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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Linda Sue Baxter entitled "Four Women's Experiences in Agriculture Education Across Generations." 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 and Extension Education.

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**Four Women's Experiences in
Agriculture Education Across Generations**

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

Linda Sue Baxter
August 2009

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Mike Baxter, and my children, Taylor and Spencer Baxter. Without their constant support, love, understanding, and encouragement I would have never finished my thesis. This thesis is also dedicated to my mother, Bernetta Kerschen, friends, and co-workers who listened, advised and help me complete this task. This has been one of the most challenging, time consuming, and largest task I have ever undertaken.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank those who assisted me in the completion of my Master of Science degree in Agricultural and Extension Education. I would like to thank Dr. Carrie Ann Stephens for all her support, encouragement, patience, time and dedication to keep me going and finishing this thesis through many e-mails, texting, re-writes, and frantic phone calls. I can truly call her friend through the past three years of researching and writing my thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon. Through her I found my passion of educational philosophy and I rediscovered my love of teaching. A thank you also goes to Dr. Randol G. Waters, the other member of my committee, for his assistance in completing my thesis.

I wish to extend a special thank you to Steve Massengill for all the times he has encouraged me and watched my fourth block class so I could meet with Dr. Stephens. I wish to acknowledge all the students I have had over the past three years who helped me emotionally to finish my Masters program and continue to inspire me to be the best teacher I can be.

Finally, I extend my most heartfelt thank you to my husband, children, and friends whose love, encouragement, and support carried me through until the end.

Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover the perceptions and barriers for female agriculture educators across three generations in a non-traditional field of agriculture. The United States Department of Labor (2006) defined a non-traditional job as any occupation where one gender comprises 25% or less of the total employment. Camp, Broyles, and Skelton (2002) revealed secondary female agriculture teachers comprise 22% of the agriculture education field. However, there is a 35% female student membership in high school FFA (National FFA, 2000) so why is there a discrepancy in the number of high school females taking agriculture and the low number females in the teaching field? There are several perceptions of why this is occurring.

Four female agriculture teachers were interviewed with the open-ended question: “What are your experiences in teaching agriculture education in a predominately male field?” The teachers selected were from three generations: early Baby Boomer, late Baby Boomer, Generation Xer, and Millennial. Each participant has a Bachelor’s degree in agricultural education and ethnicity was not taken into account when selecting participants.

These four women’s experience in teaching agriculture education across generations revealed many statements with similar content. The barriers included, but not exclusively, *qualification to teach agriculture education, challenges in teaching agriculture education, stress in teaching agriculture education, and stereotyping of agriculture teachers.*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study of four female agriculture teachers across generations. This chapter contains the introduction, the need for the study, purpose and objectives of the study, scope of the study, and definitions of terms.

Introduction

Western society views a feminist epistemology as a "...concept that claims to include "all people," it really has historically been an androcentric concept that represents a male perspective" (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p. 16). Lather (1987) expanded the feminist belief that "... the socially sanctioned power of men over women, operates in both the private and public spheres to perpetuate a social order that benefits men at the expense of women" (p.243). Feminist research is constantly changing and challenged by Western society and research for women should reflect and reveal a women's situation in society (Olesen, 2005). Research can not look at feminist research as only gender oriented, but class, race, economics, politics, and

knowledge are intertwined within society and how it affects the hierarchy of Western society (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Olesen, 2005).

Women have been marginalized for centuries by Western society (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). In the private sphere female is dominant where her *voice* can be heard, but not in the public sphere; this is considered a male domain. Thayer-Bacon (2003) acknowledged female *voices* which have been historically excluded from knowledge or knowers. Society has a male perspective and men think logically while trying to control and contain their emotions. However, women are associated with emotions and intuition (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). This created a gender split and helps to maintain the male hierarchy in Western society. Thayer-Bacon (2003) revealed that "...women still serve in the role of Other defined in contrast to rational males" (p.27). How a woman's *voice* is heard and acknowledged in society makes feminist research an active and not passive research.

Olesen (2005) pointed out there have been several studies in education regarding feminism. Many women in education struggle with the current political educational structures because of how the educational systems do not take into account the female *voice*. Lather (1987) revealed historically women teachers were an extension of their role in the home. They were to nurture and prepare children to go from the private to public sphere and "...to accept male leadership as "natural" and to provide services that reproduce males for jobs and careers, females for wives and mothers and a reserve labor force" (Lather, 1987, p.245). With this type of social structure, "...women teachers serve as transmitters of cultural norms rather than cultural transformers..." (Lather, 1987, p. 245) and were perpetuating the male hierarchy.

As Western society continued to grow and change during the twentieth century, women began to change and question their value and *voice* in society (Lather, 1987). There appeared to

be several contradictions for female teachers as what role they were to play. Lather (1987) revealed women teachers are in a position of power, and powerlessness. Women teachers have *responsibility without power* because the teaching system was and is based on male hierarchy. However, society expected women teachers to perform miracles with children and to overcome Western society's intransigent problems (Lather, 1987).

During the 1960's and 1970's a change in social climate occurred. Tyack and Hansot (1992) revealed "...when feminists redefined women's grievances as a public issue rather than as a personal problem, they found in some quarters a ready audience. And sexual discrimination in schools became one of their prime targets" (p.245). The women's movement in education sought to change the biased curriculum and a reduction of sex stereotyping educational courses (Tyack & Hansot, 1992).

With this movement underway in education came Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendment. Title IX's purpose was to eliminate discrimination of gender, race, and economic groups. Title IX "...outlawed separate-sex classes in health, physical education, and vocational subjects as well as banning sex-segregated vocational programs and schools" (Tyack & Hansot, 1992, p. 256). Before Title IX, females were allowed to enroll in the traditional female vocational classes; such as, home economics and office-business training courses. One of the purposes of Title IX was to allowed females to take the traditionally male shop classes. Therefore, the face of vocational education had to change. With that change, women entered the agriculture education field. This change happened because of a direct result of Title IX and several other statues that prohibited sex discrimination in employment (Tyack & Hansot, 1992).

Yet, within the male hierarchy of teaching it was difficult for female teachers to teach in a non-traditional field. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2002) noted if a female worked in a

traditionally male oriented field then the skill or job became devalued. The male hierarchy in secondary agriculture education perceived females devaluing the integrity of their career and attempted to keep women from obtaining a career in agriculture education (Kelsey, 2007). Slowly, barriers blocking women from teaching positions have been decreased, but are not completely eliminated in the public education system (Tyack & Hansot, 1992; Kelsey, 2007).

Women eventually began to teach secondary agriculture education, but there appears to be a hierarchy of acceptable courses for women to teach. The traditional agriculture mechanics and animal production classes are still viewed as ones males should teach and the horticulture curriculum should be taught by females (Cano, 1990; Kelsey, 2006). However, Cano's (1990) study acknowledged that most male agriculture teachers believe female secondary agriculture teachers are qualified and competent in the teaching field.

To help better understand women agriculture educators over a four generational period the researcher set out to explore four different generational women and their perceived barriers in agricultural education. Thus, this thesis will attempt to answer these many questions and include information on how a generation is defined in the workplace, perceived perceptions and barriers, and encouraging women to stay in the teaching field of agriculture education.

Need for the Study

Extensive research by Cano (1990), Corn (2000), Foster and Seevers (2004), and Kelsey (2006, 2007) revealed barriers still exist for females to enter secondary agriculture education and remain in the field. Kelsey (2007) reported the male hierarchy in public education is not willing

to “...accept women in the role of an agriculture education teacher” (p.60). Women agriculture teachers feel the *good ole boy* system is still in place and the belief that a woman can not handle the job still exists (Castillo, Conklin and Cano, 1999). However, Cano’s (1990) study indicated there is a change in the perception of how males view women teaching agriculture education.

Currently there are three generations of women teaching agriculture education. Each generation has different ethics, style and expectations in the work force and this can cause a generational collision. There appears to be a gap in current studies in revealing the experiences of female agriculture teachers across generations. For example, how does each generation affect each other and is it impacting on women entering and staying in the agriculture education field?

Are perceived perceptions and barriers for women changing across the generations as older male agriculture teachers retire and Western society becomes more accepting of females in a non-traditional job? Specifically, what are the experiences of female agriculture teachers across generations and have there been changes in the perceived and real barriers for women in a non-traditional job? A thorough study of women’s experiences from across generations would disclose how perceived and real perceptions and barriers have conformed.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover perceptions and barriers of female agriculture educators across generations in a non-traditional teaching field, agriculture education. There have been studies exploring perceptions and barriers of female agriculture educators in Ohio (Cano, 2003; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Castillo, Conklin, & Cano, 1999), as well

as a national study (Foster, 2000, 2003). However, there still appears to be a gap in the literature related to perceptions and barriers of female agricultural education teachers across four generations. Therefore, the following research question will be explored, what is the experience of a female agriculture teacher across the generations in a predominately male profession?

Scope of the Study

The participants were chosen because of the generation they were born in. The teachers were selected from each generation: early Baby Boomer, late Baby Boomer, Generation Xer, and Millennial. The teachers selected had a range of two to thirty years of teaching experience. Some of the participants no longer teach secondary agriculture education. The experiences identified through this study are generalizable only to the women in this study who are heterosexual, Caucasian and have a Bachelor's degree in agriculture in this phenomenological study.

Definition of Terms

Following is a list of terms used in this study and their definitions.

1. **Burn out:** a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and loss of a sense of personal accomplishment (Croom, 2003, p.1).
2. **CDE:** career development event in the FFA (National FFA, 2007).

3. **Generation:** as a society-wide peer group, born over a period roughly the same length as the passage from youth to adulthood, which collectively possess common persona (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p.40).
4. **Generational collision:** not understanding each other and expectations (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002)
5. **Generational persona:** a distinctly human, and variable creation embodying attitudes about family life, gender roles, institutions, politics, religion, culture, lifestyle and the future (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p.40).
6. **Non-traditional job:** any occupation where one gender comprises 25% or less of the total employment (United States Department of Labor, 2006).
7. **SAE:** supervised agriculture experience.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The United States Department of Labor (2006) defined a non-traditional job as any occupation where one gender comprises 25% or less of the total employment. Camp, Broyles, and Skelton (2002) revealed in their study secondary female agriculture teachers comprise 22% of the agriculture education field. However, there is a 35% female student membership in high school FFA (National FFA, 2000) so why is there a discrepancy in the number of high school females taking agriculture and the low number females in the teaching field? There are several perceptions of why this is occurring. One is barriers that face secondary female agriculture educators' as they pursue a teaching career in the non-traditional field of agriculture education. A national study conducted by Foster (2003) revealed perceived perceptions and barriers of women:

The three barriers or challenges most often personally experienced by the respondents included acceptance by parents and community, acceptance by peers (male teachers), and acceptance by administration and business leaders. When starting new positions, women should work to become involved in other community activities and organizations in order to increase familiarity with their abilities and thereby increase credibility (§ 4 of conclusions and recommendations).

The United States Department of Labor (2006) listed non-traditional jobs for women as detectives, architects, office machine repairers, construction and building inspectors, fire

fighters, aircraft pilots, small engine mechanics, and secondary agriculture education. The problems women face in agriculture education are not unique. They are similar to problems facing women pursuing careers in other fields that are traditionally male dominated. For example, a woman getting her first job from a school administrator who is accustomed to hiring men to teach agriculture education. Furthermore, many female agriculture teachers feel they must prove to their fellow teachers, students, parents, and administrators that they are capable of doing the job despite being female (Foster, 2001; Kelsey, 2007). There is an increase of female secondary agriculture educators, but research has shown women do not stay in the field of agriculture education (Castillo & Cano, 1999).

Research has provided us with documentation of why women leave the agriculture education teaching field and the barriers they have faced. Many of the perceived barriers and perceptions of secondary female agriculture teachers are from community members, criticisms from other teachers, and administrators, sexual discrimination, sexual bias, job competency, and attitudes regarding a female agriculture instructor (Corn, 2000; Foster, 2001; Foster & Seevers, 2004; Kelsey, 2007). However, past research does not show us whether the barriers faced by women agriculture educators are consistent across three types of generations.

Definition of Generations

Lancaster and Stillman (2002) came "...to see generational issues as the newest and hottest form of diversity on the business scene today and we continue to be amazed by how many major business issues, like recruiting, retaining, managing, and motivating employees, are

directly affected by generational collisions” (p.xxvii). A generational collision is also happening in the public secondary education system and this could make a difference for female agriculture teachers.

Howe and Strauss (2000) defined a generation “as a society-wide peer group, born over a period roughly the same length as the passage from youth to adulthood, who collectively possess a common persona” (p.40). Currently, there are four distinct generations in the work place. The four groups are: Traditionalist (1900 – 1945) Baby Boomers (1946 – 1964), Generation Xers (1965 – 1980), and Millennials (1981 – 1999) (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Birth years are significant in defining a group, but it is only one factor that defines each group. Howe and Strauss (2000) suggested generational birth years help establish boundaries for each generational persona. A generational persona is defined as “...a distinctly human, and variable creation embodying attitudes about family life, gender roles, institutions, politics, religion, culture, lifestyle, and the future” (Howe & Strauss, p.40). Three attributes defines the persona of a generation: 1) perceived membership, 2) common beliefs and behavior, and 3) common location in history (Howe & Strauss, 2000). The persona of a generation begins sometime during adolescence and evokes during his/her twenty’s.

There are several things that define each generation. Understanding what attributes influence each group helps to understand each generation. Not one item describes or influences a group, but a collective of events: shared history, how the world is seen, and icons that influence each generation. Each generational conditions and icons help shape the attitudes, values, and work styles of each individual (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). For example, the Cold War influenced the Baby Boomers and yet the Millennials will never live in a world with the Berlin

Wall separating East and West Germany; and the Traditionalists are influenced by the Great Depression.

Traditionalists make up approximately 75 million people in the United States of America (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Characteristics such as duty, sacrifice, loyalty, and patriotism are associated with the Traditionalist. Events, such as The Great Depression, Pearl Harbor, World War II, Hiroshima, and the GI Bill, are defining of traditionalists. In addition, individuals such as Joe DiMaggio, Joe Louis, Dr. Spock, Alfred Hitchcock, the Rat Pack, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Bob Hope, and John Wayne helped to define the generational personality of the Traditionalist (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006).

