

## UNIVERSITY WOMEN IN AGRICULTURAL AND EXTENSION EDUCATION: COMMITTED TO THE PROFESSION AND SEEKING SOLUTIONS TO CHALLENGES

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### Abstract

*As agricultural and extension education at the university level revamps its image for the new millennium, it may be wise to recognize its growing diversity and seek more compatible options for women in the workforce. The purpose of this study was to describe the unique challenges regarding personal lives, barriers unique to women in the field, and mentoring and support systems available to women involved in agricultural and extension education at the university level. "Changes in education and societal thinking are key components in encouraging young women in non-traditional fields" (Johnson, 1997). The three themes reported in this study reflected a broad view of the issues facing women entering the profession of agricultural and extension education at the university level. 1) Women in the field who feel encouraged seem to be happy and have a strong commitment to their role in the profession. 2) Mentoring networks and support systems are too few and do not meet the needs of the women in the field. 3) Barriers to women in the profession are real and need to be addressed. The barriers perceived by women in agricultural and extension education may be far more real than we would like to think. This study gives insight into the experiences of women in the field of agricultural and extension education.*

### Introduction

*Tell me where is it written what it is I'm  
meant to be?*

*That I can't dare...*

*It all began the day I found...that from my  
window I could only see a piece of sky.*

*I never dreamed it was so wide or even half  
as high.*

...

*The more I live, the more I learn.*

*The more I learn, the more I realize the less  
I know.*

*Each step I take--each page I turn--each  
mile I travel only means the more I have to  
go.*

*What's wrong with wanting more?*

*If you can fly--then soar!*

*With all there is--why settle for just a piece  
of sky?*

(Alan Bergman, Marilyn Bergman and  
Michel Legrand for the movie *Yentl*, 1983)

Remembering the turn of the twentieth century when the story *Yentl* took place, women were not expected to work outside the home, let alone in nontraditional fields. Today, many groups and individuals support the concept of encouraging young women to enter nontraditional fields. However, the realities of working in an environment dominated by men are not always clarified to women.

Until World War II, work environments were traditionally sex-segregated—that is, women worked with women and men worked with men. Women who work mostly with men face problems in their work environments that other women do not. Even now in most all work environments, women earn, on average, less than men (Gutek, 2001).

Women still are considered nontraditional in the field of agricultural and extension education. Currently the US Department of Labor defines as

nontraditional any occupation where one gender comprises 25% or less of the total employed. In 1998, Camp (2000) reported women comprised only 16% of secondary level agricultural education teachers. In 2001, at the university level, women agricultural and extension educators made up 14.7% of faculty in the American Association of Agricultural Educators Directory for 2001. This paper looks at some of the unique challenges women at the university level perceived facing them in their professional lives.

Mailed to the total population of women listed in the official directory of the American Association for Agricultural Education, with an appointment status of instructor or higher, the survey had a response rate of 80%. Two hundred sixty-six comments were penned by respondents reflecting intense levels of emotion regarding various issues disclosed.

As the researchers sorted the comments, issues similar to the ones reported in a previous study by Foster (2001) again pointed to the emergence of basic questions for the profession. *Do women in agricultural and extension education at the university level face different issues than men? Are the challenges these women face acknowledged by their male counterparts and administrators? How far will women go in trying to balance their personal lives and families with their chosen careers?*

### Conceptual Framework

“Society has reached an impasse dealing with working-women” (Foster, 2001, p. 9). Foster (2001) made this statement as a result of her research looking at women in agricultural education at the secondary level. In the year 2000 only 16% of the current secondary level agricultural teachers were female. Based on that figure, and the U.S. Department of Labor’s definition of nontraditional, the researchers decided to look at women in agricultural and extension education at the university level. Feminist researchers often pose questions that relate to the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness. The aim of this ideological research is to “correct both the invisibility and distortion of female

experience in ways relevant to ending women’s unequal social position” (Creswell, 1998, p. 83). This paper focuses on comments collected from a descriptive study of women in agricultural and extension education at the university level. The need to process the individual reflections of the women that responded pushes this study into the phenomenological category of research. A phenomenological study focuses on descriptions of how people experience and how they perceive their experience of the phenomena under study (Glesne, 1999).

Pamela Johnson (2001), an assistant professor of English Studies at Texas Lutheran University noted,

“All the advice for women on the job market indicates this separation (career and motherhood) is necessary and suggests that if you slip up and mention your children during an interview, you might as well just go ahead and write off the prospect” (Johnson, 2001).

She further notes,

“But while it is no doubt true that some people believe women must devote themselves either to lives of scholarship or motherhood, it is also true that accepting this neat division of labor by pretending not to have children is playing to the wrong crowd.”

According to the Summary Report of the Millennium Project at the University of Arizona (a special study commissioned by President Peter Likins), large numbers of female faculty and faculty of color experience a particularly challenging and sometimes hostile campus climate. The study, commissioned after publication of the infamous 1999 Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Report, uncovered a series of 12 myths that create serious impediments to the success of faculty at the University of Arizona. A Study on the Status of Women Faculty in Science at MIT reported gross discrepancies of salary, space, awards, and resources between men and women science faculty (Committee on

Women Faculty Report, 1999). Numbers of women faculty in the School of Science reflected little to no change for a 15+ year period. The MIT female science faculty reported feeling invisible and becoming marginalized as their careers advanced. These feelings led directly to making their jobs more difficult and less satisfying (Committee on Women Faculty, 1999).

The University of Arizona's Millennium Report also uncovered a series of myths that alluded to a sense of well being for women and minorities on campus. The myths ranged from: *The university has dramatically increased the numbers of women faculty and faculty of color in the last several years, to Workload is evenly distributed among all faculty.* The Arizona report is another example of issues facing universities nationwide that have been buried under piles of paperwork for too long (Steering Committee, 2001). Avoiding the process needed to eliminate these myths does not bode well for a healthy academic climate. Agricultural and extension education might hope for a more harmonious environment for its professionals to work in. Webster defines harmony as 'a pleasing combination of the elements forming a whole' (Merriam-Webster, 1993). An example of lack of harmony might be reflective of the experience of women in nontraditional fields like agricultural education. The top three barriers facing women in agricultural education at the secondary level are acceptance by peers and other males in the agricultural industry, balancing family and career, and acceptance by administrators (Foster, 2001). Barriers facing women, and other minorities, in extension include lack of commitment from senior managers and university administration, resistance of some clientele groups to work with staff from diverse backgrounds, and lack of specific goals and targets for attaining a diverse workforce (U.S. Department of Agriculture, ECOP-PODC, 1997). If women have experienced these barriers at entry to mid-level positions in agricultural and extension education, the question becomes *Why do they attempt to move forward?*

Various laws have been passed in an

attempt to equalize the work front for both women and men. From the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment in 1920, establishing the right of women to vote, there have been a series of honorable and worthy pieces of legislation designed to improve conditions for women in any profession. The *Equal Pay Act of 1963*, *Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*, and *Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972* are among the most notable (U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, 2000). However, when reviewing comments from the women respondents in this study, it would seem that these acts of legislation have not reached all of the hallowed halls of academia.

We strive to create and maintain a diverse workforce in academia and especially in agricultural and extension education. Coming from strong roots of predominantly white, male work populations, the move to a more diverse population in the field of agricultural and extension education will require new approaches to the administration of these departments. R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr. concludes in his work, *Beyond Race and Gender*, "those who try to force today's reality into yesterday's management patterns will seriously jeopardize the viability of their enterprise." He further notes, "diversity is a commitment to all employees, not an attempt at preferential treatment" (Thomas, 1991). Perhaps it is time that academia took a page from the book of corporate organization, lest we fall into the dilemma of losing some of our brightest scholars.

As agricultural and extension education at the university level revamps its image for the new millennium, it may be wise to recognize its growing diversity and seek more compatible options for women in the workforce. "Most of the early sociological literature relating to women's careers in teaching has suffered from a number of assumptions, which include a deficit model of women, a persistent tendency to see women in family role terms, and a pervasive ideology of individual choice" (Boulton & Coldron, 1998). The past role models for women in education must be edited to fit the new generation or their under-representation in nontraditional fields will continue.

## