The Resiliency and Leadership of Burley Tobacco Producers in Greene County, Tennessee: A Qualitative Study

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Recommended Citation
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The Resiliency and Leadership of Burley Tobacco Producers in Greene County, Tennessee: A Qualitative Study

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

Melody T. Rose
May 2016
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to those who assisted me in my endeavor to complete my graduate study. I would especially like to thank those on my graduate committee: Dr. Carrie Stephens, Dr. Christopher Stripling, and Dr. Ralph Brockett for their time, dedication, and patience throughout this learning adventure.

I would like to thank the Waynesville, North Carolina Mountain Research Station Staff, 1993-1999, especially Mr. Will Morrow, for continually inspiring me to pursue higher educational goals, and to the best UT Extension Staff in Greene County for encouraging me reach beyond the stars to accomplish my true potential.

Most of all, I would like to thank my parents, Mr. and Mrs. David B. Teague and Lillie Marlene Hill for their continued love and guidance during my graduate study. They endured many hours of hard work and continually encouraged and supported me throughout my graduate career.

Also, to my extended family for always standing behind me in all my educational endeavors, and especially to my sister, Kelsey Teague Ferguson for always inspiring me to reach higher in my agricultural pursuits.

A special thank you is also expressed to my wonderful nephew, Bryson Ferguson who was always there to put a smile on my face during the long hours of study. I appreciate each and every one of you that helped make this goal possible. I could never have accomplished this degree without each one of you sharing your love and support with me and believing in my dreams.
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of current Greene County burley tobacco producers regarding the resiliency in a declining global tobacco industry and how the producers perceive their leadership in burley tobacco production will be impacted in Greene County.

Ten Greene County producers participated in this study through an interview conducted utilizing a series of 33 questions aimed at determining specific themes in regards to resiliency in their communities, as well as the individual producers adaptive leadership styles.

Tobacco remains a viable and economic contributor to the Greene County economy. This study focused on current and past Greene County burley tobacco producers and/or industry representatives who have significant impacts on Greene County. This study first provided an in-depth review on the significant history of the tobacco industry and illustrated the importance of the crop to burley tobacco farmers, to the communities within Greene County, and to the economic vitality of Greene County.

Data collected from interviews were synthesized to correlate perceptions of current tobacco production in Greene County from the inception of the tobacco program to present-day in regards to cultural norms and economic impact, while simultaneously providing a portrayal of tobacco as a viable cash crop and its significance to present-day global production with the direct correlation of a community's response to overcoming significant change.
It was discovered burley tobacco has historical ties to the producers in Greene County, but with the significant changes that have occurred within the industry in the last 20 years, it has become almost impossible to remain profitable. As a result, Greene County producers have utilized an adaptive leadership approach to forge new paths in agriculture enterprises, as well as becoming leaders on the forefront of a dwindling industry in Greene County, contributing to resiliency in a changing market environment.
Burley tobacco is a cash crop that has a sustaining legacy that far-reaches the scope of other valuable cash crops in the United States (Middleton, 1953). Tobacco was the first form of currency on United States soil, first used in trade with the pilgrims and the native Indians (Pecquet, 2003). Through countless changes since the inception of a quota market in the 1920’s, tobacco has been grown with pride alongside rural Tennessee back roads as a constant reminder of the heritage many farmers claim as their roots.

Burley tobacco is under constant attack by consumers, government agencies, and various medical affiliated groups, but the fact remains, many Northeast Tennessee producers rely and depend on burley tobacco production to provide either their annual income or at least a supplemental portion on their annual income (Mathis & Snell, 2012). It has often been said by those involved with growing a crop of burley tobacco utilize these means to put clothes on their backs, food on their tables, provide higher education for their children, and lend itself as an advantage to those at Christmas because Santa could always deliver presents under the tree after a crop of tobacco had been sold (Buchanan, 2012).

The tobacco industry continues to change at an ever-rapid pace with global supply and demand, world health issues, and environmental regulations steering the direction (Tiller, 200b). The tobacco industry has seen several changes since the Tobacco Quota Buy-out in 2004, but has remained true to its heritage by continually proving to be a source of income that not only grows nest-eggs financially, but grows the next generation
to appreciate the hard work involved with growing a crop of burley tobacco (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015).
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Chapter 1
Introduction and General Information

The Problem and Its Setting

As the face of tobacco production continues to change at a rapid pace, so does the face of burley tobacco production in Greene County, Tennessee (Little, 2010). Burley tobacco production has always been a steadfast and dependable cash crop in Greene County. In addition, it has provided a steady and profitable income for generations of Greene County families (Tiller, 2000b).

Burley tobacco production, though in decline in recent years, continues to contribute significant economic sectors to Greene County (Gale, Foreman & Capehart, 2000). Tennessee burley tobacco producers harvested 15,500 acres in 2014, maintaining a yield of 1,750 pounds per acre with 13,000 acres being currently projected for the 2015 harvest, with an estimated yield of 1,600 pounds per acre (United States Department of Agriculture, 2015b). This amounted to a total of 27,125,000 pounds grown in 2014, valued at $2.01 pound, translating into a total of $54,521,000 for the state of Tennessee (United States Department of Agriculture, 2015a). In Greene County, burley tobacco production accounted for nearly 1000 acres during 2014 (Kenerson, 2014).

These figures illustrate the importance of burley tobacco as a viable and economic contributor to the Greene County economy. Although a highly diversified agricultural county, the production of burley tobacco has continued to be a way of life and a cultural norm. Both burley tobacco production and tobacco consumption (e.g. cigarettes, cigars, snuff, chew) continue to decline on the global scale, resulting in a substantial reduction in
the production of burley tobacco, thus resulting in both a production and cultural deficit in Greene County’s economic contributions (Brown & Snell, 2014). This also results in a direct impact to those producers dependent on the profitability of their crop each year while simultaneously imparting a conflict with a heritage in jeopardy (Ferrell, 2013).

Although many changes have occurred in the tobacco industry in the last 10 years as a result of direct-marketing contracts with companies, more commonly known as the *Tobacco Buyout*, more challenges lie ahead for the future of burley tobacco production (United States Department of Agriculture, 2000). However, tobacco still remains a crucial part of the financial structure of both large scale and small family farms in East Tennessee, specifically in Greene County, where cash receipts exceed those of other cash crops grown throughout the county (Tiller, 2000b).

There also continues to be a disconnect among direct-market companies, or whom we term *Big Tobacco* (e.g. Philip Morris International, RJ Reynolds, Japan Tobacco International) and producers. This disconnect has resulted in a gap of communication, thus resulting in confusion on the farm level, making it next to impossible to conform to company standards (Benson, 2012). In turn, comradery among tobacco producers and the livelihoods of Greene County are being threatened, resulting not only in declining production, but a shift in tradition, heritage, and cultural norms from a county born and raised from tobacco (Yeargin, 2008b).

Need for the Study

Community can be defined as “a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a cultural and historical heritage
(Morris, 1978, p. 271).” Greene County, Tennessee is one such community. A community that thrives on a culture rich in burley tobacco production. A community that is highly cognizant of its historical roots; a community that recognizes how tobacco contributed to its growth and prosperity; and a community that was simply founded on tobacco (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015).

As dramatic changes within the industry continue to occur, production will continue to shift from the mountains of East Tennessee into more feasible production/marketing locales both within the United States and globally (Tiller, 2000b). As a result, Greene County producers are left to transition from a culture alive and vibrant with tobacco as its roots and foundation to more diversified farming initiatives in an effort to remain viable in production agriculture (Yeargin, 2008b). Communities within Greene County are in jeopardy of losing a way of life; a tradition, along with the threat of a tremendous economic breach being felt within the boundaries of Greene County (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015).

As a fourth generation burley tobacco farmer myself, I recognize the value of yielding a profit from this cash crop, but also the integrity of maintaining tradition and cultural perspective. For many producers, this was and continues to be the crop that provides Christmas money for their children, pays annual taxes on the farm, instills the value of work ethic for their children, promotes independence and self-confidence, and ensures a sense of pride in their communities (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015).
Limitations of the Study

Although the research conducted in this study was both carefully prepared and resulted in strong findings, it is neither conclusive as a total representation of Greene County burley tobacco production, nor United States burley tobacco production. The research was conducted with a small number of producers to represent a large group of burley tobacco producers in Greene County, and cannot be generalized beyond the individuals involved in this study.

Assumptions of the Study

All producers in this study were both eager and sincere in their responses; therefore, assuring honest and reliable answers in which to guide the framework of this study. This study assumed all burley tobacco producers in Greene County perceive the inherent changes that have occurred in the tobacco industry during the last 12 years as an indicator of both declining personal burley tobacco production, as well as an economic decline in Greene County.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were to identify the perceptions of current Greene County burley tobacco producers regarding the resiliency in a declining global tobacco industry and how the producers perceive their leadership in burley tobacco production will be impacted in Greene County.

Research Questions

1. Do Greene County burley tobacco producers perceive the tobacco industry in a declining state at the local level?
2. Do Greene County burley tobacco producers traditionally grow the crop as a means of maintaining cultural tradition?

3. Have Greene County burley tobacco producers diversified their farming operations to remain viable as a result of the Tobacco Quota Buyout in 2004?

4. Do Greene County burley tobacco producers perceive their leadership in burley tobacco production to benefit Greene County?

5. Have Greene County burley tobacco producers adapted to a changing market environment by adopting production practices to maintain profitable at the individual and community economic level?

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined for this study:

- Agricultural Adjustment Act (of 1938) is also known as the Farm Bill, which established the Tobacco Program and was a component of the New Deal initiative inspired by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to move the U.S. economy out of the Great Depression (Tindall, 1967).

- American Jobs Creation Act of 2004 was signed by President George W. Bush, which included the Fair and Equitable Tobacco Reform Act establishing the Tobacco Transition Payment Program, eliminating the federal tobacco marketing quota and price support loan programs (Tindall, 1967).

- Burley tobacco is a leaf-style tobacco light in color grown in six countries, including Brazil, Argentina, France, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and the United States.
The United States consistently produces high-quality leaf favorable for both domestic and global cigarette manufacturing (Buchanan, 2012).

- Cross-county leasing: see Farm Poundage Quota Revisions Act.

- Fair and Equitable Tobacco Reform Act of 2004 was signed by President George W. Bush, as a provision of the American Jobs Creation Act, establishing the Tobacco Transition Payment Program, eliminating the federal tobacco marketing quota and price support loan programs (Tindall, 1967).

- Farm Poundage Quota Revisions Act, also known as Cross County leasing, was passed in 1990, providing a permanent mechanism to place a larger volume of burley quota in the hands of producers who fully intended to actually grow the quota (Snell & Chambers, 1991).

- Federal Tobacco Program consisted of marketing quotas and price supports, providing a safety net for tobacco producers until the abolishment of the program in 2004 from the Tobacco Transition Payment Program enacted by President George W. Bush as a part of the American Jobs Creation Act (Snell & Chambers, 1991).

- Hogsheads are very large barrels used in British and American colonial times to transport and store tobacco. These are still used today to pack styles of leaf for storage and shipment (Yeargin, 2008b).

- Master Settlement Agreement was entered in 1998, originally between the four largest United States tobacco companies (Philip Morris, Inc.; R.J. Reynolds; Brown & Williamson; and Lorillard) and the attorneys general of 46 states
settling their Medicaid lawsuits against the tobacco industry for recovery of their tobacco-related health-care costs, and also exempted companies from private tort liability in regarding harm caused by tobacco use (Benson, 2012).

- Resilience (*Resiliency*) is an outcome of successful adaptation to adversity (Reich, Zautra, & Hall, 2010).

- Tobacco Quota Buyout is also known as the Tobacco Transition Payment Program (Mathis & Snell, 2012).

- Tobacco Transition Payment Program provided compensation to tobacco producers the opportunity to transition from a federal government program into a free-market system (Mathis & Snell, 2012).

**Thesis Overview**

This study will first provide an in-depth review on the significant history of the tobacco industry, primarily focusing on the early historical components in Greene County, as well as a synopsis on the birth of tobacco production during the colonial era. I will illustrate the importance of the crop to burley tobacco producers, to the communities within Greene County, and to the economic vitality of Greene County. Following this, I will examine the historical components of burley tobacco from a cultural perspective that parallels the economic boost Greene County gained as a result of tobacco production in the 1800’s through present day. I will then explore the possible side-effects of the Tobacco Quota Buyout and the current protocols relevant to present day tobacco contracts and the potential to directly impact worldwide production in the coming years. I will follow discussing the recent developments in the tobacco industry in
regards to marketing, and complete this study with addressing the future of burley tobacco production in Greene County through the eyes of current producers.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The production of burley tobacco has been a long-standing tradition and livelihood for many farm families throughout the years. However, as the face of tobacco continually changes at a rapid and dramatic pace, those traditions have been somewhat compromised. The way things used-to-be are no more, especially within the production and marketing industries (Yeargin, 2008b). Marketing tobacco is the last and final step of raising a tobacco crop. Producers ultimately strive to accomplish a fair-market price for their hard work and way of life.

