.  
   - Strongly Disagree  - Disagree  - Slightly Disagree  - Slightly Agree  - Agree  - Strongly Agree

3. I provide constructive advice to new employees on how to improve performance as soon as I know that this advice is needed.  
   - Strongly Disagree  - Disagree  - Slightly Disagree  - Slightly Agree  - Agree  - Strongly Agree

4. New employees need to be able to deal with challenging situations without a great deal of support from me.  
   - Strongly Disagree  - Disagree  - Slightly Disagree  - Slightly Agree  - Agree  - Strongly Agree

3. What should the role of a new employee's immediate supervisor be in facilitating the assimilation process? If you are an agent, please consider how the role of an immediate supervisor fits in relation to your support team and your mentor. If you are not in an agent position, consider just the role of your immediate supervisor.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY!
Part III:

1. Do you have any suggestions on how OSU Extension could make the assimilation process easier for new employees?

5. Giving regular feedback to new employees about their job performance is extremely important. 1 2 3 4 5 6

6. The career goals of employees in my office are not a major concern of mine. 1 2 3 4 5 6

7. I try to provide guidance to a new person when I realize that he or she is unsure of what to do. 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. In your opinion, what are the major barriers new employees face in assimilating into OSU Extension?
Part II. Background Information

Please answer the questions in this section by circling the letter in front of the answer that most closely represents you.

1. What is the highest education level you had obtained when you began to work for OSU Extension?
   A) HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
   B) BACHELOR'S DEGREE
   C) MASTER'S DEGREE
   D) DOCTORATE DEGREE
   E) OTHER. PLEASE EXPLAIN

2. Marital Status:
   A) SINGLE OR NOT LIVING WITH A DOMESTIC PARTNER
   B) CURRENTLY MARRIED OR LIVING WITH A DOMESTIC PARTNER

3. Do you have children? (Circle all that apply.)
   A) I CURRENTLY HAVE MINOR CHILDREN LIVING AT HOME.
   B) I CURRENTLY HAVE NON-MINOR CHILDREN LIVING AT HOME.
   C) I HAVE NO CHILDREN, OR NO CHILDREN LIVING AT HOME.

4. How long have you worked (or did you work) for OSU Extension?
   _____ YEARS

5. How long have you had the role of being a supervisor of other Extension employees?
   _____ YEARS

6. What was your level of experience or familiarity with Extension before beginning your employment with OSU Extension. Please check all that apply.
   A) was a 4-H member for more than five years.
   B) was a 4-H member for five years or less.
   C) had contacted an Extension office once or a few times to seek information or have questions answered.
   D) sought information from an Extension office on a regular basis.
   E) was previously employed by Extension somewhere else.
   F) served in the role of an Extension volunteer.
   G) participated in programs and/or workshops offered by Extension.
   H) was a member of a family that frequently utilized services of Extension.
   I) I don't recall having had any significant contact with an Extension office prior to beginning work for OSU Extension.
   J) OTHER. PLEASE EXPLAIN: _____________________
Instrument 3 - demographic data to be obtained from personnel records for newcomers in the sample

1. Participant name ________________________________

2. Participant ID number ____________

3. Gender
   ___ male
   ___ female

4. Race
   ___ White
   ___ Black
   ___ Hispanic
   ___ Asian
   ___ Native American
   ___ Didn’t Indicate

6. Age
   ___ 30 or younger
   ___ 31-40
   ___ 41-50
   ___ 51-60
   ___ 61 or older

7. Is this individual’s position (check only one)
   ___ Faculty
   ___ Administrative and Professional

8. Current Position
   ___ County Agent
   ___ Program Assistant
   ___ Nutrition Educator

9. Is this an urban county by OSU Extension’s definition?
   ___ No
   ___ Yes
Instrument 4 - demographic data to be obtained from personnel records for county chairpersons in the secondary sample

1. County chairperson’s name

2. Participant ID number (for matching purposes)

3. Gender
   - male
   - female

4. Race
   - Black
   - White
   - Hispanic
   - Asian
   - Native American
   - Didn’t indicate

5. Age
   - 30 or younger
   - 31-40
   - 41-50
   - 51-60
   - 61 or older

6. Is this individual’s position (check only one)
   - Faculty
   - Administrative and Professional
APPENDIX B

PANEL OF EXPERTS AND FIELD TEST PARTICIPANTS
LIST OF PANEL OF EXPERTS

Dr. Jan Henderson, Associate Professor, Agricultural Education
Dr. Nikki Conklin, Human Resources Team, Staff Development, OSU Extension
Dr. Keith Smith, Director, OSU Extension
Dr. Howard Klein, Associate Professor, College of Business
Dr. Gail Gunderson, Human Resources Team, Organization Development, OSU Extension
Dr. Ruben Nieto, Extension Associate, Urban Programs, OSU Extension

LIST OF FIELD TEST PARTICIPANTS - NEWCOMER’S INSTRUMENT

Mary Donnell, Lucas County Extension Agent
Jennifer Nickol, Hamilton County Extension Agent
Beth Flynn, South District Families and Children First Coordinator
Chris Zoller, Tuscarawas County Extension Agent
Pam Bennett, Clark County Extension Agent
Mike Estadt, Pickaway County Extension Agent
Najiyah Muqtasid, Licking County Extension Agent
Martha Roloson, Franklin County Extension Agent

LIST OF FIELD TEST PARTICIPANTS - SUPERVISOR’S INSTRUMENT

Niki Nestor McNeeley, Southwest District Specialist, 4-H Youth Development
Eleanor Ames, Instructor, County Relations and Marketing, OSU Extension
Deanna Tribe, South District Specialist, Community Development
Cindy Oliveri, South District Specialist, Family and Consumer Sciences
Jan Thompson, Leader, Work /Life/Health Issues
Bill Grunkemeyer, Program Leader, Community Development
Bob Cripe, Licking County Extension Agent, 4-H Youth Development
Larry Ault, Northeast District Specialist, ANR
APPENDIX C

COVER LETTERS FOR QUESTIONNAIRE MAILINGS AND

HUMAN SUBJECTS EXEMPTION
Dear Friend:

We are writing to ask for your participation in a study about the level of assimilation of Extension employees. The goal of this research is to determine what factors may affect the assimilation of personnel. Assimilation is defined as becoming a part of the organization, which is important to both the organization and the employees. OSU Extension will use this information to determine how we can do a better job facilitating the assimilation of people who come to work for the organization.

You were selected as part of a small sample of current and past Extension employees, so your responses to this questionnaire are very important. Your answers will remain confidential. There are identification numbers on the surveys, which will only be used for follow up and to enter your name in a drawing for a $50 gift certificate to Conrad’s, a store that specializes in OSU memorabilia. You will be entered in the drawing only if your response is postmarked by the deadline date of May 26. The winner will be notified before June 15.

The enclosed questionnaire should take about 10 minutes to complete. Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by May 26. To further assure confidentiality, all surveys will be mailed to Gwen Wolford’s home address in the envelope provided.

If you have questions about this research, Gwen can be reached at 614-292-0877. Also, if you would like a summary of the completed results, please write “copy of results requested” on the back cover of the survey.

Thanks in advance for your frank and honest responses.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jo Jones
Associate Director, OSU Extension

Gwen H. Wolford
Doctoral Student and Extension Employee

The Ohio State University, The United States Department of Agriculture, and County Commissioners Cooperating
Dear Co-worker:

We are writing to ask for your participation in a study about the level of assimilation of Extension employees. The questionnaire you are being asked to complete is one of two being utilized in this study and is designed to measure your attitudes toward your role as a supervisor. The goal of this research is to determine what factors may affect the assimilation of personnel, and supervision is one of the potential factors being studied.

Assimilation is defined as becoming a part of the organization, which is important to both the organization and the employees. OSU Extension will use this information to determine how we can do a better job facilitating the assimilation of people who come to work for the organization.

You were selected as part of a small sample of Extension employees having either formal or informal supervisory roles, so your responses to this questionnaire are very important. Your answers will remain confidential. There are identification numbers on the surveys, which will only be used for follow up and to enter your name in a drawing for a $50 gift certificate to Conrad’s, a store that specializes in OSU memorabilia. You will be entered in the drawing only if your response is postmarked by the deadline date of May 26. The winner will be notified before June 15.

The enclosed questionnaire has only 17 questions, so should take no more than a couple of minutes to complete. Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by May 26. To further assure confidentiality, all surveys will be mailed to Gwen Wolford’s home address in the enclosed envelope.

If you have questions about this research, Gwen can be reached at 614-292-0877. Also, if you would like a summary of the completed results, please write “copy of results requested” on the back cover of the survey.

Thanks in advance for your frank and honest responses.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jo Jones  
Associate Director, OSU Extension

Gwen H. Wolford  
Doctoral Student and Extension Employee

The Ohio State University, The United States Department of Agriculture, and County Commissioners Cooperating
June 18, 1998

Dear Colleague:

We mailed you the enclosed survey approximately one month ago, and haven’t yet received a response. You were sent this survey as a member of a selected group of current and former Extension professionals. The number of people who were asked to fill out the survey is fairly small, so your opinions are very important to us.

Please take a few moments today and complete the enclosed survey. A self-addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience. All responses will be kept confidential, and will never be identified with your name. The survey needs to be returned no later than June 26.

This study is about the level of assimilation of Extension employees. Assimilation is defined as becoming a part of the organization. OSU Extension will use the findings to determine how well this process occurs in the organization, and identify how we can facilitate the assimilation process for people who come to work for the organization.

If you have questions about this research, please call Gwen Wolford at 614-292-0877. If you would like a summary of the completed results, please write "copy of results requested" on the back cover of this survey. You can expect to receive the results no later than mid-September.

Thank you for your frank and honest responses.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jo Jones
Associate Director,
OSU Extension

Gwen H. Wolford
Doctoral Student and
Interim Leader, Program Development

The Ohio State University, The United States Department of Agriculture, and County Commissioners Cooperating
APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE REVIEW

All research activities that will involve human beings as research subjects must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate human subjects review committee, or receive exemption status, prior to implementation of the research.

Principal Investigator: Henderson, Janet L. 
(Must be OSU Faculty) (Typed name) Last First Initial (Signature)

Academic Title: Associate Professor 
Phone No. 292-0450 Fax No. 292-7007

Department: Human and Community Resource Development 
Department No. 11 9

Campus Address: Room 208 Ag Administration Building 2120 Tyerse Road

Co-Investigator(s): Wolford, Gwen H. 
(Typed name) Last First Initial (Signature)

> PROTOCOL TITLE: Level of Assimilation of Newcomers to Ohio State University Extension

THE ONLY INVOLVEMENT OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN THE PROPOSED RESEARCH ACTIVITY WILL BE IN ONE OR MORE OF THE EXEMPTION CATEGORIES LISTED ON THE BACK OF THIS APPLICATION.

CATEGORIES: (Check one or more) #1, #2 X, #3, #4 X, #5 X, #6

SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR PROPOSED RESEARCH: (Check A or B)
A. OSURF: Sponsor __________________________ RF Proposal/Project No. __________________________
B. Other (Identify) Department of Extension Funds, Ph.D. students personal funds

EXEMPTION STATUS: [ ] APPROVED [ ] DISAPPROVED**
*Approval is for research to be conducted subsequent to the date of approval and does not include research conducted prior to that date.

MAY 1 1998

*Principal Investigator must submit a protocol to the appropriate Human Subjects Review Committee.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO INVESTIGATORS: Exempting an activity from review DOES NOT absolve the investigators of the activity from ensuring that the welfare of human subjects in the activity is protected and that methods used, and information provided, to gain subject consent are appropriate to the activity.
APPENDIX D

RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS
1. Do you have any suggestions on how OSU Extension could make the assimilation process easier for new employees?

- More informal get togethers; liked the new mentor program - keep it going.

- Create orientation to include background information to new hires but separate from orientation for those familiar with Extension process. I would have liked more info directly related to my position during orientation process, but spent most of the time listening to “old news” about Extension then helping clarify that info to new employees with no Extension knowledge.

- Early in the work process have a meeting with all the people (team) members who can provide help to new employees. They need to know who to call.

- Instead of having everyone go to Columbus for orientation right off the bat, I feel that if a district orientation were held also you would feel better acquainted with Extension before you go to Columbus.

- Plan quarterly orientation programs for first year of employment rather than the info overload of a 2 day orientation.

- Have a picture directory of directors or specialists.

- Clear goal setting at county level reflecting state goals.

- Our office is so very busy we have very little time to drive to Columbus for meeting people that we will probably never see again. I think it should be set up as meetings on a district level or just local office.

- Why must I assimilate, why can’t Extension assimilate?

- The orientation at OSU helped tremendously.

- As far as benefits, we could use the detailed information at the beginning of our employment, not several months later.

- Making sure county offices understand what they need to do or how they can make a new employee feel comfortable when they first start.

- Need to place brand new employees to work alongside a successful agent (2-3 weeks). Also, new state specialists need to work in the county system for 2-3 weeks.
- Not really, it’s something that must be experienced. It is easier with a good support staff.

- Along with mentor program where agents are paired off with experienced agents, new hires should also be given an “associate mentor”, someone who has been with the association for only a few years and can still remember the difficult times of transition.

- Possible having employee orientation take place on a district level so new employees can be made to feel more welcome in smaller groups.

- Doing good job now...mentor program could use a boost (or maybe a little more direction for mentoring). Experienced agents to assist newcomers.

- Chairs should be encouraged to support agents while grading them.

- Set up a minority mentoring program with long-term, minority employees.

- (office or department) Make sure to include the new employee in decision making, social events, etc.

- Make sure new employee is placed with a compatible mentor; district specialist needs to take a strong lead with program development and keep close contact for first and second years of employment; orientation to the job should be conducted on county, district and state levels and followed up through the first year.

- Get rid of support teams for new employees, they don’t work!

- Promote and continue teamwork concept.

- A great deal depends on the individuals who are on the support team, serve as mentors or are the county chair. The process is fine. It depends on how serious and dedicated the “team” is.

- The new ROPES (I think right name) is a good start for getting new employees off on the right foot.

- Too often faculty chairs have limited time to spend with new employees. What we present to them is what we learned through the years, not a clear concise message in every office.

- Supervisors at all levels need encouragement of how important their role is in supporting, encouraging and training new employees.
- New ropes plan can be a plus for agents. Chairs may need some advice/tools for training new county staff.

- “Agents in training” concept to help ease pressures and expectations for “full-agent.” Shadowing of experienced professionals (when I started my supervisory position I visited 3 agents doing similar work...this was a tremendous help to me). Allow a period of time for orientation into the county before programmatic expectations begin.

- Supervisors need to share with new employees that the fears and the frustrations they have are normal. Share some mistakes they made as a “new” employee. This takes some of the anxiety out of the situation of the new employee.

- I feel Extension needs to seek information from the new employee early and regularly and then act on it.

- Provide apprenticeships for new employees of several weeks for complicated jobs. Share the complete employment and training process with supervisors (no surprises).

- The new orientation process will be helpful. Monthly meetings with support team members for first 3-4 months.

- More training positions and internships.

- Support team can help with this if the team is allowed to be in the support/teaching role.

- Expand mentoring. 2-4 weeks shadowing experiences.

- Internship programs.

- Don’t use new employees (at least first year) as “dumping” stations for those jobs experienced Extension agents no longer want to do, i.e. state committee assignments.

- Job announcements that don’t utilize “flowery” words to describe the true work the employee is expected to do.

- Condense information in the black briefcase. Only practical information is needed when a person starts - including benefits options!

- All new employees should have a temporary assignment as an “assistant agent” to one more tenured/respected for 6 months. If chosen carefully, these “trainer agents” can impact valuable information and introduce rookies to the profession.
- Provide some definite "rules"...I think too much "freedom" leaves new employees confused and with misunderstandings. (Just like provide "rules" for children, they need to know that there are boundaries and what those are.)

- An "available" supervisor; much depends on how well a new employee is made to feel a part of their "home" office team.

- Mentoring program is working for some. Some mentors need more commitment. Internships/work experiences for prospective employees.

- More emphasis on team work (within a county unit), less emphasis on specialization team. It appears that even tenured agents are exhibiting more loyalty to specialty team than to county unit. Continue/improve mentoring system.

- Question and answer type of chat room on the Internet with H.R. team. Questions submitted anonymously.

- What about our mentoring system? We talk about it occasionally, but I don't see much evidence of it working. Sometimes the informal mentoring relationships that develop between employees (outside of the support team) are the most effective anyway.

- Better training for county chairs and maybe more time for chair activities.

- Improve new employee orientation program. "Maybe one size does not fit all." Push the mentor system. Support team members need to share successful programs with new employees. Don't make them have to create programs the first year or two on the job.

- I believe having a mentor that the new employee feels comfortable with to ask questions is important.

- Communication and frequently reminding them of Extension's willingness to provide support.

- Have a training manual to cover topics during orientation of employees at office.

- Coaching by phone that as many people as wanted could connect on - this provides for some "homework" time. It is very important to receive this kind of training in the environment it will be used in.

- For agents, give 1-2 weeks to visit at least 2 other agents to mirror their job. For support time, 2-3 days paid for by state to mirror similar position in another county.

- Encourage more district gatherings of new employees, by program area or in total.
- This is the million dollar question! Meetings with co-workers, chair, support team and mentor should help. They need to feel that support is there, that it’s OK (actually essential) to ask questions. Time and willingness to help are key issues of their co-workers.

- Continue with emphasis on mentoring. Make sure candidates know exactly what Extension is all about and the expectations.

- Empower county chairs to help (coach) employees to understand the workings of Extension and what it takes to be successful.

- “Bennie”, etc. paperwork came to new employees in dribbles - should be a complete package. New employees should be informed of all orientation workshops at beginning of employment. Business office needs to appraise other of new employees so that the employee is aware of and can become informed about the entire organization.

- New employee handbook - employee handbook - training sessions - summer interns, winter, spring, fall break interns for potential extension personnel. Give realistic view of organizational structure and expectations at orientation. Give guidance to chairs and district specialists to help with the process. Smooth the way in making introductions to key community players and their Extension peers.

- Provide opportunity to do Extension experience with another agent.

- A more detailed employee handbook with sick leave, vacation policies. A “who, what, where” directory.

- The process requires a team effort involving county, district and state program personnel. By including new personnel in some level of involvement with OSU Extension - not just new personnel orientation - should help. Perhaps requiring new personnel to spend 1 to 2 weeks on assignment or “shadowing” professionals at the 3 different levels may provide a better understanding and appreciation for the system.

- Improve the mentoring system. Have a sincere interest in new employees.

- Longer and sooner orientation.

- Allot more time for chair - it takes a lot of time to do the job right.

- Orientation period needs a formal training component.

- Early in their employment, help them understand Extension’s role in the community. Remind them to keep an educational perspective.
- On a monthly basis have employees exposed to new information, in service or training experiences, i.e.: A. Training on how to teach adults or present materials (ICC), B. Building good evaluation in programs, C. Working effectively with people. D. Open sessions where agents share their concerns.

- Work with the old agents and change their attitudes, particularly issues of diversity - race, gender.

- General clarification of job responsibilities.

- It is better than it used to be.

- New employees, especially those who have no experience or understanding of Extension and 4-H, need to spend some time becoming familiar with Extension and its missions before being assigned to a position. New employees need to also realize they are coming into counties where established agents and programs are already in existence and the new employee needs to learn to fit in with the rest of the staff and not think the rest of the staff is going to adjust to their wants and wishes.

- Continue use of mentors; new employee inservice is good; utilize support team concept wherever possible; regular contact.

- I like the monthly meetings scheduled for new employees (do you still have then?) Followed by new employee orientation (mentors - for all - someone in same position- or clusters from several counties who support employee).

- For the support team to work as a team, not individual entities.

- If person does not have experience or training in the following special training could help — verbal skills (radio and classes), writing skills (news releases), program planning, program evaluation.

- Let them know what is expected before hiring them.

- Stress the mentorship process more to allow current agents serving as mentors time to work with the new employees. I would suggest once a month meetings for a year or two!

- Mentor program is excellent - continue! Continue the new employee orientation at the state level. Perhaps try a "training" of a couple weeks duration in another county with a professional in the same program area before the individual starts in their county of hire.
- A new employee handbook to give each employee when they start in the county. Not all employees go to orientation in Columbus, and if they do it may take several months. Included in the handbook should be an organizational chart starting at the top in Columbus and moving down to county staff. Extension is so large it is difficult to understand how everything fits together.

- Orientation program should spend more time in practical matters.

- Hire new folks at a time when chair’s schedule is more flexible (joke of course!).

- More one-on-one contact between new employees and district specialists.

- Have some training for whole office on how to treat new employee, what to expect, what each person’s role is, etc. This could be done in a day-long meeting at the county with state help.

- Job descriptions that truly describe the job.

- Matching interest and educational level with job responsibilities and type of job. Realize backgrounds are very different and Extension may seem really “odd” to some people.

- Orientation earlier.

- Provide constructive advice! Encouragement from day 1 without waiting for evidence of need. Be supportive in a visible and meaningful way. Seek to be helpful. Keep an open door.

