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Steven Dale Siegelin

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EXTENSION AND MISSIONARY ADULT EDUCATOR COMMITMENT

CALLING, EXPERIENCES, AND ATTITUDES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON CAREER

COMMITMENT OF EXTENSION AGENTS AND PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES

By

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Dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Educational Leadership, International Educational Leadership

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# EXTENSION AND MISSIONARY ADULT EDUCATOR COMMITMENT

## Abstract

Siegelin, Steven, Ph.D., May 12, 2023

Educational Leadership

Calling, Experiences, And Attitudes and Their Influence On Career Commitment Of Extension Agents And Protestant Missionaries

Chairperson: Dr. William P. McCaw

This qualitative case study focused on career commitment in two types of professional adult educators, extension agents and missionaries. Past research studying extension agents and missionaries had documented decades of early career attrition. Research documented the issues, explored causes, and proposed solutions. Yet, the problem persists. Much of the research has been quantitative.

This comparative case study maximized the differences between participants within and across the two professions; conducted in depth semi-structured interviews with participants; and had participants create a drawing of their career commitment attitudes and experiences and describe the drawing during the interview. Extension agents and missionaries were selected because they both provide non-formal adult education by embedding in communities, building trust, identifying needs, and working and learning with community members; all for the purpose of improving the lives of individuals and the community. There are differences as well: the educational foundations are different, missionaries almost always work cross-culturally, missionaries in this study experience a calling where extension agent may or may not, and their funding streams are different in source and stability.

This research established two cases, one for each profession, and conducted semi-structured interviews to determine how participants entered their profession, the relevant experiences they had and the resulting attitudes, and how career commitment was impacted. Special attention was given to the presence, absence, and strength of a calling and its impact on career commitment.

The results indicate participants in both cases thrive on helping people become more successful and to have a better life. They get discouraged when their organization is top-down, overly bureaucratic, or omits them from any part of the educational process. They also became frustrated when interpersonal conflict cannot be resolved.

All participants identified their role as a calling, or between a career and calling. However, extension agents' callings were personal and more temporal and originated from within themselves. Missionaries' calling was also personal. Their calls originated before they entered their roles. Their calling was spiritual and from God. This deeper calling resulted in different attitudes about difficulty on the job. Missionaries were confident they could work through or withstand the difficulties they faced because they were called of God.

## EXTENSION AND MISSIONARY ADULT EDUCATOR COMMITMENT

### Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, children, and our parents. For all the support they have given me during my career and the time they have given up and encouragement and accountability they provided while I was working on this degree. It would not have been possible without their help.

## EXTENSION AND MISSIONARY ADULT EDUCATOR COMMITMENT

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Thank you to Dr. Bill McCaw for your continued encouragement, patience, gentle teaching, and for the countless hours you gave over nights, weekends, and holidays to allow this dissertation to be implemented in a short period of time. To Drs. Lee, Denny, Matt, and Evans: your excellent critiques and challenges to my proposal and final document have strengthened the research and the dissertation and made them stronger. You each brought unique perspectives and asked great and difficult questions that were important and challenging to answer. Through your sacrifices this dissertation was refined and made better.

To my friends across the world and nation who said encouraging words as I worked through this process, were examples through your own doctoral or research efforts, or gave generously of your time when I asked questions or sought to learn from you; you are appreciated more than you know. Your kind words, or your chastening to keep going were energizing and kept me on task. Thank you.

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## Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

Adult education is the dominant educational context in history (Savicevic, 2008). The development of formal and compulsory education for youth and adolescents is the more recent development in the history of education (Savicevic, 2008). Several scholars credit Jewish and Chinese cultures with practicing continuing learning for adults throughout life (Henschke, 2015; Henschke & Cooper, 2007; Ozmon, 2012; Savicevic, 2008). Education in these contexts was a mix of formal and informal education. Consistent across these cultures was a focus on the learner and the learner's needs (Henschke, 2015; Savicevic, 2008). These needs were identified by the learner or by the educator or collaboratively. Henschke and Cooper

claimed that the language of the Hebrew prophets, before and concurrent with the time of Jesus Christ, along with the meaning of various Hebrew words and their Greek counterparts - learn, teach, instruct, guide, lead, and example/way/model - provide an especially rich and fertile resource to interpret andragogy. (Henschke & Cooper, 2007, p. 14)

Savicevic (2008) described Jewish education as religious and practical. Ozmon (2012) provided a succinct description of Confucius' rise from humble means to an educational leader. As Confucius found professional success in the governments of his day; he began educating others. He chose to educate people from all stations in society with the purpose of improving lives. Contemporary with Confucius was the work of the Greek philosophers. "Socrates the most important teacher of all time. Socrates' special contribution to andragogical ideas was through his own methods which he used in practical educational work" (Savicevic, 2008, p. 365).

Savicevic went on to credit Plato and Aristotle for their further development of adult education as "... lifelong education, educational needs, choosing the contents, methods, etc." (Savicevic, 2008, p. 366).

Moving forward to the Middle Ages Savicevic (2008) credited Christian churches and religious organizations in Europe with developing adult education structures that educated the public for the purpose of comprehending religious content. The purpose was so people would choose to convert to Christianity. Savicevic goes on to credit Comenius, a seventeenth century Czech educator, as being one of the first scholarly practitioners who established the science that was later called andragogy. The nineteenth century saw continued interest in formalizing adult education in the scholarly realm, but it wasn't until the 1920s that adult education and andragogy began to have foundation in the academic and practical world of education (Henschke, 2015).

The term adult education is used to describe the practice and profession. Andragogy is understood to be both the scholarly discipline of adult education and a synonym of day-to-day practice of adult education. The term andragogy was coined and popularized in the twentieth century (Henschke, 2005; Henschke, 2011; Henschke, 2015; Milton et al., 2003; Phelps, 1931; Savicevic, 2008; Ullman, 2010; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2009). In this dissertation adult education is utilized for time periods prior to the adoption of andragogy as a term; after that timeframe they are used synonymously.

### **Adult Education in History**

Historically, the practice of adult education has been the norm. Modern consideration of andragogy in the context of pedagogy, the study the education of children and adolescents, is misplaced. Adult education has been documented for over four millennia. It enjoys a history of education in both religious and non-religious contexts. Knowles "claimed that the andragogical

model of adult learning provides guidelines for gearing Christian adult education toward the development and support of ‘mature Christian persons’ in contrast to ‘dependent Christian persons’” (Henschke, 2015, p. 45). Lindeman (1926) developed non-religious arguments for adult education; he argued that humanity’s role in nature and its management required continual learning on humankind’s part. He articulated his belief that adults are self-directed learners. He stated, “Our world is dynamic precisely because of this faith in man’s capacity to direct his destiny” (Lindeman, 1926, p. 32).

Modern adult educators served many roles and utilized a variety of philosophical foundations and strategies to impact the lives of adult learners. This research focused on adult educators who provide non-formal education that is learner-centric and focuses on meeting the needs of the learner. Adult educators pursue these educational efforts for the purpose of improving the lives of individuals and communities. Two groups of educators who embrace this adult education context are United States based extension agents and missionaries serving abroad.

### **Land Grant Universities and the Establishment of Extension Systems**

Extension agents work towards the purpose of improving lives in the contexts of agriculture and natural resources, youth development, community development, or family and consumer sciences (Seevers & Graham, 2012). During the Civil War in the United States Congress and President Lincoln enacted the Morrill Act (Morrill Act, Public Law 37-108, 1862), establishing land grant universities (LGUs). “Land-Grant College Acts in 1862 and 1890 [a second Land Grant act supporting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)] provided an opportunity for the children of the working class to secure a higher education” (Rasmussen, 1989, p. 3). Congress passed the Hatch Act (Hatch Act, 7 U.S.C. § 361a, 1887)

establishing a research component for the agriculture units of LGUs so they could build a scientific foundation for the teaching of students. LGUs were also charged to take the knowledge they developed and discovered and educate the general population in their states. In 1914 Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act (Act, 7 U.S.C. § 343(b)(1), 1914) establishing Extension systems in all 1862 and 1890 LGUs. Extension systems were and are financial partnerships between county, state, and the Federal governments to provide nonformal education that is established in life, agricultural, human, and social sciences to the citizens across each state.

### **Extension Agents as Adult Educators**

Extension agents are professional adult educators who help the community meet technical, social, developmental, and community needs (Arnold, 2007; Seevers & Graham, 2012). Extension agents are locally placed and identify needs with their communities, develop partnerships, collaborations, and educational resources to address those needs (ESP Extension Professional's Creed, n.d.). Extension agents imbed in communities and utilize andragogical methodologies to identify the local needs of individuals, groups, and communities while working remotely from administrative structures with great professional freedom to set priorities and workflow (Seevers & Graham, 2012). They build trust and credibility in their communities and become valued resources who help make life better. Extension agents practice andragogical methodologies that meet people where they are, values their experiences, recognize people's freedom to self-direct, and values the co-learning opportunities that come with respectful and humble collaboration (ESP Extension Professional's Creed, n.d.; Seevers & Graham, 2012).

### **Missionaries as Adult Educators**

Mission related organizations are numerous and function with autonomy. Missionaries in the Protestant Christian tradition function as adult educators; although, there is a unique



vocabulary to support the missionary vocation and mission organizations. Christian missionaries and supporting churches or organizations take their direction from the words of Jesus Christ after his resurrection (Knowles et al., 2015; Stephens, 2018; Taylor, 1997; Van Meter, 2003).

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (New American Standard Bible, Matt 28:18b-20)

Missionaries embed in local communities, most often, in cross-cultural settings. They practice andragogical methodologies that meet people where they are, value their experiences, recognize people's freedom to self-direct, and value the co-learning opportunities that come with respectful and humble collaboration (Taylor, 1997). Unlike extension agents, the biblical portion of their education is derived from the Bible and applied to local needs (contextualization). This is similar to the methodologies of Brookfield (1986); Lindeman and Brookfield (1987); Habermas (1871); Friere (1970); and Mezirow (1981) who encouraged the use of adult education methodologies to improve the lives of people and to inspire social change that the adult educator believed would improve society as a whole. See "Social activism" in Chapter Two.

### **Similarities and Differences Between Extension and Missionary Educators**

There are striking similarities between extension agents and missionaries. Both imbed in local communities, identify needs with their communities, devise strategies to address those needs, they build trust, develop collaborations, both complete an undergraduate degree and often graduate degrees to enter their professions, and neither receive high levels of compensation (Seevers & Graham, 2012; Taylor, 1997). They also differ in a few ways. Extension agents generally work in their home cultures and missionaries usually work cross-culturally. Extension

agents work in stable funding situations that were developed by the employer; missionaries often go through the process of deputation; a period of time when they raise funds to support their work from churches, individuals, and other organizations, the result is commitments to provide funding over the career of the missionary on a regular basis (Stephens, 2018). Collectively, these funds serve as the operating and compensation funding for the missionary. Extension agents base their educational context by utilizing research- or evidence-based information (Seevers & Graham, 2012). Missionaries utilizing the Bible as their guide (Stephens, 2018). An intriguing difference between the two is in how individuals choose their career path. Extension agents enter the job market similarly to the majority of college graduates or other job seekers, by applying for job openings and interviewing for positions (Arnold, 2007). Missionaries are *called* to ministry through a spiritual process. This calling may take place at any time. In most cases, a missionary is called, then completes formal education, selects a ministry location, goes through training and deputation, and then begins their assignment in their chosen culture (Stephens, 2018).

These factors will be explored for the purpose of identifying how these adult educators and organization leaders can develop greater career commitment. This research explored extension agents and missionaries and discovered their experiences of career selection; experiences; attitudes; and their career commitment. The similarities and differences between extension agents and missionaries highlighted opportunities for greater understanding of career commitment across these adult education professions. Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) purposely studied different professions to strengthen their understanding of what employees wanted from their jobs. While the accountants and engineers had different roles and responsibilities in the Herzberg et al. study, they also had similarities; they lived and worked in the same city and worked for larger companies. The two groups of adult educators in this study had more

similarities between their methodologies and have dissimilarities in their career calling, the foundational source of educational content, and whether they worked within or outside their own culture.

### **Challenges of Retention in Extension and Missions**

Both Extension and Missions organizations struggle with early career turnover (Benge & Harder, 2017; Benge et al., 2015; Ensle, 2005; Forstadt & Fortune, 2016; Fourman & Jones, 1997; Harder et al., 2014; Stephens, 2018; Taylor, 1997). Russell and Liggans (2020) documented the negative effects the work environment can have on Extension adult educators' physical and mental health. Factors that can impact health are demanding schedules, self- or organizationally imposed high expectations, demanding clientele, challenging funding structures, and "a generally busy work culture" (Russell & Liggans, 2020, p. 1).

### **Problem Statement**

Premature departure of adult educators in appointments in the United States or across the world can be costly to the organization. Certain types of adult educators spend many years in preparation before beginning their role as a nonformal adult educator. Stephens (2019) noted that early appointment experiences, "pushes workers past their normal levels of stress, causing the baggage or personal issues in their lives to surface and send some of them home" (Stephens, 2019, p. 17).

Multiple streams of research studying adult educator recruitment, retention, and career commitment have identified that many appointees fail to persist in these positions (Arnold & Place, 2010a; Arnold & Place, 2010b; Benge & Harder, 2017; Brain et al., 2009; Harder et al., 2014; Morrill & Morrill, 1967; Stephens, 2018; Taylor, 1997).

Missionaries are influencers, people sent out to be change agents for the gospel. Attrition limits the obvious impact of these missionaries. Unfortunately, they are leaving the field prematurely after investing a significant number of years and thousands of dollars in preparation to begin their careers in missions, only to face the disappointment of not finishing what they started. (Stephens, 2018, p. 17)

Similar observations from a different perspective have been made in Extension contexts. Bengé and Harder noted that “extension agents face many challenges, such as burnout, long hours, increased workloads, unrealistic expectations, lack of resources, and supervision” (Bengé & Harder, 2017, p. 36). Other authors documented how burnout and subsequent turnover are costly in the loss of knowledge and experience, the disruption to local relationships, and disruptions in service during vacancies (Arnold S. , 2007; Ensle, 2005; Strong & Harder, 2009). Bengé and Harder (2017) noted that turnover is not the only negative result. Employees that have low morale, propagate their negative attitudes, or who reduce their productivity also have a cost to the organization.

Taylor added to the issues that may lead to premature attrition. “Problem attrition occurs when missionaries, because of mismanagement, unrealistic expectations, systemic abuse, personal failure, or other personal reasons, leave the field before the mission or church feels that they should” (Taylor, 1997, p. 18). Taylor shared that

Christian organisations can be quite stressful working environments. While it is true that they are communities of God’s people working in the power of the Holy Spirit, they are also human institutions with often much to learn about how humans work together. What is needed is the dynamic of the Spirit’s influence and good management. (Taylor, 1997, p. 59)

Benge and Harder noted the importance of strong relationships between extension agents and their supervisors and that the supervisors have a responsibility to get to know, understand, and appreciate the extension agents they supervise individually. The support supervisors provide must be respectful of the individuality of each extension agent.

Premature departures can be disruptive to the employer. Socially, appointments of a short duration, have costs related to community trust and may make future progress more challenging. This turnover is costly in several ways. Financial estimates of costs of vacancies range from tens of thousands for Extension. For missionaries, “people had given up so much to come to the [mission] field as career workers. Global Mapping International’s (GMI) research suggested that it cost \$500,000 to mobilize, select, train, send, and keep a worker on the field for four years of service” (Stephens, 2019, p. 15).

The loss of credibility caused by preventable attrition makes it that much harder for the next appointee to rebuild credibility and find success. The international and higher education institutions identify the importance of retaining their staff. Research on missionaries found that “resiliency leads to longevity in ministry while despondency leads to failure and ineffectiveness” (Stephens, 2018, p. 32).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This comparative case study explored the lived experiences of adult educators. Through their experiences and understanding of how those experiences impacted their career commitment to their position were developed. *The purpose of this qualitative case study will be to identify how calling, attitudes, experiences, and factors positively and negatively influence career commitment* (2019).

### Central Question

The following central question guided this research. This question focused research efforts in a manner that resulted in actionable results. *How do home and internationally placed adult educators in non-religious and religious settings, respectively, experience calling and career commitment?*

### Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions will be used.

**Adult education.** Adult education is voluntary for the learner and inspirational involving trust and empathy and is entered into where all participants are learners and the goal is improved life situations (Henschke, 2015; Phelps, 1931).

**Adult educator.** Adult educators are facilitators and teachers of adults in non-formal settings. Learning is planned to be engaging and experiential in nature. The educator facilitates learning by involving the knowledge of the adults participating in the learning process (Dvorak, 2023).

**Attrition, preventable.** Extension professional or “Missionary departure caused by potentially preventable reasons and could have been avoided. Examples of preventable attrition include termination, preventable medical leave, and voluntary resignation” (White, 2021, p. 2).

**Attrition, unpreventable.** Extension professional or “missionary departure that occurs as the result of expected causes. Examples of unpreventable attrition include retirement, assignment completion, and unpreventable medical leave” (White, 2021, p. 2).

**Burnout.** A depletion of oneself by exhausting one’s physical and mental resources resulting in disinterest, depression, and loss of professional or personal functionality (Cho, 2013).

***Calling - religious.*** A series of evaluative steps where an individual, couple, or family determine that part of their obedience to the Great Commission involves serving in missionary roles. (White, 2021).

***Calling – non-religious.*** An internal or external attitude toward work that is driven by purpose and meaning (Dik & Shimizu, 2019).

***Deputation.*** A process where prospective missionaries share the proposed missionary ministry with churches and organizations for the purpose of raising financial and prayer support for their missionary work. (Stevenson, n.d., para. 1)

***Eisegetical.***

The process of interpreting a text or portion of text in such a way that the process introduces one’s own presuppositions, agendas, or biases into and onto the text.... [It is] often used to ‘prove’ a pre-held point of concern to the reader and to provide him or her with confirmation bias in accordance with his or her pre-held agenda” (Definition of eisegesis, n.d., para. 1).

***Exegetical.*** Using “several tools in order to arrive at what the writer [or participant] is trying to convey to the reader [researcher]. It additionally includes comprehending and analyzing both the literary and cultural context” (Exegesis Definition, n.d., para. 3).

***Extension.*** A group of college- or university-based educational systems based in LGUs that provide needs-based non-formal education to the general public (Association of Public & Land Grant Universities, 2023).

***Extension Agent.*** An extension agent is an adult educator who makes an intentional “effort to fulfill predetermined and important needs of people and communities.... [It consists of] a series of activities..., resources, and publications” (Seevers & Graham, 2012, p. 101).

***Heterologous.*** Categorically different (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

***Horizontal Axis.*** This qualitative research analysis strategy focuses on the similarities between cases and members. “Horizontal comparison requires attention to how historical and contemporary processes have differentially influenced different ‘cases,’ which might be defined as people, groups of people, sites, institutions, social movements, partnerships, etc.” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 53).

***Iterative.*** “Utilizing the repetition of a sequence of operations or procedures” (Merriam-Webster, 2023)

***Missionary.*** Missionaries are sent out, usually cross-culturally, to positively influence and impact people for Christianity. They evangelize the lost, disciple the saved, plant churches, and training national leaders (Stephens, 2018).

***Motivation.*** The inner force that drives individuals to accomplish personal and organizational goals (Lindner, 1998, p. 2).

***Non-formal education.*** “Any organized, systematic, educational activity, carried on outside the framework of the formal system, to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2009, p. 13).

***Scale.*** A term qualitative analysis “used to distinguish local, regional, national, and global levels, though critical geographers have argued forcefully against the tendency to conceptualize these as distinct and unrelated” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 13).

***Supervision.*** “The art of working with a group of people over whom authority is exercised in such a way as to achieve their greatest combined effectiveness in getting work done” (Van Dersal, 1965/1985, p. 10).



*Transversal analysis.* A qualitative research analysis strategy where comparison occurs across several scales or contexts. It takes into account both the horizontal and vertical analyses and related processes (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

*Vertical analysis.* A qualitative research analysis strategy that studies “across and through a phenomenon as a way of exploring how it has changed over time” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 92).

### **Delimitations**

This research pursued an understanding, individually and collectively, of adult educators, who were age 18 or older, utilize non-formal or andragogical adult educational approaches, and who educated for the purpose of positive change in people’s lives. This study included non-religious and religious educational settings and educators who were native English speakers and worked as United States-based extension agents or as internationally placed Protestant missionaries. Participants were in career-long positions. The participants collectively possessed a wide range of levels in job satisfaction, relationship with their supervisor, personal wellbeing, and organization commitment. Demographic diversity was emphasized. Finally, research participants spoke English well and were available for video or audio interviews with the researcher in the timeframe allotted for this research.

### **Limitations**

The proposed research had the following limitations as participants were asked to depend on their memory to recall past experiences, to be honest about successful and difficult periods in their career and personal lives and may have adjusted their responses to attain social acceptance with the researcher. Case study research is dependent on the perceptions of both the interviewees and the interviewer and online interviews utilizing conferencing services may result in varying

quality and quantity of information shared by the interviewee and varying perceptions of the interviewer. Misperceptions may introduce unintended biases from the interviewees' differing perceptions of questions asked. Given the purposeful selection of 12 participants, the results of this qualitative research are not generalizable to other populations.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study resulted in a new understanding of adult educator experiences and how those experiences influenced participants' career commitment. The inclusion of adult educators working in different cultures and in religious and non-religious settings challenged the understanding of factors that influence career commitment positively or negatively. Findings inform organizations to make administrative adjustments that encourage growing positive career commitment or reverse negative career commitment attitudes.

The population of this study strengthened the understanding of these complex issues. Both Extension and missionaries go into communities, build relationships within those communities that result in trusted interactions, identify needs with the members of the community, and collaboratively develop strategies to address those needs; all for the purpose of being agents of change in people's lives and in communities. The similarities between these two types of adult educators provided an understanding of issues adult educators face without being limited by a single professional context or "group think". There are differences between Extension and missionary adult educators: These differences provided valuable insights that will help each group of adult educators learn from the other.

Two groups of educators who practice the non-formal, locally focused, and learner-centric adult education are United States based extension agents and missionaries serving abroad. These adult educators embed in communities, develop an understanding of local needs, build

relationships and trust with community members, develop adult education strategies with the community, and help people grow and change for the better. Studying these two groups, their experiences from career selection or educational choices, training and accepting positions, and working in the profession adds to the understanding of factors that influence career commitment.

### **Summary**

This qualitative case study research explored the current and historic experiences of two sub-populations of adult educators with many similarities and a few crucial differences in their professional experiences. *The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify how calling, attitudes, experiences, and factors positively and negatively influence career commitment.* The similarities and differences between Extension and missionary adult educators greatly enhanced the understanding of each participant's experiences, when compared to the experiences of other. The study allowed for a robust understanding of pre-career and career experiences and how those experiences influenced career commitment. The following central question focused this research: *How do United States based extension agents and internationally placed missionaries experience calling and career commitment?* The need for the proposed research has been documented in the literature for extension agent and missionary employee retention and success over the past 60 years. The study of these two types of adult educators in the same study is novel and provided new perspectives for broader understanding of adult educator career commitment.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature**

This review of relevant literature is bound by the scope of the populations and context for this research. The conceptual framework created bounds for portions of this research within which the data can be evaluated. The two bounds for this research are adult education and adult educators. The context for educational and professional factors are bound by non-formal education that is entered into voluntarily by participants. The educational methodologies were consistent with andragogical principles (Henschke, 2015; Knowles, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Lindeman, 1926; Savicevic, 2008). The two-factor Motivation-Hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959) served as the conceptual framework that guided this research analysis within the central and sub question structure. Included below is a brief history of adult education in religious and non-religious contexts, a review of the definitions of adult education, and reviews of research focusing on adult educators working in the United States Extension systems, and expatriate adult educators working in international Protestant missions.

### **Adult Education**

The literature revealed that adult education was the focus of education efforts for the last 4,000 years, predating formal child and adolescent education by millennia (Savicevic, 2008). The practices of adult education developed to address both religious and non-religious needs. The pragmatic nature of adult education resulted in the embracing of learner focused methodologies (Henschke, 2015; Savicevic, 2008).

### ***A History of Adult Education***

The history of adult education globally and in the United States was difficult to study as learning outside of formal school settings was a normal part of life in society that was not always documented until recent times (Williams, 1949). Henschke (2011) succinctly described the

development of the era of adult education and how the concept of andragogy evolved. The term was first introduced when a German teacher used the term in 1833. In the 1920s another German, Rosenstock-Huessy reintroduced the term in the post-World War I rebuilding of the downtrodden German people. It was during this time that Lindeman was introduced to the term when he visited the German Workers organization in the 1920s. Lindeman introduced the term twice in that era. Savicevic shared the term with Knowles in 1966 (Henschke, 2015). From that point, Knowles “infused andragogy with much of his own meaning garnered from his already extensive experience in adult education” (Henschke J. A., 2011, p. 34).

Many authors described the second half of the twentieth century as the emergence of discipline of andragogy, adult education, and the supporting conceptual frameworks. Even the eighth edition of *The Adult Learner* by Knowles et al. (2015) had the heading “First there was pedagogy” (Knowles et al., 2015, p. 41). However, a review of other portions of the book, and of history in general, indicates that adult education was the historic norm of education and child education, pedagogy, was the more historically recent development. Savicevic (2008) observed the belief that andragogy “evolved” from pedagogy, andragogical practice from pedagogical practice, lasted for decades in my country. The known historical facts show the opposite. Why does then ignorance or inexcusable “pilfer” persist? The historical materials demonstrate that andragogy does not evolve from pedagogy, but from intellectual “conflicts” with pedagogy. As a term, pedagogy was used from the period of introduction of mandatory elementary education. (Savicevic, 2008, p. 369)

While much of the debate about the origins of adult education revolves around the etymology of andragogy; adult education’s history covered millenia of history, predating Latin as a language, the term andragogy is not yet 200 years old (Henschke, 2015; Henschke & Cooper,

2007; Knowles et al., 2015; Savicevic, 2008). Several authors have provided histories of adult education. There is concurrence among many authors that Jewish culture valued adult education and may be the earliest known culture to embrace adult education as a norm (Knowles et al., 2015; Morris, 2017; Savicevic, 2008).

**Adult Education from 2,000 BCE.** Jewish and Chinese cultures have long histories of adult education. The former is religious based and also included practical education (Savicevic, 2008) and the latter was non-religious in its origins, but later developed into a religion (Ozmon, 2012). The adult education methodology used has become known as “case method; in which the leader or one of the group members describes a situation, often in the form of a parable, and together with the group explores its characteristics and possible resolutions” (Knowles et al., 2018, p. 18). Savicevic recognized more broadly that Jewish civilization had formal and informal institutions of adult learning, many of which persist today.

The history of andragogical ideas (understood as a conception, institutions and practice) shows that in Hellenistic and ancient Jewish cultural circles andragogical institutions were the first to be founded. It was three centuries later that schools for children education were founded, because the family provided the frame for the children’s upbringing. (Savicevic, 2008, p. 365)

Henschke and Cooper (2007) documented that Jewish prophets, before and during the time of Jesus Christ, described their work in terms consistent with modern understandings of adult education.

**Hellenistic and Chinese Education (Confucius).** Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were key philosophers and educational innovators in Hellenistic adult education theory and practice. The ancient Greeks developed and practiced andragogical concepts. They had a system of and

affirmed life-long learning (Savicevic, 2008) The purpose of adult education was for the adults to collectively find solutions to the question or dilemma, improving their communities. (Ozmon, 2012). “Socrates had a great influence on Hellenistic adult education.... [Those] who were engaged in the reconstruction of andragogical ideas named Socrates the most important teacher of all time” (Savicevic, 2008, p. 365). Savicevic also credited Plato and Aristotle contributors the scholarship and practice of adult education (Savicevic, 2008).

During the same time, the Greeks were developing adult education practices. Confucius was educating people in all levels of culture to help them positively influence and contribute to the betterment of society (Ozmon, 2012). Confucius’ broad philosophy of education that was learner focused is captured in the following quote.

Confucius, who was endowed with a sense of creative values, was visiting a crowded city in China and discussing social problems with his disciples. When asked what should be done for the city’s population, Confucius replied, “Enrich them”. He was then asked what should be done next; Confucius answered, “Then educate them”. (Phelps, 1931, p. 25)

**The Middle Ages.** The Middle Ages were a time of slowed learning in European society. Christianity was a noted organizer of education for adults in that era. “Education and learning were strong factors in converting adults to Christianity. The churches and monasteries became centers for education, culture and science. The first schools founded by Christians were aimed at adults” (Savicevic, 2008, p. 366). Savicevic went on to document non-religious adult education near the end of the Middle Ages, “In the field of education and culture in general, new influences and movements emerged, among which Humanism and Renaissance dominated. In the late Middle Ages, the secular forms of adult education spread, both formal and informal ones”

(Savicevic, 2008, p. 366). These developments along with other social developments and expansion of cultural understanding contributed to the end of the Middle Ages (Savicevic, 2008).

**The Seventeenth to Early Twenty-First Centuries.** John A. Comenius (1592-1670) from Moravia (modern day Czech Republic), a Brethren pastor working in the tradition of the Czech Reformist Jan Hüs, was an educational innovator and transformational leader who had great influence in advancing the concept of universal education (Glenn, 2018). He worked in the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, Holland, and Sweden. Most often his work combined educational reform or innovation and pastoral leadership development or scholarship in the church (Comenius & Keatinge, 1910). In addition to Comenius' pedagogical work, Savicevic has credited Comenius as the founder of andragogical theory in Europe; focusing on life-long learning (Henschke, 2015; Henschke & Cooper, 2007; Savicevic, 2008).

Here we mention that the andragogical ideas stated by Comenius are the constitutive foundation of andragogy as a science. The nature and the importance of his thoughts about the possibilities, needs and organization of education and learning of adults are a basis to consider him as a founder of modern andragogy. He explained these thoughts in Pampedia, the paper found by a Czech Slavist in 1934. In Pampedia, Comenius developed the philosophy of lifelong education, and proclaimed equal frames for living and for learning. (Savicevic, 2008, p. 367)

Comenius served as bridge between the Middle Ages and the modern study of andragogy. His work and innovation in education took place in the seventeenth century but his scholarly contributions were lost to the ages until his work was rediscovered in the middle of the nineteenth century (Glenn, 2018; Savicevic, 2008). His work was rediscovered 16 years after Kapp published the first known use of the term andragogy in 1833. Kapp's proposal of the term



and concept was met with scholarly resistance and was not established as a discipline or philosophy of education at that time (Henschke, 2011; Henschke, 2015; Savicevic, 2008).

While adult education had been practiced for millennia, the term that defined the modern discipline of adult education, andragogy, lay dormant for nearly one more century. Rosenstock-Huessy, another German, “resurrected the term as he developed a method for teaching the German people, dispirited and degenerated in 1918 after World War I, to regenerate themselves and their country” (Henschke, 2011, p. 34). At that time, Eduard Lindeman visited the German Workers movement and took the term andragogy back to the United States, introducing it twice in the later 1920s.