Although it is unlikely the total aspect of marketing tobacco will completely disappear, there is no doubt the traditional method of marketing has changed (Heyes, 1999). This review examines the present and past methods of marketing burley tobacco, factors concerning various areas of production and perhaps which marketing strategy may work best for a particular producer. It also examines specific production practices, which encourage the farmer to produce the highest yielding, most profitable and best quality crop possible. Available studies were reviewed relating to the influence of cultural and traditional methods of tobacco farming, and the ties of a community rich in burley tobacco far withstanding its legacy on the international scene. Additional studies reviewing adaptive leadership styles were also evaluated, as well as how resilient communities engage and prosper through crisis and change.
Reviewing the Colonial Past

To fully appreciate the present, one must first seek the relevance of the past. Tobacco is considered to be the most revered cash crop in the United States’ history (Middleton, 1953). As early as 1612, colonists of the New World, more specifically, John Rolfe, grew the first commercial crop of tobacco on small Jamestown Island in Eastern Virginia (Pecquet, 2003). It was he who soon recognized the economic importance the value of tobacco would provide for the New World and its inhabitants (Pecquet, 2003). This was the first form of currency on United States soil, as wealth among colonists during this time was valued by the amount of tobacco pounds a man had and could grow, rather than the actual amount of money held in their pockets, as too, both gold and silver during this time was scarce (Middleton, 1953).

As aptly illustrated by Hariot (1588), “There is an herb which is sowed a part by itself & is called by the inhabitants vppówoc: In the West Indies it hath different names, according to the several places & countries where it grows and is used: The Spaniards generally call it Tobacco. The leaves thereof being dried and brought into powder: they use to take the fume or smoke thereof by sucking it through pipes made of clay into their stomach and head; from whence it purge superfluous phlegm & other gross humors, opening all the pores & passages of the body: by which means the use thereof, not only preserves the body from obstructions; but also if any be, so that they have not been of too long continuance, in short time breaketh them: whereby their bodies are notably preserved in health, & know not many grievous diseases wherewithal wee in England are oftentimes afflicted (p. 21-22).”
Colonists grew the bright leaf as their sole cash crop, shipping an ever-growing demand for the crop back to their Motherland in England, where there, they could market to the rest of the world (Middleton, 1953). The majority of the tobacco being grown in the United States during this time was in Jamestown Settlement, America’s first permanent English colony, which lied on the banks of the James River making shipment of tobacco across the Atlantic Ocean an easy task (Herndon, 1957). The U.S. History Online Textbook (2015) stated by 1630, over a million and a half pounds of tobacco were being exported from Jamestown each year. This ultimately led to the establishment of tobacco warehouses which became a profitable business facilitating the export of tobacco. This in turn generated a source of tax revenue for the colonies resulting in an official substitution for currency in both Virginia in 1783 and later in Kentucky in 1792 (Green, 1996). Tobacco was the safest and most stable currency the colonists had during this time, and it always had a value in exchange for gold (Scharf, 1967).

Tobacco currency was also unique in that it was used to pay fines and taxes during colonial times (Schultz, 2009). Examples included: “persons encouraging Negro meetings were to be fined 1000 pounds of tobacco; owners letting Negroes keep horses were fined 500 pounds tobacco; if a person wanted to become married, he had to go to the rector of his parish and pay the man so many pounds of tobacco; a man's wealth was estimated in annual pounds of tobacco” (Scharf, 1967, p. 38). Tobacco saved the Virginia colony from collapse, as it was their primary source of revenue, providing opportunities for services otherwise not had (Pecquet, 2003). For example, many women were purchased as wives for the New World, their husbands paying for their voyages
with tobacco (Hyman, 2010). Furthermore, soldiers, servants, clergymen, and government officials were all paid with tobacco as a form of currency (Herndon, 1957).

Tobacco eventually became protected by King James I in 1621 to prohibit the planting of tobacco in England and prohibit the importation of tobacco from anywhere except Virginia and the British Indies (Pecquet, 2003), but by the 1660’s, price stability and quality became issues as a result of the growing tobacco industry (Middleton & Lombard, 2011). English markets became saturated; therefore, in fear of a standstill market, colonial authorities intervened with the introduction of three corrective measures: 1) they reduced the amount of tobacco produced; 2) they regularized the trade by fixing the size of the hogshead and prohibiting shipments of bulk tobacco; and 3) they improved quality by preventing the exportation of trash tobacco (Middleton, 1953). Although these reinforcements fell-through during colonial time, these solutions were the first step in limiting tobacco in the United States, as noted in the passing of the Virginia Inspection Acts in 1730 (Finlayson, 1974).

Literally, tobacco facilitated the growth of communities during the New World Colonial Era (Middleton & Lombard, 2011). Colonists depended on one another, and thus depended on the stability of their most profitable cash crop of tobacco to both reward future endeavors and facilitate expansion throughout the new territory (Lund-Main, 1982). A way of life had begun on native soil that would forever propel generations of tobacco producers into a cultural legacy that would foster the growth of communities, provide economic stability in high proportions, and cultivate an interest for instilling value throughout the regions in which tobacco reigns (Gately, 2001).
Lastly, early Native Americans regarded tobacco as a sacred plant with special powers, “Huron Indian myth has it that in ancient times, when the land was barren and the people were starving, the Great Spirit sent forth a woman to save humanity. As she traveled over the world, everywhere her right hand touched the soil, there grew potatoes. And everywhere her left hand touched the soil, there grew corn. And when the world was rich and fertile, she sat down and rested. When she arose, there grew tobacco...”
(Lawson, 2013, p. 418).

Reviewing Greene County’s Past Tobacco Contributions

Tobacco continued to play a significant role in Early America as settlers continued to move westward (Middleton & Lombard, 2011). It should be noted that burley tobacco in Tennessee descends by a direct line from the tobacco that was developed by John Rolfe himself (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015). It was during 1885 a tobacco market was established in Greeneville, Tennessee to facilitate the sale of burley tobacco, an economically viable cash crop to the farmers of Northeast Tennessee (Bird, 1948). Interestingly, according to Yeargin and Bickers (2015), flue-cured tobacco dominated most of East Tennessee until 1916, with the exception of Greene and Washington counties. As a result, two very prominent men, Henry Brown and Clisby Austin, became the creative masterminds behind the conception of a burley tobacco sale in Greeneville that ultimately became one of the most successful burley tobacco markets in the nation (Bird, 1948).

Hogsheads packed with tobacco and consigned to markets in Virginia sitting at the railroad station were what first caught the attention of Greeneville native, Henry
Brown. He was determined to make Greeneville the focal point of burley sales in his hometown (Bird, 1948). A critical component of this tobacco sale is that it was developed specifically for the Type 31, or burley tobacco variety (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015). Prior to burley tobacco, flue-cured tobacco, which the colonists in Virginia grew, was the type first grown in Greeneville, Tennessee (Bird, 1948). However, upon the purchase of white-burley out of Ohio from Clisby Austin, a local manufacturer of chew tobacco, he determined Greeneville, Tennessee would be a suitable place to grow this new style of white-leaf burley tobacco. Thus, a small community, Chestnut Ridge, was the first documented planting site of burley tobacco, giving way to the pioneering efforts of Greene County’s pivotal role in the burley tobacco era during the late 1800’s (Bird, 1948).

It was during this time that tobacco production in Tennessee was largely confined to the eastern part of the state with the total acreage in 1924 reaching 31,500 acres, harvesting over 27 million pounds (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015). Clyde B. Austin Sr., Greenville’s first citizen, installed the first redrying machine in Greeneville, TN in 1918 and thus entered into business in 1919, creating a world-wide tobacco-leaf phenomena that would withstand decades of change within the worldwide tobacco industry (Bird, 1948). He also introduced Pur-Gold-it’s real tobacco, which was later sold to a major tobacco company (Bird, 1948). These accomplishments later propelled The Austin Company to a pivotal high in 1966, trading in 70 countries and installing plants in Mexico, Columbia, and Rhodesia, with branch offices in Hong Kong, Copenhagen, Bangkok, Rome, and Alexandria (Jones, 2014).
It was in the spring of 1928 that Clyde B. Austin approached the University of Tennessee and encouraged them to consider establishing a tobacco research facility in Greeneville (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015). By 1930, a state appropriations bill was passed in the state legislature granting $25,000 for the purchase of land on which a tobacco research station would be established (Click, 1990). The first official Field Day was held on the experiment station on August 12, 1932, an event which brought together the multitudes of farmers throughout the county to glean the latest information in tobacco production and marketing technologies (Click 1990), spurring a concept that embodies the University of Tennessee system today.

As the Second World War came to an end, a need for more tobacco was identified, and to fulfill this need was a mechanism in place on-site in Greeneville (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015). Advancements in plant breeding and agronomic practices have kept Greeneville viable in the changing marketplace in tobacco (Jarrett, 2007). In 1943, two natives of Greene County, Ogle Neas and Beryl Nichols, were hired in 1948 as the station’s tobacco plant breeder and agronomist at the Experiment Station (Click, 1990). Hugh Felts was hired on as station superintendent in 1946. Although a Robertson County native, Felts was well-versed in University endeavors (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015). This trio was instrumental in forging the path for a successful and relevant existence within the tobacco industry on both the home front and on a national level (Click, 1990).

It was out of this program, Dr. Robert Miller began his notorious journey in the realm of tobacco plant breeding in 1982 (Click, 1990). From his extensive research, the infamous burley tobacco, TN90 was born (Yeargin, 2008b). This particular variety was a
culmination of research and specific crossbreeding to favor an upright stalk position, yielding high, and having disease resistance to remain more profitable (Click, 1990). This is just one example of how tobacco has grown with the industry, far withstanding many changes in the industry itself and proving a dependable economic base for Greene County.

As Greeneville was also part of the Southern Railway Empire, the town boasted both commercial and industrial growth throughout the early 1900’s, primarily due to the influence of the golden leaf (Van West, 1995). In addition, Andrew Johnson, 17th President of the United States of America, was a fond user of tobacco, who was often noted fidgeting with his silver tobacco box (Schroeder-Lein & Zukzek, 2001). It was also during the early 1920’s that smokers discovered the taste of cigarettes improved considerably with the addition of burley, thus the production of the leaf grew enormously (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015).

*Cultivating a Community*

Tobacco towns grew at a rapid pace during the 1920’s (de Vries, 2008). When tobacco warehouses were first constructed, they intrinsically served multiple purposes. The first was to organize and sell large volumes of burley tobacco leaf, and the second purpose was to host larger crowds for community events such as political gatherings, religious services, rallies, and official public meetings (Yeargin, 2008a). Also, tobacco was considered by some to be a holiday crop, such as setting on Memorial Day, hoeing on the Fourth of July, cutting on Labor Day, or stripping on Thanksgiving (Ferrell, 2013). Moreover, this holiday crop evoked a certain sense of comradery among communities.
Tobacco culture facilitated the creation of jobs in manufacturing, processing, and numerous other industries related to the tobacco industry with tobacco sales over ritual counters adding millions of dollars in excise taxes to both state and federal treasuries (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015). Today, communities like Winston-Salem, North Carolina embrace their tobacco roots, because they recognize their city was built on the foundation of tobacco, at one time being the city’s largest employer for years (Tursi, 1994). Remnants of an empire remain, with 121 buildings throughout the city standing proud showcasing her legacy from the tobacco industry to generations to come (Hans, 2010). Similarly, Durham, North Carolina remains cognizant of its tobacco heritage through the Duke family contributions to endow present-day Duke University (“History of Duke University”, 2014). On a smaller scale, Greeneville has recognized its own tobacco heritage with the naming of Greeneville High Schools’ football field as Burley Stadium, in addition to the local Greene County Museum’s own tribute to burley tobacco in a permanent feature recognizing the significance of burley tobacco throughout the county.

**Entering a New Era**

Although burley tobacco continued to play a vital role in Greene County, Tennessee’s thriving economy, changes were starting to occur within the industry (Benson & Kirsch, 2010). It was in the not-so-distant past that a private leaf dealer from Farmville, North Carolina, A.C. Monk and Company, emerged, purchasing The Austin Company for 32.7 million dollars in 1990 (McArver, 2006). The Austin Company was founded in 1919 by Greene County native, Clyde B. Austin, where the business remained profitable over seven decades, providing steady jobs to citizens and as well as a viable
source of revenue for Greene County (Jones, 2014). Soon after A.C. Monk purchased the Austin Company, the processing plant housed in Greeneville, Tennessee was closed and moved it to a more modern Austin processing facility in Kinston, North Carolina (McArver, 2006). As a result, Monk-Austin became an overnight success with revenues reaching $630 million in 1991 (Grant, 2002).

