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Examining the Experiences of Six Women on their Personal Journeys to Becoming Deans of Agriculture: A Qualitative Study

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Sarah Jane Kleihauer entitled "Examining the Experiences of Six Women on their Personal Journeys to Becoming Deans of Agriculture: A Qualitative Study." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications.

Carrie Ann Stephens, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

William E. Hart, Bryan Q. Patterson

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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

To the Graduate Council:

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**Examining the Experiences of Six Women on their Personal Journeys to
Becoming Deans of Agriculture: A Qualitative Study**

A Thesis Presented for the Master of Science Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sarah Jane Kleihauer
May 2011

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Dedication

To Zhenya, Christina, Kevin, Christine, Betty, April and the Lord for every second of encouragement, words of wisdom, and support you have all provided me with in the months necessary for the completion of this project. You are all very special to me.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” *Philippians 4:13*

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Carrie Stephens for the advice, expertise, and time she shared with me during my research and writing. I would like to thank Dr. William E. Hart and Dr. Bryan Q. Patterson for serving on my thesis committee. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications Department for providing funding for my research.

Abstract

Understanding one's own personal journey provides for effective learning, growth, and development of self (Madsen, 2010). Reflection on the influences and experiences of successful women leaders is essential to understanding the factors that have enabled them to obtain and sustain leadership positions in nontraditional career fields. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lives of six women deans in agriculture in an attempt to conceptualize the leadership styles they have developed as a result of their positions as deans in a predominantly male field, as well as their upbringing and life experiences. Six women deans of agriculture were interviewed and observed in an attempt to recognize the impact their personal journeys have had in developing their leadership styles and sustaining their leadership role. Reflection on the influences and experiences of the women deans produced five overall conclusions: 1) the women deans were essentially all first-born children; 2) encouragement from parents and mentors as well as spousal support were crucial factors in obtaining and sustaining their role as deans of agriculture; 3) challenges imposed by gender discrimination motivated these ambitious women to achieve their leadership goals; 4) each of the women deans exhibited traits of The Big Five Personality Trait Model such as surgency, conscientiousness, agreeableness, adjustment, and intellectance which correspond to specific characteristics found relevant for leadership emergence, advancement, or effectiveness; and 5) participants lead with a transformational leadership style, an asset which has been valuable to their success as deans.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and General Information

Thesis Organization

The findings of this qualitative study will be shared in this thesis paper. Chapter one introduces the topic and research study upon which this paper is based. The gap in research concerning the involvement of women in agricultural leadership is discussed first, followed by the purpose for the study, and the organization of the thesis paper. Chapter Two is a review of the literature relevant to women's participation in leadership in non-traditional fields, particularly higher education and the agriculture industry. Chapter Three is comprised of an article based on the findings of the study related to the upbringing and life experiences of the women deans entitled "Insights from Six Women on their Personal Journeys to Becoming Deans of Agriculture: A Qualitative Study". Chapter Four contains an article based on the findings of the study associated with the leadership styles and gender issues faced by each woman dean entitled "How Six Women Deans of Agriculture Have Obtained and Sustained Their Leadership Role: A Qualitative Study". Chapter Five contains the conclusions drawn by the researchers from the findings of the qualitative research study.

Gap in Research

Understanding one's own personal journey provides for effective learning, growth, and development of self (Madsen, 2010). Reflection on the influences and experiences of successful women leaders is essential to understanding the factors that have enabled them to obtain and sustain leadership positions in nontraditional career fields. Bennis (1989) believed that in order

for one to pass on their insight and perceptions of their experiences, they must fully understand and recognize the true value of the experience,

There are lessons in everything, and if you are fully deployed, you will learn most of them. Experiences aren't truly yours until you think about them, analyze them, examine them, question them, reflect on them, and finally understand them. The point, once again, is to use your experiences rather than being used by them, to be the designer, not the design, so that experiences empower rather than imprison. (p. 98)

If one is to examine the true value of a woman's experiences, her development and journey (e.g., culture, traditions, religion, values, backgrounds, education, work-family issues, self-concept, gender barriers, expectations, previous opportunities, perceived future opportunities) must be reflected upon and understood (Madsen, 2007). Madsen suggested that "understanding the influences, backgrounds, and career paths of women who have succeeded in obtaining and maintaining powerful positions of influence within higher education is essential in deepening and broadening our understanding of leadership development as a whole within higher education" (p. 184).

Today, extraordinary leaders are needed to drive higher education institutions to new levels of excellence and innovation, particularly in the field of agriculture. As global concerns regarding economic uncertainty; natural resource and environmental issues; food security and sustainable agricultural practices; and decreasing consumer understanding continue to grow, the United States is looking to agricultural institutions and industry to lead the initiative for identifying solutions to these immense challenges.

The leadership roles of agricultural institutions, industries, and politics, however, have historically been held by males. Society couples the "traditional authoritarian and hierarchical

leadership styles associated with men” (77) to the qualities desired in an agricultural leader, namely strength, determination, aggressiveness, risk-taking, and knowledge (Pini, 2005). Today, however, changing societal expectations and the presence of new challenges in the agriculture field have created a significant demand for women’s leadership in facilitating the adversity faced by agriculture. Generally, women provide more encouragement and support to colleagues and subordinates than men and thus tend to be more focused on the aspects of leadership that promote effectiveness (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen, 2003).

According to a study by Pini (2005), in which 20 women leaders of agricultural politics were interviewed to examine their positions as both ‘agricultural leader’ and ‘woman’, the leadership styles of women were characterized as “nurturing, communicative, consultative, holistic, empathetic and inclusive” (Pini, 2005, 82). These traits are classically considered feminine, but Pini (2005) points out that “such attributes could be proudly claimed as attractive commodities for leadership” (82).

A primary example of women’s impact in agricultural leadership was the appointment of Ann Veneman as the first female to serve as Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 2001. Veneman “worked to foster the next generation of agricultural leadership” by offering young people opportunities to intern with the USDA and encouraging them to seek careers within the agricultural industry (United States Department of Agriculture, 2008). The president appointed Veneman to a leadership position in agriculture, demonstrating the government’s confidence in women’s ability to make a positive difference in the industry (Pini and Brown, 2004).

While society's changing perception of women and the presence of new challenges in agriculture have created a demand for women's leadership in this field, factors such as gender continue to hinder the involvement of capable individuals whose talents may improve the competitiveness and viability of an organization (Madsen, 2008). Visionary and competent individuals are needed to drive higher education institutions and industry to new levels of excellence and innovation to direct the future of the agriculture industry and our nation. However, Rubin (2004) found that the development, attraction, and retention of extraordinary leaders is one of eight fundamental challenges facing higher education today.

Despite this documented concern about the preparation and retention of future educational leaders, there is little published research on the development of individuals who acquire leadership positions, such as college deans. The role and leadership abilities of college deans are of particular importance in higher education because of the influence these leaders have on the direction and management of their institutions as well as the relationships they create and maintain with government officials, industry and community leaders, and their own faculty, staff, and students.

In addition to the narrow research conducted on the advancement of influential individuals in higher education, even less literature is available on the development of high-level women leaders in education. But researchers' interest in women's development of the leadership competencies that are essential for effective leadership in postsecondary education is steadily growing.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lives of women deans in agriculture in an attempt to conceptualize the leadership styles they have developed as a result of their positions as deans in a predominantly male field, as well as their upbringing and life experiences. The central research question addressed during the study was, “How have women deans of agriculture sustained their leadership role in agriculture?”

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

There is little published research on the leadership development and experiences of high level women leaders in higher education in the field of agriculture. However, researchers' interest in women's development of the leadership competencies that are essential for effective leadership in postsecondary education is steadily growing. Madsen (2007) explored the experiences of ten U. S. women university presidents in developing "the knowledge, skills, and competencies that have helped them obtain and maintain positions of influence in higher education" (xvii). She interviewed each president, documenting the women's lives from childhood on and identified the leadership principles utilized by each woman to guide their adult lives.

The interviews revealed that all of the university presidents were raised in two-parent homes. All of the women described their families as modest-middle income families, with two mentioning that they were poor at times. The women also agreed that their homes were generally stable, safe, supportive, and loving environments; one president mentioned she was "raised by loving parents who encouraged and inspired her" as well as instilled within her "a lifelong love of learning" (Madsen, 2006, 574). Six of the ten women were first born or only children in their families. Madsen (2007) noted that all presidents who had siblings (seven) were raised with at least one brother, resulting in no presidents being born into all female families. Three presidents had no siblings; three had one sibling; one had two siblings; two had three siblings; and one was born into a family whose parents eventually had five children.

Nine of the ten mothers of the university presidents attended college for at least a few years after high school, while only six of the fathers continued their education at the college level. One mother earned a master's degree and seven completed college programs (bachelor, associate, or certificate) in areas which were very traditional for women at the time (i.e., teaching, English, dietetics, political science, museum studies, nursing, home economics, and medical technology). Two of the fathers earned master's degrees with college degrees overall consisting of physical education/recreation, physics, engineering, chemistry, agriculture, and secondary education. Eight of the ten mothers (at least when their children were young) were full-time homemakers, with six of the mothers working either part-time or full-time by the time their children were in elementary or secondary school. The mothers' occupational areas included teaching, social work, and nursing.

Five of the six college educated fathers were employed in the fields of their specific degrees. The fathers of the women presidents were employed as teachers, managers of family businesses, sales, postal service, engineering, entrepreneurship, construction, farming, and manufacturing. The women described their mothers as having high expectations for their daughters; instilling within their daughters a love for learning; serving as influential role models; and making happy times. The university presidents felt their fathers believed in training their minds; cared for them; encouraged them to achieve; felt education was important; had a strong sense of responsibility to his family; had high expectations; and provided helpful feedback.

In addition to family upbringing, Madsen's (2009) interviews of the university presidents explored each woman's development of leadership competencies essential for effective

leadership. Nine motivations for leading surfaced in the university presidents' interviews: strong need to accomplish and achieve; desire to make a difference, contribution, or impact; to be involved in meaningful and important work; enjoy challenges and complexity; to have fun and enjoyment; to do work that I knew I could do; to enable others to develop and succeed; to have power and influence; and to serve. Madsen (2009) concluded that the women presidents have always yearned to make a difference in the lives of students, employees, colleagues, and community members. These women thrive on making progress in areas that truly matter and feel it is their responsibility to leave a place or situation better than they found it. Madsen (2009) believes that in today's constantly changing environment, higher education institutions must have "leaders who are capable, strong, smart, strategic, ethical, honest, motivating, inspirational, competent, innovative, creative, networked, organized, empowering, perceptive, reflective, collaborative, and insightful" (22).

While literature is still limited on the leadership development of high-level women leaders in higher education, a number of studies have been conducted on women leaders in other areas such as government, business, and public education. The findings of these studies provide insight into the current phenomenon.

In 1977, Hennig and Jardim performed an influential study of 25 successful women CEOs for the purpose of identifying commonalities that may have contributed to their success and determining the reasons they chose their careers. In their interviews, they discovered that all 25 women were first-born children, some being only children and the rest being the eldest in all-girl families of no more than three children. Twenty-two of the fathers held management

positions in business occupations and three were college administrators. All of the women's mothers were housewives except one, who was employed as a teacher. The educational level of 23 of the mothers was "at least equivalent to that of the fathers, and in 13 cases the mothers' education was in fact superior to the fathers'" (77). The parents' education ranged from high school diplomas to a doctorate, which was held by two fathers. All of the women recalled happy childhoods, speaking of the "closeness and warmth of their relationships with their parents" as well as the feeling that they "assumed a special role in their parents' eyes" (77).

The women CEOs in Hennig and Jardim's (1977) study were found to identify considerably more with their fathers, which was concluded to be a contributing factor to their success. The women's fathers were their most important source of confirmation (Hennig & Jardim, 1977). In addition, Hennig and Jardim (1977) noted that the fathers helped these women "defend against conflict, let them see themselves as women and confirmed their own belief that the acquisition of competence was an essential part of life" (138).

However, in order to secure confirmation as managers, the women CEOs sacrificed their confirmation as women. Furthermore, in order to accomplish their objectives of achievement, success, and recognition, the women refused to engage in their femininity (Hennig & Jardim, 1977). While the women CEOs had established their identity in their rise to higher levels of middle management, they began to realize that their jobs no longer challenged them and their personal lives were non-existent (Hennig & Jardim, 1977). They had achieved a greater sense of career security than they had ever experienced before, but made the decision to begin building a life outside of work. The women CEOs resolved to "accept that they no longer needed to avoid

the symbols which they and others identified with ‘traditional’ women” and reached a decision to “look and act like what they were-women” (Hennig & Jardim, 1977, 144).

These women realized the need to reconsider the value they had placed on marriage and motherhood. Half of the women CEOs in Hennig and Jardim’s (1977) study were married during this period in their careers. The women married widowers or divorced men, all of whom were at least ten years older than the women and had children (Hennig & Jardim, 1977). Those women who married discussed their plans for career advancement with their husbands, and believed these men to be “unique not only in his willingness to accept this kind of marriage, but in his drive to encourage her to move ahead in her career” (146). The presence and support of husbands in these women’s lives not only brought balance but made the women feel capable of moving toward the highest management levels in their firms (Hennig & Jardim, 1977). Over the next few years, these women rose to the presidency or vice-presidencies of their firms (Hennig & Jardim, 1977). The women CEOs adopted a style which “challenged others’ acceptance of the traditional women’s stereotype” (147) as well as began to delegate their routine work to subordinates and relate to their associates as “people rather than as mere accomplishees of work” (Hennig & Jardim, 1977, 150).

In 1985, Woo, as part of the Center for Women in Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina, surveyed 450 top women administrators for the purpose of gathering information on the realities faced in their daily lives and to identify the positive and negative elements that affected their professional decisions and progress. A composite profile of the women participants in this study showed a married woman, age 43, with 1.8 children, and a

graduate degree. The average participant grew up in a two-parent household and her mother did not work outside the home. She received encouragement equally from both parents.

When examining the events that have affected the self-image and career aspirations of women in history, Woo (1985) noted that the women's movement helped to make women more "aware of themselves, of their expanded opportunities, and of their almost unlimited potential" (286). However, the women in Woo's (1985) study experienced internal struggles between their professional ambitions and their traditional upbringing as well as the roles perceived as acceptable for women by society. Despite the challenges presented by their dual roles as females and administrators, each of these women possessed the motivation to build a family as well as advance to leadership within administration.

The women administrators attribute their success to their own determination to have careers, their personal strengths, and the encouragement and support they received from their families (Woo, 1985). The majority of the women believed "their husbands' support had been a crucial factor in their careers" (Woo, 1985, p. 287). Without that support, each woman believed she would have sacrificed her work before disbanding the marriage. Woo (1985) related women's need for encouragement and assistance to men in leadership roles who also rely heavily on their spouses for support. Indeed, the success of women and men in leadership roles is greatly influenced by the commitment of their spouses and families to their careers.

Woo (1985) determined that these women found motivation to pursue administrative careers in their desire to "develop new skills and have an impact on the organization" (287). Greater responsibility, money, and security were found to be secondary motivational factors;

while the acquirement of power was the least important factor in these women's decision to move to higher career levels (Woo, 1985). The achievements of the women administrators in this study prove that "U.S. women from conventional backgrounds can adapt to and deal effectively with organizational hurdles, demanding dual roles, and career/family conflicts" (288). The success these women have realized, however, has not come without a price. Women administrators along with most individuals in leadership positions sacrifice time for leisure activities as well as for building personal relationships in order to achieve their professional aspirations.

This study of women deans of agriculture was investigated using a feminist framework. Feminist research focuses on the issues women face within their specific environments. This study focused on the power of gender in agriculture and the affect it has had on the experiences of the participants in the study.

The field of agriculture is dominated by hierarchical gender power relations which prescribe men as key players in the industry and women as "not legitimate players in the public sphere" (Alston, 2000, 16). The viewpoint of agriculture as a patriarchal society generates an oppressive situation for women and a theme of gender domination, which is consistent with the subject matter present in feminist literature. In observing and interviewing study participants, the experiences of the women deans in their journey to achieve leadership roles in a male-dominated industry and the obstacles they face because of their gender are brought to light.

Creswell (2007) quoted a writer of the feminist approach, Stewart (1994), who suggested that researchers need to look for "the way in which women struggle with their social devaluation

and powerlessness” (26). By asking open-ended questions in the interviews with these women, an understanding for the disempowerment they felt and the boundaries that challenged their rise to a leadership position in agriculture was achieved.

The gendered nature of this field has significantly influenced the lives of women who grew up in agriculture and those who have chosen to pursue an agricultural career. Hatch (2002) stated that feminist researchers take interest in “exposing material differences gender makes in women’s life chances” (16). The interviews with the women participants revealed the impact they believe gender has had in their experiences in achieving a leadership role in a masculine domain. This study describes stories of discrimination in the shared phenomenon of these women as well as the qualities these women possess that enabled them to surpass barriers presented by male gatekeepers and achieve their earned leadership position. Revealing the obstacles men have constructed to impede women in their efforts to advance their role in agriculture, confirms the need for reassessment of the industry’s agenda and the necessity for gender equity.

Chapter 3

Insights from Six Women on their Personal Journeys to Becoming Deans of Agriculture: A Qualitative Study

Abstract

Understanding one's own personal journey provides for effective learning, growth, and development of self (Madsen, 2010). Reflection on the influences and experiences of successful women leaders is essential to understanding the factors that have enabled them to obtain and sustain leadership positions in nontraditional career fields. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lives of women deans in agriculture in an attempt to conceptualize the leadership styles they have developed as a result of their positions as deans in a predominantly male field, as well as their upbringing and life experiences. Six women deans of agriculture were interviewed and observed in an attempt to recognize the impact their personal journeys have had in developing their leadership styles and sustaining their leadership role. Conclusions were that these women were first born children. In addition, the influence of parental qualities and spousal support has impacted their success as women deans of agriculture. Mentors recognized the deans' gifts and talents and encouraged them to pursue advanced degrees and leadership positions.

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Understanding one's own personal journey provides for effective learning, growth, and development of self (Madsen, 2010). Reflection on the influences and experiences of successful women leaders is essential to understanding the factors that have enabled them to obtain and sustain leadership positions in nontraditional career fields. Bennis (1989) believed that in order

for one to pass on their insight and perceptions of their experiences, they must fully understand and recognize the true value of the experience,

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If one is to examine the true value of her experiences, a women's development and journey (e.g., culture, traditions, religion, values, backgrounds, education, work-family issues, self-concept, gender barriers, expectations, previous opportunities, perceived future opportunities) must be reflected upon and understood (Madsen, 2007). Madsen suggested that "understanding the influences, backgrounds, and career paths of women who have succeeded in obtaining and maintaining powerful positions of influence within higher education is essential in deepening and broadening our understanding of leadership development as a whole within higher education" (p. 184). Therefore, to understand this phenomenon, one must begin with exploring her childhood which is in essence the beginning of her journey.

Hennig and Jardim (1977) recognized childhood as being a significant period in an individual's development. Cooke (2004) agreed childhood relationships, developmental activities, and experiences (including hardships and times of pain) come together to create each human being. Sulloway (1996) maintained that "childhood and the family are central to the story of human behavior because they provide the immediate casual context for these developmental scenarios" (118). Furthermore, "a person's inner sense of authority will be developed during

childhood in the system of family relations, when the parents express their expectations, ideas, and emotions to their child” (Lorenzen, 1996, p. 26).

Parental interactions and expectations, however, differ according to the child’s birth order. According to Ernst and Angst (1983), first born children experience more parental involvement, specifically verbal stimulation and strict parenting, than later born children. Falbo (1981) argued that a combination of positive parental attention and high parental expectations lead first born children to setting higher standards for themselves. As a result, first borns developed higher education aspirations and a higher degree of achievement motivation than later born children. Additionally, first born children share a closer relationship with their parents and thus compare themselves to their parents whereas last born children compare themselves to their older siblings.

In addition to birth order, relationships within the immediate family circle are central to the effective development of an individual’s feelings of success, competence, and confidence (Falbo, 1981; Hartman, 1999; Wells, 1998). Furthermore, women in nontraditional occupations have parents who are highly supportive of their daughter’s career interests (Auster & Auster, 1981). In addition, successful women leaders are primarily raised in homes that are occupied by two parents (Hennig & Jardim, 1977; Keown and Keown, 1982; Woo, 1985) who have contributed to their daughters’ development, resulting in the enhancement of each woman’s confidence, knowledge, and skills important for leadership (Madsen, 2007).

In addition to parental support, achievements and behavior of parents greatly influence the motivation and values of women (Madsen, 2007). Madsen (2007) determined the strong

educational background and community commitment of mothers provided a powerful model for women. While most of the women saw their mothers as “loving, committed, and dedicated,” almost all of them also saw their mothers as “influential, competent, strong, intelligent, and fun” (Madsen, 2007, 577). Similarly, Matz (2002) found that a mother’s impact on their daughter’s self-esteem and inspiration was greater than the father’s.

In contrast, women emphasized characteristics such as respect, strength, high expectations and protection when describing their fathers (Madsen, 2006). For the most part, the fathers considered it important to “teach their daughters, as well as provide encouragement, opportunities, and education for them to become self-sufficient” (Madsen, 2006, p. 577). Hennig and Jardim (1977) and Astin and Leland (1991) also reported fathers had a stronger influence on the development, aspirations, and educational goals of their daughters. Hennig and Jardim (1977) noted that women were “taught, encouraged and supported by fathers, who expected them to aspire to and prepare for a career” (p. 118). Overall, women believe both parents are influential but that mothers have a stronger influence (Madsen, 2006).

The importance of parental relationships and influence to the development of women leaders is well documented (Astin and Leland, 1991); Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Hennig and Jardim, 1977; Madsen, 2007). In Madsen’s (2007) study of university presidents, when asked to speak about the individuals who influenced them through their adolescent and college years, most mentioned their parents’ “encouragement to learn, be educated, use their minds, and aspire for college” (10). Parents and family, along with faculty members, academic leaders, friends and peers, and other mentors help to establish a supportive and challenging environment, both

personally and academically, which is important for the career success of women (Hennig & Jardim, 1977).

Madsen (2007) reported “all of the women had authority figures who saw their gifts and talents and demanded quality and rigor” (p. 10). Van Velsor and Hughes (1990) and Wells (1998) determined that women have a remarkable capacity to learn from relationships and connections with others. Wells (1998) further noted women’s self-images were not only founded in relationships they formed with others, but were also shaped by reinforcement and rewards of respected individuals. Good friends and peers are also excellent mentors to women as they progress in their careers (Madsen, 2007). These individuals acted as “sounding boards” and provided open and honest feedback, which was critical in gaining personal insight and strength (Madsen, 2007, p. 113).

Despite the support of family and mentors, however, women who pursue their career and leadership aspirations are confronted with choosing between family and career. McDonald (2004) argued the greatest challenge to women entrepreneurs is the difficulty of juggling a growing company and growing family. In Matz’s (2002) study of women leaders, however, over 62 percent of the women sampled were married and almost 80 percent had children. Additionally, Matz found that over half of the women leaders felt their career never or only occasionally interfered with their personal lives. The women’s success in keeping family and career separate may be explained by their spouses’ willingness to share household labor and childcare (Matz, 2002). This domestic support had allowed these women to take on leadership positions in their careers while maintaining a household.

In a study of women administrators, Woo (1985) noted that women attributed their success to immense determination to have careers and the encouragement and support they received from their families. The majority of the women believed “their husbands’ support had been a crucial factor in their careers” (Woo, 1985, p. 287). Without that support, each woman believed she would have sacrificed her work before disbanding the marriage. Woo (1985) related women’s need for encouragement and assistance to men in leadership roles who also rely heavily on their spouses for support. Indeed, the success of women and men in leadership roles is greatly influenced by the commitment of their spouses and families to their careers.

In examining a woman’s journey to establish a leadership position, many factors seem to be common: strong family upbringing, excellent mentoring and spousal support. In a male-dominated field, such as agriculture, the question becomes do women have the same successful experiences? It is important to note that from our nation’s earliest days, agriculture has held a crucial place in the American economy and culture. Today, the United States is looking to agricultural institutions for solutions to growing global concerns regarding economic uncertainty; natural resource and environmental issues; food security and sustainable agricultural practices; increasing foreign competition; and decreasing consumer understanding. While there are many complex factors that influence economic conditions and consumer awareness, it is clear that education in agriculture plays an important role in preparing farmers, researchers, educators, extension staff, members of agri-businesses, and others to make productive contributions (FAO, 1998). As a result, visionary and competent individuals are needed to drive higher education institutions to new levels of excellence and innovation and direct the future of the agricultural

industry and our nation. However, Rubin (2004) argued that the development, attraction, and retention of extraordinary leaders is one of eight fundamental challenges facing higher education today.

Despite this documented concern about the preparation and retention of future educational leaders, there is little published research on the development of individuals who acquire leadership positions, such as college women deans. The role and leadership abilities of college deans are of particular importance in higher education because of the influence these leaders have on the direction and management of their institutions as well as the relationships they create and maintain with government officials, industry and community leaders, and their own faculty, staff, and students. Therefore, this article explored birth order, family influences, mentor experiences, and the spousal support system as each affected the leadership development and leadership success of woman deans.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lives of women deans in agriculture in an attempt to conceptualize the leadership styles they have developed as a result of their positions as deans in a predominantly male field, as well as their upbringing and life experiences. The central research question addressed during the study was, “How have women deans of agriculture sustained their leadership role in agriculture?” Each participant was asked probing or follow-up questions in an effort to indirectly guide their responses to provide the sought after information. Interview questions included: 1) Describe your family upbringing; 2) Describe your family now; 3) Tell me about your road to becoming a dean of agriculture.

Methods and Procedures

In order to fully comprehend the experiences participants shared, the study was performed using the qualitative research method, which provided for a “complex, detailed understanding of the issue” (Creswell, 2007, 40). Gathering information from interviews, observations, documents, and pictures provided the researcher with a bank of data from which themes could be created, interpretations made, and a “rich, full picture of a research situation” painted (Wright, 2002/3, 8). A phenomenological approach was utilized in an attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of study participants in order to understand how and what meaning they construct from their lived experiences (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Phenomenology allowed for the accurate interpretation and description of the meaning of the six women deans’ experiences in sustaining their leadership roles in a predominantly male field.

The population for this study consisted of six women deans of agriculture in Land-Grant Institutions. Twenty-five women deans and associate deans were identified as possible study participants using the 2009 Directory of Deans and Directors of Academic Programs in Schools and Colleges of Agriculture. While the researcher initially sought to engage women deans from each region of the Continental United States (North, South, East, and West), women associate deans were asked to participate in regions where women deans were not accessible in an effort to maintain a representative sample of women who have all experienced the phenomenon of sustaining their leadership roles in a male-dominated field. Each dean was assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and ensure the confidentiality of their statements. Heather and Kelly were interviewed from the northern region; in the southern region, Maggie was

interviewed; Rachel and Laura were interviewed from the eastern region; and in the western region, Shelley was interviewed.

Gaining entry

An Institutional Review Board Form B was completed and approval received by the University of Tennessee Research Compliance Services on April 27, 2009 to conduct the research. Each perspective participant was contacted by phone and email to secure authorization to participate in the study. Prior to conducting the interviews with each individual, an informed consent letter was signed and collected at the interview. A copy of the email requesting participation and consent letter is included in the Appendix.

Data Collection

The methods employed to collect data in this study included one to two hour in-depth interviews. The researcher's presence as a participant observer in the environments of each of the six women deans for two days was also utilized. During each field visit, the researcher recorded descriptive and reflective notes as she observed events and interactions in each dean's daily routine; which included meetings, workshops, classes, time with family and at home, etc. This enabled the researcher to gain an accurate account of the field as well as maintain the subjectivity of her understanding of each dean's experience. In addition, each dean participated in an audio-taped, semi-structured interview in which the researcher asked open-ended, non-leading questions (Creswell, 2007). The interviews focused on revealing the influences and experiences which helped to develop each woman. The interview protocol asked each

participant to describe her family upbringing, her immediate family, and her road to becoming a dean of agriculture. A copy of the interview protocol is located in the Appendix.

Data Analysis

The in-depth interviews were transcribed and analyzed along with the researcher's field notes. The data was examined using several methods, which included identifying significant statements and elements of meaning; creating textural and structural descriptions; and recognizing descriptions which revealed commonalities among the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007). Emerging themes from all data were coded and sorted into specific categories by the researcher.

Validation Strategies

Research Bias

Prior to launching the study, the researcher reflected on qualities she possessed which may impact her relationship with the environment and people in the study. First, the researcher holds a strong passion for agriculture as she grew up on a farm and is pursuing a degree in agriculture. The researcher's strong interest in this field may result in more focus on the selected women's impact in agriculture and how they have achieved their current status. Next, the researcher is female and possesses moderate feminist beliefs. She takes special interest in the stories of women who have overcome challenges in fields subjugated by males. This may influence the interview questions asked of participants pertaining to how they have achieved and sustained leadership positions in agriculture, a predominantly male field. Finally, the researcher has developed leadership characteristics and independence that have enabled her to take on a

variety of leadership roles. Prior to commencing the study, the researcher believed women deans were independent and have assumed many leadership roles throughout their lives.

In an effort to keep a neutral viewpoint, the researcher reflected on her biases of the research topic and assumptions of the outcomes of the study prior to and during the research to maintain as impartial of a position as possible. The researcher personally reflected on each occasion of contact and communication with the participants. The researcher also structured the research question and probing questions in such a way that did not lead or guide the participant's responses in a predetermined direction.

In addition to the researcher's efforts to reduce the impact of bias on the data collected, several validation strategies were employed to document the "accuracy" and value of this phenomenological research study. Prolonged engagement in the field and the triangulation of data sources, methods, and investigators were techniques used to establish credibility (Creswell, 2007). From the researcher's observations, a thick description of each participant and their environment was constructed to help readers determine the transferability of the research. Dependability of the study was established through peer review by another researcher trained in qualitative analysis throughout the research process. Additionally, member checks of data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions were conducted to confirm credibility of the study.

Findings

The results section is divided into four subsections: 1) birth order; 2) family influences; 3) mentor experiences; and 4) spousal support systems.

Birth Order

Five of the six women deans in this study were first born children. The sixth dean was not the chronologically first born child, but was raised as the first born due to special circumstances. Being the first born child provides opportunities that younger siblings do not experience such as being a caretaker, taking on supervisory responsibilities and learning how to provide leadership at a young age. As stated by one of the deans

Being the oldest, you become a parent of sorts. You take on care responsibilities, supervisory responsibilities, and ...I think you're just looked to fill in when your parents are not around. When mother and dad were out doing farm chores, I would watch after them. I think that you're just looked to sort of step up and fill in for the parents and many times I think that that's probably a role that most older children take.
(Lines 139-150)

In addition to taking on supervisory responsibilities and leadership roles, first born children also assume parental duties.

My father was killed when I was a freshman, so I think that there's another leadership role I sort of took on to help mother a little bit. You're the oldest and you're the most mature adult anyway that she could talk to so I just think that older siblings normally have a different kind of expectation and role than younger children do.
(Lines 158-163)

First born children are also subject to strict parental rules and high expectations. As one dean stated, "My father was the authoritarian, and he was the one that set the bar high, very demanding, and pushed....he was always one that if I got an A- I'd be saying, 'yeah!' and he'd be saying, 'Why isn't it an A?'" (Lines 35-48).

Family Influence

Mothers and fathers of these women played a significant role in their accomplishment of becoming deans of agriculture. In general, the mothers were identified as the caregivers and the

fathers were the authoritarians of the household. As expressed by one of the women deans, caregivers and authoritarians holistically develop individuals.

It was a team, it wasn't like they were working against one another, it was always that... my dad showed love in a very different way. I can remember getting upset sometimes and crying about something that happened and he would say 'Okay, that's enough, just suck it up and lets go.' And my mom would say, 'Oh, honey, I understand,' and pat me on the back. I needed both of these. I needed to hear 'Suck it up and move on,' but I also needed somebody to give me a hug and say, 'I understand.' They worked great as a team and so I'm really thankful for that. (Lines 68-76)

While mothers were generally perceived as caregivers and fathers as authoritarians, each dean had their own unique way of describing their parents. Therefore, Table 1 and 2 contain descriptive words used by deans of agriculture about their mothers and fathers.

Table 1
Descriptive Words Used by Deans of Agriculture about their Mothers

My Mother was/is...

