

# Leadership Attainment of 14 Women in Agriculture: A Qualitative Study

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*Though the number of women entering agricultural careers is slightly increasing in the United States and internationally, women who enter male dominated professions, such as agriculture, may be perceived as inherently unsuited for such work (Doss et al., 2011). The purpose of this study was to highlight and discuss the backgrounds and success of women in agricultural leadership roles. The central research question was how have women in agriculture attained their leadership role in a male dominated field? Specific criteria was set for selecting participants, and the criteria included their background experiences, uniqueness to the agriculture field, the impact they are currently making to agriculture, and their specialty in agriculture. This study selected 14 women leaders in agriculture from various locations in the United States. The researchers spent one to three days with each participant in their environment and utilized semi-structured, open-ended interviews that lasted one to four hours. The researchers transcribed the interviews and then coded and categorized the data. The researchers decided the data was best represented as individual case studies rather than themes. The researchers found 11 overall conclusions about the data. Three significant conclusions include (a) family, including parents, spouse, and children, impacted each woman's decisions for her education, lifestyle, and career choices; (b) fathers are a huge influence on their daughters; and (c) each participant discovered how to integrate work and their personal lives to be successful.*

*Keywords: women, leadership, agriculture*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Although women have made great strides in the labor force, they are still absent from top leadership roles especially those in agriculture (Kark & Eagly, 2010). During the past 70 years, women have become more involved in obtaining employment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b). In 1999, women

represented 60 percent of the labor force, which has been their highest involvement (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b). Working women in 2014 earned 83 percent of men's earnings contrasting 62 percent of men's earnings in 1979 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b).

When examining male and female leadership styles, Eagly (2007) stated, "women, more than men, manifest leadership styles associated with effective performance as leaders" (p. 1). It has been stated by some scholars that women have a female advantage to leadership (Helgeson, 1990; Eagly, 2007; Elliott & Stead, 2008) due to the stereotypical feminine, communal traits such as "kindness, concern for others, warmth, and gentleness" (Eagly, 2007, p. 4). For example, women leaders are less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative, and more oriented to enhancing individuals' self-worth (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

On the other hand, men are believed to have masculine, agentic traits such as "confidence, aggressiveness, and self-direction" (Eagly, 2007, p. 4). When women leaders are compared to men, women leaders find challenges in being effective. Women leaders who show feministic traits are often disliked and characterized as being soft; while at the same time women who show too many masculine traits are often criticized for being unfeminine (Eagly, 2007). Further, women tend to feel less confident of themselves and not as comfortable in leadership positions due to the views of leadership and its relation to masculinity (van Engen, van der Leeden, & Willemsen, 2001).

### **Women Leaders in Agriculture**

It can be noted that there is a gap in research about women leaders in agriculture in the United States. In this study we address this gap and highlight and discuss the backgrounds and success of women leaders in agriculture. We began this study with a literature search on topics related to women leaders in agriculture in three journals: *Journal of Extension*, *Journal of Agricultural Education*, and the *International Journal of Gender, Science, and Technology*. Specifically relating to the topic women leaders in agriculture, only two articles were found in the *Journal of Extension*, one in the *Journal of Agricultural Education*, and one in the *International Journal of Gender, Science, and Technology*.

Several studies we found discussed how female leaders had to prove themselves as a woman in agriculture because others, both male and female, doubted their abilities to perform such duties in a male dominated field (Mayer, 2001; Seevers & Foster, 2004; Goldberger & Crowe, 2010; Baxter et al., 2011; Kleihauer et al., 2013). The research by Seevers and Foster (2004) and Goldberger and Crowe (2010) discussed women receiving a lower salary than men in the same positions. The stress of trying to balance family and work is a similarity shared in the studies by Mayer (2001), Seevers and Foster (2004), and Baxter et al. (2011). Goldberger and Crowe (2010) and Kleihauer et al. (2013) found an underinvestment in human capital in their research.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

We relied on Krumboltz's (1976) social learning theory as our theoretical framework because it explains factors that influence the nature of career decision making. These factors are divided into four categories, which include genetic endowment and special abilities, environmental conditions and events, learning experiences, and task approach skills (Krumboltz, 1976). This study focused on two categories: genetic endowment and special abilities and environmental conditions and events.

Gender is one of the few factors that influences an individual's entire life from childhood to adulthood (Blakemore, Berenbaum, & Liben, 2009). The role of gender in childhood affects the name an individual is given, the color of their clothing, and the toys they receive (Blakemore et al., 2009). According to Blakemore, Berenbaum, and Liben (2009), adulthood is impacted by gender roles through "different clothing and hairstyles, occupations, life roles, responsibilities for the upbringing of children, different household and other chores, and different interactions with others every day of their lives" (p. 2). Gender stereotypes are then created about what type of occupation, activities, and behaviors are appropriate for both males and females (Liben, Bigler, Ruble, Marton, & Powlishta, 2002; Watt, 2010). In a group, the gender of an individual relays knowledge about their value, competence, and worth

dependent upon the decisions of that culture, and this can affect the subordination and superordination in that group (Webster & Driskell, 1978).

In addition to gender, race impacts an individual's life and their career path (Domenico & Jones, 2006). Those who are part of a minority group, particularly if they are in the lower class, face more obstacles to achieving their ideal career compared to Caucasians (Gottfredson, 1981; Farmer, 1985). Women in minority groups tend to choose their careers based on their cultural values and job security rather than pure interest in the field (O'Neill, Shapiro, Ingols, & Blake-Beard, 2013). Women are often times excluded from the white, male old boys' network, which can introduce barriers to woman's career and networking opportunities (Fearfull & Kamenou, 2006). Adding to exclusion of networking, women in the minority may experience expulsion, upward mobility, demotion, and harassment (Roscigno, 2007).

Women face a challenge of balancing work and family duties (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Majority of women hold more responsibility for domestic and familial duties than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Women spend almost twice as much time as men caring for their children and women allot more time to cooking and housework (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a). Many women leave the workforce or choose part-time employment because of domestic duties and "their [husbands] expectation that wives should be the ones to cut back on employment" (Nohria & Khurana, 2010, p. 382). Childcare responsibilities, especially, cause women to either be unemployed or assume a part time position (Kark & Eagly, 2010). Therefore, Eagly and Carli (2007) concluded women's familial responsibilities contribute to their "lesser access to power and authority in society," and these conditions reduce their "prospects for advancement" (p. 49).

Work, family, and employment policies in many organizations demonstrate and strengthen the differences between men and women in both the workplace and home (Nohria & Khurana, 2010). Many places of employment offer women maternity leave (Brown, 2015) but fail to provide parental leave for men (Nohria & Khurana, 2010). Consequently, women who are not offered flexible schedules, part-time jobs that hold significance, and reasonable childcare may not return to their careers (Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Brown, 2015).

The term "think male – think manager" is still the predominant view of leadership roles internationally and in the United States (Schein, 2007). Nohria and Khurana (2010) affirmed, "Women who conform to traditional feminine stereotypes are often liked but not respected: they are judged too soft, emotional, and unassertive to make tough calls and project the necessary 'presence' in positions of authority" (p. 385). Therefore, women are in a double-bind between applying traditional masculine or feminine qualities, and while effective leadership requires both, they encounter a situation of either being competent or liked (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Nohria & Khurana, 2010). To make matters even more challenging, women do not have the influential mentors they need for support and encouragement (Wang, 2009; Nohria & Khurana, 2010). When women have sought for a female mentor, they find many of them unavailable due to the lack of women in higher positions (Wang, 2009). Due to the power in networks which are generally dominated by white men, women's social capital is restricted (Kark & Eagly, 2010). Hence, women have a much harder time discovering networks and obtaining a mentoring relationship (Wang, 2009).

## **PURPOSE AND CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION**

The purpose of this study was to highlight and discuss the backgrounds and successes of women in agricultural leadership roles. The central research question was how have women in agriculture attained their leadership role in a male dominated field?

## **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

### **Data Collection**

Data collection for this study exploited one to four hour in-depth, semi-structured, audio-taped interviews, and the researcher asked open ended, non-leading questions (Hays & Singh, 2012). The

interviews concentrated on exposing the influences, opportunities, and overall journeys that aided in the growth of each woman and her current role. Additionally, the researchers were participant observers for one to three days in each woman's leadership environment. A participant observer interacts with the participants in the environment so they can experience the environment like the participant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During each field visit, the first and second authors documented detailed and reflective notes as events and interactions occurred in each woman's daily routine. This process permitted the researchers to gain adequate knowledge and understanding of the field in addition to sustaining subjectivity of their perceptions of each woman's experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

### **Data Analysis**

The in-depth interviews were directly transcribed and analyzed by the researchers in addition to the researchers' field notes. Data that is directly transcribed helps prevent bias from occurring compared to summarizing the interviews (Hays & Singh, 2012). The data was reviewed through identification of significant statements and components of meaning, establishment of textural and structural descriptions, and distinguishing descriptions that exposed commonalities amongst participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013). The data were coded and organized by the researchers into mutually exclusive categories that represented themes and overall essence of the study. The researchers decided it was best to organize the data as individual case studies. According to Creswell (2013), a case study is defined as "the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context)" (p. 73) and they provide a detailed analysis of multiple cases.