During the 1960s Paulo Freire was developing novel adult education practices in Brazil. At that time, literacy was a requirement to vote. Freire utilized similar novel approaches to educate adults; focusing on their lived experiences and what the learners valued. His stated goal was to teach the illiterate to read and write so they would vote for politicians who Freire agreed with (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2010; Lima, 2018; McLaren, 1997).

Adult education in the United States has been characterized by a series of resurgences in interest in adult education efforts. The work of Malcolm Knowles in the 1960s through the 1990s and the surrounding scholarly discussions have been largely recognized as the synthesis in thought around adult education in the United States (Henschke, 2015). Knowles advanced the concept of andragogy in adult learning even though the term was previously coined in Germany in 1833 by Alexander Kapp (Stubblefield & Rachal, 1992). Knowles’s work has been invaluable for adult educators in the United States. Prior to Knowles’s contributions, adult education enjoyed another resurgence in the early twentieth century (Knowles et al., 2015). At that time, theory and practice began to move away from teaching adults using the same strategies used with

children and adolescents in compulsory school settings. The initial insurgence of adult education was documented as far back the early to middle nineteenth century with evening schools being created for a variety of educational goals (Knowles et al., 2015; Phelps, 1931).

Phelps (1931) documented that the first adult education as evening schools as early 1810 (Phelps, 1931). She defined several types of adult education that began in the United States during the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. *English language literacy* courses were especially valued in cities where immigrants arrived or lived and in the southern states where there were high levels of illiteracy amongst rural and African American citizens. *University extension* was, and remains, the sharing of faculty knowledge and understanding with citizens who were not enrolled in formal courses. Universities utilized “study centers, lecture courses, and scientific and technical instruction, also by traveling exhibits, and traveling libraries; by correspondence study; and by short courses conducted in public centers” (Phelps, 1931, p. 38). These efforts differ from Cooperative Extension Service work. Phelps noted that interest in adult education via university extension increased when the Smith-Lever Act (Act, 7 U.S.C. § 343(b)(1), 1914) passed. This Federal legislation provided structure for locally focused partnerships between county, state, and Federal governments to address the needs of people in agriculture and home economics. This system combined the benefits of subject matter experts and locally placed adult educators with a broad understanding of local needs, cultural considerations, technical expertise relevant to local needs, and local and statewide partnerships to facilitate adult learning that resulted in greater individual, family, and community success. The system involved communication, trust-building, needs identification, learning of a variety of types by all parties, and results that positively impact the participants. These systems in the

United States are called Extension systems and serve locally at the state or tribal community levels, yet they differ from the university extension as it was described by Phelps (1931).

Next, Phelps (1931) identified *vocational education* as a form of adult education. She described formal training that may have been full-time education for up to two years, part-time education, or evening school. These types of educational delivery models appear to have been pedagogical in nature. The topics of education were broad and encompassed opportunities for men and women, and for those working in office, home, or industrial settings.

*Library extension* developed rapidly during the first 25 years of the twentieth century. According to Phelps, library extension

has taken two main forms in its growth. The first form is that in which a central state library organization makes up package libraries for loan. The other form, the county library becomes the unit of organization, and then in turn establishes branch libraries throughout the country, in towns, at the consolidated schools or elsewhere. (Phelps, 1931, pp. 39-40)

*Evening schools* had multiple purposes early in their histories. Some evening schools were available for children who were unable to attend during the day because they had to work. With the expansion of compulsory attendance for children, evening schools focused largely on educating illiterate adults and expanded into a variety of topics targeting a cross-section of society (Phelps, 1931). *Correspondence schools* formed as early as 1873 with The Society to Encourage Studies at Home. Many different correspondence schools began serendipitously. During this time, individuals interacted with learners in a variety of venues responding to a need or desire for learning beyond organized in-person classes. The result was the evolutionary development of correspondence schools (1931).

### *Andragogy and Its Evolution*

Phelps (1931) concluded her history of adult education with the following summary the growth of adult education,

In the United States interest in adult education has been steadily increasing until at the present time it is one of the most important departments in the field of education. It is broad in scope and varied in the classes of people served, subjects taught, and means of administration. (Phelps, 1931, p. 45)

The life experiences and the early educational experience of Lindeman resulted in his essay *Meaning of adult education* (1926). Knowles developed his six principles of andragogy in the 1970s. Knowles identified these as a set of principles that adult learning professionals may lean on to develop applications for adult learning. Knowles included many of Lindeman's and others' foundational thoughts on adult education in his review of seminal authors. He summarized Lindeman's key assumptions in

Table 3.1: Summary of Lindeman's key assumptions about adult learners: 1. Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy. 2. Adults' orientation to learning is life-centered. 3. Experience is the richest source for adult's learning. 4. Adults have a deep need to be self-directing. 5. Individual differences among people increase with age. (Knowles et al., 2015, p. 22; Lindeman, 1926)

Lindeman described his 1926 text as an essay. It was derived from his experiences from childhood to becoming middle aged scholar. "The desires somehow to free education from stifling ritual, formalism and institutionalism was probably born in those frantic hours spent over books which mystified and confused my mind.... Out of this confusion..., grew the hope" (Lindeman, 1926, pp. xiv-xv). Knowles developed six principles of andragogy over his career:

“(1) the learners’ need to know, (2) self-concept of the learner, (3) prior experience of the learner, (4) readiness to learn, (5) orientation to learning, and (6) motivation to learn” (Knowles et al., 2015, pp. 4-5). The practice and development of underlying theories and philosophies was developing for at least four millennia.

This highlight of its history showed that adult learning has valued the experience of the learners and focused more on learner needs than teaching strategies and learning objectives (Henschke, 1998; Henschke, 2015; Savicevic, 2008). Defining and describing adult education was difficult. The diversity of learners and the many goals of educators made the development of a single definition challenging. These complexities also inspired scholarly and practical debate or disagreement on the primary purpose of adult education in society (Brookfield, 1986; Freire P. , 1970; Giroux, 2010; Habermas, 1871; Henschke, 2015; Lindeman, 1926; Lindeman & Brookfield, 1987; Mezirow, 1981; Savicevic, 2008).

As adult education theory and practice developed, or redeveloped, in the twentieth century, it had to rid itself of the misconceptions that adults reach a point where they no longer learn and pedagogical or formal educational practices that put primacy on learning objectives and focus on the teacher as the expert.

Adult education presents a challenge to static concepts of intelligence and to standardized limitations of conventional education and to the theory which restricts educational facilities to an intellectual class.... Adult education is an attempt to discover a new method and create a new incentive for learning; its implications are qualitative, not quantitative. Adult learners... are least likely to be aroused by the rigid, uncompromising requirements of authoritative, conventionalized institutions of learning. (Lindeman, 1926, pp. 27-28)

During the 4,000-year history of adult education the past 150 to 175 years evolved in a new context. The new context was an era where the education of children and adolescents had become a government supported and mandated institution in much of the world. Lindeman noted, 100 years ago, the negative influence these formal structures were having on adult education models. The advent of compulsory education paused adult education practices that have been documented and modelled for millennia (Ironside, 1989). Much of the twentieth century was an exercise in rediscovering adult education methodologies and the development of a scholarly community to study adult education. It is important to consider the whole context and the purposes for which practitioners utilize adult education.

**Contexts for Adult Education.** The President of the American Association for Adult Education in 1926 said that the purpose of adult education was

to inspire grown-ups to be something more than they are now, and to do their work better than they do now.... At its best, it leads to constantly increasing richness of life, better appreciation of what life offers, greater satisfaction in the use of mind and body, and better understanding of the rights and duties of one's fellowmen. (Phelps, 1931, p. 6)

Phelps (1931) summarized types of adult education taking place during the resurgence of adult education through the 1920s. She identified the following adult education contexts. These contexts were determined by the content, delivery methods, or purpose of the adult education. The following list are forms of historic adult education Phelps identified. Additional citations from her contemporaries and modern scholars are included to support Phelps's observations.

- Domestic illiteracy or other educational needs typically address in primary or secondary school. (Bell et al., 2004)

- Immigrant education including, English language, cultural topics, and other topics that expedite success in society (Keidel, 1926; Larrotta, 2017; Leipziger, 1916; Peffer, 1926; Ullman, 2010).
- Vocational training to improve the available workforce (Bell et al., 2004; Peffer, 1926).
- Entrepreneurial success in agriculture, home economics, and leadership development in rural communities (Burlingame & Bell, 1984; Rasmussen, 1989; Seevers & Graham, 2012).
- The beginnings of adult education for social activism, while not addressed specifically by Phelps, can be discerned from Lindeman (1926). This topic will be addressed more fully (Brookfield, 1986; Freire 1970; Lindeman & Brookfield, 1987; Mezirow, 1981).
- The practice of using one's leisure time as an opportunity to learn (Peffer, 1926).

Phelps summarized that “all seem to agree, however, that adult education must be voluntary and individual” (Phelps, 1931, p. 7). Peffer described both that adult education was an exercise for people to learn and earn their way in life. Adult education was not, traditional classroom learning or vocational training. (Peffer, 1926). Keidel (1926) noted that adult education was learner-centric and addressed local needs. It is a learner-directed effort that results in growth in the life of the learners. Keidel also noted that when he was writing that many educational events that were listed as adult education were “in rare instances only, truly adult education” (Keidel, 1926, pp. iv-v).

**Definition of Adult Education.** Several authors have defined adult education or andragogy as some variation of *the art and science of helping adults to learn* (Henschke, 2015; Krajnc, 1989). Henschke noted the following definition that adult education “is the discipline

that deals with the lifelong and life-wide learning and education processes of adults” (Henschke, 2015, p. 54).

Knowles et al. (2015) “labeled pedagogy as ‘teacher-directed’ learning and andragogy as ‘self-directed’ learning. Prior to this observation, pedagogy was for children and andragogy was for adults” (Henschke, 2015, p. 43). Adult education is self-directed (Henschke, 1998). As far back as 1926, Martin described what adult education was not; “a slight increase of information and a few noble sentiments for the rank and file, but to select out of the undifferentiated mass those who are naturally capable of becoming something more than automatons [sic]” (Martin, 1926, p. 317). Keidel (1926) eschewed the idea that adult learners learned from the teacher. Keidel challenged university extension efforts of the time and whether they were qualified or capable of understanding the interests and needs of adult learners and providing education that fit those needs (Keidel, 1926).

“The strength of Knowles’ approach was its position advocating an adult learning program that is respectful, trusting, supportive, and collaborative” (Henschke, 2011, p. 35). Peffer had a different perspective. He said adult education is learning through and during everyday life (Peffer, 1926). Suanmali (1981) studied under Mezirow. In his dissertation Suanmali found 12 items he defined as a charter for andragogy. He noted the need to decrease learner dependency on the teacher; help the learner learn in many ways and reciprocally; help the learners understand their needs; help the learner plan how they learn; make the learning relevant; empower learners in thoughtful consideration of the context and others; encourage introspection; facilitate attitudes of continuous learning; develop problem-solving skills; foster a supportive and critical learning skills; learn experientially; and encourage learner-directed decision making over driving learners to the teachers best decision option.



“Andragogy is more than mere method: it is an attitude of mind and heart... an attitude of caring for the learner as a valuable, unique person, and of helping the learner to accomplish his or her educational goals is essential for an adult educator” (Henschke, 1998, p. 12). Henschke later “posited a definition of lifelong learning... as the continuous and never complete development, changes, and adaptation in human consciousness in an ever-increasing number of situations” (Henschke, 2015, p. 56).

In 1926 the Commission on Library and Adult Education provided the following definition and purpose for adult education.

Essentially, adult education is a spiritual ideal, taking form in a practical purpose. It is based on that inherent urge forward which distinguishes the human spirit. It must be voluntary. It is based on the recognition that education is a life long [sic] process, and that the university graduate as well as the man of little schooling is in constant need of further training, inspiration, and mental growth. (The American Library Association, 1926, p. 13)

**Social activism.** A persistent debate within andragogy was whether adult education should focus on the needs of the individual or whether the adult educator should organize adult education for the purpose of educating a community of people to social action for the improvement of society. Several scholars argue that focusing on the individuals’ needs is not socially responsible and that social action should be the goal of adult education. Others argue that by addressing the needs of individuals, adult educators are empowering people to social action of their own or voluntary collective choosing (Brookfield, 1986; Collings, 1964; Freire, 1970; Knowles et al., 2015; Lindeman & Brookfield, 1987; Mezirow, 1981). Mezirow (1981) described how entering adulthood often introduces new experiences in life “which may be best

resolved only by becoming critically conscious of how and why our habits of perception, thought and action have distorted the way we have defined the problem and ourselves in relationship to it” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 7). Freire built educational practices for such situations. He would make situations which were accepted by the people with whom he worked *problematic* to help them transform their perspectives and help them take action (Freire, 1970). Habermas defined similar strategies as communicative action (1971). Both Freire and Habermas had emancipation of the working class from a caste mindset as a goal. Both chose to target a single solution on behalf of the learners they engaged or theorized about reaching. They were aiming for Marxist utopianism (Salleh, 2023). This is in contrast to Suanmali’s charter item that encourages learner-directed decision making over teacher-directed decision making (Suanmali, 1981).

Hill wrote about the successes and challenges of social activism, he observed that “social movements often arise to confront oppression, to attend to damaged identities, and to renovate the cultural roles of oppressors... resulting in social transformation. Social movements introduce new values, which may eventually affect entire societies” (Hill, 2002, pp. 181-182). He demonstrated how some people use adult education concepts to rally people to a cause. He discussed how people aligned with his views found success in activating segments of society to their cause and changed society. He also went on to lament how people he disagreed with implemented similar strategies and undid the progress of the groups he agreed with. In each example provided, strategies that resulted in social changes that he agreed with and others that resulted in social changes he disagreed with, demonstrated what happens when educator-centric interests drive adult education efforts. This activist form of social change was not self-directed by the learner and is not true to the foundational tenets of adult education.

In contrast to those pursuing social action, Knowles placed the focus on individuals. He noted “Adults have a deep psychological need to be generally self-directing” (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). Knowles showed respect to the learner acknowledging that people’s experiences accumulate through life and provide fertile ground for learning. People learn more genuinely from their own experiences than from objectives set for them. According to Knowles, people learn when they experience need. He charged adult educators to create a learning environment where learning was motivated by personal needs and experiences. (1980). This mindset differs from those seeking social action who take similar approaches to get participants to identify with needs the educators bring to the process. Ultimately, “learners see education as a process of developing increased competence to achieve their full potential in life. They want to be able to apply whatever knowledge and skill they gain today to living more effectively tomorrow” (1980, p. 44).

In summary, some adult educators placed primacy on engaging adults in learning activities to affect social changes of interest to the educators. Other adult educators focus on the needs of the learner and assist them to accomplish their individual goals. The latter also allows for social action to occur via the individual or voluntary collective action of the learners.

Savicevic (2008) noted that “Adult education has vertical dimensions. Learning activities are interconnecting at local, regional and global levels” (Savicevic, 2008, p. 364). He goes on to emphasize the value of cross-cultural learning and this modern learning is needed for individuals and society to learn as societies evolve (Savicevic, 2008).

### **Motivation**

The study of motivation began in earnest when Maslow introduced his Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). His theory was the first of several need-oriented motivation theories. He

identified that there were “at least five sets of goals, which we may call basic needs. These were briefly physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization” (Maslow, 1943, p. 394). In Maslow’s assessment these needs were in a prioritized order of need. Maslow noted that people were somewhat satisfied and somewhat dissatisfied with their condition (Maslow, 1943). He noted several considerations that needed further consideration such as a) the role of values in motivation, b) desires versus what is good, c) applicability with hedonistic philosophies, and d) the role of habits to name a few (1943). One application to the corporate world was that leaders are responsible to create the best work environment for employees to fully develop their abilities (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007; Maslow, 1943; Ramlall, 2004). Robbins (2005) noted that Maslow presented his theory in the form of an argument on behalf of the theory but failed to provide empirical evidence to support his theory. It has been recognized that “unfortunately, however, research does not validate the theory” (Robbins, 2005, p. 176). Kreitner (2007) made similar observations.

McClelland proposed another need-based motivation theory focused on achievement (1961). He developed several types of achievement a) the need to excel or succeed, b) the need to control behavior in others (power), and c) the need for relationships (McClelland, 1961; Ramlall, 2004). One key application of achievement was the importance of recognizing which achievement context was important to the person being motivated (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007; Ramlall, 2004).

The equity theory was a motivational theory that was transactional in nature and focused on social exchange relationships. The exchange relationships revolve around salary and other recognition related factors, like title. This motivation strategy revolved around compensation as

it related to others. Salary compression was an example that causes reduced career commitment (Ramlall, 2004; Robbins, 2005).

Vroom's expectancy theory is a motivation theory that also had a transactional component (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007). It focused on the relationship between four factors: effort, performance, reward, and personal goals. The key consideration was that effort results in high performance and that high performance results in a variety of rewards, and the rewards help employees accomplish personal goals. (Robbins, 2005). Ramlall summarized Vroom's theory. "The most important feature of people's valences concerning work-related outcomes is that they refer to the level of satisfaction the person expects to receive from them, not from the real value the person actually derives from them" (Ramlall, 2004, p. 56).

Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) proposed the two-factor Motivation-Hygiene theory based on an extensive qualitative research project that included 200 participants. This study identified or confirmed that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are two independent factors. They identified motivation and hygiene factors that influence or result in satisfaction or dissatisfaction, respectively (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007; Ramlall, 2004; Robbins, 2005).

Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) published a seminal work on employee attitudes, motivations, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction that was novel in its design and findings. When they examined previous employee attitude research, they found three major strategies commonly practiced, asking direct questions via a questionnaire or interview about the employment topic of interest; the use of scaled inventories or standardized instruments; or direct observation of employees' behaviors. Questionnaires and scaled inventories tend to result in quantitative data and development of correlations between demographic data and dependent variables. Scaled inventories that were widely implemented had the advantage of large sample sizes developed

over time; and observation of employees or supervisors without direct researcher interactions. The latter might be defined today as an ethnography, “a way of studying a culture-sharing group as well as the final, written product of that research” (Cresswell & Poth, 2018, p. 90). Herzberg et al. likened this research strategy to the studies where experimental interventions were apparent to the participant, which may have had an unintended effect on participant behavior (1993/1959).

Over 40 years after the research was published, Herzberg reflected that their literature review sought

to definitively answer the question, “What do workers want from their jobs?” A total of 155 research studies, published between 1920 and 1954, purported to present data in answer to this question. It was disturbing to find that this accumulated research provided evidence for all possible answers to the question. Results were contradictory. (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959, p. xiii)

One finding of the literature review was that satisfaction and dissatisfaction were measured using the same scale; assuming there was a continuum from satisfied to dissatisfied. The few studies that studied satisfaction or dissatisfaction seemed, to Herzberg (1993/1959), to indicate different results based on whether the study was pursuing what employees liked or disliked. From this observation he continued to reflect on the concepts that “there might be some factors that were ‘satisfiers’ and others that were ‘dissatisfiers’.... It related closely to my master’s thesis in public health school, ‘Mental Health is Not the Opposite of Mental Illness’” (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959, p. xiii). They observed that prior studies had focused on the psychology or sociology of employee *groups* with the individual only being considered for their role in the group. Herzberg et al.’s review of prior research resulted in the following framework for their own

research efforts as factors, attitudes, and effects (F-A-E) and how the F-A-E impacted thinking about what people want from their work.

In addition to focusing on factors, attitudes, and effects, they opted for a semi-structured interview, allowing the interviewer to pursue lines of questions that arise through the interview. They chose to focus on two professional or managerial samples, engineers and accountants. They chose two sample populations because “a sample limited to one profession would have yielded results of doubtful generality... the groups are vastly different in the nature of their training. (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959, p. 32).

As a result of Herzberg et al.'s (1993/1959) literature review, they concluded that employee focused supervision was what was needed over autocratic supervision. To discover answers to these human resource issues Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) challenged themselves to find research methodologies that addressed first, the individual and how their attitudes influence thinking about their job. Second, what drives the attitudes. Third, what are the consequences of those attitudes. In their analysis of F-A-E they identified “first-level factors.... [Which] always described concrete events or situations reported by the respondent. Second-level factors were to be described as the needs or drives activated by these events” (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959, pp. 26-27). Upon analysis of the data, they found the two-factor component of the Motivation-Hygiene theory; that satisfaction and satisfiers are not moderated by dissatisfiers. The experiences that participants shared were impactful in their lives. Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) noted “the miracle is... the 200 people... were able to speak of the moving and exciting moments in their lives in which they did have a genuine opportunity for achievement through the actual work of their jobs” (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959, p. 130). In summary their results found that

when our respondents reported feeling happy with their jobs, they most frequently described factors related to their tasks, to events that indicated to them that they were successful in the performance of their work, and to the possibility of professional growth. Conversely, when feelings of unhappiness were reported, they were not associated with the job itself but with conditions that surround the doing of the job. (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959, p. 113)

According to Herzberg et al., (1993/1959) motivation factors included *achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth* and hygiene factors include *company policy and administration, supervision, relationship with supervisor, work conditions, salary, relationships with peers, personal life, relationships with subordinates, status, and security*. “In Herzberg’s mind you could not improve job satisfaction by improving any of the 10 hygiene factors; you could only improve job satisfaction by increasing the six motivators” (Smerek & Peterson, 2007, p. 231). Motivation factors were intrinsic in nature and hygiene factors were extrinsic.

The Motivation-Hygiene theory had its detractors as well. Kreitner and Kinicki (2007) argue that “research does not support the two-factor aspect of his theory nor the proposition that hygiene factors are unrelated to satisfaction” (p. 241). In this research two facets of the Motivation-Hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959) were considered to determine the suitability of the theory in adult educator settings. First, was the relationship between satisfaction and dissatisfaction, were they a continuum or were they dissociated from each other? Second, were the individual motivation and hygiene factors appropriate or accurate for adult educator settings?



Branham (2012) suggested seven hidden reasons why employees decide to leave a job, including: the job or workplace was not as expected; the mismatch between job and person; too little coaching and feedback; too few growth and advancement opportunities; feeling devalued and unrecognized; stress from overwork and work-life imbalance; and loss of trust and confidence in senior leaders. Lencioni (2007) described three signs of a miserable job, including *anonymity*: not being important or even recognized for their work or personhood by someone in authority; *irrelevance*: not knowing if what you do at work matters to anyone; and *immeasurment*: impossible to know if you are succeeding or failing in your work.

Employee turnover is costly to any organization as costs can be as high as over 100% of the employee's annual salary. Retention of employees is important, not only, for economic reasons but to provide a quality product or service without interruption of services during an employee's vacancy. (Chandler, 2004, p. iii)

### **Adult Educators**

The non-formal adult educators in this study faced unique challenges. Their clientele participated voluntarily in learning experiences and may or may not have had a willingness to learn about the topics in either religious or non-religious contexts. Whether a calling existed or not, the presence, absence, or strength of a calling was a factor of interest when career commitment was considered. In addition to calling, attrition, motivation, experiences, and attitudes were reviewed in this section.

### ***Calling***

Calling was an interesting concept in the context of this research. In the context of Protestant mission work, the term is ubiquitous and a part of the known jargon within each organization and faction of missions. It was difficult to find definitions in the missionary

literature. In non-religious settings, adult education or otherwise, calling is a recent topic of interest in the research community. Synthesizing the thoughts of several authors, they described a calling as the strongest, most extreme, or deepest route to truly meaningful work (Bellah et al., 1985; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dik & Shimizu, 2019; Hall & Chandler, 2005).

Bunderson and Thompson (2009) provided a brief description of *calling* and its evolution out of the Middle Ages based religious use to the expanded use of the term in non-religious contexts.

Although scholarly interest in work as a calling a recent phenomenon in the management literature, the concept has very deep roots in Western cultural and religious traditions.... The Protestant Reformation dramatically altered this negative view.... [when] “calling” was used to refer either to a specific call to the ministry or to the universal call of the gospel.... Scholars generally agree that the idea of work as a calling remains relevant in contemporary society, there is little consensus around the defining elements of a modern, secularized version of calling. (Bunderson & Thompson 2009, pp. 32-34)

Dik and Shimizu (2019) encouraged researchers to consider calling and the life context of participants in their research. They should take into account “their focus may be on discerning, developing, maintaining, or enhancing their callings” (Dik & Shimizu, 2019, p. 32). Bunderson and Thompson (2009) studied calling amongst zookeepers. They found that participants in their research considered themselves to be made for the job (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), or called to it.

Bellah et al. (1985) first described the evolution in thinking about work in the United States. They discussed how a job was an avenue for earning a living; a career was a work path

that involved progress and success are measured across a lifetime; and calling was work that could not be separated from the essence of the person.

Calling has centuries of history in Protestant Christianity and a few decades in non-religious settings in western society. The study of calling was appropriate for both the extension agents and missionaries. The presence, absence, or strength of calling was informative in the data analysis.

### ***Research Relevant to Extension Adult Educators***

Extension agents find themselves with a unique educational charge, a “responsibility in adult and youth education, without any compulsory hold on its clientele” (Amend, 1970, p. 18). Amend concurred with the generation prior to him. Frutche said, “in extension teaching motivation is a critical factor because participation is voluntary. No academic credit is given, and the teaching is done under conditions which are not like those of the formal classroom” (1953, Forward). In addition to the complexities of teaching those who are not required to learn, Amend noted how extension agents answered to many bosses. County commissioners provided funding, office space, and supporting employees; they answered to clientele, groups, and local advisory committees; and finally, they reported to a supervisor who was usually not co-located with the agent. Amend said “it’s quite easy for the agent to find himself in a delicate position between the University hegemony and his local clientele” (Amend, 1970, p. 20).

Louis A. Zurcher, a psychology researcher, interacted with extension agents in the mid-1960s. Zurcher’s observations helped the layperson better understand the complexities and unique nature of Extension adult education inside the larger andragogical and pedagogical frames of education. After interacting with a group of extension agents at a multi-day professional development conference, he noted

You were not what I expected you to be. Extension workers were supposed to be a group of technical-minded individuals who wanted only to find out how better to communicate fresh information to a willing audience. You were not supposed to feel so keenly and reflect so clearly the human problems of social change, nor were you to be so interested in such problems and so *action*-oriented toward their amelioration.... The textbooks and annual reports of the Extension Service gave me some insight into the formal structure and functions of the Service, but such references could not and did not provide an adequate indication of the human dynamics underlying that structure and those functions. After only a few days in the classroom, however, the answers to my questions came loudly and clearly, and somewhat overwhelmingly. Extension workers seem to be fiercely proud of their profession and are not at all hesitant to voice their work problems—with a sincere hope for discovering ways to solve them. (Zurcher, 1966, pp. 197-198)

**Organizational Challenges in Extension.** In 1990 Buford documented how extension had evolved over the 75 years of its existence. “In a less-complicated time, the Cooperative Extension Service was simpler. The land-grant university research findings were disseminated directly to rural people by agents in the counties” (Buford, 1990, p. 1). Buford noted that the smaller workforce made things simpler and that leadership or extension agents gave little thought to satisfaction or motivation.

Buford (1990) and Patton (1987) encouraged extension leaders in the 1980s and 1990s to evolve extension with the times. In some ways they asked extension administrators and agents to return to their roots. They encouraged extension to continue making a positive difference in lives and communities. They encouraged evaluating the work of extension’s success by measuring the

changes in lives and communities. Patton put these thoughts in the frame of the emerging information age. Patton said, extension

must be sufficiently flexible to move in new directions as conditions change. A strategic mission doesn't provide a blueprint so much as an overall sense of direction, and professionals are free to develop new approaches as they work creatively and proactively toward that direction. (1987, p. 1)

Buford went on to describe extension as being structured like an industrial age organization. This shift from the original local needs driven work model to more industrial or hierarchical structures occurred after World War II when the Federal government, through the USDA, imposed an expert-model teaching approach (Frutchey, 1953). This was a departure from adult education model that originated prior Lindeman's work in the 1920s. The impacts of that shift to the expert model were fading by the time Zurcher was observing extension in the 1960s. However, the metrics of extension remained focused on the products of extension work instead of the impact of extension work for the next 30 years (Buford, 1990; Patton, 1987; Zurcher, 1966).

Buford Jr. noted we could not continue with "business as usual". The best people will leave, while those remaining become experts in following procedures and not rocking the boat. Extension has little choice but to become information-based. But it's clear that the task of building this new organization is still ahead of us. It's the challenge of Extension management in the 1990s. (1990, p. 3)

While Patton (1987) and Buford (1990) made observations and recommendations about the organizational structures and strategies for Extension; Erickson (1991) focused on extension agents and the complexities experienced by extension agents working as university employees that may result in dissatisfaction. She noted that extension agents work within county

government departments and, in some cases, as county employees and university employees. Erickson challenged university extension administration to have clearly communicated policies that are consistent, understandable, and fairly applied to extension agents and campus-based faculty. She emphasized the need for Extension administrators to provide consistency, clear communication, excellent supervision, and professionalism as they enable and empower faculty success for extension agents. Organizational and administrative challenges had impacts on employee morale. The literature in extension agent motivation, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction was extensive and covered many facets of related topics.

**Motivation, Satisfaction, and Dissatisfaction.**

*Motivating others is no simple task. Those who think it is are doomed to failure. Those who recognize that motivation is a highly complex process, study motivation of people, continually evaluate their situation, and positively try to improve their situation have a much better chance of motivating others. (Lewis, 1972, p. 33)*

A large amount of extension agent employment research has utilized Herzberg et al's., (1993/1959) Motivation-Hygiene theory as the conceptual model. Extension has grown over the decades, and the educational strategies have evolved, yet retained adult education practices.

Buford (1990) reflected on the role, or lack thereof, of motivation for extension agents in earlier and simpler times in extension.

Morrill and Morrill (1967) identified *plateauing* as an issue negatively impacting extension agent productivity. They noted when work productivity ceases to continue to grow it is indicative that organizational leadership has a responsibility for the underlying causes (Morrill & Morrill, 1967). It is appreciated that their work reflected on and utilized the earlier work by Getzel and Guba (1957) on organizational and individual responsibilities. Getzel and Guba

recognized the importance that “the demands of the institution and the demands of the staff members in a way that is at once *organizationally productive* and *individually fulfilling*” (Getzel & Guba, p. 430). Morrill and Morrill (1967) stressed the importance of well-defined educational objectives in Extension that are utilized and evaluated. In the 1960s, Extension leadership approaches were more hierarchical. Morrill and Morrill are commended for seeing opportunities for growth in leadership strategies decades before Patton (1987), Buford (1990), and Erickson (1991) made similar observations. Morrill and Morrill argued that implementing motivation-based strategies can soften the disappointment that sometimes accompanies long terms of service in the same position. Supervisors should motivate extension agents through counseling and guidance

without domination and, if possible, without indication of lack of confidence. To develop his creative potential and fully utilize his capabilities, he must feel free to make some mistakes without endangering his professional standing. But permissiveness, demonstrated by *laissez-faire* attitudes of administrators, tends to destroy individual creativity rather than to promote it. Some administrative structure and direction is desirable. (Morrill & Morrill, 1967, p. 19)

Morrill and Morrill adopted Van Dersal’s definition of supervision “the art of working with a group of people over whom authority is exercised in such a way as to achieve their greatest combined effectiveness in getting work done” (Van Dersal, 1965/1985, p. 10).