Homemaker	Strong	Adventurous
Educated	Determined	Brave
Independent	Stubborn	Generous
Quiet	Traditional	Not supportive of career
Bookish	Hospitable	Nurturing
Practical	Completely dependent	Disciplinarian
Nuts and Bolts	Housewife	Strong personality
Decision maker	Feminist	Creative
Inspiring	Extremely involved	Organized

Table 2

Descriptive Words Used by Deans of Agriculture about their Fathers

My Father was/is...

Educated	Intellectual	Motivated
Quiet	Analytical	Unconventional
Bookish	Good	Wild
Intelligent	Sense of Service	Creative
Theoretical	Non-emotional	Survivor
Cerebral	Not accessible	Authoritarian
Smart	Supportive of daughter's education	Demanding
Prideful	Environmentalist	Handy
Driven	Humorous	
Respectful of Education	Strong	

As described in Table 1 and 2, the qualities of both the mothers and fathers strongly influenced the women deans' personalities. Specific characteristics that were common among all of the deans' mothers were homemaker, educated, extremely involved, and nurturing; and specific characteristics that were common among the fathers were educated, driven, supportive of daughter's education, authoritarian, and demanding. The women deans largely attribute their self-assurance and motivation in their advancement to leadership to the support that both parents provided them growing up.

I think that having the support from my family to do whatever I wanted was really very important (Lines 205-207)...When I look back across my career, a lot of the things that I accomplished, you know it wasn't that I was especially brave; I just didn't even acknowledge what the obstacles were. And you know... I just walked around obstacles because it didn't dominate my psyche and I think a lot of that was because of the supportive environment that I came up in at home. (Lines 183-187).

Mentor Influence

While the deans' parents played a role in their development as an individual, their professional advancement was mainly influenced by their mentors. Although not all of the mentorship experience was positive, all of the women deans advanced out of malice for or encouragement from their mentors.

I didn't have good mentors at all. I was told verbally, "Ah, don't worry about research, it's not even important." That's what my old department head told me. Because he was just thinking totally of education, education, education ...and there's a bigger pond out there than education. But see, I was so naive... I was so used to outreach, outreach, outreach, service, service, service. Well, that's not really right, you need to have some scholarship. So, I didn't get that message. And when I went up for full professor, our new chancellor said 'Oh no, this person has not had enough scholarship' and I was denied the promotion to full professor. (Lines 476-493)

While negative mentoring or lack of mentoring affected some of the women deans, others experienced positive mentoring which shaped the advancement and success of their selected profession. As one dean explained

My major advisor encouraged me to go on for a Ph.D. And I hadn't really thought about it. He said, 'Hey, you can do this, you can do this, you'd enjoy it, you'd be good at it.' And he started giving me some leads of people that I might work with at other universities and I wound up working with the fella who had served as my advisor's advisor...it's the people who encourage you and, like my decision to go on for a Ph.D. program, it wasn't going to happen, but somebody sat down and said hey, you need to do that, and that's all it took. (Lines 74-79, 510-512)

Spousal Support

The women in this study attribute their success as deans of agriculture to not only the positive influences of family members and mentors, but also the immense support they have received from their spouses. The deans' husbands have non-academic professions which enable them to carry out household duties and support these women in their leadership role. As one

dean revealed, “I don’t clean the house, I rarely cook, although I’m perfectly capable of it. A lot of times I leave the house at 7:00 a.m. in the morning and don’t come back till 8:30 at night, so I’m not going to prepare dinner at 8:30 at night, so he has to do a lot of those things” (Lines 536-539). These women realize that their husbands’ career sacrifices have been essential to their advancement in academia. “I think having a really supportive husband and a husband who is portable in his career is hugely positive” (Lines 511-513). Furthermore, another dean described her husband’s sacrifice as assuming the role of a stay-at-home dad. “My husband is a very introspective person, a very artsy kind of thinker, creative, a very good writer, and published in terms of poetry and literature. He didn’t work, so he was home with the kids. He is just a big kid himself, loves life, loves doing things and having fun. When I was out of town, they would make pancakes and he would flip them up in the air and they would catch them on their plates and I’d find out when I came home that the spot on the ceiling was from a pancake hitting the ceiling when they were tossing it across the room” (Lines 121-134).

In addition to their complimenting professions, the husbands’ accommodating personalities are compatible with the driven personalities of their spouses.

We’re really strong partners, really strong partners. He is protective of me, he’s supportive of me, he doesn’t serve as much of a critic in a sense, but he is always kind of my touch stone for what’s a good idea, what’s not a good idea. He’s a critical asset for me. And...it’s interesting, he has no college background, he has just a very little bit of college, and has worked in the trade his whole life. That kind of very practical, real, tangible relationship to the world is actually in some respects very similar to what I do. I do a lot of building too...and it isn’t necessarily with nails, but it’s building and he builds. And he’s built a fabulous business on a business. We bring very similar kinds of values about the way we do business, a real commitment to integrity and quality work. Very frequently, people think dual career couples are two academics...we’re not that way. And I think it’s been a wonderful balance for the intensity of my life. And the degree to which academic communities tend to get fairly self absorbed, often focused on

some fairly small things, he's always a check on that. The politics and who's more important than who or who's being recognized. It's not very interesting to him...and that's helpful for me in terms of keeping my bearings (Lines 197-226).

Conclusions

Each of these women were essentially first born children which led them to develop a higher degree of achievement motivation, become linear thinkers, and establish higher expectations of themselves (Falbo, 1981). As one dean commented about her dad's high expectations as motivation to do better, she described herself as having a "linear and A-type personality" (Line 135). First born children also possess a stronger predisposition to leadership than later born children (Adler, 1970). In addition to being first born children, the influence of parental qualities has also impacted their success as women deans of agriculture. In a study of women university presidents, Madsen (2007) found that the mothers provided a positive role model for their daughters through strong educational backgrounds and community commitment. The women presidents described their mothers as "loving, committed, and dedicated" as well as "influential, competent, strong, intelligent, and fun." Similarly, maternal qualities such as being a homemaker, educated, extremely involved, and nurturing were identified in this study and provided the deans with an internal drive to be fully engaged in their institutions. For example, these women have a sense of urgency to keep faculty, student, and community relations personable.

I keep in very close touch with a lot of students. They've gone on to really exciting lives and are contributing in a whole host of ways. And they still keep in touch which is really meaningful for me now that I'm in a dean role...because they still ask for advice and I still get to...track their lives and their contributions, both professional and I get to watch their personal lives. I get pictures of their kids and their new houses and...stay connected to them through the jobs they're taking and what they're trying to do. (Lines 281-287)

It's about passion, and it's about making a difference in the lives of students. If I took the piece away to make a difference in the lives of students from my life...my life would not be nearly as fulfilled in terms of my professional career. (Lines 291-300)

Furthermore, the women presidents in Madsen's (2007) study associated characteristics such as respect, strength, high expectations, and protection with their fathers. Moreover, paternal qualities such as being educated, driven, supportive of daughter's education, authoritarian, and demanding motivated these women deans to achieve higher expectations of themselves, as well as expect more from faculty and students. As one dean stated

Every job I've ever taken, that's been my measure...is this the kind of job that I could spend the rest of my career doing and feel rewarded and feel like I'm making a difference and feel like I can contribute in very meaningful ways? I never want to take a job where I feel like I'm taking more than I'm giving, I never want to take a job where I don't have that passion for what I do, and I never want to take a job that I don't think I'm adequately prepared for. It's always going to be a stretch, you always have to take a stretch, you always have to take that next step, but you know inside whether you have the tools, if it's the right time for that step. (Lines 303-311)

The influences of parental attributes combined with growing up during the baby boom era helped to shape and influence the development of the women deans. While the women of their mothers' generation tended to marry early and leave the workforce to raise their children and tend to household duties, their daughters achieved higher academic aspirations and pursued non-traditional career fields for women (Albers, 1999). The deans in this study obtained degrees in agricultural and extension education, agricultural engineering, animal science, biology, horticulture, and entomology. They married later than their mothers and continued working after having children (Albers, 1999). It also became more acceptable for women to contribute to the

household financially and pursue professional careers, enabling them to achieve their independence. One dean described the landscape for women during this transitional time

Now, during that period of time, there were very few females that sort of branched out of their sort of pre-determined career fields at the time, and so for a female to be in agriculture was really not, I don't know that there were any here to be honest with you... you live in the sort of social expectations and so that was just sort of the first group of more females entering into college...working outside the home. More and more women were working outside the home and taking on professional careers, so I was just sort of on that edge, that cutting edge of that transition period. (Lines 122-125, 176-179)

As compared to Madsen's (2007) study, these women deans of agriculture had mentors who recognized their gifts and talents. In addition, they also encouraged them to pursue advanced degrees and leadership positions. While some of the mentors were faculty, other mentors were involved in the women's lives outside of academics.

I've been very fortunate, had great mentors, my dad introduced me to a life mentor. He was in the livestock industry and had no children. He was a hard driver, and pushed people...I worked for him and he became a life long friend. He was just super and really, really encouraged me outside of my family because you're family's supposed to say good things and your family's supposed to encourage you, but to have somebody like that outside... He became a mentor for me when I was 9 years old and he was a mentor until he died when I was 47. He was just a champion of people and I love him and a little piece of him is always inside of me. But that's what good mentors do and that's what I want to do for others, whether it's students or my staff or early career faculty, I want them to look back someday and say, "A little piece of _____ is here," and that's what it's about, it's making a difference in the lives of others. (Lines 479-494)

The women deans in this study relied heavily on the support and sacrifices of their spouses. Woo's (1985) research supports the notion that spousal support is crucial to women's career advancement. Similarly, in this study, the deans' husbands facilitated the women's success by taking on the day to day activities of the home and children so they could focus on their careers. In addition, spousal commitment and professional sacrifices of the deans'

husbands provided opportunities for these women to pursue a leadership role in academia. Furthermore, the personalities of the deans' husbands were another contributing factor to the deans' success. The husbands assumed the role of the listener and provided an outlet for work-related frustrations of the women.

Implications

This paper offers important implications for young women in pursuit of leadership roles in academia. Women with the desire to pursue leadership need to identify a positive role model and/or mentor to encourage and foster growth in the academia profession. Without the advice, knowledge, and encouragement of a mentor, leadership advancement in academia is difficult. Furthermore, women wanting to pursue leadership roles in academia should examine spousal and family support in pursuit of their leadership goals. While two achievement oriented spouses may be successful in leadership roles in academia, research has shown that successful women who pursue leadership roles need spouses who are willing to sacrifice their own career goals for their wives.

Recommendations and Future Research Questions

Based on this study, several research questions have surfaced particularly related to the husbands' perceptions of their spouses leadership role. Two questions the researchers feel should be explored are:

1. How have husbands of women deans been impacted by the success of their wives pursuing a leadership role in academia?
2. How have husbands of women deans perceived their role as non-alpha males?

In addition to exploring the husbands' perceptions, a follow-up study should be conducted in five years with these six women deans to 1.) identify their leadership advancement if applicable; 2.) determine if mentorship is still a viable component of their leadership sustainability; and 3.) determine whether spousal support remains an integral part of their success as a leader.