Most Traditionalists have worked for one company and are loyal to that company until they retire. Most post World War II work places were dominated by males, whereas the females took care of the home and raised the children (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Traditionalist partnered with large institutions to get things accomplished and had great faith in institutions. Management style is a military chain of command and they have superb interpersonal skills and believe in promotions, raises, and recognition through job tenure. Furthermore, work ethic is based on timeliness and productivity on the job (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006).

The largest generation is the Baby Boomers. This group is approximately 80 million people and they are generally defined as the *Me* generation (Marston, 2006). Moreover, this group is focused on individuality, being a workaholic, competitive, and optimistic. Formative events such as Woodstock, Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam, Cold War, Roe vs. Wade, Watergate, Kent State, Chappaquiddick, and Hanoi all help to define the personality of the Baby Boomer. The Baby Boomers are identified by such people as John F. Kennedy, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Richard Nixon, “Deep Throat”, McEnroe & Connors, Gloria Steinem,

Barbara Streisand, John Belushi, Janis Joplin, Captain Kangaroo, Captain Kirk, The Monkeys, Rolling Stones, and The Beatles (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006).

Baby Boomers believe they have education and idealism to change things in the United States of America. The Baby Boomers believe work defines who they are. In addition, they are focused on avenues to pursue so they can advance and change the current management style. Work ethic is measured in hours and not in productivity. Moreover, teamwork is critical to success; however, competitiveness within the group is prevalent (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

The Generation Xer's is a much smaller group of approximately 46 million people, but this group has been extremely influential in society. One may describe individuals in this group as skeptical, reluctant, slacker, lethargic, sarcastic and unmotivated. This particular group does not associate themselves with any heroes and they are extremely suspicious of the Baby Boomers' values. It is important to note that the Generation Xer's was identified as the *latch key* kids and had to learn to fend for themselves because their parents were busy working (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006). Formative events for the Generation Xer's are the fall of the Berlin Wall, Challenger explosion, The Gulf War, the personal computer boom, Star Wars, and the Reagan Presidency. People who influenced Generation Xer's are Bill Clinton, Brat Pack, Bill Gates, Ted Bundy, Beavis and Butt-head, Madonna, Michael Jordan, Quentin Tarantino, Clarence Thomas, and Dennis Rodman (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006).

Lancaster and Stillman (2002) described the Generation Xer's work ethic as one that eschewed super-motivated, hard-core, do or die Boomer work ethic. They want an open line of communication regardless of position and they value control over their time on the job.

Generation Xer's respected production over tenure and they want someone who is trustworthy and loyal but not to a company or institution. Lancaster and Stillman (2002) revealed this is the

first generation to embrace technology in their everyday life and discovered“...much of American mystic was gradually stripped away (p. 25)” because they had the ability to travel anywhere via the media and internet.

Generation Xer's have been marked by skepticism; therefore, this group has grown up questioning American institutions. This brought about the attitude to distrust the permanence of institutions and personal relationships. In addition, this era has a high divorce rate, and puts more faith in their abilities. Furthermore, the Generation Xer's are plagued by Western society as not being as successful as their parents (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

With the advance in different types of media, (internet, fax machines, and cell phones) the Generation Xer's have become the most resourceful and independent group in the workforce (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006). Lancaster and Stillman (2006) found along with the new technology, the darker side of life has become more prevalent in Western society. Americans in the United States of America became more aware of the darker side of society; such as, violence in America, AIDS, crack/cocaine, drunk drivers, and child molesters because they were getting more media attention. Many of these things have impacted the personality of the Generation Xer (Lancaster & Stillman, 2006).

The next demographic boom, the Millennials, comprise approximately 76 million people. When you think of this group's generational personality the following words identify them: coddled, protected, techno-savvy, sheltered and confident. This generational group is still in the process of showing itself to the world and what they will do in the work place (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006).

Generational formative events that have helped shape the Millennials are Oklahoma City Bombing, 9/11 Terrorist Attack, the Internet boom, *Dawson's Creek*, and virtual and tangible

places, such as cyberspace to outer space (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006).

Influential people to this group are Prince William, Chelsea Clinton, Leonardo DiCaprio, Buffy, Britney, the Backstreet Boys, Felicity, Sammy Sosa, Mark McGwire, Venus and Serena Williams.

Millennials insist on having open, constant communication and positive feedback from their employers. They also seek mentorship so they can reach their goals in the work force. Millennials define a job well done as one that brings personal fulfillment and is team oriented. They will work for a company if the company is known for their altruistic attitude, but continue to search for ways to get rid of stress in their lives.

The Millennials are also defined by not knowing certain things or having certain experiences of other generations. The Millennials will not know what it is like to grow up without *miracle* vaccines or food without vitamins added. In addition, the Millennials will not experience life without cable or satellite TV or the lack of internet access (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Howe and Strauss (2000) reported:

... Millennials represent a sharp break from Generation X. Gen Xers can recall growing up during one of the most passionate era of social and cultural upheaval in American history, with often painful consequences for political, economic, family, and educational institutions – and a harrowing if temporary derogation of the needs of children... But Millennials can recall none of it (p. 48).

Distinct groups work together in the United States of America and can be productive. There are barriers and preconceived ideas regarding each generation and how well each generation works together. Research by Lancaster and Stillman (2002) and Howe and Strauss (2000) indicated there are still many hurdles to jump over. Furthermore, understanding each

generation is often difficult because of a large, diverse group. However, each generation can make progress in helping people learn how to communicate effectively.

How we express ourselves (language) can make a difference in Western society and the work place. Language can be confusing if words or phrases are used by the different generations. For example, Millennials use the word *phat* to mean something is cool or good; Generation Xer's will use the phrase *Hey, Dude!* as an appropriate greeting; and the Baby Boomer or a Traditionalist would be offended if they were greeted in such a way. Understanding or not understanding each generation in the workplace can/can not cause a generational collision (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Lancaster and Stillman (2002) pointed out "The ramifications of these generational collisions at work include everything from reduced profitability to the loss of valuable employees, higher payroll cost, poor customer service, derailed careers, and wasted human potential and even potentially serious health problems caused by stress (p. 13)."

Much of the literature reflected several of the perceptions female secondary agriculture teachers in Western society face, but are these perceptions consistent among women from four different generations? The question arises, could the perceived and real barriers be part of the reason why females leave agriculture education or the reasons why they do not enter the field? With research, some of these questions may be answered.

Profile of Secondary Female Agriculture Educator

The average female agriculture educator is 33 years of age, has children, and is Caucasian (Foster, 2000). She has a Bachelor's degree, but would like to pursue a higher degree in

education and her average salary is \$30,000 a year (Foster, 2000). Most female agriculture educators have had a background in the agriculture industry before teaching secondary agriculture. Edwards and Brier (2004) discovered the more agriculture experience the female teacher has in the field; the more likely she is to continue teaching agriculture. Even with the expertise in agriculture, statistics show that female secondary agriculture teachers are expected to teach fewer years than their male counterparts (Foster, 2000). This factor could be attributed to traditional views of male and female roles in Western society (Tyack & Hansot, 1992; Kelsey, 2007).

Western society views the world through two spheres. The woman's sphere is the private sphere where they take care of home and family (Foster & Seevers, 2004). They exhibit personality traits such as friendliness, unselfishness, concern of others, and expressiveness of emotions.

The males' sphere is the public sphere and to financially take care of the family. Characteristics of a male's personality are being independent, masterful, assertive, and competent (Corn, 2000; Tyack & Hansot, 1992). Men also make their decisions on logic, however, women view the world as a complex relationship based on decisions and how decisions may affect others (Corn, 2000). If this is Western society's view and a generational view of women, it could cause conflict when a female teacher accepts a non-traditional role such as teaching agriculture.

When women accept a non-traditional role as their career, Western society tends to not change their expectations or responsibilities, but to add to them. A great frustration for female agriculture teachers is maintaining a professional life and a personal life. Many have to make

choices that affect both areas of their life; therefore, a unique difference can be seen between the agriculture teachers to have it *all* or it is very difficult to maintain the *all* (Foster, 2001).

No matter what gender you are, there are certain characteristics which are positive to have as a secondary agriculture teacher. Miller, Kahler, and Rheault (1989) discovered that agriculture teachers need to have a sense of "...humor and patience which promote positive interaction with students" (p. 38) and they should feel enthusiastic about their job. The teacher should be able to handle a variety of situations or challenges in the classroom and cope easily with these changes. The teacher's impact and teacher's personality can greatly influence students (Swortzel, 1998; Miller et al, 1989). In addition, female agriculture teachers feel it is important to make a contribution to teacher education, to influence minorities and women to become teachers, and assume a leadership role in teacher education (Swortzel, 1998).

Perceived Barriers and Challenges

Being employed as an agriculture educator can be time consuming because there are other duties and responsibilities besides teaching in the classroom. An agriculture teacher is responsible for coaching Career Development Events (CDE's), supervising students SAE programs (supervised agricultural experience), being involved in community activities, and traveling on weekends and during the summer to FFA events. These extra responsibilities can interfere with personal and family life and can be very arduous and stressful on a teacher's personal life. Having a family can be very demanding and because of this many women prolong or choose not to have children (Foster, 2001).

Foster (2000) analyzed the amount of time a female agriculture teacher spends on her job versus her personal life. A female agriculture teacher spends 51 hours/week on the job and 17

hours/week on personal obligations. Responsibilities related to work are broken down: 9 hours are spent preparing for class (lesson plans and grading papers); 7 hours devoted to FFA activities (contest, practicing, and leadership development); 2 ½ hours working with students on SAE (Supervised Agricultural Experience) projects; 2 hours devoted to committee or community meetings; and almost 6 hours devoted to work related activities (Foster, 2000). Other studies confirmed Foster's statistics that agriculture teachers work well beyond the normal 40 hour week (Croom, 2003; Odell, Cochran, Lawrence, & Gartin, 1990).

Finding the right balance between work and family life can be frustrating for an agriculture teacher. The long hours spent on the job have repercussions for the agriculture teacher, such as health and job burnout (Croom, 2003). Health problems that can occur are excessive stress, exhaustion and frustration from the job. However, many teachers reported they deal with many health problems because of their ability to make a difference and influence children (Croom, 2003).

Gender Barriers

Foster (2000) put forth a question to female secondary agriculture educators across the nation: "Do you feel you have experienced any barriers or challenges as a teacher due to your gender?"(p. 3). She received an overwhelming yes to the question; however, the teachers indicated five factors that contributed to the gender barrier. The five factors were: acceptance by parents and community, peers, administrators, business leaders and students (Foster, 2000). Many women stated they felt the need to prove themselves in their area of job competence. In addition, many women felt they had to work twice as hard as a man in the agriculture education

field. Besides having to prove themselves, many women felt scrutinized more than their male counterparts. Moreover, women agriculture teachers stated they felt judged more harshly than male agriculture teachers in the area of behavior etiquette (Foster & Seevers, 2004). Many female agriculture teachers felt they were not valued for their ability; therefore were unclear of their position in the work force (Foster, 2000). Kincheloe and Steinberg (2002) reported in their studies, “If women pushed their way into a workplace where a particular skill was performed, then the skill was devalued. Thus, the male attempt to exclude women from the work place was not simply a matter of men thinking women were not capable of performing a job skillfully – it was more an attempt to protect their craft’s integrity from the devaluation caused by women’s involvement...” (p. 158).

In a recent study by Kelsey (2007) barriers still exist for women entering into agriculture education. Kelsey (2007) reported “... public school superintendents and principals, male agricultural education teachers, community members, and parents did not readily accept women in the role of an agricultural education teacher” (p. 60). The study also indicated female applicants were not asked to interview for secondary agriculture positions and when they were interviewed, they were asked gender-biased questions (Kelsey, 2007). These factors could cause a generational collision in secondary agriculture education.

Perception of Females

Similar studies by Cano (1990), Corn (2000), and Foster and Seevers (2004) have shown the same perceived dilemma for female agriculture teachers. Cano’s (1990) study on male’s perception of female agriculture teachers did find evidence there were perceptions of sexual bias,

sexual discrimination and sexual harassment in the field of agriculture education. Evidence that students and parents sexually harassed female agriculture teachers was also found in Cano's (1990) research. Other barriers were community members were unwilling to ask the female agriculture teacher questions because they felt she may not know the answer since she was a female (Corn, 2000; Foster & Seevers, 2004).

Cano's (1990) research suggested there were also positive indicators of male's perception of female agriculture teachers. However, there is a hierarchy of courses, such as horticulture, small animal care and agribusiness, which male agriculture teachers feel women are qualified to teach (Cano, 1990; Kelsey, 2006). Agriculture mechanics and production agriculture were the least likely to be taught by female agriculture teachers (Cano, 1990). However, the overall findings of Cano's (1990) study indicated that most male agriculture teachers believed female secondary agriculture teachers are qualified and competent in the teaching field. In addition, female teachers indicated they do have support from their male co-workers (Foster & Seevers, 2004). There appears to be a mixed signal about the presence of female secondary agriculture teachers in the agriculture education field.

Studies have shown females received mixed signals from parents and through television and magazine ads while growing up (Foster, 2001). Society tells women at a young age that boys and girls are different. Women are inferior and must *win* praise or approval and must conform to society's ideas of a proper woman (Foster, 2001; Tyack & Hansot, 1992). In addition, the message sent to many young women is that they can be anything they want and go into any profession; however, Western society holds to the values of separate spheres for the sexes – men have the public sphere and women have the private sphere (Foster, 2001; Tyack & Hansot, 1992). Separate spheres have been well established in Western society and within the separate

spheres a patriarchal hierarchy is in place and has permeated into education (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2002). Kincheloe and Steinberg (2002) stated "...the patriarchal cultural curriculum teaches the society that self-assertion and self-sufficiency are masculine values. Indeed, women's weakness is grounded on their lack of such powerful traits" (p.141). Yet, Western society demonstrates to young females through television and magazine ads they can do anything.

