



2016

# Perception, Opportunity, Empowerment, and Policy: Women's Influence in Kentucky Agriculture

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Digital Object Identifier: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2016.236>

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## Recommended Citation

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PERCEPTION, OPPORTUNITY, EMPOWERMENT, AND POLICY:  
WOMEN'S INFLUENCE IN KENTUCKY AGRICULTURE

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in the  
College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment  
at the University of Kentucky

By

Courtney Lacy Jenkins

West Liberty, Kentucky

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Lexington, KY

2016

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### PERCEPTION, OPPORTUNITY, EMPOWERMENT, AND POLICY: WOMEN'S INFLUENCE IN KENTUCKY AGRICULTURE

The number of women farmers in the United States is increasing at a substantial rate. Women are fulfilling various roles on the farm and stepping into formal leadership positions in the agricultural community. This study surveys the perception of women reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture among traditional agricultural leaders, the opportunities available to women in agriculture, the sources empowering women to serve in leadership capacities in agriculture, and how women reputational leaders influence agriculture and agricultural policy in Kentucky. The research revealed that the dynamic of Kentucky agriculture is shifting. Women have made significant strides in agriculture as farmers and professionals, resulting in women assuming formal leadership posts at all levels. Findings indicate there are ample opportunities for women in agriculture to receive informal training and education that will benefit their farm operation, but the programs should be designed solely with women's needs in mind to be effective. Recommendations for further research include an intersectionality study of Kentucky's women leaders in agriculture, a study of the potency of the Cooperative Extension Service and post-secondary educational institutions for grooming women leaders, and research to help determine why women tend to seek out volunteer roles in agricultural organizations rather than leadership positions.

**KEYWORDS:** Women in Agriculture, Reputational Leader, Leadership in Agriculture, Perception, Empowerment

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May 2016

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Pursuing a graduate degree has been a lifelong goal of mine. Though this thesis has been a-long-time-coming, and the birthing process slow and painful at times (due to my own lack of motivation), I could not be more thankful for the opportunity to finally accomplish this feat!

This study could not have been done without the multitude of people who encouraged, guided, and assisted me throughout this journey. Fortunately, I have had the privilege of having many influential people in my life. Strong men, and even stronger women, have shaped the person I am today and deserve recognition for their unwavering support.

My parents, Perry and Francis Lacy—I am reminded on a regular basis that everybody in this world does not receive the same life chances. You could have easily denied me the many opportunities that essentially made me who I am, but instead, you helped me find ways to get to where I wanted to be, even when it wasn't the most attainable option. For that, thank you. Thank you for encouraging me to work hard and think outside-the-box to reach my goals. Most importantly, thank you for teaching me that it is okay for a woman to be a farmer in a world where farming is generally gendered toward the masculine. Allowing me to be involved in agriculture, at home and in the community, cultivated my interest in the field which led to my education and my career.

My grandfather, George Lacy—You were undoubtedly the most influential person in my life. Dignified, intelligent, disciplined, and kind are just a few words I use to describe you. Your unfailing love and blanketing support was always so reassuring. You ultimately instilled in me my passion for education and taught me the importance of being a life-long learner. I am forever grateful for the impact you had on my life. I wish you could be here so I could share the news of finishing my Master's with you!

My husband, Austin Jenkins—Thank you for encouraging me every step of the way! Thank you for picking up my slack at the farm and caring for all of our animals while I was “out-of-commission” due to research interviews and hours of analyzing and writing, and for sacrificing date nights, healthy dinners, and a clean house so I could focus on this research. I love you!

My coworkers: Lacy, Andi, Kim, Jerlean, and Amanda—I appreciate you all for your reassurance and assistance throughout this process!

Alanna Carroll—Thank you so much for all that you did to help ease the burden of this research! From proofreading to assisting with transcriptions, I will be forever grateful for your friendship!

Sarah Fannin and Daniel Wilson—I would like to thank each of you for pushing me to do this and sharing your time and resources to ensure that I finished this degree!

Dr. Ron Hustedde—Thank you for seeing potential in me and in this research project. I have often wondered why you trudged alongside me as I dragged my feet for three years! Your enthusiasm, kindness, patience, and intellectuality have meant more to me than you will ever know!

Drs. Patricia Dyk and Ali Rossi—Thank you both for serving on my thesis committee and challenging me to do my best and forge into unknown territory. I really appreciate each of you taking the time to assist with this effort!

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## **Chapter One Introduction**

The number of women farmers in the United States is increasing at a substantial rate. More women are operating farms on their own and have become more involved in jointly managing operations with other family members, namely because of the movement toward more sustainable agriculture practices (Sachs, 2006b). According to the USDA's 2007 Census of Agriculture, the most noticeable upsurge of women farm operators occurred from 2002 to 2007. In 2002, 847,832 farms had female operators. In 2007, a 19% increase was recorded when the census revealed that 1,008,943 (or nearly 30%) of the farms in the United States were operated by women, with 306,209 of those operators acting as the principal operator (managing the day-to-day operations). The sudden influx of female farm operators could be attributed to the USDA's change in data collection in 2002 which allowed each farm to recognize up to three operators.

The 2012 census revealed that 14% of 2.1 million farmers in the United States at that time were women, but that census also recorded a 2% decrease, as the number of women operators declined to 969,672, with the number of farms principally operated by a female dwindling 6% (306,209 to 288,264) between 2007 and 2012. Of the 30,227 farms documented in Kentucky, 8,200 of those reported a female principal operator, with 31,419 women operators reported total (USDA, 2012, Table 47).

The census data could be confusing to some, as women have not traditionally been recognized as farmers, and even though women do the majority of food-related work, they control few resources and hold little decision-making power in the food industry and policy (Allen and Sachs, 2007). Several studies examine women's

invisibility in production agriculture and highlight the perpetual dominance of patriarchal family farms in shaping women's access to land, capital, and credit in food systems around the world (Brandth, 2002; Sachs, 1996, Freidland, 1991; and Whatmore, 1991).

In addition to fulfilling various unseen roles on the farm, other research reveals that some women are also stepping into leadership roles in agricultural communities. However, women are not well-represented in agri-business as only 30% of agricultural jobs are occupied by women (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Empirical literature also suggests that the number of female-owned agribusinesses in the U.S. is on the rise.

Women's contributions to agriculture, both on and off the farm, deserve recognition and inclusivity. Staudt (1978) observed early on in her studies that "persistent privileges extended to one group at the expense of another can result in dramatic differences in economic productivity between those groups with important consequences for their political power and ultimate life chances (p. 453)."

### **Research Objectives**

As a County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources, I have observed the shift in principal farm operators, which has been evident in extension programming as well as in leadership in agricultural organizations and commodity groups throughout Kentucky. Being a young, female professional in what has long been viewed as a predominately male field, has presented hurdles that other women in agriculture have likely encountered. Feeling forced to prove myself and my abilities on various occasions in order to be accepted by the agricultural community, especially in the counties I have worked, piqued my curiosity about how female leaders in the industry are perceived

across the state, as well as who supported their endeavors and empowered them to take strides into a man's world resulting in their visibility in agricultural policy. In addition, I questioned if there are organizations responsible for nurturing their potential and catapulting them to their success as influence makers.

Consequently, this study surveys the perception of women leaders in agriculture among traditional agricultural leaders in Kentucky and how the women leaders influence agriculture and agricultural policy in the state. Their stories provide better insight into whether they believe there are ample opportunities for women involved in agriculture to receive the informal education they need to understand agriculture, provide benefit to their operation, and the knowledge base and support they need to influence agricultural policy. The thesis will investigate the following questions: Do women in Kentucky agriculture have the support systems that are needed to excel in their leadership roles? Who has empowered them to take on their current leadership role (whether formal or informal)? How do they influence agricultural policy? Do they believe prior research about women in agriculture is still relevant?

Feminist theory and empowerment theory will guide the research, along with a hint of structural functionalism and a grounded theory approach with an exploration of literature as a guiding framework. These theories will undergird the qualitative data gathered during the research process through interviews with traditional agricultural leaders and women reputational leaders.

The findings of this research have the potential to confirm or contradict previous research on the subject, but the goal is to identify key patterns or themes to determine who, or what, has been instrumental in eliminating obstacles and creating opportunities

for women's involvement in agriculture in Kentucky. Conversely, there is an understanding that many obstacles may have not been eliminated, but lessened.

## **Chapter Two Literature Review**

Before analyzing the responses of the leaders who contributed to this study, it is imperative to explore prior literature in the area and understand the background of women's involvement in agriculture.

While changes in various federal policies increased women's involvement in agriculture and helped to direct women into a new era of agriculture, many barriers to women's success and education, as well as career development in agriculture were documented by the Committee on Women in Agricultural Economics (CWAE) in a survey in the 1980's (Kinsey, 1987). "The barriers included, but were not limited to: difficulty in finding domestic help; spouses negative attitude toward wives' careers and; employer discrimination which was evidenced by lower salaries, slower advancement up the career ladder, and attitudes with the conclusions: a.) enjoying one's work is not an adequate reason for women to pursue a career; and b.) a woman doesn't need to be paid as much as a man because a male is (or should be) supporting her (p. 13)."

Jean Kinsey (1987), a professor in the University of Minnesota Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, wrote:

These barriers, I believe, are falling by the wayside, but slowly. They die hard. Equal opportunity legislation and affirmative action regulations certainly have helped. They have opened the doors, but they have not and cannot, by themselves, alter long-held attitudes and habits. Only men and women willing to take creative risks and willing to work together over the next several generations will allow women to be fully assimilated into the agricultural occupations for which they are being prepared (p.14).

Even though the CWAE survey results and Kinsey's assertions are nearly three decades old, the survey responses could still be relevant for today and have implications

for women involved in agriculture. Though each barrier will not be addressed in this research endeavor, my primary research question is: ***How are women reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture perceived by the leaders of Kentucky's formal agricultural organizations and commodity groups?***

This question will help the researcher determine if the barriers have, in fact, fallen by the wayside as Kinsey suggests. In addition, some may argue that even though the barriers have been partially alleviated, women's roles in agriculture are still being ostracized. Hassanein (1999) points out that the limitations women face in agricultural environments come not only from overt discrimination or institutional barriers, but also from their socialization in rural communities and unequal gender relations experienced in daily life. Gender constructs of both men's and women's identities on the farm can overlook or discredit women's contributions (Brandth, 1999). These assertions pose research question #2: ***Are women's roles in agriculture being marginalized in Kentucky?***

Several noted researchers have advocated for women in agriculture and devoted much effort to gender inequities and the economic and political struggles of women involved in agriculture. These research projects on women in agriculture have helped a great deal in making women in agriculture more visible on the international level (Maman and Tate, 2012). However, with the exception of few authors (Allen, Sachs, Trauger, and others), much of the research presented documents women's roles and rights in agriculture in developing countries like Asia, Africa and Latin America, which makes the Kentucky focus of this research novel and important for women involved in agriculture in the state and across the country.

While the work and research of these women is important and valuable to the agricultural community, there is much to be desired in the research of the perceptions of women in agriculture and the political inequities that may still hover above women attempting visibility in a predominantly male field.

Robert Putnam (1976) referred to women as “the most underrepresented group in the political elite of the world. Along the same lines, other researchers have concluded it is crucial for women to act politically to alleviate or transform these documented inequities (Staudt, 1979). Though few in number, women influence makers have enormous significance for females and could potentially change the face of agriculture for women, as women of this caliber are perceived to represent other women and their interests (Staudt, 1979). Women influence makers are often considered role models and trendsetters for other women. However, feminist theory suggests that relative to their male counterparts, there are still few role models for women, and aspiring female leaders have less social support for learning how to credibly claim a leader identity (Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb, 2011). Elix and Lambert (1998) argue that women involved in agriculture lack the support systems and encouragement they need to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in leadership positions in the agricultural community, especially older women who have never been empowered as farm leaders. This research leads to research question #3: ***Do women reputational leaders have the social support they need to excel in agricultural leadership positions?*** Since leadership, in general, is often associated with men, consider the challenges of being a female leader in agriculture, a field also associated with and dominated by males.