**Motivating learners.** Zurcher observed that “studies of motivation should be of central interest to the Extension worker since he must be concerned with motivating people to learn and change” (Zurcher, 1966, p. 200). In addition to becoming proficient in motivating the learning

clientele; extension leadership, more so, needs to be expert at understanding and motivating extension agents and other professionals to sustained and successful work in extension.

**Motivating extension agents.** Lewis (1972) documented that the important factors in extension agent motivation were the professionals and the clientele and their needs, goals, value system, and abilities. The motivational processes included the organization, group, and personal goals. The outputs focused on clientele participation and behavioral change and professional effectiveness, efficiency, integration, and morale. Clegg's (1963; 1967) work focused on the importance of alignment of organizational and personal/professional goals. He recognized the importance of interaction between supervisor and employee and developing mutually beneficial goals. One agent in his studies said, "we are striving to achieve common program goals. It is stimulating, exciting, and seems to motivate us on to try to accomplish these goals" (Clegg, 1967, p. 27). Interestingly, Clegg observed that extension agents can be too motivated, the first recognition of life balances issues for extension agents in the literature.

Several researchers have identified motivators for extension agents. The motivators fell into several themes. Many researchers found that extension agent motivation fell within the six motivators identified by Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) *achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth* (Benge et al., 2015, Chandler, 2004; Clegg, 1963; Clegg, 1967; Franz, 2003; Harder et al., 2014; Strong & Harder, 2009). Chandler (2004) also noted the importance of opportunity to be creative through challenging work; professional scheduling; opportunities for professional development; recognition from clientele; and professional relationships with co-workers and peers. Chandler and Franz (2003) also noted several personal factors that were important in the study. Chandler and Franz noted that non-work-related factors included opportunities to contribute to their community; for personal growth



and development; and to know and interact with key community leaders (Chandler, 2004; Franz, 2003).

Strong and Harder (2009) published the results of an integrative inquiry that synthesized several studies of the era addressing motivation and maintenance (hygiene) issues for extension agents. Many of the studies have been addressed in this review of literature. The maintenance issue of compensation or pay was identified as a dissatisfier along with the number of hours worked in the job (Strong & Harder, 2009). Extension agents also found they could earn more money in related careers. They commented on the role of a spouse in employee satisfaction “the more dissatisfied the employee’s spouse is, the more it is going to distract the employee from the job. Consequently, an agent whose spouse is satisfied with the agent’s job is more likely to feel the same toward his/her job” (Herbert & Kotlik, 1990, p. 36). Former agents confirmed that family obligations as a reason for leaving Extension (Herbert & Kotlik, 1990). The findings suggested that the presence of satisfaction in agents is an important motivator. These researchers noted that opportunities for advancement, mentoring, and recognition were positive factors in satisfaction (1990).

**The role of supervisors.** There needed to be respect and relationship between administration and staff. Morrill and Morrill (1967) predicted that if leadership could develop constructive relationships with extension agents, then job satisfaction should increase. Amend (1970) proposed that a supervisor’s role in extension had to evolve supervisor roles from “one who maintains control over the activities of others” (Amend, 1970, p. 17) to one focusing on maximizing performance.

Benge and Harder (2017) studied whether the relationship between followers (extension agents) and leaders (county extension directors) was a functional hygiene factor in Florida

Extension. Bengé and Harder (2017) recognized that new agents start in the stranger phase of leadership-making; positive relationships mature through the acquaintance stage and continue to the partner phase (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). They also recognized that when an agent is promoted to the county extension director in the same office, that the leadership-making relationship may reset to the stranger phase with former peers. All-in-all Florida Extension had over 70 percent of Leader-Member relationships in the partner phase and less than 25 percent of relationships in the stranger phase; indicating that supervision as a hygiene factor is not a major factor in dissatisfaction (Bengé & Harder, 2017). The minor role of the supervisor in extension agent dissatisfaction was confirmed in a study by Siegelin et al. (2021) which showed a weak correlation between the supervisor extension agent relationship and career commitment.

**Solutions for Motivation-Hygiene issues.** Clegg (1967) identified actions that were key to developing quality extension agents: stimulation, responsible freedom, support, success, commitment, and self-insight. Clegg concluded by noting that

apparently, one of the most effective methods for stimulating an Extension worker to strive for a higher level of development is through the opportunity for optimum performance of his job responsibilities. By successfully carrying out the work for which he is responsible he can fulfill his and the organization's needs for achievement. (Clegg, 1963, p. 148)

Harder et al. (2014) found that 80 percent of respondents were satisfied with their positions, five percent were neutral, and 15 percent were dissatisfied. The top motivators were the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others; variety in daily job duties; and opportunity to work with youth in my community. The bottom three motivators were job security; opportunity to be a part of a LGU; and ability to spend time with spouse/family at work-related events. The greatest

discrepancies between satisfied and dissatisfied motivators were being a key leader in my community [satisfied agents were motivated by this factor, dissatisfied agents were not]; opportunity to work with youth in my community; and the opportunity to work with community leaders (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959). Clegg (1967) documented extension agent satisfaction in the agents' included technical competence, responsibility, freedom, availability of help, being able to share opinions, inclusion in decision making, recognition, ability to choose what was working, constructive criticism, and encouragement and freedom to try new things. These findings were consistent in whole or part with findings of several scholars' work since that time (See Arnold, 2007; Benge & Harder, 2017; Benge et al., 2015; Chandler, 2004; Ensle, 2005; Forstadt & Fortune, 2016; Fourman & Jones, 1997; Franz, 2003; Harder et al., 2014; Lindner, 1998).

**Evidence in extension agent research relevant to motivation or hygiene factors.** As early as 1963, Clegg published research that presented the results of a survey of Extension administrators in county offices. His results confirmed Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) in an Extension context. He found that achievement in work and recognition of work were statistically significant factors in job satisfaction. He also found that job dissatisfaction was influenced by interpersonal relationships with the advisory board, subordinates, and supervisors; interestingly, interpersonal relationships with clientele were nearly balanced between satisfaction and dissatisfaction and were not statistically significant.

McCaslin and Mwangi (1994) conducted a factor analysis with a stratified sample of 325 to determine what was influencing agent satisfaction. Their results indicated that job satisfaction... explained 24% of the variance. Listed in decreasing order of importance, the factor names and percent of variance that each factor explained were:

evaluation (7.4%); dependable supervisors (5.3%); work incentives (2.8%); pay (2.2%); praise and work location (1.8%); housing and transportation (1.6%); job security (1.5%); and administration and supervision (1.3%). (McCaslin & Mwangi, 1994, p. 2)

In separate group interviews, extension agents indicated that time-in-grade was more indicative of promotion than performance. This lowered job satisfaction, and they suggested merit-based promotions would increase satisfaction (McCaslin & Mwangi, 1994). These factors do not align with the motivation or hygiene factors brought forward by Herzberg et al. (1993/1959).

Lindner (1998) conducted a simple survey of the faculty of one of The Ohio State University Extension's Experiment and Enterprise Center. A census was attempted with a 92% response rate (23 participants). Participants ranked 10 motivating factors (see below). The research sought to address complexities of developing motivation within a complex organization. Participants collectively ranked the motivators as follows

(a) interesting work, (b) good wages, (c) full appreciation of work done, (d) job security, (e) good working conditions, (f) promotions and growth in the organization, (g) feeling of being in on things, (h) personal loyalty to employees, (i) tactful discipline, and (j) sympathetic help with personal problems. (Lindner, 1998, p. 3)

When the author fit the ranking of satisfaction into Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene theory, they found that, interesting work, a motivator item, was the top ranked satisfier and good pay, a hygiene item, was ranked second. This blending of motivation and hygiene factors in the analysis was built into the design, as participants ranked the 10 provided items into a single ranked list.

Kroth and Peutz (2010) conducted a four level Delphi study of executive leaders in Extension. Their objectives were to discover the issues that were the most important employment factors in the next five to seven years. The top five of the 32 issues executive leaders identified

collectively were “1. Evolving from traditional to contemporary issues and priorities; 2. Providing competitive salaries; 3. Having appropriate resources to do the job; 4. Recruiting and retaining diverse faculty and staff; [and] 5. Keeping up-to-date with technology” (Kroth & Peutz, 2010, p. 6). It was noted that the top administrators did not identify motivating factors as important in the attraction, motivation, and retention of extension agents.

Martin and Kaufman (2013) developed a research project that built on the work of general management researchers. They studied the relationship between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to quit. Based on the literature, they identified that job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been shown to be different in relation to employee attitudes about their work. Job satisfaction is more focused on the individual’s response to the job or to specific aspects of the job, such as pay, supervision, and working conditions. (Martin & Kaufman, 2013, p. 2)

Harder et al. (2014) found positive results when polling extension agents in one state. These authors found that 70 percent of Colorado Extension agents were satisfied in the roles. Harder et al. found that the opportunity to make a difference was a motivating factor and that leave policies was a hygiene factor. This conclusion did not support previous research where motivating factors drove satisfaction.

Siegelin et al. (2021) studied how job satisfaction, the result of motivating factors; and the supervisory relationship, a hygiene factor related to career intentions. The results showed a strong correlation between satisfaction and career intentions and a weak correlation between the supervisory relationship and career intentions. These authors noted

it is commendable that all participants agreed that their current job matched their ideal job. This indicates that MSUE’s hiring and applicant filtering processes are identifying

people who identify with the role of Extension professionals. Over 90% (n = 23) of participants agreed that they were satisfied in their position. However, nearly 40% (n = 23) participants disagreed that their job exceeded their expectations. This may allow MSUE to explore ways to help professionals identify reasonable expectations that meet or exceed their own expectations. (Siegelin et al., 2021, p. 34)

This current research study utilized and tested the Motivation-Hygiene theory for its utility in adult educator work contexts. The two-factor aspect of the theory and the individual motivation and hygiene factors were utilized as a lens to better understand the collected data.

**Career Commitment.** Smith and Beckley (1985) reported on the status of extension agent onboarding in Ohio in the early 1980s. Although they had a well-received formal onboarding training system, including level 1 and level 2 multi-day onsite trainings during an agent's first year; "new agents continued to have high turnover. Data from extension exit interviews indicated something was lacking in the new agent's introduction to the organization" (1985, para. 4). In response, Ohio State University Extension developed a mentoring program to address early career resignations. The mentoring program had the following objectives

- (1) To provide an open atmosphere for dialogue;
- (2) to enhance and provide motivation for job performance, creativity, and the acceptance of responsibilities with confidence;
- (3) to give new agents the incentive to improve themselves professionally through staff development activities;
- (4) to enhance the agents' concept of the total program of Ohio Extension by viewing differing situations and environments; and
- (5) to expand the new agents' subject-matter competencies. (Implementation, para 3)

Upon evaluation of the mentoring program, Smith and Beckley found success in 15 out of the 16 mentor/mentee pairings and created the following recommendations:

1. Be supportive of other networks that may be established.
2. Avoid the use of forms and reports.
3. Keep the informality of the mentor system by not having mentors report to supervisors.
4. Keep the program flexible.
5. Maintain the one-year length of the program (consistent with the National Guidelines for Orientation).
6. Encourage full-day visits two to three times during that year (these one-on-one visits were seen as very positive).
7. Achieve less new agent turnover for our organization. (1985, Conclusion, para 2)

The implementation of this mentoring program is representative of program implementation, evaluation, and research that addressed or studied the issues of extension agent motivation, success, retention, and longevity. Three studies (Ensle, 2005; Martin & Kaufman, 2013; Strong & Harder, 2009) found that job satisfaction, attitudes, and career intentions were stronger than expected. Martin and Kaufman shared their results which complemented the other studies. They concluded that

although voluntary turnover in Extension remains a serious concern, the study reported here highlights some positive attitudes from Extension agents with less than 6 years of employment in the Southern Region. Overall, the agents are somewhat satisfied with their jobs, are moderately committed to the organization, and do not intend to quit in the near future. (Martin & Kaufman, 2013, pp. 4-5)

Rousan (1995) found that people left OSU Extension voluntarily for job related reasons; left because they were not a good fit for the position, they weren't qualified, were bored in the job, or

were not challenged in the position. Others left because of personal or balance related reasons like normal daytime work expectations plus night and weekend commitments to meetings with clientele. Many mentioned that administration on campus were trying to drive and set programming from campus which violated, in the agents' minds, the local needs driven foundations of Extension work.

**Extension Agent Burnout.** Burnout has been described in Extension since the 1960s. While not describing it as burnout, Clegg accurately described the phenomenon. "Some were almost physically exhausted from a heavy workload which they themselves established" (Clegg, 1967, p. 24). Turnover in extension agents was "a significant problem for Cooperative Extension nationally, as increased burnout and staff turnover are monetarily expensive and an inefficient use of time management" (Strong & Harder, 2009, p. 1). This trend had continued (Benge & Harder, 2017). Ensle (2005) stated that, "avoiding burnout by balancing job and family is a necessity for Extension employees" (Ensle, 2005, p. 1). Ensle identified strategies that various states had taken to address burnout and associated turnover. Pennsylvania's administration developed and implemented professional development training series to train extension agents how to reduce or avoid burnout. In Kansas, extension agents led a grassroots process to identify the problem of burnout, develop coping strategies, and provide training to their peers. Vermont initiated research studies to discover the scope of the problem and to offer solutions. Those solutions included developing a stronger and more robust wellness program and ensuring that the benefits of the new programs were made available to all extension agents. Illinois noticed turnover increasing over a three- or four-year period. They studied the issue, trained supervisors, and rewrote position descriptions to more accurately reflect expected workload.



Arnold and Place (2010b) conducted a qualitative research study using grounded theory to explore why agents enter the profession (Arnold & Place, 2010b). Twelve extension agents were selected via purposive selection and semi-structured interviews were conducted. They found that many participants had prior knowledge or experience with Extension through their education, but not all participants had this experience. Current extension agents or specialists, or college advisors recruited participants to Extension work. They appreciated being involved in and serving the agriculture community and helping them find greater success. Many liked the type of work that extension agents do. They helped people, solve problems, and have resulting variety in their work. However, agents noted that formal position descriptions lacked clarity when compared to the real job expectations. The type of work, the variety, flexibility, and creativity allowed in the position was appealing. Extension agents also liked that they were university supported educators serving their communities.

Benge et al. (2015) completed a qualitative analysis of free response data gathered in a larger mixed methods survey of extension agents working for Colorado State University Extension. The open-ended prompt for this study was “as you think about some of the issues that might affect agent burnout/retention, also think about solutions to these issues. Please offer your thoughts about possible solutions to address retention issues” (Benge et al., 2015, p. 5). Using a constant comparative methodology, several themes were identified, and rich thick descriptions were provided. The top themes were: (a) compensation and raises, (b) promotion and advancement within the system, (c) workload, (d) reporting, (e) being asked to do more with less, (f) hiring practices, (g) personnel and staffing, and (h) recognition,

Forstadt and Fortune (2016) led a team in conducting a qualitative action research project for Maine Extension. They utilized grounded theory and appreciative inquiry methodologies;

they also leaned on ethnography as they sought to understand the culture of Extension for the organization and the individual. Their goals were first, “a successful staff that does excellent work and [second,] an organizational climate that supports the pursuit of work-life balance and personal sustainability” (Forstadt & Fortune, 2016, p. 2). This research was unique as it was conducted by an 11-member team, all within Maine Extension; was entered into with a charge and guidance from the Director of Extension; and utilized grounded theory with the intent to introduce changes during the research project.

The following views emerged from the open-ended questions in the survey, interviews, and focus group discussions:... Staff are very committed to the organizational mission and value the ability to make a difference in people’s lives. Staff value and appreciate supportive colleagues and supervisors, job benefits, and the independence, autonomy, variety, and creativity of their jobs. (Forstadt & Fortune, 2016, p. 6)

Three major themes were identified from this research. *Work-life balance* was identified as a theme with successes and failures, with some already practicing a healthful balance and others overworking. *Collegiality and Connection* was a second theme which identified issues with staff isolation and programmatic silos that were difficult to breakdown. *Connection to organizational vision* was identified as a strength in the system and staff were interested in strengthening this characteristic during those times of change within and outside Extension. As a result of this action research, four areas of change were recommended: “commit to individual actions for our health; balance personal sustainability with excellence and accountability; build relationships, program connections, and community; and connect our work to a sustainable organizational vision and structure” (Forstadt & Fortune, 2016, p. 7). Recommendations included 24 strategies to accomplish these four strategies.

Russell and Liggans (2020) studied extension agent burnout utilizing an outgrowth of motivation and other theories; the Job Demands-Resources Theory (Demrouti et al., 2001). These researchers attempted a census of extension agents in direct adult education roles (n = 855, 15%). They found that job demands positively correlated with burnout across all Extension disciplines and that job resources negatively correlated with burnout, but only for the agriculture, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H disciplines. They recommended that “extension leadership may find greater success in focusing on reducing job demands while taking a targeted programmatic approach to enhancing job resources.... implementing programmatic or discipline-specific... strategies to address job characteristics rather than implementing such elements in one-size-fits-all fashion.” (Russell & Liggans, 2020, p. 9)

### ***Missions Employment Research.***

While Extension research was abundant and easily focused by search terms like *motivation*. Research on missionaries was less plentiful. Review of relevant research was focused on missionary selection methodologies, the success, or more often the failure, of missionaries to remain at their posting, or factors influencing longevity or retention. As early as the 1960s Masserman and Palmer identified that “many apparently sincere, dedicated, and self-sacrificing men and women sent into foreign fields broke down with disabling and sometimes serious emotional difficulties” (Masserman & Palmer, 1961, p. 25).

Anderson (2005) studied private, public, and nongovernmental organizations who placed expatriates in international postings. In her study, all non-governmental organizations were religious organizations supporting missionaries. She observed “not all missionaries are successful on the field and some return to their home countries earlier than scheduled. The high attrition rates of missionary postings are viewed with considerable concern” (Anderson, 2005, p.

572). Anderson noted that 10 to 50 percent of missionaries return home during their first term or even their first year. Anderson observed that “missionaries who return home early may suffer from feelings of guilt and a lowered sense of self-esteem, but also their children are affected, turning out to be disenchanted about missionary work” (Anderson, 2005, p. 572). Schubert (1991) noted that the life experiences of contemporary missionary candidates have evolved and the changes have led to suggestions that missionary recruitment using status quo methodologies of the day were “placing well-meaning individuals in jobs beyond their emotional skill” (Schubert, 1991, p. 33).

Anderson (2005) found that private organization repatriates described how they were offered positions and, only after accepting the position, spouse and family were considered. Anderson noted that only missionary organizations screened the employee, spouse, and family prior to selection with consistency. This strategy similarly described by Solomon (1996) in her summary of Shell Internationale’s response to expatriate failure. Shell Internationale’s solution was to create a support unit with staff to support families in transition to international postings and developed support centers in major international centers.

Taylor (1997) edited the book *Too Valuable to Lose* a presentation of the results of the Reducing Missionary Attrition Project (ReMAP). This study had a long-term focus was and is pastoral and is directed to the global mission force in the areas of selecting and screening, preparing and training, sending and supporting, strategizing and shepherding, and encouraging missionaries during their lifelong pilgrimage to find God’s purpose for them, regardless of geography or specific ministry. (Taylor, 1997, p. xiv)

In this study, Taylor (1997) and the chapter authors focused on preventable attrition. Retirement or return from the field due to illness were treated as acceptable forms of attrition. Taylor observed that “Several studies have clarified that ‘while attrition hits first termers especially hard, it is not a phenomenon limited to the first term. One mission found that serious attrition was taking place at the level of their emerging, experienced leaders’” (Taylor, 1997, p. 8). Taylor (1997) provided justification from the research data for these studies. He shared that 5.1 percent of career missionaries leave the field each year, of those, 71 percent leave for preventable reasons (estimated at 5,400 per year globally). It was these departures that were of interest. Taylor also recognized that documenting the reasons for attrition can be challenging. “1. The reasons the agency and church leaders believe they have heard and understood. 2. The recorded reasons in the files. 3. The reasons departing missionaries hold in private or may share with closest friends. 4. The real reasons” (Taylor, 1997, pp. 9-10).

McKaughan (1997) defined the problem of attrition as a phenomenon which “occurs when missionaries, because of mismanagement, unrealistic expectations, systemic abuse, personal failure, or other personal reasons, leave the field before the mission or church feels that they should” (McKaughan, 1997, p. 18). McKaughan explained why people and organizations were concerned about attrition.

It causes us great anxiety when we “lose” the investment of hundreds of thousands of dollars in the acquisition of theological, cultural, and linguistic understanding, along with time spent in raising funds. Perhaps the matter is not so much a problem of the individual as it is a problem with the system, which front-loads all this development before really gaining the experiential understanding as to the giftedness and/or the ability of a person to be effective in a particular cultural setting. (McKaughan, 1997, p. 21)

Brierley (1997) shared the results from the *Too Valuable to Lose* questionnaire. The top ten reasons for attrition were

1. Normal retirement
2. Children
3. Change of job
4. Health problems
5. Lack of home support
6. Problems with peers
7. Personal concerns
8. Disagreement with agency
9. Inadequate commitment
10. Lack of call

Brierley (1997) also documented the recorded reasons, and the perceived reasons, missionaries departed the field. Many of these pairings had similar percentages. Notably, *unpreventable* attrition was 29 percent compared to 24 percent perceived as the reason for separation. *Team* and *cultural* reasons for attrition were the opposite with six percent recorded and nine percent perceived and two percent recorded and five percent recorded, respectively. Brierley also documented the most important reasons preventing missionaries from leaving the field.

1. A clear calling
2. A supportive family
3. A healthy spirituality
4. Cultural adaptation
5. Good relationships

6. Pastoral care
7. Financial provision (Brierley, 1997)

Blöcher and Lewis (1997) concluded that agencies with a small number of missionaries were five or six times more likely to lose missionaries proportionately. They determined that agencies with at least 200 missionaries had more stable staffing.

The reasons missionaries left their positions combined with the reason why other missionaries stayed in their positions are two results from Taylor (1997). Taylor's results were addressed in a follow up study, ReMAP II (Hay, 2007). Hay (2007) developed seven key retention practices for international agencies to implement.

1. Careful candidate selection;
2. Effective leadership:
  - Good interaction with missionary
  - Servant attitude
  - Flexible structures;
3. Opportunities for training and development of gifts;
4. Engage missionaries to improve ministries and agency operations;
5. Change is not top down;
6. Utilize insights of missionaries; and
7. Partnerships with other agencies (Hay, 2007; Van Meter, 2003; World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission, 2010).

Anderson (2001) found that nongovernmental organizations consistently provided higher levels of service in the selection, preparation, management, and repatriation. "One interviewee in the nongovernment sector, when discussing the selection process, indicated that husbands and

wives would complete the same application form, be put through the same interview process, and given the same psychological assessment” (Anderson, 2001, p. 39). White’s dissertation research (2021) focused on preventable attrition at the International Missions Board (IMB), the largest mission agency in the United States and a unit of the Southern Baptist Convention. The study covered the years 2008 to 2017. The top three reasons missionaries departed the field were a stateside job, health, and missionary children. Most returnees (34) accepted church staff positions, others accepted a position elsewhere in the Southern Baptist Convention (nine), and others took secular jobs (seven), others indicated that they had a change in calling (six), and a final person moved to an IMB home office position.

Stephens (2018) conducted qualitative research studying the experiences of missionaries and mission leaders to increase understanding of factors influencing longevity. He identified nine themes missionaries and leaders perceived contribute to their longevity, he found: (a) cling fiercely to God – *Soli Deo*; (b) posture of the heart – humility; (c) thriving home – marriage and family; (d) unhurried leadership – leaders who walk the journey with others; (e) life-on-life – mentored by the experienced; (f) embedded and engaged – complete field assimilation; (g) healthy team dynamics – live and labor together; (h) equipped – training for life and ministry; and (i) pre-field foundations – prepared, launched, supported. He largely found agreement between missionaries and leaders. One difference highlighted was that many missionaries would not describe themselves as humble, yet leaders would often describe missionaries as humble (Stephens, 2018). ReMAP “discovered the staggering data that 47% of missionaries leave the field by year five over mostly preventable reasons” (Taylor, 1997, p. 13).

Van Meter (2003) coordinated a follow up study to ReMAP (Taylor W. D., 1997) that surveyed mission agencies to gather data and collectively identify factors of missionary success



and failure. The agencies identified the importance of relationships and teams, dedication of the missionary, supervision with accountability, and agreement on work objectives were important factors in missionary success. They identified lack of or insufficient financial support, personal issues with family, and interpersonal conflict hinder success. Van Meter captured the importance of understanding factors that positively or negatively influence longevity in foreign placed missionary expatriates. “If the ‘preventable’ reasons for people leaving can be addressed and changes made, then there is the potential for increased retention and longevity of personnel” (2003, p. 2).

### **Summary**

As a result of this review of relevant literature it has been demonstrated that adult education is the historic norm in education of all types and that it focused on both religious and nonreligious topics (Comenius & Keatinge, 1910; Henschke J. A., 2015; Knowles et al., 2015; Savicevic, 2008). Adult education has been documented practice for over 4,000 years. Adult education is voluntary, individually directed, and grounded in the learner’s experiences. Andragogy is the science and practice of adult education with the term and scholarly discipline originating in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and developing more fully in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is often defined as “*the art and science of helping adults to learn*” (Knowles, 1980, p. 43).

Extension in the United States has been an adult education organization since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Research and observation over the past 60 years had documented a variety of issues, opportunities, and solutions for the purpose of improving extension agent career commitment.

Missionary related studies since the 1980s have included many of the same contributing factors to career commitment failures as the extension research. A few major studies serve as the

basis of missionary retention research. Those studies utilized mixed methodology approaches through surveys. The seminal research was published in the book *Too Valuable to Lose* (Taylor, 1997). This comprehensive survey studied over one thousand missionaries or missionary leaders serving organizations based in 14 nations and serving globally. Follow up research was published that strengthened the ReMAP I with the publication of ReMAP II (Van Meter, 2003; World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission, 2010). Stephens (Stephens, 2018; Stephens, 2019) studied factors of mid-career missionaries (nine years of service or more) to learn what factors influenced their early career success and longevity as missionaries. No research found for this literature review studied missionaries as adult educators, nor were there studies that followed Herzberg et al.'s (1993/1959) research practice of studying two populations with similarities and differences to develop a more robust understanding of the research questions.

### Chapter Three: Methodology

This qualitative comparative case study (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017) was used to examine the experiences of non-formal adult educators and how those experiences influence career commitment. This research explored the phenomenon of adult educator career commitment. Comparative case study methodologies were utilized (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017; Cresswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1994; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014) to explore the experiences of extension agents and missionaries.

Existing literature described comparative case studies (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017) using many terms; multiple-case (Yin, 2014), multicase (Stake, 2006), collective case study (Stake, 1994), and comparative case studies (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017) are a few of the descriptors from leading authors. In this research, these terms were treated synonymously, and *comparative case study* were used throughout this dissertation.

Yin (2014) stated that “the case study is preferred when examining contemporary events, but when relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated.... The case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence” (Yin, 2014, p. 12). Stake (1994) described comparative case studies as a

study extended to several cases... to manifest the common characteristic. They may be similar or dissimilar, redundancy and variety each having a voice. They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases. (Stake, 1994, p. 237)

Yin went on to clarify that “case studies can cover multiple cases and [the researcher] draw[s] a single set of cross-case conclusions” (Yin, 2014, p. 18). Analysis of individual cases and across cases identified emergent themes and patterns.

The selection of a comparative case study for this research with two identified cases that are different yet similar follows the practices used by Herzberg et al. (1993/1959). In the introduction to the 1993 version of his seminal work, Herzberg explained that they chose to study engineers and accountants because “a sample limited to one profession would have yielded results of doubtful generality... the groups are vastly different” (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959, p. 32). There are several obvious commonalities and differences between the two adult educator cases in this research. They have the following commonalities.

- Serve a community
- Learn the culture of their clientele
- Develop understanding of the community in general
- Develop understanding of community needs
- Build trust with community members
- Develop solutions and educational strategies to address needs
- Overall goals are to improve the lives of individuals and the community

They have the following differences.

- Work from different educational foundations (research or the Bible)
- Extension agents, generally, worked in their own culture and missionaries in this study worked cross-culturally
- The types of career calling were different
- The years of preparation were generally longer for missionaries
- Different funding sources, strategies, and responsibilities
- The missionary and spouse, if applicable, were both vetted and trained, and often work in partnership

Semi-structured interviews were utilized with questions based on the central and sub questions guiding this research. Semi-structured interviews ensured consistency between participants yet allowed the researcher to explore concepts raised by the participants that were not a part of the questionnaire (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

The comparative case study approach... is particularly well-suited to social research about practice and policy. By practice, we mean to signal studies that consider how social actors, with diverse motives, intentions, and levels of influence, work in tandem with and/or in response to social forces to routinely produce the social and cultural worlds in which they live. (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 1)

Bartlett and Vavrus discussed a framework for analysis that was discovery oriented (heuristic). It is a methodology “that comes from experience and aids in the process of discovery or problem-solving” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 7). These authors recommended an analysis strategy that “compares how similar policies unfold in distinct locations that are socially produced” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, pp. 2-3), this was a horizontal analysis. The vertical analysis explored similar and different scales or contexts. The transversal analysis “historically situates the processes or relations under consideration.... We seek to show how social research, including but not limited to policy research, would benefit from attention across these three axes” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, pp. 2-3). While Bartlett and Vavrus’ context was public-policy based; their analysis strategy has merit in experience- or practice-based qualitative research contexts. They argued that cases and their contexts are not easily bounded as is standard in case study research and that “not only are sites not autonomous—they are influenced by actions well beyond the local context and the current moment, and thus the idea of bounding them..., is an illusion” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 14). This research focused on two cases bound by the type of

employment, that of a nonformal adult educator. The two cases were identified as extension agents and missionaries. The cases were unbound by place and the lines of inquiry are not bound by time. Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) contended that this allowed the topography of community to be studied as is the norm, and allows the topographies, of power, and global interrelatedness to be evaluated.

Yin (2014) described several structural strategies for reporting results of comparative case studies. According to Yin, the researcher presented several analysis options. This research generated a case summary for each individual participant and then created an analysis for each case. The summaries for each participant served as the *horizontal* analysis (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017) phase of analysis. The summaries were shared with participants as a form of member checking (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). The summaries also fulfilled the horizontal analysis step per Bartlett and Vavrus (2017). This research utilized a comparative compositional structure (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017; Yin, 2014) which allows the researcher the freedom to utilize descriptive and exploratory purposes in the research.

### **Central Question**

The following central question and sub-questions guided this research. The central question served as the overall guide to focus these research efforts in a manner that resulted in actionable results. *How do United States based extension agents and internationally placed missionaries experience calling and career commitment?*

### ***Sub-Questions***

Several sub-questions further guided and focused the research processes to elucidate themes and concepts that increased understanding issues surrounding this line of inquiry. They were supported by a primary opening question to support each sub-question, planned prompts to

ensure robust responses from each participant, and follow up questions that were used if needed, see Appendix A. The following sub-questions were developed from the literature and helped address various facets of the central question.