These mixed signals can be a source of guilt for a female agriculture teacher (Foster, 2001). Foster's (2001) study revealed many female agriculture teachers have to make choices and how those choices affect their career and family life. Foster (2001) also noted many of the female agriculture teachers had conflicting feelings of having a family or not, the guilt of time away from her family, and maintaining a career. A main concern is if a woman chooses her family over an FFA event, a male agriculture teacher criticizes the female agriculture teacher (Foster, 2001). Are younger male agriculture teachers indoctrinated in the same value system as a Traditionalist or Baby Boomer?

Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

Foster's (2003) research revealed 81% of secondary women agriculture teachers are satisfied with their jobs despite the barriers they have had to overcome. For example, some barriers are gender bias, subtle sexism, acceptance by community, peers, and students, other duties and lack of recognition (Foster, 1991). Also, research has shown most female teachers are satisfied with their co-workers (Castillo, Conklin, & Cano, 1999). It appears that women are happy in their chosen career and have a strong commitment to their profession. Their work is important to them and they feel like they are making a valid contribution to society (Foster & Seevers, 2003).

Valid contributions, based on Castillo and Cano's (1999) study, indicated the more satisfied a teacher is the more productive they are and students are more motivated. Other positive factors are that the teacher can make changes in the curriculum, and the student population is changing in the classroom as more females take agriculture classes (Castillo & Cano, 1999).

Studies of secondary agriculture teachers in the Northeast Region of TVATA indicated job satisfaction "...is not entirely dependent upon job related factors" (Odell, et al, 1990, p. 18). Other things that can attribute to the teachers job satisfaction is family, marital satisfaction and children. Odell, Cochran, Lawrence, and Gartin (1990) study revealed "...the amount of time a vocational agriculture teacher spends in professional activities, especially after regular school day hours, has a direct effect on his or her spouse's marital satisfaction and perception of problems associated with the teacher's job" (p. 14). School administration needs to be aware of how family can affect a teacher's performance and their job satisfaction (Odell, et al, 1990).

Castillo, Conklin and Cano (1999) addressed factors which cause agriculture teachers to become dissatisfied with their job. The Castillo, Conklin, and Cano (1999) study indicated the number one complaint by female agriculture teachers is school policy. However, the number one complaint by male agriculture teacher is supervision and working conditions. Other job dissatisfied factors are work environment, pay conditions, supervisors, and interpersonal relationships. Female agriculture teachers do not see an opportunity for advancement in teaching agriculture. They feel there is a bias from administration that goes back to the *good ole boy* idea of that woman can not handle the job (Castillo, et al, 1999). Thus, the study did not indicate one particular job factor responsible for an agriculture teacher's job satisfaction; however, the salary

of an agriculture teacher did have an impact on their satisfaction (Castillo, et al, 1999; Odell, et al, 1990).

Salaries that are less than \$25,000 per year can have a negative impact on job satisfaction (Odell, et al, 1990). The United States Department of Labor Women's Bureau (2006) provided guidance in salary for women. The pay in general is equal to 81% of the take home of their male counterparts and has become a major concern for female educators. Overall how female agriculture educators' deal with this barrier may affect the recruitment of future female secondary agriculture educators.

The United State Department of Labor Women's Bureau (2006) projected that many of the non-traditional jobs will be filled by women because of retirements or transfers to other occupations. "Non-traditional jobs are attractive to women because they generally offer higher entry-level wages..." (United States Department of Labor, 2006, p. 1). Women continue to make inroads into non-traditional jobs which were dominated by males in the 1980's and are no longer non-traditional jobs for females. However, agriculture education continues to be dominated by males (United States Department of Labor, 2006).

In a study by Croom (2003), some teachers experienced job burn out. Croom (2003) defined burnout as "...a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and loss of a sense of personal accomplishment" (p.1). Burnout is manifested through work overload, lack of control in the work environment, high levels of stress, lack of community among teachers in the school, lack of fairness in work assignment and the uneven distributions or absences of recognition (Croom, 2003; Edwards & Briers, 2001). Other factors which lead to job dissatisfaction are educational bureaucracy, low moral, lack of decision-making authority, poor working environment and feelings of low personal achievement (Cano, 1990; Croom, 2003).

Retaining and Mentoring Female Secondary Agriculture Teachers

Women receiving encouragement and support from other teachers (male and female) may make a positive difference in retaining women in agriculture education. Thorbega and Miller (2003) contended teachers who received supervision and feedback about their teaching methods and styles were more likely to stay in the teaching field. The teacher who received positive critique felt that they had the support to improve their performance as a teacher. Kelsey (2006) study supported the idea “The more support she receives, the less likely she will be to abandon AGED” (p. 127).

There are currently two web sites for female teachers to receive support and mentoring in the teaching profession. Dessert Roses, a site that was developed by Dr. Billye Foster in 1996 for female agriculture teachers, helps mentor and support other women in the profession. It has links to other sites, a forum for teachers to talk to each other, and has mentors that you can e-mail. The second web site is for all female educators. Annie Blanton from Texas created Delta Kappa Gamma International Society so that female educators would have a network of other teachers to help support and mentor each other. Today the society still maintains this philosophy, promotes professional, personal growth, and excellence in education.

Foster and Seevers (2004) contend having support in the profession of education is vital to keeping and encouraging women in agriculture education. Foster (2001) also reported having a good network of support from family and husbands are an invaluable support system for the female agriculture teach. If the husband assists with family and home life then many female agriculture teachers do a good job at teaching because of the support they get from their husbands (Foster, 2001).

Other suggested method of retaining female agriculture teachers is making the new teacher aware of her responsibilities. Roberts and Dyer (2004) suggested if new or prospective teachers are aware of other duties besides being in the classroom, such as, making home and business visits, and taking an active involvement in the students' learning. Therefore, teachers must have a wider variety of skills to teach agriculture because the field of agriculture is broader than production agriculture. The responsibilities have expanded beyond the classroom and new or prospective teachers need to become aware of the extra duties of an agriculture teacher (Delnero & Montgomery, 2001). Delnero and Montgomery (2001) expounded on the University's job as training and exposing prospective or new teachers to their responsibilities as an agriculture teacher. More experienced teachers must take an active role in promoting and retaining female agriculture teachers through a mentoring system. This means understanding each others work ethics and expectations in the job (Delnero & Montgomery, 2001; Roberts & Dyer, 2004).

Mentoring and support can retain a teacher or encourage someone to go into the teaching profession. Myers, Dyer, and Washburn (2005) reported mentoring is different from teacher to teacher and most teachers found experience problems finding a good support system. Most female secondary agriculture teachers reported the mentoring and support they have received has been informal and mostly occurs at meetings, phone calls, or e-mails to one another (Foster & Seevers, 2003). In addition most teachers have contact with another female at least once a month. Female agriculture teachers who have been in the field for more than ten years stated they did not have a female mentor (Foster & Seevers, 2003). Foster (2000) revealed 59% of female agriculture teachers had both a male and female mentor, 37.5% had a male mentor only, and 3.6% had a female mentor only (the study did not indicate if the mentors were in agriculture

education). However, Myers, Dyer, and Washburn (2005) have revealed mentoring is a vital part of retaining teachers and must be maintained and changed to meet the needs of other generations' expectations.

Conclusion

The United States Department of Labor (2006) has defined agriculture education as a non-traditional occupation for females. The problems women face in agriculture education are not unique. They are similar to problems facing women pursuing careers in other field that are traditionally male dominated. Female agriculture teachers feel they must prove their ability to teach agriculture education to their fellow teachers, administrators, and community (Foster, 2001; Kelsey, 2007). Castillo and Cano's (1999) study revealed there is an increase in females entering the field of agriculture education; however, research has shown women leave agriculture education at a rate higher than men.

Many female agriculture teachers feel there are real and perceived barriers for women in the agriculture education field. Many of the perceived barriers and perceptions come from fellow teachers, sexual discriminations, sexual bias, and attitudes regarding a female agriculture teacher (Corn, 2000; Foster, 2001; Foster & Seevers, 2004; Kelsey, 2007). However, past research does not show if the barriers and perceptions are consistent across four generations.

There are currently four generations working in the work place. They are the Traditionalist, Baby Boomers, Generation Xer, and Millennial. Each generation has its own ethics, style, and expectations in the work place and can cause a generational collision. Research has indicated there are many hurdles to overcome and understand each other when working

together with as diverse a group as four generations (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Therefore, understanding the barriers women face across four generations becomes imperative and noteworthy to explore.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGY

Overview

In Chapter III, the procedures and methodology utilized in this study are outlined. In addition, Chapter III contains description of purpose, qualitative inquiry paradigm, and design of the phenomenological study, data analysis and nature of anticipated findings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover the perception and barriers of four female agriculture educators across three generations in a non-traditional field of agriculture education. There have been studies exploring perceptions and barriers of female agriculture educators in Ohio (Cano, 2003; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Castillo, Conklin, & Cano, 1999), as well as a national study (Foster, 2000, 2003). However, there still appears to be a gap in the literature related to perceptions and barriers of female agricultural education teachers across generations. The following research question will be explored. What is the experience of a female agriculture teacher across generations in a predominately male profession?

Qualitative Inquiry Paradigm

“Whether the real world has a “real” existence outside of human experience of that world is an open question” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.202). What is the real world? How we look at the world and internalize what we see and experience help to determine what paradigm to follow as a researcher. The paradigm that I subscribe to determines how I do my research; analyze the data and how I view my reality with others. My philosophy follows the paradigm of constructivism. The constructivist paradigm maintains that reality does not exist out there, but is constructed by human beings in relation to others (Gubba & Lincoln, 2005). Bettis and Gregson (2005) stated reality is based on human experience and interaction with the world, and making sense of that interaction.

A constructivist tries to understand the world in which we live. The ontology of a constructivist is that multiple realities are constructed and are based in local and specific co-constructed realities. Constructivists believe there can be no objectivity and absolute realities cannot be known. The epistemology is a relationship between the knower and known. The researcher and subject co-construct understanding of the worldview and that view can be transactional. I am co-creating my reality with others and gaining an understanding of that reality.

The methodology of a constructivist is often naturalistic or phenomenological qualitative methods, which can be hermeneutical and dialectical. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) defined hermeneutics as “... an approach to the analysis of text that stresses how prior understandings and prejudices shape the interpretive process” (p.27). Oxford American Dictionary (1982) defines dialectical as “investigation of truths in philosophy etc. by systematic reasoning” (p. 237). Bettis and Gregson (2005) stated that constructivists use an inductive nature of qualitative

inquiry and seek theories that arise from the data and help explain the many ways that humans conceptualize the world in which they live.

Research Tradition and Methodology

The research tradition and methodology I used to address my topic was phenomenology. Creswell (1998) described phenomenology as a study of the “lived experience for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon” (p. 51). Phenomenology is about exploring others experiences to make meaning of their experiences. The researcher tries to capture the *essence* of the experience in her writing so others can also experience or have an understanding of that experience. The researcher has to have a broad perspective of the worldview and suspend her own preconception of experiences. The researcher has to tell how individuals in the study experience the phenomenon and then write about what was experienced. In addition, the researcher must rely on intuition, imagination and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience (Creswell, 1998). Then the researcher can bring her experiences into the phenomenon.

There appears to be a phenomenon for female secondary agriculture teachers from the current literature and a gap in revealing the experiences of female agriculture teachers across four generations. Statistically female secondary agriculture teachers are a minority in this field. Camp, Broyles and Skelton (2002) study stated that female secondary agriculture teachers nationwide comprise 22% in the teaching field of agriculture. The phenomenon for secondary agriculture teachers is about their experiences teaching, barriers they face and perceived barriers

in a field dominated by males. The phenomenon has changed over the generations and has created generational differences in the teaching field.

There are some concerns about doing a phenomenological study of secondary female agriculture educators. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) pointed out that conducting a study with people you know can be confusing and research changes your role with other people when you become the researcher. The need to explore my biases and experiences will affect the study. My personal experiences may influence my findings and I can not take my experiences or biases out of the study. I will have to determine how my own personal experiences fit into this study and how I will introduce my own experiences.

Selection of Participants

Four female agriculture teachers were interviewed. The teachers selected were from three generations: early Baby Boomer, late Baby Boomer, Generation Xers, and Millennial. During the in-depth interviews, participants were encouraged to share stories of their experiences in teaching agriculture education. Each participant has a Bachelor's degree in agricultural education and ethnicity was not taken into account when selecting participants. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect her identity.

The participants were contacted through e-mail or phone to ask if they were willing to be interviewed, given a brief outline of the study and how long the interview would last. A consent form was mailed to all participants after they were contacted and consented to the interview. Through e-mail or the phone each participant was contacted regarding setting a time and day to

conduct the interview. Again, the participants were informed that the interview would last approximately one hour and it would be taped or the emailed would be saved. The interviews through e-mail were an on going dialog and each e-mail was saved in a folder from that participant. Interviews that were taped were face to face interviews and then transcribed by the researcher.

The participants had the opportunity to clarify any comments they have made during the interview. In addition, they were given the choice to contact the researcher through e-mail or by phone within the first week after the interview or during the member checking period to discuss the interview or project.

Data Collection Strategies

Creswell (1998) summarized the major procedures when using phenomenology. It is important for the researcher to ask the right kind of questions which explore the meaning of the individuals' experiences (Creswell, 1998). One goal in phenomenological research is for the reader to have a better understanding of the phenomenon. The correct question allows the reader to experience what the participants have experienced in teaching secondary agriculture education.

The method of gathering data from the participants was through interviews. Open-ended questions were utilized and their responses were tape recorded or kept through e-mail. Follow up questions to the interview came from personal contact, phone interviews or through e-mail depending on the location of the participant. The follow up period took place after the interview

and was transcribed within one week of the interview. Member checks were accomplished by mailing participants a copy of the interview with a member check sheet. The participants had the opportunity to make corrections and verify the interview.

Data Analysis Procedure

I started with a full description of my own experiences as a secondary female agriculture educator and suspended my presuppositions and interpretations before analyzing data. Creswell (1998) stated, “Clarifying researcher bias from the outset of the study is important so that the reader understands the researcher’s position and any biases or assumptions that impact the inquiry” (p.202). Being aware and acknowledging my personal biases further enhance the validity of the data.