- Include orientation programs on the district level. Have the new employee network with colleagues in the neighboring counties early on.

- Clear expectations; good job description; try to explain what we do.

- Provide supervisor with **adequate time and support** to do this well. A little time at the beginning saves doing it again when replacement must be hired because first person left.

- Human resource team needs to develop a plan with a group of agents and chairs. Utilize a team player plan utilizing state, county and district approach.

- I have heard that some county chairs are rather difficult to work with. If they can’t get along with co-workers, they must not hold the chair position.

- Assign them to a mentor and have the mentor keep in regular contact with the new employer - this could be a good concept for support staff too.
- This is tough because we are so busy in an office that there is often not time to show/teach what needs to be done in a timely fashion.

- New agent round table discussions at state and district level. Check with Barb Ludwig about her round table discussion.

- District staff need to be more involved.

- More timely, in-depth training for new employees or make new employee orientation more compact, more comprehensive or provide guidelines for supervisors on what to train new employees on.

- Provide them with 2-3 key factors for success. Define the organizational mission and program area emphasis in real terms.

- The jargon and acronyms make it tough, but I don’t think there is a good solution. Asking others to explain helps.

- A yearly calendar of when meetings, conferences, etc. are usually held.

- Having been exposed to Extension from early on, I can’t think of the best ways to make assimilation easier for those without that background.

- Supply appropriate mentors for new hires.

- Don’t assume we’ve all been here for 20 years and just “know” things or people.

- Mentor program assistants with other county p.a.’s to help them as you do with agents.

- Spend a month with an agent in a county similar to the one you work in - before you start your county.

- More opportunities for social as well as professional interaction among employees.

- I feel that new employees should be guided through a mentoring process in their particular program area. I also feel that visiting other counties programs would be helpful to new employees.

- There is a new personnel department with OSU Extension that does orientation training. I would believe a phone call once or twice in the first six months to ask how things are would be very appreciated.
- Easier access to materials relating to the history of extension. In-service training by state people at local/district level. Part of in-service should be to give individual info about all aspects of what Extension has to offer.

- Clear and concise job descriptions. An orientation process that tells you what you’re supposed to do and what is expected of you either at the state or county level or both. You shouldn’t have to be in a job a full year before you feel like you know what you’re doing and when you need to do things.

- Training or in-service for specific job.

- The way the system is currently set up, there often develops a class system within some offices. This is especially true if older tenure track or faculty track agents are present. These barriers need to be relaxed if new employees are to be made more comfortable and stable in their jobs.

- A list of the abbreviations and meanings might be helpful. They could be categorized according to the “branch” of Extension (FCS, Ag, CD, 4-H).

- Make sure that agents know what their job is and that they are not just in that job because they’re friends with someone, have a spouse at the university, or just need a “free” Masters Degree. If the agent is there to “serve the county” and is dedicated to the people of the county, as well as Extension, then things might go smoother as was the case with my first supervisor.

- Make all available programs and benefits known to a new employee. If an employee is at an extension office they are not aware of all the benefits OSU has to offer.

- Revamp the orientation seminar to make it more interesting.

- In-depth orientation (2-3 days) for new agents very early upon hire - not 3 months after beginning the job. Mentor assigned within first week on the job. Follow-up orientation every 2-3 months for a 2 year period.

- Get rid of the idea that Extension is the only one that knows anything.

- District staff are important in this process - not just from district office but by identifying staff members (agent staff) that are seen as decision makers or folks “in the know” - well respected by colleagues, to spend some time with them, informally, helping them “learn the ropes.”
- Respect the differences in employees and help them to utilize their strengths instead of constantly pointing out weaknesses. Don’t expect everyone to fit an “Extension mold” - you hired us for the individuals we are. Ask questions, care about the employees. Sometimes poor work performance is due to something totally unrelated to the person’s ability to do the job.

- Assign a mentor right away. If new agents are lost and floundering jump in right away not months later when they’re ready to quit. Have all, not just one, support team members check on them periodically.

- Orientation is really great. Possibly a run through on how to fill out health, dental forms or some benefits.

- Training on the first day of employment.

- Condense information in the black briefcase. The really messed system (ARMS) should be straightened up ASAP! The first day of my orientation (’95) was a total waste!!

- Spend a couple months learning about OSU and extension, orientation in Columbus should be within this time, not months later.

- No. Any limitations in assimilation were self-imposed by a spirit of rebelliousness and independence inherently to the Extension vision, mission and philosophy.

- Insist ALL employees attend orientation. When I began at OSU Extension I was told I didn’t need to attend new employee orientation - that it “didn’t apply to me.” Many times I’ve had questions that probably were answered at orientation - or at least I’d know the process to follow to find the right connection to an answer. I still don’t know if I’m missing out on available opportunities.

- I believe the mentoring project can be quite successful for new employees if the right mentor is selected/assigned. State in-service training for new agents should be less formal and more frequent utilizing discussion group methods.

- Simplify materials at orientation. Can give a more intense seminar at second training.

- A check list of items to be reviewed by supervisors, i.e. travel, parking, copier supplies, office procedures, who are mostly common contacts, suggestions for mentors or someone to call with questions specific to position. I remember my first days in both my county position and my state position - I spent the entire time cleaning the office and digging for supplies. What a warm welcome!
- Continue to address personality matches as new employees come on board. Do they match the atmosphere in the current work group?

- Planned fully supportive at all levels path.

- When both you and your supervisor start with OSU Extension on the very same day, someone else needs to be designated to help the P.A. get started - perhaps someone in another county.

- I think it would be helpful to have mentors for each job. I share 50% FCS, 50% 4-H. It would be nice to talk to someone with same duties.

- Start the mentoring program sooner. Mine officially didn’t start until I was on the job four months.

- What I remember most about orientation was needing more information on the day to day items (getting organized, understanding the language, etc.) and the big program items (camp, fair). I think the mentoring program helps to fill some of these gaps.

- OSU Extension county offices can offer a retreat annually for Extension co-workers to build moral and cohesiveness among one another.

- When I started, I never had anyone serve as a coach or mentor and I felt like I floundered and never had a good start on the job.

- Continuing mentoring.

- By not assuming that everyone who comes to work for OSUE has a history with OSUE - or Extension anywhere.

- Continue to develop an active mentoring program.

- Continue to encourage local and district involvement on support teams.

- A mentor new employee feels comfortable with to ask questions or advice.

- Paid internships for all new prospective employees.

- Immediate supervisor and district specialist and director - collaborate and avoid conflicting advice.
- Inform new employees of where to go for help, whether professionally or personally. This way they don't feel alone in their struggle. Also, so they don't have to discover these avenues on their own.

- A consistent, once a week (one day per week) session or visit to Wooster and/or Columbus to really interact and talk to staff to become familiar and assimilated.

- New employees, especially those with little to no experience with Extension, need much more information to learn about the philosophy and understanding of the goals and visions of Extension. They also need to understand the sources of funding and how Extension moneys are derived and the proper use of the funds.

- The paper work and policies are overwhelming. Thank goodness for the local secretaries and ______ at OSU Columbus and ____. My supervisor was also helpful but there were several areas that took time to understand and ask questions.

- No - I've had a good experience overall.

- Better ongoing support.

- Mentoring should be done quickly, need the support of someone doing a similar job.

- Longer and sooner orientation.

- New employees could be hooked up with a pre-mentor.

- I think more in-services for new employees would be very helpful.

- Keep the “new employees” info meetings in Columbus - gives employees opportunity to meet others in extension and is a good informational meeting.

- If you hire people without degrees, make sure they are treated equally in the office. At times some employees are “snooty”, saying things like “you don’t have a degree!”

- Establish mentors. Provide sheet of acronyms and jargon at orientation or on Internet.

- Assimilation within my county was easy, pleasant and long lasting. I still am in contact socially with Greene County. The contact between counties was assisted by periodic meetings to share ideas and socialize. Budgetary constraints limited these get togethers. Perhaps a small additional travel would help the further counties.

- Mentor, buddy, or shadow program where a new employee would be partnered with an established employee to “learn the ropes” hands-on.
- Be sure workshops actually pertain to the new employee. My position was with a Latch Key Program so the Columbus meetings were a waste of time.

- As far as community development, Extension needs to reconcile how its goals often diverge from community goals, which are just as valid. We work differently and assimilation is more important within the community.

- I believe this is one thing that simply takes time.

- More contact with district specialists. Have new agent orientation sooner in schedule.

- If there could be someone in the office who could give the new employee background info on the organization. When I started everyone was busy.

- Have more program specific inservices for new employees during first year of service (for example, just 4-H topics).

- More guidance from immediate supervisor.

- Mentor program in all fields would be highly accepted.

- Be encouraging. Provide support - visible and meaningful.

- Keep up the good work!!!

- Orientation period could include visiting 2 or 3 surrounding counties to get a “big picture” review of Extension in new employees locale. This would also help them expand resources and feel like part of the overall team.

- Be certain that new program personnel are immediately made familiar with POW/ROR, reporting to legislators, etc. - importance of these functions in maintaining funding. (“Nuts and Bolts” of what is expected.)

- Spend time shadowing an agent.

- Mentoring important. Good support team is important. Knowledge of resource people and information. Help of other agents and state specialists and knowledge of their strengths and focus specialization helped.

- The orientation I received in Columbus was very inadequate regarding my area, 4-H. I think it is better now. There was no clear outline for in-county orientation.

- Have (train) new employees write mission statements.
- Have background/history of OSU Extension as a fact sheet - handout.

- Encourage counties to allow staff (support) to interact more with other state and county offices. Continue to promote mentoring at all levels. Allow counties more involvement in selection process for new staff (agents).

- Tell them to read everything! I scan everything that comes into the office, even if it doesn’t directly affect my program area. I read a copy of the history of Extension - very informative - that I found in the Huron County office. It really helps you understand how things were in the beginning and how we’ve evolved as an organization. Read through all the files in the office in your program area. Get familiar with what we have as resources!

- Provide a list of abbreviations. I have spent 2 years learning them. Make in-services, meetings informal. This aids in the learning process. Encourage informal get-togethers (i.e. orientation class reunions) and program area or district retreats. Provide financial assistance for meetings where diverse (state, district, county) personnel network.

- More training.

- More training and explanations more supervised and follow up.

2. In your opinion, what are the major barriers new employees face in assimilating into OSU Extension?

- Distance between counties and Columbus was more of an issue than between neighboring counties. An understanding of the pecking order or politics at the state level was a mystery. Within my county, there was no question.

- Too many choices. Too big a job. Too little direction other than go forth and make the world a better place. Need to get M.S. in 5 years.