For the most part, empirical literature suggests women have been excluded from decision-making or leadership roles in agriculture for such a long period of time that they feel incompetent or inadequate when fulfilling leadership roles in agriculture (Pini and Brown, 2004). It brings forth research question #4: *Do women leaders in Kentucky agriculture feel inadequate in their leadership positions?*

Let us first examine gender as it relates to agriculture, as well as gender's relation to agricultural policy before introducing theory.

### **Gender and Agriculture**

Though women have been involved in agriculture, in some sense, for thousands of years, attention to gender issues in agriculture is fairly recent. Poats (1991) found that women, especially in developing parts of the world, play a significant role in agricultural production as farm owners, managers, sales agents, and field workers. The research suggested that more often than not, women's roles in agriculture have been overlooked, resulting in reduced impact and even total failure of programs related to women in agricultural development. The report recommended that farm centers and organizations review their programs on farming systems to ensure that the role of women is specifically considered and that the possibility of differential benefits to men and women be analyzed.

In addition to the aforementioned report, Poats (1991) emphasizes that "women are critical to agricultural production and that their access to necessary resources and effective technologies is often constrained by gender barriers, which is confirmed in the explosion of literature on gender and development, and by the increasing number of conferences and workshops on the topic in the international research and development

community (p. 6).” Sachs’ research also aligns with this perspective (Sachs, 1983; 1996; 2006a).

As previously alluded, women are not just involved in agriculture as farmers; they also work as professionals in the field. Many women are interested enough in agriculture that education and training opportunities have led them to be employed in a field related to agriculture. Furthermore, women are moving into the world of agri-business by way of forming agricultural nonprofits and offering their own educational programs on their farms (Allen and Sachs, 2007). Additionally, they have publicized their agricultural education needs to be more diverse than that of large-scale agronomic production and livestock farms (Trauger *et al.*, 2008). This leads to research question #5: ***Are there ample opportunities for women involved in agriculture to receive the training and education they need to benefit their farming operations or influence agricultural policy in Kentucky?***

Women are undoubtedly pursuing formal education in agriculture, but it is not clear if the opportunities for informal education and training are present and effective. Kinsey (1987) reported that the enrollment of women students in college degree programs increased dramatically in the 1960s. In 1973, 19 percent of the students in agricultural programs in land-grant universities were women, 28 percent by 1977, and 36 percent by 1980. She also cited the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges which revealed that by 1983, 33 percent of the students in agricultural colleges were women—17 percent in graduate programs, 71 percent of which had neither a farm nor a rural background. Why the sudden influx of women seeking education and training in a predominantly male field? According to the research, “on the one hand,

women were seeking well-paying jobs and prestigious, exciting careers; while on the other hand, they seemed to have a preference for being close to nature and supporting a “back-to-basics” approach because they worry as much about the environment as they do about crop yields or farm income (p. 6).”

Male students were not particularly pleased with the sudden flooding of women into agricultural occupations, however. Kinsey reported that 30 percent of male students said that they thought agricultural occupations were not suited for women and 40 percent believed that it was okay for women to work, but that their actual fulfillment in life should come from motherhood rather than a career. “These attitudes carrying over into the workplace and across the nation lend themselves to the barriers of women seeking equal employment opportunities in agriculture and advancement in agriculturally related careers (p. 7).”

Though women have been viewed by many males as marginal in their roles as farmers (Allen and Sachs, 2007), they have persisted in the world of agriculture, even without recognition. They have remained unseen, primarily in developing countries, but as much so in the United States, as female farmers are often disregarded as farmers in official data collection and have become the “invisible farmer” (Sachs, 1983). In more recent research, however, the work of women farmers or women in agriculture has been touted chiefly in the emerging sustainable agriculture movement. Allen and Sachs (1991) vie that even though women want more decision-making roles and access to land, their demands for change have not been incorporated. Increasing research on the subject, along with women’s willingness to step into leadership roles in agriculture and engage in agricultural policy, may lessen the burdens that are carted by women in agriculture and

allow them the confidence to be positioned in the forefront of the face of agriculture without the historical stigma.

### **Women and Agricultural Policy**

Though women engaging in agricultural policy is not the sole manifestation of women's visibility in agriculture, it is a sign of women's power influence. Haney and Miller (1991) reported that Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE), one of the first national organizations of farm women, helped make women a visible force in U.S. farm politics and policy circles. WIFE has given farm women experience in official positions at all levels. Leadership positions coupled with political pressures brought about by the women's movement has assisted in drawing WIFE officers into the leadership circle of agricultural coalitions and interest groups at the state and national levels. The research found that women's knowledge of farming and farm finances led them to be actively involved in and concerned about the economic prosperity of the farm, home and family, and suggested that U.S. women have been involved in agricultural politics and agricultural policy-making for many years, but did not specify at what level (local, state, or national) women have been participating.

The *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook* (World Bank, 2009) proposes that women have enjoyed more successes at gaining access to decision-making positions in local government than at the state or national level. It contends that local positions tend to be more accessible because there is less competition and women's decision-making roles in city and community government may be more accepted because they are seen as an extension of women's involvement in their community. Even still, in many countries, women's participation in local politics is often diluted by gender inequality within

families, by an unequal division of labor within households, and by deep-rooted cultural attitudes about gender roles and the suitability of women for decision-making positions.

The book also closely examines governance and its relevance to “gender sensitivity” in agriculture. One can consider agricultural reforms to be “gender sensitive” if they embrace at least one of four things: 1.) making sure that women are not losing out in the reform process; 2.) taking into account that needs between men and women engaged in agriculture differ at many levels; 3.) if they are empowering to women, that is creating more opportunities for rural women’s participation in political processes or; 4.) attempting to change prevalent attitudes and social norms that lead to discrimination against rural women.

However, Staudt (1978) noted that studies rarely examine the differential impact of policies on the sexes or draw implications about differentiation for the productivity of gender-based groups. This research will not delve deeply into women’s bearing on agricultural policy in the state, but it will scratch the surface. It will explore the contemporary efforts of U.S. farm women to influence rural and agricultural policy in the context of women’s policy-making roles and the agrarian movements of the past and traditional agricultural organizations of the present.

Knowles (1988) argues that the agrarian protests of the first two decades of the twentieth century could be divided into two parts. The first, a movement by large prosperous farmers to make agriculture more scientific and business-like and the second, a movement by rural people concerned with the overall quality of rural life. The researcher examined women’s letters to Extension (an outreach arm of land-grant universities in the United States that has long served the educational needs of rural and

agricultural communities (Trauger et al., 2010)) personnel and their responses to surveys sponsored by agricultural programs and discovered that women were concerned with the relationship between the welfare of the family and that of the farm. These rural women identified a need for trainings in tending to livestock, growing and marketing fruits and vegetables, and developing home-based businesses to supplement farm income (Knowles, 1988; Elbert, 1988). Research question #6 will help determine if these needs are still relevant: *Do Kentucky's women reputational leaders believe the need for these types of informal trainings is still relevant?*

The efforts by these women did not go unnoticed. Extension agents began to develop programs that responded to the needs of these women, but only a few of the early practitioners seemed to understand the complex web of work responsibilities of farm women and actually designed programs to meet their needs (Knowles, 1988).

In recent years, Trauger *et al.* (2010) attested that it has been well-documented that the Cooperative Extension Service inadequately serves women throughout the United States in providing knowledge and developing programs about production practices in contemporary agriculture, but the reasons for the inefficient service are not fully understood. Extension is not the only agriculture-based educational organization in the United States, though.

In a national survey of approximately 2,500 farm women, Rosenfeld (1985) discovered that 75% of farm women and 80% of farm men belonged to at least one farm or community organization. However, farm women tended to participate in community organizations while farm men were involved in commodity associations and agricultural cooperatives. Although farm men and farm women were equally likely to take part in

activities and serve on committees and boards of the Cooperative Extension Service, men were twice as likely to participate in agricultural-related programs while women attended events related to the home and family. Rosenfeld (1985) found that few women were involved at any level on agricultural committees or boards. Sachs (1996) argued this phenomenon to be happening because farm women typically overlook their needs or subordinate themselves by joining organizations that support their families or by supporting their spouse's role in a farm organization. Empirical literature suggests that the few women choosing to participate on those committees and boards had a more difficult time influencing agricultural policy, but in the last decade, women have become bolder in navigating themselves into situations that could foster change in policy. This phenomenon is evidenced by the increasing number of women participating in policy-making.

Haney and Miller (1991) contend that if the level of farm women's participation in policy-making is changing, there seems to be three motivating factors in the focus of their political activities: "1.) Concern for the family farm and farm family's welfare; 2.) Unity on the farm, and 3.) Overall strategy to educate themselves (as farm women) and others (p.120)."

These factors lead to research question #7: ***Are these three factors the driving force of Kentucky's women reputational leaders' participation in Kentucky agricultural policy?***

Women actively seeking formal education in agriculture has fostered the development of informal educational programs for women in agriculture in organizations throughout the country and the world, and now that these women are prepared to assume

leadership roles in these organizations, leadership education and development are more important now than ever before. Just as Haney and Miller (1991) believe that WIFE has given farm women opportunities to fill leadership positions within the organization that have, in turn, opened doors for farm women to increase their skills and experience and direct input on agricultural policy-making (p. 120), perhaps organizations like Kentucky Women In Agriculture have done the same for Kentucky's female farm leaders. Are Kentucky's farm women's driving forces in agricultural policy paralleled with those presented at the national level? And are the educational opportunities available to women in agriculture propelling them to fulfill formal leadership roles?

Though a more visible group of women in agriculture is emerging, the value of their educational juncture could be questionable through the lens of both feminist theory and Kenneth Pigg's empowerment theory.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Feminist Theory**

Feminist theorists continue to wrestle with questions regarding women's relationship with nature and agriculture (Sachs, 2006b). Gaining an understanding of the nature of gender inequality in agriculture requires examining women's social roles, experiences, interests, chores, and politics. Allen and Sachs' (2007) theorize that women remain at a disadvantage in the formal agricultural labor force, or material domain of agriculture, because agrarian ideology "tends to support and reinforce the subordination of women (p. 5)."

Feminist theories also seek to build knowledge of women's oppression and develop strategies for resisting marginalization, resulting in improved quality of life for

women (McCann and Kim, 2013). Thus, this study will survey the injustices with which women in agriculture are confronted and point to effective recommendations for change. Establishing equal opportunities for women both on and off-the-farm has been proven to be a hard row to hoe.

Feminist theory undergirds two directives of this research: a.) understanding the nature of inequality in agriculture and leadership, in general and; b.) establishing equal opportunities for women in education, employment, and leadership in on-farm and off-farm agricultural endeavors.

Because agriculture in the United States is commercialized, highly mechanized and quite scientific, women involved or employed in agriculture are likely to be farmers or educated specialists or professionals who work in food and agricultural businesses, in education, in policy analysis, and in scientific research (Kinsey, 1987). In the early 1900's, numerous women were enrolled in vocational agriculture classes, but they disappeared when a separate vocational program was established for women with the George-Reed Act of 1929. The act designated Home Economics as a course specifically designed for women to convince females of their helpmate position on the farm—not to train them to be better farmers nor to find off-farm jobs. This revelation in agricultural education aided and abetted the inequalities of this form of education, lending itself to many years' worth of the word "farmer" being synonymous with "male" and women internalizing the role of "helper" (p. 15). It also led to agriculture and food-related sciences becoming historically gendered (Allen and Sachs, 2007).