The data was read to gain insight of what was included and not included in the data. Hatch (2002) stated, “Researchers must start by being immersed in the data to the extent that whatever impressions are formed throughout the analytic process is considered within the context of the overall data set” (p. 181). Therefore, I reread my personal story and impressions that were made during the interviewing phase and set aside my own preconceived biases. This led me to identify relationships during the interview.

The interviews were read again to find statements regarding how individuals experienced the phenomenon of being a secondary female agriculture teacher, listed significant statements and treated each statement as having equal worth (Creswell, 1998). The statements were

categorized, known as coding, and then reread to redefine and narrowed down the interpretations and analyzed for patterns and themes.

A draft of the findings known as phenomenal experience was written and a copy was sent to participants for a member check (Creswell, 1998). Participants were asked for feedback on the interpretations of her personal interview. A final draft of the experience was written with rich and textural descriptions to support interpretations and capture the essence of the phenomenon from the study.

Nature of Anticipated Findings

The findings were described in a narrative format. It was developed in a rich, textural structure capturing experiences of female agriculture teachers across four generations. Participants described their experiences in teaching and the researcher relied on their *voices* to tell the story. Key themes were brought forth by the researcher and the participants and researcher co-constructed the meaning of their experiences through feedback.

Merriam (1998) stated "...validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted and the way in which the findings are presented" (p.199-200). Validity and reliability are intertwined with trustworthiness, dependability and credibility. Merriam (1998) stated when internal validity, external validity, and reliability are met in the research then you have met the challenge of trustworthiness, dependability, and credibility.

Validity and reliability in qualitative research can be met through six strategies (Merriam, 1998). *Triangulation* is achieved through using multiple methods to confirm themes or findings. I had another researcher trained in qualitative methods reevaluating the findings and confirming the themes found in the research. The participants did *member checks* through out the research process. A transcript of the interview and a rough draft of themes and findings were sent to each member and asked if the findings are plausible. *Peer examination* and *feedback* were accomplished by having the participants read draft copies of the findings and to make corrections or additions to the findings. *Collaborative research* was achieved through the conceptualizing the study with other teacher educators. *Researcher's biases* were established at the onset of the study; however, those biases can never fully be removed.

I hold a constructivist epistemology and acknowledge that my experiences as a secondary female agriculture educator helped to conceptualize this study. The experiences identified are generalizable only to the women in this phenomenological study that is heterosexual, Caucasian and have a Bachelor's degree in agriculture.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this study, four female agriculture teachers across generations were asked the open-ended question, “What are your experiences in teaching agriculture education in a predominately male field? The four emerging themes: qualifications to teach agriculture education, challenges in teaching agriculture education, stress in teaching agriculture education, and stereotyping of agricultural education teachers, were revealed.

Who are the participants?

As four women’s stories unfolded, each shared her experiences on how agriculture impacted or not impacted childhood, high school years, and becoming an agriculture teacher. Each story is unique to that person and in spite of all the challenges, each became an agriculture teacher.

Taylor is the early Baby Boomer. She grew up on a working ranch and loved all aspects of agriculture. Taylor made the decision to take agriculture classes in high school; however, she was not allowed to take vocational agriculture classes. She described the experience, (T=2-51) “This was seen as almost a sacrilegious act by the school administration and I was not allowed.” Taylor explained she was disappointed and (T=2-52) “... at that time kids just didn’t buck the system.” The high school counselors did not see the need for her to study agriculture and (T=2-59) “...thought I would make a great elementary teacher.” Taylor went on to college, graduated

with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science and continued on to advance degrees in agriculture education.

Karen, the Baby Boomer, never considered taking agriculture classes in high school. The classes were taught at her high school, but she chose not to take agriculture classes. Karen talked about her background and explained, (K=2-10) “I did not come from agriculture background...did not grow up on a farm...” When it came time to enter college Karen decided on pre-veterinarian medicine with a minor in animal science. She worked in a veterinarian clinic and did some field experiences with local veterinarians. She came to the conclusion that veterinary medicine was not for her.

Karen remained in the College of Agriculture, but thought she would like to teach high school biology. Karen explained, (K=2-16) “I never had any intentions of teaching agriculture. I always thought I’m going to be a biology teacher.” Karen did her student teaching in agriculture education and enjoyed the experience. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Extension Education and continued on to advance degree in education.

Karen began her teaching career in secondary agriculture education, but she emphasized one day she would be teaching high school biology. Karen said she continued to think, (K=2-25) “I will teach here for a few years then I’m going back close to home and teach science.” Karen laughed that she still thought this after teaching four, five, and six years. Karen taught high school agriculture for 16 years and currently serves as Career and Technical Education Director. Karen admitted she fell in love with agriculture education and was willing to return to the classroom.

Roxanne, the Generation Xer, grew up on a small family farm in a rural area. Roxanne began her story by explaining that she and another girl signed up for ninth grade agriculture as a

joke. She did this because, (R=2-29) “There weren’t any girls taking agriculture...” The high school was a consolidated ninth grade and Roxanne was bused to the school from a rural town. (R=2-34) “...of about 450 kids, two girls were in the whole agricultural program,” Roxanne chuckled. However, she did confess that she thought about dropping the class, but was too intimidated to do so.

Roxanne discovered a new world through agriculture education and the FFA. (R=2-42) “I had some good and terrible experiences...he (the teacher) did not have a lot of experience with females in agriculture but was open and non-judgmental...” Roxanne stated her high school agriculture experiences, (R=3-48) “...gave me a venue for success and that motivated me.” Roxanne also revealed she was the first class of non-traditional vocational students at the consolidated ninth grade high school.

Roxanne graduated from college with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science with a double minor in biology and general education. She is certified to teach biology and agriculture education. Roxanne continued her education and has an advanced degree in education. She taught high school agriculture for several years and is currently in administration.

Paige is the Millennial. Paige revealed she always wanted to be a teacher. She knew she wanted to take agriculture classes in high school because she was involved in agriculture in her daily life. Paige revealed (P=1-15) “I did the Creed contest when I was a freshman and from that point on, I knew that I always wanted to be a teacher...” Paige joined the FFA and became extremely involved and was exposed to many aspects of agriculture education during her high school years.

Paige graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture and Extension Education. She began her teaching career after graduation and taught for two and one-half years. She is currently working in another field of agriculture.

Qualifications

All four participants revealed they had to prove they were qualified to teach agriculture education during their teaching careers. The major theme to emerge was participants proving they were qualified to teach agriculture education.

Proving Women are Qualified

The participants felt they had to prove their ability to teach agriculture to students, other teachers, administration, parents and community. Responses ranged from the Traditionalist (T=4-124) "...when you are one of the only women in a field teaching, you spend so much time trying to prove yourself you don't think a lot about things like diversity, equity, or even gender discrimination." The Baby Boomer stated, (K=5-73) "...he (Career and Technical Education Director) didn't think I was qualified for that job ... there are male and female students that just down right tell you. Their parents will tell you. They refuse female authority and like I said, it's not just males." The Generation Xer explained (R=4-75) "...I had a very, very difficult time getting a job," and the Millennial added, (P=14-309) "...you have to prove to them (students) that you know about agriculture..." All four participants frequently responded by saying they had to prove themselves to different groups of people.

Taylor indicated that she had to prove that she could teach agriculture education in high school and at the college level. Taylor realized when pursuing an agriculture teaching

position (T=2-61) "...reality hit again and I realized there were very few jobs available for women in any field of agriculture in 1974." [While] Karen felt she had to prove herself through the quality of her agriculture program. If the students were active in the FFA and the community saw it then it was/is a credible program.

Roxanne indicated that she had to prove herself and gain respect at the same time. Roxanne perceived the avenue to gain respect and prove she could teach agriculture education. She goes on to explain, (R=11-241) "...you can earn respect within your school...you can earn respect from your vocational director, principal... if you want to earn the respect of your fellow teachers and prove you can teach agriculture education, that comes from competition."

Paige felt she had to prove herself to students so students would respect her. She responded by saying, (P=14-313) "...the upper classmen, they wanted to see how far they could push ya...see what they can get away with."

The participants related stories or incidents of where they have had to prove they were qualified to teach agriculture education. The process employed to accomplish proving themselves was working long hours, teaching science, and then pursuing a career, in agriculture education. Taylor qualified this by saying, (T=7-209) "Early on in my career...a friend told me that as a woman I would need to be everywhere (work, competitions, and meetings) earlier than anyone else, do everything better...Sadly, I believed that for years...first to arrive, the last to leave..." Others responded by saying (K=26-396) "You're goin' to have to work your tail off" to (R=11-245) "...an indication of work and that's an indication of puttin' your time in... that's an indication of equal."

Three of the four participants revealed their frustrations about not being employed as an agriculture teacher. Two of the participants began their teaching career teaching science then

were hired as an agriculture teacher. The participants related stories of how they interviewed for an agriculture teaching position and a male was hired for the job. However, Taylor talked about how she was overlooked for a high school agriculture position and when she finally was teaching agriculture, she looked back and realized (T=4-126) "...you realize it's there (gender and sexual discrimination) and have even may have had some unpleasant experiences, but you are more focused on the job."

Karen and Roxanne also commented on how difficult it was to attain their first agriculture teaching position. Roxanne told her story about of not being hired because she was a young, unmarried female. Both participants had supervisors tell them (K=5-70) "...that I did not belong in that job...because I was a female."

Paige did not have difficulty in obtaining her first teaching position in agriculture, but her frustration came from her co-worker. (P=2-40) "I was being told what to do a lot. I don't know if that was because I was young or I was female but that was hard."

Each participant faced obstacles either obtaining a job or while teaching, but each woman felt she had made a difference in agriculture education at her school. All participants noticed an increase in female enrollment in their non-traditional classes of agriculture and believed they were a positive role model for all students, female or male.

Challenges

All four participants had different challenges to overcome than a non-traditional teacher. Three prevailing sub-themes emerged: proving women can perform agriculture education duties, sexism, and resentment from students and community.

Proving Women Can Perform Agriculture Education Duties

Each participant claimed she felt the need to prove she was qualified and capable of teaching agriculture education. Two of the participants revealed they had low number of students in their program; and they had to increase agriculture education enrollment to continue teaching the subject. Taylor, the early Baby Boomer, explained she was (T=2-78) "...offered a part-time position at the local community college...had a total of six students in the agriculture program. Six years later...one hundred twenty (students) and still only one teacher." Roxanne, Generation Xer, realized her co-worker was going to retire and they had forty-two students in their agriculture program. She knew they would keep him with a low number, but not her. She explained, (R=6-133) "I was not going to be able to stay in a program and keep a job with forty-two kids. I went on a big recruitment drive." Roxanne was successful in her recruitment drive and her enrollment increased.

Other challenges participants faced were teaching students who were only a few years younger. Karen, the late Baby Boomer, told of her experience, (K=4-49) "I was the first female agriculture teacher the school had ever had... students were three years younger than I was...it was difficult." Karen also shared she did not have a lot of experience in FFA, (K=20-293) "I worked harder...I knew nothing and I've not had those experiences. I just (pause) I just had to work that much harder." To Roxanne saying, (R=12-265) "For some people it was a little bit threatening...I felt I had something to prove."

For Paige, the Millennial, it was challenging to be in the classroom, but more challenging to work with an older co-worker. She explained, (P=2-34) "...teaching with him as my co-worker (pause) felt like sometimes he was more my boss." She found it to be very difficult in this situation, (P=4-73) "It's hard, as a young teacher talking to someone that's been teaching for

a long time and being told “no” I couldn’t do things.” Other challenges were the administrator’s perceptions of what she could teach or not teach. (P=7-151) “...the male teacher teaches shop, power machinery...they never ask me to do it because they think I can’t.” However, participants expressed they had to prove themselves to their male co-workers. In fact, their co-workers were willing to help them learn to teach agriculture by spending extra time with the new teachers and showing them how to do things.

Sexism

Sexism appeared in each of the woman’s story. Each encountered some form of sexism from the community, students, and colleagues. Some forms of sexism from the community were perceived conceptions of what is appropriate or not appropriate behavior for a female agriculture teacher to display. Roxanne commented on a field trip to a hog farm which was to castrate pigs. The field trip was cancelled when the farmer realized it was a female agriculture teacher who was bringing the students. Roxanne called to reschedule the trip and spoke with the hog farmer’s wife. (R=25-652) “My husband didn’t realize that you were a woman and he does not think that it is appropriate for you to be out here with boys doing that.” She was stunned!

Taylor realized there were very few jobs available to women in agriculture in 1974. (T=2-63) “I spent my first few years of marriage...working at random jobs in agriculture – usually some type of technician” explained Taylor. She realized there was gender discrimination in agriculture education by a comment a school board member made. He said, (T=6-186) “Taylor, you are doing a great job! However, I feel you should know that I voted not to re-new your contract. I just don’t believe mothers should work outside the home.” She was amazed some people wanted to run her life.

Karen, Roxanne, and Paige experienced some form of sexism from students. For example students asked them out on a date or made sexual comments. The sexual comments did not only come from students but from colleagues. For example, Roxanne shared her poignant story of how a colleague she respected and admired made a sexual overture to her. (R=12-267) “I was so shocked...hurt...I was insulted.” Paige acknowledged (P=13-298) “I’ve had kids say things which have offended me...you gotta have that line between...you’re the teacher.” Karen revealed statements made to her such as, (K=4-66) “Oh, ag teachers didn’t look like this, you know, when I was in school.” Karen sums up her story of the statements made to her, (K=11-207) “I had teachers that made remarks and I see that same thing happening to young female teachers now...looking back twenty years ago and that same thing was going on with me and I hated it.”

Resentment from Students

Three of the participants had students resent them for various reasons. Karen felt resentment at two different schools where she worked. Both incidents involved a teacher retiring and students were devastated the male teacher left. Karen revealed in one program a student was so resentful of her being there and not his former male agriculture teacher, the student put a quote in the school yearbook, (K=10-181) “...‘I would have the good sense to move on, or do something better in her teaching career.’ You know that really hurt...just so resentful...had to spend their senior year with me.”

Paige experienced resentment from students by creating tension between the two agriculture teachers and this caused a great deal of conflict. Paige commented students did not view a female as an appropriate agriculture teacher and consistently challenged her authority by

causing conflict with her co-worker. The participants found challenges in teaching agriculture education and had to overcome them to continue in their field. How they resolved the challenges is unique to each woman as their challenges were unique.