- New employees - Don’t understand the structure/hierarchy of Extension, how the chair, district specialist, district director and state officials have different roles towards an agent. This is not a typical organizational set up. It is sometimes hard for new employees to understand Extension’s unique role in the community. Training needs to be explicit.

- Too many rules, rule changes, unwritten rules, diversity of rules between departments.

- Understanding the system, not having enough support from county chair on a daily basis.

- Diving right into the work before getting properly oriented and trained.
- Promotion and tenure process - doing all that “stuff” to keep your job. I have heard that a number of young agents don’t plan to be in Extension long enough to be bothered by all the “hoops.” Learning how to plan and conduct relevant programs.

- Distance of employee to university. Supervisors/chairs lack training. Series of mandated sessions, i.e. teaching, budgets, benefits program to employees that everyone participates.

- Complexity of the organization. Size of organization with many varied functions. Often the new employee is expected to “hit the road running” and doesn’t have the time to assimilate and get job done.

- Very different type of job.

- Information overload - new employee orientation should be broken down into 2 programs that are scheduled about 1 month apart. This gives more time to digest info and would allow for follow up questions and answers.

- Too broad of job assignments, become overwhelmed. Too many “bosses” - both internal and external. Internal - supervisor, support team, district director, district specialist, assistant director, and even some co-workers. External - local clientele, volunteers and local funders and agencies. Lack of guidance on program emphasis and offerings to clientele.

- Some lack recognition of Extension’s role/mission when they accept the job.

- Other employees too busy for much support.

- Jobs are so different. It takes a good year just to get through some programs. As a result, it takes a long time to learn the job.

- Are not aware of what the job is — more than 40 hours per week; no pre-existing audience looking for knowledge to be imparted to them; 4-H agents do not work mainly with youth; nobody else is going to make the coffee and set up the meeting room.

- Many are just unsure of their real role or job. Seems just when they thought they knew what to do, we (Extension) changes it.

- Adjusting to extra and evening hours.

- Too much to learn too soon - the job as well as the clientele/community as well as key elected officials.
- Everyone is so busy. They don’t always take the time to welcome new employees and help them fit in.

- At the county level, especially counties far away from Columbus, employees do not really feel part of OSU. They can seldom take advantage of perks or events that take place on campus. Secretaries and P.A.’s may only get to Columbus one time per year if even that.

- Not having a degree from OSU. Get too immersed in the “busy-ness” of the day to day job immediately upon employment.

- Trying to understand what OSUE is all about - it gets confusing for tenured agents at times too! The expectation that they can figure it out on their own.

- Lack of guidance. Lack of support. Supervisors not adequately trained to coach. Not enough time for supervisors allocated to help new employees.

- Attitude of new people in work force - just a job and not a life style.

- There are many facets to the job and they all come at once. There are many expectations among the public as well as within “the system.” There has usually been a vacancy so one begins with a stack of mail and messages.

- “Hands off” approach of district staff makes job of county chair difficult. Chair not comfortable providing assistance when other team members will not back up.

- The challenge is in finding enough time (agent) to work with new employees.

- Current supervisor and others taking time needed to work with new people (on a regular basis). Lack of understanding of Extension philosophy by new employees.

- Many of them really do not understand Extension or what we are about or how we derive our funds. Some come in with a “pie in the sky” attitude, thinking they can do what ever they want without regards to staff and programs already in existence. During orientation new agents should not be told “they can do whatever they wish.” This is not a true statement and gives them a false impression of the reality of the situation.

- The variety of programs and trying to answer more than they know.

- The vast requirements to perform a job tasks.

- Racism.
- In the 70's I find there to be no diversity of employees. It's important that employees be matched appropriately with people like themselves (racially, subject matter wise, professional experience, etc.) so that they feel comfortable in their need position. Having supervisors who have limited experience relating to and interacting with people effectively. Other employees assuming that new people know everything. They are often too busy to share important information.

- All the changing faces, roles, title and expectations.

- Diverse job expectations, not sure how to prioritize.

- Not having taught their subject matter before.

- Balancing Extension and county responsibilities.

- The time obligations, irregular hours, adjusting to people.

- In many cases, new personnel are filling vacancies which have been open for a period of time. When this happens, the new agent is faced with the demands for action from the clientele and not enough time is available for adjustment.

- Their own lack or fear of getting involved in professional groups, in clusters with other local, district, state teams.

- So many hats to wear!

- Working with committees; understanding organizational structure; understanding importance of evaluation and program outcomes; time commitment.

- No transition or training program in local office. Lack of contacts to get day to day answers to clientele questions - state extension specialists not in for immediate answers (prior agent able to answer). Lack of lesson plans for programs - most agents are educators, however, no teaching materials to teach from.

- "Class" system based on agent, PA, support staff. All work on the same team.

- I believe many new employees lack a work ethic. I also think they have little regard for the culture of the community, political rapport or for working with a quasi-governmental organization.

- Working on a Master's Degree at the same time. Multiple roles of Extension Agents.
- Other agents are "too busy" with their own efforts to make time to help someone new. New "language", new world and it takes time to figure it out. New agents/staff don't always have the time and or personal drive to learn it all.

- Extremely vague and varied expectations by their bosses, co-workers and clientele.

- Recognition that the job description does not always reflect true job expectations. Agenda of local people vs. agendas of Extension are not always the same.

- Knowing all the rules and procedures. There are a lot of them. They need to know exactly what they are becoming assimilated with. It is a lot like a personal relationship. The process takes time and growth comes slow.

- No piers on a day to day basis. As agents share in our office, they are still coming from different program areas. One month or even 2 weeks on the job service under the leadership of an agent in the same program area would encourage faster success.

- The amount of responsibilities expected. Jobs are added but very seldom do we drop jobs. Expectations of balancing work and family.

- Agents too busy to offer support. "I don't care" attitude of may - kind of sink or swim.

- Lack of direction on exactly what your job entails. Lack of guidance from your support staff. Conflicting views between Columbus and what happens in the county.

- This is a fast paced career. Most people are too busy to spend significant time helping new employees. New employees, especially in rural counties, need to be very visible to the public.

- Probably the fact that everyone has a different job, based on the county, other staff and your interests. So it is difficult to give a job description or training.

- Day-to-day demands of the job interfere with new employees and their supervisors or support teams taking the time to help that new employee get "settled" into the job and into the organization.

- Too much work to do to have time to learn all the necessary documentation (i.e. POW, ROR, EET, needs assessment, mileage, etc.) required! Often need to be ready to hit the ground running with programs due to long vacancy periods.
- In 4-H there is so much to do, all the time, that there is very little time for planning/conducting new adventures and even less time for planning career objectives. As with any situation, new people must prove their worth to gain respect/trust of people in an organization. The sooner this two way path is opened, the sooner “assimilation” takes place.

- They are expected to do too much too soon, especially in youth development. Too many of us already in the organization are too territorial and too embarrassed/jealous of the success of our peers.

- Extension jargon - EFNEP, FNP, etc. Whose expectations to meet — county, district, state, local clientele, commissioners?

- Insufficient time, caring co-workers, “rules.”

- Organizational expectations to perform and show an impact early when the first job of the agent should be to learn about their county. Tendency for new people to say “yes” to everything that comes along - they must learn to be selective. Unclear roles played by support team members. Who should a new agent listen to - county chair, district specialist, state specialist, mentor agent???

- Too many acronyms. The hierarchy was hard to figure out.

- Day to day tasks that are real but don’t get mentioned in job announcements. New programming vs. old - time management.

- Beginning paper work is overwhelming.

- Their quickly overwhelmed with material and not specific quality training.

- Learning the culture and the unwritten rules. Conflicting messages and demands from clientele, committee members, co-workers and administrators. The lack of written rules and policies. Dealing with the pace, frequent changes and autonomy.

- Employees are often expecting structure, which may or may not exist in county office.

- Unwillingness on part of new employees to understand and appreciate the environment

- Understanding demands of the position. Primarily from clientele.

- Colleagues and support team members too busy to give them the initial support they need. Attitude from co-workers that “I made it, you can too.”
- They are not hired by the supervisor. They are often hired after brief contact by remote (on campus) HR staff who are not thinking of local offices, but rather of the total organization makeup. Too many people, at too many levels telling the new person what to do.

- "Extension culture" - traditional, bureaucratic, familiar to traditional audiences and long-time employees. Training is lacking - for many it is a sink or swim experience. Overload on existing employees - frequently with trivial but time-consuming work prevents them from being helpful.

- Supervisors "setting them up" to fail. Supervisors/co-workers assuming new people know how to do everything that's expected. Thinking they have to look and act like workaholics to succeed in Extension.

- Comprehending the flexibility of the position to use their talents.

- Perhaps, out of necessity (prior vacancy) employee has to jump right into conducting programs and events - local issues and committee work, meeting and greeting clientele, before becoming oriented to community and Extension. Orientation in Columbus is very helpful and necessary, yet perhaps overwhelming amount of information condensed into 2 days.

- Time management.

- Organization's culture.

- "Breaking in" to the groups/cliques.

- The amount to learn seemed Huge but I was reassured a lot - my questions were answered, people seemed willing to help and were supportive till I felt more sure of myself. I don't know how that could be done an easier way.

- Race, acceptance, personal feelings of others.

- Old ways of doing things.

- Knowing the history and organizational structure of Extension.

- Isolation at county office.

- Feeling good about what they are doing. Knowing that they are on the right track. Learning about the different roles.
- Not enough guidance - too much program info and not enough training in basic communication, site visits, telephone calls, core programs, using computer, where is the training - except on the job - on what incidents to put on file. How are we supposed to track incidents/problems?

- Learning the large amount of extension procedures.

- Making themselves known to key agency representatives in the community. Also getting acquainted with their co-workers in the same position in other counties.

- Overcoming the expectations that are placed on new employees. Salaries need to be equalized for all parts of organization.

- New demands on time; getting to know work group and exactly what is required of you.

- Racism - subtle and unsubtle. Lack of diversity.

- I have seen no barriers in our office. We have a wonderful staff of people that work together, help each other and I see no barriers.

- Perhaps the discipline divisions and agent/program assistant hierarchy.

- Get an understanding of how things operate.

- Not knowing history, way things are run.


- I feel that each county is probably different in this area. Depending on who and where you work for.

- When I began working for OSU Extension, my immediate supervisor was very helpful.

- It is hard to come up with one. Since I had been employed in another state by Extension, I knew to dig in and I found out who the players were and I approached them. Someone with no experience might have a hard time even knowing what questions to ask. That is where a good supervisor and committee become very important. Extension everywhere has a wonderful habit of just shaking your hand and saying “welcome, now get to work”. Sometimes I worry we set people up for failure when we hire them.

- Size. Overload of work at county offices makes team approach difficult for newbies. Direction from district personnel is not in line with local office directions (confusing!).
- Acronyms used with new employees - no definitions given. Campus being major place for training.

- The organization is very large and it takes time to understand the overall “hierarchy” of the organization when working in a county office.

- New employees become overwhelmed and over committed very quickly and get caught up in trying to do the job rather than fitting in to the organization.

- In many/most cases the new employee does not know where they fit in the system, who is the boss? Who should they work to please? The support team system has merged administrative and program functions and personnel to the detriment of the new employee and OSU Extension.

- The most major barrier is the challenge of obtaining Master’s Degree.

- Understanding all the paperwork and the system. Understanding the benefit systems that are available.

- Learning to deal with the complexity of the position and the organization. There are very few guidelines for new employees.

- The time demands. Having a clear understanding of the expectations.

- They are overwhelmed with all the new things so information overload is a concern. New employees want to do themselves and take advise as criticism when it may not be meant that way. Extension has lots of people telling them what to do. They have little patience so learning the system and the proper procedures and waiting is difficult for them.

- Too “clicky.”

- Segregation.

- Segregation of work departments.

- Overwhelming size of the organization! May be hard for out of state people to adjust to size of Ohio State. Life, in a fish bowl, certainly plays a part because you must feel comfortable at home to feel comfortable at work. Politics of upper administration and some departments lead to dissension and this makes fitting in hard when you are forced to choose sides.
- Not diving into the wealth of information available in each office. Not having a supportive “supervisor.” Being made to feel like you are not a part of what goes on because you’re a program assistant, not an agent. (This did not happen to me, but has to other FNP program assistants.)

- Lack of interaction with other offices.

- Every agent is involved in their own job and don’t have or take time to help/counsel new personnel.

- Learning our cultured system.

- There is a presumption of OSU alumni status on campus/Columbus orientation.

- Setting priorities, focus on strengths, assessing community needs and matching programs to these.

- Time! Community expectations. We are supposed to find time for ourselves and our education (obtaining a Masters) but the community doesn’t understand and forces you to do more programs or more projects that take up your time.

- I can only speak for those in similar situations such as mine - I came from a health care and private business background. At the time I started employment with OSU Extension I felt it to have an ego all its own. I felt that ideas from outside of traditional Extension disciplines were not readily welcomed.

- I appreciate when the Columbus located extension personnel make it into the counties for visits. It makes them seem more human and accessible to county employees. Otherwise, you hear the names but can’t put faces with them and are somewhat intimidated by the campus environment.

- New employee needs a good county chair!!!

- Too many “bosses” - internal and local clientele. Too many responsibilities - can be overwhelming. No help in being selective about early career program offerings or emphasis.

- Understanding exactly what is expected of you.

- Promotion/tenure process.

- Not knowing who to go to with a problem. Not understanding the “big picture” completely. (How do all of the different departments work together?)
- If we’re not familiar with OSU Extension all the information is overwhelming.

- Lack of day-to-day mentoring at the very beginning.

- No experience, lack of acceptance, lack of knowledge. I survived because I already new or was familiar with Extension as an employee in another state. It wouldn’t have been easy if I wouldn’t have found a few friends when I first started. Now things are fine! I’m settled!

- Old employees vs. new employees.

- Learning everyone and what their role is in all the other offices.

- Having to travel to Columbus for meetings.

- Different priorities. Leadership does not understand what we need to produce at the community level. Poor counties don’t want to pay for economic development “teachers.”

- As with any new position, learning paperwork and computer programs for this specific work place.

- Meeting all of the people, having an understanding of what everyone does and gaining a good understanding about the entire organization.

- Finding their niche.

- Breaking barriers.

- Difficulty understanding grants needed for funding projects - jobs - salaries, etc.

- Acronyms. Who’s who and what’s what. Extension does so many things it’s hard to learn and understand it all. Too much information. So, in the beginning I was totally confused. After about 1 year I had better knowledge of what Extension does. I tell new employees not to be worried about this confusion. Time will help them understand Extension.

- Balancing Extension and county responsibilities.

- Confusing about job duties.

- The “way it has been done.”
- Overload! Some people say they have trouble breaking into cliques but I did not experience this.

- Paperwork! At times I'm still overwhelmed. It seemed to have increased since I was first hired.

- Lack of understanding the philosophy, goals and mission of Extension. During the orientation program, new employees are told they can do pretty much as they choose with regards to programming. I feel this is incorrect information to be sharing. Each county is different, the expectations within that county varies and each county has specific expectations of their agent and the agent needs to realize that situation. Also when hiring additional agents in a discipline, the new agent needs to be receptive to the duties the established agent and staff was already accomplishing and be willing to work within that framework. Need to work as part of a team, not as an independent maverick.

- Overcoming past historical difficulties within the county and Extension’s clientele. Learning the who’s who and does what in Extension in Columbus and Wooster.

- Learning the politics involved in OSUE. Learning who will help and who will not. Learning who cares and who doesn’t.


- Being accepted by the “lifers.” New ideas are always challenged and immediately rejected because of tradition.

- There seems to be distinct lines between FCS, 4-H and Ag Agents. Also groups form within areas - may be difficult for new employees to break into groups.

- Having written work (first time) evaluated by state specialists appropriately.

- Feeling overwhelmed initially.

- I think EFNEP personnel should be considered “support staff.” As it is, we are not agents, not support staff and consequently are in this sort of no mans land of our own, which I feel is a barrier to assimilation.

- The jargon - but it is learnable.

- Narrow minded individuals.
- My situation was that I wasn't familiar with Extension. The time constraints of employees.

- Lack of recognition. Orientation (I sometimes wonder if our new personnel orientation really does the job), although this is a great improvement over what I experienced as a new agent. The mentoring program is a plus. The perceptions about our 2 track system. Understanding the communities in which they will be working.

- Possibly feedback and guidance are or may be barriers

- It is totally different from what I learned about in school and what I perceived as a former 4-H member. I think one barrier for me was an unrealistic view of the position. In the interview and recruitment process, it's very important to give people as realistic a view of the position and what it entails as possible.

- Knowing what is important and what is not (mail, meetings, in-services, programs, etc.).

- There is no standard program, etc. in each county - each is geared to specific needs of each county. This is important, necessary and unique but can be difficult to understand when starting out. Also, people are very busy and it's difficult for them to take time. Also, everyone assumes you know where everything is located at OSU - many of us don't.

- Learning terms, budget, processes.

- Getting over being all things to all people.

- Learning chain of command, becoming known in your particular county - especially with brand new program. No place for FNP in retreats, etc. Feel excluded from professional groups as well as the staff - sec. "holidays." We are sort of like orphans that nobody wants to claim!

- Specific training before skills or knowledge is needed. Realistic time management and expectations.

- The notion that new employees are outsiders. Especially those who have different philosophies than their supervisors.

- Clear emphasis on experienced OSU Extension employees making more effort to assimilate new hires. I try to be a reference for new folks as most offices I worked with haven't even offered a tour to new hires to help them understand basic office procedures - travel, supplies, phone, etc. Often it is expected for new hires to figure it out on their own.
- Time! All the materials given at orientation are too much to assimilate during the start up process.

- Support from their supervisor, county staff and clientele to participate in out of the county/district workshops. Some traditions and expectations are hard to overcome.

- Distances - people outside of the Columbus metro area aren’t able to take advantage of many opportunities as the main campus employers are (FREE classes, health and wellness screenings, cultural arts and sporting event opportunities, theater, galleries, golfing, take your daughter to work day activities, etc.). Not much opportunity to meet “on campus” associates.

- OSU does a superb job of rapidly accommodating employees and helping achieve a comfort level.

- Learning what all the connections are with OSU and local extension, and what the benefits are from being an OSU employee. Have explained up front, soon.

- Construction in Columbus. Too many acronyms. The hierarchy was too hard to figure out.

- Knowing how the system works.

- District meetings with staff are very stretched out. Prior experience, we met every month or every other month as FCS agent. Area wise (9 counties). All agent staff met 4 times a year in the morning. After lunch section meetings. Always on Fridays and expected to be there. Met agents and worked with easier than OSU.

- Time/stress management. Balancing roles. They stress time management but continuously ask to serve on things.

- Learning office routine and fitting in the office environment. For some, it is dealing with being in an unfamiliar place. Extension needs to be aware of the incredible stress of starting a new job, moving, leaving all that is familiar - especially for single people.

- Others thinking you know a lot about Extension, when you really don’t. The agents are so busy. I was kind of “on my own” to get started with programming and really didn’t know how to begin or other agencies to make contact with.

- Who it is and what the relationship is with the county chair. The county chair can make a huge difference in how people feel when they first get in - and the unwritten or non-verbal expectations the county staff and/or clientele have in place. The jargon and the understanding of the organizational culture.
- Location - distance away from district office. Few meetings at the district level for program assistant.

- Fear of competition from other established employees.

- Lack of knowledge of Extension. Lack of knowledge of “chain of command.” Lack of knowledge of roles of agents, county chair, district director, district specialists, etc. Importance of accountability. Importance of scheduling. Dealing with flexible work schedules.

- Becoming a part of the Extension family. Meeting Extension people more than just one time.

- Not having a degree. Most OSU employees look down on other employees who do not have a long list of degrees.

- Many times “supervisors” schedules reflected their own wants and needs (such as attending graduate school, in-service training, vacation, sick leave) and not necessarily the needs of the employees. Many times I was on my own to find out specifics (such as getting a parking decal, finding out about health policies, inquiring about payroll discrepancies).

- Breadth of programs and people.

- I did not feel I faced any major barriers. If I had a question I asked and was given assistance.

- For me the biggest barrier was the Masters Degree requirement. To move from a program assistant to agent required that at the age of 51 I had to obtain a Masters Degree. This became a major barrier to me even though I had over 30 years of experience in the field of agriculture. I felt that more emphasis was placed on the level of education than on the level of experience and what I brought to the job.

- Lack of knowledge of how the program operates.

- Lack of understanding of what their job really is and who they really work for. Talking to other counties doesn’t help either since we are all set up differently, it makes it more confusing and you feel like you’re all alone.

- Understanding what others do in the office - or district level. It was more than a year before I knew what others actually did in our office.
- County chair problems. Old "cliques." Too many immediate supervisors, chairs, district director, district specialists. Hard to simply get the job done and then worry about pleasing 3 different people. Do not like being evaluated by another agent in the office - county chair.

- The new barriers are getting acquainted with their program and all of the responsibilities needed to do their job effectively.

- Get to know the red tape - the right people.

- Becoming a member of the group.

- Need time to become familiar with the county you serve and the programs being provided.

- Getting beyond that stage where you are no longer considered "new" and your ideas are now meaningful.

- Politics. Differences in philosophy depending on location.

I think one of the major barriers is the "white-water" status we are now constantly in. There are always changes coming - so it is difficult to keep up with them and learn about the history the way things used to be.

- How the county office operates on a daily basis, each is so different. Not getting a good mentor, who is willing to take the time and listen. Amount of paper work, what to do with it.

- Don't know of any. People were very welcoming.

- The massive demand of new agents to achieve and work the tenure track.
3. What should the role of a new employee's immediate supervisor be in facilitating the assimilation process? If you are an agent, please consider how the role of an immediate supervisor fits in relation to your support team and your mentor. If you are not in an agent position, consider just the role of your immediate supervisor.

- Helping with employment issues, leave, etc.

- Take the time to thoroughly explain policy and procedures at job site - miscellaneous expenditures, travel forms, health insurance, roll of support staff. Review job description in detail and create specific responsibility list.

- Offer guidance, support, encouragement.

- The immediate supervisor should be available for questions, should be supportive, informative, and genuinely interested in the new employee's fate.

- A confidant who you can ask questions to and not feel like you are not "getting" your job by asking them.

- Introduce resources that are available, initiate networking.

- Go over the hierarchy more than once over time. Things don't sink in at first. Sometimes people forget what it was like to start. Take time for them - sit down and listen.

- To make sure the employee knows how to operate in their position.

- Support, clarify, help obtain resources.

- Depends on the supervisor's personality. Some people are dull and boring and in that event the whole process would be better left to someone that is more outgoing.

- To encourage communication in all ways and with co-workers especially.

- Available to answer questions. Give support and encouragement. Advise on improving job performance.

- Open dialogue of OSU Extensions policies, values, organizational charts of authority, and also Extension's common functions and gatherings.

- The immediate supervisor is vital in the new employees position and getting started.
- Always be willing to answer any questions or let the new employee know where they can get an answer without getting the run-around.

- Spending the extra time teaching the new employee. Sometimes they treat the new employee as though they were treated, which was very little supervising by their supervisor.

- How can supervisors (chair) allow dedicated time in a program area that isn’t their own? So many decisions are left up to the county that your best training is in your home county - but that doesn’t include the program training that is needed. This becomes a mean little circle - I know that new agents need more orientation in their home county than they currently get. Going to Columbus doesn’t help them work with irate customers who want magic. Consider our reporting system - the only reports that are expected across the board seem to be POW/ROR. So what day to day, weekly or monthly info should be filed? By whom? Who requests it? If it’s the chair - in a well established office - it works, otherwise communication becomes inconsistent and “chair” driven. Also - where is the training to establish good “core” services - telephone calls, site visits and traditional programs. These seem to be overlooked as we encourage new employees with needs for VITA, specialization dollars and rewards and incentives for “innovative” programming. You have to walk before you run. Could we have new people on staff for 18 months before they’re encouraged to try innovative stuff? Or pursue a degree?

- Give some direction and support help when needed.

- Encourage new hires to network with other people in their program area. To develop a rapport with others who can advise and help them along the way.

- Depends on individual employee and supervisor. Supervisors need to walk the fine line between employee independence and employee support.

- Day-to-day help. Long-term vision needs given to new.

- Give regular feedback, up-front meetings, early on is important!

- Direction, advice.

- Open to questions, encouraging, helpful feedback.

- Immediate supervisors should make you aware of their goals and their expectations of you and then allow you the freedom you need to do the job you were hired to do. Make sure you keep your supervisor posted on everything and welcome their feedback.
- The supervisor should meet regularly with the new employee to discuss how the new employee is adjusting to his/her position.

- Offer guidance, support, training and education about the position and its responsibilities.

- Immediate supervisor needs to make sure that the new employee is exposed to what he or she needs to know and steer them in the right direction. Positive feedback is essential on job performance by the total support team on a continued basis - not just once a year.

- Help the new employee understand the Extension system and the employee’s role in it. Help the employee learn to work with the public and with other employees.

- It should not only be one of individual support but also one of a co-team member support. Maintain close communication to create a team atmosphere conducting programs as opposed to each individual. It is much easier to supervise someone while standing with them within a program as opposed to supervising while standing outside the program.

- Be available for questions. I think the new fact sheets will help.

- To be there as a mentor and a friend. To genuinely care about that employee both professionally and personally. To encourage, support, guide and work in adopting a shared vision but to get out of the way and let them do their job. You need to monitor progress and constantly provide words of encouragement.

- An active role. To support, assist, guide, encourage, help clarify, help employee look at a situation from a different point of view.

- Information presenter, guidance on a regular basis, friend and mentor not program decision maker.

- Supervisor is key role in process - can often make or break employee if employee has no extension background.

- Much depends on who the new employee is and the role in Extension. Big difference from county agent to office support staff member. Question is too ambiguous.

- Supervisor should take leadership role in setting up orientation and training schedule for new employee. Acclimating new staff to: (at least arrange, make provisions for, share training dates, etc.) introduction to key people and community; introduction to position responsibilities; training and orientation, subject matter; information to OSU policy and procedures.
- Assist them with the new employee packet. Help them understand their role in the organization. Help them use their talents to do their job.

- Encouragement is #1, support, guidance, talking over potentially volatile situations beforehand.

- Be available, patient, help find answers, advocate for the new employee if necessary.

- New people see too many people as their supervisors or superiors. Too many people give advice and direction. Actual supervisor is often not involved in these meetings. The new employee's supervisor should be the central figure in helping the new employee put everything in perspective.

- Frequent and regular “reality checks” and coaching sessions during the first 3 months.

- Help them avoid problems while allowing them to make decisions and mistakes that aren’t fatal.

- Listening, coaching, supporting, building a positive and trusting relationship with the new employee. Employee must see supervisor as someone who supports and coaches them and not someone who simply evaluates and judges.

- Openly discussing policy - written and unwritten. Be available to talk and share.

- Orientation, coach, cheerleader and guide.

- Helping new employee ID a few areas to focus on first and developing expertise there. Look at building knowledge base a slower rate but more in depth.

- Go over the paperwork with them; introduce them throughout the community; discuss current program efforts; discuss their plans for future programs.

- When I started my job 17 years ago my district supervisor checked on me weekly - in-depth conversations, priority setting, programming, etc. This is not happening today. He made it clear to me that he would help me be successful. Today I think the attitude is sink or swim!

- Answering a lot of questions. Encourage. Identifying who the “immediate supervisor” really is can be tough.

- Ideally, the immediate supervisor should be the lead assimilator - yet the failure of that model brought about the mentoring program.

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- When I began in Extension I remember my supervisor saying to me..."if you don’t succeed, it is my fault and I have failed as your supervisor.” Role...mentor, advisor, teacher, “care-giver.”

- Immediate supervisor should take the lead in this process.

- Perhaps a more formalized, longer term orientation/assimilation process to cover Extension procedures/requirements and the local community infra-structure, leadership, socio-economic structure.

- Be open and available. Be a resource and a backup. Respect the talents and abilities and skills and knowledge of the new person.

- Planned weekly agendas for learning what is expected!

- To concentrate on setting aside the time to meet with that new employee regularly and on an informal basis to find out how they’re doing and help to “mentor” them as much as possible.

- Sometimes it seems I get more support from other members of the support team than the chair. I think chairs need to set aside plenty of time to meet with new employees and cover Extension as well as individual office policies.

- Early on, role should be to help new employee learn the ropes. Help them select some simple programs to conduct that should be successful. Later, role should be to help agent focus on local needs and conduct programs that may not be well attended but are needed.

- The supervisor should give direction, guidance, make new employee feel comfortable. Extension can seem overwhelming. The supervisor should help new employee take steps needed to gain understanding.


- Being available to answer questions for new employees. Go to programs conducted by new employees so they can be evaluated.

- An immediate supervisor who works in the same office needs to be primary in giving feedback. They recognize work skills, areas of confidence and areas , comfort with work load.

- Assist when asked. Be there for encouragement, direction and support! Assimilation just takes time when the organization is a big as “ours”!
- To be in daily contact with the agent about the days work and how to plan for next week/month.

- Lots of timely feedback and listening.

- Help make sure that new employee asks questions; provide time to "just talk" - encourage (force?) them to meet one on one with others in office.

- Orientation, county direction, county politics.

- A coach or a valuable resource to be communicated with often.

- Supervisor/chair should receive same info so that he/she can work with new employee encouraging participation in orientation, etc.

- Supportive - but with a hands on policy on programming unless requested. Informative - local office procedures: messages, scheduling; local lay of land: politics, past activities of program.

- Regular “touch base” informal “meetings.” Introductions to staff and clientele. Approachable. Overview of office operations and expectations.

- Regular contact several times a week - to answer questions and give direction and advice.

- Creating a supportive environment - communicating verbally and non-verbally that “I have time for you” is very important. Also, even if new employee doesn’t come to you (supervisor), supervisor should go to them.

- Being attentive and encouraging to the new agent. Let them know why you are there and show support for their work and efforts. To serve as a sounding board.

- The positive side of their first several questions.

- Should be serving as mentor.

- To support the new agent on a day to day basis. Look for signs of stress, problems, accomplishments, etc.

- Help with specific job duties, keep focused.

- Answer questions as they arise. Help them quickly understand the acceptable ways of paying for programs, office finances, postage, etc. so they keep out of trouble.
- Supervisor needs to ask the agent frequently what are the questions, fears and other issues. These issues or concerns may be similar to what other agents might be experiencing. Then a strategy can be planned to address it that may relate to the entire group.

- To be a historical provider concerning the past agents role in a certain program area. Provide information about the community and its leaders. Help set first year goals for new agent.

- Finding out what help they need and seeing that someone helps them learn it.

- An immediate supervisor needs to be very pro-active in assisting a new employee to become assimilated to the job, but not at the risk of jeopardizing the well being already established functioning staff. Sometimes when more than one agent is being brought in, in the same discipline (example: 4-H, FCS, etc.) the established agent, although not a part of the support team, should be granted at least "team leader" status, not just an equal status.

- Work with them in orienting them to the job, what is to be done as well as acquainting them with OSU policies like affirmative action, ADA, etc. Working with them on time management, planning schedules, travel, working with others in office and office communications. Coordinate where applicable with support team. Introduce them to community leaders.

- I like the idea of a team approach (how can you and I work together to help get this job done).

- Because of team concept there is no "immediate supervisor." Employee has difficult time understanding where lines of support are.

- Source of information; sounding board for local concerns; introduction to key people; orientation to local situation.

- Orientation, support, guidance, introduction to the community, needs assessment of the program/position as it was run, suggestions of goals.

- I feel the chair in a county office situation has a critical role in providing the leadership and the motivation for the entire staff to be actively involved in assimilation of a new employee. This shouldn't be viewed as just the role of primarily the immediate supervisor.
- Whoever is responsible for training has primary responsibility for assimilation. It is easier for P.A.'s or secretaries who have more exact job descriptions to be oriented. Agent positions are so broad that specific job descriptions are not available, causing new agents, especially those who aren’t familiar with extension, to be unsure of what they should do and what is expected of them.

- The supervisor should have regular meetings with a new employee to talk through problems/concerns/questions.

- Introduce to the county. Tour the county. Help understand the needs/plans established by the position.

- Spend time helping them get accustomed to job duties. Actually many new employees don’t even know what questions to ask. We ought to have “new” employees (maybe on job for over a year) write down the questions they had and compile them. The supervisors could then have these questions and answer them.

- Orientation. Coaching - lots of. Answering questions. When a new item comes up, check to see if there are questions and understanding. Don’t assume people know anything.

- Visit during the first week of employment. Help new employee with any questions or problems. Help develop training plan as needed. Return one month later for same.

- Facilitator.

- Immediate networking - introducing new employee to people they will be working with as well as Extension’s resource and technical support providers.

- Open communication on any job related subject, question, issue, task, organization, etc., etc.

- County chairs or equivalent need time to help assimilate. Often they are overburdened and can’t do this adequately. Need to be assimilated at county, community and university level.

- Supervisor should provide training, however many supervisors are new and have no idea what to do. County chairs need more training themselves. Should be a different training program. Training is fragmented.

- Make sure that the agent starts early in learning about and doing the right things. Help them do work with committees and key individuals to plan programs that will be successful. Don’t start making big changes unless absolutely necessary.
- Some supervisory in-services would be nice - one day, district sites. Once a year
performance appraisal meetings are not the way to do it

- **Daily** contact with the new employee to discuss what is going well and what's not - then
respond to problems/challenges immediately before they become major.

- We should take the time to help this new person understand his/her role. Shadowing an
agent in a similar county situation seems like an appropriate way to do this - but it takes
time away from getting the job done.

- Immediate supervisors often know more than the chair or support team about program
and/or job performance. Immediate supervisors should have input on annual appraisals.

- Very active.

- Supervisor should — point out resources for learning about Extension; facilitate
introductions in community; help explain administrative procedures; help explain
hierarchy, Extension culture; help explain research/teaching/facilitating roles.

- The immediate supervisor can help untangle the state web of politics. However, I didn't
find this lack of understanding of the state procedure to hinder my program or
effectiveness within my goals.

- The chair should be supportive and helpful. The chair may not understand the program
area as well as the district specialists and mentor.

- An immediate supervisor can be very helpful in getting a new employee assimilated into a
new county by helping them avoid some of the hidden agendas of clientele. (Sometimes in
the 4-H program you find families with long histories of disputes.) An immediate
supervisor, that has been around for awhile, can sometimes open doors for you more
quickly than you could have done alone.

- I feel positive feedback and guidance would aid in assimilation of new employees.

- Supervisors are in a position to hook up new agents with existing agents plus mentors to
help new employees with program ideas, community contacts, etc. Support teams are
good but often they all are not in positions of being where the “rubber meets the road” in
order to assist the new agent.

- Support, information, orientation, mentoring.

- Support and freedom to create creative programs.
- Time should be set aside to educate that employee on an on going/as need basis for at least a month.

- Education and support primarily. They are really the first bridge you encounter in the organization.

- Provide regular feedback, clarify expectations, assist in goal setting.

- To be supportive - guide not direct/dictate.

- Supervisor should support and give guidelines. Should not dictate in services or meetings they must attend, call everyday, etc.

- Chairs should sit down with agents once per week the first month just to allow the agent to verbally process the overwhelming amount of new information. Then once per month. District directors should call at least every 2 weeks of the first 6 months minimum. That is support. Not waiting until a problem occurs and the new agent calls them.

- Should recognize that the new agent will need a lot of his/her time for the first year or so. Should be a friend as well as a supervisor. Should maintain confidentiality when asked.

- Inform new employee of the contacts available to him or her. Give constructive criticism. Offer support and confidence.

- Allowing opportunity and freedom for the agent to be assimilated and be out of the office. Also give the agent a who’s who and go through the directory and who an agent could get to know.

- The immediate supervisor needs to be very pro-active assisting agents to assimilate and at times giving a little more direction to agents with very little understanding of Extension and how to be team players.

- My immediate supervisor was very helpful and was available to answer (or get the answers I needed). I wasn’t smart enough at times to know the questions I should ask.

- Give them enough space to explore their role but also listen and give support.

- Guiding through what the job requires and many of the “unspoken” duties.

- Help prioritize tasks, be willing to listen.

- Should be serving as mentor.
- Supervisors should take a lot of time to work with new employee for the first 2 months of employment. They need to be there to encourage, answer questions and guidance. Without this local orientation a new employee may feel like they are being fed to the wolves.

- Immediate supervisors should be available to answer questions when needed.

- Encourage attendance of info meeting in Columbus. Encourage open communication on job performance, suggestions, feedback, etc.

- My supervisor was great in all areas.

- Be sure the support team meets and provides useful information in non-threatening manner.

- The supervisor should introduce you to all groups you will be working with and provide some publicity to the community about your new role.

- Be sure support continues beyond the initial process.

- I found my supervisors to be great people genuinely concerned about me. I think they understand the competing pressures. Unfortunately, I don't think they could give me examples as to how to balance the pressures, as would have helped.

- Provide as much detailed history as possible.

- I firmly believe that the only way to conquer this assimilation process is to hire professional staff, good staff that already exists in the system to train (on a full time basis) new employees. Work with them side by side for the first couple of months of their employment. Business world calls them corporate trainers. It works!

- Supervisor needs to take lots of time (which they may not have) to spend with the new person.

- The supervisor should be a connection between the new employee and the rest of the organization.

- ___ in ___ County, does a great job on the local level!! Gives me just enough direction to get me going, but also gives me the freedom to use my own ability and judgment. She's great!

- Guidance, coaching and sharing.
- Giving advice and moral and mental support is wonderful.

- Be encouraging, provide support - visible and meaningful.

- Provide suggestions.

- Being available the first few weeks so new employee feels free to ask for assistance. Making sure new employee knows where to go for “backup” if agent or supervisor is out of the office.

- Give guidance in the overall vision/mission of Extension as a whole - but also of the employees work group. Also - provide specific how-tos of reporting numbers, expectations for evaluation, etc. Proactive and outcomes oriented information.

- Help them become oriented to office, community and system.

- Supervisor listens, asks questions and help agent problem solve - see other ways to view problems or issues. Helps with impact and evaluation.

- The issue is that the chair may not be here very long.

- Act as coach, meet on a regular basis, discuss issues and concerns of new employees. Help them cope with other employees not willing to change.

- There is a need for training of people who supervise employees. My chair was told by DD to learn supervisory techniques from the previous chair. There should be a better way.

- Supporter, encourager — all without overwhelming!

- I was extremely lucky to have _____ (Agent) as my immediate supervisor. She showed me what to do, then stepped aside and let me do my job. She’s always been there to help if I have questions, but doesn’t “micro manage.” She shared the FCS newsletter with me and other resources she gets so that I can keep up with changes in the profession. Not many other agents do that! She shares everything she learns at OAFCS meetings (which I can’t afford to join) and other various FCS functions. She is an exceptional giving person who is not threatened by someone else in the office knowing what she knows!

- My experience most great! I am allowed to plan, conduct and follow my own programs. Nothing but encouragement and help from my supervisor! My recommendation - design a program using my supervisor as a role model. They would: support specialization development, encourage your own programming, help you fit into the community, help you fit into extension via networking, allow you to “be yourself!”
- To be sure employee fully understands.

- By helping the new employee integrate into the office (as a whole), not just in his/her program area.

- To make sure the employee understands and follows office procedures. To make sure that training is adequate and follow ups are done.

- Encouragement, listener, advisor, friend.

- Assimilation was not the problem in my opinion. I think OSUE is almost too democratic or at least my work group was. My supervisor was nice but not very directional. A few of my co-workers seemed to have too much to say about how everyone else was performing. Hierarchy or structure is not always a bad thing. I think that structure would have helped our super democracy.

- Good listener. Take time to see where this person needs help. Help the person to assimilate into the office setting with other workers. Identify when there is a problem and deal with it.

- Highly supportive, patient, there to answer your day to day questions.

- Frequent contact, but not hovering. No mentor selected for me.

- Have an open door policy regarding communications.

- A supervisor should be a good mentor.

- Introduce them to the movers and shakers, give them encouragement and let them make decisions, don’t do their job for them.

- I feel that an immediate supervisor is there to provide support and guidance to a new employee.

- Help new person become a resource for others in the office rather than be isolated based on “title.”

- What are their expectations of you, how much freedom do you have within a job, where to find information if you need it, what other office members jobs are and how you fit into that.

- Train in program area, support to employee in way of question and answer sessions.
- The role of my supervisor is to explore and seek out what resources the employee brings to the job. Then work to develop those resources so they are of maximum benefit to the office and the job the employee is doing. At the same time, make the employee feel comfortable and appreciated. Too often tasks are assigned and little attention is given.

- Mentor - one who explains, encourages, and directs without being "bossy" or dictating.

- Offer support, help guide one through the "OSU" side of the job.

- They should be able to describe "the ropes" of the system. They should be well versed in the subject matter (for me, nutrition). Be passionate about getting the message out. Be aware and up-to-date in regard to current university policies and politics. Be able to run a concise and efficient meeting and also be able to offer teaching of subject matter (nutrition).

- The immediate supervisor should put aside his or her prejudices and support their new employee throughout their career, not just for a few months. They should not play "favorites."

- Providing guidance to the new employee so they know what to do.

- Have an officially assigned mentor for each new agent, even for those with prior experience in another state. Immediate supervisor can assist by teaching new employees about required record keeping processes, i.e. travel, POW, ROR, impact statements, etc. However, as a county chair, most do not have the time to teach new employees about "What is Extension."

- Support, understanding, help.

- To educate the new employee on OSU’s network, operations, policies and expectations of the specific position.

- Be sure to be getting the new employee meeting the "right" people in the community and in the organization. Reviewing expectations and being sure all align with support team, each other, etc. Also assisting new staff in understanding the organization’s unwritten rules, idiosyncrasies, etc.