Women would not only fall behind in agricultural education in this era, but also in leadership development. Recent research attests that with the emerging cadre of women

in agriculture also comes a demand for leadership development programs designed specifically for women. However, because of the lack of coherent, theoretically-based, and actionable framework for designing and delivering these programs for women, many universities and programs have adopted the “add-women-and-stir” approach (Martin and Meyerson, 1998: 312), simply delivering the same programs to women that they deliver to men, while others groups have implemented a “fix-the-women” method (Ely et. al., 2011). Ely and Meyerson, (2000) argue that these educational opportunities “assume that gender matters, but they locate the problem in women and accept that women have not been socialized to compete in the world of men, so they must be taught the skills their male counterparts have acquired (p. 6).” These types of programs, which are not solely dedicated to female participation, can be viewed as a disservice to women.

Ely *et al.* (2011) state that leadership itself is culturally gendered toward the masculine so a woman tends to have a harder time both in seeing herself as a leader and in being seen as a leader. These cultural associations of women and leadership hinder the ability of others to see a woman’s leadership potential, trusting that any woman can lead well, or being willing to legitimize her as a leader even if she holds a formal position. As a result, actions of women with vision, who effectively make change and persuade others to follow that vision, do not align with the cultural concepts of a leader, in general, making it difficult for women to feel empowered and transfer those power resources accordingly. Sachs (1996) argues that women need to be participating in organizations dedicated exclusively to women’s empowerment.

Therefore this study will also explore two additional research questions: #8.) ***Are the opportunities available to women in agriculture effective at transferring power***

*resources that can be used to influence others?* and; #9.) *Where do Kentucky's women reputational leaders' sense of empowerment stem from?* Empowerment is rather complex, but can be more easily understood when utilizing Pigg's three dimensions of empowerment.

### **Empowerment Theory**

Kenneth Pigg (2002) argues that there are three dimensions of empowerment that are all interdependent: self-empowerment through individual action, mutual empowerment that is interpersonal, and social empowerment in the outcomes of social action (p. 108). Pigg recommends that community development programs and community developers (those involved in Extension programming and the like, for example) address all three dimensions of empowerment, especially social action, for an educational program to be deemed effective (p. 108).

Empowerment generally means giving or providing power to another (Pigg, 2002). However, empowerment is not a direct transfer of power, but more like the transfer of power resources. "Power exists in the form of influence based on personal skills and competence, and networks and relationships that can be employed as influence to extend others access to resources (p. 108)." Thus, "empowerment does not occur without actions that manifest themselves in empowerment outcomes, that is community changes that give those perceived to be powerless access to decision-making arenas and processes that eliminate the social and political obstacles to authentic and effective civic participation in the affairs of the community (p. 109)." This leads to research question #10: *Do the opportunities available to women in agriculture provide them with access*

*to decision-making arenas and processes that eliminate the social and political obstacles to authentic and effective civic participation in the affairs of the agricultural community?*

Pigg (2002) designates three “faces” to the idea of empowerment. The first “face” points out the significance of personal efficacy, which could be defined as “personal power.” Individuals lacking efficacy may have little initiative and lack commitment, or may possess attitudes that are unproductive and exhibit obstructionist behaviors. Pigg states, “The empowerment of individuals is rooted in the psychology of power, the effects of “feelings” and perception of powerlessness (p. 112).”

The second “face” comes from organizational or social relations, implying that empowerment stems from the group rather than the individual. This “face” allows each person in the group to contribute to the task for which the group is responsible for completing.

The third and final “face” of empowerment is found in social institutions and social action. Empowerment in this form strives to connect dependent people with the resources they need to make choices and negotiate more favorable outcomes with those who have traditionally controlled those resources. To put this in perspective, this form of empowerment organizes a collective body to promote certain ideas. When working collectively, it is important that the group understands that all parties must lend themselves to the cause in order for the group to wholly function, a viewpoint which could be theoretically linked to structural functionalism.

## **Structural-Functionalism**

Structural-functionalism is a common sociological theory. Structural-functionalists established concerns about social structures, substructures, relationships among structures and substructures, equilibrium and orderly change (Ritzer, 1991). Hustedde (2015) refers to *structures* as organizations and institutions such as health care, educational entities, businesses, and nonprofits or informal groups, while *function* denotes the purpose and mission of the *structure* and what they do in society. Some structures may be oppressive while others are liberating for women or others. Some organizations may have formal or informal functions that might inhibit or encourage change. Though the usefulness of structural-functionalism has been criticized by some social theorists, others like Robert Merton have authored conceptual insights about the theory which have helped it maintain its relevance. Merton argued that structures must exhibit high levels of integration which leads to the notion that all structures and functions are functionally necessary for society (Merton, 1968, 1975, 1976).

Effectively integrating women into agricultural organizations has proven to be challenging. The connection between structural functionalism and this study is reflected in the concept that it is necessary for women in agriculture to work together, along with their male constituents in formal Kentucky agricultural organizations toward a common goal, which often requires the third “face” of empowerment, in order for the group to achieve reform. This study will attempt to draw conclusions surrounding Kentucky’s agricultural organizations and their adaptation, or lack thereof, to supporting women’s needs and empowering women as leaders in their organizations. Are the structures impeding women’s involvement in agriculture or is it the functions of those structures

that are encumbering women's potential? Additionally, it will seek out women reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture to gain a better understanding of the sources of empowerment for the women reputational leaders as well as the opportunities and leadership positions within structures that has allowed them to increase their skills and experience and have direct input into the function of the group and into agricultural policy-making.

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## Chapter Three Research Methods

### Identifying Community Change Agents

Identifying change agents in a community can be accomplished by using one of four different approaches (Tait, Bokemeier, and Bohlen, 1988).

The **positional method** is the oldest method for determining community power actors. This method necessitates labelling individuals who occupy key formal authority positions in formal institutions and organizations as community influencers.

The second technique, the **reputational method**, requires the investigator to select “knowledgeables” in the community and request them to identify key leaders in that sector. Abu-Laban (1965) said two different approaches could be used to collect the names: 1.) Ask the “knowledgeables” to select and rank names of leaders or; 2.) Request the traditional leaders to offer a list of influentials.

The third approach, the **decision-making method** (also known as event analysis), involves tracing the history of a collective decision concerning at least one issue area and naming those whose suggestions and demands were incorporated into the final outcome as the change agents (Tait *et al.*, 1988).

The final method, the **social participation method**, involves listing formal leaders with the highest degree of social participation in voluntary associations in the community.

For the purpose of this study, a combination of the traditional method and the reputational method was employed to gather names of women influence makers in Kentucky agriculture. I could have easily assumed the women positional leaders of

Kentucky's agricultural organizations and commodity groups to be the female power actors, but a different tactic was needed to avoid bias.

Therefore, I identified positional leaders (both male and female) who acted as the "knowledgeables" and asked them to list women in Kentucky agriculture who have effectively influenced others and fostered change in agricultural policy in the state, engaging the reputational method here as well.

The findings of research conducted by Summers, Seiler, and Wiley (1970) concluded that utilizing more than one of these methods to pinpoint leaders would strengthen the findings of the research. The authors also presented substantial evidence that several reputational techniques are capable of identifying the same persons as leaders consistently.

### **Methodology**

In order to address the research questions, I elected to use a qualitative approach. Interviews took place with two groups. The first group consisted of traditional leaders (those who act as the key spokesperson for an agricultural organization or commodity group) in Kentucky agriculture. The second group was made up of reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture who were determined by the traditional leaders.

The responses generated by both the traditional and reputational leaders assisted in drawing conclusions to help answer the key research questions.

### **Key Research Questions**

The key research questions derived from the literature review include:

1. How are women reputational leaders perceived within Kentucky's formal agricultural organizations?
2. Are women's roles in agriculture still being marginalized?

3. Do women elites (reputational leaders) have the social support they need to excel in agricultural leadership positions?
4. Do women leaders in Kentucky agriculture feel inadequate in their agricultural leadership positions?
5. Are there ample opportunities for women involved in agriculture to receive the training and education they need to benefit their farming operations or influence agricultural policy in Kentucky?
6. In 1988, rural women identified a need for trainings in tending to livestock, growing and marketing produce, and developing home-based businesses to supplement farm income. Are these needs still relevant and represented in agricultural policy?
7. Research suggests that women's participation in agricultural policy is driven by three factors: 1.) concern for the family's welfare rather than themselves as farm women, 2.) goals, statements, and actions centered around unity on the farm, and 3.) overall strategy to educate themselves. Do Kentucky's women reputational leaders consider these three factors the driving force of their participation in agricultural policy in Kentucky?
8. Are the opportunities available to women in agriculture effective at transferring power resources that can be used to influence others?
9. Where do Kentucky's women reputational leaders' sense of empowerment stem from?
10. Do the opportunities available to women in agriculture provide them with access to decision-making arenas and processes that eliminate the social and political obstacles to authentic and effective civic participation in the affairs of the agricultural community?

### **Hypotheses**

The research questions could be framed into *THREE* major hypotheses:

1. The barriers limiting women's involvement in Kentucky agriculture have become less prevalent, resulting in women's visibility in agriculture and agricultural policy-making in the state, ultimately leading to women in agriculture being perceived positively by their male counterparts.

2. There are sufficient opportunities for women in Kentucky agriculture to receive informal training and education that will benefit their farm operation and influence on agricultural policy-making, but because of farm women's complex array of responsibilities, the programs could be reviewed to ensure women are specifically taken into account, their participation is targeted, and their needs are largely considered.
3. Kentucky agriculture's female influence makers are adequately fulfilling leadership roles and influencing policy decisions because of their personal and professional support systems, as well as the sense of empowerment they internalize from those support systems.

### **Traditional Leaders**

The process for choosing a sample of traditional leaders in Kentucky agriculture was drawn from of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's list of agricultural organizations and commodity groups and can be found at: <http://www.kyagr.com/ag-links.html#> (accessed on August 24, 2015), and exploring each organization's website, if available, to determine the key spokesperson or traditional/positional leader (Executive Director/President/Chairman, in that order, respectively), for the organization. However, national/out-of-state/multi-state organizations were omitted from the list to eliminate confusion associated with the interview questions which focus on Kentucky agriculture and Kentucky leaders. The one, and only, university-based organization was also removed from the list. Of the 48 organizations listed, 35 were exclusive to Kentucky and eligible to participate in the study.

The 35 organizations were:

1. Kentucky Alpaca Association
2. Kentucky Association of Fairs and Horse Shows
3. Kentucky Cattlemen's Association
4. Kentucky Certified Crop Advisors
5. Kentucky Clean Fuels Coalition

6. Kentucky Christmas Tree Association
7. Kentucky Corn Growers Association
8. Kentucky Dairy Development Council
9. Kentucky Exposition Center
10. Kentucky Farm Bureau
11. Kentucky Feed and Grain Association
12. Kentucky FFA Association
13. Kentucky Forest Industries Association
14. Kentucky Goat Producers Association
15. Kentucky Grocers Association
16. Kentucky Limousin Breeders Association
17. Kentucky Nursery and Landscape Association
18. Kentucky Petroleum Marketers
19. Kentucky Poultry Federation
20. Kentucky Propane Gas Association
21. Kentucky Retail Federation
22. Kentucky Sheep and Wool Producers Association
23. Kentucky Santa Gertrudis Association
24. Kentucky Sheep and Goat Development Office
25. Kentucky Small Grain Growers Association
26. Kentucky Soybean Association
27. Kentucky State Beekeepers Association
28. Kentucky State Fair
29. Kentucky Turfgrass Council
30. Kentucky Vegetable Growers Association
31. Kentucky Veterinary Medical Association
32. Kentucky Vineyard Society
33. Kentucky Women in Agriculture
34. Kentucky Woodland Owners Association
35. Organic Association of Kentucky

After developing a list of eligible organizations and determining the traditional leader of each one, the researcher began initial contact with the leaders by way of a standardized email which was approved by the University of Kentucky Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A). The email contained details of the study, the research objectives, and a request for an interview, as well as an attached consent form (Appendix B), which explained the interview process, the volunteers' rights throughout the research process, and that no harm should be anticipated from participation in the study.