Stress

All four participants indicated teaching agriculture was a high stress job. Two sub-themes were revealed and were interlinked together. Those themes are balancing family and work and the high burnout/low return rate of female agriculture teachers.

Balancing Family and Work

Participants revealed several stories and incidents of how balancing work and family together was difficult. Three of the participants explained how having children changed the dynamics of balancing work and family. All participants agreed the job was demanding and required a good relationship with their husbands.

Three of the participants have had children and they never took much time off from their jobs. Taylor went back to work when her first child was eighteen months old. Karen and Roxanne claimed they never took any extra time off when their children were babies. Taylor reflected, (T=2-82) “I had a growing family and my job did not seem conducive to a healthy family life.... I was averaging seventy-five days a year on the road. I put my family through hell. Don’t get me wrong, there were good times.”

Karen and Roxanne found the agriculture community to be very open about bringing children to different FFA functions. Both told how their children grew up around FFA students/competitions and because of that, their children have had many good experiences.

Taylor, on the other hand, did not take her children with her. She commented on how she missed several activities her sons' were in. Taylor's job was so time consuming one of her son's looked at her and said, (T=3-99) "Come back to see us sometime. It was like I was a traveling salesman or something." All three female agriculture teachers agreed that spending the amount of time on their job may not have been worth it to their family.

Besides trying to balance work and family life, participants realized their jobs were demanding and become more demanding if you so desire. Karen described her experience as, (K=21-304) "You get sucked into a big black hole if you're not very, very careful....it can be very, very overwhelming." Roxanne concurred by saying, (R=17-376) "I designed my life around my job... that was the focus from the beginning...once I made the comment that being an ag teacher, it's like riding a tiger...you can't get off because it'll bite ya." For Paige, her first year teaching was overwhelming. She discovered, (P=9-189) "...never enough time in the day to get everything that needs to be done." A consensus was reached on the most time consuming aspect of teaching agriculture is the extra paper work that is required by the Department of Education, the State and National FFA and local school system. Overall, participants realized teaching high school agriculture jobs are time consuming and demanding on many levels.

High Burnout / Low Return Rate

The participants acknowledged the retention rate of female agriculture teachers is low. They perceived the reasons to be because of the amount of paper work, commitment to CDE's, and the classroom preparations all contributed to why new teachers do not return to teaching agriculture education. Karen also theorized why females do not return, (K=21-316) "...it gets most difficult for them (females teaching), probably during the transition of starting a

family....they look pretty weary when their draggin' in strollers...that's when it gets really hard...I think that's the maker or breaker point for a lot of females. You're torn at that time."

Coinciding with the low retention rate is high burnout amongst the agriculture teaching profession. In discussion, participants revealed there is a level of expectation from the students, community and the administration. In addition, there is extreme pressure to maintain a high level of standard in the FFA and academically. Roxanne's explanation is, (R=17-380) "It has to do with expectations of others and people around you. I have often believed that is why there is a high burnout rate among agriculture teachers...you can make it as big of a monster as you want to make it." Whether the factors that contribute to stress are real or perceived, they have impacted participants and their families.

Stereotyping of Agriculture Education Teachers

All four women revealed they had people stereotyping an agriculture education teacher and questioned their credentials. Comments were made from others about their appearance and ability to teach agriculture education because they were female.

Breaking the Stereotyping of an Agriculture Teacher

As the four women's stories unfolded, each experience was different. Some people told the women they did not represent what an agriculture teacher should look like. Taylor's first encounter was in high school. She was not allowed to take vocational agriculture classes and was directed to take the more traditional female classes such as Home Economics and Business/Typing classes. Taylor recalled what it was like to teach agriculture education in the 1980's, (T=7-199) "...it was like being a pioneer to another planet where no one spoke your

language.” She also realized there were no other women to look to as a role model. Hence, Taylor became a role model for future female agriculture education teachers.

Karen revealed she was one of the first female agriculture teachers in her state. She recalls people in the community asking, (K=12-233) “Where is your agriculture teacher or FFA advisor?” because people would assume the agriculture teacher was male. Other comments made to participants were: “I didn’t know women were agriculture teachers” to “Oh, agriculture teachers didn’t look like you when I was in school” and, “You’re an agriculture teacher?” Roxanne and Paige concurred on experiencing the same type of comments.

Karen and Roxanne recalled instances where they were at formal agriculture education functions and it would be announced, (K=12-227) “Would all the agriculture teachers and their wives please stand up.” Both claimed it took several years for that particular announcement to change. Participants also noted people in the community and in the agriculture education field assumed they were someone’s wife; however, the assumption is not made very often now.

Other forms of stereotyping were from other agriculture teachers or administrators. The early Baby Boomer, late Baby Boomer and Generation Xer recalled instances when they were told they would not make it as an agriculture teacher or did not belong. Karen described her first encounter of stereotyping, (K=5-70) “...a male in a supervisory position told me I did not belong in that job because I was a female.” Roxanne recalled two incidents of stereotyping at the beginning of her teaching career. She went to a male agriculture teacher for help and his response was, (R=10-222) “Young lady, your biggest problem is you are a girl in a boy’s club.” However, when Roxanne sees him now, he claims agriculture education is turning into a sorority (more females are teaching agriculture education). The other incident occurred at a Career and

Technical Education Conference where a male agriculture teacher made the comment, (R=12-251) “You’re never going to cut it and you’re never gonna last.” Roxanne saw a great deal of irony in this because that particular agriculture teacher left teaching and she is still in the field of agriculture education.

Karen, Roxanne, and Paige proclaimed administrators assumed they would have discipline problems due to their gender. Roxanne explained, (R=10-211) “...they (administrators) were anticipating that I would have discipline problems because I was a female.” These women felt they were under a microscope and the administration, other teachers, and the communities were looking for them to make mistakes or fail at being an agriculture teacher. Taylor added, (T=6-168) “In the single teacher program, all success and failure falls on the shoulders of the teacher. You are responsible for getting and keeping the ball rolling...there is little room for error.” Roxanne sums up her experience with stereotyping this way, (R=16-344) “...to keep from being stereotyped as the emotional one or somebody having female issues, I worked hard at my job.”

Even though the participants experienced stereotyping, they also found themselves being role models to other female students. The four female agriculture teachers saw an increase in female enrollment. Obviously, they had made a positive impact on students and representing females in agriculture education. Taylor pointed out, (T=4-133) “...women are re-inventing this field to suit their needs and provide them a stage to bloom on.”

Conclusions

This study focused on four women from different generations and the barriers they had in obtaining a career in and teaching agriculture education. Each participant has a Bachelor's degree in agricultural education and ethnicity was not taken into account when selecting participants. The results of this study cannot be generalizable for all female agricultural education teachers but only the four in this study.

Four women's experience in teaching agriculture education across four generations revealed many statements with similar content. It appeared the four female agriculture teachers did experience many of the same barriers whether perceived or not. The barriers included, but not exclusively, *qualifications to teach agriculture education, challenges in teaching agriculture education, stress in teaching agriculture education, and stereotyping of agriculture teachers.*

Although the participants are from different generations, they all revealed in their stories having to prove themselves capable of teaching agriculture education to different groups of people such as other teachers, students, administrators, and the community. Such things as the need to work hard, community establishment, and teaching *male* classes are a few areas where the women in this study felt they needed to prove themselves. However, participants believed they had made a difference in agriculture education and noticed an increase in female enrollment. In addition, these women believed they were a positive role model for all their students, female or male.

The challenges in teaching agriculture education appear to be the same across the four generations. The challenges revealed in this study were proving women can teach agriculture education, dealing with sexism within the teaching system and community, and challenges

students present. Within proving women can teach agriculture education, the participants had the challenge of increasing enrollment to retain their career. They knew the school system would keep the older male agriculture teacher with low numbers, but not them. Other challenges were being the first female teacher in the school system and having to overcome many of the perceived barriers of what is appropriate and not appropriate for a female agriculture teacher.

Based on the women's stories, sexism had been experienced throughout their careers. Each encountered sexism from the community, students, and colleagues. It appeared the community still believed female agriculture teachers should teach the horticulture curriculum. Also, community members made comments to the women about their gender and appearance. In addition, students asked the teachers out on dates and would make inappropriate comments.

Participants revealed teaching agriculture education was a demanding and time consuming job. Creating and keeping a quality agriculture/FFA program demanded the teacher to be committed to the job and students. Each female recalled how difficult it was to balance a family life and how overwhelming teaching agriculture education was. However, they all agreed having a supportive partner was extremely important in maintaining a balance of family life and career. Overall, participants realized their jobs were time consuming and demanding on many levels.

Because teaching agriculture education is demanding, there appears to be a high level of burnout/low retention rate of female teachers (Croom, 2003). Again, across the four generations it was revealed the amount of paper work, commitment to CDE's, and the classroom preparations all contributed to why teachers did not return to teaching agriculture education. Furthermore, the four women felt there is a level of expectation from the administration, students, and community and the teacher must maintain a high level of standards academically

and in the FFA to meet those expectations. Whether the factors that contribute to stress are real or perceived, they have impacted the participants and their families.

The four women disclosed that they have been exposed to some form of stereotyping. The stereotyping ranged from females should not be employed in agricultural education, the pre-conceived appearance of an agriculture teacher, and discipline in the classroom would be more pronounced for female teachers; many people assumed the female agriculture teacher taught *farming* classes or made the comment, “Where is your agriculture teacher?” when the teacher was standing there. It appears there are still preconceived concepts of what an agriculture teacher should look like and what is the appropriate curriculum such as, horticulture, for a female agriculture teacher. However, the four women found ways to overcome many of the perceived or real barriers and taught agriculture education.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, recommendations of helping females overcome real or perceived barriers in agriculture education is needed. It is apparent the barriers are very real across four generations. It appears the current system in place in the pre-service teacher program is not working and other methods of breaking the barriers for female agriculture teachers need to be put into place.

One recommendation is to implement a mentoring system for all new teachers. From this study none of the participants had a formal mentoring program. The early Baby Boomer was a pioneer in agriculture education and received help through other male agriculture teachers. It is apparent that female agriculture teachers need a formal mentoring system to help them overcome

the many challenges and barriers they face in teaching agriculture education. For a mentoring system to work it must be mandated by the State Department of Education and be well funded. Myers, Dyer, and Washburn (2005) identified new teachers in need of a support group to assist teachers. The state department of education, the school system and the university need to develop a program of partnering a qualified female agriculture teacher with a new teacher and give the female agriculture teacher a venue to discuss problems or challenges in their program. Other forms of support for teachers would be through professional development, teacher in-service programs, and the teacher preparation program.

For female agriculture teachers to overcome sexist and biased behavior in the public school system, they will need training. Kelsey (2006) concurred in her study that many women are faced with sexist and biased situations in the school system. In this study of four women across the generations, they identified sexist and biased behavior on many levels. It is recommended the teacher preparation programs implement a program designed to make pre-service teachers aware of sexist and biased behavior and in-service training for new teachers, current teachers, and administrators. In addition, a course on gender challenges in the classroom needs to be taught at the university level.

In a time where three generations are working together it is imperative that they are capable of working together in harmony. It has been documented by Lancaster and Stillman (2002) and Marston (2006) that the work place is changing with different ethics, style, and expectations in the work force. As educators, we need to change the work atmosphere and break down the real and perceived barriers in order to retain female agriculture teachers.

Questions for Further Study

Further study is needed to determine if the perceived and real barriers across the four generations are prevalent in a larger group of female agriculture teachers. Researchers should examine the effects of the following issues in teaching agriculture education and how it affects the retaining of teachers:

- What are the challenges for females teaching agriculture education?
- What methods should be employed for new teachers to become aware of the demands of teaching agriculture education?
- What methods should be employed for new teachers to become aware of stereotyping and sexism in agriculture education?

CHAPTER V

FOUR WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION ACROSS GENERATIONS

Preparation for Submission in The Journal of Agricultural Education

Overview

Chapter IV is a paper prepared for submission to *Journal of Agriculture Education*. It contains a summary of the study, purpose of the study, methods and procedures, results, conclusions, recommendations, questions for further study, and an abstract.

Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover the perceptions and barriers for four female agriculture educators across generations in a non-traditional field of agriculture. The United States Department of Labor (2006) defined a non-traditional job as any occupation where one gender comprises 25% or less of the total employment. Four female agriculture teachers across three generations were interviewed with the open-ended question: "What are your experiences in teaching agriculture education in a predominately male field?" The teachers selected were from three generations: early Baby Boomer, late Baby Boomer, Generation Xer,

and Millennial. Each participant had a Bachelor's degree in agricultural education and ethnicity was not taken into account when selecting participants. The themes revealed in the study were: qualifications to teach agriculture education, challenges in teaching agriculture education, stress in teaching agriculture education and stereotyping of agriculture education teachers.

Introduction

The United States Department of Labor (2006) defined a non-traditional job as any occupation where one gender comprises 25% or less of the total employment. Camp, Broyles, and Skelton (2002) revealed secondary female agriculture teachers comprise 22% of the agriculture education field. However, there is a 35% female student membership in high school FFA (National FFA, 2000) so why is there a discrepancy in the number of high school females taking agriculture and the low number females in the teaching field? There are several perceptions of why this is occurring. One is barriers that face secondary female agriculture educators' as they pursue a teaching career in the non-traditional field of agriculture education.

Much of the literature reflected several of the perceptions female secondary agriculture teachers in the nation face. A national study conducted by Foster (2003) revealed:

The three barriers or challenges most often personally experienced by the respondents included acceptance by parents and community, acceptance by peers (male teachers), and acceptance by administration and business leaders. When starting new positions, women should work to become involved in other community activities and organizations in order to increase familiarity with their abilities and thereby increase credibility (§ 4 of conclusions and recommendations).