It is important to note the succinct difference between tobacco culture and the tobacco economy. The fact remains that it is impossible for tobacco culture to exist without a tobacco economy (Buchanan, 2012). One influences the other, which is often seen as a result of tobacco production in small communities. Farmers raised tobacco to pay for weddings, holidays, vehicles, and annual land taxes (Brass, 2014). Moreover, as Buchanan (2014) described, “tobacco money helped perpetuate the culture and economy of tobacco farming” (p. 146). As noted in an 1887 history of Tennessee, “tobacco was the key to this newfound prosperity as the manufacturer and shipment of tobacco emerged as a leading industry” (Goodspeed, 1887).

Historical Components of Burley Marketing

Many significant issues have assisted with the historical and current structure of the burley tobacco industry. Those issues include: 1) the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) of 1938; 2) buying and selling quota; 3) cross-county leasing; 3) the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA); and 5) the shift in United States production.

Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) of 1938

The most relevant issue to all tobacco produced in the United States was the creation of the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) of 1938 (also known as the Farm
The Farm Bill established the Tobacco Program and was a component of the New Deal initiative inspired by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to move the United States economy out of the Great Depression (Tindall, 1967). As Tindall (1967) pointed out, the Great Depression provided the impetus for passage of the AAA of 1938, which was legislation aimed to address the recurring problems related to the overproduction of, and resulting low prices for agricultural commodities in general and other challenges that had plagued the tobacco industry since colonial days. Interestingly, as a result of the failed AAA of 1933 (the precursor to the AAA of 1938) ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1936 in the Hoosac Mills Case, tobacco farmers were left without an orderly production and marketing program which ultimately left the tobacco industry facing problems predating the Great Depression (Snodgrass & Wallace, 1964).

*Buying and Selling Quota*

As a result of the passage of the AAA of 1938, tobacco producers earned a safety net under auction prices and provided manufacturers with a stable crop of raw material for several decades (Tindall, 1967). The AAA of 1938 designated parity as the formalized method of arriving at a fair price, thus the creation of what came to be known as the support price. The support price represented the minimum price producers would receive for a unit of their product (Schickele, 1954). It was during this time, the quota system evolved, tying tobacco producers to acreage allotments determining the maximum acreage of tobacco they could produce. The allotments were based on historical production of the farm demonstrated and reported by the producer as to where tobacco was grown on their land (Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938). Tobacco producers were
then given a marketing card to facilitate the production and marketing of their tobacco crops (Schickele, 1954).

**Cross-county Leasing**

Yet another significant historical factor which affected the marketing of burley tobacco concerned the leasing of burley quotas (Snell & Chambers, 1991). This affected both the individual farmer and the markets up until 2004. It was not until 1971 that leasing was allowed under the Federal program for tobacco farmers (Buchanan, 2012). In 1990, The Farm Poundage Quota Revisions Act (FPQRA) of 1990 gave all burley tobacco quota holders the right to sell their quota to any active producer within the same county (Snell & Chambers, 1991). As time progressed, cross-county leasing was introduced, making more tobacco poundage available outside a producer’s home county (Hull, 2002). Cross-county leasing affected the rate of quota consolidation in Tennessee as many producers in high lease-price counties found it more profitable to lease-in pounds from low-lease price counties instead of actually purchasing the high-valued quota within their own county (Snell & Chambers, 1991).

A study comparing cross-county leasing to in-county leasing was performed by Klindt and Keller in 1979. The study delved into the estimated shifts of burley production. Cross-county leasing had not yet been introduced at this time; only merely speculating on the idea. Therefore, based purely on speculation, Klindt and Keller (1979) guessed if cross-county leasing were to be instated, lease prices would increase across the board. This was a trend during 2002 – 2004 with a shift in high lease prices which skyrocketed from a $.02 per pound to a $.85 per pound (this number can vary from county to
county) according to a University of Kentucky *Agricultural Situation and Outlook Report* (Ernst & Burdine, 2005). This was a substantial difference because not only did Klindt and Keller predict lease prices would soar, but they also surmised the amounts of available quota in counties would decline (1979). Therefore, thousands of pounds of tobacco quota were lost each year in the counties in East Tennessee (Gale, Foreman & Capehart, 2000).

Klindt and Keller’s (1979) study predicted if cross-county leasing was allowed, each county would gain economically. For instance, a study evaluating Claiborne County economics estimated Claiborne County to increase production by 1,408,000 pounds by being able to lease cross-county (Klindt & Keller, 1979). At $1.20 per pound at market, that would be a total value of $1,690,000. However, to merit this, Claiborne County producers would have to pay the going rate for pounds in neighboring counties. At the time of this study, the rate was $.02; therefore an expenditure of approximately $235,000 was doled out to other counties (Klindt & Keller, 1979).

Another example of cross-county leasing can be seen in Washington and Unicoi counties. If cross-county leasing were not allowed, pounds would just be wasted in Unicoi County because they have more poundage than they have producers (Jarrett, 2007). However, with lease prices the way they were, most producers agreed it was not economically feasible for them to pay the high end of the going lease rate for the growing season, which was $.25-$0.75 per pound for growing years 2002-2004 (Tiller, 2000a).

McManus and Hancock (1974) also studied the effects of leasing quota for pounds. They approached their study in a budget format by accounting for difference in
yields, tobacco prices, wages, and management charge. McManus and Hancock (1974) assumed three different yield levels, tobacco prices and wage prices. As a result, the estimated values per pound indicated the prices one could expect to find for a one-year lease (McManus & Hancock, 1974). For example, this study concluded that individuals experiencing low yields and high wage rates should consider leasing poundage to a producer that has lower costs. On the other hand, a producer producing high yields and low wage rates could consider leasing more quota in order to maximize profits (McManus & Hancock, 1974).

The Farm Poundage Quota Revisions Act (FPQRA) of 1990 and the advent of cross-county leasing in Tennessee spurred economic changes within the industry. Most prominent was the allowance to sell burley quotas providing a permanent mechanism to place a larger volume of burley quota into the hands of producers who intended to actually produce the quota (Snell & Chambers, 1991). As indicated by Mathis and Snell (2012), Tennessee was facing a permanent loss of some of their quota due to low utilization, or production of quota in several high-production-cost counties. With the inception of these two critical additions to the Tobacco Program, a means to reduce the overall industry’s critical underproduction problem was provided and the first stirrings of producers questioning the benefits of the quota program (Mathis & Snell, 2012).

Master Settlement Agreement

In addition to the buying and selling of quota and cross-county leasing changes, numerous lawsuits from both within and outside the tobacco industry continually brought pressure on the Tobacco Program during the 1990’s (Mathis & Snell, 2012). Hence the
Master Settlement Agreement (MSA), which was an accord reached on November 23, 1998 between the state Attorneys General Office of 46 states, five United States territories, the District of Columbia, and the five largest tobacco companies in America concerning advertising, marketing and promotion of tobacco products (Master Settlement Agreement, 1998). According to Spence (2009), this was the largest civil litigation settlement in history. The primary purposes for MSA funding to the states involved Medicaid services for smoking-related illnesses, and educational programs to reduce underage smoking (Master Settlement Agreement, 1998). Due to the MSA of 1998, Tennessee has received over $2.3 billion in payments of the total $4.8 billion, which will be in effect until 2025 (Master Settlement Agreement, 1998), and are referred to as the Phase I Tobacco Payments.

As Tiller (2002) noted, “Eight of the 14 tobacco producing states: Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Georgia, South Carolina, Maryland, Ohio, and Alabama, targeted some portion of their MSA payments to programs related to agriculture and/or rural communities, especially uses targeting tobacco producers and agricultural development. These states have spent an average of 22 percent of their settlement receipts to fund projects targeting agricultural development. Five of these eight tobacco states: Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Georgia, have also allocated another 20 percent on average for direct payments to tobacco producers and quota owners (p.5).”

Unfortunately, Tennessee, after initially expressing an interest in allocating half of its settlement payments to an agricultural development fund, later used all of its payments
through FY2002 (over $550 million) to partially offset a general budget deficit (Tiller, 2002).

To ease the burden of the MSA on tobacco owners and producers, the National Tobacco Growers Settlement Trust was established by Philip Morris, Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corporation, Lorillard Tobacco Company, and R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company to compensate tobacco quota owners and producers for potential reductions in their tobacco production and sales (Mathis & Snell, 2012). These payments more commonly became known as the Phase II payments and totaled $4.15 billion earmarked as payment to tobacco quota owners and producers in fourteen states over the 1998-2007 period (Tiller, 2002). In regards to Phase II allocations, Tennessee received nearly $400 million through 2010, which directly benefitted the tobacco producers and quota owners at a 90 percent/10 percent split respectively (Tiller, 2002).

*Tobacco Quota Buyout*

Due to the passage of the MSA, which began during President Clinton’s term as part of his Presidential Tobacco Commission, and further spurred by a pessimistic outlook and rapidly declining quotas, tobacco state congressional members intensified their efforts to move toward a buyout in 2002 (Mathis & Snell, 2012). Finally, on October 22, 2004, the Fair and Equitable Tobacco Reform Act of 2004, otherwise known as the Tobacco Quota Buyout, was signed into law (Womach, 2004). This occurred after gaining momentum upon endorsement from Philip Morris, the leading cigarette manufacturer in the United States which also supported Federal Drug Administration (FDA) regulation on tobacco products (Mathis & Snell, 2012). Although the FDA was
not the vehicle who moved the proposed buyout into legislation, it had a great bearing on the overall outcome of the legislation. The Tobacco Quota Buyout was attached to a must-pass corporate tax bill known as the American Jobs Creation Act (Womach, 2004).

Following the passage of the Tobacco Quota Buyout, various issues emerged with direct influence on the production and marketing of burley tobacco. Tobacco producers ultimately had only one year to transition from a federally regulated market to a free market system wherein they could no longer rely on the federal government for a price support (Tiller, Feleke & Starnes, 2010). Gone was the 66 year safety net tobacco producers had come to rely on and here to stay was the new free-market system unknown on most accounts by all tobacco producers. As Brown, Rucker, & Thurman (2007) predicted, a producer surplus in flue-cured tobacco production, Snell (2005) indicated an impediment in the expansion of burley production due to labor and curing structure constraints.

Upon passage of the Tobacco Quota Buyout, Tiller (2000b) indicated other factors as well in regards to direct-market contracts with the tobacco companies, including labor constraints. To illustrate, 76 percent of tobacco producers surveyed from Tennessee indicated labor would have a direct link to their future production of burley tobacco. Jarrett (2007) resonated this point as well, noting most tobacco producers had resigned themselves that history had been made in regards to direct-market contracts with tobacco companies, which resulted in a higher cost of production in the United States, especially labor. Therefore, many producers chose to exit production post-buyout (Tiller, Feleke & Starnes, 2010).
Buchanan (2012) discovered, with the emergence of neoliberalism in respect to tobacco companies, the culture and economy of tobacco farming had been blatantly disrupted to the point of many small tobacco producers being forced out of production. Tiller, Feleke, and Starnes (2010) also reflected this result as 54 percent of tobacco producers surveyed in this study proved to exit production in 2006 in Tennessee alone. Lastly, Mendieta (2011) determined as a result of current marketing strategies in tobacco, many Tennessee tobacco producers were likely to exit production and enter into diversification enterprises to sustain their farm operations and to remain economically viable.

*Shift in Production*

The United States perspective, as indicated in the Census of Agriculture data (United States Department of Agriculture, 2009) determined the number of tobacco farms decreased 72 percent from 56,977 farms in 2002 to 16,234 in 2007, resulting in almost a double turnover from the 1997-2002 period, which was a loss of only 39 percent (United States Department of Agriculture, 2009). There was also a significant decrease in tobacco farms between the 2007 and 2012 with the Census of Agriculture illustrating a total farm loss of 6,220 farms in a five-year period (United States Census Bureau, 2012). However, there was a shift in production from smaller acreage farms to larger acreage farms from 2002 to 2007 with smaller farms producing 23 percent of the annual crop compared to 43 percent of the larger farms (United States Department of Agriculture, 2009). However, an increase in tobacco acreage was seen in 2008, attributing this to an increase in larger acreage farms belt-wide (Brown & Snell, 2013). As a result, by 2012,
larger tobacco farms were producing 61 percent of the annual tobacco crop (United States Department of Agriculture, 2014).

Lastly, when President Obama signed the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, the FDA gained authority to regulate the production and marketing of cigarettes and other tobacco products (Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, 2009). Their first major regulatory action came in 2009 with the banning of the flavored cigarettes, declaring they were a gateway for children and youth to pick up the smoking habit (Harris, 2009). As noted in a 2004 study by Sloan, Mathews, & Trogdon (2004), the Family Smoking Prevention and Control Act, the Tobacco Quota Buyout, and the Master Settlement Agreement have not significantly harmed the tobacco industry in regards to the international sales of United States tobacco products.

**Theoretical Framework of Resiliency**

“Resilience is best defined as an outcome of successful adaptation to adversity” (Reich, Zautra, & Hall, 2010). Most would consider the response to adversity to be an individual basis, determined by a crisis. However, communities are engaged daily in practices that foster resilience at the community level, and crises can differ in definition dependent upon the situation(s) (Gaventa, Smith & Wellingham, 1990). In reality, resilience can be looked upon as a theory, encompassing both a set of capacities and strategy for promoting a readiness response to any type of crisis (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008).