The traditional leaders were given one week to respond to the initial email. If no response was received, I sent a second email including the same information and waited one week, again, for contact. No response after the second email meant one last request by a third and final email. If no response was yielded a week after the third email, I resorted to contacting the leaders by phone. If the leader could not be reached after three emails and three phone attempts, they were eliminated from the study.

Thirteen leaders could not be reached and were omitted from the study and two leaders opted out of the study, resulting in 20 organizations participating in the research.

Two different Executive Directors acted as the director of two different eligible organizations. However, one Executive Director passed the interview off to the organizations' Associate Director (who also served as the Associate Director for both organizations). Another organization's President asked the Vice President to participate in the interview in his place.

A total of 17 interviews were conducted with traditional leaders, nine of which were female, which presented potential bias in the research. As a female questioning males about women's roles in agriculture, it seemed that several of the male respondents were more hesitant when answering questions regarding women's marginalization in agriculture, their roles in Kentucky's agricultural organizations, and the opportunities available to them. The male traditional leaders carefully considered their answers while the female traditional leaders had no issues with responding immediately when asked the same questions.

## **Interview Process**

After making contact with each leader who desired to participate in the research, they were asked to sign and return the consent form. Once the consent form was received by the researcher, an interview was arranged at a time convenient for the traditional/positional leader. Every interview was digitally recorded, was conducted by phone, and consisted of 12 interview questions approved by the IRB (Appendix C). In addition to being asked to name 15-20 women reputational leaders or influence makers in Kentucky agriculture, the leaders were asked about their involvement in agriculture, their role in their organization, women's involvement in Kentucky agriculture, women's involvement in their organization, and how women agricultural leaders are perceived within their organization.

I took notes during each interview, even though they were voice recorded, to highlight important quotes and enable quick reference points to avoid referring back to the recorder at a later date for key aspects of the interview. Due to time constraints and lack of resources, these interviews were not transcribed.

Interviews with traditional leaders had an average time of 12 minutes and 24 seconds.

## **Women Reputational Leaders in Kentucky Agriculture**

In order to identify Kentucky's female reputational leaders in agriculture, I compiled the lists of names provided by each traditional leader. Women whose names occurred on the list three or more times were deemed reputational leaders by the standards of this study. 134 names were provided, 18 of which were recurring, but five of

the 18 only occurred twice. Therefore, 13 female reputational leaders were identified and qualified for an interview.

The process for making contact with the female reputational leaders was much the same as making contact with the traditional leaders: three emails and three phone attempts. The leaders were contacted by email with an IRB-approved email (Appendix D), which included information about the study, the research objectives, a request for an interview, and a consent form (Appendix E). Again, the consent form explained the interview process, the volunteers' rights throughout the research process, and that no harm should be anticipated from participation in the study.

The reputational leaders, like the traditional leaders, were given one week to respond to the initial email. If no response was received, the researcher sent a second email including the same information and waited one week, once more, for contact. No response after the second email meant one last request by a third and final email. If no response was yielded a week after the third email, the researcher resorted to contacting the leaders by phone. If the leader could not be reached after three emails and three phone attempts, they were omitted from the study.

Though the researcher had a goal of reaching 10 of the 13 reputational leaders, that objective was not met. Nine of the 13 reputational leaders responded by email while another was reached by phone. However, one leader signed the consent form and agreed to participate, but conflicting schedules did not allow for the interview to take place prior to the deadline for research completion. Therefore, only 9 of the 13 reputational leaders participated in the study. This created potential bias in the research, as the 4 remaining

reputational leaders may have responded in ways that could sway the conclusions of this research.

### **Interview Process**

After making contact with each leader who agreed to participate, they were asked to sign and return the consent form. Once the consent form was obtained, an interview was arranged at a time convenient for the reputational leader. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or by phone with each leader. I preferred face-to-face interviews with the female reputational leaders and was able to arrange four of the nine interviews in a personal setting: one at a location convenient for the interviewee; two leaders opted for the interview at their workplace and; one in the comfort of her home. The face-to-face interviews averaged 20 minutes and 12 seconds.

The need for extensive travel to some participants limited the possibility of face-to-face interviews with several of the leaders. Therefore, the other five of the nine interviews with the reputational leaders were completed by phone. The average phone interview lasted 19 minutes and 21 seconds.

*The leaders did not receive the interview questions ahead of time.*

Every interview was digitally recorded and consisted of 20 interview questions approved by the IRB (Appendix F). The leaders were asked a series of questions about their involvement in agriculture, the opportunities available for women involved in agriculture, their participation in agricultural policy, their support systems, and from where they acquire their sense of empowerment.

I took notes during each interview, even though they were voice recorded, to highlight specific quotes and enable quick reference points prior to having the interviews transcribed. Once the interviews were transcribed, I reviewed the transcriptions to verify accuracy and began referencing transcriptions rather than notes.

## **Chapter Four Research Findings**

The following will address the apparent themes of each research question and report any outliers in responses. To obtain insight and sample descriptions of both sets of traditional leaders and reputational leaders, they were asked, respectively:

### **Traditional Leaders**

Interview Question #1: How long have you been involved in agriculture?

Interview Question #2: Is your involvement through production agriculture on-the-farm or by way of your profession off-the-farm?

Interview Question #3: How long have you been involved in this organization?

Interview Question #4: What is your leadership position in the organization?

### **Reputational Leaders**

Interview Question #1: How long have you been involved in agriculture?

Interview Question #2: Is your involvement through production agriculture on-the-farm or by way of your profession off-the-farm?

Table 4.1 helps us to understand the background and characteristics of each of the reputational leaders:

Table 4.1

*Characteristics and Background Information of Kentucky's Women Reputational Leaders*

	Formal or Informal Leader?	Raised on a Farm?	Support Systems Include State or National Organizations?	Active in Influencing Ag Policy in KY?
Reputational Leader #1	Informal	No	State	Yes
Reputational Leader #2	Formal	Yes	State	Yes
Reputational Leader #3	Formal	Yes	National	Yes
Reputational Leader #4	Informal	Yes	State	Yes
Reputational Leader #5	Formal	No	State	Yes
Reputational Leader #6	Formal	No	National	Yes
Reputational Leader #7	Formal	Yes	State	Yes
Reputational Leader #8	Informal	No	State	Yes
Reputational Leader #9	Formal	No	State	Yes

The remaining survey questions helped to guide the research. Research question #1 was addressed exclusively by Kentucky's **traditional leaders** with the latter list of questions from the interviews:

- Interview Question #11: How do you feel about the work of these women (women reputational leaders)?
- Interview Question #12: How are they (women reputational leaders) perceived within your organization?

### **Research Question #1**

**How are Kentucky's women reputational leaders perceived within Kentucky's agricultural organizations and commodity groups?**

#### **Traditional Leaders**

The interviews with the traditional agricultural leaders revealed that women leaders in Kentucky agriculture are highly valued among members of Kentucky's agricultural organizations and commodity groups. The traditional leaders generally recognized the women they perceive as reputational leaders as well-respected equals who have great ability to lead and are being looked up to for their knowledge and dedication. Two leaders also noted that the women leaders have good ideas, and in most cases, better ideas than men, and are better at thinking issues through before acting. Traditional Leader #16 stated:

They're perceived just the same as men are, I mean, there's no bias against them because they're women, not like it might be in other things like the fire department and police department. In, at least the horticultural industry, and I'm sure most of agriculture, there's no bias against them...if they've got a good idea, that's great. And a lot of times, they have better ideas than the guys...the women come up with a lot of ideas that us guys would have never

have thought of...because they're looking at things from a producer aspect as well as a consumer aspect.

However, Traditional Leader #6 made one outlying comment which referred to sexual prejudices in Kentucky:

There's still some guys that have problems with women, just prejudiced, you know. I hate to say that, but it's true. It's sad, but that's the way it is in Kentucky, I think. But, uh, I think they can do as good a job as anybody, personally.

Underlying barriers, like gender discrimination, which seems to still be prevalent in a few organizations (1 out of 17 in this case), evidenced by the above response, confirms Kinsey's 28-year-old assumption that the barriers affecting women are, indeed, falling by the wayside, but slowly. Though it seems that women are battling through these obstacles, some researchers believe that women's roles are still being marginalized. This idea was explored by questions asked of **traditional and reputational leaders**.

#### Traditional Leaders

- Interview Question #5: Do you feel that women involved in this organization are involved at the same capacity as men?
- Interview Question #6: Do you feel that women involved in agriculture are involved at the same capacity as men?

#### Reputational Leaders

- Interview Question #7: Are women's roles in agriculture being marginalized?
- Interview Question #17: Were there any organizations that were not helpful in your role and discredited your success?

**Research Question #2**  
**Are women's roles in agriculture being marginalized?**

**Traditional Leaders**

Twelve of the traditional leaders believe that women involved in their organizations are involved at the same capacity as men, while the other five traditional leaders were not as positive. The Associate Director who was interviewed on behalf of two different organizations said the organizations in which she holds her leadership positions are 80 to 90 percent male. Three leaders said that women are certainly welcome to be involved in their organizations at the same capacity as men, but the organization's numbers would not indicate that, as most women do not seek out leadership positions.

Traditional Leader #11 (male) stated:

The numbers (in the organization) probably would not indicate that because we don't have as many women that seek office and leadership roles as much as men. Part of that is, we do have a women's advisory committee that is extremely active. There is a definite role that's prominent for women even though it's on a different path, but we do encourage that and it is available.

This response could be tied back to historical data in that women are being redirected. Just as women were led to believe that Home Economics was better suited to their gender roles, this particular organization could be leading women to believe that their role is to be a part of a committee, specially designed for females, that restricts them from becoming so involved on other committees that they choose not to seek out leadership positions.

One leader (male) also stated that women tend to be more inclined to fill volunteer roles within the organization, which raises the question: *Do the women find volunteer roles more attractive because they feel excluded from the leadership positions?*

Another leader (male) addressed the fact that few women are involved in his organization and since his involvement with the group, all Presidents have been male.

Notable gender differences were realized upon analyzing the data. Of the female traditional leaders, only one said that women were involved in their organization at the same capacity as men. Of the male traditional leaders, only one responded that women are *not* involved at the same capacity as men.

As for women's participation in agriculture, in general, four leaders said women's involvement depends on their situation and seven said that women are, indeed, involved at the same level as their male counterparts. The remaining six of the traditional leaders said that women are *not* involved at the same capacity as men. When asked if she believed that women are involved in agriculture at the same capacity as men, Traditional leader #3 stated:

No, I don't. I have what we call a Board of Directors or Board of Trustees and there are 24 seats on that board and there are three women...I think, well, as a mother, I really don't have time to take on like one more thing, even though I would really like to. I think that's probably the difference—it is that women have work responsibilities and then they have more home responsibilities with their families.

The obstacle of motherhood and organizational involvement is one that will be difficult to overcome. Child care services at meetings and events of agricultural

organizations would surely increase women's participation and ought to be considered, especially in male-dominated groups.