### **Subjects**

The target population for this study was women in agricultural leadership roles in the United States. The researchers sought to engage women in agricultural leadership roles from each region of the Continental United States (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West). The criteria for women to be selected to participate in the study involved their background experiences, uniqueness to the agriculture field, the impact they are currently making to agriculture, and their specialty in agriculture.

The researchers conducted a Google search about women in agriculture in each region and utilized 72 websites. Some examples include: Rhode Island Women in Agriculture, Louisiana Seafood Board, Oregon Women for Ag, and New Mexico CowBelles. Several documents were found that highlighted women in agriculture in addition to specific organizations devoted to women in agriculture who recognize women in the field. Additionally, recommendations were given to the researchers from colleagues in the field of agriculture such as the assistant dean for the college of agriculture, and the researchers had a personal contact for one participant. All of the researched information, which included the women's involvement with agriculture, their careers and hobbies, a brief biography, and links to their websites, was then compiled and used for both researchers to compare each woman's background, uniqueness, impact, specialty in agriculture, region, and expertise. At the closure of this process, both researchers came to an agreement on which women to select as participants. At least two females were selected from each region with 15 women identified based upon the aforementioned criteria. The selected women were then contacted via email or phone asking them to participate with some participants contacted multiple times. After agreeing to participate, on site visits and interviews were scheduled for one to four days depending on the woman's availability. Fourteen of the 15 women agreed to participate.

### **Rigor**

This study utilized credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to establish rigor. Credibility exist through the researchers' journals that included thoughts about how the researchers believed the interview would go, how the interview process actually went, how the research was impacting the researcher, and observations about how the researchers' presence was impacting the participant's environment. In addition, member checking and triangulation were also used for credibility. Transferability was established through the use of interviews, related literature, and a reflexive journal to confirm consistency amongst sources as well as a thick description of the studied population.

Dependability was present through the use of a faculty member with expertise in qualitative research, who is familiar with the study's content and intricacy, to search for consistency throughout participant responses, the researcher observations, notes, and conclusions. The faculty member also coded the data, and upon completion of coding, the faculty member and researcher compared codes, created themes, and agreed the data would be best represented as individual cases so the themes were woven into cases. Lastly, confirmability existed through an audit trail for this study, which began with reviewing the recorded interviews of each participant by listening to the entire interview before transcribing the data. The interview data was then transcribed word for word into a separate word document for each participant. Upon completion of the interview transcriptions, the participants reviewed the transcriptions to ensure accurate representations of their experiences were present. In addition to member checking, the researchers kept a journal of thoughts about presumptions and insights before and after the interviews as well as observations of the participants and their environments.

## **RESULTS**

In this section, each participant's journey as a women leader in agriculture is provided in detail. Based upon Krumboltz's (1976) social learning theory of career selection, these six areas will be discussed about each participant: background, current family dynamics, career path, personality, connection, and leadership. Since each participant's journey is specific to them, the six areas are not discussed in a particular order but rather the order that best shares their journey.

### **Participant 1**

Participant 1 thoroughly enjoyed her 4-H experience, showing animals at the fair with her younger sister, and working on a dairy farm. Participant 1 stated, "My work ethic, my agriculture drive came from my father's influence and just my love of being outside and animals and all instilled to where I am." Her dad taught her the value of taking care of things and helping out when needed while her mother always encouraged her to do her best and provided support in all her endeavors.

She went to college to become an agricultural teacher and met her husband who was a farmer. Her husband worked 80 hours a week and she soon realized with both of their jobs demanding so much of them that having children was not an option unless she pursued another career path so she accepted a high school agriculture teaching position.

Participant 1 acknowledges she has a closer relationship to her students than other teachers in subjects like English or math due to the amount of time spent traveling to FFA events, the hands-on work, and the Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAEs). When she began teaching, she would take her young children with her whenever she could. Participant 1 stated, "The kids were here all the time." She now attempts to better balance herself between school and home. Through her attempts of achieving a balance, she mentioned, "I cannot say that I manage because I am always behind here and at home." Due to her vast amount of time spent with her students, she often feels guilty for not being home with her family.

In addition, she is involved with a mom network of young staff at the school who have children around the same age and an aggie mom network of agricultural teachers who are mothers and need support and encouragement when they feel guilty for not being home with their children. Additionally, Participant 1 has other networking relationships such as the [State] agricultural teachers. Looking back, Participant 1's grandmother was her mentor before she passed away because of her strong passion for agriculture and life. In 4-H, she found a mentor who provided her with a bond through agriculture and the importance of advocating. Also, when Participant 1 was an FFA state officer, her executive secretary mentored her by making her reflect and understand what she should do in life. During her student teaching, her cooperating teacher provided her with the encouragement and positivity she needed since she was a newlywed and still in college.

Now, her husband, and their four children live on 2000 acres with approximately 1000 cattle, while instilling their values of responsibility, passion for agriculture, and work ethic into their children. Participant 1 noted the importance of having a happy home, support, and open communication with her

husband. Participant 1 also values serving God and revealed, “God says you must use your talents so I am using my teaching talents to teach agriculture, to teach about God, and to teach at home.”

Through the course of her experiences, Participant 1 has learned to lead by being a delegator. She leads by bringing together a group of individuals and assigning each of them their task to complete in order to meet the goal of the group. While advising her group of FFA officers, she notes that her leadership style is “to help and advise you and to keep you in the rights and wrongs . . . and keep you accountable . . . when you guys plan something, I am not gonna do it for you.”

## **Participant 2**

Participant 2 enjoyed the days of riding on the tractor with her dad who was easy to talk to farmer, good hearted, generous, and faithful. When growing up, Saturdays were spent at the sale barn enjoying a candy bar and pop and then visiting their grandfather once the sale was finished. Participant 2’s mother was book smart, an entrepreneur, and attracted people with her visions. Her father worked as a medical nurse at night and then would come home and work on the farm during the day. During high school, Participant 2’s parents sold the farm but kept a small portion of the land. Her mother had a vision for greenhouses so her parents decided to open their greenhouse and corn maze business, which succeeded for about 10 years before her mother was diagnosed with cancer. Her mother passed away, and now they host a 5K run every year through the farm to carry on her mother’s legacy. Participant 2 mentioned, “When she passed away, instead of sending flowers, we planted trees. There are trees all over, and my kids say those are our Nana [mother] trees and people will post pictures and say ‘hey look at our Nana [mother] trees.’”

During college, Participant 2 met her husband, who did not want to return to the farm but wanted to work in agriculture. Participant 2’s taught agriculture at high school for one and a half years until her husband decided he wanted to obtain a Ph.D. from a university in another state. When they moved, Participant 2 decided to obtain a master’s degree and worked for a company writing curriculum. Upon completion of her master’s, she worked with the Cooperative Extension Service in the Junior Master Gardener Program training teachers how to use the curriculum for including gardening in the classroom. After her husband graduated and found a job in another state, they moved. In between having more children and not being certified to teach in the state, Participant 2 decided to volunteer in memory of her mother as a Master Gardener so she began writing grants for community school gardens. She then accepted a part time position writing a gardening blog. From there, her role evolved into managing a program that awards students who use the organization’s soil science curriculum to teach others. Although it is part time, Participant 2 enjoys being able to be engaged in agricultural education and have a flexible schedule to care for her family, too.

Participant 2 strives to use her strengths to improve situations for other people while she also tends to be a people pleaser. She has learned it is far more important “to please God than it is to please man.” As an extrovert, she enjoys being around people so she volunteers. She wants to provide the children in her community with opportunities they have not had before, and she believes she is doing this through grant writing for the school gardens and local FFA program(s). Her passion for agriculture is apparent, “Agriculture is the number one employer, and we are doing a disservice to our students if we are not providing it in the high school.” Participant 2 also believes, “We are supposed to be like Jesus and supposed to serve others, and I want to serve others where my kids are.” So she utilizes her strengths at the school, church, home, and community.

Now, her, her husband, and their three children live on eight acres in a small, farming community sharing their values of work ethic and passion for agriculture with their children. Participant 2 has the support she needs from her husband to serve the field of agriculture by helping other people. She stated, “None of this would be possible if [husband] did not have a good job. So he is really the breadwinner, and he is the one that allows this to happen.”

She noted her networking relationships have been easier to build in the different states they have moved to because of her involvement with 4-H and FFA. She also enjoys her part time employment

because it allows her the time to mentor and assist the new, local agricultural teacher. Participant 2 acknowledges her strengths of working as a team player and building a vision with a group of people.

Additionally, she recognizes she has the ability to help make opposing people work together and understand the common goal. In doing so, she notes, “I would rather help somebody and not take the lead on it and be in the background. I do not want credit for things. I just want to be a helper. Make whatever you are doing stronger.”