The problems women face in agriculture education are not unique. They are similar to problems facing women pursuing careers in other fields that are traditionally male dominated. The United States Department of Labor (2006) listed non-traditional jobs for women as detectives, architects, office machine repairers, construction and building inspectors, fire fighters, aircraft pilots, small engine mechanics, and agriculture education. Women face similar problems when pursuing careers in fields that are traditionally male dominated, for example, a woman obtaining her first job from a school administrator whom is accustomed to hiring men to teach agricultural education. Furthermore, many female agriculture teachers feel they must prove to their fellow teachers, students, parents, and administrators that they are capable of doing the job despite being female (Foster, 2001; Kelsey, 2007). There is an increase of female secondary agriculture educators, but research has shown women do not stay in the field of agriculture education (Castillo & Cano, 1999).

Research has provided documentation of why women leave the agriculture education teaching field and the barriers they have faced. Many of the perceived barriers and perceptions of secondary female agriculture teachers are from community members, criticisms from other teachers, and administrators; sexual discrimination; sexual bias; job competency; and attitudes regarding a female agriculture instructor (Corn, 2000; Foster, 2001; Foster & SeEVERS, 2004; Kelsey, 2007). However, past research does not show us barriers faced by women agriculture educators consistent across four types of generations.

Theoretical Framework

Western society views a feminist epistemology as a "...concept that claims to include "all people," it really has historically been an androcentric concept that represents a male perspective" (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p. 16). Lather (1987) expanded the feminist belief "... the socially sanctioned power of men over women, operates in both the private and public spheres to perpetuate a social order that benefits men at the expense of women" (p.243). Feminist research is constantly changing and challenged by Western society and research for women should reflect and reveal a women's situation in society (Olesen, 2005). Research can not look at feminist research as only gender oriented, but class, race, economics, politics, and knowledge are intertwined within society and how it effects the hierarchy of Western society (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Olesen, 2005).

Women have been marginalized in Western society for centuries (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). In the private sphere female is dominate where her *voice* can be heard, but not in the public sphere; this is considered a male domain. Thayer-Bacon (2003) acknowledged female *voices* have been historically excluded from knowledge or knowers. Society has a male perspective and the male thinks logically while trying to control and contain their emotions. However, women are associated with emotions and intuition (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). This created a gender split which maintains the male hierarchy in Western society. Thayer-Bacon (2003) revealed "...women still serve in the role of Other defined in contrast to rational males" (p.27). How a women's *voice* is heard and acknowledged in Western society makes feminist research active and not passive.

Olesen (2005) pointed out there have been several studies in education regarding feminism. Many women in education struggle with the current political educational structures because of how the educational systems do not take into account of the female *voice*. Lather (1987) revealed historically women teachers were an extension of their role in the home. They were to nurture and prepare children to go from the private to public sphere and "...to accept male leadership as "natural" and to provide services that reproduce males for jobs and careers, females for wives and mothers and a reserve labor force" (Lather, 1987, p. 245). With this type of social structure, "...women teachers serve as transmitters of cultural norms rather than cultural transformers..." (Lather, 1987, p. 245) and were perpetuating the male hierarchy.

As Western society continued to grow and change during the twentieth century, women began to change and question their value and *voice* (Lather, 1987). There appeared to be several contradictions for female teachers as to what role they were to play. Lather (1987) revealed women teachers are in a position of power, and powerlessness. Women teachers have responsibility without power because the teaching system is and was based on male hierarchy. However, Western society expected women teachers to perform miracles with children and to overcome society's intransigent problems (Lather, 1987).

During the 1960's and 1970's a change in social climate occurred. Tyack and Hansot (1992) revealed "...when feminists redefined women's grievances as a public issue rather than as a personal problem, they found in some quarters a ready audience. And sexual discrimination in schools became one of their prime targets" (p. 245). The women's movement in education sought to change the biased curriculum and a reduction of sex stereotyping educational courses (Tyack & Hansot, 1992).

With this movement underway in education, Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendment was passed. Title IX's purpose was to eliminate discrimination of gender, race, and economic groups. Title IX "...outlawed separate-sex classes in health, physical education, and vocational subjects as well as banning sex-segregated vocational programs and schools" (Tyack & Hansot, 1992, p. 256). Before Title IX, females were allowed to only enroll in traditional *female* vocational classes; such as, home economics and office-business training courses. Title IX allowed females to take the traditionally *male* shop classes. Therefore, the face of vocational education had to change. With that change, women entered the agriculture education field. This change happened because of a direct result of Title IX and several other statutes that prohibited sex discrimination in employment (Tyack & Hansot, 1992).

Within the male hierarchy of teaching it was difficult for female teachers to teach in a non-traditional field. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2002) noted if a female worked in a traditionally male oriented field then the skill or career became devalued. The male hierarchy in secondary agriculture education perceived females devaluing the integrity of their job and attempted to keep women from obtaining a career in agriculture education (Kelsey, 2007).

Women eventually began to teach secondary agriculture education, but there appeared to be a hierarchy of acceptable courses for female to teach. The traditional agriculture mechanics and animal production classes are still viewed as ones males should teach and the horticulture curriculum should be taught by females (Cano, 1990; Kelsey, 2006). However, Cano's (1990) study acknowledged most male agriculture teachers believed female secondary agriculture teachers are qualified and competent in the teaching field. Slowly, barriers blocking women from teaching positions have been decreased, but are not completely eliminated in the public education system (Tyack & Hansot, 1992; Kelsey, 2007).

Definition of Generations

Howe and Strauss (2002) defined a generation “as a society-wide peer group, born over a period roughly the same length as the passage from youth to adulthood, who collectively possess a common persona” (p. 40). Currently, there are four distinct generations working together. The four groups are: Traditionalist (1900-1945), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation Xer’s (1965-1980), and Millennials (1981 -1999) (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Traditionalists make up approximately 75 million people in the United States of America (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Characteristics such as duty, sacrifice, loyal, and patriotism are associated with the Traditionalist. Most Traditionalists have worked for one company and were loyal to that company until they retired.

Most post World War II work places were dominated by males, whereas the females took care of the home and raised the children (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Other traits of the Traditionalist pertain to the work place. Traditionalist partnered with large institutions to get things accomplished and had great faith in institutions. Management style is a military chain of command and they have superb interpersonal skills and believe in promotions, raises, and recognition through job tenure. Furthermore, work ethic is based on timeliness and productivity on the job (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006).

The largest generation is the Baby Boomers. This group is approximately 80 million people and they are generally defined as the *Me* generation (Marston, 2006). Moreover, this group is focused on individuality, being a workaholic, competitive, and optimistic.

Baby Boomers believe they have education and idealism to change things in the United States of America. The Baby Boomers believe work defines who they are. In addition, they focused on avenues to pursue so they can advance and change the current management style. Work ethic is measured in hours and not in productivity. Moreover, teamwork is critical to success; however, competitiveness within the group is prevalent (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

The Generation Xer's is a much smaller group of approximately 46 million people, but this group is extremely influential in society. One may describe individuals in this group as skeptical, reluctant, slacker, lethargic, sarcastic and unmotivated. This particular group does not associate themselves with any heroes and they are extremely suspicious of the Baby Boomers values. It is important to note that the Generation Xer's was identified as the *latch key* kids and had to learn to fend for themselves because their parents were busy working (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006).

Lancaster and Stillman (2002) described the Generation Xer's work ethic as one whom eschewed super-motivated, hard-core, do or die Boomer work ethic. They want an open line of communication regardless of position and they value control over their time on the job. Generation Xer's respected production over tenure and they want someone who is trustworthy and loyal to but not to a company or institution (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

This is the first generation to embrace technology in their everyday life and Lancaster and Stillman (2002) discovered "...much of American mystic was gradually stripped away" (p. 25) because they had the ability to travel anywhere via the media and internet. With the advance in different types of media, the internet, fax machines, and cell phones, the Generation Xer's became the most resourceful and independent group in the workforce (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006).

The Millennials, the next demographic boom, comprise approximately seventy-six million people. When you think of this group's generational personality the following words identify them: coddled, protected, techno-savvy, sheltered and confident. This generational group is still in the process of showing itself to the world and what they will do in the work place (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Marston, 2006).

Millennials insist on having open, constant communication and positive feedback from their employers. They also seek mentorship so they can reach their goals in the work force. Millennials define a job well done as one that brings personal fulfillment and is team oriented. They will work for a company if the company is known for their altruistic attitude, but continue to search for ways to get rid of stress in their lives.

The Millennials are also defined by not knowing certain things or having certain experiences of other generations. The Millennials will not know what it is like to grow up without *miracle* vaccines or food without vitamins added. In addition, the Millennials will not experience life without cable or satellite TV or the lack of internet access (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Howe and Strauss (2000) reported:

... Millennials represent a sharp break from Generation X. Gen Xers can recall growing up during one of the most passionate era of social and cultural upheaval in American history, with often painful consequences for political, economic, family, and educational institutions – and a harrowing if temporary derogation of the needs of children... But Millennials can recall none of it (p.48).

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover the perception and barriers of four female agriculture educators across generations in the non-traditional field of teaching agriculture education. There have been studies exploring perceptions and barriers of female agriculture educators in Ohio (Cano, 2003; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Castillo, Conklin, & Cano, 1999), as well as a national study (Foster, 2000, 2003). However, there appears to be a gap in the literature related to perceptions and barriers of female agricultural education teachers across generations. The following research question will be explored. What is the experience of a female agriculture teacher across generations in a predominately male profession?

Methods and Procedures

Four secondary female agriculture teachers were interviewed. The teachers selected were from three generations: early Baby Boomer, late Baby Boomer, Generation Xers, and Millennial. During the in-depth interviews, participants were encouraged to share stories of their experiences in teaching agriculture education. Each participant has a Bachelor's degree in agricultural education and ethnicity was not taken into account when selecting participants. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect her identity.

The participants were contacted through e-mail or phone to ask if they were willing to be interviewed and given a brief outline of the study and how long the interview would last. A consent form was mailed to all participants after they were contacted and consented to the interview. Through e-mail or the phone each participant was contacted regarding setting a time

and day to conduct the interview. Again, the participants were informed that the interview would last approximately one hour and that it would be taped or saved through e-mail. The interviews through e-mail were an on going dialog and each e-mail was saved in a folder from that participant and then transcribed by the researcher.

The participants had the opportunity to clarify any comments they made during the interview. In addition, they were given the choice to contact the researcher through e-mail or by phone within the first week after the interview or during the member checking period to discuss the interview or project.

The method of gathering data from the participants was through interviews. Open-ended questions were utilized and the responses were tape recorded. Follow up questions to the interview came from personal contact, phone interviews or through e-mail depending on the location of the participant. Follow up questions were asked after the interviews and were transcribed within one week of the interview. Member checks were accomplished by mailing participants a copy of the interview with a member check sheet. The participants had the opportunity to make corrections and verify the interview.

The coding for the interviews: each participant had a pseudonym and each line transcribed and page was numbered. The coding would then be used to identify key quotes by the participant. An example of the coding: K=1-14, the letter stands for the participant, first number represents the page, and the third number represents the quote. Key themes were brought forth by the researcher and the participants and researcher co-constructed the meaning of their experiences through feedback.

Merriam (1998) stated "...validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data were

collected, analyzed, and interpreted and the way in which the findings are presented” (p.199-200). Validity and reliability are intertwined with trustworthiness, dependability and credibility. Merriam (1998) stated when internal validity, external validity, and reliability are met in the research then you have met the challenge of trustworthiness, dependability, and credibility.

Validity and reliability in qualitative research can be met through six strategies (Merriam, 1998). *Triangulation* is achieved through using multiple methods to confirm themes or findings. Another researcher trained in qualitative methods reevaluated the findings and confirming themes found in the research. The participants did *member checks* through out the research process. A transcript of the interview and a rough draft of themes and findings were sent to each member and asked if the findings are plausible. *Peer examination and feedback* were accomplished by having the participants read draft copies of the findings and to make corrections or additions to the findings. *Collaborative research* was achieved through the conceptualizing the study with other teacher educators. *Researcher’s biases* were established at the out set of the study; however, those biases can never fully be removed.

Findings

In this study, four female agriculture teachers across generations were asked the open-ended question, “What are your experiences in teaching agriculture education in a predominately male field? The four emerging themes: qualifications to teach agriculture education, challenges in teaching agriculture education, stress in teaching agriculture education, and stereotyping of agricultural education teachers, were revealed.

Who are the participants?

As four women's stories unfolded, each shared her experiences on how agriculture impacted or not impacted childhood, high school years, and becoming an agriculture teacher. Each story is unique to that person and in spite of all the challenges, each became an agriculture teacher.

Taylor is the early Baby Boomer. She grew up on a working ranch and loved all aspects of agriculture. Taylor made the decision to take agriculture classes in high school; however, she was not allowed to take vocational agriculture classes. She described the experience, (T=2-51) "This was seen as almost a sacrilegious act by the school administration and I was not allowed." Taylor explained she was disappointed and (T=2-52) "... at that time kids just didn't buck the system." The high school counselors did not see the need for her to study agriculture and (T=2-59) "...thought I would make a great elementary teacher." Taylor went on to college, graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science and continued on to advance degrees in agriculture education.

Karen, the Baby Boomer, never considered taking agriculture classes in high school. The classes were taught at her high school, but she chose not to take agriculture classes. Karen talked about her background and explained, (K=2-10) "I did not come from agriculture background...did not grow up on a farm..." When it came time to enter college Karen decided on pre-veterinarian medicine with a minor in animal science. She worked in a veterinarian clinic and did some field experiences with local veterinarians. She came to the conclusion that veterinary medicine was not for her.

Karen remained in the College of Agriculture, but thought she would like to teach high school biology. Karen explained, (K=2-16) “I never had any intentions of teaching agriculture. I always thought I’m going to be a biology teacher.” Karen did her student teaching in agriculture education and enjoyed the experience. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Extension Education and continued on to advance degree in education.

Karen began her teaching career in secondary agriculture education, but she emphasized one day she would be teaching high school biology. Karen said she continued to think, (K=2-25) “I will teach here for a few years then I’m going back close to home and teach science.” Karen laughed that she still thought this after teaching four, five, and six years. Karen taught high school agriculture for 16 years and currently serves as Career and Technical Education Director. Karen admitted she fell in love with agriculture education and was willing to return to the classroom.