Chapter 4

How Six Women Deans of Agriculture Have Obtained and Sustained Their Leadership Role: A Qualitative Study

Abstract

There is a disproportionate ratio of men to women in leadership roles in higher education and agriculture. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lives of women deans in agriculture in an attempt to conceptualize the leadership styles they have developed as a result of their positions as deans in a predominantly male field. Six women deans of agriculture were interviewed and observed in an attempt to recognize the impact their personal journeys have had in developing their leadership styles and sustaining their leadership role. Conclusions were: 1) education and work experience were not limiting factors in their achievement of the deanship; 2) spouses of the women deans assumed the child rearing responsibilities which aided them in sustaining their leadership role; 3) women deans' learned to be great strategists and establish their presence within the University despite gender discrimination; and 4) each of the women deans in this study exhibited personality traits such as surgency, conscientiousness, agreeableness, adjustment, and intellectance which are traits considered relevant for leadership effectiveness.

Introduction of Women and Leadership

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of followers to achieve a common goal. Therefore, leadership is not a trait internalized by leaders but rather an interactive event between the leader and follower. Furthermore, the leader is affected by those

individuals he or she leads (Northhouse, 2007), which attests that leaders are not born, they are made.

Leaders invent themselves by following; they develop character and vision as a result of experiences and growth through following and learning from individuals who have influenced them. Thus, since there is no *leader cookie cutter*, leaders may come in “every size, shape, and disposition- short, tall, neat, sloppy, young, old, male, and female” (Bennis, 1989, p.39). In fact, it is the diversity of these individuals that is and will continue to be critical in effecting change in organizations and our rapidly changing world. Today’s society should not be content with preparing only a selected few for leadership; however, all individuals should be encouraged to develop leadership skills in order to gain maximum benefit from their diverse talents and skills (Madsen, 2008).

While contributions of all types of leaders are vital, factors such as gender tend to hinder the involvement of capable individuals whose talents may improve the competitiveness and viability of an organization (Madsen, 2008). Furthermore, there is an unmistakable difference in the leadership and decision-making power bestowed on men and the responsibilities allotted to women in organizations and society (Eagly & Carli, 2004). There are four types of explanations for the demise of women’s occupancy in high-level leadership positions: underinvestment in human capital (e.g., education, work experience); the difference in leadership styles of men and women; the nature of men and not women to lead and dominate others; and discrimination against female leaders based on gender norms (Eagly & Carli, 2004).

Gender gap in workplace leadership occurs when women's human capital investment in education, training, and work experience is lower than men's (Eagly & Carli, 2004). Today, women attain university degrees at higher rates than men do which discredits this portion of the argument; however, women's salaries and representation in leadership roles are not equivalent with men's. A factor which supports this statement is women's greater involvement in domestic work (housework and child care), which may result in women acquiring less training than men do, contributing less effort to paid work, and experiencing more interruptions in work history (Eagly & Carli, 2004). While men increasingly share in housework and child rearing responsibilities, the majority of domestic duties are still performed by women; resulting in necessary breaks from employment, less job experience, and missed opportunities for advancement. Therefore, domestic expectations impose an added burden on women advancing in leadership positions and account for slowed career progress and reduced earnings (Northouse, 2007).

The difference in leadership styles of men and women is another explanation for the exclusion of women from leadership roles. The style with which an individual leads largely determines the leader's effectiveness on followers; any difference is generally perceived as a product of gender and ultimately affects people's views of who should advance to a leadership position (Eagly & Carli, 2004). As more women have begun occupying positions of leadership, numerous studies have been conducted to determine whether or not there are distinct differences in female and male leadership styles and identify which types of leadership are best suited to conditions faced by contemporary organizations.

Beginning in the early 1980's, leadership researchers began studying a new, future-oriented style of leadership introduced by James MacGregor Burns as *transformational* leadership (Northouse, 2007). Transformational leadership is a process which changes and transforms people and organizations. According to Eagly and Carli (2004), transformational leaders “state future goals, develop plans to achieve those goals, and innovate, even when their organizations are generally successful” (285). Leaders of this approach articulate to followers the problems in the current system and offer a compelling vision of what a new organization could be (Lussier & Achua, 2007). Such leaders first establish themselves as role models by gaining the trust and confidence of their followers. Transformational leaders then encourage followers to develop their full potential and thus contribute more effectively to their organization through mentoring and empowerment (Eagly & Carli, 2004). Thus, the drive of transformational leaders to shift their followers' focus from their personal needs, aspirations, and values to a concentration on an organization's collective interest, may be crucial in helping organizations adapt to current geopolitical, social, and economic changes (Lussier & Achua, 2007).

Burns (1978), Avolio (1999) and Bass (1998) compared transformational leadership to *transactional* leadership. Transactional leadership resembles traditional management practices, producing a give-and-take relationship between the leader and his or her followers. This style involves assigning a subordinate responsibility, rewarding them for meeting objectives, and correcting them for failing to meet objectives (Eagly & Carli, 2004). Transactional leadership facilitates an exchange of effort for rewards which provides for the achievement of both leader and follower agendas (Kuhnert, 1994). It is effective because followers benefit from fulfilling

the leader's requests. Conversely, transformational leadership motivates followers to accomplish more than what is anticipated of them, transcending their own self-interests for the good of the organization (Northouse, 2007). While transformational and transactional leadership styles are very different, both can contribute to effective leadership.

When determining the distinction between transactional and transformational leaders, it is helpful to associate this comparison with the difference between managers and leaders. While leadership and management both involve influence, working with people, and effective goal accomplishment; they are also two different constructs. The overriding function of management is to provide order and consistency to organizations, whereas the primary function of leadership is to produce change and movement (Northouse, 2007).

Lussier and Achua (2007) described transformational leaders as "influential, inspirational, and charismatic" (382), whereas transactional leaders are classified as "task- and reward-oriented, structured, and passive" (383). A connection can be made linking management and transactional leadership in that transactional leaders reward followers for performing specific behaviors that meet the leader's expectations and punish followers' performance when it does not meet expectations. Transformational leaders are similar to charismatic leaders in their ability to articulate a compelling vision of the future, and influence followers by arousing strong emotions in support of the vision (Lussier & Achua, 2007).

Although there are clear differences between transformational and transactional leadership, like management and leadership, both styles are effective in leading followers. In addition to transformational and transactional leadership, Burns (1978), Avolio (1999), and Bass

(1998) distinguished a third leadership style labeled *laissez-faire* leadership. Laissez-faire leaders abdicate responsibility, delay decisions, provide no feedback, and make little effort to help followers satisfy their needs (Northouse, 2007). Unlike transformational and transactional leadership, there is no exchange between laissez-faire leaders and their followers and no effort to help their followers grow.

Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003) confirmed the generalization that women's typical leadership styles are more transformational than those of men, especially when it came to providing encouragement and support to subordinates. Thus, women are more focused on the aspects of leadership that promote effectiveness. In addition, women leaders were more engaged in rewarding followers' behaviors, an aspect of transactional leadership called contingent reward (Lussier & Achua, 2007). Conversely, male leaders appear to be more prone to exhibiting aspects of transactional leadership other than contingent reward, such as corrective and disciplinary actions that are either active (timely) or passive (belated) (Eagly et al., 2003). Moreover, men are also more likely to operate as laissez-faire leaders, who take little responsibility for managing.

Another explanation as to the disproportionate occupation of men in leadership roles asserts that men have an evolved psychological character that equips them with a natural tendency to seek leadership and take a dominant role in situations. Evolutionary psychologists link current sex differences in behavior to the differing reproductive pressures males and females experienced in the early history of the human species (Eagly & Carli, 2004). While men possess an internal instinct to compete for dominance and mating partners, as well as a tendency to

evolve dispositions of aggression, risk taking, and competition for status; women possess a predisposition to invest more in the offspring and depend on their mates to provide resources to support them and their children.

Personality traits are of further relevance in understanding gender differences in effective contemporary leadership. Most managerial experts advocate the more feminine and androgynous skills of negotiation, cooperation, diplomacy, team building, and inspiring and nurturing others rather than distinctively masculine traits and skills (Eagly & Carli, 2004). These feminine qualities parallel those that depict transformational leadership. In addition, some characteristics that are known to derail leaders, such as an intimidating or abrasive style, arrogance, and coldness (Nahavandi, 2003), are at least stereotypically masculine (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). Therefore, it is unlikely that effective leadership in contemporary organizations consists of traditionally male behaviors or that men's attainment of leadership roles reflects their natural dominance.

Additionally, leadership scholars have identified five broad personality trait categories that correspond to many of the specific traits found relevant for leadership emergence, advancement, or effectiveness (Yukl, 2010). This five factor model of personality, or the "Big Five" model, distinguishes five personality traits including surgency, conscientiousness, agreeableness, adjustment, and intellectance (Yukl). Surgency is defined through specific traits such as extroversion (outgoing), energy/activity level, and need for power (assertive); conscientiousness is characterized by dependability, personal integrity, and need for achievement; agreeableness is described through attributes including cheerfulness and optimism,

nurturance (sympathetic, helpful), and need for affiliation; adjustment is identified through the specific traits of emotional stability, self-esteem, and self-control; and intellectance is defined as curious and inquisitive, open-minded, and learning oriented.

The dearth of women in high-level leadership also points to prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors as a liable cause. The term *glass ceiling* was introduced in 1986 in the *Wall Street Journal* (“The Corporate Woman”, 1986), which rapidly spread among journalists and other writers and soon became part of the culture (Eagly & Carli, 2004). While this metaphor paints an unmistakable picture of the invisible barrier that challenges the ascent of many women to high-level leadership positions, what is not so clearly understood is that women face a variety of obstacles throughout their leadership journey. Women and men are not granted equal access to entry- and midlevel positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007), proving that a woman’s trek to leadership is complex with resistance and prejudice, but ultimately attainable and a goal worth striving for.

Prejudice toward female leaders materializes from the incongruity that people often perceive between the characteristics typical of women and the attributes of leadership roles. Women are associated with communal qualities (e.g., being especially affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive), which convey a concern for the compassionate treatment of others (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These traits are inconsistent with those society perceives to be necessary for successful leadership, which are predominantly agentic (e.g., being assertive, dominant, forceful, self-reliant, masterful). People readily associate leadership qualities with masculine characteristics, placing the daunting task on women to find

an effective balance between showing their followers compassion and demonstrating assertiveness and maintaining control.

The gendered nature of leadership in the fields of agriculture and higher education has significantly influenced the lives of women who have chosen to pursue leadership roles within them. There is little published research on the advancement of influential individuals in higher education, and even less literature is available on the development of high-level women leaders in education. But researchers' interest in women's development of the leadership competencies that are essential for effective leadership in postsecondary education is steadily growing. Hatch (2002) stated feminist researchers take interest in "exposing material differences gender makes in women's life chances" (16). Therefore, this article explored the leadership styles developed by each woman dean, the gender discrimination each faced in their journey to deanship, and how these factors impacted the women's personal development and professional advancement to their leadership role in agriculture.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lives of women deans in agriculture in an attempt to conceptualize the leadership styles they have developed as a result of their positions as deans in a predominantly male field, as well as their upbringing and life experiences. The central research question addressed during the study was, "How have women deans of agriculture sustained their leadership role in agriculture?"