### **Participant 3**

Participant 3’s parents were immigrants from Brazil and they were extremely happy with their three girls and a small piece of land in the United States. After attending cosmetology school, Participant 3 owned her own salon for seven years and she was pregnant with her son and then became an independent contractor. Participant 3’s husband is a fourth-generation dairy farmer, and they live on the family dairy farm with their two children. She is thankful for her children being raised on a farm to teach them important skills such as responsibility and work ethic. Participant 3 enjoys being a stay-at-home mom, “It is great that I am here to help cart them back and forth, raise the kids, and you know do all that stuff.”

Participant 3 and her husband discussed the importance of using social media in the agriculture industry to combat the negativity often faced by farmers. Participant 3 started her own blog about the dairy industry to promote agriculture with the intent to “educate [others] about the dairy industry.” Her blog includes written pieces about the farm, what the day-to-day operations are on the farm, and her volunteering experiences with agriculture groups.

Participant 3 is an extrovert, and she mentioned, “I just love to socialize so I am always out there wanting to meet new people and new friends and share everything.” She had two mentors who assisted her with getting involved in agriculture events and conferences. For example, when she started to become active on social media she went to her mentor’s Facebook page, and friended close to 500 of her mentor’s friends even though Participant 3 did not know who they were. Participant 3 also had two female mentors who invited her to important blogging conferences, equipped her with a wealth of information. During some of the blogging conferences where she is surrounded by non-agriculture individuals, she is sure to share information and answer questions about agriculture and specifically, the dairy industry. Moreover, Participant 3 emphasized how much support she has received from those in the dairy, agriculture, and blogging communities. In addition, to the agriculture community connections, Participant 3 mentioned, “I feel like we have a team of social media, and we all know each other through social media. We could count on each other not just our little, small community here where we live but across the United States.”

Lastly, Participant 3 commented about her leadership style as, “I just kind of go with the flow really.” She noted she has a specific end goal in mind such as a lesson or objectives when she is teaching a topic to a group of individuals. Her personality allows her to easily engage with individuals “I just love to socialize so I am always out there wanting to meet new people and new friends and share everything.”

### **Participant 4**

Participant 4 was raised around orchards and citrus where she recalls picking the fruit off the trees and enjoying the smells and taste. She attended a private girl’s high school where they had a strong science program that she was heavily interested. Her best childhood memory is with her grandmother and baking to see what the end product would taste like. She believes she was born to be a sensory analyst of some sort. Her father was a mechanical engineer who worked around wineries, and he would bring her with him, which she thoroughly enjoyed. During the summer months of her college career, she searched for part-time jobs and ended up working in wineries. She began studying chemistry but changed her major to enology. Presently, she is the head winemaker at a winery and fully devotes her time to the wine since her two children are now grown.

Participant 4 began her career during those summer months of college, but eventually was able to work in the laboratory where they offered her a job after she graduated from college. She worked in the laboratory for a few years, then decided to leave to raise her children, and the winery inquired about her returning. After a few years, Participant 4 accepted a new enologist job. She was eventually promoted to

assistant winemaker then 10 years later she assumed the head winemaker position, which she has held for 15 years.

Participant 4 attributes her fine attention to detail to her father who was a mechanical engineer. She commented:

I am very involved. I watch every single step, and the way it works is that I develop a plan every season, every year for exactly how I want the fruit handled when it reaches the winery. So that is detailing how it is pressed, how it is crushed, what tanks it goes into to, tank fermentation temperatures, yeast, and then barrel profiles, which is really big, and so I oversee all of that.

Participant 4 focuses on her individual achievements to be successful in the winemaking industry. At times, Participant 4 finds herself overwhelmed due to taking on too many tasks, but she has learned to prioritize and things fall into place. She truly enjoys dedicating her time to creating a product people will enjoy.

Throughout her career in the wine industry, Participant 4 has developed many relationships through networking and with mentors. She emphasized, “This is a pretty transparent industry where we all share a lot of information, and we try to remain very open to everything and everyone’s input.” Participant 4 is involved with a technical wine group, and they meet each month to discuss the wine industry. In addition, she is involved with a women’s wine group where they discuss such topics as wine, leadership, and management. When she first began her career, there was a female head enologist who she enjoyed working alongside at the time and learning from. She also worked with an older winemaker who, “mentored me with showing how blending happened with different varietals and creating a blend and that was fascinating, and I loved that.” Participant 4 developed a strong connection with the woman she met when she first returned to work after having her children who introduced Participant 4 to her husband, and she still works for him to this day. Though mentoring others outside of the winery is a conflict of interest, Participant 4 is sure to mentor those working with her at the winery.

During the past 30 years of working at the winery, Participant 4 has learned it is important to provide encouragement, give feedback, and be a cheerleader for her team. In addition, “I am very straight forward and direct and want to get things done the right way.” Also, when she began her career, she worked with professionals who had been there for many years, and “I was impressed how they lead with their professionalism and being very direct.” Through her commitment to quality, attention to detail, and leadership of the winery, Participant 4 revealed, “I am kind of obsessed by quality and to see my obsessions fulfilled with a high quality product is very rewarding . . . but really to see a quality product that everyone enjoys and to be recognized.”

### **Participant 5**

Participant 5 grew up on a burley tobacco, fescue seed, and beef cattle farm that has been in their family since before [state] became a state. She spent countless hours with her father and grandfather on the farm, who was her hero. After her grandfather passed, her grandmother became more active in her life on the farm and influenced her passion for agriculture. Participant 5 revealed, her mother encouraged her children to obtain a college degree because she was the first in her family to achieve a college degree. After high school, Participant 5 attended college and studied agricultural education. She eventually obtained a master’s degree in agricultural education, too.

Participant 5’s career path began as a high school agriculture teacher, which she did for one year because she was offered an opportunity to obtain her master’s degree. She then accepted a position as communications intern with an agricultural company where she was then moved to communications public policy, and finally was registered as a lobbyist. Part of her career was spent lobbying one half of the year and the other half working with an agricultural program for elementary students. Participant 5 is still with the same company today but holds more of an administrative position. She explained,

what I do during the day is in the hallways catching the lawmakers to talk to them as they walk from one meeting to the next about bills that we are interested in so you have to get

very good at explaining a bill in about less than a minute a lot of times. That is why it is crucial.

During her career on farm visits with other males, Participant 5 described a common situation where,

I would run into a situation where the farmer would say you know we [men] will go out to my cows, we will go to the dairy barn or whatever. My wife's got some nice quilts in there that she would love to show you.

Participant 5 learned how to adapt and mentioned, "As I aged, I realized there was a plus to that too, and I could learn a lot from the women as I looked at the quilts and figure out how to catch up with the guys later." She realized the more they got to know her they began to respect her and believe she understood the issues at hand. In addition, Participant 5 thrives on seeking knowledge, and each morning as she walks five miles on the treadmill, she mentioned, "I will listen to Agro talk and ag news of the day . . . I also turn the television on the treadmill I am on and each television beside me so I can watch [three different channels]." Moreover, Participant 5 mentioned, "I probably spend more time studying late at night than a lot of people would."

Participant 5 self-identified as an introverted individual. In recognizing her introverted style, she noted, "I hope that my style makes other people comfortable when I am around them." Additionally, when discussing those in supervisory roles, she stated, "I just want to say that is not what is going to make them do a good job, scaring and forcing them but making them feel like what they are doing is important and appreciated." Participant 5 understands the value of creating meaningful relationships so when a new lawmaker is elected, she is sure to set up a breakfast or lunch meeting with them, a few farmers, and herself to really get to know them and teach them about the organization.

Participant 5 recognizes the impact of having a mentor so she is sure to be a mentor to others, including males and females. She enjoys knowing their goals for life and mentioned "the girls kind of separate and I want to do this, this, and this as far as career is concerned or I might want to get married and raise a family." She said the males never separate their career goals from their family goals.

Participant 5 enjoys leading through encouragement and making others feel comfortable in situations such as when they may be timid, although her job requires her to be aggressive at times when working with legislative agendas. Additionally, she leads through connecting individuals and helping them work together to achieve a common goal. Participant 5 values the farmers she works with and appreciates their opinions and thoughts about the bills being discussed.

## **Participant 6**

Participant 6 was raised with her two sisters in a larger sized city in a suburban area. Her mother and father both worked full time jobs with her father working a second job, too. After graduating high school, she attended college majoring in elementary education. While at college, she met her husband who was from a farming family, and he planned to return to the farm after graduation. Currently, her husband and their five children live on their farm growing row crops and livestock, and they utilize the livestock to teach their children about responsibility, animal husbandry, work ethic, and business.