Roxanne, the Generation Xer, grew up on a small family farm in a rural area. Roxanne began her story by explaining that she and another girl signed up for ninth grade agriculture as a joke. She did this because, (R=2-29) “There weren’t any girls taking agriculture...” The high school was a consolidated ninth grade and Roxanne was bused to the school from a rural town. (R=2-34) “...of about 450 kids, two girls were in the whole agricultural program,” Roxanne chuckled. However, she did confess that she thought about dropping the class, but was too intimidated to do so.

Roxanne discovered a new world through agriculture education and the FFA. (R=2-42) “I had some good and terrible experiences...he (the teacher) did not have a lot of experience with females in ag but was open and non-judgmental...” Roxanne stated her high school agriculture experiences, (R=3-48) “...gave me a venue for success and that motivated me.” Roxanne also

revealed she was the first class of non-traditional vocational students at the consolidated ninth grade high school.

Roxanne graduated from college with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science with a double minor in biology and general education. She is certified to teach biology and agriculture education. Roxanne continued her education and has an advance degree in education. She taught high school agriculture for several years and is currently in administration.

Paige is the Millennial. Paige revealed she always wanted to be a teacher. She knew she wanted to take agriculture classes in high school because she was involved in agriculture in her daily life. Paige revealed (P=1-15) “I did the Creed contest when I was a freshman and from that point on, I knew that I always wanted to be a teacher...” Paige joined the FFA and became extremely involved and was exposed to many aspects of agriculture education during her high school years.

Paige graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in Agriculture and Extension Education. She began her teaching career after graduation and taught for two and one-half years. She is currently working in another field of agriculture.

Qualifications

All four participants revealed they had to prove they were qualified to teach agriculture education during their teaching careers. The major theme to emerge was participants proving they were qualified to teach agriculture education.

Proving Women are Qualified

The participants felt they had to prove their ability to teach agriculture to students, other teachers, administration, parents and community. Responses ranged from the Traditionalist (T=4-124) "...when you are one of the only women in a field teaching, you spend so much time trying to prove yourself you don't think a lot about things like diversity, equity, or even gender discrimination." The Baby Boomer stated, (K=5-73) "...he (Career and Technical Education Director) didn't think I was qualified for that job ... there are male and female students that just down right tell you. Their parents will tell you. They refuse female authority and like I said, it's not just males." The Generation Xer explained (R=4-75) "...I had a very, very difficult time getting a job," and the Millennial added, (P=14-309) "...you have to prove to them (students) that you know about agriculture..." All four participants frequently responded by saying they had to prove themselves to different groups of people.

Taylor indicated that she had to prove that she could teach agriculture education in high school and at the college level. Taylor realized when pursuing an agriculture teaching position (T=2-61) "...reality hit again and I realized there were very few jobs available for women in any field of agriculture in 1974." [While] Karen felt she had to prove herself through the quality of her agriculture program. If the students were active in the FFA and the community saw it then it was/is a credible program.

Roxanne indicated that she had to prove herself and gain respect at the same time. Roxanne perceived the avenue to gain respect and prove she could teach agriculture education. She goes on to explain, (R=11-241) "...you can earn respect within your school...you can earn respect from your vocational director, principal... if you want to earn the respect of your fellow teachers and prove you can teach agriculture education, that comes from competition."

Paige felt she had to prove herself to students so students would respect her. She responded by saying, (P=14-313) "...the upper classmen, they wanted to see how far they could push ya...see what they can get away with."

The participants related stories or incidents of where they have had to prove they were qualified to teach agriculture education. The process employed to accomplish proving themselves was working long hours, teaching science, and then pursuing a career, in agriculture education. Taylor qualified this by saying, (T=7-209) "Early on in my career...a friend told me that as a woman I would need to be everywhere (work, competitions, and meetings) earlier than anyone else, do everything better...Sadly, I believed that for years...first to arrive, the last to leave..." Others responded by saying (K=26-396) "You're goin' to have to work your tail off" to (R=11-245) "...an indication of work and that's an indication of puttin' your time in... that's an indication of equal."

Three of the four participants revealed their frustrations about not being employed as an agriculture teacher. Two of the participants began their teaching career teaching science then were hired as an agriculture teacher. The participants related stories of how they interviewed for an agriculture teaching position and a male was hired for the job. However, Taylor talked about how she was overlooked for a high school agriculture position and when she finally was teaching agriculture, she looked back and realized (T=4-126) "...you realize it's there (gender and sexual discrimination) and have even may have had some unpleasant experiences, but you are more focused on the job."

Karen and Roxanne also commented on how difficult it was to attain their first agriculture teaching position. Roxanne told her story about of not being hired because she was a

young, unmarried female. Both participants had supervisors tell them (K=5-70) "...that I did not belong in that job...because I was a female."

Paige did not have difficulty in obtaining her first teaching position in agriculture, but her frustration came from her co-worker. (P=2-40) "I was being told what to do a lot. I don't know if that was because I was young or I was female but that was hard."

Each participant faced obstacles either obtaining a job or while teaching, but each woman felt she had made a difference in agriculture education at her school. All participants noticed an increase in female enrollment in their non-traditional classes of agriculture and believed they were a positive role model for all students, female or male.

Challenges

All four participants had different challenges to overcome than a non-traditional teacher. Three prevailing sub-themes emerged: proving women can perform agriculture education duties, sexism, and resentment from students and community.

Proving Women Can Perform Agriculture Education Duties

Each participant claimed she felt the need to prove she was qualified and capable of teaching agriculture education. Two of the participants revealed they had low number of students in their program; and they had to increase agriculture education enrollment to continue teaching the subject. Taylor, the early Baby Boomer, explained she was (T=2-78) "...offered a part-time position at the local community college...had a total of six students in the agriculture program. Six years later...one hundred twenty (students) and still only one teacher." Roxanne, Generation Xer, realized her co-worker was going to retire and they had forty-two students in their

agriculture program. She knew they would keep him with a low number, but not her. She explained, (R=6-133) “I was not going to be able to stay in a program and keep a job with forty-two kids. I went on a big recruitment drive.” Roxanne was successful in her recruitment drive and her enrollment increased.

Other challenges participants faced were teaching students who were only a few years younger. Karen, the late Baby Boomer, told of her experience, (K=4-49) “I was the first female agriculture teacher the school had ever had... students were three years younger than I was...it was difficult.” Karen also shared she did not have a lot of experience in FFA, (K=20-293) “I worked harder...I knew nothing and I’ve not had those experiences. I just (pause) I just had to work that much harder.” To Roxanne saying, (R=12-265) “For some people it was a little bit threatening...I felt I had something to prove.”

For Paige, the Millennial, it was challenging to be in the classroom, but more challenging to work with an older co-worker. She explained, (P=2-34) “...teaching with him as my co-worker (pause) felt like sometimes he was more my boss.” She found it to be very difficult in this situation, (P=4-73) “It’s hard, as a young teacher talking to someone that’s been teaching for a long time and being told “no” I couldn’t do things.” Other challenges were the administrator’s perceptions of what she could teach or not teach. (P=7-151) “...the male teacher teaches shop, power machinery...they never ask me to do it because they think I can’t.” However, participants expressed they had to prove themselves to their male co-workers. In fact, their co-workers were willing to help them learn to teach agriculture by spending extra time with the new teachers and showing them how to do things.

Sexism

Sexism appeared in each of the woman's story. Each encountered some form of sexism from the community, students, and colleagues. Some forms of sexism from the community were perceived conceptions of what is appropriate or not appropriate behavior for a female agriculture teacher to display. Roxanne commented on a field trip to a hog farm which was to castrate pigs. The field trip was cancelled when the farmer realized it was a female agriculture teacher who was bringing the students. Roxanne called to reschedule the trip and spoke with the hog farmer's wife. (R=25-652) "My husband didn't realize that you were a woman and he does not think that it is appropriate for you to be out here with boys doing that." She was stunned!

Taylor realized there were very few jobs available to women in agriculture in 1974. (T=2-63) "I spent my first few years of marriage...working at random jobs in agriculture – usually some type of technician" explained Taylor. She realized there was gender discrimination in agriculture education by a comment a school board member made. He said, (T=6-186) "Taylor, you are doing a great job! However, I feel you should know that I voted not to re-new your contract. I just don't believe mothers should work outside the home." She was amazed some people wanted to run her life.

Karen, Roxanne, and Paige experienced some form of sexism from students. For example students asked them out on a date or made sexual comments. The sexual comments did not only come from students but from colleagues. For example, Roxanne shared her poignant story of how a colleague she respected and admired made a sexual overture to her. (R=12-267) "I was so shocked...hurt...I was insulted." Paige acknowledged (P=13-298) "I've had kids say things which have offended me...you gotta have that line between...you're the teacher." Karen revealed statements made to her such as, (K=4-66) "Oh, ag teachers didn't look like this, you

know, when I was in school.” Karen sums up her story of the statements made to her, (K=11-207) “I had teachers that made remarks and I see that same thing happening to young female teachers now...looking back twenty years ago and that same thing was going on with me and I hated it.”

Resentment from Students

Three of the participants had students resent them for various reasons. Karen felt resentment at two different schools where she worked. Both incidents involved a teacher retiring and students were devastated the male teacher left. Karen revealed in one program a student was so resentful of her being there and not his former male agriculture teacher, the student put a quote in the school yearbook, (K=10-181) “...‘I would have the good sense to move on, or do something better in her teaching career.’ You know that really hurt...just so resentful...had to spend their senior year with me.”

Paige experienced resentment from students by creating tension between the two agriculture teachers and this caused a great deal of conflict. Paige commented students did not view a female as an appropriate agriculture teacher and consistently challenged her authority by causing conflict with her co-worker. The participants found challenges in teaching agriculture education and had to overcome them to continue in their field. How they resolved the challenges is unique to each woman as their challenges were unique.

Stress

All four participants indicated teaching agriculture was a high stress job. Two sub-themes were revealed and were interlinked together. Those themes are balancing family and work and the high burnout/low return rate of female agriculture teachers.

Balancing Family and Work

Participants revealed several stories and incidents of how balancing work and family together was difficult. Three of the participants explained how having children changed the dynamics of balancing work and family. All participants agreed the job was demanding and required a good relationship with their husbands.

Three of the participants have had children and they never took much time off from their jobs. Taylor went back to work when her first child was eighteen months old. Karen and Roxanne claimed they never took any extra time off when their children were babies. Taylor reflected, (T=2-82) “I had a growing family and my job did not seem conducive to a healthy family life.... I was averaging seventy-five days a year on the road. I put my family through hell. Don’t get me wrong, there were good times.”

Karen and Roxanne found the agriculture community to be very open about bringing children to different FFA functions. Both told how their children grew up around FFA students/competitions and because of that, their children have had many good experiences. Taylor, on the other hand, did not take her children with her. She commented on how she missed

several activities her sons' were in. Taylor's job was so time consuming one of her son's looked at her and said, (T=3-99) "Come back to see us sometime. It was like I was a traveling salesman or something." All three female agriculture teachers agreed that spending the amount of time on their job may not have been worth it to their family.

Besides trying to balance work and family life, participants realized their jobs were demanding and become more demanding if you so desire. Karen described her experience as, (K=21-304) "You get sucked into a big black hole if you're not very, very careful....it can be very, very overwhelming." Roxanne concurred by saying, (R=17-376) "I designed my life around my job... that was the focus from the beginning...once I made the comment that being an ag teacher, it's like riding a tiger...you can't get off because it'll bite ya." For Paige, her first year teaching was overwhelming. She discovered, (P=9-189) "...never enough time in the day to get everything that needs to be done." A consensus was reached on the most time consuming aspect of teaching agriculture is the extra paper work that is required by the Department of Education, the State and National FFA and local school system. Overall, participants realized teaching high school agriculture jobs are time consuming and demanding on many levels.

High Burnout / Low Return Rate

The participants acknowledged the retention rate of female agriculture teachers is low. They perceived the reasons to be because of the amount of paper work, commitment to CDE's, and the classroom preparations all contributed to why new teachers do not return to teaching agriculture education. Karen also theorized why females do not return, (K=21-316) "...it gets most difficult for them (females teaching), probably during the transition of starting a

family....they look pretty weary when their draggin' in strollers...that's when it gets really hard...I think that's the maker or breaker point for a lot of females. You're torn at that time."

Coinciding with the low retention rate is high burnout amongst the agriculture teaching profession. In discussion, participants revealed there is a level of expectation from the students, community and the administration. In addition, there is extreme pressure to maintain a high level of standard in the FFA and academically. Roxanne's explanation is, (R=17-380) "It has to do with expectations of others and people around you. I have often believed that is why there is a high burnout rate among agriculture teachers...you can make it as big of a monster as you want to make it." Whether the factors that contribute to stress are real or perceived, they have impacted participants and their families.

Stereotyping of Agriculture Education Teachers

All four women revealed they had people stereotyping an agriculture education teacher and questioned their credentials. Comments were made from others about their appearance and ability to teach agriculture education because they were female.

Breaking the Stereotyping of an Agriculture Teacher

As the four women's stories unfolded, each experience was different. Some people told the women they did not represent what an agriculture teacher should look like. Taylor's first encounter was in high school. She was not allowed to take vocational agriculture classes and was directed to take the more traditional female classes such as Home Economics and Business/Typing classes. Taylor recalled what it was like to teach agriculture education in the 1980's, (T=7-199) "...it was like being a pioneer to another planet where no one spoke your

language.” She also realized there were no other women to look to as a role model. Hence, Taylor became a role model for future female agriculture education teachers.

Karen revealed she was one of the first female agriculture teachers in her state. She recalls people in the community asking, (K=12-233) “Where is your agriculture teacher or FFA advisor?” because people would assume the agriculture teacher was male. Other comments made to participants were: “I didn’t know women were agriculture teachers” to “Oh, agriculture teachers didn’t look like you when I was in school” and, “You’re an agriculture teacher?” Roxanne and Paige concurred on experiencing the same type of comments.

Karen and Roxanne recalled instances where they were at formal agriculture education functions and it would be announced, (K=12-227) “Would all the agriculture teachers and their wives please stand up.” Both claimed it took several years for that particular announcement to change. Participants also noted people in the community and in the agriculture education field assumed they were someone’s wife; however, the assumption is not made very often now.