Methods/Procedures

In order to fully comprehend the experiences participants shared, the study was performed using the qualitative research method, which provided for a “complex, detailed understanding of the issue” (Creswell, 2007, 40). Gathering information from interviews, observations, documents, and pictures provided the researcher with a bank of data from which themes could be created, interpretations made, and a “rich, full picture of a research situation” painted (Wright, 2002/3, 8). A phenomenological approach was utilized in an attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of study participants in order to understand how and what meaning they construct from their lived experiences (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Phenomenology allowed for the accurate interpretation and description of the meaning of the six women deans’ experiences in sustaining their leadership roles in a predominantly male field.

The population for this study consisted of six women deans of agriculture in Land-Grant Institutions. Twenty-five women deans and associate deans were identified as possible study participants using the 2009 Directory of Deans and Directors of Academic Programs in Schools and Colleges of Agriculture. While the researcher initially sought to engage women deans from each region of the Continental United States (North, South, East, and West), women associate deans were asked to participate in regions where women deans were not accessible in an effort to maintain a representative sample of women who have all experienced the phenomenon of sustaining their leadership roles in a male-dominated field. Each dean was assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and ensure the confidentiality of their statements. Heather and Kelly were interviewed from the northern region; in the southern region, Maggie was

interviewed; Rachel and Laura were interviewed from the eastern region; and in the western region, Shelley was interviewed.

Gaining entry

An Institutional Review Board Form B was completed and approval received by the University of Tennessee Research Compliance Services on April 27, 2009 to conduct the research. Each perspective participant was contacted by phone and email to secure authorization to participate in the study. Prior to conducting the interviews with each individual, an informed consent letter was signed and collected at the interview. A copy of the email requesting participation and consent letter is included in the Appendix.

Data Collection

The methods employed to collect data in this study included one to two hour in-depth interviews. The researcher's presence as a participant observer in the environments of each of the six women deans for two days was also utilized. During each field visit, the researcher recorded descriptive and reflective notes as she observed events and interactions in each dean's daily routine. This enabled the researcher to gain an accurate account of the field as well as maintain the subjectivity of her understanding of each dean's experience. In addition, each dean participated in an audio-taped, semi-structured interview in which the researcher asked open-ended, non-leading questions (Creswell, 2007). The interviews focused on revealing the influences and experiences which helped to develop each woman. The interview protocol asked each participant to describe her family upbringing, her immediate family, and her road to becoming a dean of agriculture. A copy of the interview protocol is located in the Appendix.

Data Analysis

The in-depth interviews were transcribed and analyzed along with the researcher's field notes. The data was examined using several methods, which included identifying significant statements and elements of meaning; creating textural and structural descriptions; and recognizing descriptions which revealed commonalities among the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007). Emerging themes from all data were coded and sorted into specific categories by the researcher.

Validation Strategies

Research Bias

Prior to launching the study, the researcher reflected on qualities she possessed which may impact her relationship with the environment and people in the study. First, the researcher holds a strong passion for agriculture as she grew up on a farm and is pursuing a degree in agriculture. The researcher's strong interest in this field may result in more focus on the selected women's impact in agriculture and how they have achieved their current status. Next, the researcher is female and possesses moderate feminist beliefs. She takes special interest in the stories of women who have overcome challenges in fields subjugated by males. This may influence the interview questions asked of participants pertaining to how they have achieved and sustained leadership positions in agriculture, a predominantly male field. Finally, the researcher has developed leadership characteristics and independence that have enabled her to take on a variety of leadership roles. Prior to commencing the study, the researcher believed women deans were independent and have assumed many leadership roles throughout their lives.

In an effort to keep a neutral viewpoint, the researcher reflected on her biases of the research topic and assumptions of the outcomes of the study prior to and during the research to maintain as impartial of a position as possible. The researcher personally reflected on each occasion of contact and communication with the participants. The researcher also structured the research question and probing questions in such a way that did not lead or guide the participant's responses in a predetermined direction.

In addition to the researcher's efforts to reduce the impact of bias on the data collected, several validation strategies were employed to document the "accuracy" and value of this phenomenological research study. Prolonged engagement in the field and the triangulation of data sources, methods, and investigators were techniques used to establish credibility (Creswell, 2007). From the researcher's observations, a thick description of each participant and their environment was constructed to help readers determine the transferability of the research. Dependability of the study was established through peer review by another researcher trained in qualitative analysis throughout the research process. Additionally, member checks of data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions were conducted to confirm credibility of the study.

Findings

Eagly and Carli (2004) identified four explanations for the demise of women in leadership roles. These four explanations were underinvestment in human capital (e.g., education, work experience); the difference in leadership styles of men and women; the nature of men and not women to lead and dominate others; and discrimination against female leaders

based on gender norms. Despite these common challenges, these six women proved to be effective leaders of their institutions.

Possible Challenges for Women Leaders

Underinvestment in Human Capital. While research shows that women do not achieve leadership roles due to a lack of education and work experience (Eagly & Carli, 2004), these six women all have doctoral degrees and numerous years of experience in agricultural fields. They have also assumed numerous leadership roles in their pursuit of deanship. In addition, the majority of the women deans are married with children. Furthermore, spouses of the women deans take on household duties which include child rearing responsibilities.

Gender Discrimination. The areas of discrimination identified and discussed in this study are perceptions of women, fairness in the work place, and power structures. Five of the six deans provided accounts of discrimination they experienced in their journey to deanship. Bias and opposition were encountered by these women as they pursued agricultural degrees and careers; joined agricultural organizations; applied and interviewed for faculty/administrative positions and promotions; advanced to higher levels of leadership; and entered into departments comprised primarily of males. As they discussed their experiences, each woman was quick to comment that they grew as professionals because of the obstacles they had to overcome.

Perceptions of Women. When I first applied for the professor's position I was a post-doc, and the professor's position opened up and I applied for that and the dean at the time told me we don't really want you because you're a woman, we don't think you can do the job. We want someone who can do the research in fruits and I said, 'Well, what is it you think I can't do? I've installed irrigation, I've grafted trees, and I'll show you how to graft one right here. I've planted 57,000 trees; I know how to do this. He said, 'Well, you know, if you've done the practical things...can you drive a tractor?' and I said, 'Yes.' 'Can you drive a backhoe?' 'Yes, it's no big deal.' 'Post hole digger?' 'No big deal.' And he said, 'Well, can you calibrate a sprayer?' I said,

‘Yes.’ And he said, ‘Well how would you calibrate a sprayer?’ He kind of copped an attitude. So I described to him how you would calibrate a sprayer. He said, ‘Well, how would you do the irrigation?’ So I showed him a typical irrigation layout, you know, and he said, ‘Oh, well okay, maybe you would be a good candidate.’ So he let me go ahead and apply and interview and I got the position. I put in a 40-acre orchard...a research orchard right away and got the irrigation in under the railroad. But, that was one of the examples of...I guess they were going on perception (Lines 452-467)

Fairness. Like when I went for promotion and tenure, I received my tenure and they decided not to grant me promotion and their justification for that was...they said I needed to have some international experience, well there was nowhere where that was specified in the documents for associate professor, and the two guys that went up at the same time I did didn’t have international experience, but they got promoted. I had more pubs than they had, so basically...And they said I could fight it, but at that time the back log for fighting it was about three years to have a hearing, so it was easier just to go get the international experience and then apply the next year, and I got it the next year. But I remember thinking that, the fairness issue was not right (Lines 469-480)... And one other case too where there were five directors in the department and I was the director of _____, the only woman, and I was being underpaid by \$20,000. All the guys, even the ones that came after me had higher salaries...so...I had to fight that, and it took eight years before I won that, well I won it in five but it took three years to collect. So, there were problems, but I learned a lot there. I learned about fighting when things are unjust, you know, you have to fight. You may not always win, but you have self respect at least (Lines 480-486).

Power Structure. When I became the department chair and they saw me as ...shifting in the power structure and when it became evident that I was my own person and I was not going to carry forward their agenda... all hell broke loose... to put it mildly and it was a really difficult year (Lines 283-286). The dean at the time convinced me to change job positions. In retrospect, I recognize that I was not going to win that battle and I also recognize that there was nothing that I could have done, no accomplishment I could have made, no...strategic goal I could have set and reached that would have won the respect of this group of men...because it was so fundamentally a problem of my gender. There was absolutely nothing that I would be able to do to win their respect, and it’s very difficult to lead people who don’t respect you (Lines 301-306).

Although some of the women in this study expressed concerns over gender discrimination, others were oblivious to this notion. In addition, if gender discrimination was present, a couple of the women were not aware of it. Moreover, one woman dean acknowledged

that if we understand and support both perspectives (men and women) and educate people about these viewpoints, as a society we will become more accepting of each gender.

It's a real challenge, because I don't like partitioning people out. I like to help men to understand women and women to understand men and understand that when we bring things to the table that...if you work with women alone, I think it's easy to create an 'us against them' attitude or men with women. I don't ever want to create an 'us against them'. I think men and women bring some unique things to the table in very different ways. I also know that there are things that I can do that a man couldn't do, in terms of working with students, I mean...if I give a hug to a student, it's very different than if a man gives a hug to a student...even if that student needs a hug. But men can do things like being more authoritative and more direct. Men can get away with that type of leadership, but there are things that women can get away with that men can't. And I also know that if I have to deliver bad news to somebody, they're much less likely to take me on and yell and banter back than they are if a man told them. They would be more argumentative, and so they would challenge that more than they might with me because of this sense of respect. And so there are some huge advantages, so you need to know what are the advantages, what are the disadvantages, and recognize that I will never be a person that can pound my fist on the table and say this is the way it's going to be guys, but there are some other things that I have that are an advantage in terms of gender roles in a workplace that men don't have. It's understanding what those differences are and how to use them appropriately (Lines 498-519).

The Big Five Personality Traits

These six women deans can be characterized as effective leaders based on these five personality traits: surgency, conscientiousness, agreeableness, adjustment, and intellectance.

Surgency. Surgency is defined as an individual possessing specific traits such as extroversion, energy, and need for power. As demonstrated by one dean, she is very passionate and assertive concerning her work.