### **Reputational Leaders**

Five of the nine reputational leaders asserted that women's roles in Kentucky agriculture are *not* being overlooked and shared similar sentiments as Traditional Leader

#1:

It's not been my personal experience. I feel like when I'm with a group of ladies, and with a group of men for that matter, they give me all the credit in the world! I don't feel like there are any barriers to any professional or volunteer role that I would want to assume if that interested me.

Two leaders believed women's marginalization in agriculture to be a thing of the past. Reputational Leader #4 shared her thoughts:

Well, I'm thinking about, okay, "being marginalized?" I don't think so. I think the ag-related industries are better aware of the fact that women have decision-making roles. They're better aware of the fact that women are capable of doing agricultural jobs. One example would be advertisements for agricultural products. You now see more women. It's increased gradually over the years, but now you see advertisements for tractors with women operating them. You never used to see that.

Reputational Leader #7 seemed baffled when she said:

I would hope not! There is no reason for that to be happening today. We have a lot, a lot of qualified ladies in the state and in the nation.

Seven of the nine women said marginalization is not happening today, while one leader said women's roles are only sidelined if they let them be and another felt that

women's roles are being marginalized "sometimes," but she did not offer any specific examples of how or when.

When asked if there were any organizations that were not helpful to them or discredited their success, eight of the nine said there were not. However, Reputational Leader #4 had a different opinion:

You know, I was just sitting here, as I was talking about my family and all of those kinds of things...thinking about the fact that I have to preface this comment by saying that I try very hard to be a devout Christian. I'm at church every time the doors are open...well, no, I won't say I'm there every time the doors are open, but I have been a Sunday School teacher, I've been a vacation bible school director, I have been a song leader and I'm now the clerk or secretary, basically, of the church to which we belong.

Probably the organization that has held women back as much as anything has ever been is organized religion.

Personally, I believe that humans have done that. I don't think God intended that, but I just feel like organized religion has done women a disservice. Although any church you walk into, any church I've ever belonged to or attended, if you wanted anything done, you've got the women involved in it.

Though the responses to these survey questions would lead one to believe that marginalization is no longer a threat to women's roles in agriculture, I am not convinced that it is a thing of the past. Ostracism reared its ugly head in several of the responses given by both male and female positional leaders. However, since the slighting of women's roles in agriculture is perceived to be less prevalent today, it is important to understand who, or what organizations, aided women in overcoming barriers towards full participation and being overlooked.

Determining who, or what organizations, helped alleviate these obstacles and answer research question #3 was accomplished with responses provided by the *women reputational leaders* to the following interview questions:

- Interview Question #9: Do you feel you have the support system you need to excel in your agricultural leadership role?
- Interview Question #10: Who, or what organizations, would you consider to be your support system?
- Interview Question #11: Is there someone, or an organization, that you believe has helped draw women into the leadership circle of traditional agricultural organizations or commodity groups?

### **Research Question #3**

**Do women reputational leaders have the social support systems they need to excel in agricultural leadership positions?**

#### **Reputational Leaders**

Cohen and Wills (1985) propose that “social support systems provide regular positive experiences and a set of stable, socially rewarded roles in the community (p. 311).” The authors claim that this kind of support could be related to overall well-being because it provides a positive affect, a sense of predictability and stability in one’s life situation, and a recognition of self-worth. With that in mind, I explored if and how social support systems have an effect on women leaders seeking acceptance and influence in a predominately male field.

The female reputational leaders unanimously responded that, yes, they do have the support they need to excel in their agricultural leadership positions. The support comes in many forms and is derived from several different sources. According to the reputational leaders, their support comes from family, friends, producer leaders, co-

workers, faith-based groups, other women leaders, agricultural organizations and commodity groups, and universities. The responses challenge earlier research which argues that women involved in agriculture *lack* the support systems and encouragement they need to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in leadership positions in agriculture (Elix, 1998).

Table 4.2 depicts the various support systems named by the leaders and the number of reputational leaders who mentioned that particular source of backing:

Table 4.2

*Social Support Systems of Women Reputational Leaders in Kentucky*

Social Support System	Number of Leaders Identifying Source of Support
Producer Leaders/Committee Members	3
National Organizations	3
Colleges/Universities	3
Family	2
Friends	2
Kentucky Farm Bureau	2
Boss/Coworkers	2
Kentucky Women in Agriculture	1
Church	1
Ag Community	1
Other Women Leaders	1
Other Commodity Groups	1
Media	1
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association	1
Kentucky Beef Network	1
Kentucky Agriculture Development Board	1

In addition to asking the reputational leaders about their personal support systems, they were asked to identify any organizations which they believe helps to draw women into the leadership circle of agricultural organizations or commodity groups. The responses are indicated in Table 4.3:

Table 4.3

*Organizations Recognized by Reputational Leaders as Drawing Women into the Leadership Circle of Ag Organizations and Commodity Groups*

Organization	Number of Leaders Identifying Org. or Commodity Group
Colleges/Universities	3
Program within a Commodity Group	1
Kentucky Farm Bureau	1
Kentucky Ag Council	1
Kentucky Ag Leadership Program	1
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association	1
Kentucky Women in Agriculture	1

While Reputational Leader #2 could not specifically name any organizations drawing women into the leadership circle, her response was insightful:

I don't know that it's necessarily an individual or organization, but just an evolution of time. Growing up in the Midwest, I saw a lot of females take the leadership roles within veterinary practice... A lot of the big feed yards out there felt that they (women) fit that role best because they had the nurturing quality about them, as a mother would, to take care of those sick animals. There were several of those folks that actually sought out a female veterinarian because they felt they did perform that role better. I think, just over time, as women begin to feel more empowered on the farm, or even in agriculture settings, that their involvement and their leadership roles have continued to grow. And we

probably fit some of those roles better than a male would just because of how we are tooled.

Reputational Leader #4 recalled what it was like at the college/university level as a student:

...I think our colleges and universities have, in my opinion, responded to these students cohorts that they get. Back in the dark ages, when I was an undergraduate student, there were probably less than twenty percent women in the ag department. That has increased dramatically. When I went to veterinary school, it was the same thing.

I think the colleges and universities have had to respond positively with supporting women in those leadership roles because that's the students they've got. Have they recruited women? Yes, they've recruited women as well, but I think the women probably went into it and the universities responded to that.

It could be because of invisibility (Sachs, 1983) and underrepresentation (Putnam, 1976) throughout the years that women in agriculture face challenges that could make them feel unaccepted and incompetent. The next research question addresses this concern through an interview question asked only of the *women reputational leaders*:

- Interview Question #8: Empirical literature suggests that women have been excluded from decision-making roles in agriculture for such a long period of time that they feel incompetent in fulfilling leadership roles in agriculture. Do you feel inadequate in your agricultural leadership position?

#### **Research Question #4**

**Do women reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture feel inadequate in their agricultural leadership positions?**

#### **Reputational Leaders**

Though previous research proposes that women have been excluded from decision-making or leadership roles in agriculture for such a long period of time that they

feel inadequate in fulfilling leadership roles in agriculture (Pini, 2004), Kentucky's female leaders offer another perspective. Seven of the nine respondents said that they do not feel inadequate. Reputational leader #6 stated:

I don't feel inadequate. I can understand that feeling...that perception among women because...we *tend* to be not as big of advocates for ourselves as men. There's all of this literature on when you're negotiating for salary or you're negotiating for a retention package, men are much better in doing that than women. We have some ground to catch up with there. I have not felt, in the job I'm in now and the job I was in before, I haven't felt any substantial barrier to my effectiveness or my being perceived as effective.

Reputational Leader #7 laughed when she said:

No, I don't think so! Let me tell you something, you give a lady a task and it's going to get done.

The two leaders who responded the opposite had good reason, but their responses had nothing to do with women being excluded from agriculture. Reputational Leader #1 said:

Sure. But only in a human, personal kind of way. I don't feel like anyone has made me feel inferior or that I might not be smart enough to do the job or capable enough to do the job. It's any restrictions I think I put on that, I put them on myself, and that's just a normal part of personal growth, I guess.

Reputational Leader #4 laughed before she shared her answer to the question, which was more a reflection of society:

You know, I feel inadequate some days, but it has nothing to do with being female, or I don't think it does...I think society has not done a good job giving young women positive self-image or self—I'm trying to think of the right word—when we tell our daughters that they're beautiful

and we tell our sons that they are brave and smart and strong, I think we need to do a better job of telling our daughters that they are brave and smart and strong.

It doesn't mean you're not supposed to tell a young lady she's beautiful. I just think our young ladies don't have...don't perceive (themselves) as they should. Now, some parents do a good job of that. Maybe it's not all the parents' fault. Maybe part of it is society. I think I see the self-esteem issue...I can't narrow that down just to rural women. I think that's women in general. We just don't have the self-esteem that we ought to.

Now, self-confidence, "Can I get the job done?" Yes! Our self-worth and our self-esteem just is not where it ought to be. That's a comment about society in general...

Therefore, the claim that women feel inadequate in leadership positions in agriculture is not an accurate assertion for Kentucky's women reputational leaders. The reason for the unraveling of this claim is not obvious, but it could be credited to the educational opportunities in agriculture which more women seem to be taking advantage of, according to survey results for the fifth research question. This research question was explored by asking the same sets of questions to **traditional and reputational leaders:**

#### Traditional Leaders

- Interview Question #7: Do you feel there are ample opportunities for women involved in agriculture to receive training and education that will benefit their farming operations or influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky?
- Interview Question #8: Do you feel these opportunities are valuable in helping them understand farming operations and agricultural policy in Kentucky?

#### Reputational Leaders

- Interview Question #3: Do you feel there are ample opportunities for women involved in agriculture to receive training and education that will benefit their farming operations or influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky?

- Interview Question #4: Do you feel these opportunities are valuable in helping them understand farming operations and agricultural policy in Kentucky?

### **Research Question #5**

**Are there ample opportunities for women involved in agriculture to receive the training and education they need to benefit their farming operations or influence agricultural policy in Kentucky?**

The answers gathered in response to this question were woven together with a common thread: the majority of the leaders stated that there are definitely adequate opportunities. However, two traditional leaders and three reputational leaders shared a similar perspective that the majority of women view the programs as not intended for women and the opportunities for women could be improved. For example, Reputational Leader #2 shared her view:

I think that there are opportunities for them (women), but it's an area that we could probably focus and concentrate more on, and create more opportunities. Sometimes I think it gets diluted out that the opportunity is available, but a stereotype gets made that it's not for me or intended for me, so they (women) don't participate.

### **Traditional Leaders**

All 17 traditional leaders believed there to be ample opportunities for women involved in agriculture to receive the training and education they need to benefit their farm operations and agricultural policy in Kentucky. Though they all believed the opportunities are abundant and women are not discriminated against in agricultural education, two believed that sometimes the programs are just not feasible for women because of home commitments or other invisible walls. Traditional Leader #7 (male) said:

I believe that the training and educational opportunities are wide open for everyone. I'm not sure that data would demonstrate that the opportunity, however, is the same, and I think we see more and more opportunities for everyone, but at the same time, it still feels like it's more weighted toward men than women.

This statement is another that could direct us to the need for child care during educational programs and training opportunities to alleviate one of women's responsibilities and allow them to become fully engaged.

Fifteen of the 17 leaders also said that they believe the opportunities available are valuable in helping women understand farming and agricultural policy in Kentucky. The other two of the 17 leaders had a different opinion. Traditional Leader #12 (male) alleged that the opportunities are valuable when women choose to be involved, while Traditional Leader #12 (female) said:

I don't know if you can fully understand farming by taking a class or training. I don't know enough about existing trainings that would be the equivalent of an apprenticeship, but in order to fully understand what it takes to run a farm operation, you have to work a farm...a farm is a private business unless you're a university or organization, otherwise, nonprofit or whatever, so I would say that that is the winning area for women because I don't see any delineation, discrimination of any kind by any of the programs offered—like anything, of course, offered by Extension, or otherwise through the universities and KCARD (Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development) being a nonprofit. They have fully embraced our operation with open arms and are more than helpful.