- They should make time, or schedule time, to help a new employee get acquainted with Extension, their program and other co-workers.
- There needs to be some support in place other than a "support" team that also evaluates job performance. How can someone feel comfortable seeking help when it may turn up on their evaluation? Support agents - learn what the person needs in way of support. A phone call or note every now and then would be nice.

- Supportive - encouragement in work process and career - mentor - feedback on job performance - respect you.

- Help in meeting the "important" people in the county. Commissioners. Introduce at various committee meetings that will future serve on.

- Encouraging in-service attendance; explaining the hierarchy of Extension; should be covered by HRT in orientation.

- Just be there. My colleagues and chair as well as district supervisor are unselfish of their time and have accumulated principled wisdom.

- Be available for answering questions. Make sure the employee, the supervisor, the chair and everyone in the office knows the job responsibilities of each position so there is no misunderstanding on anyone's part. Keep employee informed of opportunities, in-services, CES, etc.

- Some individuals need more guidance and encouragement to be able to complete the necessary work and have time to become part of the "family." Supervisors don't always have the time to complete this successfully.

- County chair needs to share all info concerning 4-H such as how accounts work, money available and right to make their own decisions.

- More supportive in giving direction for the first year. Set option for monthly meetings (if new hire wants to), to discuss progress, problems and focus for success in the next month.

- Introducing to other people in the organization, meeting with you on a frequent basis.

- Honest and useful communication especially with difficult situations.

- Give guidance in what to do and how best to do it. Be someone you can bounce ideas off of. Allow you to make choices, decisions, plans, etc. Introduce you to "the right people." Familiarize you with Extension personnel in other counties and on the state level.

- Main role should be to expose the new hire to key aspects of the OSU Extension Service. Other aspects the new hire would pick up as time goes on in the job.
- He/she should allow enough time or assign duties so you become familiar with our resources and discover the pace necessary to complete job description duties.

Please provide any additional comments about the levels of assimilation into OSU Extension.

-- In _____ County, where I work, I feel the level of assimilation is excellent.

-- Extension is slow to react to problems and a lot of personnel pass the buck.

-- Encourage team/collaborative efforts between individuals.

-- With every county doing their own thing and writing their own job descriptions it becomes very confusing. I think it would be better if state took a larger role in telling us what our job is. Then it would be easier to go to another county and talk to someone with the same position and get tips and advise.

-- I think most extension offices are very good at making a new person feel at home. Through my husband's career I have become acquainted with 4 different offices, and each one made me feel welcome. As an employee, I have worked in 2 counties. One county I felt as if I were among family. They were always there to help, no matter what the need might be.

-- Thanks to _____ and _____!

-- Unfortunately, I had a wonderful supervisor for my first 6 months as an EFNEP Youth Educator. Then I was 8 months without ANY supervisor! During which time I organized and carried out the entire summer program and organized and scheduled the 9 month school year program. My first supervisor was very adept at communicating new policies and current University trends. She was an expert in her field and it was evident that she was passionate about serving the needs of the youth in our community. She provided in-house trainings and encouraged me to go to in-services and work at the fair! I do not understand how my second supervisor was hired. She had no nutrition background, and was not particularly interested in community needs beyond writing memos and occasionally attending a program that someone else had set up. Many times she mentioned how nice it was to be getting a "free" masters degree and how nice it was to get paid to go to class, etc., etc. How is this type of attitude supposed to assure a positive understanding and smooth transitions in OSU Extension? Since leaving my position, and, consequently my co-worker leaving, our Youth EFNEP Department has been closed. How does Extension justify taking eight months to hire a person who could care less about her job (doing service to her county) than getting her "free" masters degree (with a pay increase afterward). I feel the smooth assimilation of future employees lies in the reorganization of the Extension system and a look at the politics of the University in general.
Just because you want to help your friend or spouse DOES NOT mean that they are the person for the job!!

-- OSU Extension talks big about continuing education for its employees but makes no effort to support those of us who live too far from campus to further our education.

-- The agents and secretaries were extremely helpful.

-- I never felt that many other Extension personnel were in a similar situation, and that made assimilation less of a concern to me.

-- Have one or two people at the District level assigned in this role mentioned above. This would tie into less turnover. It's what the business world uses to cut down on turnover rates and increase productivity and quality of total organization. I would even consider it! Something like this is needed badly.

-- Overall it was just fine. I had no trouble getting to know people or understanding my job.

-- I enjoyed working for OSU Extension!!!

-- I didn't seem to have problems because so many people are willing to help guide you.

-- Mentors and support team and help of other agents and state specialists was crucial!

-- I have been told - that it has been said - that it takes 3 years to “get it” for program personnel new to Extension. I would agree with this - though this time could be longer and/or more stressful depending on supervisor(s) tenure with Extension, training received or not received, changes in work group, etc. I presently feel “okay” with my assimilation level!

-- Overall, I think Extension does a good job orienting new employees. I just happen to have had a poor supervisor at that time.

-- I’m very good with names, and that helps. I like meeting new people and getting to know them. I guess I would suggest that new people push themselves and get acquainted with others at meetings and share. Everyone I’ve met is very nice and helpful. If you need something - they’re happy to send you info or resources. Don’t just sit there and be miserable. Find mentors you click with, personally, and visit their offices! See how they run their programs, how they organize their files, anything! I’m consistently getting new ideas when I talk with other PA’s, agents, etc.

Another help was (and I know this is unusual) working 2 days a week as a secretary when FNP bumped down to 24 hours/week. I needed 40 hours since I’m a single parent, so our
office chair arranged for me to do secretarial work for 2 days a week. Nothing helps you understand how the office functions better than running the office in all its programs areas (ag, 4-H, FCS). I filed ag information, put date into the 4-H data base, you name it - I learned it. It makes you smarter! Plus it forged a close bond with the secretaries because I know how hard their jobs are, too! Don’t be afraid to share with people. I recently talked to a fellow FNP-PA from another county who was debating about quitting because of her low salary. I told her about the equity adjustment that is going to go in this year for 8-10 FNP PA’s who started at low salaries (like me) and are getting an adjustment. She was so happy she almost bawled her eyes out! She said her office chair never mentioned that something like that could be done. ___ got equity adjustments for 2 agents in our office because they were underpaid. I asked why PA’s can’t get one and she said “let’s try!” And thanks to ___, ___, I’m getting one! She (the PA) couldn’t believe I told her all this stuff, apparently she doesn’t know how to ask or who to ask in her own county. So I know there are people in other counties who have questions and need people to talk to about them. Could there be someone at the state or district level to help people when they have questions and don’t know where to turn? Encourage everyone at new employee orientation to not be afraid of asking questions. Don’t worry about looking stupid. People love to be asked for their opinion or advice - it makes them feel important and needed.

-- 1) My county support staff, co-workers and extension clientele who hired me help me fit into the office and community. It would be hard to stay if we (family) did not “feel at home” in this county. 2) A trip spent with state, district and other county staff really aided my assimilation in OSU Extension. Encourage these activities in a funding if possible. This has been one of my highlights in Extension. Commodity team involvement has also aided my assimilation. Just like in school, aligning with a group of people with similar interests has greatly helped me “fit” into the organization.

-- I think ____ County is a great example of assimilation at the county level!!

-- We try and do fairly well but especially for people of non-traditional backgrounds and racially diverse backgrounds more is needed.

-- New employees without MS degree should be warned about the amount of time and tears it would require to work and go to school simultaneously.

-- The county chair position and the attention I received from that person is nearly entirely responsible for me making it through my first year. I would have made it without that person, but it would have been miserable.

-- Once you learn the politics and you learn who cares about what you’re doing, you’re all set!
-- It is tough because the organization is so big.

-- I feel I made the assimilation into Extension rather easily because I had some understanding of extension and 4-H. However, I feel agents with less experience needs more assistance with Extension philosophy and mission and teamwork as they are hired on with Extension.

-- I enjoy working for Extension - sometimes I think all the meetings and workshops are a little too much. I feel overwhelmed at times in my role as PA - I have taken on a lot - I don't always feel compensated very well for my commitment to OSU. I work 30 hours a week - but am fully committed to getting that job done.

-- I like OSU Extension because I have a good support system. There is always someone I can depend on to answer my questions or help me out in a bind.

-- Promote balancing work and family - prevent burnout.

-- I found the orientation which I attended four months after I started my assimilation to be helpful. But, I think it should of been held sooner.

-- Inservice help with networking.

-- I have been involved with Extension for 35+ years. If I had not been, I would probably still not be real sure what the purpose of Extension is!

-- The mentoring program has helped me immensely. I would contact my mentor or district specialists quite a bit.

-- Assimilation is an ongoing process. The level that I am at now is very good. I've made friends in the organization and in the community. I appreciate my job and value the organization.

-- My office was a very worker friendly environment.

-- I didn't have any 4-H experience as a young person and have consequently always felt myself a bit of an outsider - just a bit. Is that my own insecurity - or is it an implicit message of the organization - I'm not sure.

-- My experience has been very positive.

-- There is some cliques and “in” groups - which will always be there. Sometimes new staff feel so “out” they form their own group for support which I guess is OK but can mislead or lead to turnover.
-- I believe that assimilating with your county residents, co-workers and professionals in the area is more important than understanding the politics of Columbus and Extension.

-- Many times (most of the time) in our office, our county chair fails to share information that comes from Columbus. She makes the decision on the relevance of the item without any regard to an employee's personal interest. We usually end up finding out info through other offices/counties.

-- Peoples personalities plays an important part of successful assimilation into OSU Extension. I suspect that introverted people will have a lower "success" rate than extraverts.

-- District Director was very helpful with lessons on working with volunteers and committees, and suggestions for future.

-- Discourage "clicks" and encourage team work. The SNR, there are faculty members who won't even give me the time of day, plus I see no collaboration between these faculty members. So sad!

-- An opinion: I think that those agents coming in doing non-traditional programming, regardless of discipline, have a harder time assimilating.

-- It takes time to understand the "workings" of Extension, being in the job position for less than 1 year, I was just starting to get a handle on extension (goals, philosophy, grant proposals, etc.).

-- Overview training of programs all ready in place.

-- I have been out of extension for 10 months now. I found this question hard to respond to from a past program assistant's perspective.

-- It was a great organization to work for. By far one of the top Big 10 Extensions. Keep up the great work.

-- I would like to see money sent to local county offices for them to do some things together socially. When we go to Columbus we get lost in the crowd. We need to develop a bond within each office so we work as a team.

-- Support team members from district office made it possible for me to be successful working with a less than supportive chair.

-- Extension cannot do enough because of older county agents who are racist and prejudiced.
List of References