But in the classroom, oh my goodness...I get in the classroom and I am wound up for the day. I tell you what, when I guest lecture...I've begged to teach, they think I'm crazy. When I was at _____, I taught every freshman orientation class, I taught six sections of freshman orientation every fall and we met twice a week. So I had 12 contact hours along with everything else I was doing and I wouldn't give it up. I was passionate about not giving it up. It is

rewarding, encouraging, engaging, motivating, exciting. Getting in front of students just really revs me up. So I don't want to pass up that opportunity. (Lines 343-357)... every job I've ever taken, that's been my measure...is this the kind of job that I could spend the rest of my career doing and feel rewarded and feel like I'm making a difference and feel like I can contribute in very meaningful ways? I never want to take a job where I feel like I'm taking more than I'm giving, I never want to take a job where I don't have that passion for what I do, and I never want to take a job that I don't think I'm adequately prepared for. You always have to take that next step, but you know inside whether you have the tools, if it's the right time for that step (Lines 303-311).

Conscientiousness. A conscientious individual exhibits specific traits including dependability, personal integrity, and need for achievement. One dean desired her community to feel pride in the work they do and feel energized. In addition, she has launched discussions with department chairs to empower faculty members.

We want people to feel proud of what they do here, they have every reason to. The work of this college is so important and so valued. To feel safe, to feel comfortable, to feel proud, to feel energized, that's what we're looking for. We are a very large organization, can I ensure that every pocket across the college feels that way...no, but where we don't, we try hard to know that that's true and be an active part of the solution towards something better. So we explicitly launched a series of conversations about what some characteristics of healthy departments were. And that turned out to be a very revealing and important tool for many of our chairs...empowering for lots of our faculty (Lines 620-632).

Agreeableness. Agreeableness is characterized by traits such as cheerful and optimistic, nurturance, and need for affiliation. Deans value the relationships they have created in their institutions with both faculty and students.

I think you have relationships with people that seem to last forever, and some of the relationships that I'm enjoying here have carried over from my previous institution. A lot of my kids still come by, and they'll probably be mine forever. One of mine works for _____ now in _____, and I'll see the emails saying mom, you know, I did this, and it gives me the chance to be proud of him and how much he's grown. It's a good feeling to have your students coming back and becoming full-fledged professionals too or having people that you've been

able to work with or encourage become leaders here. That's exciting. Or when you've been able to dream up ideas with the help of a real committed team and those ideas work. That's exciting! (Lines 499-508)

Adjustment. An individual who possesses emotional stability, self-esteem, and self-control exhibits an adjustment personality trait. The deans acted as mediators in diverse, sometimes hostile environments where people had many differences. In addition, they took on leadership roles in the face of adversity.

But in my department, there was a lot of conflict between new people who had been hired from the _____, and people who had either been in _____ for...30 or 40 years or people who grew up there and were on the faculty. And there was just this huge divide and I was often the person who could cross that divide (Lines 243-247)....I ended up having quite a number of leadership roles in difficult things that had to happen in the department. The chair would be looking for somebody to lead who could make it happen without World War Three occurring. For example, I led a reevaluation of space and reassignment of space for the faculty, there is nothing more precious in a university than space. People will fight to the death for their space. So I had to find a way to make a totally transparent and fair process and I was an assistant professor so I was like really dancing a fine line (Lines 247-254).

Intellectance. Intellectance is defined as an individual who is curious and inquisitive, open-minded, and learning oriented. As one dean expressed

I like being able to interact with and to be knowledgeable about majors beyond the one that I came from. My department of _____ is housed in the same department with _____. Did I know anything about those majors or anything about the types of stuff they did? Nahh, even though I was in the same building. But now that I'm in this office, I have a much better understanding for...what they do with their major, what they're trying to accomplish with the education of students...and the three programs that they offer there...where their students go and the types of things they do and the types of backgrounds that they come from. I never would have known that type of thing. I mean we've got ___ departments...we have ____ undergraduate majors in this

college and... I get to have access to information that I never would have seen before (Lines 432-444).

Conclusions

Based on this study, one may conclude that while these women deans pursued leadership roles, education and work experience were not limiting factors in their achievement of the deanship. The influences of parental attributes combined with growing up during the baby boom era helped to shape and influence the development of the women deans. While the women of their mothers' generation tended to marry early and leave the workforce to raise their children and tend to household duties, their daughters achieved higher academic aspirations and pursued non-traditional career fields for women (Albers, 1999). The deans in this study obtained degrees in agricultural and extension education, agricultural engineering, animal science, biology, horticulture, and entomology. These women married later than their mothers and continued working after having children (Albers, 1999). It also became more acceptable for women to contribute to the household financially and pursue professional careers, enabling them to achieve their independence. One dean described the landscape for women during this transitional time

Now, during that period of time, there were very few females that sort of branched out of their sort of pre-determined career fields at the time, and so for a female to be in agriculture was really not, I don't know that there were any here to be honest with you... you live in the sort of social expectations and so that was just sort of the first group of more females entering into college...working outside the home. More and more women were working outside the home and taking on professional careers, so I was just sort of on that edge, that cutting edge of that transition period. (Lines 122-125, 176-179)

In addition, spouses of the women deans shared in the child rearing responsibilities which enabled them to focus on professional development and career advancement.

Due to different discrimination experiences, some of the women deans learned to be great strategists and establish their presence within the University. For example, one woman dean commented, “I learned a lot about how to fight dirty. I learned how to protect myself. I learned how to try to figure out what they were up to and have my own strategy...I mean it became almost like a battleground for me and I’m confident lots of people face these kinds of situations in their departments...a very tough realization for me to come to” (Lines 286-290). In addition, some of the women’s experiences that related to gender discrimination stem from the natural tendency of males to lead and dominate others. This explanation is supported by the findings of this study and the previous work of Eagly and Carli (2004).

Furthermore, several of the women deans did not experience or acknowledge gender discrimination as part of their journey to becoming a dean of agriculture. Therefore, one could conclude that gender discrimination made these women stronger and more determined in their leadership. It also can be concluded that even if a woman hadn’t experienced gender discrimination in the work place; she too was determined, successful and wanted to educate people about the qualities of both genders to help establish a better understanding of male and female leadership.

Each of the women deans in this study exhibited personality traits such as surgency, conscientiousness, agreeableness, adjustment, and intellectance as cited in Yukl (2010). Therefore, by exhibiting these traits, the women deans of agriculture were deemed effective in their leadership role. The overall conclusion of this study is that these six women deans can all

be classified as transformational leaders. Transformational leadership is a process which changes and transforms people (Lussier & Achua, 2007). Perfectly stated by one dean

I've read in a number of documents that there's a kind of tipping point in the diversity of a community. When you have a very homogeneous community, it will function through the filter of whatever that group of people are, if it's all men, or all Caucasian, whatever the homogeneity is, it's going to function with that as its primary filter. If you start bringing in diversity and you just drop in say one person, they're going to be very much influenced by the weight of whatever that filter is. If you've got 9 men and one woman, it's going to function like a male society and that is going to be the expectations of that woman, to function like a white male. If it's a white male society, she's going to be asked to function like a white male, only problem is...she's not. So as you shift that and you become more and more diverse, there's a place where there's a kind of a tipping point and you lose that homogeneous filter that the society is functioning under. You start to get it functioning like the diverse society that it is...which means you're taking into account everybody's views and the way they are, and their needs, what they need to be successful, and I think that that's what we need to do to really transform the institution, is to arrive at that tipping point. Everybody agrees that once you get there it's a really great thing. People say, 'Oh, how are you going to maintain excellence?' But once you hit that tipping point, you realize how much you bring with the diversity...the viewpoints, the ability to be creative, the projects that people are willing to take on, the kind of work that's being done...it all gets better (Lines 599-619).

Implications and Recommendations

Women pursuing leadership positions in academia can benefit from other women's experiences. Knowing some of the gender barriers that could exist in academia can assist women in the preparation of becoming a leader in the agriculture academia arena. In addition to recognizing the gender barriers women may encounter in academia, one needs to also evaluate their personality traits such as those included in the Big Five Personality Trait Model. If one analyzes their personality and determines that most of the personality traits are solid, one may be ready to pursue a leadership position. However, if one is deficient in several personality traits, then leadership development training should be considered.

Based on this study, several research questions have surfaced. Three questions the researchers feel should be explored are:

1. How are women deans viewed by colleagues in their institutions?
2. How have male deans obtained and sustained their leadership role in agriculture?
3. In five years, have these six women deans advanced in their leadership role or chosen other career aspirations?

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations

Conclusions

The reflection on the personal and leadership journeys of the six women deans in this study reveal experiences and influences that provide insight into how these women have sustained their leadership role in agriculture. Madsen (2007) suggested that “understanding the influences, backgrounds, and career paths of women who have succeeded in obtaining and maintaining powerful positions of influence within higher education is essential in deepening and broadening our understanding of leadership development as a whole within higher education” (p. 184). Reflection on the influences and experiences of the women deans produced five overall conclusions: 1) the women deans were essentially all first-born children; 2) encouragement from parents and mentors as well as spousal support were crucial factors in obtaining and sustaining their role as deans of agriculture; 3) challenges imposed by gender discrimination motivated these ambitious women to achieve their leadership goals; 4) each of the women deans exhibited traits of The Big Five Personality Trait Model such as surgency, conscientiousness, agreeableness, adjustment, and intellectance which correspond to specific characteristics found relevant for leadership emergence, advancement, or effectiveness; and 5) participants lead with a transformational leadership style, an asset which has been valuable to their success as deans.

An individual’s upbringing and family provide the immediate context for developmental opportunities and significantly impact human behavior (Eckstein, 2000). Each of the women deans in this study were essentially first born children. Birth order theorists have concluded that position in the family is a powerful predictor of interests, style, and achievement. After

interviewing and observing the six women deans in their leadership role, it is clear that these women exhibit first born characteristics that strongly correlate with their leadership ability. In general, first borns are ambitious, assertive, conscientious, responsible, socially dominant, self-confident, competitive, insistent on rights, achievement-oriented, and like to possess power and authority (Sulloway, 1996). The women deans in this study are compassionately demanding of faculty members and students to achieve new heights of innovation and excellence; competitive in their mission to make theirs a top ranked university; and vocal about their opinions when making decisions concerning the welfare of faculty and students. While at times they may be stretching themselves thin, these women yearn to make a difference in the areas that matter to their students, colleagues, and community members.

From childhood on, an individual's values and character are molded as a result of life experiences and influences from the people that have touched their lives. Encouragement from parents and mentors as well as spousal support facilitated the development of these women's leadership abilities and served as crucial factors in obtaining and sustaining their role as deans of agriculture. Overall, the women deans had strong parental support systems growing up that encouraged them to continue their education and pursue their non-traditional career interests. This encouragement, from the fathers in particular, was imperative to establishing the women's belief in their own capability to obtain a job in their desired career field and one day obtain a leadership role.

The support of mentors was also a vital asset in these six women's journey to leadership in agriculture. The women deans of agriculture in this study seemed to thrive on the

relationships they shared with these individuals on their journey to leadership. These women strongly believed the encouragement and opportunities they received from their mentors to gain job experience in their career fields helped develop their confidence as well as shape their self-image, molding them into the women they are today. In addition, the women deans in this study acknowledged the significance of the support and sacrifices of their spouses. A major contributing factor to the dean's success was their husbands' willingness to understand and encourage the deans' rise to leadership in a non-traditional field and their readiness to forfeit their advancement to leadership within their careers to share household duties and childcare responsibilities. If spousal support of this magnitude had not been available, the women deans' belief in their leadership capabilities would likely have suffered. Furthermore, they would have assumed dual roles as career woman and mother, slowing their professional progress.