Other forms of stereotyping were from other agriculture teachers or administrators. The early Baby Boomer, late Baby Boomer and Generation Xer recalled instances when they were told they would not make it as an agriculture teacher or did not belong. Karen described her first encounter of stereotyping, (K=5-70) “...a male in a supervisory position told me I did not belong in that job because I was a female.” Roxanne recalled two incidents of stereotyping at the beginning of her teaching career. She went to a male agriculture teacher for help and his response was, (R=10-222) “Young lady, your biggest problem is you are a girl in a boy’s club.” However, when Roxanne sees him now, he claims agriculture education is turning into a sorority (more females are teaching agriculture education). The other incident occurred at a Career and

Technical Education Conference where a male agriculture teacher made the comment, (R=12-251) “You’re never going to cut it and you’re never gonna last.” Roxanne saw a great deal of irony in this because that particular agriculture teacher left teaching and she is still in the field of agriculture education.

Karen, Roxanne, and Paige proclaimed administrators assumed they would have discipline problems due to their gender. Roxanne explained, (R=10-211) “...they (administrators) were anticipating that I would have discipline problems because I was a female.” These women felt they were under a microscope and the administration, other teachers, and the communities were looking for them to make mistakes or fail at being an agriculture teacher. Taylor added, (T=6-168) “In the single teacher program, all success and failure falls on the shoulders of the teacher. You are responsible for getting and keeping the ball rolling...there is little room for error.” Roxanne sums up her experience with stereotyping this way, (R=16-344) “...to keep from being stereotyped as the emotional one or somebody having female issues, I worked hard at my job.”

Even though the participants experienced stereotyping, they also found themselves being role models to other female students. The four female agriculture teachers saw an increase in female enrollment. Obviously, they had made a positive impact on students and representing females in agriculture education. Taylor pointed out, (T=4-133) “...women are re-inventing this field to suit their needs and provide them a stage to bloom on.”

Conclusions

This study focused on four women from different generations and the barriers they had in obtaining a career in and teaching agriculture education. Each participant has a Bachelor's degree in agricultural education and ethnicity was not taken into account when selecting participants. The results of this study cannot be generalizable for all female agricultural education teachers but only the four in this study.

Four women's experience in teaching agriculture education across four generations revealed many statements with similar content. It appeared the four female agriculture teachers did experience many of the same barriers whether perceived or not. The barriers included, but not exclusively, *qualifications to teach agriculture education, challenges in teaching agriculture education, stress in teaching agriculture education, and stereotyping of agriculture teachers.*

Although the participants are from different generations, they all revealed in their stories having to prove themselves capable of teaching agriculture education to different groups of people such as other teachers, students, administrators, and the community. Such things as the need to work hard, community establishment, and teaching *male* classes are a few areas where the women in this study felt they needed to prove themselves. However, participants believed they had made a difference in agriculture education and noticed an increase in female enrollment. In addition, these women believed they were a positive role model for all their students, female or male.

The challenges in teaching agriculture education appear to be the same across the four generations. The challenges revealed in this study were proving women can teach agriculture education, dealing with sexism within the teaching system and community, and challenges

students present. Within proving women can teach agriculture education, the participants had the challenge of increasing enrollment to retain their career. They knew the school system would keep the older male agriculture teacher with low numbers, but not them. Other challenges were being the first female teacher in the school system and having to overcome many of the perceived barriers of what is appropriate and not appropriate for a female agriculture teacher.

Based on the women's stories, sexism had been experienced throughout their careers. Each encountered sexism from the community, students, and colleagues. It appeared the community still believed female agriculture teachers should teach the horticulture curriculum. Also, community members made comments to the women about their gender and appearance. In addition, students asked the teachers out on dates and would make inappropriate comments.

Participants revealed teaching agriculture education was a demanding and time consuming job. Creating and keeping a quality agriculture/FFA program demanded the teacher to be committed to the job and students. Each female recalled how difficult it was to balance a family life and how overwhelming teaching agriculture education was. However, they all agreed having a supportive partner was extremely important in maintaining a balance of family life and career. Overall, participants realized their jobs were time consuming and demanding on many levels.

Because teaching agriculture education is demanding, there appears to be a high level of burnout/low retention rate of female teachers (Croom, 2003). Again, across the four generations it was revealed the amount of paper work, commitment to CDE's, and the classroom preparations all contributed to why teachers did not return to teaching agriculture education. Furthermore, the four women felt there is a level of expectation from the administration, students, and community and the teacher must maintain a high level of standards academically

and in the FFA to meet those expectations. Whether the factors that contribute to stress are real or perceived, they have impacted the participants and their families.

The four women disclosed that they have been exposed to some form of stereotyping. The stereotyping ranged from females should not be employed in agricultural education, the pre-conceived appearance of an agriculture teacher, and discipline in the classroom would be more pronounced for female teachers; many people assumed the female agriculture teacher taught *farming* classes or made the comment, “Where is your agriculture teacher?” when the teacher was standing there. It appears there are still preconceived concepts of what an agriculture teacher should look like and what is the appropriate curriculum such as, horticulture, for a female agriculture teacher. However, the four women found ways to overcome many of the perceived or real barriers and taught agriculture education.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, recommendations of helping females overcome real or perceived barriers in agriculture education is needed. It is apparent the barriers are very real across four generations. It appears the current system in place in the pre-service teacher program is not working and other methods of breaking the barriers for female agriculture teachers need to be put into place.

One recommendation is to implement a mentoring system for all new teachers. From this study none of the participants had a formal mentoring program. The early Baby Boomer was a pioneer in agriculture education and received help through other male agriculture teachers. It is

apparent that female agriculture teachers need a formal mentoring system to help them overcome the many challenges and barriers they face in teaching agriculture education. For a mentoring system to work it must be mandated by the State Department of Education and be well funded. Myers, Dyer, and Washburn (2005) identified new teachers in need of a support group to assist teachers. The state department of education, the school system and the university need to develop a program of partnering a qualified female agriculture teacher with a new teacher and give the female agriculture teacher a venue to discuss problems or challenges in their program. Other forms of support for teachers would be through professional development, teacher in-service programs, and the teacher preparation program.

For female agriculture teachers to overcome sexist and biased behavior in the public school system, they will need training. Kelsey (2006) concurred in her study that many women are faced with sexist and biased situations in the school system. In this study of four women across the generations, they identified sexist and biased behavior on many levels. It is recommended the teacher preparation programs implement a program designed to make pre-service teachers aware of sexist and biased behavior and in-service training for new teachers, current teachers, and administrators. In addition, a course on gender challenges in the classroom needs to be taught at the university level.

In a time where three generations are working together it is imperative that they are capable of working together in harmony. It has been documented by Lancaster and Stillman (2002) and Marston (2006) that the work place is changing with different ethics, style, and expectations in the work force. As educators, we need to change the work atmosphere and break down the real and perceived barriers in order to retain female agriculture teachers.

Questions for Further Study

Further study is needed to determine if the perceived and real barriers across the four generations are prevalent in a larger group of female agriculture teachers. Researchers should examine the effects of the following issues in teaching agriculture education and how it affects the retaining of teachers:

- What are the challenges for females teaching agriculture education?
- What methods should be employed for new teachers to become aware of the demands of teaching agriculture education?
- What methods should be employed for new teachers to become aware of stereotyping and sexism in agriculture education?

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL



THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE

Institutional Review Board

Office of Research
1534 White Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
Phone: (865) 974-3466
Fax: (865) 974-7400

06/12/2006

IRB#: 7063 B

TITLE: Four or five women's experiences in Agriculture Education across generations.

Baxter, Linda
Agricultural Economics
4420 Northgate Dr.
Knoxville, TN 37938

Fritz, Dr. Carrie Ann
Agricultural Economics
325 Morgan Hall
Campus

Your project listed above was reviewed and has been approved under Expedited review.

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Brenda Lawson
Compliances

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT-INTERVIEW (ADULT)

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study. The study will focus on the experiences of female agriculture educators.

Information about Participants Involvement in the Study

As a participant in this study, you will be interviewed. The information gained from the interviews will be used in written research publications and a graduate thesis to describe the experiences of female agriculture teachers. The following are the terms of participating in the study:

- 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. I agree to participate in an in-depth interview and I understand that the interview will last approximately one hour. There will only be one interview conducted and possibly a follow-up interview, if needed. I will be asked to share my thoughts related to my experiences as a female agriculture teacher. How I structure my story and what information I choose to share will be up to me. I may choose to share personal stories but I will be assured that my identity will be kept confidential by using a pseudonym for my 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 Fritz's 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 phenomenological study before the final draft is written and negotiate changes with the researcher.
- f. The participant will receive a copy of the final research report soon after completion.

Risk

The risks are minimal for participating in this study. If you choose to share personal stories be cautioned that those stories may be included in the final written report. I, the researcher, will use a pseudonym for your name in the written report.

Benefits

The benefit of study is to inform current and future female agriculture teachers about the agriculture education field. In addition, females can face many challenges and obstacles when being employed in a male dominated field like agriculture. Therefore, there will be

numerous benefits to female agriculture educators currently in the teaching field and upcoming female agriculture educators.

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Carrie Ann Fritz's 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. No reference will be made in oral or written reports, which could link participants to the study.

Contact Information

If you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact Dr. Carrie Ann Fritz at (865) 983-2746. If you have any questions about the rights as a participant, contact Research Compliance Services of the Office of Research at (865) 974-3466.

Participation

Participation is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or discontinue participation in this research project at any time. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you 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 _____

APPROVED
By Dr. Carrie Ann Fritz

JUN 12 2006

APPENDIX C

RESEARCHERS BIASES AND EXPERIENCES

There are some concerns about doing a phenomenological study of secondary female agriculture educators. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) pointed out that conducting a study with people you know or associated with can be confusing for the researcher and your role changes with the known participants. The need to explore my biases and experiences will affect the study. My personal experiences may influence my findings and I can not take my experiences or biases out of the study. I will have to determine how my own personal experiences and biases fit into this study.

After graduating from college I had difficulty in obtaining a teaching position in agriculture education. I interviewed for several agricultural education positions, but comments were made by administration, they were holding a job for someone else and it usually was a former male student from that school or I was too pretty to teach agriculture education to a bunch of boys. Other major barriers I faced, I was not from this area and I was not known. A CTE director told me I needed to substitute teach for a while so people could get to know me.

In 1990, I obtained my first teaching job. I was an interim agriculture teacher during the Gulf War. I soon discovered in this rural community, the boys in agriculture education were not willing to accept a female agriculture teacher. The boys constantly challenged my authority, knowledge, and ability to teach agriculture education. I was told by the male students that I did not *know* anything about agriculture and sexual comments were made frequently. I had several boys ask me out on a date. I was married before I started teaching agriculture education. I had worked two years in the whole greenhouse/nursery industry before my first teaching job. I did have a knowledgeable background in the green industry contrary to what others thought.

Working with the school administration at my first school was an eye awakening event. The school principal thought my job was to have my students pick up rocks off the baseball field and plant trees at his house. Other duties I was assigned were to have my students mow the school lawn. I was so green my first year and I did not know any better. The other agriculture teacher, who was male, also mowed and he did not tell the principal “no”. The male agriculture teacher told me if I wanted to keep my job and have a good recommendation then I should pick up rock, plant trees, and mow.

The following year I taught at a school that was located in a city and I remained there for five years. It was a two teacher agriculture program. I chose to teach the horticulture curriculum along with one agriculture mechanics class. My first year was difficult because I replaced a male teacher and I was constantly compared to him. Over the course of four years I taught forestry, agriculture mechanics, agriculture production, and horticulture. I had the support of the other agriculture teacher, whom was male and the principal. My biggest problem was with the CTE director. He told me that I would not make it as an agriculture teacher because I was a female and a mother. CTE director said motherhood would take me away from my responsibilities as an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor.

During my first six years as an agriculture teacher I had to prove my ability to teach agriculture education to the students, community and the CTE director. Sexual comments were made to me by students and I was asked out on several dates. The CTE director made my job extremely difficult and he made sexist and biases comments to me. I personally felt he made my job difficult so I would leave.

I was at a turning point in my career with the birth of my second child. I had been teaching agriculture education for six years and I was not sure if I wanted to continue teaching. The principal who was so supportive of me retired and the new principal was not supportive of the entire agriculture program. I was unhappy where I was employed because of the CTE director and the principal. I had to make a decision – stay or leave.

I left that school and went to work in a semi-rural high school. I have been there for the past 13 years and love my job. I expected to have some problems because a very much loved agriculture teacher left to teach in his home town. However, I found this community much more welcoming of me and I did not encounter as many problems because of my gender. I had fantastic support from my principal, CTE director, and co-worker. I considered my male co-worker to be my mentor. I did have my struggles with some people in community because I was female and I still have a few comments made about me being the agriculture teacher. Some people in the community still look for a male agriculture teacher when they come into the greenhouse. I did and still do work hard and long hours, but now I do it more for my students than proving myself to the school, students and community. The enrollment of female students has increased over the years and we have females enrolled in the traditional agriculture mechanics program.

My path has been difficult. Has it been worth it? I say yes because of the difference I have made in the community and for my students. I have opened many doors to both female and male students in agriculture. I am content and happy at my current teaching position.

VITA

Linda Sue Baxter was born in Wichita, Kansas, on June 1, 1964. She received her high school diploma from La Sierra High School, Carmichael, California, in June 1982. She continued her education at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Extension Education in March 1988.

After graduation, Linda Sue worked with the mentally and physically challenged adults. She also worked in the wholesale nursery/greenhouse industry in Knoxville, Tennessee. In the fall of 1990 she was employed as a secondary agriculture teacher in Campbell County, Tennessee. Currently, Linda Sue is working at Union County High School in Maynardville, Tennessee as an agriculture teacher. She has been employed at Union County High School for the past 12 years and is part of a three teacher department. Over the past 19 years in teaching secondary agriculture education, she has taught the following courses: agriculture mechanics, forestry, wildlife management, and animal production. Currently she teaches the horticulture curriculum of landscape design, greenhouse management, turfgrass, management, and plant bio technologies.

Linda Sue is a member of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International and has served as the chapters', Beta Pi, President, Vice-President, and currently the Treasurer. She is also a member of Gamma Sigma Delta, the Honorary Society of Agriculture; Tennessee Education Association; National Education Association, National Association of Agricultural Educators, and Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators.