Women in Agriculture: A Qualitative Study Examining How Women Have Sustained Their Leadership Roles in Agriculture in Australia

Amanda Dean, Undergraduate
Dr. Carrie Stephens, Faculty Advisor

The purpose of this study is to explore the lives of women in Australian agriculture in an attempt to conceptualize the leadership styles they have developed as a result of their positions in a male-dominated field, as well as their upbringing and life experiences.

Objectives:
- Explore personal journeys of five women in agriculture
- Identify leadership styles of selected women
- Recognize impact their personal journeys have had in developing their leadership styles and sustaining their roles as leaders in a male-dominated field

RESULTS
The subjects represented a broad range of industries within Australian agriculture. The findings from this study emphasize that people, including and especially that of their leadership development, are ultimately generated by their human experiences. Exploring the personal journeys of five of Australia’s leading women indicated that simply having a female presence within the industry itself promotes a positive impact for other women who now have opportunities to grow in a male-dominated field. By examining individual experiences throughout childhood, the opportunities presented to, or withheld from, them throughout their career, and their perception of their own leadership styles at home and in the office, an understanding of the environment each has constructed for herself is provided. This study found that leadership was generally promoted as a trait which must be carefully cultivated, but may be met with additional resistance if one is a woman. As expressed by one subject, “If you’re a female in the industry, you may have to work twice as hard to be thought of as half as good.”