The construct of resilience “…refers to a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker,
To expand on this concept, Ledesma (2014), described three resilience models used to describe the impact of stress on quality adaptation in the event of a crisis. Within the scope of this study, the challenge model represents the ability to enhance a community’s adaptation to a particular stressor, enabling them to better prepare for the next set of challenges (Ledesma, 2014).

As described by Frankenberger, Mueller, Spangler, and Alexander (2013), in order for communities to develop and/or maintain resilience, they must first be prepared. This means individuals within a community who are affected by a current perceived crisis will typically seek information from the knowledge of those in the community that have managed a similar crisis before (Frankenberger, Mueller, Spangler, and Alexander, 2013). Secondly, communities must respond to the perceived crisis (Frankenberger, Mueller, Spangler, and Alexander 2013). This is often a response from the local government acknowledging the crisis, and lastly, innovation becomes the key to success when a community is engaged in a particular crisis. The adaptive capacity at the community level is enabled as a result of a shared learning process among all those involved in the community (Berkes, 2007).

In addition, the process of thriving cannot be overlooked, as O’Leary (1995) described challenges can often provide an opportunity for growth and change, thus spurring resilient communities in the advent of stressors. As Ledesma (2014) described, communities will respond in three different ways when confronted with a challenge. They will survive the incident, recover from the incident, or thrive as a result of the incident. Resilience is seen as a multidimensional process which occurs over time.
(Polidore, Edmonson & Slate 2010), and is ultimately the ability to bounce back from adversity, frustration, and misfortune (Ledesma, 2014).

**Resiliency in Communities**

To illustrate how crises affects communities, many prominent agricultural crisis events have occurred throughout history, including the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in the United Kingdom in 2001, the Great Depression, the mad-cow epidemic, various ecoli incidents, and on the tobacco precipice, green-tobacco sickness, otherwise known as nicotine poisoning (Mazoyer, 2006). All these events adversely affect the communities from which they arise. However, each of these occurrences have given rise to communities rebounding as a result of community resilience.

A more in-depth illustration can be seen through the exploration of the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in the United Kingdom during 2001 (Bourn, 2002). As quoted by a local in Goddard’s (2002) report, “Many businesses were wrecked, both in tourism and agriculture, people's lives destroyed… rural communities torn apart… the loss of hundreds of years of breeding, some of the finest stock resources in the world, resulted in, without doubt, the worst tragedy to visit Cumbria this century (p. 4).” This significant crisis led to an opportunity for the Cumbria community (Goddard, 2002). An educational network was created out of a rapid response team in a nearby community to give over 500 farmers access to the Internet, providing them with the information necessary to determine what was going on outside their locked-down community and to prevent them from feeling the isolation (Hagar & Haythornwaite, 2005). This service still exists today
and portrays how even in moments of crisis, communities can overcome adversity and rise to the challenge of resilience.

Similarly, the drought in California during 2012-2015 substantially affected the producers in the region, reducing both production and profitability at the farm level (Bornstein, 2015). Because the media primarily focused on the impacts felt by the people within the cities and suburbs, agricultural impacts were overlooked (Hertsgaard, 2015). As indicated by (Bornstein, 2015), communities within the affected regions relied on the necessary resources to respond to the crisis event. The California Legislature intervened, regulating groundwater extraction in the eighth largest agricultural economy in the world (Hertsgaard, 2015). As a result of the drought and as a response to community needs, the California Cooperative Extension Service hosted over 150 workshop totaling over 10,000 participants addressing water issues (Bornstein, 2015). Practical solutions were investigated to alleviate water use, including more practical uses of irrigation (Hertsgaard, 2015). Producers sought out alternative crops to remain profitable and maintain production levels during the drought, while simultaneously reducing overall water consumption at the farm level (Bornstein, 2015).

Although California remains impacted by the remnants from the drought, progress has been made as a result of the communities’ working together to solve the water deficit crisis. Communities throughout the drought-ravaged California agricultural area have become resilient, seeking alternatives to withstand the crisis, diverting loss of production, and overcoming adversity.
Adaptive Leadership

As defined by Northhouse (2013), “adaptive leadership is a unique kind of leadership that focuses on the dynamics of mobilizing people to address change” (p. 260). Included in the adaptive leadership model are a certain series of situational challenges that create specific leadership behaviors, thus resulting in adaptive work in which individuals emerge as leaders in their communities. Wong (2004) described adaptive leaders as those that learned to live with unpredictability, thus spending less time fretting about the ability to establish routines or controlling the future; rather focusing more on exploiting certain opportunities to become successful.

The key to the success of the adaptive leadership model are the behaviors in which leaders must possess to move forward (Northhouse, 2013). They include: “1) getting on the balcony; 2) identifying the adaptive challenge(s); 3) regulating distress; 4) maintaining disciplined attention; 5) giving the work back to the people; and 6) protecting the leadership from voices below” (Northhouse, 2013, p. 261). In order for adaptive leaders to help others in their communities confront difficult challenges and inevitable changes that accompany those challenges, they must first overcome technical and/or adaptive challenges (Northhouse, 2013). Refer to Figure 1.

Adaptive challenges are problems that are not easy to identify, thus often requiring a shift in perception as a result of dealing with a substantial change (Northhouse, 2013). Overcoming these particular challenges often requires leadership driving perspective in the midst of an impending change or loss (Heifetz, 1994).
Adaptive challenges are tied to emotion, thus imparting a necessary need to change (Northouse, 2013). As a result, coping becomes an adaptive skill (Heifetz, 1994). This approach mitigates frustration felt by the process of adaptive change (Northouse, 2013). As most individuals inherently avoid change, it is necessary for adaptive leadership to guide the process deliberate acknowledgement in order for successful growth to continue, as well as to give voice to the concerns of those affected (Northouse, 2013). As a result, there is a buy-in from all affected parties resulting in a more flexible transition of change because adaptive leadership is follower-centered (Northouse, 2013).

Figure 1: Models of Adaptive Leadership

Figure 1: Models of Adaptive Leadership. Northouse (2013, p. 261)
Chapter 3

Materials and Methods

As described by McMillan (2012), a qualitative perspective emphasizes a phenomenological view in which reality inheres the perceptions of individuals and typically focuses on meaning and understanding in naturally occurring situations. Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research used to gain an understanding of underlying reason, opinions, and motivations; and provides insights into problems by developing ideas and/or hypotheses (Wyse, 2011).

This qualitative study utilized in-depth interviews, which are “optimum of collecting data on individuals’ personal histories perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive subjects are being explored” (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen & Guest, 2005, p.30). Gathering information from interviews, personal observations, and photographs taken during the research provided me the opportunity to gain perspective on each participant, as well as providing the necessary details to create themes, make interpretations and conclude a rich, full picture of the research situation (Wright, 2002). In-depth interviews also provide the opportunity for participants to develop and give their personal thought processes without fear of bias and/or influence from other respondents, especially in controversial, sensitive or tabooed subjects (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, & Guest, 2005).

Participant Selection

This study utilized purposive sampling to identify appropriate participants (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, & Guest, 2005). Ten prospective participants were identified
through historical records accessed via industry portals and current industry employees, as well as Farm Service Agency historical documents.

1. Participants selected must have had some ties to the early production of burley tobacco in Greene County and/or worked in the industry within Greene County’s borders to more effectively meet the scope of this study. Employees of the Farm Service Agency identified 10 individuals from Greene County that met the criteria.

2. Upon selection by the Farm Service Agency, I reviewed historical documents located in the Farm Service office denoting they were indeed current and/or past Greene County tobacco producers, either by their involvement in the tobacco program prior to 2004 (quota holder) or as an active recipient of farm loan and/or insurance on record at the Farm Service Agency (tobacco producer), also known as ARC/PLC Program.

3. Once approved by the Institutional Review Board, each individual was contacted directly by telephone to determine their interest in participating in an interview. They were required to complete an Informed Consent form prior to the interview.

4. Participants represent a total production of 279 acres during their lowest production year up to a total of 975 acers at their highest production peak. All participants now range in the lowest production year, as a result of company contract cuts during 2014.
5. All participants have been actively growing tobacco for a combined 367 years and range in age from 20 to 78 years.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted from June through August, 2015 with past and present Greene County growers/industry representatives. Interview locations included Greene County, Tennessee; Washington County, Tennessee; Lenoir County, North Carolina; and Johnston County, North Carolina. These locations were relevant as the participants chosen for this study now live and/or work in these locations, but have inherent ties in the production and/or the marketing of burley tobacco in Greene County.

Interviews were conducted at either the producer's farm or at a local restaurant, dependent upon where the producer felt most comfortable in participating in the interview. This ensured privacy for the producer, as well as providing the benefit of confidentiality. Interviews ranged in length from one hour and 45 minutes to almost six hours. The interview process also afforded me the opportunity to record personal observations and take photographs to be utilized in data synthesis.

Demographics

I interviewed 10 producers ranging in age from 22 to 78 years. Four producers were 40 and under, two were in their forties, one was in his fifties, and two were in their sixties, representing an average age of 49 years. All producers were male and were natives of Greene County.
Participant 1 was 52 years old, full-time producer with no children, producing over 100 acres of burley tobacco, as well as a variety of row crops, straw, pumpkins, beef cattle, and owns and operates a custom spraying operation.

Participant 2 was a 36 year old full-time firefighter and part-time producer, with one 11 year old son who enjoys working alongside his dad on the farm. He produces four to eight acres of burley tobacco each year. This producer also grows and supplies wine grapes to a local winery and grows pumpkins for local retail markets.

Participant 3 was a 33 year old part-time producer who also owns and operates a full-time lawn care business. He has two young children he hopes will one day return to the farming operation he continues to grow. He only produces five acres of burley tobacco, but consistently grew the crop prior to the buyout as both a quota owner and producer. He also maintains a sizeable beef cattle herd and hay operation.

Participant 4 was a 69 year old full time producer producing over 200 acres of burley tobacco prior to 2015, in which he only produced 15 due to company contract cuts and declining health. He is also a row crop producer, producing over 800 acres of corn and soybeans. His two grown children have never pursued full-time or part-time farming endeavors.

Participant 5 was a 48 year old row crop, commercial vegetable, and burley tobacco producer with two children not intending to pursue farming at any level. He is also a full time employee off the farm and produces 20 to 100 acres depending on the market year, focusing more on retail vegetable production at the local farmers markets.
Participant 6 was a 22 year old who wishes to pursue the family farming operation full-time in the coming years. He produces small fruits and vegetables for local resale, owns and operates a greenhouse in which vegetable and flower transplants are sold each spring, and has a beef cattle herd in partnership with his father. He has only been actively producing his own burley tobacco crop for four years, but was actively involved with the family tobacco farm from a young age. He owned tobacco quota prior to the buyout, creating eligibility for him to participate in this study. He also plans to produce the commodity as long as he can.

Participant 7 was a 78 year old full-time producer in partnership with his son in producing roughly 50 acres of burley tobacco, as well as maintaining a large beef cattle operation. He is also a former dairy producer, but due to health reasons, is no longer assisting with this facet of the farm.

Participant 8 was a 40 year old full-time producer growing 100 to 310 acres of burley tobacco, along with commercial vegetables, including squash and cabbage for the wholesale market, row crops, beef cattle, and greenhouse tobacco plants. He has young children he hopes will one day pursue a career on the family farm.

Participant 9 was a 43 year old full-time producer, maintaining a beef cattle herd, along with about 100 acres of burley tobacco. Participant 9 consistently yields well over 2500 pounds per acre annually on his tobacco crop and is actively involved with many burley tobacco boards and associations at the local, state, and national level.
Participant 10 was a full time producer and self-employed business operator. He has consistently grown 20 acers of burley tobacco each year, as well as being known as the top-rated producer of burley tobacco greenhouse seedlings in a tristate area.

Among the 10 producers, they have a combined 367 years’ experience in working on a tobacco farm. Three producers claimed to have been actively engaged in tobacco production their entire life. Only one producer is considered new to the industry, having only been engaged in tobacco production for four years and is also of whom the youngest respondent at age 22. The remaining six range from 33 years to 45 years being actively engaged in tobacco. Interestingly, three of the remaining six became actively engaged in production at age 18, with two of those becoming actively in the industry before age 12.

Of the 10, only four have held off-the-farm jobs while growing tobacco. Of those four, only one has been self-employed. Regarding the remaining six, three have and continue to be full-time producers, whereas three contend they are full-time producers with a self-employed business related to agriculture. One of those producers is actually only actively engaged in tobacco production at the level of producing tobacco transplants for resale.

In regards to diversification efforts prior to the Tobacco Quota Buyout, seven producers were actively engaged in livestock production; one producer owned a dairy; and two were involved with hay/straw production. No producers were actively engaged in commercial vegetable/fruit production or owned and/or operated a side business prior to the buyout. However, as a result of the buyout, six producers increased their tobacco
poundage of the farm. Therefore the need for additional labor in burley tobacco production also increased, resulting in additional inputs at the farm level.