But when you're talking about the larger community of ag, if I were, as a woman, to go and solicit work or find a job in ag working a farm, I don't think I have been given the same credence (as men). It's very much still a have-to-prove-yourself and prove-your-worth, prove-your-abilities, and farmers, in general, are still looked at as men...I would say that I have experienced a handful of times where I've definitely had to prove myself

whereas a male counterpart would have been readily accepted...

This statement supports Kinsey's (1987) research that employers inadvertently discriminate against women by not taking them seriously.

### **Reputational Leaders**

The nine female reputational leaders also believed that there are sufficient informal educational opportunities for women seeking knowledge and training in agriculture. However, two leaders commented that women do not have the courage to push themselves into certain situations—situations regarding both education and policy.

For women leaders who do embrace these opportunities (especially those that are valuable to their operations) to become more educated, though, there are great possibilities to step into leadership roles. Eight of the nine women agreed that the opportunities available to women in agriculture are valuable in helping them understand their operations and agricultural policy.

The outlier, Reputational Leader #4, did not believe the same:

*Some of them are. I don't think every opportunity that comes along, or every ag board you can be on...I don't think those are all as valuable as some people try to make them out, but some of them are. I think you have to pick and choose what is important to you.*

In order to understand the informal training needs of women, the **female reputational leaders** were asked to answer the following question which guided the conclusions for research question #6:

- Interview Question #12: In 1988, rural woman identified a need for trainings in tending to livestock, growing and marketing produce, and

developing home-based businesses to supplement farm income. Are these needs still relevant and represented in agricultural policy?

### **Research Question #6**

**In 1988, rural women identified a need for trainings in tending to livestock, growing and marketing produce, and developing home-based businesses to supplement farm income. Are these needs still relevant and represented in agricultural policy?**

#### **Reputational Leaders**

Although the research that identified the needs for these particular trainings is 28 years old, the women reputational leaders believed the need for these trainings is as relevant today as it was in 1988. Three of the women stressed that these trainings are still needed for men just as they are still needed for women in agriculture. This indicates that even though agricultural opportunities are heavily weighted toward men, men could still benefit from informal education and training opportunities in the areas identified as well.

Reputational Leader #6 also commented that most home-based businesses are now female-owned and that it's been realized in her time in agriculture that females are better at most animal care activities than males (another recurring theme in the research), alluding to the fact that these types of educational opportunities may be even more relevant for men in 2016 than for women. Therefore, the informal workshops are still necessary for both genders to keep agriculture moving forward. Reputational Leader #4 described the need as "not going backwards any time soon:"

Oh, I definitely think they're still needed. I think men need education in those areas as well. I think we are seeing an increase in the number of families who move "back home," so-to-speak...families who...want to take advantage of the positive things about rural life. So those educational needs for production of produce, for production of livestock, for even the preservation of produce...I think

there is still very much a need for that. I don't see that going backwards any time soon.

As for deciding if these needs are represented in agricultural policy, none of the women could make a positive determination. The responses typically ended with, "I'm not sure how they are represented in ag policy," but Reputational Leader #2 took her reply one step further by adding that she becomes involved in policy when a specific policy needs addressed or when problems arise and the issue needs to be tackled in Kentucky.

Research question #7 also targeted the **women reputational leaders** and was explored by asking the following questions:

- Interview Question #13: Are you active in influencing agricultural policy? If so, how?
- Interview Question #14: Research suggests that women's participation in agricultural policy is driven by three factors: 1.) concern for the family's welfare rather than themselves as farm women, 2.) goals, statements, and actions centered unity on the farm, and 3.) overall strategy to educate themselves. Do Kentucky's women reputational leaders consider these three factors the driving force of their participation in agricultural policy in Kentucky?

#### **Research Question #7**

**Research suggests that women's participation in agricultural policy is driven by three factors: 1.) concern for the family's welfare rather than themselves as farm women, 2.) goals, statements, and actions centered unity on the farm, and 3.) overall strategy to educate themselves. Do Kentucky's women reputational leaders consider these three factors the driving force of their participation in agricultural policy in Kentucky?**

#### **Reputational Leaders**

All of the women reputational leaders stated that they are currently active, or were very active at point in time, in influencing agricultural policy in Kentucky. Some are

participating through legislative committees within an agricultural organization or commodity group, one writes letters to legislators when issues arise that affect her job, place of business, or profession, and Reputational Leader #7, an Executive Director of one of Kentucky's agricultural commodity groups, said that she is active through performing her daily job duties. When asked if she was active in influencing agricultural policy in the state, she stated:

I certainly hope so! In doing your daily job, you're doing that. You respond to things that come up and you are portraying a positive role in agriculture.

In addition, Reputational Leader #4 said:

I'm on several state committees...we work on policy on those committees—certainly policy as far as it affects my job, my place of business, my profession—those are all things I'm going to weigh in on.

In fact, yesterday I wrote letters to several different legislators about some things that may affect county fairs. Yeah, I am. Mostly I try to write letters. I don't do a whole lot of telephone calling, but I have gotten to know the legislators that are in our area and through other contacts, I know some legislators in other parts of the state as well. I don't like to think of myself as a politico, because I'm not very good at it.

When asked about the three factors that Haney and Miller (1991) contend as the driving forces of women's participation in agriculture, each of the women agreed that at least two of the elements were responsible for their desire to influence. Aside from these three factors, only one of the women offered to mention any other driving forces of their involvement. After stating that she would consider the three factors as the driving force of her participation, Reputational Leader #1 added:

I would add that it's always been so important to me to put a new, but accurate face on agriculture. I don't want

people to just remember—and I'll tell you something that bugs me—this is silly, but you've seen that little yellow sign, that saying about "Go Slow," farmers and everything? It's a 1930's tractor and the person that is on the sign is wearing an old straw hat, it's a very antique looking sign. That's not agriculture today. It doesn't have to be a woman sitting behind a desk or it doesn't have to be an elaborate four-wheel drive, fabulous tractor, but it's not the way it used to be.

It's important for me for people in my community—and I think at home, I know they do—to recognize that agriculture is the biggest industry in our country...I want to break that expectation of what production agriculture is supposed to look like because it's me.

If women are increasingly becoming more active in agricultural policy, it is beneficial to know if the aforementioned opportunities that are available to women in agriculture are effective at transferring power resources that can be used to influence others. Consequently, both the **traditional and reputational leaders** were asked their viewpoint:

#### Traditional Leaders

- Interview Question #9: Do you feel these opportunities are effective at transferring power resources that can be used to influence others?

#### Reputational Leaders

- Interview Question #5: Do you feel these opportunities are effective at transferring power resources that can be used to influence others?

### **Research Question #8**

**Are the opportunities available to women in agriculture effective at transferring power resources that can be used to influence others?**

The transfer of power resources is a complicated task which Pigg (2002) argues can be especially effective when enacted within a social framework. When asked about

whether the opportunities available to women in agriculture were effective at transferring power resources that can be used to influence others, the views of both sets of leaders were closely aligned.

### **Traditional Leaders**

Thirteen traditional leaders were certain that the education and training opportunities were effective at transferring power resources. Traditional Leader #11 believed that to be evidenced by more women becoming politically active. On the other hand, the remaining four leaders felt that improvement is still needed in the area.

Traditional Leader #1 (female) stated:

I'm not sure. (Pause). I think I feel like they are, but there could be some improvement in that area. And again, it depends on which agency you're talking about and which office you're talking about. You're always going to have some areas that maybe aren't as efficient at that as others, you know.

### **Reputational Leaders**

Of the reputational leaders, seven of the nine said that they do believe the opportunities are effective. Two of the nine were more apprehensive. Reputational Leader #2 said:

I don't know. That's a hard question...it probably just depends on the content of the material that they're receiving and how they choose to utilize that material. Sometimes I think there's a level of intimidation that comes into play with the learning aspect of things—that they're (women are) afraid to ask a question or afraid to perform a task because they may be judged on their ability to do that, or their knowledge base at the beginning.

Reputational Leader #4 had different views about the transfer of power resources as well:

I think the transfer of power is not where it needs to be...the transfer of power within organizations and within farming operations—we aren't there yet. I think we still tend to look toward male figures. I think some women who are in positions of power, sometimes they aren't viewed as...I'm trying to think of a politically correct manner...Sometimes women bosses are looked at as being bitchy. I think some women have not learned how to be in those (leadership) positions yet. I can think of a couple people, in particular, who have made a lot of contributions to their community; a lot of contributions to their farming neighbors, but they're not always looked at in the most positive light.

Empirical literature suggests that the transfer of power resources often leads to empowerment. This assumption resulted in the **women reputational leaders** being asked about who, or what, empowered them to take on their current leadership role, whether formal or informal, and from where their sense of empowerment stems. The responses helped to usher in the conclusions of the next research question:

- Interview Question #18: Were you empowered by someone to take on this leadership role?
- Interview Question #19: Where does your sense of empowerment stem from?

### **Research Question #9**

**Where do Kentucky's women reputational leaders' sense of empowerment stem from?**

#### **Reputational Leaders**

Determining where an internal sense of empowerment stems from might be a struggle for some individuals, but eight women reputational leaders in this study could easily pinpoint just that. One leader chose not to answer the question for unknown reasons, but the others offered concrete examples of what empowers them.

Reputational Leader #1 said her sense of empowerment stems from people who see her potential and are able to recognize, without limitations, her leadership qualities, as well as those who value her opinion and give her a vote of confidence. Along the same lines, Reputational Leader #5 said she feels empowered when she is acknowledged by the agricultural community as having made an impact, and Reputational Leader #6 said others being confident in her abilities is empowering. Their responses suggest that affirmation is important to some female leaders in Kentucky agriculture.

Others cited the following as contributing to their sense of empowerment:

- Reputational Leader #2: Family, experiences, and leadership opportunities.
- Reputational Leader #3: No response.
- Reputational Leader #4: Wanting things done and wanting to improve life for vets and livestock owners.
- Reputational Leader #7: Challenges.
- Reputational Leader #8: Recognizing a need and realizing you have the talent to push to get something done.
- Reputational Leader #9: Being able to tell the story of agriculture.

The women were also asked if anyone empowered them to step into their current leadership position. According to Pigg (2002), “empowerment is the development of individual leadership skills and knowledge regarding the practice of leadership, as well as formal recognition by the community of their newly acquired skills (p. 118).”

In this case, recognition of newly acquired skills and competencies came from existing power structures. Five of the nine women were empowered by their predecessor or former or current supervisor: three by their male predecessor, one by her current male

boss, and one by a former female boss. This contradicts O'Connor (2010) who argues that the cultural associations of women and leadership hinder the ability of others to see a woman's leadership potential, trusting that any woman can lead well, or being willing to legitimize her as a leader even if she holds a formal position.

Kentucky's women reputational leaders revealed empowerment from all three faces of Pigg's empowerment theory: self-empowerment derived from individual actions and psychological attributes; mental empowerment derived from relationships with others, and social empowerment created with the removal of social and political obstacles to the exercise of individual influence.

The final research question seeks to answer if women feel they have access to decision-making arenas in agriculture, empowered or not. The question below was asked only of the **women reputational leaders**:

- Interview Question #6: Do these opportunities provide women with access to decision-making arenas and processes that eliminate the social and political obstacles to authentic and effective civic participation in the affairs of the agricultural community?