Participant 6's career path began after college when she moved to the small town where the farm is located. She was a teacher's aide for high school special needs classes at the local school, which was an eye opening, rewarding experience for her. Once the farm began to grow and she had children, she decided to stay home to raise the children and help out on the farm. Her involvement on the farm includes, "general dialogue about what variety we are planting, what are the pressures we have whether it be weeds or insects, training, just general everyday conversation, whether it be machinery that needs to be upgraded or things like that." She also places orders for machinery, seeds, fertilizer, and other items needed on the farm. Also, Participant 6 realized she had a strong passion for agriculture she volunteers with the local 4-H club, does various other community outreach, writes a blog to educate about their farm and agriculture, and teaches a couple of leadership and communication classes at the local community

college. She speaks to groups about her journey from living in the city to moving to a farm that she calls “from city lights to prairie nights.”

Participant 6 realizes the importance of reflection of oneself. She has learned to analyze the situation or task at hand and reflects on her daily decisions to determine if what she is engaged in is assisting their farm, family, or her faith for the better. Participant 6 revealed, “I have to step back and say is this the right thing for me? . . . Reflection is definitely a huge piece of that. How do I use my strengths to make our farm, family, and faith better?” She takes time to pray and reflect on what she learns from her time spent with God. With laughter, she claimed she is “an introvert that is forced to be an extrovert but given my role as a teacher and my passions that I have, I have to put on a different jacket and step out of the house.” Likewise, she values her personal privacy and privacy of the farm.

Participant 6 has been mentored along the way, which has aided in her success. Her mentors provided her with framework and positive reinforcement so she would be successful but still struggle enough to learn something. She recalled, “Sometimes I think that those mentors, the best ones I have ever had, have been the harshest but have had the deepest level of belief in what I am able to do.” With realizing the importance of having a mentor, she mentors others by believing in them and helping them problem solve through their experiences. Additionally, she believes having an expectation for her mentees is important to assist them in carrying out their goal.

Through Participant 6’s experiences, she has learned that leading as a “gentle giant” is the best approach for her. Additionally, she notes she is resourceful and confident but quiet. Participant 6 commented about her resourcefulness, “I can point people to people who would know, or I can find you a resource and get back to you.” Participant 6 also reiterates that in order to be a leader, you must be a good listener and recognize your own strengths and weaknesses. She realizes the most important thing is to help the next generation and her peers become leaders because everyone is a leader in some aspect.

### **Participant 7**

Participant 7 was raised in a small town on a llama farm along with other animals such as ducks, geese, chickens, oyster, turtles, cats, and dogs next to her grandparent’s dairy farm. Her mother was creative with marketing techniques while her dad was able to bring people together and had the charisma to make their llama farm operate appropriately. The farm life in a small town, along with her parents’ values, impacted her strong work ethic, self-reliance, the understanding of what it takes to accomplish a task, comradery, and the importance of humanity and traditional agriculture skills. She was involved with FFA at her high school where they had livestock, a large greenhouse, and a Christmas tree program.

After high school graduation, she attended college to study environmental science and became involved in outdoor education. After college, she worked with an organization taking students in the backcountry to teach leadership through outdoor activities such as canoeing, backpacking, and rock climbing. The students who attended those trips were from the urban areas and had never been into the woods. After working with the organization for five years, she traveled to Belize for two months to work on a farm. Participant 7 also led trail crews across the United States, and during her last couple of trips, she was getting tired of wearing men’s Carhart pants. She decided to contact some companies and request for them to make women’s work pants, but no one seemed to be interested. This fueled her desire to start her own company geared towards making work pants for women.

At age 25, she decided she would start her own company for women’s work wear. Although she had no business, marketing, management, or apparel experience or education, she knew she had the creativity and marketing skills, as well as the ability to bring people together, to be successful. Participant 7 revealed, “I knew I had a pretty good skillset of a more creative side and marketing and the ability to bring people together in a way that has proven very valuable.” She began by reading a small business for dummies book, and while reading at a coffee shop, a guy who was over production and design for Patagonia began talking to her, giving her advice, and shared his business card with her. They met a week later, and shared with her information about who to contact and gave her advice and started to serve as a mentor to her. Before the company began, Participant 7 worked various jobs. After a year of learning about her business, she decided to find a small, authentic, agriculture town for her store front, and she

found a saddle shop in a town a few hours away. When deciding on the name for her women's work wear, she asked a biologist what he knew about ants and he responded, "Well in an ant colony, the female ants do all the work." She replied, "Come on you are making that shit up like that is too perfect." In addition to the women's work wear, Participant 7 started an annual music festival as a non-profit organization in an effort to bring her community together. Now the festival brings people together from all over the country and includes music with hands-on, skill based workshops for women such as a chainsaw workshop, timber skills, bison hide tanning, and ranch roping.

Participant 7 started honing her leading abilities during high school through starting the volleyball team at school, being captain of sports team, president of her class, and she realized people were listening to her. She was also involved with her local FFA chapter and she shared that, "I do keynotes around the nation, and it started with FFA. I mean there are so many great elements to those programs. She realized that she is a person who has the ability to start projects but does not have enough time or energy to execute them, but other people want to help carry it out. Participant 7 revealed,

To me, it is envisioning and creating this energy and getting people excited about something and let us have a 14,000-person music festival in a cow pasture out in the middle of nowhere. Come on guys, this is going to be great! And then they do, they show up.

Participant 7 mentioned, "I cannot do it alone so I have been forced to ask for a lot of help, which has been a good growing experience, and I can pick and choose where I want the help and where I do not." Moreover, she enjoys pleasing other individuals so she tends to care for herself last, which has caused her to have a few health issues. She revealed, "Often, women, we take care of everyone else around us, and then if there is time, we will think about taking care of ourselves, and that is a problem. So I am working on that."

Furthermore, Participant 7's other influential mentors introduced her to more people who really believed in her. Her mentor helped her set a price point and choose a manufacturing center. In addition, another male mentor helped her with finding a factory in the United States and provided her the emotional support she needed. She admitted, "It is funny that most of my mentors from business are male." She realized she does not have any strong female mentors, excluding her mother and grandmother who serve as her role models. Participant 7 realizes how important having mentors is so she takes the time to mentor others as often as possible. Through guest speaking, she has had high school girls work for her during the summer, and she notes the important relationships that she has established.

When she moved to the small town to open her store front, she believed, "There is going to be this great cowboy, and he is going to have a ranch, and he is going to want a wife." After 10 years passed, she met her current boyfriend, who had been a customer for many years. They now live on a farm with his two children and their dogs. Participant 7 explained the importance of making time for the two of them and family weekends. It can be seen that Participant 7 has been a very successful female in the agriculture industry.

### **Participant 8**

Participant 8 faced some challenges during her upbringing due to her father working in the oil field that left the family poor when the oil field bust. Her and her three siblings had their own jobs to provide money for the family. Participant 8's parents had her at a young age, and her father often drank. He would belittle her mother, and in those moments, Participant 8 mentioned, "it made me run the other way and be a really independent person so I took to school and just wanted to get an education because some kind of way I was getting out of there." She lived with her aunt and uncle before graduating high school. Participant 8 was dating her husband at the time and was planning to sign up for the Air Force. Her husband had then asked her to marry him, and based on her parent's relationship, she knew she wanted a companion who would complement her and not make her dependent on him.

Furthermore, her husband was involved in the seafood industry and owned a shrimp dock so she began working with the family business. In the beginning, her husband would spend 300 days out of the year on the water trawling with her two sons. Participant 8 would travel two hours from their home with a boat and then take the boat on the water to meet her husband with the shrimp. She mentioned the boat would “hold about 50 ice chests with about 50 pounds in each ice chest.” She would take the boat back to the vehicle, drive back home, and sell the fresh shrimp. Her and her husband made many plans for buying new boats for trawling and even had a processing plant that began in their backyard. She claims you have to be able to work well together in order to be successful, and her and her husband work well together because “[husband] is my strength where I am weak, and I am his strength where he is weak.” Moreover, she also mentioned, “I do not do stupid. Also, I am a pretty blunt person so if you say something towards me, I am going to confront you where my husband probably has more finesse than me.” Currently, Participant 8 and her husband run their shrimp dock by offloading other boats and their own, operating a supply house, and running their retail shop. She has a daughter, two sons, and spends many hours assisting with the grandchildren. Participant 8 is involved with support groups for moms, and she mentioned, “When other people are praying for you, you feel a sense of people.”

Despite the many adversities, Participant 8 has faced throughout her lifetime, her leadership and faith in God has prevailed. Her children were raised in church and attended a private Christian school. While her two sons have faced their own challenges, Participant 8 has stepped in to raise her grandchildren while still running the seafood operations. At times, she struggles with her role, “I do not get to be grandma so much as I have to be mom and dad.” Throughout her life, Participant 8 has learned to be a leader by “picking up pieces of puzzles.”

Moreover, Participant 8 is involved with the seafood associations to help educate the fisherman and lobby for the industry. She is active within the seafood industry and educates others through social media and email. Participant 8 leads through “picking up pieces of puzzles where no one else has picked them up and decide to take it and run with it.” During her involvement with a particular seafood organization, a male individual was using the group’s money on personal items, and she spoke up about the issue, and he responded with threats. In addition, Participant 8 commented about a different incidence,

One guy he is out of our industry now . . . he had a lot of power, a lot of money, I mean big money . . . he was not about to allow us to do anything different, but I went around him you know. I figured that out, and he hated me and so did everybody else because they just jumped on the bandwagon.