Based on the responses from the interviewed producers, reflective notes from the researcher, and peer-reviewed notes, four specific themes emerged, which were impact on personal farm, sense of pride in community, resiliency, and adaptive leadership. Within those themes emerged seven additional subthemes. The subthemes of impact on personal farm level were diversification of their personal farming operations, production and marketing constraints, and concern for future generations. Subthemes of sense of pride in their community were communication; perceptions; heritage and historical legacy; and community involvement and community economics.

Documents

All documents collected throughout the interview process were kept confidential, utilizing a code number for each participant, as findings focus on specific themes rather than individual case studies. Documents collected included personal field notes from each interview, as well as personal journal reflections upon completion of the interviews, and the transcriptions from each interview itself. Audio tapes were only used to transcribe the interviews upon which all audio recordings and transcripts will be kept for five years in a locked cabinet in the office of the secondary investigator at the University of Tennessee, in which only the primary and secondary investigators will have access. After five years, all documents will be destroyed.
Data Analysis

Data from interviews was synthesized to determine perceptions of current tobacco production in Greene County from the inception of the tobacco program to present-day. Interviews both reflect cultural norms and economic impact, while simultaneously providing a portrayal of tobacco as a viable cash crop. The significance of present-day global production with the direct interaction of a community’s response to overcoming significant change is also synthesized from interview data in this study.

All transcriptions were completed, along with field notes, photographs, and personal journal reflections prior to data synthesis. A reflection journal was kept with me at all times in order to further interpret data at any time throughout the research for this study, thus creating the opportunity to triangulate the data and maintain trustworthiness. Interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed by me, as this process allowed better acquaintance with the research (Reissman, 1993). All files utilized Microsoft Word 7 for word files and document retention, upon which can only be accessed via a laptop computer. The laptop is password protected by only myself.

Based upon the responses received from the participants, four specific themes emerged, which were impact on personal farm, sense of pride in community, resiliency, and adaptive leadership. Within those themes emerged seven additional subthemes. The subthemes of impact at the farm level were diversification of their personal farming operations, production and marketing constraints, and concern for future generations. Subthemes of sense of pride in their community were communication, perceptions, heritage and historical legacy, community involvement, and community economics.
Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is established through credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, authenticity, and coherence (Hays & Singh, 2012). To ensure validity throughout the study, credibility was maintained utilizing a technique known as triangulation, which involves the use of different sources of data/information by categorizing which individual interviews for this study (Creswell, 2007). Triangulation occurs when all respondents agree on specific outcomes throughout the study, basically yielding the same understanding of the outcomes (Creswell, 2007). All documents utilized throughout this study were triangulated, including the interviews themselves, personal observations and reflections, and field notes, as well as a thick description of each participant, which are also representative of credibility.

To represent dependability of this study, a peer reviewer, which is a university trained faculty member in qualitative studies, scanned for consistency among participant responses, researcher notes, and observations. To maintain transferability, the use of participant interview responses, the literature review, reflective notes and observations, as well as prolonged engagement were utilized. All participants of this study facilitated a check of individual transcripts, establishing confirmability.

Researcher Bias

Prior to engaging in this study, I recognized possible bias could occur in conducting this study. I am a tobacco producer myself. I grew up in a tobacco-dependent rural community in Western North Carolina, and earned my State Farmer Degree in Future Farmers of America (FFA) in tobacco production in 1993. I have also worked in
the industry and education and research sectors for 22 years. Therefore, it was concluded a bias could occur as a result of my direct personal ties to the industry; therefore, possibly influencing the questions asked in the interview to determine emotion and change perceptions about the industry.

Having grown up on a burley tobacco farm in North Carolina, I am highly cognizant of the parameters burley tobacco serves to both the individual farmers and overall communities. My background in the tobacco industry includes three sectors: 1) Education, serving in the role of Extension Agent in Washington County, Tennessee (1999-2004) and Greene County Extension Agent (2009-present); 2) Research, having served in the capacity of Tobacco Research Technician at the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (1993-1999); and 3) Industry, as an Agronomist with Philip Morris International Tobacco Company (2004-2008).

To minimize bias during the interview process, both interview questions and probing questions were structured so participants were not guided in their responses. A university faculty member served as a peer reviewer, trained in qualitative studies to facilitate the guidance of both the analysis of data, as well as theme development. I believe tobacco remains a strong, viable cash-crop commodity for Greene County, Tennessee burley tobacco producers, and the overall economy of Greene County, Tennessee.

**Researcher/Participant Reflection**

Having grown up on a burley tobacco and beef cattle family farm only fifty miles from Greene County, Tennessee, I am highly cognizant of the potential loss in cultural
traditions and how directly significant changes can alter the sense of pride and connection within communities when suffering a loss of a typical “way of life” on the farm. It is from my own personal experience, as well as personal observations during interviews with respondents of this study and later reflections upon their answers and research for this study, I recognized although change is inevitable, communities’ can withstand certain change and emerge triumphant in future pursuits without losing the legacy of their historical past.

It is those direct lines with our past that drive us to succeed and enable us to impart a lasting footprint of our own in making the transition to a better tomorrow. It is the personal relationships that flourish in these communities, along with a personal sense of pride in our upbringing and current farming endeavors that allows each of us to look toward the future while never forgetting our past. It is the realization that without those generations before us, paving the way for our personal successes, perhaps the legacy they left for us to love today would be of a different status quo.

I write this as I sit in the former Austin Company’s main office headquarters, which today is my office, complete with the Diamond G emblazed on the smokestack out in front of the building that ironically houses the UT Extension, Greene County offices. It stands tall and proud towering over this unforgotten and distinctly memorable area of downtown Greeneville, reminding us of our cultural legacy that will forever remain in this historic district where our roots run deep with the production of a plant that epitomizes the foundation of a community rich with culture and the birthplace of the world’s second largest leaf dealer today.
Burley tobacco, although a 13 month job and some of the hardest work I have ever been personally involved with, gave me opportunities far surpassing anything I could have ever imagined. Being raised on a fourth generation burley tobacco farm, I was taught from a very early age the importance of hard work and helping my fellow neighbors. It instilled a sense of spirit in me that will forever remain because I know I am who I am today as a result of those many summers hoeing endless rows of tobacco or handing up every stick of tobacco into the barn or grading tobacco in weather so cold you could never feel your fingers or toes. Tobacco gave me not only a sense of pride for myself and my family legacy, but for my overall community. My small community in Haywood County, North Carolina is very different now than it was sixteen years ago when I left, but that spirit lives on in the little valley of Crabtree, traditionally known today as one of the best burley growing regions in Western North Carolina. There may not be a lot of the golden leaf seen growing on the roadsides or hanging in the barns, but we all know and remember...
Chapter 4

Results and Discussion

Chapter 4 seeks to explain the findings from the 10 interviews conducted for this study. This study explored the perceptions of current Greene County burley tobacco producers regarding resiliency in a declining global tobacco industry. This study also evaluated how the producers perceive their leadership in burley tobacco production, and how they feel that will be impacted in Greene County.

Based upon the responses received from the producers, the impact on personal farm, sense of pride in community, resiliency, and adaptive leadership emerged as themes for this study, with an additional seven subthemes, which were diversification of their personal farming operations; production and marketing constraints; concern for future generations; communication; perceptions; heritage and historical legacy; and community involvement and community economics.

Impact at Personal Farm Level

Diversification of personal farming operations

All 10 producers agreed they had each diversified their farming operations as a result of factors within the tobacco industry. One producer (P1) performs custom spraying in their community. Two producers (P3 & P10) own lawn and/or landscape companies as a side business for the farm. Six (P1, P3, P6, P7, P8, & P9) own beef cattle; one (P7) operates a dairy farm; four (P1, P3, P6 & P8) produce hay and/or straw for resale; four (P1, P4, P5, & P8) grow corn and/or soybeans; and five (P1, P2, P5, P6, & P8) are involved in commercial fruit and vegetable operations, specifically pumpkins,
blueberries, squash and cabbage with one producing wine grapes for a local vineyard. As
one producer stated, “...production and profitability is now based on quality as well as
quality. The company wants quality, so I look for alternative crops now” (P1).

Upon inquiring which farm enterprises were of highest market value, two of the
10 producers (P3 & P6) claimed beef cattle. Of the remaining eight producers, five (P4, P5, P8, P9, & P10) reported tobacco was their highest value cash crop, and two (P1 & P7) reported a combination of both the beef cattle and tobacco were their highest valued crops. One producer stated “grapes were the most profitable in my overall farming operation last year” (P2).

Production and marketing constraints

Regarding production and market changes, the 10 producers have personally experienced in the last 10 years, three (P5, P6, & P10) reported no significant change. Of those three, one is not currently producing tobacco (P10) and one is relatively new to the industry and unfamiliar with the quota system (P5). As one producer explained, “I have only been in production for four years. I got in because of my dad. No real changes” (P6).

Five producers (P1, P6, P7, P8, & P9) stated they now operate utilizing the big bale package versus the small bale. As one producer stated, “I have gone from small bales to big bales. My acreage is up” (P1). Although one producer confirmed bigger bales was a positive change in the last 10 years, he also stated, “I simply could not afford the big bale as an option on my farm due to my small production size” (P3). As a result, he was penalized from the company for delivering in small bale packages.
Four of the 10 (P1, P3, P5, & P7) confirmed a shortage in pounds (e.g. allotment, quota) in the last several years as a market change, yet another four (P2, P4, P8, P9) have also personally increased labor on their farms. Four of the 10 producers (P1, P3, P6, & P7) expressed concern over direct-marketing contract companies having too much control, creating an absence of competitiveness among companies and the overall uncertainty of the future of the industry. As one producer points out, “Production is limited based on what pounds the company will contract to you. Therefore, I have no personal choice on how much I can grow. It is all controlled by the company because of their contract numbers” (P1). Yet another producer claimed, “The market is very unstable with uncertainty” (P2).

Incidentally, seven of the 10 producers (P1, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, & P9) claim they are striving to build or maintain a high level of agronomic practices on their operations through proper usage of pesticides, resistant varieties, and decreasing costs of overall inputs to remain profitable. As one producer described, “I am more in tune with my tobacco as a crop” (P5). Interestingly, only one of the 10 producers felt prices have become more stable in the last 10 years.

When prompted to recall the price per pound of tobacco in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, producers struggled to remember precisely. However, five (P2, P5, P6, P7, & P10) agreed somewhere in the range of $1.65 - $1.75 with four (P1, P3, P8, & P9) agreeing somewhere between $1.85 and $1.90. Of those four, one cited a specific $1.98 for tips during that time. Only one producer (P4) indicated a price per pound lower than $1.50, stating he remembered prices to be at $1.30 during the 1980’s.
In contrast, when prompted to recall the price per pound of tobacco in 2005, producers were more confident in their responses. Eight producers (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, & P9) claimed the price per pound ranged between $1.65 and $1.85, with three (P1, P8, & P9) of those citing specifically $1.85. One producer (P10) was not actively engaged in production at that time, and one producer (P3) claimed only $1.45 price per pound in 2005.

Similarly, when asked about the status of their production yields since they have been actively growing tobacco, five of the producers (P1, P3, P5, P6, & P7) claimed to have had no real changes and/or remained steady, other than a few instances with Mother Nature. As one producer described, “There has been no dramatic change in my yields other than Mother Nature” (P3). Two producers (P2 & P9) responded their production yields had actually increased, whereas, one producer (P4) indicated there was a potential for increase with resistant varieties. One producer (P8) claimed an overall decrease in production yields. Again, one producer (P10) is not actively engaged in tobacco production other than transplants, but stated his transplant production has decreased in the last 11 years.

When producers were asked if they were familiar with the Tobacco Quota Buyout, all responded yes. One producer illustrated, “Initially the buyout looked good for producers, and it worked well because companies made it look attractive. It actually made the tobacco get in the hands of those who really wanted to produce it. During the Tobacco Quota Buyout, pounds were in the hands of those wanting to make a profit without even growing tobacco. The disadvantage now is companies are smart enough to
know the cost of production, and with no price support or government intervention companies have too much control of the marketing system. They totally control the price, who can grow tobacco, and then ultimately who can market tobacco” (P1).

However, one producer stated, “Well, the Tobacco Quota Buyout forced a lot of growers out of business. But, the tobacco is in the hands of those who want to grow it now, like myself. Price support gave us a safety umbrella because now the buyout just gave all the control to the companies. We, as producers, really have no say” (P8).

Four of the 10 producers (P2, P5, P7, & P8) expressed their preference to the quota system, claiming there was better stability and less volatility in the market. One producer described, “The price support was a good program. It had a safety net for farmers. Companies today are too picky and expect too much. They just don't care” (P7). Yet another producer simply stated, “I think the government program supported the growers more. There was more stability. There is too much volatility today” (P5).

A safety net [government support price] was in place to protect the producers. As noted by one producer, “I know it is hurt my business and its producers continually seem to be getting cut and in the beginning many producers exited the business altogether” (P10).