#### **Research Question #10**

**Do the opportunities available to women in agriculture provide them with access to decision-making arenas and processes that eliminate the social and political obstacles to authentic and effective civic participation in the affairs of the agricultural community?**

#### **Reputational Leaders**

Eight of the nine reputational leaders were adamant that women do have access to decision-making arenas that eliminate the social and political obstacles to authentic and effective civic participation in the affairs of the agricultural community. Three of the

leaders reflected on years passed when women were not so fortunate. Reputational

Leader #8 said:

I think that now, *in this era*, they are more prone to include the women and the women's decisions and what they might say, and realize that they are getting something done. They are being valuable agriculture people in their community, and I think they do try to include them on committees and try to get what their expertise is.

One of the nine leaders was concerned that the opportunities are still in need of improvement and made mention of women's access to those processes in prior years.

Reputational Leader #4 said:

I think those opportunities are improving. They (women) are not yet to where men are, but they're certainly improving. I see women stepping up every day and being a part of the system; whereas forty years ago, they did not.

Through the lens of Pigg's (2002) empowerment theory, Kentucky's female reputational leaders have pursued actions that manifest themselves in empowerment outcomes. Community changes, over the course of the last two decades, have led to women, who have typically been perceived to be powerless, having access to decision-making arenas without social and political plight, as evidenced by this study.

From a structural-functional perspective, women are attempting to contribute more to the whole of agriculture, but until key agricultural organizations or male-dominated agricultural institutions fully embrace women's potential to bring fresh ideas to the table, equilibrium will not be reached.

## **Chapter Five Conclusions**

This chapter contains four objectives: 1.) outline the limiting factors of this particular study; 2.) provide recommendations and considerations for those who develop future research surrounding women's involvement in agriculture and agricultural policy-making; 3.) discuss any notable discoveries that were not part of the initial research agenda and; 4.) draw conclusions based on participant responses and deliver results through common, recurring themes.

### **Limitations of the Research Methods**

The methods used in this study generated several unforeseen limitations, both in the methods, in general, and the interview processes. However, each set of interviews posed different constraints for various reasons.

#### **Traditional Leaders**

Limiting factors were not as evident with the traditional/positional leaders as with the reputational leaders. The most recognizable flaw in dealing with the traditional leaders could relate to gender bias. As a female interviewer, investigating female involvement in Kentucky's agricultural organizations and commodity groups and the perceptions of women among those groups, men participating in the interviews could have chosen to withhold information or alter their responses because of the researcher's gender.

Another identifiable limitation came during the interviews with the traditional leaders. When asked to name 15-20 women reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture, five positional leaders named only two to twelve women involved in their organizations.

Therefore, the researcher concluded that one of two things could be occurring: a.) there was a misconception by those leaders that they should only name internal women leaders in their organization rather than look at Kentucky agriculture as a whole or; b.) the leaders were not capable of naming female leaders outside of their organizations or at the state level.

The traditional leaders could have also been asked about the dominant picture of agriculture and farmers within their organizations' advertisements. It would have been helpful to know if their organization's promotional materials reflect different nationalities of farmers and encompass all ages and genders.

### **Reputational Leaders**

The limitations in the processes associated with the reputational leaders came with both the general aspects of the research and the interview methods as well.

One general issue came with variances in the method of interviews—face-to-face or by phone. Had every interview taken place in a face-to-face setting, body language and facial expressions could have been observed. Research suggests that 93% of all daily communication is nonverbal, while only 7% of communication is conveyed through words (Mehrabian, 1972). This indicates that vocal elements, facial expressions, and gestures are important for fully understanding communication.

The limitations of the interviews included: a.) the researcher did not specify in questions relating to organizational support systems and organizations drawing women into the agricultural leadership circle, that the organizations should be exclusive to Kentucky, resulting in some national organizations being identified, b.) the researcher didn't probe the leaders adequately on the questions regarding policy to gain proper

insight on particular issues and answers, and c.) the researcher neglected to obtain demographic information which could have indicated key patterns or themes across age ranges.

The questions which could have been prodded more rigorously are:

- **Interview Question #13: Are you active in influencing agricultural policy? If so, how?**

The reputational leaders responded that they are active in influencing agricultural policy

through legislative committees or boards within an organization or commodity group, but shared little to no details about how their participation has actually affected agricultural policy or the policies which they feel responsible for helping to enact.

- **Interview Question #14: Research suggests that women's participation in agricultural policy is driven by three factors: 1.) concern for the family's welfare rather than themselves as farm women; 2.) goals, statements, and actions centered around unity on the farm and; 3.) overall strategy to educate themselves. Would you consider these three factors the driving force of your participation in agricultural policy in Kentucky?**

Each of the women participating in this study agreed that at least two of these factors were the driving forces of their participation in agricultural policy in the state. Albeit, only one volunteered information about what she would add. The researcher unintentionally ignored the opportunity to probe the leaders about other reasons for their involvement in policy.

In hindsight, the investigator would have also asked the female reputational leaders how they believe they are perceived among their male counterparts and in the public sphere of agriculture. It would have been helpful to explore if their beliefs aligned

with the responses provided by the traditional leaders about how these women are perceived by them and within their organization.

One final limitation could have tested the reputational method even further. In retrospect, the researcher should have asked the female reputational leaders to provide their own list of women influence makers in Kentucky agriculture to determine how their lists aligned with those of the traditional leaders.

### **Recommendations and Implications for Future Research**

This study examined the perceptions of women in agriculture regarding the opportunities available to women in agriculture, their sources of empowerment, and their influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky.

Although we learned that the women involved in this study believed that women's work in Kentucky agriculture is not generally being marginalized, a study of intersectionality could be done to decide if the same holds true for women of different races and nationalities in the state, as all the participants in this research were Caucasian Americans. The researcher is aware of several non-Caucasian female influencers in Kentucky agriculture who were never mentioned.

Several **traditional leaders** in this study asserted that women involved in Kentucky agriculture tend to seek out volunteers roles rather than leadership positions within their organizations. Why is that? Do women in some of Kentucky's agricultural organizations and commodity groups feel excluded from positional roles? If so, why do they feel excluded? Is it because the majority of the leadership positions are held by men? What can these organizations do to create a more inclusive environment for women?

Next, four of the nine **reputational leaders** identified communication as a crucial component of their continued success when asked:

- Interview Question #20: What would be helpful to you in continuing your leadership in this position?

Three of the leaders expressed a specific need for better communication across agricultural organizations and commodity groups in the state. This could imply that the positional leaders of each organization in Kentucky should take the time to regularly update other traditional leaders about the happenings within their group.

Lastly, this study has major implications for post-secondary educational institutions and the Cooperative Extension Service. It appears that both of these embody a potency for grooming leaders that needs to be pursued further.

Three of the nine reputational leaders discussed the role that a college or university had in their development as leader, while another three of the nine acknowledged the Kentucky Agricultural Leadership Program, a two-year program at the University of Kentucky, as being part of their support system or contributing to their success.

Six of the nine reputational leaders and four traditional leaders cited the Cooperative Extension Service or 4-H (a youth development organization designed to develop citizenship, leadership, responsibility and life skills among youth ages 9-19), at some point in the interview, as playing an important role in their young lives and having an impact on the future of their involvement in agriculture.

Subsequently, the researcher is unaware of any programs designed by a university in the state that target women, and few extension programs do just that. Poats (1991) referenced the low number, or absence, of women among professional and management

ranks of research and extension which contributes to their male orientation (p. 7).

However, the increasing numbers in today's women agriculture professionals, especially at the university levels and in extension, could affect this gender paradigm. Kentucky's educational outlets and extension should work toward a goal of developing opportunities specifically for women and their needs. Imagine the possibilities for women when programs are implemented that focus on them and their empowerment!

Future research could also look at recent policy reform to determine if women have been responsible for agricultural policy changes and how they were involved in the passing of new legislation or revisions to the old.

### **Surprising Finding**

It is difficult to get recognition for one's work, especially for women (Rossler, 2007), and it is only with adequate recognition that people can realize their full autonomy as human beings (Ritzer, 2011). People are believed to need three forms of recognition from others. The first form lies in being cognizant of a person's needs and emotions which results in increased self-confidence for that person. The second form is respecting a person's moral and legal dignity which leads to that person's own self-respect, and the third, and final, form comes as esteem for a person's social achievements which results in higher self-esteem for that person (Van den Brink and Owen, 2007).

Some of the women in this study apparently received their rightful recognition, as the research reveals one notion that was not part of the initial research agenda. Some women leaders contend they were empowered by their male predecessors or male supervisors to take on leadership roles in agriculture. With the array of research that

points to society's inability to see women as leaders, what are these men seeing in these women that solidifies their need to nurture their potential and transfer power resources?

### **Conclusions**

The dynamic of Kentucky agriculture has certainly changed in recent years. Women have made great strides in agriculture as farmers and as professionals, resulting in many females assuming formal leadership posts at all levels, but there is still some work to be done.

Even though marginalization of women's roles in Kentucky agriculture seems to be a thing of the past, and most of the traditional agricultural organizations seem prepared to accommodate female leaders, some still appear to be inadvertently discriminating by sending women on "different paths." These unintentional actions include some of Kentucky's organizations creating groups or committees just for women to channel their influences as leaders and allowing only the chairman of that committee a seat on the executive committee. Organizations with all male leadership also pose a problem, as women automatically feel that the organization is not for them.

We learned that in order for agricultural learning opportunities to be more effective, the organizations need to reevaluate their programs to ensure that women are specifically considered and that the benefits to both men and women are analyzed separately. For best results, however, programs for women should be designed only with women's needs in mind. The "add-women-and-stir approach" to educational programs does not create a conducive learning environment for women, but the reasons why are still unclear. Perhaps women are more open to discussion when men aren't present?

A structural-functionalist would argue that until these organizations have informal trainings and leadership programs designed solely for women, they are dysfunctional, as they are not adapting to women's potential for leadership and are not fully integrating women into leadership positions.

Additionally, the research indicates that all women leaders are not being fully affirmed by their male peers to reach their full potential. The sources of empowerment noted by the reputational leaders also reflected Pigg's three faces: individual, mutual, and social. The women confirmed individual empowerment by believing in themselves and their abilities and not allowing their gender to make them feel powerless in a gendered field. Their mutual empowerment stemmed from organizational groups which enabled them to contribute to certain tasks and demonstrate their skills, while their social empowerment was derived from their acceptance by those who traditionally controlled resources in agriculture and being asked to lead or organize a group to promote certain ideas in agriculture.

This research also embellishes feminist theory. Allen and Sachs (2007) argue that the vast majority of feminist organizing efforts tend to neglect women in agriculture, and this study aided in that assumption. The unique focus of this research compliments that argument.

Overall, Kentucky's female influence makers in agriculture seem to be satisfied with the role of women in the industry. Even though the transfer of power resources is "not yet where it needs to be" and some women still feel pressured to prove themselves in the field, the barriers limiting women's involvement in Kentucky agriculture have

become less prevalent, resulting in women's visibility in agriculture and agricultural-policy in the state, as hypothesized.

In conjunction with hypothesis number two, there *are* ample opportunities for women in Kentucky agricultural to receive informal and training and education that will benefit their operation and help them understand and influence agricultural policy, but an extensive review of those programs is needed to be sure that women's needs are taken into account.

Lastly, Kentucky's female influence makers *are* adequately fulfilling leadership roles and influencing agricultural policy with the help of their personal and professional support systems, as well as the empowerment they internalize from those support systems, supporting the final hypothesis.

This research should be summarized and shared with agricultural organizations (both adult and youth), post-secondary agricultural education institutions, and the Cooperative Extension Service system. These structures could benefit from the findings by using the information to tailor future programs to effectively meet the needs of women clientele seeking education and empowerment in agriculture. Fully assimilating women into agriculture will contribute to the agricultural community's equilibrium and societal survival.