The deans in this study experienced different levels of discrimination which imposed challenges that motivated these ambitious women to achieve their leadership goals. In light of these experiences, some of the women deans learned to be great strategists and establish their leadership identity amongst their colleagues and within the University. In most cases, these women used discriminatory challenges as additional motivation and drive to adapt and deal with conflict effectively in order to continue their pursuit of deanship. Those women who did not experience or acknowledge gender discrimination as part of their journey to becoming a dean of agriculture were still determined to be advocates for women who have become successful career women and mothers.

Each of the women deans in this study exhibited traits of the Big Five Personality Trait Model, which included personality traits such as surgency, conscientiousness, agreeableness, adjustment, and intellectance as cited in Yukl (2010). This personality model produced visible examples of effective leadership development in identifying the personality traits best suited to each of the six women deans of agriculture. By exhibiting the personality traits outlined in the Big Five Personality Trait Model, the women deans of agriculture were deemed effective in their leadership role.

The overall conclusion of this study is that these six women deans can all be classified as transformational leaders. Transformational leadership is a process which changes and transforms people (Lussier & Achua, 2007). According to Eagly and Carli (2004), transformational leaders “state future goals, develop plans to achieve those goals, and innovate, even when their organizations are generally successful” (285). Such leaders first establish themselves as role models by gaining the trust and confidence of their followers, and then encourage followers to develop their full potential and thus contribute more effectively to their organization through mentoring and empowerment (Eagly & Carli, 2004).

The women deans in this study exhibit numerous qualities associated with transformational leadership. Several of the women expressed desires to become more involved in the recruitment of students as well as voiced their concern for the successful adjustment of new faculty members and students. The women deans are strategic and unbiased in decision making and value the ideas and opinions of faculty, students, colleagues, and community members. These women are focused on the learning outcomes of the courses offered at their

institutions, placing constant concern on what is best for the students. The women deans also believe honesty, integrity, and transparency are innate skills that should be emphasized within institutions to help colleagues, faculty, and students achieve their personal and leadership goals. The women deans of agriculture in this study are energetic, enthusiastic, and motivated when discussing their passion for students, the university, and community. These women have gained the trust of their students, faculty, and staff, enabling them to motivate these individuals to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the institution. The women deans in this study can be described as “influential, inspirational, and charismatic” (Lussier & Achua, 2007, 382). The six women deans of agriculture in this study truly represent transformational leaders.

Implications

Understanding the experiences and perceptions of these women provides insight into the types of influences and experiences that are beneficial for women to develop the needed knowledge, skills, and competencies required for effective leadership. Knowing some of the gender barriers that could exist in academia can assist women in the preparation of becoming a leader in the agriculture academia arena. In addition to recognizing the gender barriers women may encounter in academia, one needs to also evaluate their personality traits such as those included in the Big Five Personality Trait Model. If one analyzes their personality and determines that most of the personality traits are solid, one may be ready to pursue a leadership position. However, if one is deficient in several personality traits, then leadership development training should be considered.

This research can benefit women pursuing leadership positions in academia as well as women of all ages interested in career and leadership development. Educators, administrators, and mentors who will be guiding and training future women leaders may also find this research useful.

Recommendations

Based on this study, several research questions have surfaced related to the husbands' perceptions of their spouses' leadership role. Two questions the researchers feel should be explored are:

1. How have husbands of women deans been impacted by the success of their wives pursuing a leadership role in academia?
2. How have husbands of women deans perceived their role as non-alpha males?

In addition to exploring the husbands' perceptions, a follow-up study in five years should be conducted with these six women deans to 1.) identify their leadership advancement if applicable; 2.) determine if mentorship is still a viable component of their leadership sustainability; and 3.) determine whether spousal support remains an integral part of their success as a leader.

Three other questions researchers feel should be explored are:

1. How are women deans viewed by colleagues in their institutions?
2. How have male deans obtained and sustained their leadership role in agriculture?
3. In five years, have these six women deans advanced in their leadership role or chosen other career aspirations?

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Appendix

Email to Study Participants

Hello Dr. _____,

My name is Sarah Kleihauer, a graduate student working with Dr. Carrie Ann Stephens in the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications program at the University of Tennessee. I am pursuing a master's degree and I am in the process of conducting a qualitative study related to women leaders in the field of agriculture. The participants of the study will be women deans or associate deans in Colleges of Agriculture.

The purpose of the study is to explore the lives of women deans in agriculture in an attempt to conceptualize the leadership styles they have developed as a result of their upbringing and life experiences that have enabled them to sustain their leadership role in a male-dominated field. Objectives of the study will be to examine personal journeys of women deans of agriculture; identify their leadership styles; and recognize the impact their personal journeys have had in developing their leadership styles and sustaining their leadership role as deans.

I have selected women deans from the north, south, east, and western regions of the United States to ensure I capture a sample which will provide a breadth of knowledge from participants across the United States.

I have selected you from the _____ region. Would you be willing to participate in this study? If you agree to partake in the study, I will email you my cover letter, an explanation of the study, and a consent form to designate your approval to participate. Once you receive the consent form, you may read it over, sign and date it, and fax it to me.

Your participation in this study will involve an on-site visit from me to your university for approximately two days. This on-site visit will provide an opportunity for me to "shadow" your daily activities (which can include attending a meeting or a class you teach) and a one to two hour interview. The interview will be an opportunity for me to learn about your personal and leadership experiences.

An IRB to perform the study and interview participants has been approved through the University of Tennessee. Because the University of Tennessee does not require an additional IRB for researchers to observe and interview participants on their campus, I will be asking each participant to inform me if their institution requires the IRB approval so I may have this process completed in time to conduct the observation and interview.

Once I have received approval from the selected deans to participate, I will contact you by phone to set a date for the visit.

Thank you for your consideration of my request to participate in this thesis study. If you have any questions, please contact me at (712) 389-1874 or skleihau@utk.edu or Dr. Carrie Ann Stephens at (865) 974-7371 or cfritz@mail.ag.utk.edu.

Sincerely,

Sarah Kleihauer
University of Tennessee
Agricultural and Extension Education Graduate Student

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT-INTERVIEW (ADULT)

Examining How Women Deans of Agriculture have Sustained Their Leadership Role

Introduction

_____ (the “Participant”) has been invited to participate in a research study by Sarah Kleihauer (the “Investigator”). The study will focus on the experiences of female deans of agriculture at land grant universities. By executing this document, the Participant and the Investigator acknowledge and agree on the terms of the Participant’s involvement in the research and the Participant provides her consent to such involvement.

Information about Participants’ Involvement in the Study

The Participant consents to be interviewed and to the use of the information gained from the interview(s) in a graduate thesis and written research publications describing the experiences of female deans of agriculture, subject to the following terms and conditions:

- a. The information obtained during this project will be used to write research publications and a graduate thesis that may be read by the participant and other individuals.
- b. The Participant agrees to participate in an in-depth interview and understands that the interview will last approximately one hour. There will only be one interview conducted and possibly a follow-up interview, if needed. The Participant will be asked to share her thoughts related to her experiences as a female dean of agriculture. How the Participant structures her story and what information she chooses to share will be up to her. The Participant may choose to share personal stories. The Participant’s identity will be kept confidential by using a pseudonym for her name.
- c. The interview will be tape-recorded and the researcher will transcribe the tapes after the interview has taken place. The audio tapes will be stored in Dr. Carrie Stephens’ office (325 Morgan Hall) in a locked filing cabinet. The audio tapes will then be destroyed.
- d. Real names will not be used during data collection or in the written report.
- e. The participant will receive a copy of the study before the final draft is written and will be provided the opportunity to negotiate changes with the researcher.
- f. The participant will receive a copy of the final research report soon after completion.

_____ Participant’s initials

_____ Investigator’s Initials

Risk

The risks are minimal for participating in this study. If the Participant chooses to share personal stories, be cautioned that those stories may be included in the final written report. The Investigator will use a pseudonym for the Participant’s name in the written report.

Benefits

The benefit of this study is to inform females aspiring to become deans of agriculture of the experiences of established women deans. In addition, females can face many challenges and obstacles being employed in a male dominated field like agriculture. Therefore, there will be numerous benefits to females aspiring to obtain dean positions in agriculture and females currently serving as deans of agriculture.

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Carrie Ann Stephens’ office located at 325 Morgan Hall. Data will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. The identity of the participants will not be publicly disclosed and all possible efforts will be made to avoid references in oral or written reports that could be used to link participants to the study.

Contact Information

If the Participant has any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, she may contact myself, Sarah Kleihauer, or Dr. Carrie Ann Stephens at (865) 974-7371. If the Participant has any questions about her rights as a participant, contact Research Compliance Services of the Office of Research at (865) 974-7697.

Participation

Participation is entirely voluntary. The Participant may refuse to participate or discontinue participation in this research project at any time. If the Participant decides to participate, she may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If the Participant decides to withdraw from the study, information or material provided by her will be excluded from the study and returned to her or destroyed.

Consent

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in the study.

Participant’s Signature _____ Date _____

Investigator’s Signature _____ Date _____

Interview Protocol

Topic domain #1 Family upbringing

Leadoff Questions: Describe your family upbringing.

Covert Categories:

[Relationship with family members, family member's personalities, what affect their relationship had on her, describe herself growing up.]

Possible follow-ups:

1. Tell me about your relationship with your mom, dad, and siblings.
2. Describe yourself growing up.
3. Describe your home life.

Topic domain #2 Her own family

Leadoff Questions: Describe your family now.

Covert Categories:

[Her relationship with her husband and son, raising her children]

Possible follow-ups:

1. Tell me about raising your children.

Topic domain #3 The Road to Becoming a Dean

Leadoff Questions: Tell me about your road to becoming a dean of agriculture.

Covert Categories:

[Leadership training; developing a leadership style; what inspired her leadership; passion for agriculture, FFA, 4-H; grow up on a farm; educational journey]

Possible follow-ups:

1. What inspired you to pursue this path?
2. What leadership skills are required to be a dean?
3. What do you value about being dean of agriculture?

Vita

Sarah Kleihauer was born in Elk Point, South Dakota, to the parents of Harlan and Mary Kleihauer. She has one younger sibling, Kevin. She attended Akron-Westfield Community School in Akron, Iowa from kindergarten through twelfth grade. After graduation, she headed south to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee where she began studies in molecular biology. Sarah transferred to Middle Tennessee State University after one year at Vanderbilt to pursue a degree in Recording Industry Management. She obtained a Bachelor of Science degree from MTSU in May 2008 in Recording Industry Management. She accepted a graduate teaching assistantship at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in the Agricultural and Extension Education department. Sarah graduated with a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications in May 2011. She plans to teach high school agriculture education for three years and then return to school to receive her doctorate degree in education.