In reference to the current marketing structure affecting production, only one producer (P9) claimed there was no effect. Three of the 10 (P1, P6, & P10) indicated either too much control within the company or volatility in the world market were factors in determining their production based on current marketing structure. Of the remaining
six (P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, & P8), all attributed the companies’ decisions to cut poundage as the primary reason for affecting their overall production.

Of the nine current producers, all received contract cuts following the 2014-2015 production cycle (one producer (P10) does not actively produce a crop). One producer (P6) completely lost a contract, with two (P8 & P9) losing 80 percent of their contracts and two (P3 & P4) losing 70 percent of their contract. The significant factor was no producer remained even with pounds or increased in pounds last year. All producers lost anywhere from ten percent to all of their contracts for the 2015-2016 production year.

Concern for future generations

Among the 10 producers, seven (P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, & P9) had children. Of those seven, only one (P7) has children actively involved in a farming operation, but three of those (P2, P3 & P8), which had very young children, hope perhaps one day their children will want to pursue the farm. Two producers (P4 & P5) had children not involved with the farming operation at all.

When asked what the future holds in regard to tobacco production on their farms, only five (P3, P6, P7, P8, & P9) responded they wanted to continue growing tobacco. One producer said, “I love to grow it! I need to survive” (P7). Yet another simply declared, “I’ll keep growing” (P9).

One producer (P5) indicated he would decrease production, with the remaining three (P1, P2, & P4) declaring the possibility of quitting production altogether. As one producer stated, “If I can find something to replace tobacco income wise, I would. I would quit growing tobacco tomorrow, and I am very near to that point now because of
the cost of producing a profitable crop. Profit margins are down, labor issues are a problem, and qualified labor is absolutely an issue. Tobacco is nowhere near appealing to grow as it once was. I only grow it today for sentimental reasons, and because I'm good at producing it because I always have. The policy problems difficulties are all too much to try to keep growing without the profit we use to receive” (P1). Yet another producer simply stated, “It does not look very good. I am thinking about quitting” (P4). One producer (P10) was unsure about his future production.

When asked if these cuts influenced their future decision to produce, four of the nine current producers (P6, P7, P8, & P9) indicated the cuts would have no bearing on their future decision to produce, with one grower stating, “Well, it sure is not as fun as it used to be. I will grow as long as they let me, I guess” (P8). One producer felt he was not being treated fairly and is fed up with the entire system, “Buyers are too biased. There is no consistency. Many buyers do not know what tobacco is. I am fed up with the whole system! I feel as though I have not been treated fairly” (P4). One producer (P3) indicated if he received a contract, he would continue to grow, yet another (P2) indicated he was looking for alternative enterprises as a result of the contract cuts.

Producers were asked how they saw the future of tobacco production in Greene County, and if they thought their opinion would impact or influence younger producers looking to produce tobacco as a mainstay in their personal farming operations. Eight of the 10 producers (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, & P9) felt tobacco was on its way out in Greene County. As one producer described, “This area has historically produced high-quality tobacco, and at one time we were the largest tobacco producing county in the
entire state of Tennessee. We no longer are anywhere close to being relevant on the
domestic or the world wide crop” (P1).

The remaining two (P2 & P10) did not respond concretely to this, but implied
production was on the decline. In regard to influencing the younger generation, nine of
the 10 producers (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, & P10) were adamant about the younger
generation not getting involved in the industry. One producer in particular stated “I
would struggle to encourage any young person to even consider growing tobacco these
days” (P3).

Of those nine, six (P1, P3, P4, 5, P6, P7, & P8) stated even if the younger
generation wanted to get into the industry and produce tobacco on their farms as a
mainstay, it would be difficult. As one producer so eloquently stated, “First off, even if
young people are interested in producing tobacco, their opportunity or potential of getting
into the industry is very, very slim. I would struggle to encourage any young person to
even consider growing tobacco these days” (P1). One producer stated, “There is no more
room to play” (P4). A younger producer claimed, “Younger folks like me just can’t get
in even if they want to” (P8). As yet another younger producer illustrated, “Cattle prices
are high and other crops are bringing more money to the farm cash flow” (P3). And last,
“I am young. How long can I stay? It is up to the company” (P6).

When asked how the buyout has affected Greene County production since 2004,
five producers (P1, P2, P4, P6, & P7) remarked there has been a decrease in production.
Three (P8) cited there were simply no producers left in the county, with one remarking,
“Just drive around. It is evident. There is no tobacco left here. The small guy is out” (P8).
Three (P6, P7, & P9) were in agreement the smaller producer was being pushed out, and the larger tobacco producer has having room to expand after the buyout from two growers. One producer (P9) made mention of the empty warehouses in Greene County, whereas yet another producer (P10) emphasized the maintenance and expense of today’s crop. Interestingly, only one producer commented on diversification after the buyout in comparison to one farmer remarking, “The older generation just got out when they could. The newer generation or the young producers like myself realize the money is just not there for us” (P3).

Pride in Community

Communication

Producers were asked if and how the direct communication from their contracting company(s) had affected their production/marketing plan since 2004. Of the 10 respondents, five (P2, P3, P5, P9, & P10) indicated they knew what was expected in advance from the company. One producer acknowledged, “I know what companies will pay up-front, what they are looking for, and how I can adjust accordingly” (P5). Yet another producer stated, “We both signed the contract before the crop year. I have to deliver what I say. The company has to deliver the price” (P9).

The remaining five producers (P1, P4, P6, P7, & P8) perceive the company as having too much control, with two of those (P1 & P8) five expressing too much communication from the companies. One producer (P8) went as far as to say communication from the companies has increased his workload overall, and yet another stated, “There is no loyalty from tobacco companies” (P4).
When asked what TSNA’s and NTRM’s were, all but two (P6 & P7) knew they were Tobacco Specific Nitrosamines and Non-Tobacco Related Materials. Ironically, both the youngest (P6) and oldest (P7) producers were the two that did not know what these terms were. Upon acknowledgment of these terms, when asked if they affected their marketing strategies, one producer (P3) stated he felt they did not affect him because he was such a small producer. Of the remaining six, one producer stated, “I lost my contract due to an NTRM issue” (P4). However, the other five (P1, P2, P5, P8, & P9) agreed they currently take steps to reduce both issues from a production and marketing perspective in their farming operations. As one producer noted, “I am much more cautious about how I handle my tobacco today than I was 10 years ago” (P2).

Furthermore, one producer (P1) stated he now follows labels accordingly on testified usage and uses only 200 pounds per acre of nitrogen on his crop to facilitate a decrease in TSNA’s at the farm level.

Perceptions

The 10 producers have all been actively engaged in tobacco production at some point throughout their lifetime. However, production has decreased at a steady pace since the Tobacco Quota Buyout in 2004. When asked what the largest and smallest amount of tobacco grown on their farm and the factors influencing those acreages, all 10 producers reported they are significantly growing less tobacco today than they were prior to and/or right after the buyout. As one producer noted, “After the buyout, I took a full-time job off the farm. As a result, my production decreased on the farm” (P5).
Four of the 10 producers (P1, P5, P6, & P7) claimed their largest growing years were prior to the Tobacco Quota Buyout occurred and their lowest production years have been recent due to company poundage cuts. Ironically, two different producers (P2 & P9) claimed the opposite, stating their production increased as a result of the Tobacco Quota Buyout, as companies increased poundage for their specific contracts. Furthermore, one producer (P10) reported he stopped tobacco production on his farm following the buyout. The remaining three (P3, P4, & P8) cited labor shortages, Mother Nature, and personal issues as their reasons for less tobacco production since the Tobacco Quota Buyout.

Conversely, the remaining six producers (P2, P3, P4, P8, P9, & P10) perceived an alternative mentality, suggesting the newer direct market contracts system allows for the tobacco to be grown by those that actually want to produce the crop, while simultaneously weeding out those growers not producing a high quality crop. Of those six, one conveyed, “The government should be left out of it all together” (P2). Two of the six producers (P1 & P4) confirmed the price was level in their marketing scheme as a result of not having to track down pounds after the buyout. They felt their bottom line was sufficient for the less amount of work involved soliciting pounds from quota owners before the buyout occurred.

As one producer stated, “Well in my case I have never been more tickled to get tobacco pounds in the hands of those who really wanted to grow it. I was someone who really wanted to produce it. I do not have to spend months and months begging to get pounds now like I used to. That was crazy, but the price per pound dropped, meaning I
ended up with the same amount of money, but there again I could focus on my production and my farm other than chasing down pounds” (P4).

The remaining three producers (P4, P8, & P9) agreed the buyout forced some producers out of business, but also rid the market of those individuals wanting to get rich off tobacco without growing the labor intensive crop as suggested by one producer, “After the Tobacco Quota Buyout, the quota owners got rich. Well, those that owned any quota. I leased a lot of pounds. The game is the same. The Tobacco Quota Buyout did weed out those guys who just did not care about growing quality. I prefer the contract system. If you grow quality, they [companies] will take care of you” (P9).

Upon asking what producers thought about the inception of the GAP program, two producers (P3 & P4) claimed it was ridiculous, declaring, “There is no rhyme or reason. No consistency at all. They need to give us a break and realize we are business operators and tobacco producers! GAP makes no sense” (P4). Whereas, three producers (P1, P5, & P9) felt the concept is good for the producer, although maybe not efficient, as noted by one producer, “The concept is good and could be useful to the industry. I have always been supportive, although to this point it has not been effective in my opinion” (P1). One producer also noted, “It has been a good program. It raises awareness. It makes all of us as producers more competitive and efficient in the long run” (P5).

Of the remaining five, two (P8 & P10) felt the program was silly or goofy. One producer (P5) thought it was a waste of everyone’s time; one producer (P2) thought it was for companies to get the growers together to manipulate them; and one (P6) is still trying to figure it out.
In relation, when asked if GAP has affected their production/marketing schemes, five (P3, P4, P7, P9, & P10) replied no. Only one (P5) relied yes, with four additional producers (P1, P2, P6, & P8) implying yes. One producer commented, “I am much more cautious while handing my tobacco” (P2). One producer (P10) is now growing low-converter seeds. Two producers (P6 & P8) felt it was more paperwork for them to comply with the GAP program, but admitted to doing it to adhere to current company standards. One producer specifically stated, “Quite frankly, some of it is ridiculous and none of their business! No, it has not affected my production practices, other than that I have to do what is required of me in order to stay in business. That is all. It only benefits the company. There is way too much paperwork involved. Let me be a farmer” (P4).

Of the 10 producers, four (P3, P5, P6, & P9) hold only one contract to market their crop and four (P1, P2, P4, & P8) hold two contracts to market their tobacco, whereas, one producer (P7) admitted to holding two contracts and sometimes selling to the auction system. When inquired what their thoughts were specifically in regards to direct market contracts, four (P2, P3, P4, & P9) indicated a positive response, with one stating, “I wouldn’t go back to the poundage system for nothing” (P4)! Five (P1, P5, P6, P7, & P8) indicated they felt the contract system only benefitted companies, and that there was no room for the grower. As one producer indicated, “They are just too picky. Just let me sell my tobacco” (P7)! Yet another producer claimed, “This is the only way to conduct business in today’s word. My opinion” (P2).
Heritage and historical legacy

When producers were posed the question as to what historical relevance Greene County has played or continues to play on the worldwide supply and demand stage, all 10 producers overwhelming declared that Greene County was historically the largest market in the state of Tennessee. One of the 10 producers actually declared, “Tobacco was King” (P10)! With another agreeing, “Tobacco put us on the map” (P6)! Similarly, eight of the ten made reference to the fact Greene County was no longer producing high volumes of tobacco, therefore not contributing much to the worldwide supply and demand in tobacco production. Three producers (P1, P2, & P3), however noted historically both producers and companies knew tobacco produced in Greene County was of a high quality. Interestingly, only one producer (P2) felt there was promise for Greene County to continue growing and delivering based on supply and demand in worldwide production.

When producers were asked where they thought direct market contracts had affected tobacco production the most at the local level, three (P2, P6, & P9) specifically commented on the reduced amount of producers now in the county. Five (P3, P4, P5, P8, & P10) stated there were simply no pounds left to grow in the county, with three additional producers (P3, P4, & P5) noting the economy of Greene County had been compromised. One producer summed it up by commenting, “There is no tobacco seen driving through the country anymore” (P5). The economy went bust! Look at downtown” (P7)! One producer made mention of the fact companies had left the area,
leaving only two options to sell tobacco, and one producer implied, “Many of the current producers are now talking about exiting the business due to lack of interest” (P4).

Community involvement and community economics

When producers were asked if they realized the impact tobacco has played in the role of economic contributor to Greene County, the overwhelming response was verbatim, “Absolutely” from seven (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, & P10) of the ten producers. The remaining three (P5, P8, & P9) answered with, “Yes”; “Hell yes;” and “Oh, yes!” From these responses, it is clear to infer from the resounding replies all 10 producers were indeed aware of the role in tobacco as an economic contributor to Greene County.