1. *How are career paths chosen?* Arnold (2007) sought to understand “factors and experiences that influence agricultural extension agents to enter” employment with Extension in Florida. This research proposes to expand upon Arnold’s methodology by studying adult educators in more diverse set of adult educators. This was accomplished using strategies that benefit from maximum differences in participants. Extension agents from six different states were included as participants. A second type of adult educators, missionaries, who serve cross-culturally were included. The cultural and organizational diversity of the participants and their organizations allowed the development of more robust understanding of career selection or calling and how these factors influence career commitment.
2. *How do adult educators’ attitudes influence their career commitment?* Taylor (1997) recognized that missionary attitude, individually and culturally, influences attrition. Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) explored the question, what do employees want from a job? Their work developed the Motivation-Hygiene theory to explain how employees’ attitudes influenced satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Herzberg et al. were able to connect experiences and how those experiences influenced the attitudes of employees. This research expanded the understanding of attitudes and experiences in autonomous adult educator contexts.
3. *How do experiences influence career commitment?* In addition to attitudes that were discovered in their research, Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) pursued lines of questioning

that explored satisfying and dissatisfying experiences for employees. This research explored how participants with a diverse set of backgrounds, cultures, and work settings experiences influenced career commitment.

4. *How do organizational structure and policies influence career commitment?*

Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) recognized that employees with low morale were more likely to absent themselves or leave their position prematurely. Many of the hygiene factors that influenced dissatisfaction are organizational in nature. Stephens (2018) explored career commitment in longer-term employees by interviewing them directly and by interviewing administrators to gain understanding from both the employee and the organization. This research developed understanding of how organizations positively and negatively influenced their employees' career commitment.

### **Participants**

Polkinghorne stated that participants are able “to function as informants by providing rich descriptions of the experience being investigated” (1989, p. 47). The research identified two major adult educator cases: United States based adult educators who are working within their own culture as locally placed extension agents and adult educators who work cross-culturally in Protestant mission contexts served as participants in this research. Both types of educators were in permanent employment situations. Twelve participants were selected, six in each case. This allowed for data saturation for the study (Guest et al. 2006; Stake, 2006).

Guest et al. (2006) recognized the challenge of predicting and reaching theoretical saturation in qualitative research and noted the seemingly arbitrary nature of many recommendations for the *proper* number of cases or participants to reach saturation. Utilizing research, they conducted in two African countries with 30 interviews in each country; they



measured saturation by developing themes for all the participants and then identified how many codes were identified in successive sextets of participants. After the first six interviews 73 percent of the codes were identified, after 12 interviews 92 percent of codes were identified. The remaining eight percent of codes were identified over the remaining 18 interviews. They then moved to interviews from the second country and only found one new code of substance and four others that clarified verbiage to capture communication nuances of similar concepts from the first country. Guided by Guest et al.'s research and Stake's (2006) recommendations, a minimum of 12 participants were organized into two cases, six United States based extension agents and six United States missionaries who are working internationally.

Contact information for both United States-based extension agents and missionaries was accessed from existing databases. This research utilized the information in these databases to “maximize variation as a sampling strategy to represent diverse cases and to fully describe multiple perspectives about the cases” (Cresswell & Poth, 2018, p. 158). The participants were selected to maximize differences (Cresswell & Poth, 2018) utilizing the following criteria: job satisfaction (Smerek & Peterson, 2007), leader making phase (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), General Health Questionnaire, GHQ-12 (Goldberg & Williams, 1988), organizational commitment (Mowday et al., 1979), and career intention (Siegelin et al., 2021). In addition to career oriented measures, gender, age, and geographic location was considered. Lists of appropriate participants were identified, potential participants were contacted via email, phone, or a phone alternative (messaging apps, e.g., WhatsApp) until six participants in each case confirmed their interest in joining this research, see Table 1. Alternative participants were identified in the event that an original participant interview fails to occur in a timely manner.

**Table 1** Participant selection criteria and demographic information

Participant	Instrument performance ranges					Demographic information		
	Satisfaction <sup>a</sup>	Leader making phase <sup>b</sup>	Wellbeing <sup>c</sup>	Organizational commitment <sup>d</sup>	Career longevity <sup>e</sup>	Gender	Geographic region (U.S or continent)	Age Range <sup>f</sup>
<b>Extension agent<sup>g</sup></b>								
Lana	High	Partner	High	High	Middle	Female	Western	27 to 42
Chelsea	High	Partner	High	High	Middle	Female	North Central	27 to 42
Paige	Middle	Partner	Middle	Middle	Middle	Female	Northeastern	27 to 42
Braden	Middle	Partner	Middle	Middle	Middle	Male	North Central	27 to 42
Alex	Low	Stranger	Middle	Low	Low	Male	Southern	43 to 58
Eve	Low	Acquaintance	Low	Low	Low	Female	Western	59 to 77
<b>Missionary<sup>g</sup></b>								
Connor	High	Partner	High	Middle	Low	Male	Europe	27 to 42
Jake	Middle	Partner	High	Middle	Middle	Male	Asia	43 to 58
Noah	Middle	Partner	Middle	Middle	Middle	Female	South America	59 to 77
Joslyn	Low	Partner	Middle	Middle	Middle	Female	Africa	59 to 77
Evan	Low	Acquaintance	Low	Middle	Low	Male	Africa	27 to 42
Molly	Middle	Stranger	Middle	High	Middle	Female	South America	27 to 42

Note. "High" indicates greater than one standard deviation above the mean for the entire database of extension agents or missionaries

Note. "Middle" indicates within one standard deviation of the mean

Note. "Low" indicates more than one standard deviation below the mean for the mean

<sup>a</sup>Smerek and Peterson (2007)

<sup>b</sup>Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995)

<sup>c</sup>Goldberg and Williams (1988)

<sup>d</sup>Mowday et al. (1979)

<sup>e</sup>Siegelin et al. (2021)

<sup>f</sup>Age ranges provided to protect identities

<sup>g</sup>Participants were identified using two unpublished databases that contained scores for the noted instruments.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The two cases provided the source of data for this research project. These two cases included six members whose diversity was maximized as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018). Figure 1 shows the organization of this research and the flow of information and the analysis strategies and processes via comparative case study methodology defined by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017).

#### ***Data Collection***

The phenomenon being studied was career commitment. A comparative case study methodology served as the structure for this research (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were utilized to provide consistency to the information gathered across participants and cases. Interviews were conducted via Zoom web-conferencing services at times mutually convenient for the participants and researcher. Recordings were managed and saved in Zoom's cloud storage. Human transcriptions with 99 percent accuracy by TranscribeMe.com were purchased for each interview (TranscribeMe.com, 2023).

Semi-structured interviews allowed participants and the researcher to explore relevant lines of thought that were discovered during the interview process. Two cases were studied in the research. Case 1 included six individuals who are United States based extension agents. Case 2 included six individuals who are missionaries serving in cross-cultural settings and speak English as their first language.

The semi-structured interviews contained questions guided by the central- and sub-questions. Each sub-question is included below in bold and the primary prompt(s) for each sub-

question follows. The semi-structured questionnaire with additional prompts and follow up questions is included in Appendix A.

**How are career paths chosen?** We talked about the process you went through to select this career and to get into the career. Next would you share why you chose the career? What/who motivated/encouraged/discouraged you along the way? What helped/hindered you?

**How do adult educators' attitudes influence their career commitment?** Think about the times in your career that you have been the most excited or most discouraged about what you are doing in your job. What was happening? How did you feel in those situations? What were the causes? How did they make you think about your career choice?

**How do experiences influence career commitment?** I want to ask you to think back to the time you were deciding to pursue this career. Describe the experiences and processes you went through from the time you started pursuing this career and getting into this position.

**How do organizational structure and policies influence career commitment?** Let's think about the organization you work for. What are the things they do that make it easy for you to thrive or make it challenging for you to succeed? Do they help you love your career or make you want to leave it? What is it that the organization does (+/-) that impacts how you think about your career and whether you stay in it?

### **Summary**

This qualitative research explored the experiences and attitudes of adult educators. The research utilized a qualitative comparative case study methodology as articulated by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017). It addressed the central question of "*How do home and internationally placed adult educators in non-religious and religious settings, respectively, experience calling and career commitment?*" Data was gathered utilizing semi structured Zoom interviews. Analysis of

the data was heuristic and utilized a three-pronged analysis strategy that evaluates the horizontal factors (those concepts discovered through similarities), vertical factors (those concepts discovered through differences), and the transversal (those concepts discovered through consideration of history) (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). Data was coded for categorical data and theme development. The categorical coding identified demographic and other information that demonstrated the maximization of differences (Cresswell & Poth, 2018) amongst the participants and within each case and structural characteristics of the interview itself.

## Chapter Four: Results

This research utilized qualitative comparative case study methodologies to gain an in depth understanding of how adult educator attitudes, experiences, and employer factors, influenced participants' career commitment. A maximum difference strategy (Cresswell & Poth, 2018) was implemented to the maximize possible variation amongst the 12 participants. This strategy differs from previous extension research where adult educators with many commonalities were chosen as participants (Arnold, 2007; Benge et al., 2015, Chandler, 2004). The research also sought to broaden understanding of adult educator career commitment. Two cases were identified for this study: United States extension agents and internationally placed missionaries. The practice of using two similar, yet different groups was implemented by Herzberg et al. (1993/1959). Herzberg's purpose in using this strategy was to improve generality of concepts learned through the research.

### Description of Analysis

#### *The Participants*

The first step in the research project proper was the purposeful selection of participants (Polkinghorne, 1989). Two existing databases, one of which included extension agents and the other included missionaries, were utilized to identify participants for this research. Each database contained age and location as well as job satisfaction, leader-follower, well-being, organizational commitment, and career commitment scores. Standard deviations were calculated for each factor listed. Database members were grouped into a *high* level, more than one standard deviation above the mean; *middle* level, within one standard deviation of the mean; and *low* more than one standard deviation below the mean. The leader-member exchange (LMX-7) Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) was developed over two decades. Through their development of the LMX-7, they

created three descriptors that described the quality of leader-member-follower relationship. Their descriptors were *partner*, *acquaintance*, and *stranger*. Due to the extensive development of these descriptors, those descriptors were used in lieu of the standard deviation methodology.

The two populations of possible participants were filtered to remove participants that the researcher knew personally or professionally or worked for the researcher's employer. The remaining database members were reviewed based on their high, middle, or low groupings for all factors. Two participants from each grouping were selected. Diversity of location, age, salary, and gender were considered to maximize the differences amongst participants. In addition to the employment related factors, the extension agent case included four women, two men, and were located in all four USDA regions; six states; represented both 1862 and 1890 (HBCU) LGUs; work in urban and rural settings; and five Millennials and one Boomer. In addition to the employment related factors, missionaries included four men and two women; were located in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America; worked for five missionary agencies; worked in urban and rural settings; and three Millennials, one Generation X, and two Boomers. While maximum differences within two cases of six was challenging; these two cases contain several diversities that strengthen the understanding across the participants and professions and thereby add to the transferability of the finding. Previous research has studied one profession or professionals within one organization. The focus on maximizing the differences between participants and cases provided more perspectives and allowed the juxtaposition of results against each other. This was not possible in other studies. See Table 1.

### *Data Analysis*

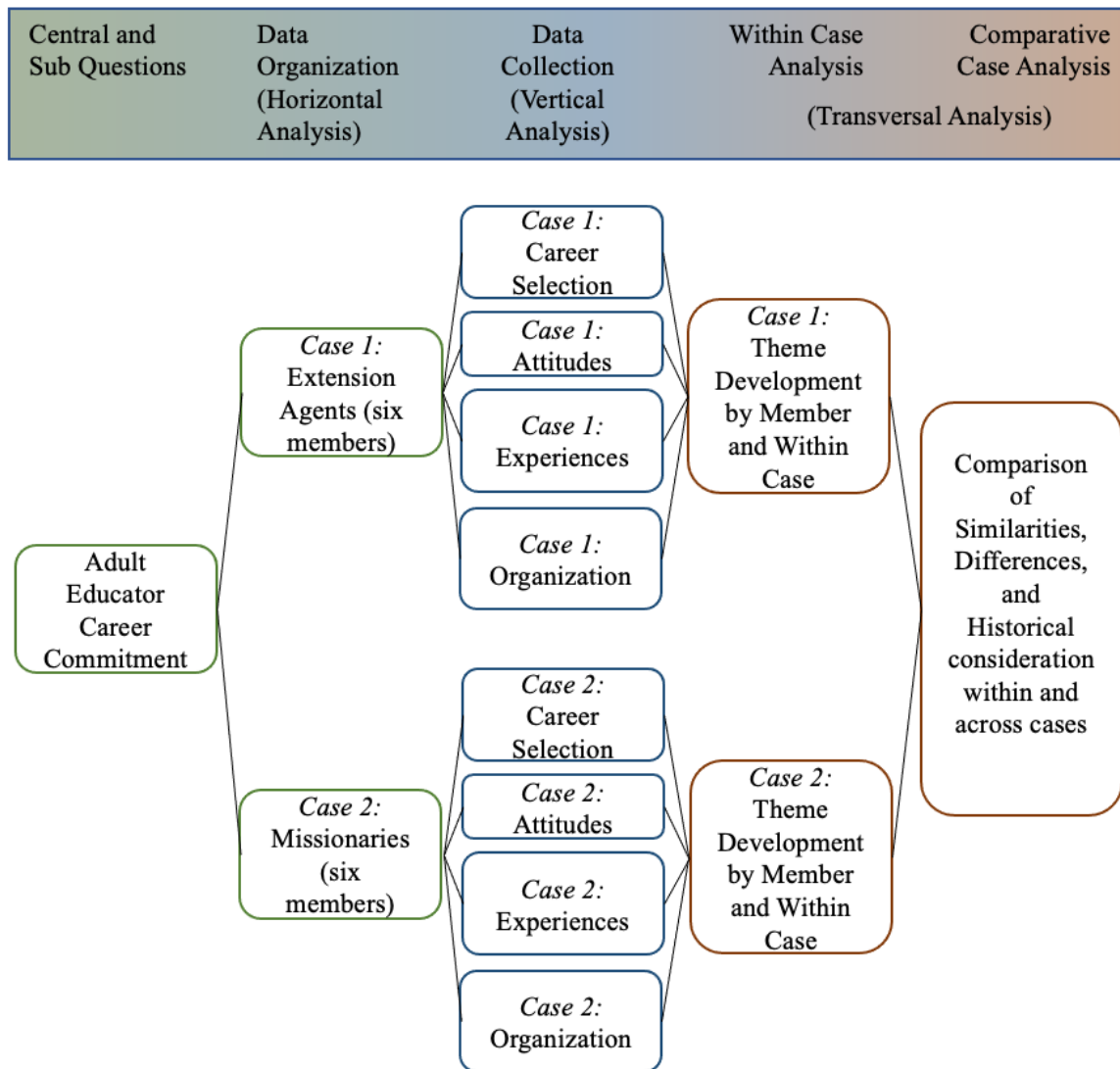
Heuristic methodologies (those methodologies that draw meaning from the data itself) provided a set of strategies that analyzed the data from the data, and it allowed the data to drive the analysis (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). This process was exegetical. The Researcher studied and developed understanding from the data collected. As such, this methodology set aside eisegetical processes where the researcher, purposely or inadvertently, applied presuppositions or personal beliefs to the data and then interprets the data in a manner that strengthens or supports their own opinions. This research built on this heuristic foundation and utilized Bartlett and Vavrus's three-pronged strategy to conduct a horizontal, vertical, and transversal analyses of the data.

*Horizontal* analyses were valued in this research as the two cases have many similarities in approaches to adult education. *Horizontal* analysis "requires attention to how historical and contemporary processes have differentially influenced different [participants], which might be defined as people, groups of people, sites, institutions, social movements, partnerships, etc." (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 53). A heterologous strategy was implemented because it "entail[s] tracing a phenomenon across sites.... It is important to consider sites that may be more or less the same scaler but may not be categorically equivalent" (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 54). It allows logic-based comparisons and juxtaposition. *Vertical* analyses explored these juxtapositions between the two classes of adult educators and tracing the many differences in context, history, strategy, culture, etc. and how they influence the phenomenon of career commitment. *Transversal* analyses took into account contemporary and historical contexts and how the phenomenon of career commitment has been considered in the past and present. This three-pronged analysis approach informed the development of research and interview questions



and served as the framework that allowed for exegetical analysis of the data collected in this research, see Figure 1.

*Figure 1 Data Structure and Analysis Plan*



The final contribution to be highlighted here is related to achieving saturation in qualitative research efforts. Guest et al. (2006) described the challenges of most advice or selecting the correct number of participants to reach saturation most are based on the experience of other research projects, or the best guidance provided by experts in qualitative research. Guest

et al. conducted research that utilized two cases of 30 participant each and found that saturation was reached at 12 participants. Based on their findings, this research established two cases with six participants, each. Saturation was reached prior to completing chronological theme development. It is an interesting chicken or egg scenario to plan research and select the number of participants that are hoped to reach saturation and conducting research until saturation is confirmed. In this case, following guidance from Guest et al (2006) resulted in saturation being reached comfortably and also gaining additional perspectives that support the themes that were developed with earlier participants.

**Transferability.** The strength of qualitative research is the ability to communication results in a manner that provides the reader with the confidence to transfer results to other relevant settings. To provide the reader with such confidence, the data and analysis must be trustworthy. Trustworthiness was established by the accuracy of the data, and the analysis strategies via verification processes that ensure the results presented are representative of the data (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Verification strategies in the proposed research included triangulation; rich, thick descriptions; clarifying researcher bias; member checking; and external peer review by the advisory committee.

**Accuracy.** Interviews were recorded with audio and video (if bandwidth allowed) utilizing Zoom's recording features. Files were stored in Zoom's cloud to facilitate automatic audio transcription services. Chance (2022) found Zoom to accurately recognize over 93% of standard American English words. A professional transcription service (TranscribeMe.com, 2023) was employed. Video and audio recording allowed the researcher to observe non-verbal communication and intonation cues to be observed during the interviews. During theme development or review, the research could access the video or audio recordings to develop a

stronger understanding of the participants' intended messages by watching non-verbal communication cues and hearing intonation and inflection cues that cannot be conveyed in the transcript.

**Verification.** Qualitative research is first concerned with the integrity and credibility of the data and reported results. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that qualitative researchers engage at least two practices that verify the credibility of the data. This research utilizes five verification procedures to ensure the trustworthiness of the data.

**Triangulation.** Information was gathered utilizing multiple voices working in two different adult education contexts. Answers to semi-structured interviews served as the primary data source. Participants were asked to generate a drawing that represents their current experiences and attitudes about their job. Drawings and other novel qualitative data collection techniques have emerged as alternatives or complements to traditional text-based qualitative data. Conveying thoughts using non-textual representations can help “research participants to express their viewpoints and tell their stories more clearly and vividly, provide them with a topic or issue about which to discuss, encourage them to reflect verbally on their views and perspectives” (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010, p. 718). Stone (2014) noted that “beyond traditional textual representations of data, photographs and drawings can be utilized in conjunction with interviews and explained by participants to provide more comprehensive and complete view of their experiences” (Stone, 2014, pp. 46-47).

**Rich, thick descriptions.** The development of comparative case study results included detailed and nuanced narratives that allowed deep understanding of the results, allowing the reader to determine the transferability of the research to other contexts (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

Eisner set forth a methodology on how to make the observations that result in rich, thick descriptions.

*The Enlightened Eye* is about the perception of qualities, those that pervade intimate social relations and those that constitute complex social institutions, such as schools. It is also about the meaning of those qualities and the value we assign to them. But seeing qualities, interpreting their significance, and appraising their value are only one side of the coin. The other pertains to that magical and mysterious feat through which the content of our consciousness is given public forum. (Eisner, 1991, p. 1)

**Member checking.** Member checking took place on two levels. During the interviews participants were asked to clarify or further elucidate responses that were unclear to the interviewer. The second level of member checking involved a review of the complete transcript for each participant. A brief biography was created from the transcript for each participant. These biographies were shared with participants via email for their review and corrections or clarifications were made to the biographies.

**Clarifying researcher credibility.** The researcher has worked in Cooperative Extension Systems in Indiana (Purdue University), Michigan (Michigan State University), and Montana (Montana State University) since 1995. He has served as an extension agent from 1995 to 2005, as a supervisor of agents from 2001 to 2016, and as researcher, analyst, and evaluator focusing on program and employee success since 2016. He has conducted qualitative research in class projects and leads an ongoing, extensive longitudinal phenomenological research project studying the experiences of 28 newly hired Montana State University extension agents. Each participant was interviewed at the time of hire, nine, 18, and 36 months after hire. Additionally, the researcher has published quantitative research studying the relationship between job

satisfaction and the leader follower relationship and career commitment for extension agents in Montana. He is currently leading a quantitative research team to expand the previous research to a larger and more diverse population and study additional factors that may influence career commitment. He is on the leadership team for a mixed methods Statewide Needs Assessment for MSU Extension. He has spent the last 17 years developing an understanding of adult educator career commitment through internal analyses and research; seeking workable solutions to increasing career commitment.

In his personal life, he knows and follows the work of several missionaries (from as early as 1990) and has observed the similarities and differences in the adult education strategies they utilize in their roles compared to extension agents. It is a combination of his professional and personal experiences that allowed him to collect information from participants objectively and with understanding. His diverse professional and personal experience over the past 33 years provides him insights into situations and the ability to interpret the nuances of situations shared by participants. These abilities, if utilized, would be eisegetical and insert researcher bias into the results. The Researcher was responsible to exclude his opinions from the presentation and interpretation of the data. The advisory committee also had a role in holding the Researcher to this standard. This research excluded adult educators the researcher knows well or has collaborated with in the past.

***External audit.*** The dissertation committee serves a crucial role to ensure the research was novel, the methodology was sound, and that success was obtained. They approved the methodology and reviewed the results and findings to ensure the results are defensible.

### *Explanation of Theme Development*

The coding process for the data collected in this research project was iterative. A repetitive and diverse set of strategies were utilized to develop an understanding of the individual interviews, how the commonalities and differences within each case resulted in greater understanding, and how the cases were interrelated and different from each other. Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959) served as the evaluative construct for this research. Table 2 provides the motivation (satisfiers) and hygiene (dissatisfiers) developed by Herzberg et al. in their seminal work.

**Table 2.** *Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) motivation and hygiene factors*

Factors	
Motivation (Satisfiers)	Hygiene (Dissatisfiers)
Recognition	Company Policies and Administration
Achievement	Supervision
Interesting Work	Salary
Responsibility	Job Security
Advancement	Personal Life
The Work Itself	Working Conditions
	Status
	Interpersonal Relationships (peers, subordinates, or superiors)

In this study relevant factors were coded for themes and the names of the factors were shortened or modified to better fit the context of this research.

These processes resulted in a comprehensive understanding of how a diverse set of adult educators develop and experience career commitment. Table 3 provides the chronological and methodological steps taken in theme development.

**Table 3** *Categorical and thematic coding process*

Action	Purpose	Results
Zoom interviews were transcribed via TranscribeMe.com <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 99%+ accuracy guarantee</li> <li>• Speaker IDs</li> <li>• Timestamps (TranscribeMe.com, 2023)</li> </ul>	To ensure accuracy of interview transcripts during analyses.	Accurate Transcriptions
Transcriptions were adapted to convert S1 and S2 speaker codes to the interviewer, “Steve” and the pseudonym of the participant	To protect the confidentiality of participants	Transcripts that were ready to import into NVIVO
Cases were assigned to each interview file. Cases are NVIVO’s categorical coding structure.	These cases simplify searches and analysis of data (Extension, Missionary, and Participant pseudonym)	Data is better prepared for analysis
The interviewer and participant responses were auto coded to appropriate cases	To simplify inquiries about individual participants’ responses and generate reports that exclude the interviewer from the reports	Data is better prepared for analysis
Attitudes (mixed, neutral, negative, and positive) were coded as themes for most interviewee responses	To identify attitudes as needed for the related sub-question and to indicate whether other coded themes are positive or negative.	To create a structure that minimizes having multiple versions of the same theme with differing attitudes
Question or prompt responses were assigned to cases for each item	To simplify decontextualized analyses	Responses to a single prompt from all participants was easily generated
Codes created for Herzberg et al., (1959) motivation-hygiene factors	Prior coding efforts indicated that some motivation-hygiene factors were relevant to these responses	Coding for these themes were the first emergent themes identified
During the motivation-hygiene review and coding, additional emergent themes were coded	Developing a robust set of emergent themes	This resulted in adding Balance, Challenges, Changing Lives (of others), Collaboration, Cross-Cultural, Innovation, Inspiration, and Learner

Decontextualized the coding by reviewing all the answers for each question/prompt, question by question.	To consider the responses in a different context for greater overall understanding.	Discrimination and Motivation were added as themes but were not high volume codes. Additionally, overall coding was improved as codes developed later in the early reviews were coded.
Review of drawings and related explanations	To learn from what the participants' drawings, why they drew it, and how it demonstrated their experiences, attitudes, and career commitment or attitudes	The pictures were coded and ready for use in publication
Review of coded themes	A report was generated for each theme and the results reviewed	Strengthened the decontextualized review of data.

The completed transcription files were opened in Word and the speaker codes were changed to "Steve" as the interviewer and the appropriate pseudonym and files were given coded file names. Files were imported to NVIVO 20 for Macintosh. Several cases were assigned to files or the content in the files. *Cases*, one coding type in NVIVO, serve as classifications that describe the participants or the content of the transcripts. *Codes* in NVIVO are utilized to identify themes that are discovered within the transcripts. NVIVO's automatic speaker recognition was utilized to create cases that identify who was speaking. Transcript and drawing files were assigned to extension or missionary cases. Each file was assigned to a case for the participant. Finally, responses to each question or prompt response from participants were assigned to question cases, allowing simple analysis of all question responses in a single search result. All of these steps allow the quick and simple selection of data for a variety of analyses.

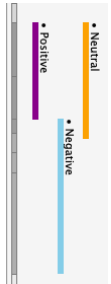
The following steps began several passes through the transcripts. All transcripts were read to assign questions responses to cases. All interviews were coded for participant attitudes (mixed, negative, neutral, or positive). This coding served two purposes. Sub-question 2 asks "how do adult educators' attitudes influence their career commitment?" These codes informed



that sub-question. These codes also simplify overall coding strategies as combining attitudes with other coding themes reduced the number of overall themes. For example, a code for interpersonal relationship can have four different interpretations based on the shared attitude coding. Most participant text was coded for one or more attitudes, see Figure 1.

**Figure 2** Example of drawing description and attitude coding in NVIVO

Molly  
 So I drew two different table settings. And I feel like I relate to the table setting on the bottom, which is there's food on the table. There's a discussion. There's different people. I drew one of the women in indigenous dress with the indigenous braids. And this is kind of where I feel like my context is. It's in relationship. It's a table community with the people here. And then I drew a table above at the top. And this, I feel like, sometimes represents the Canadian office. And around their table are graphs and computer. And oftentimes, they're the ones who are above, who are making decisions that are then filtered down. And I think that sometimes the frustration is that there can be little communication between the decision-makers and the field workers and that the decisions can often be made based on spreadsheets and budgets and not as much to do with the relational reality that exists on the field. So I think that that is a tension that exists in a lot of different mission organizations. And CBM is not immune to that either.



Examples to single layer coding for interpersonal relationships may result in the following codes: interpersonal conflict, friendship, synergistic relationships, supervisor relationships, clientele relationships, and peer relationships. Dual layer coding adds a layer of complication that results in simpler data management. Long lists of primary codes risk duplicate coding or lost codes in the long list. A first layer code of *interpersonal relationships* in combination with qualifying code groups like *attitudes* and *people types* allows a researcher to have fewer primary level codes, making coding simpler, and utilize the *attitude group* and the *people type group* to access relevant data out of *interpersonal relationships* via query options in NVIVO. For example, when relationships with conflict are desired, the *interpersonal relationships* with *negative* attitudes were queried.

As a result of assigning questions to cases and attitudes to codes, it was observed that responses from all 12 participants aligned with Motivation-Hygiene factors of Herzberg et al (1993/1959). These codes served as the first emergent themes in the coding process. The following Motivation-Hygiene factors were selected achievement, advancement, benefits,

interpersonal relationships, job security, physical working conditions, policy and bureaucracy, recognition, salary, supervision, and the work itself. The factor names were shortened to simplify accessing the coding list and a few names were modified to fit the thematic coding from these data. All interviews were coded considering those factors. The next iteration in coding focused on role perspective. This coding focused on whether responses indicated from the participants' perspectives considered their employment role as job, career, or calling.

The initial theme development occurred by coding the interviews chronologically. The following new themes were developed during those coding efforts: balance, challenges, changing lives (of others), collaboration, cross-cultural, innovation, inspiration, and learner. The coding steps reviewed Extension interviews from beginning to end in the order the interviews occurred and then the missionary interviews were reviewed in the same manner. The next iteration of theme identification decontextualized the data by reviewing all responses to each prompt starting with the first prompt and reading every response for that prompt, Extension first, followed by missionary responses. This process allowed for the data to be considered in a different manner than the chronological coding processes. Prompt number four asked participants to share and describe the drawing they made to represent their current attitudes and experiences in their current professional role. The drawings were also coded in NVIVO using spatial selections for relevant themes. Additional codes were identified through these decontextualized processes, discrimination and motivation, but received few references. The second decontextualized analysis reviewed all coded responses for an identified theme. Annotations were made at this time as the beginning step in comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing the results in regard to the cases and the central and sub-questions. The decontextualized reviews also allowed improvement

to chronological coding efforts. Missed codes were observed and coded and themes that were developed mid-process were applied to earlier participants.

With themes developed, the comparative case analysis began. The themes developed were *Attitudes: mixed, negative, neutral, and positive; balance; challenges; changing lives; collaboration; cross-cultural; discrimination; Herzberg factors: achievement, advancement, benefits, interpersonal relationships, job security, physical working conditions, policy and bureaucracy, recognition, salary, supervision, and the work itself; innovation; inspiration; job perspective: calling, career, and job; learner; and motivation*, see Appendix B for the complete coding book. This analysis strategy follows the methodologies outlined by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017), see Figure 1. The comparative case analysis utilizes a horizontal analysis, a process that explored the individual participants so that their historic and current contexts could be understood; vertical analysis expanded the understanding of participants within a case and how their combined experiences inform the central question; and transversal analysis took into account the context, history, strategies, and culture within each case and across the two cases to develop the most robust understanding of career commitment (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

### **Comparative Case Study Analysis**

The coding strategies allowed for and overlapped with the analysis strategies utilized in this study. The *horizontal* analysis considered how the career commitment “unfold[ed] in *distinct locations* that are *socially produced*” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 3). This step of evaluation was completed once the interviews were completed and an analysis of each participant’s interview transcripts and drawings were reviewed. A brief biography and summary of current career commitment related experiences and attitudes were created for each participant. These summaries were approximately one to two pages in length. The biographies were sent to

participants for their review and provide clarifications or corrections. This member checking resulted in four participants offering minor corrections to facts or clarification of a concept they shared. These biographies were updated with the information provided through member checking.

The *vertical* analysis “insists on simultaneous attention *to and across scales*” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 3). *Scales* were used to help the researcher “distinguish local, regional, national, and global levels” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 13) in relationship to the central- and sub-questions. This strategy focused the analysis on the broad concepts that were developed through the qualitative analysis. The *horizontal* analysis focused on the individual participants. The *vertical* analysis complemented the *horizontal* strategy, maximizing the differences between the participants. Extension agent and missionary participants provide several scales for consideration, they included local, regional, national, and global levels of difference. This level of analysis utilized the information provided within each case. The first level of analysis consisted of a review of the data within the interview chronology. It was during this phase of analysis that theme development saturation was confirmed. All codes that received numerous references were identified prior to decontextualized analysis. Only two new themes were developed later, *motivation* and *discrimination*; and these themes received very little use. These two themes were developed utilizing the context of each interview question across all participants and for each theme across all participants.

The beginning of the *transversal* analysis and the ending *vertical* analysis was not a distinct boundary but a gradual transition where the vertical analysis tapered off and the transversal analysis tapered into existence. The *transversal* analysis situated the varied experiences and attitudes of the participants within each case. It also evaluated the various

situations across cases and all the participants. It was in this level of review that formal comparative case study analysis took place.

### **Narrative Report**

This report of results follows the comparative case study analysis utilized in this research. The horizontal analysis is also important as it introduces the reader to the participants in this research.

#### ***Horizontal Analysis: Extension Agents***

The first phase of analysis of the interviews reviewed and summarized each participant's situation, experiences, and attitudes toward their career commitment. This review introduced the participants to the researcher and reader. The result was a brief summary of the participant's historical and current situation and understanding of the attitudes and experiences that inform their career commitment. Additional details were explored in later analyses.

The following summaries serve as the horizontal analysis described by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017). It demonstrates the participant's current assessment of their experiences; attitudes; and how factors from their employer influence career commitment. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect participants' confidentiality. When necessary, some facts are obscured to provide additional protection to participants. For example, if a participant's area of expertise or work is very narrow and possibly identifiable, a more general, but appropriate, description was utilized. Each participant was described by their generation. This served as an acknowledgement of their age range and helps the reader understand the major life events the person may have experienced (e.g. the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion, or 9/11). The sharing or identification of their generations did not impose characteristics of those generations on the individuals.

**Lana.** Lana is a Millennial (date of birth 1980 to 1995) and a newer extension agent who is a mid-career childhood development expert who trains adult professionals in that field. She works in a large Extension office in an urban area of the western United States. Prior to working in Extension, Lana worked for other organizations in the same field. She found great satisfaction in the work and with the organizations and people she worked with. When asked if she ever experienced burnout, Lana referred to an experience with a prior employer. She loved working for this organization until a new supervisor arrived who had a different philosophy. Lana's motivation declined during this time and when it was clear things would not improve; she found other employment.

During Lana's previous jobs, she befriended the Extension professionals she now works with. She was impressed with the work and work-environment they experienced and how their educational work impacted the community. Lana also met the leader for her current Extension unit. Through these interactions and collaborations, she decided to pursue a position with Extension when the opportunity arose. Approximately two years ago, Lana started working for Extension and loves the educational model and autonomy provided to her as she trains adult practitioners. Lana appreciated that she does not have administrative roles, which do not appeal to her. At this time, Lana is highly satisfied in her extension agent role and can see herself retiring from Extension if family priorities don't change.

**Paige.** Paige is a Millennial (date of birth 1977 to 1995) who has a unique pedigree that supports her four-year Extension career. She has a background in visual arts and later pursued a master's degree in forestry at a land grant university. Through her graduate school experience, she worked with an extension agent in her department. Paige's path to Extension was a slow

process of small steps. She has worked in two Extension-like jobs at two universities and now serves as an extension agent in a third institution.

She finds great satisfaction in her work with clientele and helping them improve their lives and having a positive impact. She struggles with inconsistency and turnover in administrators. Paige referred to poor leadership styles that limited her ability to be creative or exercise autonomy, being told to “slow your roll”. She is a resilient Extension Educator who thrives on helping people. Paige admitted that “even she might experience burnout”. She is place bound and expects to stay in her role for the long term. She loves her job and the people and the type of work she does and is willing to tolerate the challenges for the love of the work.

**Eve.** Eve is a Baby Boomer (date of birth 1946 to 1964) who began her extension work in the southern U.S. after running a niche agriculture business for over two decades. Eve grew up in Extension as a 4-H member, parent, volunteer, and leader. Her initial employment roles in Extension were implementing targeted educational programs on specific topics that were grant funded. As funding on Eve’s grants ran out, she pursued county extension agent positions in her home state but was unsuccessful in finding a position in the timeframe she needed. She found employment as an extension agent in a western state in a frontier county. Eve has served in her new role almost two years. She is experiencing culture shock in three ways, most manageable is ecosystem differences (semi-arid, different agriculture crops, public lands issues, etc.); Extension structure and density (the philosophy of Extension work and structure in each state differ, and geographically larger counties in the west increase the distance between peer agents to hours instead of minutes); and lower population density means there are fewer people to interact with (she finds herself with limited friends locally).

Eve's agriculture community is skeptical of her ability to help them as an outsider from another part of the U.S. She finds one-on-one interactions work best and is proud of the in-roads she has made with certain producer groups in regions of her county. Eve is frustrated that many more producers aggressively resist her attempts to get to know more about their agriculture operations. She speaks very highly of several of her peer agents in other offices and laments that they are over two hours from her office.

Eve is most frustrated with the Extension system's structure that pushes her to do research and publish over working with and helping her clientele. She is a direct person who shares her thoughts and feelings freely.

Simply said, she indicated she is not fitting into this Extension system and is struggling to find anyone in administrative channels who will help her. Eve finds administrative interactions the opposite; she named several layers of administration who she said were demeaning to her. She also noted that her supervisor did not have one positive comment about her work after her first year on the job.

Eve is discouraged and experiencing burnout and is looking for her next career opportunity. Interestingly, when asked whether she looked at her current role as a job, career, or calling; she responded with a long-term perspective, seeing and believing in the good work that can happen in Extension. Eve seems to understand that success will be difficult in her current position due to lack of support from administration and some of her clientele. She believes she can help her clientele, if they would open up to her. She is greatly disappointed in how hard the challenges have been to face and that many of the challenges she is facing are coming from within the organization.



**Chelsea.** Chelsea is a Millennial (date of birth 1977 to 1995) who is a five-year extension agent who focuses on natural resources and horticulture. She has a degree in environmental sciences from a liberal arts college and a master's degree in biology from a university near where her boyfriend, now spouse, lived. She serves in a southern culture and considers herself to be working cross-culturally, having grown up in an industrial suburban/urban culture on the other side of the state.

Chelsea works with two large volunteer groups and inherited several issues where volunteers were overstepping their roles prior to her arrival or interpersonal conflicts that were ongoing. She described how she quickly became too busy when she was first hired and was attempting to calendar more activities than were sustainable. Chelsea serves multiple counties and was surprised how much time she spends driving for this position. The COVID-19 curtailment of face-to-face activities helped her correct her overscheduling. However, her clientele live in extreme poverty and distance and virtual solutions that were viable elsewhere were unavailable to her clientele as they did not have access to technologies or the internet.

Prior to joining Extension, Chelsea always looked at extension agents in her state as the elite professionals in topic areas and expressed how pleased she was that an Extension position opened where she lived and that she was chosen for the role. She observed that her clientele accepted her more easily when she took her husband's name, which was a familiar name in the region.

Chelsea appreciates freedom that her local supervisor provides and that he is empowering and results oriented. She is pleased that the office dynamic is family-like. She is frustrated when campus determines that all offices in the state should "push" a certain practice. She finds that often the statewide effort is not appropriate for the level of poverty in her area.

When asked she considered her role as a calling. Chelsea clarified, “I’m not just here because of the job, right? I’m not just here doing my work for the money. I really do care about the people in my communities. I care about helping them.”

**Braden.** Braden is an early career Extension Educator who is a Millennial (date of birth 1977 to 1995). He began his extension career at the beginning of COVID, working for an 1890 land grant university. Braden finds satisfaction in building new programs and being involved in developing agriculture demonstration sites or centers. His greatest satisfaction comes from helping small and innovative agriculture producers.

Braden’s path to Extension was less traditional. It was through graduate school and working with Extension faculty in his department that he began to learn how his passion for helping people and teaching could be focused on an extension career. As he was the first person in his role, he was complimentary of his 1862 [the first land grant university in each state, either the sole state university or one of the state universities] Extension colleagues and their welcoming of him and the collaborations that have developed in a short time.

Braden did express some concerns about bureaucratic processes that are not only cumbersome, but they are also outdated paper-based processes. Purchasing requires many levels of permission and take so long that the need for the purchase may cease to exist because the event had to cancelled or went on under-resourced.

Overall, Braden is satisfied in his work, loves working with his clientele and peers, and looks forward to when more of his peers are hired. He looks at his role as a career, which he defines as something that makes him a better person.

**Alex.** Extension is a third career for Alex, a Generation X (date of birth 1965 to 1976), who serves a region of his state. He ran a construction company with his brother and then

returned to college to study natural resources. Alex began working for non-profits to help landowners implement sustainable practices on their lands. These positions covered several states and required significant travel. As his family began to grow his Extension system advertised a position doing similar work for a portion of his state. While the pay was less, Alex and his wife decided to make the switch to Extension.

The switch was seamless. Alex stopped working for the non-profit on a Friday and started to work with Extension on Monday; working with the same clientele and partners he worked with before. He has been in this position a little over three years and he has earned his master's degree since starting.

Alex described how much he enjoyed the work with his clientele and helping people implement practices to better manage their land. His work requires long and unusual hours and prudent use of flexible scheduling. Alex appreciates that his travel is closer to home and overnight trips are less common.

As Alex described his experiences and attitudes toward his role; he describes loving it at first, then being disappointed, and now discouraged. The driving factors for this evolution are items related to Extension administration, policies, and bureaucracies. He is passionate about helping people and working directly with people. Alex does not enjoy working at his desk to fulfill requirements like reporting. If something required of him by administration takes him away from work with clientele, it frustrates him. Another frustration was what he described as an unwritten rule that you must spend several years in grade before a person will be considered for advancement [this timeframe was longer than most tenure schedules]. Having worked as an owner in construction and from his experience working in non-profits; recognition of good work was more immediate and not constrained by arbitrary limitations like time in grade.

The flexibility provided by Extension is the driving job characteristic that holds him in Extension. Alex can command a higher salary and knows he has other career options available to him that pay better but may require more time away from family. When asked how he perceived his current role, he was quickly said, “my current role, a lot of what I do, I feel like, is a calling when I'm out of teaching, being able to help folks”; however, he lamented “this role that I'm in now seems a little more like a job to me.”

***Horizontal Analysis: Missionaries.***

**Joslyn.** Joslyn is a Baby Boomer (date of birth 1946 to 1964) and is a long-time missionary who currently serves in Africa and previously served in South America. She has had teaching and administrative support roles in a variety of settings. Joslyn is single and fluent in Spanish and is learning the language in her current setting in Africa. Most citizens where she is speak English; she is not benefiting from emersion in that English speaking culture.

Joslyn was encouraged in high school to attend Bible college to learn more about the Bible and Christianity. Through that process she explored mission options and determined that God was calling her to missions. She worked a long stint in South America where she found success with a team that was building capacity with national pastors and churches. She was most encouraged at times where she was developing resources, supporting efforts, or working with people in ways that had positive results. Joslyn found herself most discouraged at times where her employer changed her situation. In one instance she was moved from one home that was near her church in favor of one that was closer to her work location. The move disconnected her from her network of friends and any nighttime church activities due to safety concerns. Joslyn was also discouraged when her employer determined that the national churches had become self-sufficient, and she had to move to a new continent and a new culture. Her disappointment came

from leaving people and a church that she had invested her life into and losing her close-contact friendship networks and no longer being able to invest in their lives. Joslyn has also found discouragement in the introduction of more detailed and controlling funding and reimbursement mechanisms as her employer experienced reduced revenue. Since leaving South America she has worked in two African nations and is nearing retirement.

Even though Joslyn has faced times of discouragement and even depression resulting from actions by her employer, she is now less than two years from retirement. She explained why she persevered through the difficult times. Joslyn described her methodology throughout her life as taking it step by step. When a decision needed to be made, she took the next step. When she was enjoying successes, Joslyn too the next step. When her team was removed from South American, she took the next step. When she was moved from her first posting in Africa, she took the next step. Her willingness to move forward during difficult and positive times allowed her to take in new experiences and adapt to her new settings and find success that is resulting in a full career of service.

**Noah.** Noah is a long serving Baby Boomer (date of birth 1946 to 1964) in South America. He went to the field with his wife in the 1980s. His wife grew up as a missionary kid in a different location in country where they currently serve. They raised their children in that country. Noah served in traditional church planting roles. Now he also serves as regional supervisor, supporting missionaries in several countries.

When asked about his experiences as a missionary; Noah immediately shared how difficult his first term was (approximately four years). When they arrived in the large city where they were serving; they rented a small space for a church. An influential leader of a non-profit responded negatively to their presence. Noah and his wife experienced very difficult periods as

they were accused of operating a cult-like organization that sexually abused young women, they were subjected to illegal searches by the country's version of the FBI, the same officials began attending services at the church, and investigative reporters showed up at their home pursuing the accusations. Later, the people in their neighborhood were building an athletic court for youth and Noah's church provided supplies and labor to support their neighbors. The same local leader wrote the mayor accusing them of stealing the land so they could build their church. This final attack backfired as the neighbors were shown the letter when police came to investigate. The neighbors validated that Noah, and his church were helping with the project and donating concrete and gravel and working alongside the neighbors to help them with their goals. The accusing leader lost credibility with his own clientele as he suggested that the mayor deed the neighborhood land to his non-profit to keep it away from those "foreigners". The neighbors perceived this as the leader trying to steal their land. In the end, many neighbors attended Noah's church.

These experiences, greatly simplified here, are foundational to Noah's long-term success. These early years were extremely challenging for a young couple trying to begin their ministry. They experienced times where the emotional toll made it easy to think about leaving the field, but being called by God to the ministry, they never seriously considered quitting. Forty years after those experiences, the raw impact it had on Noah and his wife was palpable as he shared this early career experience. As he reflected, he was thankful that they persisted. Their church plant was the first Protestant church planted in the city and now 70 churches exist, and they have sent 20 missionaries to other countries.

The extreme nature of those early attacks were not the only difficult times they faced over the years, but they were the most difficult; giving them confidence that they could survive other difficult experiences.

Noah is satisfied in his current role where he still has local ministry responsibilities and a supervisory middle-manager role supporting several other missionaries in Spanish speaking South America. He did not seek out this supervisor role. He was identified by his employer and agreed to the change and is enjoying the role. He attributed success in persisting as missionaries to their calling from God and their trust that their calling was real and that the difficulties and attacks could be overcome.

**Connor.** Connor is a Millennial (date of birth 1977 to 1995) who shared how he had “a call to [a Midwest church]” where he served as worship leader and later had “the call to [work in Europe]”. Through a series of experiences, including traveling to Africa to adopt an Ethiopian daughter, he and his wife began to consider international ministry. They identified a missionary agency when they were called by God to serve in eastern Europe. Connor is in his early 40s and considers himself a Millennial who is serving in his second ministry calling. His passion is ministry that combines music and Jesus.

During Connor and his wife’s first several years they served in one city and developed partnerships with other missionaries and national churches of various denominations. He noted how smaller denominations looked at him as a valued resource from afar who’s help was sought and valued. The largest Protestant denomination was the opposite, the churches were well-established and had a critical mass that provided them successes from their national leadership and membership. The latter were welcoming of him but do not need or crave his assistance.

Early in their first term, learning the language dominated their time with language classes for 12 months and other learning through emersion. Language skills must be developed well beyond the level that allows an expatriate to live in the culture without the use of English. As they continued their early service, they built partnerships with individuals and churches and contributed in ways that they valued. After returning to the U.S for several months to recharge and report on their work; they returned to a new city. They moved to this new city in the past two years. They are now building new partnerships and starting over in their ministry. This move was challenging as they moved away from their network of partners and mentors.

Cultural adjustments were challenging as their new culture is very different than the U.S. He specifically noted the challenges his children face when attending shame-based schools and living in a culture influenced by post World War II Russian bloc societies.

When considering his calling, Connor noted that he had two in his life. The first, was to the midwestern church and the second to eastern Europe.

He defined his calling as “something that came to be outside of my own, personal desires, meaning the Lord spoke to me. I didn't sit around daydreaming, wishing, and hoping that someday I could live in [in Europe] and work for [the mission agency]. No, that was very outside of me”.

Connor indicated that a calling may have a time limit and he was committed to his current work, but also thought that this current era of ministry might come to an end at some point. The number one concern he expressed relating to leaving his current role were negative experiences or consequences for his wife or children.



They are committed to fulfilling their calling. When they face challenging times, they trust in the calling that they are in the right place, doing the right work. They are open to their calling changing as they experienced when migrating from U.S. based to foreign ministry.

**Molly.** Molly is a Millennial (date of birth 1977 to 1995) and a Canadian missionary with her husband in South America. She works in holistic ministries that address outreach and personal growth-oriented efforts with the goal to improve the lives of others. Molly describes herself as adaptable and empathetic; a helper and as someone who cares about others. She went to school in a French immersion program during her primary and secondary education, studying French culture. She went to Bible college and studied international ministry. Molly also moved to a city in French speaking Canada but lived in an immigrant community where other languages dominated. During this time her husband was completing his master's degree. They interned for several months in the country where they now work and experienced a call to minister there full time after raising support. Molly explained her calling.

That's a tricky question because I don't know if I've experienced a calling in the sense that I've heard a lot of pastors talk about when I went to Bible college and to seminary and that felt they felt called to do a pastoral role or something like that. My calling was always quieter, and it was about saying yes to lots of little things and then taking a step back and looking and realizing, "Oh, God has been pulling me and guiding me this way all along the way, but he didn't reveal that to me at the beginning." But now, looking up and looking around and realizing, this is where God wants me to be.

The work in their country needed both Molly and her husband as missionaries. Their employer's philosophy of ministry aligned well with their beliefs. They were well prepared to enter the field. When they taught at an international school in their country, they took the

opportunity to learn from the parents of their students about the missionary efforts and organizations that were working in that country.

As they experienced challenges in ministry, they realized that challenges are not unique to a single location and moving to a new country would not free them from challenges. The result was that they decided to work through the challenges where they served, rather than try to escape those experiences for another location, only to face other challenges elsewhere.

Molly has a strong preference to work in community with people, building friendship and trust with nationals and helping them succeed in life temporally and eternally. One of the discouraging things she experiences was when her employer made decisions analytically and dispassionately without consideration for the relationships, partnerships, and trust that take years to develop. She sees many missionary employers using business models in a human development context. The detached leadership style is one of the most discouraging things in her career. She noted that the leadership allowed ease of fundraising to drive programs. Molly is especially concerned when long-term programs with strong relationships and partnerships were discounted as hard to fund in favor of new programs that were easier to “sell” to funding partners. She also noted that challenging relationships within her missionary team and a straining relationship with a supervisor were that cause of burnout in her time in-country to this date. They found the supervisor detached and that he lacked engagement in the programs in the country. Molly and her husband were frustrated when they would propose something new in a well thought out manner and the idea was dismissed without consideration. The situation is now improved due to a proximity change of the supervisor, and the burnout is in the past.

Molly works with vulnerable communities, often women, to help them develop small businesses that empower them to greater personal freedom and flexibility. Her focus on genuine

relationship building has been proven as many of the women she works with have partners in prison. These women have been a great help as they support and commiserate as the demonstrated reciprocation as the national women supported her as she and her husband worked to adopt a national child and faced bureaucratic hurdles. The national women also knew the governmental bureaucracies well and willingly helped Molly and her husband navigate through the challenges of a corrupt government.

Molly and her husband decided that they plan to retire from their careers in their country. She acknowledged that there may be career changes, but they have decided that wherever they are, that is where they will plan to work until retirement. This mindset helped them focus strategically on long-term goals. This long-term view is consistent with their focus on community and building trust and relationships with nationals.

**Evan.** Evan is a Millennial (date of birth 1977 to 1995) and a missionary nurse, MSN RN, in Africa. He grew up as a missionary kid in the Oceania, returned to the U.S. to earn his nursing degree, and was immediately commissioned in the U.S. Navy where he served for nearly a decade; prior to joining a team establishing a missionary hospital in Africa. Upon arriving in Africa to help set up the hospital on a short-term appointment. Evan met Eva, another missionary nurse, they dated while in Africa and were married in the U.S. two years later and now have three young children. Evan now serves as a full-time missionary and Eva cares for their children. He is nurse in the medical unit, trains national nurses, and is the nurse supervisor.

In the time prior to Evan and Eva's departure from Africa to be married, Evan explained that they were both experiencing burnout. Their employer provided training and counseling while in the U.S. that helped them process the burnout and return to the field ready to serve again. Evan has served as the supervising nurse since arriving at the hospital. He has no choice in

the role, the culture he works in dictates that the supervisor role should be filled by a man; most of the national nurses are male as well. Evan does not enjoy this role and continually hopes to pass that responsibility on to another. His passion is ministering to patients physically and spiritually and to train national nurses in ways that improves their knowledge and skills. Evan would also like to have more time develop friendships and rapport with nationals outside medical settings. In addition to being forced to be the supervisor; he is also frustrated that his organization is inflexible when current team members want to adjust their hospital workload, Evan indicated employees felt ignored. Evan also shared that when potential candidates to join the hospital team are willing to move to Africa and serve in the hospital the organization will reject them if it isn't a perfect match for their organizational chart.

Evan talked candidly about how much death they experience. Malaria is a significant problem. Other health issues also result in death at the hospital. Many of these deaths are a result of no preventive healthcare options in the country or that patients arrive at the hospital with conditions so advanced it is difficult to help them.

When asked how much longer he will serve in his country; Evan responded, "five years, maybe, five to eight". He went on to indicate that if they leave their current roles, it won't be to abandon ministry. They will continue ministry elsewhere. Evan quipped that the grass may be greener if they move away from their arid climate, but they won't be moving to find greener pastures.

**Jake.** Jake is a Gen X (date of birth 1965 to 1976) who grew up in the western U.S. and moved to a major city in Asia where his father served as a missionary. After high school in Asia, he returned to his home state and attended a state university where he learned the foundations that allowed him to work in the trades. At this point in his life, he had no desire to be a

missionary. Jake started working in his profession and eventually started his own successful business. He has always preferred to work with his hands and to work in and enjoy the outdoors.

Jake is married to Faith who grew up in Asia as a missionary kid. While living in the western U.S. and early in their marriage, they pursued several options to return to Asia and the culture that Faith embraced as her own. None of these opportunities came to fruition. In hindsight, Jake was thankful about this. He said their motivations were wrong. They were trying to go for self-focused reasons. As he reflected on these possibilities he thought if they had gone to Asia as missionaries, they would have likely left the field in failure. While Jake wanted to make his wife happy by going to Asia, Jake was not interested in being a full-time missionary at that time. They continued to work in their business and serve in their church. Jake responded to the opportunity for a short-term mission trip that was focused on construction and community development projects. Each year he continued to participate in similar projects involving more of his family on each trip. It was through these experiences that Jake and Faith were called to choose full time missions. They served in Africa in a ministry that took advantage of Jake's trade skills and informal relationship building and discipleship abilities. After the initial challenges that most new missionaries face were addressed, they were thriving.

Then, interpersonal relationship challenges on their team began to surface. Jake and Faith went through a process of identifying the difficulty with an individual, being confident they could resolve things, to hoping or wishing they could, to realizing things were unlikely to improve. Through this time their attitudes were spiraling down, and they became burned out. At the lowest of these times, they returned to the U.S., spending 14 months in their home church recuperating, being supported and encouraged, and receiving counseling. They returned to Africa, but in a different city with a different focus in ministry. They developed a successful

ministry in their new location, but Jake was in more formal educator roles and couldn't utilize his trade skills as much as he wished. They were relieved to be past the period of conflict and planned to retire from their country.

As Jake and Faith traveled home at one point, they visited a long-time friend in Asia and were introduced to new possibilities in Asia. After consideration and knowing that they still had 20 more years of service; they moved to Asia and have worked there since that time. They faced challenges in their current country as their language skills are not developed enough to talk about spiritual or philosophical issues with nationals. They are committed to staying in this country as long as they are allowed to stay there.

**Summary.** The horizontal analysis demonstrates the value of striving for maximum differences in participants. The biographies demonstrate the spectrum of professional experiences and the variation in attitudes and experiences and how they influence career commitment. This analytical methodology was supported by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) and their comparative case study analysis and by one of five analysis strategies identified by Yin (2014) where each participant is described for the reader. The vertical analysis will explore how that participants' interviews inform the central and sub-questions of this research for each case.

#### ***Vertical Analysis: Extension Agents***

The vertical analysis process began to bring the individual responses into an organized system of thought around the sub-questions for extension agents and missionaries. Each sub-question served as a category of analysis of the participants within each case.

**Sub-Question 1: How are career paths chosen?** Participants responded to three main prompts that explored the experiences they went through to enter their current employment situation; describing why they chose the employment path they did; and whether they considered

their current role a job, career, or calling and how they defined the final response. This sub-question was primarily informed by interview question six, “We talked about the process you went through to select this career and to get into the career. Next would you share why you chose the career? What/who motivated/encouraged/discouraged you along the way? What helped/hindered you?” Responses to interview prompt three, “I want to ask you to think back to the time you were deciding to pursue this career. Describe the experiences and processes you went through to from the time you started pursuing this career and getting into this position.”; and interview question 11, “Do you consider your current role a job, career, or calling? Why? What does that term mean to you?” also informed this sub-question. The extension agent responses for this sub-question were organized into five concepts that were derived from the themes and responses to the relevant interview questions, see Appendix A for the interview questions.

*Being inspired by a mentor or peer.* Several extension agents described individuals who work in extension roles who inspired or helped them learn about extension as a career. Lana noted “I have a friend who works at extension.... And every time she would talk about her work and what she did, it just lit up something in me that I really, really wanted to do what she was doing”. Based on extension classes Chelsea attended, she “thought [extension] was this really elite place that you couldn’t really get into until you were really far in your career”. Braden “did a bit of work [at an university] Arboretum and their center for integrated agricultural systems”. Through this work experience he got to work with faculty “who were 50% research papers and 50% extension in soil science, in horticulture, [and] in animal science”. He credits one faculty member with encouraging him into a course that focused his career goals. Initially, Braden worked for a non-profit that grew and donated food for the hungry and an organic vegetable

farm. Braden wanted to work for Extension and started applying for jobs near where his wife wanted to attend graduate school.

An iterative process without a clear path. Paige described herself as being both a creative and artistic person who also had a scientific background. She found Extension “slowly... through a series of decisions, [I] found out that extension was the best place for me to be. And it kind of just was... serendipitous that I ended up here”. Braden had always valued “learning and being open to learn and always just wanting to be learning new things”. He worked in several specialty crop and local foods related positions, all of which fostered learning for Braden, others, or both. Extension was a longtime career goal that he pursued.

Career focus was an area of passion. Chelsea had experiences as a client of Extension where she grew up. “As someone fresh out of grad school, I didn’t necessarily think that I would qualify for a position”. “I had worked more in youth environmental education outreach during college. And I’ve been a Sunday School teacher and things like that. So I’d... worked with kids and education”.

After going to grad school, I kind of had the two options... I just didn’t necessarily have a great experience with my research project. And... what we called... the publish or die atmosphere in grad school. And that pressure and all of that, it was just not for me... I really wanted to focus on outreach.

Upon graduation she successfully landed a fixed-term outreach and education job at a government visitor center. As that position was ending, an extension agent position was advertised near her graduate school and in the town where her future husband grew up. She was successful in getting an extension agent job in her discipline. Alex was running a construction company with his brother when he experienced two impactful experiences.



I had a romantic relationship that ended, and I just got tired. I got burned out”.

Professionally, “I was a couple of weeks working [in difficult construction situations]....

One night, I watched Dirty Jobs, Mike Rowe. And he was doing what I had been

doing.... And he said, “You’d have to be out of your dag gone mind to be doing this.

This is insane”.

Those experiences were the catalyst he needed to return to college and get a degree in his area of passion, a bachelor’s degree in natural resources. Upon graduation, he began working with non-profit organizations that helped landowners manage the natural resources on their properties. “I really wanted to get out and work in the woods and not be stuck in an office”. Those positions allowed Alex to accomplish that goal. In his personal life he was married and had two young children. When Extension in his state advertised a similar position to his that covered several counties instead of several states, he jumped at the opportunity to join Extension, even though he took a pay cut to do so.

Needed income and was qualified. Eve described her lifelong experiences with Extension, starting as a 4-H member in her youth and her continued involvement in adulthood as a 4-H volunteer and parent. When talking about the reasons she pursued her first job in Extension, she said “So basically, this position came up... and the money was better. So I’m like, yeah, I like extension. I’m familiar with extension, familiar with the system [in her home state]. So I just applied for it”.

**Sub-Question 2: How do adult educators’ attitudes influence their career commitment?** Attitudes for each participant were portrayed throughout the interviews. All questions provided insights about attitudes, as attitudes were often the result of experiences or organizational factors. The following follow up prompts were utilized when participant

responses did not include their attitudes. “What role did your relationships with others have in your attitudes toward your career?” And, “What role has attitudes played in your career?”

Participants’ responses to all questions were coded as having mixed, negative, neutral, or positive attitudes. The research used follow up prompts to encourage participants to expand on their attitudes and how those attitudes impacted their thinking about career commitment. Neutral attitudes largely coded factual information and will not be addressed here. Mixed attitudes are combinations of negative and positive attitudes or instances where attitudes are more moderated, yet variable. Attitudes permeate the responses provided by participants and are evident in the responses summarized in other sub-questions. A summary of the situations that result in negative or positive attitudes for extension agents is shared here; leaving the descriptions of experiences and attitudes for other sub-question sections and discussion in Chapter Five. These negative attitudes often result in burnout or discontentment with their job.

*Negative attitudes.* Extension agents described several types of situations or settings that result in negative attitudes. The most common experiences that resulted in negative attitudes related to impositions or requirements placed on them by their institution. Some examples include reporting requirements; administrators who impose programming work that is not relevant to clientele; administrators who either limit the autonomy of agents or otherwise micromanage them; accounting or human resource processes that are time consuming and detract from *strategic* level work; or unsupportive supervisors. Another source of negative attitudes were interpersonal relationships where conflict exists, relationships lack respect, or individuals were overstepping their areas of responsibility in inappropriate ways. These sources of dissatisfaction often led to discontentment or the pursuit of other employment opportunities. Eve is interviewing for a new job and two other participants expressed openness to leaving extension if the right

opportunity presented itself. These negative attitudes often evolve into discontentment or burnout in their job.

*Positive attitudes.* Extension agents were consistent in their demonstration of positive attitudes and the causes. Making a positive difference in people's lives was the greatest source of satisfaction and positive attitudes toward their work. Supporting those impacts in people's lives were strong interpersonal relationships where trust existed, and learning occurred together. They valued being provided autonomy by their supervisors and the creativity that can result from that freedom. Recognition by their clients or their organization is valued by some, this recognition need not be formal, it can be simple. The experiences that resulted in positive attitudes are powerful motivators for making Extension a career with many years of service. All participants described how their role is a calling or how it is a blend of a career or calling. This indicates that positive attitudes can increase extension agents' career commitment.

This research confirms that attitudes are powerful influencers in satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and career commitment. All participants shared how much value they placed on helping the clientele they serve grow and become more successful. The passion they shared in their interviews was palpable. To the contrary, the frustration they had, largely from their own institution, was even more clear and drove them to consider other employment options.

**Sub-Questions 3: How do experiences influence career commitment?** Most participants connected their experiences with their attitudes and how both components influence his or her career commitment. Several themes were identified from the responses to these interview prompts. The following themes were utilized for the experiences of the participants in coding density order: interpersonal relationships, achievement, challenges, the work itself,

recognition, supervision, innovation, cross-cultural, collaboration, advancement, and responsibility.

Making a difference through clientele learning and doing things that improve their lives. Lana noted, “I think that feeling of support and that feeling of doing something good for my community really gives me a positive attitude about my job and about the work that I’m doing”.

Paige shared her passion noting the

things I’ve been more excited to do is work with the public, conduct workshops, help people out individually, and just seeing that— you can literally see the change in knowledge. Something that comes across their face, where they’re just like..., “I had no idea.” That’s what really drives me.

She went on to note how she taps into her creative side and how enjoying the variety of the works “comes from that creativity standpoint, and then the research and science standpoint, and bringing research down to the public— bringing it down from the lofty heights..., and translating it for them”.

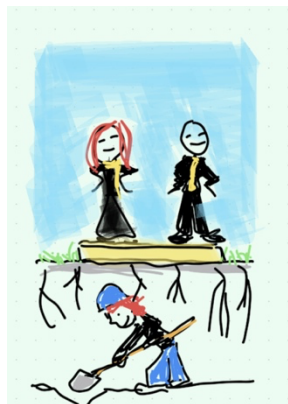
Working in an area of personal passion. Prior to joining Extension Lana learned from her colleague in the Extension office that the career she dreamed of, teaching early childhood teachers, was a legitimate career path. She later said, “Yeah. Yeah, I think so. I feel very fulfilled and challenged. And there’s so much room for a growth that it doesn’t feel like it would ever get stale”. Paige said “I actually love my job”, regardless of administrative frustrations. Chelsea enjoys “Getting outside with our volunteers, getting outside in the gardens and working side by side, but then also doing educational programs and more of the planning and administrative work behind the scenes. So I like that it’s constantly changing”.

**Sub-Question 4: How do organizational structure and policies influence career commitment?** If they did not make these connections in their initial responses, follow up prompts explored career commitment. Working in a large educational institution provided a certain level of resources that support the work of extension agents. These same organizational structures also provided challenges as bureaucracies can increase procedural requirements to a point that becomes limiting (Buford, 1990).

Administrative oversight and interpersonal relationships. Lana observed, “I think I bring [a positive attitude] into the office and I bring that into my trainings and my coaching sessions”. Braden praised his supervisor when clientele were having challenges getting florists to buy cut flowers from local producers. Braden “brought it up to my boss, and we ended up doing a... grant to create a seasonal availability calendar that the cut flower growers could use to promote their products to florists and weddings and things like that”. Paige acknowledged that new administrators are resulting in practices that fit her preferred leadership approaches better than their predecessors. Chelsea had expressed concerns about administration on campus being out-of-touch with her clientele and their needs or poverty, and how her region was as far from campus as possible in her state. She appreciated that recently people from campus, including the president of the university, have been visiting her part of the state and listening to the local needs. When Alex was hired his administration went to bat for him and he received an exception that allowed him to receive the continuing education benefit from the start of employment instead of when it normally started. These positive observations are commendable. However, administrative and bureaucratic limitations or obligations were the most common reasons given for negative attitudes, reduced career commitment, or being open to new employment. Paige expressed concerns about how administration would get in the way of doing good work; force

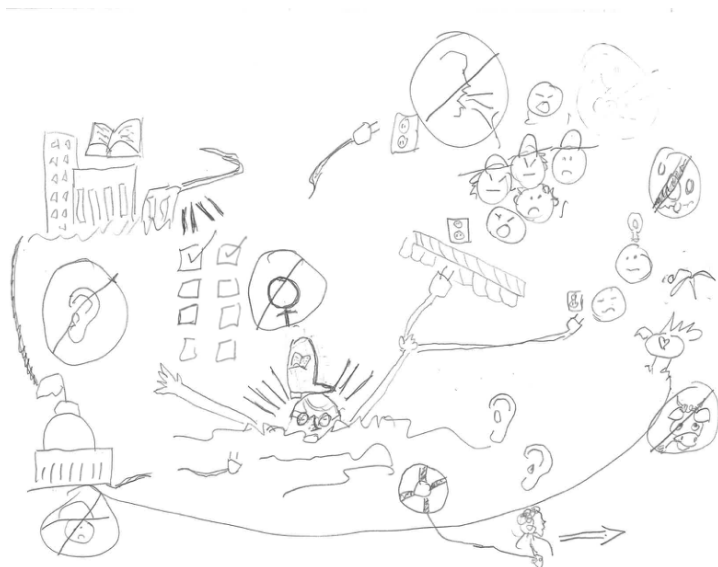
priorities into her work that were inconsistent with clientele priorities, and they took credit for her work. Figure 6 shows how Paige sees herself doing the dirty work and being in the underground and achieving success. Then the leadership took credit for her work, see Figure 3.

**Figure 3** *Paige works underground while administrators take credit for her success*



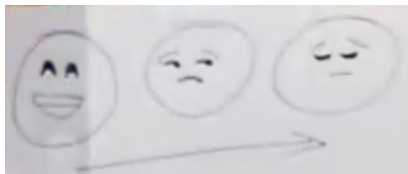
Eve described the most negative experiences with administration. In Figure 4, she specifically noted being suppressed by her institution, assigning meaningless tasks to her, her being out of touch with colleagues at the university, and many other negative experiences with her current employer. She also believed that administration violated her civil rights. Her experiences have resulted in her pursuing other employment.

**Figure 4** *Eve represented her frustrations in several contexts*



Chelsea is one of the more positive extension participants in this research; however, she noted several frustrations with the university. She described how she felt like she had to carry the weight of the university, found reporting requirements cumbersome, and the amount of time spent at her desk was frustrating. Braden described how arcane the purchasing process was for his institution. Paper processes are still in place, and he is not able to make purchases on his own. The process was so tedious and lengthy that some educational programs have been cancelled because supplies could not be purchased in a timely manner. Alex loves the work he does and is in his third year on the job. He described how his attitudes have gone from happy to neutral to disappointed in his institution in that short time, He gives full credit to the university for his evolution towards dissatisfaction, see Figure 5.

**Figure 5** *Alex drew emojis to represent his attitudes towards his work, he Added the arrow during the interview*



He described it this way, “it’s a bureaucracy of all of it really. And so that’s what leaves me annoyed with it, how everything— I mean, a lot of it, the structure, and you have to meet certain timelines and all this stuff. And a lot of the annoyance, honestly”.

**Compensation.** Paige lamented that the higher paid administrators were standing on a pedestal held up by the “spindly” legs of underpaid faculty. Chelsea was happy to work on permanent funding from extension instead working in soft funded positions. Finally, Alex mentioned that he took a pay cut to join extension, but his dissatisfactions had more to do with what administration asked of him, that he deemed onerous, or bureaucratic policies that failed to recognize achievement. He mentioned that he periodically receives offers of employment with

better pay, but the flexibility and geography in his Extension job still hold him in his current position.

**Barriers.** A few participants talked about barriers to entering or succeeding in Extension as a career. Lana experienced a minor barrier from the time she knew she wanted to work for extension, “I really, really wanted to do what [her friend] was doing [for Extension]”. She had to wait for the right position to become available in the right location, at the right time. Eve was able to find employment with Extension but experienced loss of soft funding in her first state. In her second state she described opposition from administration and clientele that was making success difficult or impossible. Chelsea established a barrier in her own mind when she determined that extension agents were the elite in their career. She doubted she would be successful in a search as a new master’s level graduate. Braden was successful in finding a job in Extension; however, he found his specialty crop and local foods focus was too narrow for several Extension positions he applied for previously. Paige and Alex did not describe barriers to entering the profession.

### ***Vertical Analysis: Missionaries***

The *vertical* analysis began to consider the data across more contexts and scales (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). In this study, the *vertical* analysis utilized the sub-questions to synthesize the data.

**Sub-Question 1: How are career paths chosen?** Participants responded to three main prompts that explored the experiences they went through to enter their current employment situation; describing why they chose the employment path they did; and whether they considered their current role a job, career, or calling and how they defined their response. This sub-question was primarily informed by interview question six, “We talked about the process you went



through to select this career and to get into the career. Next would you share why you chose the career? What/who motivated/encouraged/discouraged you along the way? What helped/hindered you?” Responses to interview prompt three, “I want to ask you to think back to the time you were deciding to pursue this career. Describe the experiences and processes you went through to from the time you started pursuing this career and getting into this position.”; and interview question 11, “Do you consider your current role a job, career, or calling? Why? What does that term mean to you?” also informed this sub-question.

An iterative process with a clear path. Most missionary participants entered college looking to learn more about the Bible and Christianity. No one indicated they knew they were going to enter foreign missions at the start of college. As most of them progressed through their college experience became open to ministry in some form. Evan was the exception; he attended a Christian university to pursue and earn a bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) in nursing. He later earned an Master of Science in nursing (MSN) in nursing. Joslyn reflected “I always wanted to serve the Lord in some way, find a way to work for him”. She noted that after experiencing chapels during her first year in college, “I just felt that maybe I could go overseas and be of a help to other missionaries”. She had cousins who served in Africa. “And so I always thought that would be interesting, to go and visit other countries.... I wasn’t necessarily thinking of becoming a missionary at that time”. Her mom was her greatest supporter. As Noah finished high school, he observed that “God had touched my heart to help other people. I was interested in the Bible. So I went to Bible college, just mainly to learn more about the Bible and the ministry and how it could possibly help people”. As he experienced college, he noted how

God brought me out of myself and actually helped me to a little bit change my personality enough to be able to do what God was leading me to do, that is to be more

outgoing and be able to be in front of people and then be able to lead people and be in charge of ministries.

“Little by little, internal sense that God wanted me to work in the ministry” developed. Through college he met his wife, who grew up as a missionary kid in the country they eventually moved to for long-term service. Noah credited his professors, his pastor, his best friend (the pastor’s son), and, later, his father-in-law as being key influencers in his path to missions.

So by the end of my college time through different experiences, including making a short-term trip to [South America] to see what that looked like since I sensed God was leading me and really impressing on me that this is what I needed to do, and so I had that assurance by the time I finish my college time, that leading and assurance and impulse from God that really this is the path I needed to follow.

Noah described how “God really opened up... many doors to be able to partner with people through prayer and finances.... At graduate school, financial barriers, paying for graduate school... were the only barrier. God brought in some special gifts to help us”. Connor was first intrigued about missions when taking a graduate course in world missions. One of the demographics he learned was that “one of the largest unreached people groups on the planet is actually the young generation”. He was also impacted by a short trip to Africa to adopt their third daughter. They experienced true poverty for the first time and had that poverty impressed on them through the experience “that was contextualized in the person, of our new family member. And so I remember returning to the United States feeling embarrassingly wealthy”. He was “feeling like one of the wealthiest people in the world, but then I felt compelled to be generous with that and live strategically”. As he considered his current role as a worship leader/pastor in a city, he realized that many people could do his current job, but few were willing to move to

eastern Europe for the same job; “a place that had the opposite, the vacuum of leaders and a vacuum of people that we could offer help to. So I think that was a big reason for why” we decided to enter international missions. Molly grew up having

always been interested in different cultures and languages and things like that. I did a program all through my school years from kindergarten to grade 12 called French Immersion. And so all of my schooling was in French, and a big part of that was learning about different French cultures.

“I always thought that I would call to a French speaking country, but alas. [laughter] I had to learn another language because God has a sense of humor.” She grew up in a church that was supportive of the mission agency that became her employer and of missionaries who served in the country she eventually went to with her husband. Molly’s first experience in country was a four-month internship. After that she returned to Canada and was married. The newlyweds moved to a major city in Canada and worked inter-culturally with immigrant communities. Their next step was to volunteer as teachers in an international school in “their country”. They thought it’ll be some cross-cultural experiences, and then we’ll come back to Canada and find jobs here. But after our first year, we realized, let’s look into what it would be like to say a little bit longer and move out of the international school context into a more missions-focused context. And we’ve come down as volunteers with [agency] with my organization. And during our second year, getting more involved with [agency] programming, we realized that this was really what we wanted to do and where we felt called. And so we applied to be full-time staff from the field. And we never left. So we planned to stay for 10 months, and it’s now been 10 years.

They were pleased to find one job for available to Molly and another job available “for my husband and I that was really important was that there was work for both of us that it wasn’t just one of us found their niche and their passion and the other one kind of was making things work”. Molly described how she feels “like we’ve been given skills and characteristics that really align well and suit the missionary life well”. Evan had the least iterative path to missions. He is the son of a physician and nurse who were medical missionaries and church planters in Oceania. After earning his BSN and being commissioned into the Navy, Evan served nearly a decade. When he resigned his commission, he was open to many options anywhere since he did not have many anchors in the world. “That’s when the Lord was like, well, this is a good time to do missions.” He knew the hospitals his parents helped establish were self-sufficient and being run by nationals, the ultimate goal. He contacted the agency his parents worked with and found out about a two-year opportunity in Africa. He thought, “I don’t have any other commitments. I can give a year to 2 years and help out. And then we’ll see from there”. “It truly is the call of the Lord. I mean, yes, as a nurse, I’m compassionate and be like, ‘Hey, I can use my nursing skills to help people,’ so that obviously you have that side”. Jake and his wife, Faith both spent some of their youth in Asia. Jake went later in his primary education. Faith was in Asia long enough to have adopted the culture where she lived, fully. They were married and returned to the state where Jake grew up. He observed,

when we got married, we had the wrong motives for wanting to go back overseas. I mean, I wasn’t adverse. I wasn’t not wanting to go overseas. I just didn’t want to be a worker. I didn’t want to be somebody who raised support and I didn’t see myself fitting into that. I’m not a preacher, and I didn’t see me fitting into what I saw my dad doing. Because he was more of a teacher, a pastor, a trainer, and a lot of academic, and I’m not

that way. So we started out going for the wrong motives, and we tried and tried to get back into Asia... to do more community development, and it just never worked out. The Lord just kept shutting doors and shutting doors.... And realized I had a lot of maturing that I needed to have happen. And we weren't ready. And our motives were completely backwards. I was trying to please her. She was trying to get home.... Our motives were wrong, which was God's grace that we didn't get over there somewhere and make more of a mess of things.

After time passed and they served in their church, the church "sent out this massive, it was 21 people to [Africa for four weeks].... When I read it..., it was like, I got to go do this. I wanted to sign up right then, which was weird". Over the years Jake took more and more of his family on these annual mission trips. As Jake reflected, he shared,

I'm not going to say, God told me, but he did. He led us. As we walked by the spirit, He gives us direction, and that— there's a series of conversations and experiences and passages that we read and moments with friends and that all kind of led to that. But it was the Lord led us and is still leading us in it. So yeah, trying to put a pen and pencil to it is not that easy because... it's been a spiritual journey.

**Sub-Question 2: How do adult educators' attitudes influence their career**

**commitment?** Participants' responses to all questions were coded as having mixed, negative, neutral, or positive. Missionaries identified the following attitudes as it related to their employment. Neutral attitudes largely coded factual information and will not be addressed here. Mixed attitudes are combinations of negative and positive attitudes or instances where attitudes are more moderated. Attitudes permeate the responses provided by participants and are evident in the responses summarized in other sub-question sections. A summary of the situations that result

in positive attitudes or negative attitudes for missionaries is shared here, leaving the detailed descriptions for other sub-question sections and discussion in Chapter Five.

*Negative.* Missionaries demonstrated negative attitudes in a few instances. Generally, the missionaries looked at challenging situations that may typically result in negative attitudes as opportunities to consider new options or opportunities to make changes. They are not immune to negative attitudes. When the mission agencies made strategic reinvestments that shut down or reduced programs the missionaries had invested their lives into, resulted in negative attitudes. When the mission agencies reassigned to new roles or locations, they often lost connections, relationships, and networks causing them to start over in many ways. Another source of frustration was when the agency would assign unwanted roles to “the last person standing” and their work was either increased or shifted their focus away from their passions to administrative roles. A last administrative observation by one missionary was when the agency is too loyal to its staffing charts. The missionary noted how existing staff want to change their work assignment or they know of individuals who want to join the team, but the agency won’t adjust the slated position to fit the interests of the new person. For example, a medical professional might like to work 70 percent of their time working in the clinic and 30 percent in missions work, but the staffing chart is looking for a 90/10 split and leave the position unfilled. In addition to administrative concerns, they expressed concerns when interpersonal conflicts arose on their teams with peers or supervisors and could not be resolved. These were discouraging and resulted in negative attitudes; in part, because they were frustrated, they could not be resolved and not just the fact there was a conflict. Missionaries’ negative attitudes in this study did not extrapolate into reduced career commitment.

*Positive.* Missionaries were the most positive when they were helping people become more successful in life, in general, but especially spiritually and in their relationship with Christ. These successes were enjoyed when they were helping team members or nationals. They also found satisfaction in being creative and finding novel solutions to the situations they faced. Most importantly was the trust and depth of relationships they built with peers and nationals.

**Sub-Questions 3: How do experiences influence career commitment?** Participants were asked about their employment experiences. Most participants connected their experiences with their attitudes and how both components influence his or her career commitment. If they did not make these connections, follow up prompts explored career commitment.

*Making a difference.* Joslyn said she enjoyed her work “when I was able to do things with the Sunday school or a Bible study that I had. We would put together presentations, and it was really fun to see how they would work”. Noah described how he and his wife helped others to be touched by Christ’s fingerprints on the lives of the people they interact with. Things like “seeing a marriage is healed [go from struggling to loving and successful] and families and people’s lives changed and see them grow in the principles in the Bible and grow in Christ”; the formation of a “local nucleus of believers formed into a functioning church”; or seeing the “reproduction and multiplication of other churches being formed all over [South America]”.

Relationships with clientele. Joslyn talked about the how the relationship she had with nationals and other missionaries “were definitely part of me staying on the field, and especially when I was able to see that some of the Bible lessons were being understood and applied to lives”. Molly says

I’ve just been able to develop relationships with them. And the thing that gets me the most excited about my work is the relationships that I’m able to develop with the people

that I'm working with, with the vulnerable, with the poor.... In the government organizations [laughter] and the court systems, we've seen a lot of corruption and have just really been through a difficult time these past couple of years. And no one understands the frustration of working within these justice systems. No one understands it better than these women. And so to be able to come to them and share what we've been going through, the frustrations, cry with them, and to have them be able to offer that support back to give me advice on how to work through different things on how to work within the systems and to just have them say, "Let me pray for you. Let me be here for you as a support for you during this time." For me, that was just like, "This is the community that I want to be a part of, that I hope to inspire." And to see that actually come to fruition for me has just been, yeah, really, really profound. And yeah, it's all about those getting to that level of relationship with people.

Evan describes how exciting it was when their hospital finally opened.

It was a huge party. So that was exciting to say, "Hey, we're finally here." And of course, then that excitement of the first day of patients, no idea what to expect. But hey, here we go. We did this. And you're seeing patients. Then I think since then, the times that it's most exciting, I mean, it's easy to lose sight, but when you have these amazing stories, especially when you hear the story of somebody..., because of the care they got, how it's changed their lives, and they came to Christ, or something like that, where you're just like, what we're doing is making a difference and making a difference eternally. And those are the exciting times.

Interpersonal relationships. There are also negative aspects of relationships with others.

Joslyn admitted that she would experience "conflicts and misunderstandings. So then you had to



figure out how to apologize and straighten the relationship out, so those could make it difficult”.

Jake described how he and his wife

had to step away because— and that’s a quite a long story, but I mean, it was a pretty rough situation for probably— I mean, we hung on, we tried to try to get things pulled back together, but it just, we had to step away for a number of reasons. But so we stepped away [from their ministry and location].

**Sub-Questions 4: How do organizational structure and policies influence career commitment?** Working internationally for non-profit organizations provides a certain level of resources that support the work of missionaries. These same organizational structures can also provide challenges as bureaucracies can increase procedural requirements to a point that becomes limiting.

*Administrative leadership and decision making.* Joslyn described how a number of mission organizations pulled out [my country]. But [my agency] said, as long as the national church wanted us, we would stay there. But then, after a while, they saw we weren’t starting anything new and anything that the nationals couldn’t do themselves. So actually, they said, “Try to find new things, or maybe we’ll invite you to close.” And that’s what they did. And that was tough because I could’ve pictured myself staying down there much longer.

One of the things Connor noted about his organization was how they hosted

these annually planned events for all of the missionary kids to spend time together. And that network of third-culture kids has been a lifeline for our kids. Because I think even if I enjoyed the challenges of my job, if I came home every night to children that were sinking, we wouldn’t be here nine years. The other thing that they’ve done is have annual

plans for us adults to also huddle up for a conference where we receive biblical teaching and spend time together. And we've cultivated international friendships. We don't work with those people every day. Everyday life is with our Polish church partners. But to have those little oases where we can get off and enjoy that brotherhood and sisterhood, like-minded people that are also enjoying the successes and challenges of this lifestyle.

Molly described how frustrating it was to have a supervisor working in close proximity to them who was disinterested in new ideas Molly and her husband proposed.

***Barriers and other Challenges.*** Noah related

when we arrived there, neither one of us had seen the city. Today, it's common in almost [all situations today] that teammates would do a survey trip so that they could understand the ministry and the culture and their teammates and so on and so forth, but not back in that day.

When asked about moving from one city to distant city in his country and how that transition impacted his commitment to serving in his country; Connor described the cultural adjustment required when missionaries and their families leave their culture for another. He described being a missionary in eastern Europe as

working the hard ground. The culture is challenging, the people groups are challenging. It's not an easy assignment by any means. So my wife and I, we've never attached our commitment to stay or return to America to success or failure in our work here.... We needed something outside of good and bad, successful, unsuccessful, to sort of determine whether or not we were going to be here.

Evan acknowledged that it is

still stressful, but for always other reasons, life is stressful here. The work can be stressful. And it's just, we thought we were busy when we opened and it just continued to get busier in terms of patient volume, and really even acuity of patients. Seeing sicker and sicker patients, so challenging.

Evan faces the challenges of working in a 24/7/365 hospital and ministering to people's spiritual needs while balancing family life in a developing nation. He talked about how important his wife is in the ministry and how encouraging she is for him and how her empathy as a nurse helps him deal with situations others may not understand. It

made a huge difference when we returned as a couple. And I had already had language. So she was better off the first time around anyway, and so language school was even— It was just mastering it even more. But for me to be able to come back with her, to come back that second time with language was a huge difference in communicating with the... staff.

Molly and her husband countered conventional thinking about what to do when work life becomes difficult.

If you do move around a lot and you're rather nomadic in your mission work, no matter where you find yourself, take a view that that's where you're going to retire. Build community, build relationships, set down roots, and then you'll be able to live your fullest life and have the most impact.... We're committed to the work here in [our country]. We're committed to our organization as well as much as, sometimes, we'll have frustrations or difference of opinion with them. We see ourselves as working for the same goals and with the same love. And so, yeah, I have a commitment to work things out, to work things through instead of just kind of cutting and running.

The vertical analysis demonstrated the value of developing cases with high levels of diversities. The varying and similar responses from the participants within each case provided robust perspectives that informed the central- and sub-questions.

**Vertical analysis summary.** Joslyn said she enjoyed her work “when I was able to do things with the Sunday school or a Bible study that I had. We would put together presentations, and it was really fun to see how they would work”. Noah described how he and his wife helped others to be touched by Christ’s fingerprints on the lives of the people they interact with. Things like “seeing a marriage is healed [go from struggling to loving and successful] and families and people’s lives changed and see them grow in the principles in the Bible and grow in Christ”; the formation of a “local nucleus of believers formed into a functioning church”; or seeing the “reproduction and multiplication of other churches being formed all over [South America]”.

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Vertical analysis summary. The answers for the sub-questions described for each case here were enlightening. The answers to the sub-questions demonstrated how each type of adult educate, as represented in the two cases experienced work and the attitudes that developed from those experiences and how career commitment is influenced.

***Transversal Analysis: Within Case Analysis for Extension Agents and Missionaries***

The Extension and missionary cases were treated separately through the *vertical* analysis. The *transversal* analysis (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017) synthesized the information, first by case and second across the cases completing the comparative case analysis. Several diversities amongst the participants provided many perspectives to consider during analysis.

The *transversal* analysis focused on the central question and the complexities discovered when documenting the results by the sub-questions. The central question guided this research from its inception; *How do United States based extension agents and internationally placed missionaries experience calling and career commitment?* The sub-questions focused participants experiences in entering and working in their profession and considered what attitudes resulted from their experiences. The following analyses consider the broader considerations and ramifications.

**Transversal analysis: extension agent case analysis.** The transversal analysis includes within case analysis and the comparative case study analysis. The within case analysis analyzed and summarized the satisfiers and dissatisfiers for each case.

***Satisfiers.*** The participants described passion for helping others. When they described their interactions with people; helping people was rewarding. Lana reflected on how she became interested in Extension.

I started to realize that my passion really went towards working with the new teachers.

And I wanted to share with them what I had learned and to help them learn best practices for teaching. So every time my friend was talking about her job, and that's exactly what she was doing, she was providing training and professional development to early childhood educators, and that really was what I was learning was the right path for me....

I feel excited a lot just because there's always something new to kind of look forward to.

She illustrated her thinking in her drawing, see Figure 6.

**Figure 6** Lana drew her Ideal role, the one she has with extension



Paige declared “that’s what really drives me”, seeing people learn and be excited for what they can do with the new knowledge. Eve said “I loved helping new farmers” in my first state. She went on to say “I am a teacher. I like teaching.... I’m passionate, passionate about agriculture. I love agriculture. I love all facets of it”. Chelsea shared how she really likes her “job because no two days are the same. There’s lots of different avenues for me to be successful in my job”. She talked about the interaction of satisfying work, strong relationships in the office, and how they increased her career commitment.

I did not expect to walk into a family. I know a lot of people like—I feel weird about calling my work family a family, but it is a family. And I didn't expect feel as welcomed.... I thought I'd be here a year or two, and then just see what happened, but I've been pleasantly surprised with all the things that I am to do and how to really just seems to fit with my interests and my capabilities.

When Braden was looking for job in a new location, he said,

Extension was big component of what I was looking for, just because I valued working with the folks in Extension at [his university]. I valued the program. And again, I like learning; I like educating. So I really wanted a job that had that as a focus

Lana was driven to share her passion and “experience and best practices and really just build them up and empower them to take that into the classroom and share that with children”. Chelsea liked the flexibility she had “because they encourage us to follow our areas of expertise and put that information out. So that was easy for me coming into this position. It's just the flexibility in general. Braden also noted that he gets “a lot of flexibility and leeway to do programming that I'm very interested in”. Braden was encouraged by ways he was successfully partnering with other Extension peers and with the support his supervisor provides him in his position and in an organization that is in a growth stage.

Chelsea was grateful that she found a career path that did not require her to pursue a doctorate and have to pursue a position on the academic side of a university. Alex has been recognized as an expert in his field and is invited to lecture in courses at his university by the academic professors. He lamented that starting his position with only a bachelor's degree was frowned upon by some, even though his reputation, experience, and practical knowledge was also recognized. Paige gets excited when she is “thinking of new ways to reach people and to be



innovative, and how can we find new partners and try new programs and just get new faces” involved.

All extension agents mentioned how flexibility was important to them and a factor that kept them excited about their career and sticking with it. They also valued and appreciated that the flexibility they enjoyed came with responsibilities to do good work in the right quantity and of the right quality. Braden summarized it this way, based on job interviews with other Extension systems he was

anticipating basically being told, “Here’s what you’re doing,” whereas [his employer], there’s some, “Here’s what you’re doing,” but there’s also a lot of, “Well, what do you want to do, and what can you find out that people want you to do?”

Alex greatly valued the flexibility in his position, stating “the flexibility is the draw for this position”. He also criticized some of his peers as they have abused the flexibility, especially during COVID-19 restrictions and were not doing their jobs sufficiently, in his opinion.

***Dissatisfiers.*** Salary and benefits were only raised occasionally by extension agents. Eve mentioned that the pay was good when she took extension positions. Paige lamented that the higher paid administrators were standing on a pedestal held up by the “spindly” legs of underpaid faculty. Chelsea was happy to work on permanent funding from extension over working in soft funded positions. Finally, Alex mentioned that he took a pay cut to join extension, but his dissatisfactions had more to do with what administration asked of him, that he deemed onerous, or bureaucratic policies that failed to recognize achievement. He mentioned that he periodically receives offers of employment with better pay, but the flexibility and geography in his Extension job still hold him in his current position.

Several experiences extension agents faced drove increased dissatisfaction and decreased commitment to their organization. Paige discussed a previous employment situation where she was only allowed to work with communities that were on a good footing in her topic area. She was frustrated because the communities that had nothing going for them needed more help, but she was told to ignore those communities. She described in several ways how the faculty were busy scraping by and doing the work, but when success occurs, the administrators claim the credit. She has experienced several administrators, peers, and supervisors in her short time at her institution because of high turnover. She expressed several concerns about top-down management, micromanagement, and poor leadership in previous administrators. She is optimistic about the current leadership, but she may also be wondering how long the current administrators will stay in the institution. Eve described the most negative experiences with administration in her institution. She was concerned about non-profit groups sharing bad science to drive their political agenda and even having campus faculty supporting them at times. She was disappointed when campus-based faculty visited her county, did not invite her, and actively excluded her clientele from meetings to avoid opposition to their ideas, “so he left them out.... And he purposely marginalized them and excluded them”. When she raised this issue with her department head, she was disappointed that he did not take any action to ensure professionalism when faculty visit her county by informing and involving her. She also lamented how her first state embraced its agriculture heritage at the university and state government levels. In her current state she believes the university is generally anti agriculture and the political leadership in government is definitely anti agriculture, “they seem to just dismiss everything that ag does”. She noted on several occasions that she considered Extension administration to be a bunch of box checkers, proclaiming “it’s horrendous. Tick the box! Tick the box...! We want you to do all

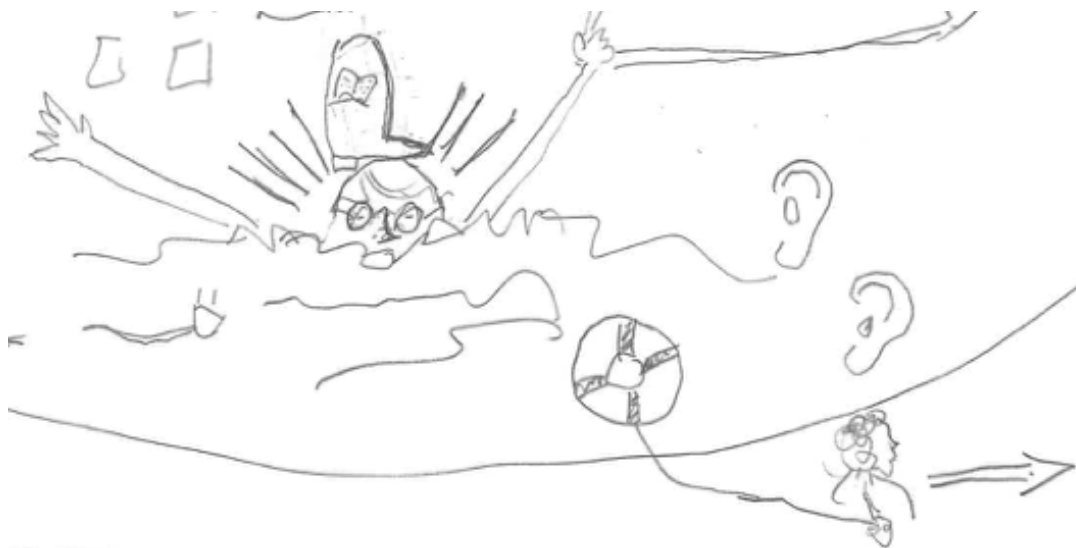
this, just to show that we're doing something, instead of we're doing something constructive and helpful". She also reports that when she has raised concerns about a variety of things to people in authority, they were demeaning or misogynistic towards her. When she "called him out on DEI. And he says, 'You can't do anything'". She felt abandoned by someone that she believed should have protected her. Like Paige, Braden experienced previous leaders who were top-down micromanagers who set the organization back as they sought to control everything that was happening. He is grateful for current leadership. Alex lamented

you know how much with extension we're--this is kind of behind the computer, and this is a lot of the stuff that we hear from administration about changes that may or may not be happening, a lot of annoyance, which progresses into that. I mean, it's working for a huge-- it's a bureaucracy of all of it really. And so that's what leaves me annoyed with it, how everything-- I mean, a lot of it, the structure, and you have to meet certain timelines and all this stuff. And a lot of the annoyance, honestly, comes from-- we don't have any teaching appointments whatsoever. We're just getting the stuff out to the ground, but I end up going back to the university to teach several classes a year or co-teach because of my expertise.... Dealing with the mothership. Probably the most discouraging, honestly, is an unwritten 8-year rule before any chance of promotion comes up. And I come from the outside world where if you're doing good - you're knocking everything out of the park - you have a chance of going up. And it's not necessarily even the financial side of it. It's that I'm still stuck at the same level as a kid coming straight out of school, and I've been doing this for 15 years, so.

Paige also expressed concerns about "mismanagement, mainly. There's some people here that don't need to be in the positions that they're in. Also, everybody is severely overtasked. We're

all drowning”. Eve used the same analogy that she is “drowning at times”. Her drawing took it a step further where she represented her situation as the University was drowning her, see Figure 7. She sees her only lifeline was to leave the university.

**Figure 7** *Eve Drew the Boat of Academia Drowning her*



Alex describes his supervisor as hands off. He noted, in the context of newly hired and inexperienced extension agents, that if

you're not motivated, self-motivated, if you don't know what's going on, you can hide in this job for 2 or 3 years before people realize that you're not doing anything. So it's not the best way to manage people. I don't think it does justice for younger people early on in their careers because you don't have much guidance on how to be a good professional.

***Job, career, or calling.*** When asked about whether their current role was a job, career, or calling the extension agents responded in a variety of ways. Lana immediately responded “as a calling”; Paige immediately responded “a career”; Eve said it was “kind of between a career and a calling”; Chelsea responded “Oh, that’s a good question”; Braden said “that’s a good question”; and Alex said “my current role, a lot of what I do, I feel like, is a calling when I am out of teaching, being able to help folks. This role that I am in now seems a little more like a job to me,

if that makes any sense”. Most to the participants found this question about job, career, or calling intriguing and thought provoking. Their non-verbal communication indicated excitement and reflection. The responses above were the first words out of their mouths after the questions was shared. These responses indicated that this topic was not in the forefront of their minds as they thought about their roles. Chelsea, and Braden immediately began to verbally process their thoughts without additional prompts. Chelsea went on to say

it’s definitely more than a job. I’m on the career track, but I don’t know. That’s a good question because my county director talks about how we’re all called to this job because of the way that we serve the public. So I would probably say that it’s a calling.

Braden processed it this way,

I mean, I think career, for sure, and calling, I mean, I think, yes, calling. Yeah. So, I mean, career and calling, I think, are up there.... I wouldn’t say it was a calling from a very young age, but I feel like where food comes from is important to me, and how we manage our ecosystems is important to me. So, in that way, I’d say it is, to a degree, a calling. And it’s definitely a career. I guess, job, I would view in my personal view is something that you’re doing just to make money and to get by whereas a career is something you actually want to be doing. And a calling is something that you really feel passionate about.

Others were asked how they would define the term they selected. Lana said a calling “means that I feel like I’m supposed to be doing this. That I would feel less whole if I was doing something else”; When asked what career meant to her, Paige paused for several seconds and provided the following response and modified her answer.

I don't know. It's kind of a calling, I guess. Career, for me, is something that you're actually invested in that you want to get better at— that you see this as your long-term plan. And there's the calling aspect to it, it feels right. But I wouldn't necessarily feel like this is my be all/end all of my existence. So calling, in that it works for me and my skill set and I enjoy it, and that this is what I was meant to do for work.

Chelsea continued to process her thoughts when asked what career meant to her.

I guess just that— I mean, I'm not just here because of the job, right? I'm not just here doing my work for the money. I really do care about the people in my communities. I care about helping them.... But helping them take a step to living a better life. And it's really those one-on-one connections with people, working in a food donation garden to grow food for people that come to food pantry, and then taking it there and handing it to someone who's so thankful because they have fresh green beans to take home and they wouldn't have had that option. Those connections, that's not about the money, that's not about the job. That's about connecting with people and helping them like person to person. So that's why I would call it a calling.

Alex was the most concise of all extension agents. In essence said he loves his job, and it is a calling and I hate my job. Although his response was quite brief, it was insightful and confirms the dissociation of satisfiers and dissatisfiers as proposed by Herzberg et al. (1993/1959).

In summary, extension agents find the most satisfaction in helping others learn and find greater success in life. They thrive when provided professional freedom and flexibility to meet the needs of citizens in creative and innovative ways or even in routine ways that fall in their purview.

Recognition is appreciated and it was noted by some that recognition can be simple and need not necessarily be monetary in nature. Salary was neither a negative nor positive factor for these

participants. The vast majority of the dissatisfiers related to administrative or supervisory experiences. They felt that administrative requirements distracted them from doing the real work of extension and resulted in them spending too much time in the office documenting work on their computer instead of spending time helping clientele or other more rewarding work. Most participants had positive things to say about their current supervisors, but they also expressed concerns about past experiences with previous administrators. Eve had the most direct and negative accusations about the leadership in her organization. She felt completely unsupported by administration and that they had violated her rights. The extension agents consider their roles to be callings or, at least careers; however, the nature of their responses indicate that *calling* is a concept that they appreciate and adopted currently, but *calling* was not a part of their career selection thinking.

***Within case summary: Extension Agents.*** Extension agents shared many common experiences and attitudes that influence their career commitment. The themes that resulted in the greatest career commitment were experiences where clientele were benefiting from the work they do. The clients were improving their lives as a result of the extension agents' work. The work itself, changing lives, achievement, interpersonal relationships, and responsibility were all themes that informed these results. Conversely, the extension agents identified three main sources of dissatisfaction. Policy and bureaucracy, supervision, and interpersonal relationships as major sources of dissatisfaction for extension agents. In this grouping of issues, the issues were also the coding themes, which were also hygiene factors identified by Herzberg et al., (1993/1959). The experiences of the extension agents influence their attitudes, both positive and negative. These attitudes drive extension agent career commitment. Extension agents could describe enthusiastically the experiences that drove increases in positive attitudes; and a few

sentences later, describe experiences that resulted in increased negative attitudes. For extension agents, the latter had greater influence on attitudes with negative attitudes having more influence on career commitment than positive experiences and attitudes.

**Transversal analysis: missionary case analysis.**

*Satisfiers.* Missionaries find the greatest satisfaction from building relationships with people that result in positive changes in their lives. They also enjoy the satisfaction of a job well done. Joslyn was most excited about her role when “I was making an impact”, “We would put together presentations, and it was just really fun to see how they would work out and communicate with other people. And I really enjoyed those times”. She also described enjoying the success of students in the Bible college she supports now. Noah provided several examples of what satisfies him as he reflects on his career. He shared the following.

Well, the overall vision of sharing God’s love and his message and trying to leave my unique— but actually they’re Christ’s fingerprints, his mark on people’s lives through our life, and so leaving our fingerprints on people’s lives. And then hearing stories of people whose lives have been changed. And people’s lives are being changed. And as we do family and marriage counseling, seeing them have a different worldview, a different perspective, and seeing a marriage is healed and families and people’s lives changed and see them grow in the principles in the Bible and grow in Christ. And then of course, seeing churches formed, actually seeing the local body of Christ, local communities, the local nucleus of believers formed into a functioning church, the body of Christ, where they can carry on the ministry and reach out.

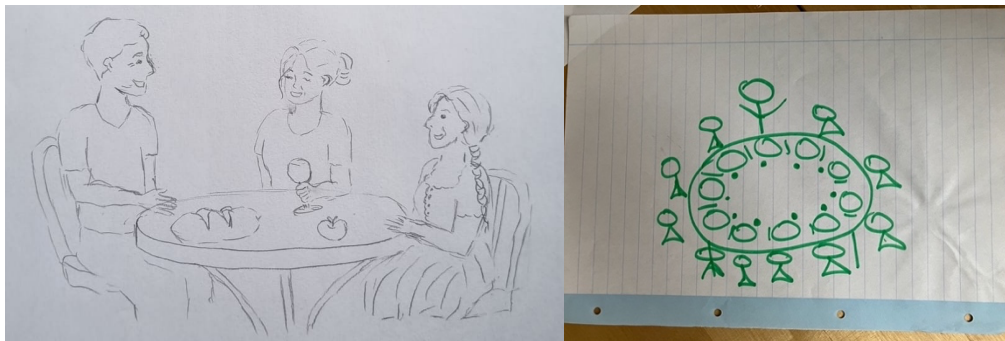
Whereas Noah gave several broad examples, Connor was specific.



I think... walking with some individuals for an extended period of time. And there's one young man that was at the start of our ministry back at the beginning, and he was in college, and he spent a lot of time with me, did some internships. Then he felt a calling to be a missionary in our organization, joined our organization, at various levels raised his own support, and now he's on staff with me.

Connor, a musician, and worship leader found satisfaction in a major festival he helped organize. It reached 1,000 teens from across Europe. Both Molly and Connor described how they valued their relationships with the local people they serve. Both chose to depict this friendship and fellowship around sharing a meal, see Figure 8.

**Figure 8** *Molly and Connor emphasized the importance of living in community with nationals through round tables and sharing a meal*



Molly described some of what she conveyed in her drawing with the following thought.

I think feeling really rooted in the community here and feeling like a fierce loyalty to these people that I work with can make it difficult when people talk about those projects in terms of budgets, in terms of statistics and kind of the cold, hard facts, divorced from this relationship and this community.

Evan immediately reflected on the opening of their hospital nearly a decade ago and how exciting it was to see their work come to fruition. Since then, he noted,

the times that it's most exciting, I mean, it's easy to lose sight, but when you have these amazing stories, especially when you hear the story of somebody, but because of the care they got, how it's changed their lives, and they came to Christ.

Jake stated it simply and succinctly, "In my role, I think the most excited is when I have— it seems like what I'm doing is affecting people for the Lord or meeting a need of some kind".

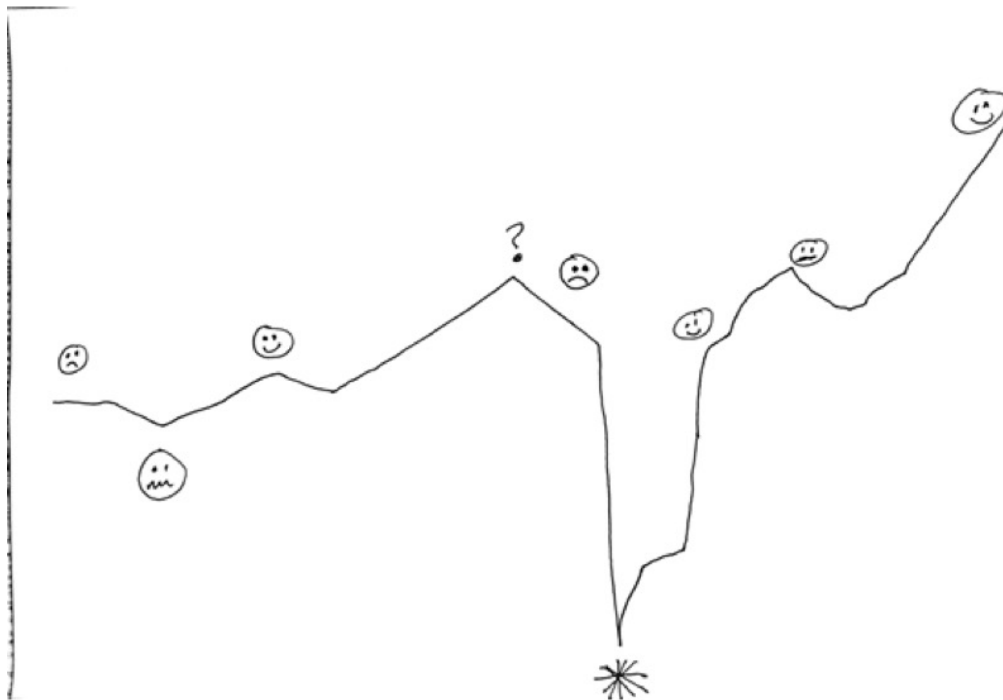
Molly noted that she appreciates that her organization understands and expect efforts to evolve over time "they allow you to kind of shift your focus as the ministry changes. And so I'm really happy with where I'm at right now".

***Dissatisfiers.*** Joslyn described how "things weren't working out" and she was moved to a new home closer to the school she worked in and further away from her church. In this process, she lost her community. Reflecting on this time, she said, "I guess I got a little depressed, and there was just a real struggle". Noah's early challenges with the local non-profit leader who worked to get them sent back to the United States was documented earlier in this chapter. Connor noted that after getting established in one location in their country; they were moved to a new city. In essence, they had to start over in building relationships and networks. Connor talked about how the move was hard for him and he was hours away from his peers and his family had to build new relationships and learn a new city. He acknowledged that the experience was similar to when they first arrived in country, but knowing the language was helpful and simplified the adjustment period. Connor's other concern was frustration he experienced when national pastors or partners were not interested in collaborating. Molly focused on two frustrations. She described how her supervisor was disinterested and dismissive of new ideas she and her husband would present to their team. She felt undervalued and discouraged. Her other frustrations came from headquarters. She was discouraged when headquarters would deliver directives that were top-

down in nature or when they held discussions with partners in her country and did not include the team in those discussions. She also noted that the fundraising arm of the organization would lean toward guiding donors to new and attractive efforts that were easy to sell. They did this at the expense of highly successful and operationalized efforts that were having consistent impacts. Evan expressed one main concern that had serious ramifications for he and his wife. He was tasked with being the supervising nurse by default. This role is one that adds a lot of stress to his life and reduces his joy in ministering to patients' physical and spiritual needs. This impacted he and his wife to the point they benefited from his organization's member care and support when they returned to the United States. They received counselling that was helpful. Evan still serves as the supervisor. When asked if his current job matched his ideal job, his immediate response was "No. I mean, right now, my ideal job would not be a supervisor, it would be mostly involved in nurse education". He was also concerned that his organization was too loyal to their organizational chart for the hospital. He was aware of people who wanted to join the team and could have relieved pressure on existing staff, but when the potential newcomer wanted to adjust the job responsibilities or assignment ratios, the organization refused. Evan described it as missing the opportunity to relieve workload by bringing on someone who was willing to move to Africa. He wished they would have taken the partial FTE or adjusted responsibilities of a full FTE and get some help instead of guaranteeing no assistance. Jake shared a few frustrations. The biggest one was not being fluent in the language of their current country. He isn't able minister to local people the way he would like or how he did when serving in Africa. Jake's situation is unique because he and his wife freely made the decision to change countries; it wasn't imposed on him like Joslyn or Connor's moves were. Jake's largest period of dissatisfaction came in Africa when a team member became perennially difficult, and conflict arose. This was twice

frustrating. The conflict itself was frustrating. They were also frustrated because they never wanted to be involved in a conflict that couldn't be resolved. That is the situation they found themselves addressing. Their organization provided great support and helped them through the situation. The team member made it impossible to resolve the situation. As a result, his family changed their ministry efforts in Africa. Both Evan and Jake provided drawings that showed the ups and downs of missionary work and that deep down times are a reality, see Figure 9. As a medical professional, Evan deals with death, a lot of death. Often, patients arrive at his facility when it is too late. Like most medical professionals, the reality of death is a fact of life, but it also takes its toll. He described how "you lose, I mean, compassion. You start having compassion fatigue".

**Figure 9** Jake illustrated the ups and downs that missionaries face. All missionaries shared similar sentiments.



Several missionaries described the cross-cultural nature of their work as a difficulty and occasionally as a source of dissatisfaction. Language ability was the most often cited cultural issue that caused dissatisfaction. This stems from missionaries need for a high level of fluency to be able to discuss philosophical or spiritual topics with nationals. While their language ability was sufficient to live in their new culture, failing to master the language was a frustration that was mentioned. It was often a transient limitation. Other cross-cultural issues have been mentioned elsewhere as appropriate.

Approaches to dissatisfaction. Many of the missionary participants discussed how they handled difficulties or dissatisfaction. Joslyn, from early in her career, decided she was going to adapt to whatever situation she experiences. She describes her mindset as taking steps forward and making the best of situations. She has now served on two continents and in three countries and in a variety of roles as she nears the end of her career. Noah was candid about how challenging it was during their first year in their city, as a young couple, and brand-new missionaries. He shared his view of difficulty in a thoughtful manner.

Life is hard for everybody. And people lose children. They lose their spouse to cancer. They lose jobs. There's accidents. There's different things that happen to it. Life is difficult. But in our case, Christ sustains us. We're in God's hands. He sustains us. He empowers us. He carries us forward. But there are difficult times. These things have left their scars on our lives. I recount the stories that I told you, in our first year of ministry, that's now 36 years ago. And it's not fresh, but it's there. It left a deep mark, a deep scar. These things leave scars. When you're falsely accused or you go through difficulties or problems or attacks like this, they leave you scars, but Christ heals them. You're discouraged at the time, you're wondering how you're going to get through it as you go

through these things.... And we find a new equilibrium in life, whether it's we lost a child or our child is in addictions or we lost a spouse or having difficulties in ministries or we're falsely accused or attacked. And we've been marked by the storm, but we're still with Christ. He's still with us. He sustains us. But we're different for these experiences.... We go forward. There's times when we didn't want to be there. There's times when you're just tired of the fight and you would just like to run. It's curious. We saw other teammates that did run. They ran for different reasons. But you carry the same person with you when you run. And you will face new and similar experiences wherever you go.

Molly shared similar thoughts from her own perspective.

The nature of working with others is always going to be complicated. It's always going to have conflict. And so do I care about what I'm doing? Do I care about the people that I'm working with? And do I care about seeing this transformation within them, within their community? And the answer is, "Yes, I do care." So it's worth the challenges. It's worth the ups and downs. So keeping, I think, that end goal in mind, keeping the people who I'm working with at the forefront has helped keep things in focus, keep my perspective on track.

She later stated that "For me, it's a long-term commitment. It's part of my identity, I guess. And so I don't really have my ear to the ground for other job opportunities or things like that".

Connor mentioned that his peers were talking about being burned out and then shared his thoughts.

I'm trying to figure out what burnout means because some of my colleagues have said that they're experiencing it. I don't know that I've experienced it to the degree that

they're describing. My suspicion is that if I don't maintain the work and rest rhythms that the Lord has prescribed, then I'll inevitably be burned out. And that's work hard for six days, rest hard for one.

Evan described the death of the surgeon (colleague) who was the champion for starting the hospital. He got to Africa and worked several months to help open the hospital, working with the surgeon who recruited him to the hospital ministry team. The surgeon died

but he was huge in recruiting at that time before we opened. And the hospital really was his passion, and he was here before. Served here in Africa for a few years in the southern part of [our country] in the hospital down there. But as they continued to progress in the construction of this hospital, eventually they moved up here early, and he was integral in actually helping build the hospital, recruiting for personnel and getting it going. So for sure, he was all about recruiting for me and it was a big part of why I got here. And that was a challenge when he passed away then a year after we opened. It was a huge loss, seemingly a huge loss. I mean, it was, but obviously God was in control and knew, but to us, it was like the man behind the dream, the man running the show is gone. I mean, God's saying, "Hey, I used him as I needed him. And you guys don't need him,"

***Job, career, or calling.*** All missionary participants quickly identified calling as the best descriptor for their roles. Most of the missionaries describe how their calling developed over time as a series of experiences and learning. Molly said,

My calling was always quieter, and it was about saying yes to lots of little things and then taking a step back and looking and realizing, "Oh, God has been pulling me and guiding me this way all along the way, but He didn't reveal that to me at the beginning." But now, looking up and looking around and realizing, this is where God wants me to be. It's

where he's giving me passion and love for people, for culture, for working for ministry. And so, yeah, I feel like all of those things come together to help me understand my calling. But it wasn't some sort of supernatural voice or feeling or revelation that I had one day. It's been quieter and step-by-step.

Her description of her calling is consistent with all the missionary participants in this study. Most indicated that their calling process began in high school or college. None of them pointed to a single event or spectacular mystical experience as their calling. Most of them would talk about God's calling or will for their life or His providence from a retrospective frame. They would see God's plan in hindsight. Evan explained why calling was important to him in difficult circumstances

I would say... it's the Lord because there is no other reason to be here. Because it's a tough environment, physical environment. And so without the Lord's call to say, "This is where I want you to go. The people need to hear about me.... We can help you spiritually if you're willing. We can share the good news with you". It's ultimately their decision, whether they accept the hope that we're offering. But we can treat that. So but the short answer, the Lord [is why we are here], because without that, there's no reason to be here.

Connor described how he and his wife considered the difficulties they would experience before going to Europe.

Okay. The sacrifice that's required of me to change so much for myself, my wife, my children, will be worth it if we're able to help impact some of these really large spiritual problems. And so I think that's how they motivated us to make the change. Higher purpose, higher goal than our own comfort.... I think a big part of it is this piece over here, why are we doing this? What are the higher purposes? Are we making a difference



for the good even if it takes a lot of bad days? What I'm referring to you in our church jargon is this higher calling basically.

Molly looks at her role as all encompassing, when asked about calling, she said, "Oh, a calling. I don't know and I'm not sure if it's healthy or not, but I don't know how to separate my work in ministry from my life". Molly, Joslyn, and Noah had attitudes that their current role is their permanent role, or the role they will retire from. Joslyn and Noah have changed roles over time and Joslyn has changed continents. Connor, Evan, and Jake are more open to their calling changing over time or even ending. The long-term attitudes about calling and the perspective the calling coming from God appeared to made the missionary participants resilient in times of difficulty.

***Within case summary: missionaries.*** Missionaries shared many common experiences and attitudes that influence their career commitment. The themes that resulted in the greatest career commitment were experiences where clientele were benefiting from the work they do. The clients were improving their lives as a result of the Missionaries' work. The work itself, changing lives, achievement, interpersonal relationships, and responsibility were all themes that informed these results. Conversely, the missionaries identified three main sources of dissatisfaction. Policy and bureaucracy, supervision, and interpersonal relationships as major sources of dissatisfaction for extension agents. In this grouping of issues, the issues were also the coding themes, which were also hygiene factors identified by Herzberg et al., (1993/1959). The experiences of the missionaries influence their attitudes, both positive and negative. These attitudes drive missionary career commitment. Missionaries could describe enthusiastically the experiences that drove increases in positive attitudes; and a few sentences later, describe experiences that resulted in increased negative attitudes. For missionaries, the latter had greater influence on attitudes with

negative attitudes were not trivial; however, missionaries were more patient to find resolutions to experiences and attitudes that reduce their career commitment.

***Transversal analysis: comparative case analysis.***

Extension agents and missionaries have similar experiences and resulting attitudes. They all were the most satisfied, excited, or experienced joy when they were helping people solve problems, grow in life, or make improvements. While the context of their work is different both cases described the things that excited them the most in similar terms with similar levels of enthusiasm. Both described things that frustrated them the most and administration and bureaucracy were the top target for their frustration. They also described how challenging interpersonal conflict was for them. In most situations they were a part of the relationship that was in conflict. A few extension agents also described conflicts that occur between partner organizations or between volunteers in extension program area.

Career commitment followed their level of satisfaction in general. Extension agents who were highly dissatisfied allowed their career commitment to be more influenced by their dissatisfaction. Missionaries also increased their career commitment when they were experiencing success and satisfaction. However, missionaries moderated the impacts of their dissatisfaction due to the spiritual nature of their calling and being confident God was in control of their situation.

**Summary**

This analysis and results from the data collected via interviews and drawings provided by the participants was shared. The results included three levels of analysis as described by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017). The *horizontal* analysis introduced the reader to each participant, providing a brief biography that shared some demographic information, current role, and a superficial

explanation of their attitudes towards career commitment. This level of analysis familiarized the reader with who each participant was at the time of the interview. It also began to describe the members of each class. The second level of analysis, *vertical* began to consider the information gathered from participants within each class, extension agents and missionaries. The analysis organized the information by the sub-questions that guided this research. The *vertical* level of review began to describe the classes and focus the results. The *transversal* level of review contained the third level of analysis and completed the synthesis of information from the participants and described each case more completely. The fourth level of analysis continued the *transversal* analysis and provided a comparative case analysis across the cases. Considering the results from the *horizontal, vertical, and transversal analyses* provided a more robust understanding the experiences and attitudes of participants and how it influenced career commitment in a comparative case analysis across the two cases..

This chapter provided rich thick descriptions of how the participants responses answered the sub-questions for this research and the central question that guided the overall research. The comparative case analysis describes how the extension agent and missionary cases are similar and different in the context of the sub- and central questions.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

In this chapter the interpretation of the results will be shared; an assessment of the research methodology will be considered; a review of the conceptual construct's applicability will be provided; and considerations for future research will be shared. Herzberg et al., (1993/1959) in the forward of the 1993 reprinting of their seminal work described that they decided to study engineers and accountants so their data would have generality than if they studied just one profession. This research utilized the same strategy and combined that strategy with a maximum difference approach (Cresswell & Poth, 2018) to allow consideration of perspectives within and across the professions and also attempt to amplify different perspectives within each profession. The utilization of existing databases with several employment scales and demographic data allowed the consideration of multiple factors to make participant selections with high levels of variation within and across the two cases.

### Findings

The design and results of this research have provided new understanding that supplements the body of research in extension and mission contexts. The study of widely different participants in similar, yet individual, contexts within two professions, brought new insights and understanding of career commitment and calling for adult educators.

### *Answers to the Sub-Questions*

The central question that guided this research was *How do home and internationally placed adult educators in non-religious and religious settings, respectively, experience calling and career commitment?* An explanation of how the central was answered through this research follows.

**Sub-Question 1: How are career paths chosen?** Most participants in both cases entered college with some idea of what interested them for their professional work. From that point iterative processes led most participants to the career they have today. Many extension agents and missionaries entered college with an idea of what they might like to pursue professionally if it worked out for them. Extension agents pursued a wide variety of study topics. Many missionaries attended Bible college with the idea they might pursue Christian vocations. Missionary consideration of career options in college were narrower than the extension agent case who attended liberal arts or state universities. Two participants pursued degrees outside their current professions. One person's parents would not financially support the degree path that interested Alex. Jake did not have a desire to be a missionary when in college and pursued a degree at a LGU that, ironically, qualified him for extension agent positions. Both Alex and Jake were business owners outside their current field. Alex returned to school to get a degree he was passionate about and entered his current profession. Jake sold his business so he and family could serve as missionaries in African and then Asia. Evan attended a Christian university and received his BSN and was commissioned into the US Navy. It was at the time he was leaving the Navy that he began considering medical missions as option.

All participants described the importance various people in extension or missions, teachers, mentors, or family members had on their awareness of their professional options. Many times, these people's examples in the profession was inspiring according to the participants. These experiences that led to entering the profession were consistent with the findings of Arnold (2007) and Arnold and Place (2010b) where they found that extension agents had an important role to play in inspiring and recruiting future extension agents. Arnold and Place also found experiences consistent with the iterative experiences participants described how their desire to

serve their profession and the people in a served by it. They also developed a sense of how they would fit in the profession through their developmental progress in college or in their previous professional roles.

**Sub-question 2: How do adult educator's attitudes influence their career**

**commitment?** All participants develop positive attitudes that increase their career commitment when they are successfully helping people learn, grow, and improve their lives. They also have positive attitudes when they are trusted by their organization to identify the needs of the people they work with and develop novel and innovative ways to address those need. Building synergistic partnerships with clientele or peers is another source of satisfaction and enjoyment. They appreciate recognition from the organization, peers, or clientele. All participants also express the similar frustrations that cause them to have negative attitudes toward their career commitment.

Participants develop negative attitudes primarily when they experience two phenomena. The more prevalent experience was when their organization imposed onerous, distracting, unwanted, or irrelevant work on them that they perceived as distracting them from their strategic work. Less frequently mentions, but important when it was brought up, was interpersonal conflict. Regardless of the source of the conflict or the level of responsibility in the conflict; it resulted in negative attitudes and rapidly reducing career commitment.

These findings about attitudes were consistent with Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) and their findings that experiences resulted in positive or negative attitudes with the corresponding change in career commitment. Benge et al. (2015) studied causes for burnout. While most of their results focused on experiences or organizational factors that were related to burnout; they also observed resulting shifts in career commitment.

**Sub-question 3: How do experiences influence career commitment?** Making a difference in people's lives was the strongest motivator and satisfier in this study. All participants enthusiastically described how rewarding it was when individuals or groups became stronger as a result of the participant working with them. Noah was later in his career, and he shared many examples similar to those who were earlier in their careers. He also shared examples of the cumulative work over decades and how persistent work overtime is full of similar work, but the impact continues to multiply into large systematic impacts.

Administrative requirements, interactions, or poor supervision were consistent experiences that resulted in frustration and reduced career commitment. Interpersonal conflict was always draining when it occurred; which it did across both cases. Those conflicts were emotionally trying and exhausting when they occurred. Some participants worked through the conflicts and have moved beyond them. Others could not find satisfactory resolution and they have pursued or are pursuing other options, an obvious impact on their career commitment.

These findings were consistent with previous studies. The experiences of the participants in this study were consistent with some of the motivation and hygiene factors identified by Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) like the work itself, achievement, responsibility, policy and bureaucracy, supervision, and interpersonal relationships were consistent in Herzberg et al.'s work and this research. Arnold and Place (2010b) found that motivators were important for newer extension agents for their careers. Benge and Harder (2017) documented the level of quality of the relationship between supervisors and extension agents, finding 75 percent of agents had a partner level relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Molly described how an unengaged supervisor can cause dissatisfaction, even when the relationship is not stressed. Eve described in detail how discouraging and dissatisfying supervisors who provide little, or no support can

eliminate career commitment. Lindner (1998) found a mix of motivators: interesting work, good pay, recognition, and job security. Interesting work and recognition were confirmed in this research; however, salary was rarely mentioned and never having a major influence on career commitment. Missions research has identified the ultimate importance as they career commitment, attrition. Stephens (2019) identified that one mission agency was losing 60 percent of their new employees during their first five years. He did not describe the losses in terms of satisfying and dissatisfying experiences. Instead, he noted that those early years are when new missionaries are most vulnerable.

**Sub-question 4: How do organizational structure and policies influence career commitment?** The organizational administration and supervision were the most mentioned sources of frustration. Several sources of frustration were raised. They mentioned a variety of arbitrary decisions which either distracted participants from focusing on client needs or made decisions that reduced morale for all participants or access to support networks for missionary participants. Disinterested, detached, micromanagers, or organizationally focused supervisors were frustrating to many participants, as were bureaucratic restrictions, requirements, and reporting requirements.

Contrary to the negative experiences, several participants described times where their organization was helpful. Evan described how his mission organization helped he and his wife work through their burnout early in their career and prepare them to return to Africa for further service. Braden describes a time when his supervisor helped him find a solution and funding to support an important clientele need.

Kroth and Peutz (2010) conducted a Delphi technique to identify the top needs of extension agents from the perspective of extension directors. The top five factors identified were



moving from traditional needs to contemporary needs, appropriate salaries, appropriate resources, a diverse staff, and current technology. Kroth and Peutz (2010) found that extension executive leaders identified (a) evolving from traditional to modern educational issues; (b) competitive salaries; (c) appropriate resources available; (d) diversity in staffing; and (e) technologically current as the most important work factors extension agents. Those findings were not supported in this research. The participants in this research were more interested in meeting local needs and seeing the resulting changes in life and having the autonomy to do those things than they were the hygiene and organizational factors identified by extension directors. These findings challenge extension executive leaders to revisit their extension agent retention and support strategies to ensure those efforts are targeting topics and issues that are important to extension agents and most likely to reduce premature turnover.

### *Answers to the Central Question*

**Career commitment.** The central question guiding this research was How do home and internationally placed adult educators in non-religious and religious settings, respectively, experience calling and career commitment? The contribution of the interview responses to understanding the central question was interesting for this group of participants. Career commitment was strong for this group of participants, with only one participant actively seeking other employment. Between the two cases career commitment was similar with most participants loyal to their current role and a few open to new opportunities if they were to arise. Everyone indicated a preference to stay within the profession even if they changed roles or organizations.

Career commitment was high in this study. The most common factor that reduced career commitment was policy and bureaucratic requirements or poor supervision. Secondary were interpersonal conflicts (client, peer, or supervisor). When conflict arose, it was very challenging

and often reduced career commitment quickly. This is a positive finding, in that, solutions to reduced career commitment are within the control of administrations who are willing to do the hard work of reducing or eliminating the organization momentum that is frustrating the professionals who are on the front lines of accomplishing the organizational mission.

**Calling.** Extension agents were thoughtful about a calling, most of them decided that their current role was a calling. Their initial responses to whether their current role was a job, career, or calling were generally to pause and consider the options. Two immediately said calling, but one had a serious caveat. The rest considered and processed the question verbally. It appears that this group had not seriously considered the question in the past. Even though their responses indicated that calling was not a topic they thought about often; everyone identified their role as a calling, or between a career and calling. This was true for the most satisfied and most dissatisfied extension agents. Alex and Eve presented the main caveats. Alex, in one breath, defined his role as a calling and a job. This documented how his satisfaction was driven by working with and helping his clientele, but his dissatisfaction was driven by his disdain for how the university bureaucracy crushed creativity and accomplishment. Eve had every reason to define her current role as a job, yet she immediately responded that it was between a career or calling. She clarified that she was not going to have a career or calling experience with her current employer. Extension agents defined calling as something they are meant to do, work that makes them whole, or related to their desire to make a difference in society. Missionaries were more introspective when talking about their calling. Typically, calling for missionaries is prerequisite to be accepted by a mission supporting organization. They have all thought about their callings and had to articulate what the experience was for them and what it meant for them. They all quickly answered that their role is a calling. As they explained what that meant, the processes

they described were iterative, involved obedience, willingness to do new things, and open-mindedness regarding learning and opportunities. While calling can be experienced in many ways in Protestant Christianity; the participants in this study were measured in how described their calling. They did not experience any type of mystical event. They developed habits of study, obedience, and open-mindedness to new opportunities. They spoke most confidently about their callings when looking back on their experiences. They would share they could now see how God was preparing them in the past to be where they are today.

The permeation of calling throughout all or much of their adult life separated the missionaries from extension agents in one important way. When missionaries in this study experienced hardship or difficulty, they looked at their calling as the hope they needed to persevere. Their difficulties were similar to extension agents, but their career commitment remained stronger through the difficulties. Extension agents viewed calling from within themselves. A calling meant they were doing things with passion, in which they could thrive, and they were improving their clientele's lives. Missionary calling was prerequisite to entering their roles. They had to articulate their calling to be considered as a missionary applicant. Their calling came from outside themselves, from God, and was spiritual in their experience. This difference between the cases had one noted impact; missionaries considered their calling when facing difficulties. The difficulties that extension agents and missionaries face are mostly similar with cross-cultural adjustments and language deficiencies being the primary differences. When missionaries face difficulties, they lean on their calling and derived confidence from the calling that God is in control. Therefore, they chose to persist through the difficulties. Extension agents were willing to persist in difficult situations, but their confidence is in themselves or the people supporting them. Career commitment in extension agents was similar to other studies with 8.7

percent of Florida Extension agents pursuing other employment (Benge & Harder, 2017). None of the missionaries were actively seeking new roles. Some were in the midst of difficulties. They had hope that the difficulties would be resolved. A few missionaries were open to new opportunities but desired to stay in the profession. Other missionaries purposely took the attitude that they were there to stay until they retire. They chose that mindset because it helped them treat their relationships and partnerships as long-term investments in people.

### **Implications of the Findings**

In Chapters Four and Five, the results from the participants were shared and focused solely on the concepts the participants shared and synthesizing thoughts that were shared in common by participants. Differences between participants were also noted. In this section analysis of the results from the participants was expanded to include several implications by the author. This research developed findings that were specific and provide solutions for the adult educators and their organizations. The research showed results that are both supported in the conceptual framework and provided evidence that the framework may need adjustments when applying the Motivation-Hygiene theory to non-formal adult educators. These results reproduced Herzberg et al (1993/1959) “the miracle is... people... were able to speak of moving and exciting moments in their lives in which they did have a genuine opportunity for achievement” (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959, p. 130).

### ***Career Selection.***

Most participants began to pursue their role with extension or missionary work in the later years of high school or in college. Those participants who pursued their career because they wanted to be in that specific type of role seemed more satisfied in their work. They experienced dissatisfactions, but their foundational passion that helped them pursue the career, seems to

moderate the dissatisfaction to a point. Those who pursued the career in some form of opportunistic manner seem to be more impacted by their dissatisfying experiences and expressed, in form or another, that they were more open to other opportunities if they arose. This is consistent with Stephens (2018) where he observed “resiliency leads to longevity in ministry while despondency leads to failure and ineffectiveness” (Stephens, 2018, p. 32). This observation was influence for the leadership of these organizations. Recognizing, celebrating, and empowering the passions that led people to pursue their roles while observing when “despondency” is beginning and helping the person focus on what they are doing well may head off reductions in career commitment. Evan is an example where the organizational decision to have him serve as the supervisor is outside of Evan’s passions and is causing despondency for him. The organization has the opportunity to find a different supervisory solution or focus appreciation and recognition of the sacrifices Evan is making to do a job that isn’t enjoyable, but needed.

While no career selection pathways were identical; all participants described a series of steps, interactions with people, or experiential opportunities that affirmed their career interests. Extension and mission organizational leaders have the opportunity to strengthen their relationships with colleges and universities, develop pathways to interact directly with students who are or may develop interests in the profession, or provide real life experiences that affirm a student’s interest or disinterest in the profession.

### ***Career Commitment***

The career commitment of participants was influenced by four main factors and several sub-factors. Extension agents and missionaries thrive when helping people, organizations, and systems change for the better and having the professional freedom to be creative and innovative

in accomplishing the former both increased career commitment and satisfaction. Autonomy, responsibility, recognition, trust, and patience are all factors that organizations can provide to increase career commitment with employees who are new or demonstrate reliable performance. Administrative and bureaucratic requirements that distract from helping people in ways that do not make sense to the employees can increase dissatisfaction and lower career commitment. Interpersonal conflicts at any level can increase stress and decrease desire to be in certain work situations, especially when peers or supervisors are a part of the conflict. The result is often lost energy and reduced career commitment.

**Satisfiers: Experiences that Result in Positive Attitudes and Increased Career Commitment.** Almost all of the participants had several examples of things that they find satisfying in their roles. There was great consistency across participants and cases. Everyone found the greatest satisfaction in helping people learn, grow, and change. Most participants work directly with the people they are helping and also build some type of capacity in their communities. In extension the capacity building was in volunteer or community leaders. In missions the capacity building national pastors, lay leaders, other missionaries, churches, or national nurses, in Evan's case. Participants described how excited they get when someone they were helping improved their life. The resulting synergisms, support, gratitude, and energy that develops through these relationships result in greater satisfaction and often contribute to greater accomplishments. These positive experiences and resulting enthusiasm were observed by Zurcher in extension agents when he described them as "fiercely proud of their profession... with a sincere hope for discovering ways to solve them" (Zurcher, 1966, p. 198).

All participants work to help people live a better life today and tomorrow. The missionaries also focus on changing people's lives eternally through evangelism and discipleship

and helping improve individuals, couples, and families live more successful lives. The other source of satisfaction was interpersonal relationships that develop into constructive learning relationships or partnerships.

**Dissatisfiers: Experiences that Result in Negative Attitudes and Decreased Career Commitment.** Like satisfiers, the dissatisfiers were similar across the participants and cases. The employers and their administration and bureaucracies were the most common sources of dissatisfaction. Organizational leadership has a clear opportunity to transition their supervisory structures from unsupportive or micromanaging supervisors to empowering leaders; reducing the number of reporting requirements; or streamline bureaucratic processes that are cumbersome or reducing the adult educators' ability to make a difference in people's lives. Clegg (1963) observed that policy and administration was the second highest source of extension agent dissatisfaction.

### *Calling*

Consider Molly's discussion on calling and how the passion that God has given both me and my husband for inter-cultural interaction and community, I feel like we've been given skills and characteristics that really align well and suit the missionary life well. And so, yeah, I don't think that it's a higher calling than any other thing.... For me, it's a long-term commitment. It's part of my identity, I guess. And so I don't really have my ear to the ground for other job opportunities or things like that. And I believe that if God starts stirring it in me that he wants us to go to a different place or serve in a different way, I would be open to that. But I always tell people, my mentality is that I will retire here.

It may be beneficial to explore whether there is a type of calling in non-religious contexts that could elicit similar levels of career commitment or originate outside the person. Like the findings of Bunderson and Thompson (2009) where the zookeepers in their study “were born with gifts and talents that predisposed them to work in an animal-related occupation” (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009, p. 37). Another line of inquiry would be to determine the role of being *predisposed* to the work or developing the mindsets, skills, and passion during one’s developmental years or during adulthood.

### ***Research Methodology***

The comparative case study analysis methodology developed by Bartlett and Vavrus is “well-suited to social research about practice and policy” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 1). This research studied 11 different sets of organizations supporting adult educators on five continents with employers supporting adult educators in two divergent contexts. and people working in rural to urban settings in countries that span all levels of development. At first, this level of variability in practice and policy seemed a challenging fit for comparative case study analysis strategies that were developed as public policy evaluation tools. The data in this multiple case study was more phenomenological than systems and policy oriented. The data gathered was derived from the lived experiences of participants and there were no constant employment or policy structures within which make comparisons across participants. The application to the lived experiences of unrelated cases and participants was challenging. Upon extended consideration of how or if the three-pronged evaluation strategy fit this research; specific roles for each prong were identified, See Figure 1. The end result was a complete and complex analysis of the data that resulted in a robust understanding that informed the central- and sub-questions that guided this research. The comparative case study analysis strategies were helpful in ensuring that the



data gathered was analyzed and assessed from several different perspectives. It was also helpful that horizontal analysis resulted in discreet understanding of each participant's situation, experiences, and attitudes. Utilizing these biographies as a source of member checking that occurred shortly after the interviews were completed allowed the participants the opportunity to review their biography. The concise nature of the biographies was easy to manage for the participants and allowed for member checking to occur quickly and prior to the onset of in-depth analysis of the information provided by participants. Yin (2014) recommended a similar analysis strategy where a summary for each individual was the first major step in a case study analysis. Overall, the comparative case study analysis strategies brought forward by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) worked well in this study. It was not a simple adjustment of the application to a non-policy-oriented study, but, in the end, the methodology strengthened this study.

Theme saturation was reached comfortably within each case and across the entire study. A different or larger group of respondents may have provided additional insights. The extension agents were well represented by the agriculture and natural resources discipline with lesser representation in family and consumer sciences in the form of human development or early childhood development. 4-H youth development and community development agents were not well represented. Insights from these disciplines in the extension profession may have provided additional and important insights. All the missionary participants articulated that they intended to work in their current role for a long period of time, which might include new roles or new locations. Having participants who were seriously considering leaving missionary work may have provided additional insights regarding career commitment or for the research in general.

### *Conceptual Construct*

This research was guided by three conceptual constructs. The context of non-formal adult education; the role of adult educators in that context; and Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959) served as the evaluative construct for this research. Non-formal adult education serves as the professional context of this research. It involves learning collaboratively and voluntarily. The adult educator is a person who embeds in communities, builds relationships and trust, identifies needs, and facilitates adult learning collaboratively. The review of literature in Chapter Two documented the evolution of research of extension employees utilizing the Motivation-Hygiene conceptual framework from as early as 1963 (Clegg, 1963) and as late as 2021 (Siegelin et al., 2021). No evidence was found of the use the Motivation-Hygiene theory in missionary employee research.

During early coding steps the participants described experiences that were consistent with either motivation or hygiene factors. As a result, motivation and hygiene factors were identified as the first emergent themes in the analysis, see Table 4 for a list of motivation and hygiene factors identified and their utilization. Table 4 identifies how many files were coded for each factor and how many times that factor was referenced. In addition to the Motivation-Hygiene factors, Table 3 shows how many times each factor was also coded for negative or positive attitudes.

**Table 4** *Hygiene and motivator themes coded in interviews and drawings*

Herzberg Factors	Hygiene Motivation	Files	References	Attitudes	
				Negative	Positive
All Factors		23	286		
Policy and Bureaucracy	H	18	73	57	16
Interpersonal Relationships	H	16	42	32	14
Achievement	M	19	38	12	30
Work itself	M	15	37	6	24
Supervision	H	12	33	25	10
Responsibility	M	11	20	6	14
Recognition	M	10	14	7	10
Salary	H	4	9	4	2
Advancement	M	4	8	2	4
Physical working conditions	H	4	6	5	4
Benefits	H	2	2	0	1
Job security	H	2	2	2	0

The information in Table 3 raised some interesting questions about the applicability of the Motivation-Hygiene theory in these adult educator settings where the educators are distant from their supervisors and administrative and bureaucratic structures. Only six factors, three motivators and three hygiene factors were referenced in interviews 20 or more times. The motivators receiving a high number of coding references were achievement, the work itself, and responsibility.

In answer to Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) question whether two-factor Motivation-Hygiene theory is still relevant today; the participants confirmed a major finding from Herzberg et al. (1993/1959). The two-factor satisfaction and dissatisfaction was confirmed. Many participants described their passion and love for the work they do, especially when helping people become more successful. While also describing factors that were causing simultaneous dissatisfaction. Alex provided the most concise demonstration of the dissociation between

satisfiers and dissatisfiers, “My current role, a lot of what I do, I feel like, is a calling when I'm out...teaching, being able to help folks. This role that I'm in now seems a little more like a job to me, if that makes any sense”. He agreed that the bureaucracy made his calling into a job.

The second question to consider is did the Motivation-Hygiene factors, developed in offices of accountants and engineers in the 1950s (Herzberg et al., 1993/1959), apply to distributed adult educators with little daily organizational support? The answer to that question is “No”. Some motivation or hygiene factors were not always shared in a positive or negative light, respectively. The most noticeable example of this in this context is interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal conflict serves as a hygiene factor, as inter-office, peer, client, volunteer, or supervisor related conflict is a cause of dissatisfaction. However, in extension and mission work interpersonal relationships that are constructive or synergistic are strong motivators for adult educators. When considering the negative and positive attitudes coded to the Motivation-Hygiene factors indicate that satisfiers and dissatisfiers described by Herzberg et al. are not discreetly defined in the context of nonformal adult education. While the majority of the dissatisfaction originated with policy and bureaucracy or supervision; approximately 20 percent of the responses in these areas that generated dissatisfaction were coded as resulting in positive attitudes as well. Benge et al. (2015) found that compensation and opportunities were most important to Colorado based extension agents. These hygiene factors had the opportunity to reduce turnover. Harder et al. (2014) found that hygiene factors were more important to these same agents in Colorado. This differed from Herzberg et al. (1993/1959) who concluded that motivators were more important to employees.

This research indicates that evaluation of the utility of the two-factor Motivation-Hygiene theory should separate the consideration of the satisfaction and dissatisfaction and the motivation

and hygiene factors developed by Herzberg et al. (1959). In this research the two-factor consideration of satisfaction or dissatisfaction appears to be confirmed. Is the specific list of factors developed by Herzberg et al. applicable over 60 years later in an adult education context? The answer to that question appears to be “no” on two fronts. First, the factors on each list either lack relevance for factors that received little coding versus those that received frequent coding. Second, all factors received coding that were expected to be positive for motivation and negative for hygiene factors. However, all factors received a noticeable fraction of coding that was counterintuitive to the Motivation-Hygiene theory.

### **Recommendations**

This research study raised several questions and opportunities for improvement. Suggestions for future research endeavors and changes in organizational practice follow.

### ***Future Research***

This research raised several questions that deserve further consideration. Increasing the understanding of modern applications of the Motivation-Hygiene factors, development factors that are specific to a profession or groups of similar professions, or thinking about the factors and whether they are discrete satisfiers or dissatisfiers. Are there reasons to consider expanding research efforts utilizing the Motivation-Hygiene theory in missionary contexts? Other secular behavioral theories have been considered in mission career commitment research. For example, Donovan and Myers (1998) described the role of the generations in missionary attrition and made predictions about the future. The positive and negative role of interpersonal relationships in both extension and mission contexts could be an intriguing line of inquiry. This research provided examples where both extension agents and missionaries left positions due to negative and, what they perceived as unresolvable interpersonal conflicts. Understanding how conflict

develops in the workplace, with volunteers, or clientele and learning how to prepare adult educators to mitigate conflict could be a valuable tool for increasing career commitment or reducing or eliminating dissatisfaction due to conflict. This research included extension agents who worked in agriculture and natural resources, consumer, and family sciences, and, to a limited extent, 4-H youth development. The 4-H program involved parents, volunteers, and parents as volunteers who are supporting youth, in competitive contexts where money is involved. As a result, interpersonal conflict is more common than in other programmatic disciplines. Further research focusing on 4-H youth development agents would be valuable.

Calling and its role in career commitment deserves more consideration. Is it solely something that is developed at the individual level? Can organizations facilitate the development of calling that is genuine and increases organizational commitment? Is there a type of calling in non-religious contexts that could elicit similar levels of career commitment to those experienced by missionaries? Like the findings of Bunderson and Thompson (2009) where the zookeepers in their study “were born with gifts and talents that predisposed them to work in an animal-related occupations” (p. 37). Another line of inquiry would be to determine the role of being *predisposed* to the work or developing the mindsets, skills, and passion during one’s developmental years or during adulthood.

Research that develops understanding of the roles and authority of supporting units in extension or mission organizations could be valuable. Research that explores the impacts of policies and procedures on accomplishment of the strategic mission of the extension agent or missionary and whether they are synergistic, additive, or antagonistic would be a valuable addition to understanding how to improve career commitment through changes in the organizational structure, policies, or procedures.

When questionnaires were utilized in previous research, salary or compensation were issues that were determined to be important to extension agents. In this study, salary or compensation were not raised by participants at any serious level. Research into methodology in determining the importance of salary should be explored. Is salary determined to be important *because* the research methodology specifically asks about salary or compensation or because salary is an important issue. This study allowed participants to raise whatever satisfiers or dissatisfiers were important to them and salary was not a top concern.

### ***For Leaders***

The most important dissatisfiers identified by participants were administrative in nature. These things are within the control of the organizational leaders if they choose to do the hard work of finding balance between legitimate organizational needs and excessive or bureaucratic requirements. Organizational structures and bureaucratic units that have implemented onerous processes over time to the detriment of accomplishing the strategic goals of the organization should be addressed, mitigated, or eliminated. Supervisors need to find the balance needed with their adult educators that provides support and freedom with enough guidance to ensure accomplishing goals. The most challenging task may be to untangle the red tape of the bureaucracy and reel in the over control that hinders those who do the strategic work of the organization. It is a difficult balance to achieve as each person is unique and has differing needs.

### **Contributions to the Field**

Buford (1990) offered commentary on how the internal departments that support the mission of extension work, like human resources, information technology, or finance sometimes develop into cumbersome bureaucracies that reduce the effectiveness of extension agents. The participants in this study, confirmed Buford's 33-year-old commentary. Both extension agents

and missionaries described how supporting units either distracted them from the mission they were focused on or make decisions or implement policy that have negative impacts on their strategic success.

The participants in this research described reasons that preventable attrition occurs. Some participants described why they were a part of the preventable attrition statistics in their previous positions. The diversified nature of the participants in this research strengthened the research that has occurred within extension systems. This is an issue for the leadership of all extension systems and mission agencies to take seriously. The positive finding in this research is that the most discussed dissatisfiers for extension agents and missionaries were found in administrative and organizational expectations and requirements, along with issues with supervisors; solutions are obtainable and within the purview of organizational leadership.

The concept of calling was a valuable line of inquiry that was enhanced by including both extension agents and missionaries in this research. All participants, at least, discussed how their role could be a calling. They identified both career and calling as something more than having a job for the paycheck. Career and calling were things you did out of passion or belief that you are making a difference in society. Both extension agents and missionaries valued the difference they make in people's lives. How extension agents and missionaries defined and talked about their callings differed in other ways. When extension agents talked about calling something that was fulfilling to themselves, personally. Calling was also something they had not considered in noticeable ways prior to being asked about calling in this research or throughout their professional evolution. Missionaries differed in two noticeable ways. They considered their calling or whether they had a calling from the time they were in college or in the years prior to entering their ministry as a missionary. The number of years they had considered, reflected on,



and implemented their calling resulted in a different application of calling than was observed in extension agents. The second factor in the missionary calling phenomenon was the spiritual nature of their calling. They consider their calling from God. Their belief in their calling gave them more confidence. The result was added confidence resulted in a mitigation of the impacts negative attitudes can have on career commitment. When discussing difficulties from any source that resulted in negative attitudes; the missionary participants leaned on their confidence in their calling to persevere through difficult times because their call was from God, and they were confident that they would eventually overcome the situation. Extension agents did not exhibit this same type of confidence during difficulty, nor did their calling come from outside themselves.

### **Conclusions**

*How do home and internationally placed adult educators in non-religious and religious settings, respectively, experience calling and career commitment?* Extension agents and missionaries experience career commitment similarly. The satisfiers for both include succeeding in the work itself. Helping people learn and subsequently choosing to improve their lives is the most rewarding experience described by both extension agents and missionaries. They also thrive when given the chance to try and implement new programs. They enjoy having the freedom to find solutions that work for their clients, themselves, and their organization. They also find great value in building relationships with clientele and partners that are trust-based and reciprocal in nature. These interpersonal relationships serve as a source of satisfaction. They also experience dissatisfaction similarly. Administrative requirements that they perceive as unnecessary and distract them from helping people cause dissatisfaction that erodes their career commitment. Both disinterest (*laissez-faire*) or over interest (*micromanagement*) from supervisors serve as

frustrations that impact their career commitment. Interpersonal conflict of any type in the work setting were described as dissatisfiers that were exhausting and reduced work effort and career commitment.

The different experiences with calling between extension agents and missionaries is intriguing. Extension is not able to create a calling that is spiritual in nature. However, it would be interesting to explore if it is possible to develop concepts of calling in extension where the source of calling is beyond one's self.

The greatest hope observed in this research is that the dissatisfiers are well within the control of organizational leaders to address for their organizations. The solutions are within reach, but they are not easy. This type of organizational change is challenging, especially in larger organizations. The momentum of the bureaucracies is significant. It is challenging at times to inspire people to change their habits when they don't receive the benefit of the change.

The contributions of the participants in this study are commended. All 12 participants shared how they had helped others have a better life. They are hardworking professionals who dedicate themselves to making a difference in their communities, both by their own contributions and in the ways they help others improve. Ten of the twelve provided evidence of strong commitment to their career and to their organization. A few participants were open to new opportunities in their profession but most often they wanted to do similar work in a different setting. Sometimes they were loyal to their organization and other times they were open to a change. The time each person sacrificed to interview for this research and complete a drawing in advance of the interview is greatly appreciated. The interactions with each person were encouraging in their unique ways and the researcher is encouraged by the qualities of the participants and their dedication to helping others improve their communities.

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**Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire**

- 1. Please tell me about who you are as a(n) Extension agent/missionary.**
- 2. What qualities and characteristics do you value in yourself?**
- 3. As we start our conversation today; I want to ask you to think back to the time you were deciding to pursue this career. Describe the experiences and processes you went through to from the time you started pursuing this career and getting into this position.**
  - a. Follow up prompts, if needed
    - i. What was your experience during your education or with key people or mentors that influenced you to select this career?
    - ii. Were there training experiences that motivated you?
    - iii. Were there barriers you experienced?
  - b. Follow up questions if additional detail is needed.
    - i. What type of experiences have you had that either enhanced or reduced your commitment?
    - ii. When you reflect upon your career, what experiences stand out in this journey? Why do they stand out for you?
- 4. Let's take a few minutes to look at the drawing you completed for this interview. Explain what everything represents and means to you.**
- 5. Think about the times in your career that you have been the most excited or most discouraged about what you are doing in your job. What was happening? How did you feel in those situations? What were the causes? How did they make you think about your career choice?**

- a. Follow up prompts, if needed
    - i. What role did your relationships with others have in your attitudes toward your career? What role do the people you value most in your life (family, friends, etc.) in influencing your attitudes about your career?
    - ii. Have you experienced “burnout” in your career? What was that like? How did you address it?
    - iii. When you think about the discouraging times, what was driving your discouragement? Was there conflict involved? Explain.
  - b. Follow up questions if additional detail is needed.
    - i. What role has attitudes played in your career?
- 6. We talked about the process you went through to select this career and to get into the career. Next would you share why you chose the career? What/who motivated/encouraged/discouraged you along the way? What helped/hindered you?**
- a. Follow up prompts, if needed
    - i. What interested you in this career?
    - ii. Who helped you most in making the career choice? How did they help you?
    - iii. Were there people who discouraged you from the career?
  - b. Follow up questions if more detail is needed.
    - i. How do you describe career commitment?

ii. Do you have a calling? Please tell me more. Or, what distinctions do you make between a career and a calling?

iii. Why do you stay in this career?

**7. Let's think about the organization your work for. What are the things they do that make it easy for you to thrive or make it challenging for you to succeed? Do they help you love your career or make you want to leave it? What is it that the organization does (+/-) that impacts how you think about your career and whether you stay in it?**

a. Follow up prompts, if needed

i. What about your supervision, the bureaucracy, solving problems (organizational or inter-personal), the leadership styles, and administrative tasks?

b. Follow up Questions if more details are needed.

i. Was there a time when you thought you might leave this career?  
Tell me more please.

**8. Does your current job match your ideal job? Why? Why not?**

**9. Are you satisfied with your job (consider all the expectation you had when you started your job)? Why? Why not?**

**10. Does your current job exceed those expectations? Why? Why not?**

**11. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that is important to our conversation or about your commitment to your career?**

**Appendix B: NVIVO Code Book**

Name	Description	Files	References
Attitudes	These codes target the sub-question on attitudes. They also provide a way to sort other coding items that are attitude-neutral into useful in coding (e.g., “Interpersonal Relationships” can be positive or negative, this coding strategy keeps the number of codes reasonable)	23	468
Mixed		8	30
Negative		20	159
Neutral		12	102
Positive		19	177
Balance	A broad category where balance between aspects of life are being discussed (i.e. work/life, administrative work/clientele focus, etc.)	13	60
Challenges		8	35
Changing Lives	Improving, outcomes, impacts	14	24
Collaboration	Teamwork, any level with any level (peer, admin, clientele)	15	30
Cross-Cultural	Added this because two or three Extension Agents were experiencing culture shock. Missionaries were also coded but only when they were discussing the topic. Obviously, missionaries’ entire experience is cross-cultural, as defined in this study.	7	26
Discrimination	Civil Rights concerns (only one participant)	1	2
Herzberg Factors	I lumped the hygiene and satisfiers together and am using the “Attitudes” codes to discern whether the coded item is positive or negative.	23	286
Achievement		19	38
Advancement		4	8
Benefits		2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Interpersonal Relationships		16	42
Job security		2	2
Physical working conditions		4	6
Policy and Bureaucracy		18	73
Recognition		10	14
Responsibility		11	20
Salary		4	9
Supervision		12	33
Work itself		15	37
Innovation	Any self-directed creative or new efforts.	6	12
Inspiration	by a leader or mentor or experience	8	16
Job Perspective	Asked is your current role a job, career, or calling.	13	41
Calling		13	35
Career		2	5
Job		1	1
Learner	Evidence they are seeking to learn (content or through experiences or partnerships)	6	12
Motivation	for choosing or staying in their role	2	2