Participant 8 mentioned in the seafood industry “you are a target for every environmentalist group, every state agency . . . you are always fighting against something and so it makes you super aggressive.” Moreover, she revealed, “I fit into this puzzle well because this industry is an underdog, and I will probably fight till I die for this industry.”

### **Participant 9**

Participant 9 comments she was an “Air Force brat” due to her father being a two star general in the United States Air Force and being an only child. Her father’s family was original homesteaders on the Oregon Trail, and he was raised on the family ranch in Oregon. Although her father left the ranch to attend West Point and obtain college degrees, Participant 9 spent many summers on the Oregon ranch with her grandfather and cousins because her father wanted her to become knowledgeable about the ranch and gain a sense of work ethic. While her father was fulfilling his Air Force duties, her mother stayed home and raised her. Participant 9 spent all the time she could with her father exploring and learning new things such as horse riding, boating, and changing the oil in the car. Her father taught her to be observant of everything and always ask questions. Due to her father being in the Air Force, she moved quiet frequently. In fact, she moved every year during elementary and middle school but was finally able to complete her junior and senior years of high school at the same school. After graduating high school at the age of 16, she attended college and studied animal science and zoology.

During college, she had an internship at a zoo where she focused on the behavior of animals which led her to the opportunity of volunteering with a company that had marine mammals. Once she graduated college, she considered going to veterinarian school, but her father did not support that idea so she chose to receive a master's degree in comparative medical research where she focused on equine. Although she did not attend veterinarian school, she stated, "I literally studied what I loved." Due to the valuable skills and self-confidence she learned from her father, she walked into a museum focused on science and handed them her resume. The beginning of her career was at the same museum where she focused on environmental science and took people on eco tours. Following this job, she was hired to develop the master naturalist program for the state and through that job, she met her current employer. Participant 9's current employer was searching for someone to manage a nature center and living laboratory, and that is what she is still currently doing, 17 years later. In addition, Participant 9 mentioned, "In my home, my husband has 51% of the vote. It is not always easy for me. But it is the way we raised our family and that is the way it is." Now, her and her husband both still work and have four grown children, three sons and one daughter. Participant 9's children all enlisted into various military branches which consist of the Coast Guard, Air Force, Army, and National Guard.

She recognizes without her mentors she would not be where she is today. Her father provided her with the mentoring she needed to be a successful individual while her current boss has taught her patience, more about the culture of agriculture, and provides her the support she needs to be successful in her career. Participant 9 also mentioned God has served as her mentor, and she always leans on prayer for the good and bad times. Furthermore, she realizes the important role a mentor serves so when mentoring others, she explained "mentoring someone is to give them the recipe so they can go and do it themselves and be there for them to always answer more questions and encourage them." Moreover, she communicates to her mentees that she will be completely honest with them and to "quite thinking being a leader is an option. It is not optional." She explained it is important to be a leader in your own life, in your community, and to your children.

Participant 9 enjoys leading others through encouragement, inspiration, enthusiasm, and passion so the individuals want to be there with her. Also, she leads through having everyone working on the same level as a middle manager. Participant 9 believes as a leader you must be willing to take responsibility, serve in a variety of roles, and always do your very best. Additionally, she stated, "We are all going to do this, but there has to be one person that champions the cause and encourages everybody together, and I do that. You have to be a positive spirit."

### **Participant 10**

Participant 10 was raised with her five siblings on a lake growing an orange tree, tangerine tree, and grapefruit tree. Her father was a family practitioner and owned a family practice where her mother was the registered nurse. It was a small town so all the patients who visited the family practice were well known. Her parents instilled into her and her siblings the importance of education and that "you can do whatever you want to do." During high school, each of the siblings had their own jobs. Participant 10 often worked at her father's practice even during college on Saturdays and over the summer break. She remembers talking with one patient about what she would like to do for a career, and Participant 10 said, "maybe like to work in the newspaper and get some real-world experience." The patient's son was the publisher of a newspaper so she contacted him and shortly after, Participant 10 had an internship with the local newspaper. She started out writing obituaries, moved to local government, then to agriculture, and she was assigned to the citrus and phosphate industries.

After the newspaper job, she started working for a citrus organization in public affairs. During her time with the citrus organization, she obtained a master's degree in mass communication. When she realized there were no opportunities for advancement within the organization, she began working for Farm Bureau, where she led a statewide organization. She worked for Farm Bureau for four years and then obtained her current position as president of a nonprofit fertilizer and pesticide organization. Currently, she connects with and represents the members of the organization, lobbies, and is involved with topics such as: water policy, taxation, education, public relations, certifications, and regulation.

Participant 10 enjoys being the team builder and cheerleader to the members of the organization and others she leads and does not care who receives the credit.

Participant 10 recognizes she would not be where she is today without her mentors and networking relationships that she has developed over the years. She considers the board members of her organization her mentors because “they have taken the time to teach me.” She also noted she is not micromanaged, which she sincerely appreciates. In addition, women from other phosphate organizations and the [State] Department of Agriculture have provided her with advice and served as role models. Participant 10 asserted, “People [women] have broken that ground ahead of me and made my life easier.” In addition, she acknowledges the impact of the relationship she shares with her four sisters. They provide her with close friendships and the support to stay healthy in her stressful, busy life.

While she was working for the newspaper as a reporter, she met her husband at a bar, and he was the bartender. They married while she was working for the citrus organization, and when they decided to have children, Participant 10’s husband decided to stay home and raise their two girls while she carried on her career. Participant 10 commented about her husband that “[He] gave me the luxury of not worrying about home.” In addition, he provided her with the support she needed to work in a male dominant industry because he trusted her and was never jealous. Participant 10 makes time for her and her husband to be together, and that is key to their happy, supportive marriage. Now, she has a daughter who has started college and one who is in middle school. Her husband prepares the meals and cleans the house so she is able to devote her time to her career.

### **Participant 11**

Participant 11 grew up in France with her five siblings, and her father owned a small farm and winery in the country. Her mother stayed home with the children and according to Participant 11, “my mother was absolutely adorable, and she was there just to make everybody happy.” She claims her parents were a classic couple with her father being powerful and earning the income for the family and her mother being very sweet, raising the kids, and caring for the home. After graduating high school, Participant 11 wanted to become a geologist so she began studying science, but her father thought she should study winemaking so they could work together. She knew she loved being with her father so she decided to pursue winemaking, and after completing her undergraduate degree, she went on to become an enologist. At the time, there were political problems in France and her father’s winery was bombed twice so she considered going into another field. She began working for someone else in a consulting lab but did not enjoy it because her work consisted of wine analyses so she decided to open her own wine consulting lab.

Participant 11 wanted to travel to the United States to visit some wineries and become more educated about the wine industry because she was extremely passionate about winemaking. After her visit, she decided to move to the United States; therefore, she closed her consulting lab in France. She obtained a position at a winery, met her husband shortly after, quit her job at the winery, and then moved to the town where her husband was established. Her and her husband decided they wanted children, and she stated, “I am the female winemaker and it is very hard to have kids, and so I said well better to have the family and then we will see, and it was just the time. When I was ready to go back, my son was 4 years old.”

When she was ready to return to work, she contacted the winery owner that she previously worked for, and they rehired her. Participant 11 has worked for the same winery for 29 years. Participant 11 still has the same strong passion for the winery as when she began her career. Now, she is the head winemaker and leads others at the winery. She is responsible for the quality of the wine and working with the vineyard manager. Her leadership style can be described as providing direction and being clear to her team. Putting the team together and ensuring they work well together makes her happy as well as truly caring for her team. Additionally, she has learned to delegate tasks. Participant 11 leads the team with clear communication and direction. She stated, “I do not want power. I do not want to be super woman. I am not interested at all.” Moreover, Participant 11 said,

They love me here in this team because, for example, if Adele the singer is coming here and there is a dinner, I have more important things to do at home, just go. I truly do not care. I think Adele is good, but my home is more important.

She enjoys making wine and that is what she is focused on doing. She learned these leadership tactics from her mentors when she realized she enjoyed having a leader who was direct, clear, and provided her with direction. Participant 11 reflected on her mentors “I was lucky enough to be taught by [winemaker] and Mr. [winemaker] about quality and from my dad too. Never compromise, no shortcuts, be detailed.” Knowing the importance of having mentors, Participant 11 tries to be a mentor to others as well. She spends time mentoring younger winemakers and the assistant winemaker into becoming successful in the wine industry. In regards to mentoring others, she stated, “I can be demanding, and I think it is important, and it depends on the temperament of the employee.” Additionally, she assured being humble is also crucial to the winery business

### **Participant 12**

Participant 12 grew up spending time with her father hiking and exploring in the woods. They would hunt mushrooms and learn about what was edible and what was not. Participant 12 knows her father influenced her more than her mother, but her mother always provided her the support she needed. When she was 12 years old, she moved to a large property around the water where she spent her time making forts, finding Indian relics, exploring the soil, and picking the fruit off of trees.