## Appendix A

### Email to Traditional/Positional Agricultural Leaders

**Subject: Perceptions of Women in Agriculture and their Influence on Agricultural Policy in Kentucky**

Dear Traditional/Positional Leader in Kentucky Agriculture:

As a graduate student at the University of Kentucky in the Department of Community and Leadership Development, I am seeking your help in identifying 15-20 women reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture, or women whom you feel have had a great influence on agriculture in Kentucky, as well as information about how women leaders in agriculture are perceived within your organization.

The research objectives for this study include: a.) identifying 15-20 women reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture b.) collecting information about the perceptions of women in agriculture and their influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky by traditional/positional agricultural leaders, c.) determining if and how women are influencing agriculture and agricultural policy in Kentucky, d.) determining the support systems that allow women to excel in agricultural leadership roles and if those supports vary by age, e.) deciding if agricultural education opportunities for women are valuable and suited to their needs, and f.) concluding how women in agricultural leadership positions were/are empowered to influence agricultural policy.

I am requesting a brief interview with you in which you will only be asked ten questions. Please keep in mind that while your participation in this research is voluntary, your insight and experiences could be very beneficial to this study.

Any information you provide will be kept confidential and you will not be identified in any materials which align with this study.

Attached to this email, you will find a Consent Form which should be reviewed and signed before the interview.

Your participation in this research is very important and your time is greatly appreciated. Please reply to this email or call Courtney Jenkins at 606-548-0949 to schedule your short interview.

Sincerely,

Courtney Jenkins  
606-548-0949  
[calacy2@uky.edu](mailto:calacy2@uky.edu)

## **Appendix B**

### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

#### **Perceptions of Women in Agriculture and their Influences on Agricultural Policy in Kentucky**

##### **Traditional Agricultural Leaders**

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the perceptions of women in agriculture and their influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you have been identified as a traditional/positional in an agricultural organization or commodity group in Kentucky and could potentially offer insight of women in leadership roles in Kentucky agriculture. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 25 people to do so.

The person in charge of this study is Courtney Jenkins of the University of Kentucky Department of Community and Leadership Development. She a student working toward a Master's degree in Career in Technical and Education and is being guided in this research by Dr. Ronald Hustedde. There may also be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

By doing this study, we hope to learn about the perceptions of women involved in Kentucky agriculture and their influence on Kentucky agricultural policy. The objectives of this research include: a.) identifying 15-20 women reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture b.) collecting information about the perceptions of women in agriculture and their influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky by traditional/positional agricultural leaders, c.) determining if and how women are influencing agriculture and agricultural policy in Kentucky, d.) determining the support systems that allow women to excel in agricultural leadership roles and if those supports vary by age, e.) deciding if agricultural education opportunities for women are valuable and suited to their needs, and f.) concluding how women in agricultural leadership positions were/are empowered to influence agricultural policy.

There are no questions which should cause any type of emotional distress; however, if you foresee any questions or issues which could potentially arise that you are not willing to talk about or wish to avoid, you should not participate in this study.

The research interview will be conducted at a location convenient for you such as your workplace, a county extension office or any other location which you feel comfortable.

You will need to be available for the interview one time and the visit will take between one and two hours. The interview will also be voice recorded.

As a traditional/positional leader, you will be asked about your involvement in agriculture and the organization in which you are considered a positional leader, as well as your perceptions of women in agriculture and their influences on agricultural policy in Kentucky. You will also be asked to name 15-20 women reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture.

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. These questions are not intended to be upsetting or stressful. You may opt out of any question you do not wish to answer at any time.

You will not receive any compensation, reward, or personal benefit for participating in this research, but I anticipate that your leadership experiences in your organization and insights of women in agriculture are well worth my time and will be beneficial to this study. Your willingness to take part, may, in the future, help society as a whole better understand this research topic.

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

We will make every effort to keep confidential all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. All documents taken from this study will be kept in a locked safe at the researcher's home for a period of six years and then they will be destroyed.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Courtney Jenkins at 606-548-0949. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Mon-Fri. at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of (authorized) person obtaining informed consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C

### Perceptions of Women in Agriculture and Their Influence on Agricultural Policy in

### Kentucky

#### Interview Questions for Traditional/Positional Leaders

1. How long have you been involved in agriculture?
2. Is your involvement through production agriculture on-the-farm or by way of your profession off-the-farm, or both?
3. How long have you been involved in this organization?
4. What is your leadership role in this organization?
5. Do you feel that women involved in this organization are involved at the same capacity as men?
6. Do you feel that women involved in agriculture are involved at the same capacity as men?
7. Do you feel there are ample opportunities for women involved in agriculture to receive training and education that will benefit their farming operations or influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky?
8. Do you feel these opportunities are valuable in helping them understand farming operations and agricultural policies in Kentucky?
9. Do you feel these opportunities are effective at transferring power resources that can be used to influence others?
10. Can you name 15-20 women in agriculture who have effectively used these resources to influence others and foster change in agricultural policy in Kentucky?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
  - 5.

- 6.
- 7.
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- 11.
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- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

11. How do you feel about the work of these women?

12. How are they perceived within your organization?

## Appendix D

### Email to Women Reputational Leaders

**Subject: Perceptions of Women in Agriculture and their Influence on Agricultural Policy in Kentucky**

Dear Female Reputational Leader in Kentucky Agriculture:

As a graduate student at the University of Kentucky in the Department of Community and Leadership Development, I am completing a research project about the perceptions of women in agriculture and their influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky. You have been identified by a traditional/positional agricultural leader (president/chairman of an agricultural organization or commodity group) as a reputational leader in Kentucky agriculture.

I am requesting a brief interview with you in which you will be asked a series of questions about your involvement in agriculture. Please keep in mind that while your participation in this research is voluntary, your insight and experiences could be very beneficial to this study.

The research objectives for this study include: a.) identifying 15-20 women reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture b.) collecting information about the perceptions of women in agriculture and their influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky by traditional/positional agricultural leaders, c.) determining if and how women are influencing agriculture and agricultural policy in Kentucky, d.) determining the support systems that allow women to excel in agricultural leadership roles and if those supports vary by age, e.) deciding if agricultural education opportunities for women are valuable and suited to their needs, and f.) concluding how women in agricultural leadership positions were/are empowered to influence agricultural policy.

Any information you provide will be kept confidential and you will not be identified in any materials which align with this study.

Attached to this email, you will find a Consent Form which should be reviewed and signed before the interview.

Your participation in this research is very important and your time is greatly appreciated. Please reply to this email or call Courtney Jenkins at 606-548-0949 to schedule your interview.

Sincerely,

Courtney Jenkins  
606-548-0949  
[calacy2@uky.edu](mailto:calacy2@uky.edu)

## **Appendix E**

### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

#### **Perceptions of Women in Agriculture and their Influences on Agricultural Policy in Kentucky Reputational Leaders**

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the perceptions of women in agriculture and their influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you have been identified as a reputational leader in an agricultural organization or commodity group in Kentucky and could potentially offer insight of women in leadership roles in Kentucky agriculture. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 20 people to do so.

The person in charge of this study is Courtney Jenkins of the University of Kentucky Department of Community and Leadership Development. She is a student working toward a Master's degree in Career in Technical and Education and is being guided in this research by Dr. Ronald Hustedde. There may also be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

By doing this study, we hope to learn about the perceptions of women involved in Kentucky agriculture and their influence on Kentucky agricultural policy. The objectives of this research include: a.) identifying 15-20 women reputational leaders in Kentucky agriculture b.) collecting information about the perceptions of women in agriculture and their influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky by traditional/positional agricultural leaders, c.) determining if and how women are influencing agriculture and agricultural policy in Kentucky, d.) determining the support systems that allow women to excel in agricultural leadership roles and if those supports vary by age, e.) deciding if agricultural education opportunities for women are valuable and suited to their needs, and f.) concluding how women in agricultural leadership positions were/are empowered to influence agricultural policy.

There are no questions which should cause any type of emotional distress; however, if you foresee any questions or issues which could potentially arise that you are not willing to talk about or wish to avoid, you should not participate in this study.

The research interview will be conducted at a location convenient for you such as your workplace, a county extension office or any other location which you feel comfortable. You will need to be available for the interview one time and the visit will take between one and two hours. The interview will also be voice recorded.

As a reputational leader, you will be asked about the capacity in which you are involved in agriculture, opportunities available to women in agriculture, who or what organizations have supported your agricultural venture, who or what organizations empowered you to take on a leadership role in agriculture, and whether you are actively influencing agricultural policy in Kentucky.

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. These questions are not intended to be upsetting or stressful. You may opt out of any question you do not wish to answer at any time.

You will not receive any compensation, reward, or personal benefit for participating in this research, but I anticipate that your leadership experiences in your organization and insights of women in agriculture are well worth my time and will be beneficial to this study. Your willingness to take part, may, in the future, help society as a whole better understand this research topic.

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

We will make every effort to keep confidential all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. All documents taken from this study will be kept in a locked safe at the researcher's home for a period of six years and then they will be destroyed.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. We may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Courtney Jenkins at 606-548-0949. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Mon-Fri. at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of (authorized) person obtaining informed consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix F**

### **Perceptions of Women in Agriculture and their Influence on Agricultural Policy in**

#### **Kentucky**

##### **Interview Questions for Women Reputational Leaders**

1. How long have you been involved in agriculture?
2. Is your involvement through production agriculture on-the-farm or by way of your profession off-the-farm, or both?
3. Do you feel there are ample opportunities for women involved in agriculture to receive training and education that will benefit their farming operations or influence on agricultural policy in Kentucky?
4. Are these opportunities valuable in helping them understand farming operations and agricultural policies in Kentucky?
5. Are these opportunities effective at transferring power resources that can be used to influence others?
6. Do these opportunities provide women with access to decision-making arenas and processes that eliminate the social and political obstacles to authentic and effective civic participation in the affairs of the agricultural community?
7. Are women's roles in agriculture being marginalized?
8. Empirical literature suggests that women have been excluded from decision-making roles in agriculture for such a long period of time that they feel incompetent in fulfilling leadership roles in agriculture. Do you feel inadequate in your agricultural leadership position?
9. Do you feel you have the support system you need to excel in your agricultural leadership role?
10. Who, or what organizations, would you consider to be your support system?

11. Is there someone, or an organization, that you believe has helped draw women into the leadership circle of traditional agricultural organizations or commodity groups?
12. In 1988, rural women identified a need for trainings in tending to livestock, growing and marketing produce, and developing home-based businesses to supplement farm income. Are these needs still relevant and represented in agricultural policy?
13. Are you active in influencing agricultural policy? If so, how?
14. Research suggests that women's participation in agricultural policy is driven by three factors: 1.) concern for the family's welfare rather than themselves as farm women, 2.) goals, statements, and actions centered around unity on the farm, and 3.) overall strategy to educate themselves. Would you consider these three factors the driving force of your participation in agricultural policy in Kentucky?
15. You are considered a leader in Kentucky agriculture. Who, or what organizations, propelled you to success?
16. What other factors can be attributed to your success?
17. Were there any organizations that were not helpful in your role and discredited your success?
18. Were you empowered by someone to take on this leadership role?
19. Where does your sense of empowerment stem from?
20. What would be helpful to you in continuing your leadership in this position?

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## **Vita**

Courtney Lacy Jenkins graduated from Morgan County High School in May 2006 and went on to pursue an undergraduate degree at the University of Kentucky. At UK, she earned a B.S. in Community and Leadership Development. She began her graduate studies at UK in the fall of 2010.