When asked if the buyout and the GAP program had positively, or negatively, or made no significant change influencing the overall economy in Greene County in comparison to the 80’s, all 10 responded that both of these issues have negatively affected the Greene County economy. One producer stated, “Before the buyout, there was a lot of tobacco money in this county, but after the buyout, folks took the money and run. What used to be able to pay for Christmas or a kids’ education is no more. Now the money in this sector is gone. Probably never to come back” (P4). Yet another producer stated, “Reflecting on my childhood, tobacco was what paid the bills. Now it is a hobby. An expensive one” (P6).

Resiliency in Greene County

As indicated by nine of the 10 producers (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, & P9), they are currently still growing burley tobacco as a means of income for their farming operations, illustrating resiliency at the community level. Although burley tobacco
production has declined steadily in Greene County, eight producers (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, & P10) have all been actively engaged with production for 22 years or more, with two (P4 & P7) producers citing they had been involved with tobacco their entire life.

In regards to market changes in Greene County, all 10 producers have continually diversified and/or produced more burley tobacco as a means to stabilize farm income. As one producer indicated, “We [Greene County] should be able to continue to grow and deliver based on supply and demand in production worldwide” (P2), illustrating resiliency has been an active concept throughout the county for many years. Also, as noted by one producer concerning the effect of the Tobacco Quota Buyout, “Some expanded production. Some got out of production. Some diversified” (P5).

Although all but one producer feels like burley tobacco production will continue to decline in Greene County, all producers are cognizant of the crop’s influence in their hometown, indicating a community rich in resilience. As one producer remarked, “Reflecting on my childhood, tobacco was what paid the bills” (P6).

*Adaptive Leadership*

In referencing adaptive leadership and their influence on burley tobacco production in Greene County, eight producers (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, & P9) have adapted to the changes within the burley tobacco industry in some fashion. Of the remaining two, one producer (P10) has completely exited production. The remaining producer has been unable to adapt in the changing market environment, and has thus received a lower price for his tobacco claiming, “I am too small to go to a big baling system. Therefore, I deliver in small bales and get a lower price” (P2).
Four producers (P1, P2, P5, P8, & P10) have made significant changes in their production practices in order to maintain profitability at the farm level. As one producer stated, “I have gone from the small bales to the big bales and added new varieties” (P1). One producer (P8) studies Crop Protection Agents (CPA’s) to determine which will work more effectively and yield a lower input cost. Yet another producer proclaimed, “I have been trying to change my production program to be more in-line with that of the company, especially in regards to agronomic practices” (P5). As indicated by that same producer (P5), the GAP program has afforded the opportunity for producers to become more “in-tune” with their crop. Yet another producer remarked, “I do more record-keeping now to maintain compliance with the company” (P8), and as one producer pronounced, “We all are now more accountable” (P9).
Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Burley tobacco has been and will continue to play an important role in Greene County, Tennessee’s economic sector, as well as maintaining its’ historical ties framed within the context of tradition. Producers in this study identified diversification of their personal farming operations necessary in order to either maintain current production of burley tobacco or to maintain viable on their farms independent of tobacco. As a result, burley tobacco production represents an adaptive challenge for both burley tobacco producers and citizens within Greene County, Tennessee, as well as the entire tobacco industry in the United States.

Several subthemes emerged in regards to the personal impact felt at the farm level including diversification, production and marketing constraints, and concern for future generations entering into burley tobacco production. Half the producers have already shifted production from burley tobacco as their highest value cash crop as a result of shifts in the production and marketing environment experienced since the buyout in 2004. The producers have thus faced adaptive challenges requiring a shift in perception as a result of dealing with a substantial change (Northouse, 2013). Greene County, Tennessee demonstrates adaptive leadership through the ability to see the big picture and its relation to both a personal farm income from the tobacco producer’s standpoint and the overall economic impact at the community level while simultaneously creating an environment satisfactory to both parties.
Tobacco has always been a mainstay crop grown on many Southern Appalachian farms as a means of profitable and consistent income for the last several years. However, most tobacco warehouses in the mountains have closed and the vast majority of former tobacco farms are no longer producing tobacco (Jarrell, 2011). Tobacco has been a crop grown traditionally on Greene County family farms to supplement off-farm income or to provide a stable income for full-time producers. However, as with all enterprises, change occurs and with change comes the potential frustration of losing a way of life, a heritage or a legacy. It is with these changes, communities band together to facilitate new opportunity and remain strong in their cultural tradition in order to progress effectively as individual farmers and as a community of solidarity.

As tobacco reigned as the most prominent crop for several years in Greene County, life was what most families throughout the communities considered good. Tobacco was profitable and although hard-work; it provided a more-than-decent income for farm families throughout the county (Yeargin, 2008b). However, as multiple changes began occurring at a rapid pace families and communities were adversely affected throughout Greene County causing both financial and emotional struggles (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015). The question being asked was how could families afford to continue to grow tobacco, but how could families afford not to? Perhaps through a process known as resilience.

Perhaps, as this study so poignantly clarifies, there is a connection between the farmer and the tobacco plant itself which has repeatedly stood the test of time. There is a long-withstanding legacy that evokes a sense of nostalgia and pride among the
communities that have historically grown tobacco. New on the horizon is the emergence of a new type of farming that could pave the way for the continued production of tobacco in the United States and provide the means necessary to remain intimate with the love of producing the weed that developed this nation; an industry known as biopharming, which is the production of pharmaceuticals in genetically modified plants (Hayes, 2013).

The theme of resiliency emerged including the cultural effect on a community, and the overall community acceptance of change. Interestingly, all 10 producers felt a shift in culture in regards to a specific way of life involved with the production of burley tobacco on their family farms, spanning multiple generations. Therefore, this study reveals a deep culture of tobacco production as a mainstay crop for community livelihoods.

Greene County entered into a financial predicament with the abolishment of the Tobacco Program in 2004, which lead to an emotional breakdown of farming communities throughout Greene County (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015). Farmers,’ along with citizens’ livelihoods had been compromised (Jarrett, 2007). The promise of an at least a break-even crop of tobacco was in question. Could producers continue to make a profit for themselves? Would communities that were dependent on income derived from tobacco taxes be in jeopardy from production cuts? Some producers recount those early days after the buyout as a disastrous and questionable time (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015). As a result, the 2004 buy-out incurred a stress response felt throughout the county.

“The background of stressors are aversive circumstances that threaten the well-being or functioning of the individual, organization, neighborhood, community, or society (Norris, et al, 2008),”
whereas crisis in its simplest terms is defined as "an upset in a steady state (Rapoport, 1962).

Greene County has seen the phenomenon of communities overcoming adversity and rising to the challenge of resilience first-hand with the implementation of the Direct Market Contracting system in 2004 (Little, 2010). Although, many producers exited tobacco production during this transitional time, they either chose to diversify their farming operations to remain viable or sought a full-time job off the farm (Yeargin & Bickers, 2015).

It lies within the communities to determine whether or not to succeed and/or fail after industry-changing events alter the current path of production. “Tobacco farmers, dairy farmers, steel workers in Pittsburgh, auto workers in Detroit, textile workers in South Carolina—what do we all have in common? Our ability to see the big picture, to organize, to renew pride in our strengths, to rebuild communities, and to wrest control over the political process. We can do it. We are doing it” (Gaventa, Smith, & Willingham, 1990, p. 84). This quote illustrated the power of a resilient community that even when faced with dire straits, looks to succeed. Interestingly, as Gaventa, Smith, and Willingham (1990) pointed out, tobacco lobbyists in Washington, which are financed by companies and producers alike, promise they have interests of the entire tobacco industry at heart. Ironically however, it is the producers themselves that have their own interest at heart, as they are naturally more inclined to favor higher prices and wish to protect the vested interests of production while at the same time diversifying into other crops to remain viable in an ever-changing industry.
The research for this study came from a multitude of sources, including internet sources, newspaper clippings, published documents, books, magazines, and government reports detailing the history of the tobacco industry, including recent developments on both the local and state and global scene. An emphasis was placed on the historical component of the tobacco industry to increase awareness so the importance tobacco held in colonial times, across the seas, and here at home in our backyards could be illustrated. Four specific themes emerged as a result of the 10 producers interviews in relation to a cultural way of life being compromised in their personal farming operations, as well as in their hometown communities.

As shifts in production have occurred in burley tobacco production since 2004, so too, has the shift in mindset for Greene County citizens (Yeargin, 2008). Although no longer the tobacco giant they once were, they still remain profitable in a plummeting domestic industry, staring adversity in the face, acknowledging change, and accepting the challenge to be a resilient community (Jarrett, 2007). They remain steadfast in their ability to withstand financial and emotional impediments through the realization of tobacco as a cultural tradition, revered and valued by those intrinsically impacted, whether directly or indirectly, through the production of burley tobacco in Greene County (Little, 2010).

In this research, eight producers specifically stated with the shift in tobacco production, the Greene County economy had been compromised in recent production years and acknowledged little or no contribution to worldwide supply and demand volumes for burley tobacco. As Buchanan (2012) stated, “the federal tobacco program
allowed for the continuation of small farming as a part-time livelihood an full-time way of life in the mountains well past the years when other farming communities across the country, such as those in the Midwest, had met the full force of the free market.” (p. 158).

As this study indicates, all 10 producers have been actively engaged in tobacco production throughout their life, but each of them admitted their personal production has steadily decreased since the buyout in 2004.

Although tobacco production has steadily decreased in recent years, producers have not been left without a steady means of income or cash flow in their farming operations. As a result of this study, it was determined all 10 producers had indeed diversified their personal operations as a result of the changing industry in the last 10 years. This comes as no surprise as indicated by Beach, Jones and Johnston in their 2005 study, which suggested farm households were more interested in diversifying their income over time in the absence of tobacco money (p. 18). Ironically, fifteen years ago, many tobacco producers believed there was no farming enterprise available to them that would yield the profit like tobacco (Altman, Zaccaro, Levine, Austin, Woodell, Bailey, Sligh, Cohn & Dunn, 1998). Interestingly, in Greene County, one producer claimed his highest valued crop during the 2014 production year was wine grapes.

Not only has one producer expanded into wine grape production, but tobacco producers in Greene County have diversified their operations since abolishment of the Federal Tobacco Program in 2004 with various enterprises, reflecting the spirit of an agrarian society, while simultaneously clinging to their tobacco heritage. As indicated in this study, commercial fruit and vegetable production, including tomatoes, squash, and
pumpkins; and farming businesses, including custom spraying and landscaping/lawn mowing have provided a steady cash flow for producers in Greene County, while concurrently affording them the opportunity to grow the legendary golden leaf, revered for its historical to sustaining the livelihoods spanning multiple generations. Although beef cattle; hay and/or straw for resale; dairy production; and row crops, including corn and soybeans were enterprises producers were engaged in prior to the buyout, these areas of production have also increased since the Buyout as a means to remain profitable at the farm level.

As noted throughout this study, many factors have influenced the overall decline of tobacco production in the United States. One of the most influential factors is the more expensive cost of burley tobacco in the United States compared to competing countries (Gale et al. 2000). In addition, direct-market contract companies prefer cooperating with fewer large-scale producers due to the trouble directly working with a larger number of small-scale growers, of which typically lacked in financial resources to comply with company standards (USDA FSA, 2000). In response to these factors, Greene County producers in this study either conformed to company standards through purchasing big-bale packaging systems and increasing tobacco acreage on their farming operations, or simply decreased production and increased farm cash flow receipts elsewhere on the farm.

Yet another indicator, as realized in this study, in conforming to company standards was the addition and implementation of the standardized Good Agricultural Practices Program (GAP) in 2013, mandatory for all tobacco producers in the United
States. GAP covers information on three integral production components, including, 1) Crop Management; 2) Environmental Management; and 3) Labor Management (Bailey & Pearce, 2014). This study revealed an overwhelming negative response to the new program citing it a waste of time and just another means of companies having control over the producers producing the tobacco. In conjunction with the one hour annual GAP training each year materializes the potential for a third-party audit visit, often adding stress to the already over-worked Greene County producer trying to keep accurate records on a daily basis in order to not risk losing his contract. Although considered burdensome by producers in this study, several admitted to handling their tobacco more cautiously and complying with recordkeeping requirements as a result of the implementation of the GAP program.

This study also concluded all 10 producers realized tobacco was a huge economic contributor to the Greene County economy. They all viewed the 2004 buyout as a negative change for the overall Greene County economy and claimed a significant exit of producers had occurred since the buyout, thus in their opinion, weakening the overall economy in Greene County. As predicted by Tiller, Shiferaw, Feleke and Starnes in a 2010 study, more than one half of sampled burley tobacco farms in Tennessee exited production by 2006, demonstrating the impact of the termination of the federal tobacco program in 2004. Many tobacco farming communities were well-positioned to absorb tobacco income loss, but others were more vulnerable (Gale et al. 2000). However, Greene County producers have rebounded by increasing beef cattle herds, thus ranking number one in the state of Tennessee for beef production (Mays, 2015).
Although the impact of reduced tobacco production in Greene County has been felt by each of the producers, one Greene County producer, interviewed by a local newspaper stated, “I see it as a threat to our way of life in America. It’s not just tobacco; it’s corn, it’s everything.” This same producers also stated, “I’m still making money. It’s a good life (Little, 2010).” Also, as noted in Jarrett’s 2007 study, the Extension Agents he interviewed in North Carolina and Tennessee agreed the economic impact felt during the ten years of the buyout settlement would be good while the money was in circulation, but after that period, it would be over (p.127). This statement reflects the overall demise regarding the loss of tobacco production in Greene County and rings true across the burley belt as Kentucky alone reported a loss of 18,700 farms from 2002 to 2012 (Patton, 2014).

Although tobacco farming has subsided in Greene County, Tennessee after the termination of the federal tobacco buyout program in 2004, several producers have remained steadfast in their growing intentions. However, as the 2016 production year is upon us, I have received word from three of my largest producers, all three of which were respondents in this study, are exiting tobacco production this year, due largely in part to the significant contract cuts felt at the conclusion of the 2014 marketing year by the companies. As unfortunate as this is for their personal farming operations, it is even more adverse for the overall production intentions for Greene County, Tennessee, which can also be seen in various other tobacco producing regions across the belt. This transition can be witnessed in Kentucky, where projections for 2016 production are
predicted to be almost 100 million less than two years previous (Burdine, Davis, Woods, Snell, and Meyer, 2016).

As indicated, all producers in this study have demonstrated and overcome adaptive challenges, therefore making them leaders in their communities. Because adaptive challenges are tied to emotion, the need to change becomes necessary (Northouse, 2013), and thus, coping becomes an adaptive skill (Heifetz, 1994). Adaptive leaders were key to strategizing negotiations from the farm level all the way to the legislative level, enabling all those involved with the industry, a process in which clarification from all perspectives could be defined, resulting in a more cohesive approach to deliberate change. Tobacco producers in Greene County have become key to strategizing negotiations from the farm level all the way to the legislative level, enabling all those involved with the industry, a process in which clarification from all perspectives could be defined, resulting in a more cohesive approach to deliberate change, therefore mitigating frustration felt by the process of adaptive change (Northouse, 2013). Because many individuals inherently avoid change, it becomes necessary for adaptive leadership to guide the process in order for successful growth to continue, as well as to give voice to the concerns of those affected (Northouse, 2013).

Greene County, Tennessee demonstrates adaptive leadership through the ability to see the big picture and its relation to both a personal farm income from the tobacco producer’s standpoint and the overall economic impact at the community level while simultaneously creating an environment satisfactory to both parties.
As stated by most producers in this study, tobacco is on its way out in Greene County with no hope of the next generation producing tobacco on the traditional family farm. Unfortunately, this appears to be the trend amongst most burley tobacco growing regions in the Southern Appalachians, but to reiterate as indicated in this study, producers, and thus communities persevere, engaging in alternative enterprises yielding comparable worth to that of the beloved golden leaf.

Burley tobacco production and marketing has significantly changed in the last 20 years, resulting in a diminished profit for both individual producers and Greene County communities as a result. However, in response to the industry’s tumultuous transition, Greene County burley tobacco producers have risen to the challenge by adapting their production and/or marketing methodologies. Greene County continues to undergo momentous change, but with adaptive leaders at the helm, Greene County will continue to emerge triumphant in the face of crisis. Greene County is a resilient community born out of commitment to a legacy that has long withstood the test of time and contributed to an economy rich in agriculture and pride in their tobacco heritage.

Future Recommendations

As revealed in this study, changes have rampantly occurred in the last several years and continue to remain eminent in the burley tobacco industry, both locally and globally. As a result, both independent farms and steadfast tobacco farming communities will be in transition to remain profitable in the ever-changing industry. These questions will need to be further explored to determine both individual producers and tobacco farming
communities’ response to inevitable change in the worldwide and domestic tobacco markets.

- What is the interpretation of Greene County burley tobacco producers in regards to their personal experiences and feelings endured at the farm level as a result of the substantial changes in the tobacco industry?
- Will the United States remain a player in global supply and demand when other countries can produce the “big leaf” so much cheaper?
- Do our smaller farms in East Tennessee have the potential to remain competitive in a market driven by Big Tobacco companies?
- Where does the future lie with agrarian communities in regards to alternative enterprises replacing the lost income from tobacco?
- How can Extension be utilized as a means of further dispersing information to communities and producers’ alike in regards to diversification efforts and growing strong communities?
- Are there advantageous outcomes to benefit communities tied to tobacco production even as a result of a decline in production/consumption at the local level?
- Can communities dependent on burley tobacco survive in the changing market environment, while simultaneously sustaining their tobacco heritage?
List of References


Click, C. L. 1990. A history of the University of Tennessee Tobacco Experiment Station. (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Tennessee, Knoxville.


Appendix
Appendix A: IRB Approval

June 12, 2015

Melody Teague Rose,
UTIA - EXT-Greene County - EXT-Greene County
105 Greene County Extension Office Space
204 N. Cutter Street
Greeneville, TN 37745--3847

Re: UTK IRB-15-02286-XP
Study Title: The Story of Burley Tobacco Production in Greeneville, Greene County, Tennessee: An Historical Account of Cultural Perspective and Economic Impact

Dear Ms. Rose:

The Administrative Section of the UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for the above referenced project. It determined that your application is eligible for expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1), categories (6) and (7). The IRB has reviewed those materials and determined that they do comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects. Therefore, this letter constitutes full approval by the IRB of your application (version 1.1) as submitted. Approval of this study will be valid from 06/12/2015 to 06/03/2016.

Please be sure to use the form "Informed Consent (contact updated)" which is dated and stamped IRB approved, as it contains updated contact information for the IRB Compliance Officer.

In the event that subjects are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, web-based advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB. Any revisions in the approved application must also be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Finally, re-approval of your project is required by the IRB in accord with the conditions specified above. You may not continue the research study beyond the time or other limits specified unless you obtain prior written approval of the IRB.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Colleen P. Gilrane, Ph.D.
Chair
Appendix B: Informed Consent Statement

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

This informed consent explains about being a subject in a research study. It is important you read this material carefully to determine whether or not you choose to be a volunteer participant.

PROJECT: “Burley Tobacco Production in Greene County, Tennessee: An Historical Account of Cultural Perspective and Economic Impact”

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to obtain ten Greene County burley tobacco producers perspective/perception/insight on a culture and economy during a time of transition.

DURATION: Interviews will last one to two hours. Interviews will consist of a limited number of questions pertinent to the tobacco industry within Greene County, Tennessee relating to your knowledge and experience with the tobacco industry, both past and present.

PROCEDURES: Interviews will be recorded on tape and later transcribed, word for word. Interview questions may require you to recall past tobacco growing practices and cultural traditions.

RISKS: No identified risks and/or discomforts associated with the research participant.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All documents collected throughout the interview process will be confidential. Your name will not appear on any documents. Findings from this study will focus on generating stories relevant to synthesize perceptions of burley tobacco production in Greene County, Tennessee, as well as incorporating both economic and social themes relevant to tobacco production both past and current. To reiterate, although the “story” of tobacco production will be told through your eyes as a participant, no individual names will be included in any documentation throughout the duration of this study.

Audio tapes will only be used to transcribe your interviews upon which all audio recordings and transcripts will kept for five years in a locked cabinet in the office of the secondary investigator at the University of Tennessee, in which only the primary and secondary investigators will have access. After five years, all documents will be destroyed.

BENEFITS and/or COMPENSATION: Potential benefit of this study is to the citizens of Greene County, Tennessee. This study will provide a more in-depth comprehension of
the overall burley tobacco industry within Greene County in relation to worldwide and domestic production. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** Feel free to ask questions concerning this research study prior to agreeing to participate in this study or while participating during this study. You may contact Melody Rose at (423) 262-7445 or e-mail mteague@utk.edu or Dr. Carrie Stephens at (865) 974-4830 or e-mail cfritz@utk.edu. Any questions related to your rights as a participant, or any concerns you feel were not addressed about this study can be directed to the University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board at (865) 974-3466.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. 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 this study.

Participant's signature ______________________________ Date __________

Investigator's signature _____________________________ Date __________
Appendix C: Phone Script

Telephone Recruitment Script

Hello - My name is Melody Rose and I am a Master’s student from the Agriculture Leadership, Communications, and Education Department at the University of Tennessee. I'm calling to talk to you about participating in my research study. This is a study about Greene County burley tobacco producers’ perspective/perception/insight on a culture and economy during a time of transition. You're eligible to be in this study because you have been or currently are a Greene County tobacco producer and/or a former and/or current employee of the tobacco industry in Greene County, Tennessee. I obtained your contact information from the United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency in Greene County, Tennessee.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be recorded on tape and later transcribed, word for word. Interview questions may require you to recall past tobacco growing practices and cultural traditions. Interviews will last one to two hours. Interviews will consist of a limited number of questions pertinent to the tobacco industry within Greene County, Tennessee relating to your knowledge and experience with the tobacco industry, both past and present. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate, we can go ahead and schedule a time for me to meet with you to give you more information. If you need more time to decide if you would like to participate, you may also call or email me with your decision.

Do you have any questions for me at this time?

If you have any more questions about this process or if you need to contact me about participation, I may be reached at 423-262-7445, which is my cell phone number.

Thank you so much.
Appendix D: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Please remember your responses are confidential. Your identity as a participant in this study will not be revealed to anyone other than the primary and secondary investigators involved in the research of this study or the official of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Tennessee.

1. What year were you born?

2. Are you a Greene County native?

3. If not, how long have you lived in Greene County?

4. Do you have children? Are they involved with the farming operation or plan to pursue that endeavor?

5. How many years have you been actively engaged in tobacco production?

6. Have you held an off-the-farm job during that same time? Self-employed business?

7. Have you ever diversified your farming operation as a result of factors within the tobacco industry?

8. If yes, what other farm enterprises are you engaged in on your farm?

9. In terms of market value, what are the most profitable farm enterprises on your farm?

10. What was the largest and smallest amount of tobacco grown on our farm?

11. What were the scenarios for both of these? What factors influenced these crop years?

12. What changes in the market have you personally experienced in the last 10 years? Describe those experiences.

13. What changes in production practices have you personally experienced in the last 10 years? Describe those.
14. Think back to the late 80’s...What price per pound for tobacco did you receive?

15. Think back to 2005...price per pound for tobacco?

16. How about your production yields? Have they increased/decreased in the years you have been growing tobacco?

17. Are you familiar with the Tobacco Buyout? Thoughts? Describe your experiences with the price support system versus the buy-out.

18. How many contracts do you hold to market your crop?

19. What are your thoughts on the direct market contracts?

20. How has the direct communication between you and the contracting company affected your production and marketing plan since 2004?

21. What are TSNA’s and NTRM’s? Do they affect your marketing strategies?

22. What do you think of the inception of the GAP program?

23. How has this affected your production/marketing schemes?

24. What does your future hold for tobacco production on your farm?

25. How is the current marketing structure affecting your production?

26. How many pounds were you “cut” for 2015 production year?

27. How has this influenced your future decision to produce?

28. In regards to production in Greene County, how have the buyout and GAP program influenced the overall economy in comparison to the 80’s or even the early 1900’s? Positive, negative? No importance?

29. Do you realize the impact tobacco has played in the role of economic contributor to Greene County?

30. How has the Buy-out affected Greene County production since 2004?
31. Where direct market have contracts affected tobacco production the most on a local scale?

32. What historical relevance to the industry do you think Greene County has played or continues to play in tobacco production in regards to worldwide supply and demand?

33. How do you see the future of tobacco production in Greene County? Will your opinion impact or influence younger growers looking to produce tobacco as a mainstay on their farming operations?
Vita

Melody Teague Rose grew up in Haywood County, North Carolina in a rural farming community called Crabtree on the outskirts of Waynesville, North Carolina. Her passion for agriculture was instilled in her at an early age by her grandfather, Wallace Hill, where she spent her afternoons after school feeding the cows, hoeing tobacco, and working in the garden. These experiences further shaped her love of the land, and thus ultimately lead to a very active involvement with the Tuscola High School Future farmers of America chapter, where she excelled in numerous judging activities and earned her State Farmer Degree in 1993. Upon entering college, Melody pursued a degree in Agriculture form Berea College. Upon graduating from Berea College in 1998, Melody advanced her career with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, the University of Tennessee Extension Service and later served her passion for burley tobacco as an employee of Philip Morris International. Through her vast range of knowledge and experience within the burley tobacco industry, as well as her infinite love of leadership education at all levels, Melody enrolled at the University of Tennessee in agricultural leadership and communications. Melody has served in numerous leadership positions including the Tennessee Farm bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers State Committee and the Kentucky Agricultural Leadership Program. Upon graduation, Melody will continue to serve the agricultural industry, representing UT Extension in Greene County, Tennessee as an Extension Agent II with educational programs geared toward both burley tobacco and adult leadership activities.