After obtaining a master’s degree in cultural anthropology, she moved to a different state and worked at a coffee shop then a Montessori school. From there, she obtained an agricultural internship on an organic farm and decided that was the direction she wanted to take her career. She would visit farmer’s markets to learn more about farming and agricultural practices. Participant 12 recalled, “I remember a guy there had these tomatoes, and he said my tomatoes are smaller, but the key to really sweet tomatoes is to not water them for a while before you harvest them because it concentrates the sugars.” She was mentored by a farmer at an organization who taught environmental education and had agricultural apprentices. Participant 12 decided to start her own organic farm so her and her partner moved across the country. They moved once more and operated an organic farm, which had multiple raised vegetable beds on two acres of land. After a few years, Participant 12 moved overseas and lived in a Buddhist Monastery, and when she returned to the states, she joined another spiritual community

Participant 12 began her business in 2003 when she bought 1,300 acres. It began by renovating the farmhouse, building the energy barn, and designing the renewable energy system and food system. Her current partner joined the business in 2010 when she met her as the property wealth asset consultant. Participant 12 and her partner began their own private wealth investment company with hopes to combine their expertise and establish a model that would be offered to other land owners. They also own a small company within their farm that markets seaberries and the nectar from the seaberries. Since they grow perennial crops on the farm, they needed something that would produce a yield quickly in order to make a profit. Participant 12 realized they tasted delicious and no one else was producing seaberries in the United States. In addition to the private wealth investment company and seaberry company, Participant 12 aspires to motivate others by, “land stewardship practices that other people can put into place that can generate yields, multiple kinds of yields, and with the food lab showing what can be done with those. So that we can affect the culinary world.”

Participant 12 has confidence she leads by being visionary for the field of agriculture. In addition, her position requires her to be grounded and progressive but also dominant and assertive. She enjoys self-challenge in order to learn the best way to complete tasks around the farm that is financially viable. She mentioned,

That has been a huge. This is not traditional stuff that we are doing . . . We are trying to grow perennials instead of annuals. We are trying to grow and come up with land stewardship models that work with wildlife, that allow the large scale conversion of old

pasture, old dairy remnants to something that is gonna actually build in the soil, carbon equestrian, resiliency, and high nutrient yields so that is what we are really passionate about.

Participant 12 extensively researches information related to their farm and strategies for improving so she spends ample time synthesizing information and developing plans on how to implement her research. She believes a leader should “not be intimidated and to share completely, not withhold anything, to be completely out there and recognize then let go.” Additionally, she also believes as a leader you have to be willing to be proven wrong and change based on new information. Participant 12 revealed, “You lay out your core values like an algorithm that you stick to and then you build on that and you look for excellence and build on that and you stay in it for the long line.” She stated, “If you do not have an ethical framework that is driving you, it does not get you up in the morning because it is not about me being a leader. It is about caring about something bigger than me.” Participant 12 provides substantial leadership in her area of agriculture, and she stated, “Guys get recognized for it instead, and I am like I thought we were way past this, but we are not.” She notes the importance of women speaking up, and they need to be willing to bear the insecurity, be dynamic, and gain the confidence. Lastly, Participant 12 believes in being open to new ideas and maintaining a sense of professionalism and ethics as an individual in agriculture.

### **Participant 13**

Participant 13 grew up in a small town with a conservative lifestyle and enjoyed boating, camping, fishing, and water skiing. Both of her parents obtained education after high school including her father receiving a bachelor’s in agriculture education and her mother attended business school. Her father only taught for one year and did not enjoy it so he switched to working for an oil company. During the time period, it was customary for women to stay home and raise the children so Participant 13’s mother stayed home until she started junior high. Participant 13 and her older brother were always told they could do anything they wanted to do and an emphasis was placed on obtaining an education. Participant 13 commented about her mother that, “I do tribute a lot of my success in terms of not limiting myself to her [mother].” Participant 13 revealed, “I can hear this ringing in my head. You can do anything you want to do. And if I ever said ‘I cannot be president of the United States.’ My mom would go ‘why? Why not?’” Although, she admits she was a “daddy’s girl” and remembers him cooking her a fried egg with butter for breakfast.

After high school, she decided to attend college to study music and then went on to obtain a master’s degree in marine and environmental science. Participant 13 met her husband when she was singing at events and believes God put them together. The Christmas before they married,

I opened up the box, and I am looking at this list, and I am like what is this? Did you make this list after you met me? And he said no I made this list six months before I met you. And there were 32 items on the list. It was that specific . . . There were only two out of 32 that I did not have. The first was 5’4” and [husband] is 6’4” God knew he needed someone taller, and the second one was he wanted her to have a ranch in the hill country, and that is just pushing it.”

She then taught high school for five years and had her first of two daughters. She knew she wanted to work in higher education so she began working for the Department of Honors and Academic Scholarships. Participant 13 decided to work on her Ph.D., which she earned in human resource development focusing on adult education programs. During her coursework of her Ph.D., she developed a manual on how to teach using an interactive video conferencing for a class project, which was picked up by Verizon. Her and her husband began a consulting company, and she worked with the agriculture and environmental safety group. The group wanted her to apply for an open position so she became the Extension Associate in agriculture and environmental safety. The Vice Chancellor and Dean of the

[College] at [University] wanted to begin a distance education program and hired her. She accepted the position, and after a couple of years as the distance education coordinator, "I am very excited flying on the lear jet and here comes [boss] and he goes will you be a visiting assistant professor for us and pick up [colleague]'s classes? Will you teach the principles of technology course for us?" The college had two tenure track positions vacant for distance education so she applied and accepted the new position. Participant 13 discussed her experiences of working when her children were young,

[Coworker] would get to the office at 6:00 a.m. and leave at 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. My kids are little. I am having to pick them up after school, take them to piano lessons or dance lessons and all of this. So I could not be at the office those hours so I started feeling guilty like I am not working hard enough, I am not doing enough and really struggling.

In addition, during her time in this position, her colleague who was hired at the same time began earning \$13,000 more than her because he interviewed with another university. Participant 13's supervisor told her the only way to increase your salary is to either receive another job offer or do well throughout your career, and it will eventually increase. The next day she received a phone call from a technology company wanting to hire her to work with the higher education accounts at universities. Her supervisor believed she pursued it or was bluffing, and she almost left the profession at the time. Participant 13 then became the highest paid assistant professor in the United States at that time, became associate department head, and went up for full professor after four years. Since then, she has assumed an administration role. Participant 13 notes she always has to be learning something new, and the work environment has to be one that encourages and supports people where they can grow.

Participant 13 commented about her leadership as, "I try to lead by example. I would never ask someone to do something that I am not willing to do. So rolling a cart with food on it, I just did that Friday." She has strong communication and interpersonal skills so everyone on the team understands what is expected. She emphasizes that importance of delegation and providing her team with authority and the power to make decisions. Participant 13 wants her team to be independent thinkers who are willing to collaborate with others. Additionally, she has utilized her human resource development background by aligning each team member's talents with their positions so they are able to thrive best.

During her career path, Participant 13 has had some mentors and has mentored others. Early in her career as assistant professor, she was assigned a mentor who was a male because there were not many women in the field. He provided her with a fabulous experience and provided her with essential advice related to using her time and communicating her accomplishments on her vitae. She did not find another mentor until she acquired her current position, which she was rejected by the first person she asked to mentor her. Finally, Participant 13 found an excellent female mentor who previously was a vice chancellor and dean and has provided her with advice and is willing to listen. Participant 13 is involved in a women's faculty network where she mentors others. Participant 13 realizes that, "There are just certain things you cannot talk about. Guys do not understand it and so we [women] have to be there to mentor and support each other."

#### **Participant 14**

Participant 14 was raised around some aspects of agriculture with one set of grandparents owning a ranch, and her other grandparents owning a watermelon and cantaloupe farm. She enjoyed spending time with her grandfather because he would build her dollhouse furniture and other neat toys from his wood shop. Her grandparents were her idles because they taught her that "you do not let things get in your way because you are not allowed to because the family motto was before the grace of God." She noted she was raised with the motto "I felt bad for myself because I had no food until I saw the man that had no feet." Additional aspects of her upbringing included participating in 4-H contests at the county fairs such as the photography, craft, and baking contests, but when her sister lost interest, they no longer participated. Her

dad was a machinist while her mother stayed home to raise her and her older sister, although her mother had obtained a degree in home economics.

Participant 14 thought she would be a veterinarian until she saw a calf being born on her grandparents' farm so she changed her mind and thought about becoming a paleontologist. When her dad was not working, he would spend his time doing debates with Participant 14 about different topics, and if she did not know something, she would go to the library to learn about it. Participant 14 remarked, "I was one of these nerdy kids, and I was way too well behaved . . . I was very shy and did not really come out of my shell until college." She also mentioned, "I did not ever want to disappoint anyone. I was scared to death of being seen as not good at something." Participant 14 was involved with forensics, public speaking, and debates in high school. She was fascinated by the world and international relations, and during high school, she took Spanish, German, and French classes. She was part of a student exchange program when she was a junior in high school and went to Germany. Participant 14 knew she was headed towards a career in politics because she was fascinated with how government operates. Sadly, she had a poor experience on her student exchange program so she decided against international relations and decided to attend college to study political science and Russian. Participant 14 continued with her Russian degree but dropped political science and continued to try and find a replacement major. She finally decided on anthropology because she only needed 10 more hours to complete that degree. She wanted to obtain a master's degree so she enrolled in humanities and environmental history. She needed to take some basic agriculture courses before beginning the environmental history coursework, and mentioned, "The male grad students made it very clear that you [a woman] were not supposed to be there."

After completing her master degrees, she accepted a job with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and worked on the pesticides team as a short-term contract employee. During her time with EPA, she was sorting the mail one day and a woman told her to never do it again because it is all they would ever see her as, and Participant 14 noted "that was a wonderful piece of mentoring advice that she gave me." She then worked with the corn growers as a manager of natural resources. During her time with the corn growers, she would send out newsletters related to various agriculture group activities. Participant 14 moved from working with the corn growers to working with the [State] Department of Agriculture and was once again in pesticides. She mentioned, "Of all the jobs I have ever had, I hated that job [State Department of Agriculture] the most." Contrasting, she did enjoy the biotechnology aspect of the job. Then, a female mentor encouraged her to apply for a position as a legislative assistant in agriculture for a congressman, and Participant 14 received the position. After the congressman announced his retirement, she applied for a job with a nonprofit which focused on researching biotechnology, studying public perceptions, and writing research reports. She enjoyed employment with the nonprofit for five years until it was no longer challenging. Therefore, she applied for her current position as an associate director in agricultural policies.

Now, her and her husband both work in fields that make them happy, agricultural politics and architecture, respectively. Her husband enjoys his job performing historical renovations, and she mentioned that she "would never move because he loves his job so much." Participant 14 was unsure about having children because growing up she believed they were "too sticky," but during this same time, her mother was struggling financially "so I am like you [mother] come out here, you do us a favor by raising the kid, and we will do you a favor by looking after you as you get older." Now, her mother helps raise their two children so they can focus on their careers and care for both their children and her mother at the same time.

When she began her current job, she started thinking of it as it was her job to make everyone else's easier. She emphasized the importance of communicating appropriately to those she works with. Her strength as a leader is bringing people together, making connections for people, and informing them of a vast amount of information in a summary format. Participant 14 reflects back to her upbringing and her values in which she stated, "we need every single level of different people."

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, 14 women shared their personal journeys for attaining their leadership position and included their experiences and influences, which provides insight into how they have attained their leadership position in agriculture. The participants represented a broad range of areas within agriculture. Providing detailed, personal journeys of women leaders and their perspectives is important for future women (Madsen, 2007). Madsen (2007) mentioned the importance of research highlighting women's personal journeys, "This research is important for the development of quality and effective leadership development programs, opportunities, or counsel for women during their youth, college, and workplace years and experiences" (p. 198). This study utilized two categories of Krumboltz's (1976) social learning theory of career selection, which included genetic endowment and special abilities and environmental conditions and events. Genetic endowment and special abilities involves gender, race, physical appearance, characteristics, intelligence, and abilities (Krumboltz, 1976). Environmental conditions and events include the action of humans and natural occurrences such as social, cultural, political, and economical incidences (Krumboltz, 1976). Reflecting upon the influences and experiences of these 14 women and Krumboltz's (1976) social learning theory of career selection, the researchers produced 11 overall conclusions: (a) family, including parents, spouse, and children, impacted each woman's decisions for her education, lifestyle, and career choices; (b) fathers are a huge influence on their daughters; (c) each participant discovered how to integrate work and their personal lives to be successful; (d) education is a strong value; (e) each participant has at least one mentor and/or networking relationship; (f) each participant has such a strong work ethic; (g) having support from somewhere is extremely important to serve in their roles; (h) religion is important for how they live their lives; (i) each participant has a strong passion for her specific area in agriculture; (j) 12 out of the 14 women have children; and (k) all types of leadership styles are needed.

Human behavior is significantly impacted by an individual's upbringing and family (Eckstein, 2000). An individual's parents' values, hobbies, skills, careers, and wealth impacts the individual's life choices (Krumboltz, 1976). Sometimes, individuals make choices similar to their parents' lifestyle while occasionally it is in spite of their parents' decisions. Moreover, individuals may choose to work in the same industry as their parents (Krumboltz, 1976). Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 5, Participant 7, and Participant 11 chose the same area in agriculture as their parents. Participant 4, Participant 12, and Participant 13 chose similar aspects of their career like their parents. In addition, individuals tend to obtain similar life and work skills from each parent. While Participant 3, Participant 6, Participant 8, Participant 9, and Participant 10 chose a different career path than their parents, they chose careers based upon their interests and skills, which were influenced by their parents. Furthermore, an individual's spouse and children impact the choices they make about their career especially for women. Some women choose to not work or only have part-time employment because of their duties as a wife and mother (Krumboltz, 1976; Nohria & Khurana, 2010). Having the responsibility of family and full-time employment can be challenging for women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In addition, women choose their careers and involvement based on their husband's career and children's schedules. Each participant in this study, except Participant 4, Participant 5, and Participant 10, base their involvement and career choices around their spouse and children including multiple participants changing their careers to follow their husband's careers. In addition, individuals will choose to raise their children based on their own upbringing, in which they may choose to replicate some or all aspects (Krumboltz, 1976).

Each participant in this study indicated the influence their fathers have had on their life choices, which was not found in previous research. Although, the participants' mothers have always provided them with support and pushed them to obtain an education. Many of the participants claimed their passion for agriculture came from their fathers. Participant 1 stated, "My work ethic, my agriculture drive came from my father's influence and just my love of being outside and animals and all instilled to where I am." Like so, other participants shared stories of the activities they did with their dad such as hiking, boating, riding in the tractor, at the sale barn, practicing debates, critical thinking, at the winery, and working on

the farm. Some participants revealed their mothers served as more of the disciplinarian and the fathers tended to be the fun parent to spend time with.

All 14 participants discovered how to integrate their work and personal lives in order to be successful in each. This is attributed to the participants' parents providing them with examples of how to do this. All participants' parents were married while they were being raised by their parents, and only one participant's parents divorced later in life. This is a new conclusion that was not discovered in previous research. A child's age at the time of the divorce will depend on the impact the divorce has on the child resulting in younger children being more at risk for issues than older children (Lansford, 2009). According to a Copen et al. (2012), almost half of first time marriages end in a divorce. Lansford (2009) mentioned, "Children whose parents have divorced have higher levels of externalizing behaviors and internalizing problems, lower academic achievement, and more problems in social relationships than do children whose parents have not divorced." Each participant mentioned both parents during their interview and the roles they have played throughout their lives. The participants observed how both of their parents were able to work, manage the home, raise their children, and enjoy their personal lives, which can be attributed to the participants' successes. While a majority of participants shared positive stories about their parents and their involvement in their lives, a few participants revisited negative occurrences that have impacted them and the life choices they have made.

Each participant in this study recognizes the importance of receiving an education. This is a new conclusion, which has not been determined in previous research. Almost all participants admitted their mother is the one who pushed them to obtain an education and to achieve their dreams. Participant 13 revealed, "I can hear this ringing in my head. You can do anything you want to do. And if I ever said 'I cannot be president of the United States.' My mom would go 'why? Why not?'" While almost all participants received a bachelor's degree, many also obtained a master's and one received a Ph.D. In addition, these participants are continuously learning new things about their area in agriculture through local organizations, research, and workshops. In addition, many participants spend time researching topics important to them to learn more. Moreover, several participants in this study are passionate about educating others about agriculture through teaching high school students, mentor relationships, providing professional development opportunities, trainings and workshops, blogging, and social media.

Contrasting the research by Wang (2009) and Nohria and Khurana (2010), the participants in this study had at least one mentor, and some had many more, who helped them throughout their leadership journey. The research by Mayer (2001) mentioned the participants in the study found a network of women in their area to serve as mentors. Participant 7 mentioned her mentor "gave me loads of contacts and advice and was like [Participant 7] I think you are onto something big here, I think you need to move on this now." Moreover, some participants sought out a mentor while others were contacted by a mentor. Their mentors and networking relationships have assisted them with attaining their leadership position by providing advice, encouragement, and support. Their mentors also assisted them with connections and resources throughout the industry. Additionally, there was a mixture of male and female mentors of the participants.

The participants in this study value work ethic and display that on a daily basis. Before Participant 7's company began, she worked various jobs "I got a job working on the floor of a backpack company sewing packs just to see what the production side was, and then I was grooming ski trails and then peeling logs you know for like log homes." Many of the participants commented their hard work ethic is due to being raised on a farm because they understand hard work. In addition, many women with a strong work ethic are fighting the traditional views of the male as the leader with the power and authority (Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2006; Eagly, 2007). Studies by Mayer (2001), Seevers and Foster (2004), Goldberger and Crowe (2010), Baxter et al., (2011), and Kleihauer et al., (2013) found their participants had to prove themselves as a woman in agriculture because other individuals have doubted their ability to perform. Participant 8 stated,

One guy he is out of our industry now . . . he had a lot of power, a lot of money, I mean big money . . . he was not about to allow us to do anything different, but I went around

him you know. I figured that out, and he hated me and so did everybody else because they just jumped on the bandwagon.

Moreover, the women in this study may have such a strong work ethic because they are trying to prove to the individuals around them that they are capable of fulfilling their duties, which was found in previous studies (Mayer, 2001; Seevers & Foster, 2004; Goldberger & Crowe, 2010; Baxter et al., 2011; Kleihauer et al., 2013).

Thirteen out of 14 women in this study have a husband, boyfriend, or partner who provides her with constant support. Participant 2 revealed,

None of this would be possible if [husband] did not have a good job. So he is really the breadwinner, and he is the one that allows this to happen. I have to give him a lot of credit. He is like I do not care what you do as long as you are taking care of the kids.

They also receive support from their children, other family members, friends, support groups, and their mentor and networking relationships. These women recognize the importance of having support to serve in their position. Many of these women have careers that require them to spend a lot of time away from the family, and while they sometimes face guilt, knowing they are supported in their decisions provides them with the inspiration to continue their career. Contrasting previous research, Participant 10's husband raised their children, cooks the meals, and cares for the home so she is able to continue her career without the guilt and stress of worrying about childcare and other domestic duties (Kark & Eagly, 2010; Nohria & Khurana, 2010; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a). Participant 10 said, "[husband] gave me the luxury of not worrying about home."

Almost all of the participants mentioned religion during their interview and the role it plays in their lives. In addition, a majority of the participants who discussed religion as playing a large role in their lives attended religious ceremonies as a child with their parents. Based on research by Krumboltz (1976), parent's values impact their children. Many of these women also receive the support and guidance they need from their faith and from prayer especially during difficult times. In addition, some participants claim they are serving people like Jesus and are using their talents per His teaching. Participant 1 stated, "God says you must use your talents so I am using my teaching talents to teach agriculture, to teach about God, and to teach at home." Furthermore, the participants in this study are extremely passionate about agriculture and their specific area within agriculture. Participant 4 has a strong passion for winemaking

I am very involved. I watch every single step, and the way it works is that I develop a plan every season, every year for exactly how I want the fruit handled when it reaches the winery. So that is detailing how it is pressed, how it is crushed, what tanks it goes into to, tank fermentation temperatures, yeast, and then barrel profiles, which is really big and so I oversee all of that.

Eleven out of 14 participants (Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 4, Participant 5, Participant 7, Participant 9, Participant 10, Participant 11, Participant 12, Participant 13, and Participant 14) were raised around their specialty area of agriculture, and Krumboltz (1976) mentioned individuals are influenced by their surrounding environment and the occurring events. It can be noted there is a difference in the type of passion for agriculture of an individual depending on if they were raised around their specific agricultural area versus being married into agriculture. There were three participants, Participant 3, Participant 6, and Participant 8, who married into the family business. Participant 8 has a strong passion for her specialty area, and it appears she would stay in the agriculture field regardless of her marriage situation. The two other participants who married into the family agriculture business are truly passionate about advocating for agriculture and supporting the family business, but if they had married someone who was not in the agriculture field, their passion for agriculture would be non-existent.

Only two of the participants, Participant 5 and Participant 12, in this study do not have children. Seven of the 12 participants (Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 6, Participant 7, Participant 10, and Participant 14), who have children, are still young and living at home while five participants (Participant 4, Participant 8, Participant 9, Participant 11, and Participant 13) children are grown and living on their own. These conclusions align with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015b) in which they found 75.8 percent of working mothers with children six to 17 years old and 70.1 percent with children 18 years of age or older. In both situations, these women have struggled with balancing work and domestic duties, but they have discovered what works best for their family. Participant 13 discussed her experiences of working when her children were young,

[Coworker] would get to the office at 6 a.m. and leave at 6 or 7 p.m. My kids are little. I am having to pick them up after school, take them to piano lessons or dance lessons and all of this. So I could not be at the office those hours so I started feeling guilty like I am not working hard enough, I am not doing enough and really struggling.

This is to conclude that it is possible to have a successful career and be a mother. Participant 10's husband switched traditional roles so she could continue working while Participant 14's mother lives with her to help raise the children while her and her husband work. Moreover, Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 6 are stay-at-home mothers. Participant 2 and Participant 6 have part-time employment that is flexible for their busy schedules. Other participants, Participant 4, Participant 9, Participant 11, took a few years off from working during their children's years as a baby and toddler and then continued with work once they entered schooling age. Participant 11 mentioned, "I said well better to have the family, and then we will see, and it was just the time. When I was ready to go back, my son was 4 years old." Based on previous research, balance issues are common for working mothers (Mayer, 2001; Seever & Foster, 2004; Baxter et al., 2011). It can be noted there are endless possibilities of discovering the balance that works best for a working mother.

Finally, each participant has her own way of leading her team and those around her. Based on previous research, one conclusion is that women leaders hold qualities such as collaboration, cooperation, empathy, and compassion (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Baruch, 2011). In addition, women leaders focus on gaining trust, confidence, mentoring, and empowering their followers, which is true for this study (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Four of the participants (Participant 5, Participant 6, Participant 7, and Participant 14) lead through connecting individuals and bringing people together to achieve a goal. Participant 7 stated, "It is this leadership for being able to bring other people into the project and have them be willing to bust their butt and bend over backwards on everything. It is the human component that has made it work." Three participants, Participant 4, Participant 9, and Participant 13, provide encouragement and support and act like a cheerleader for their team. In addition, two of this study's participants, Participant 2 and Participant 10, focus on team building and being a team player to be a successful leader. Participant 2 mentioned,

I realize that it is important to be a team player and build a vision with several people rather than just myself because if I come in and tell you about a garden, well that is a great idea. . . . But by not coming in and telling them how to do it but asking them questions and building their vision I think that is why we have had success.

Participant 1 and Participant 11 lead through delegation of tasks. Participant 8 claims she does the things that others do not want to do while Participant 3 leads by example for her children and others in agriculture. Lastly, Participant 12 follows a lassie-faire leadership style due to her dominance and assertiveness. This is to conclude that certain situations require different types of leadership styles, and there is not one correct way to lead a group of individuals.

## IMPLICATIONS

Understanding the personal journeys, experiences, and perceptions of these 14 women offers an understanding of the important experiences and influences beneficial for attaining a leadership position in agriculture. This study can serve as promotional material for recruiting women into the field of agriculture by providing them with real life experiences from women in the field. Likewise, it could increase the number of women who enter into agriculture who may need a boost of encouragement or to know other women have faced similar challenges. Women who are currently facing the struggle of balancing their work with familial duties can use this study for encouragement or to understand they can serve the industry they are passionate about through volunteering or advocating. Women who are interested in the field of agriculture may use this as a guide for support and advice when they face challenges or need encouragement.

This study can also serve as advice and insight to parents raising daughters to understand the impact their decisions as parents have on their daughter. Other leaders who work with women in a male dominate field can use this study to better understand the role of a working woman. Additionally, those working in any field, especially a male dominate field, could use this study to better understand the gender differences that exist between women and men. Moreover, leaders can use the information about gender differences to assist their team appropriately and to lead them more successfully. Also, understanding different individual perspectives can only improve the strength of an organization and develop better professionals: male or female. Individuals who serve as mentors to women can use this study as an educational tool for attaining a positive mentoring relationship. Likewise, women seeking a mentor or networking relationship may use this study as a guide of what attributes to search for in a mentor or networking relationship. In addition, an instructor or professor teaching a woman in leadership class or a qualitative research class may use this study as an educational tool for teaching their students. Furthermore, this study can be used in an educational setting to serve as individual case studies and to assist students with understanding how individuals raise their children in certain environments. Moreover, individuals who will be training and guiding future women leaders may find this study valuable. They may use this study as a guide to assist women leaders with an understanding of the challenges they may face with solutions to combat the challenge.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this study, several questions arose. Future research questions to be explored include:

1. How have some of the top men in United States agriculture attained their leadership role?
2. How have women leaders in agriculture been impacted by their mentors and networking relationships?
3. How have women in agriculture attained their leadership role in a male dominated field based upon the Centered Leadership Model (Barsh, Cranston, & Craske, 2008)?
4. How have women in agriculture with divorced parents attained their leadership role in a male dominated field?

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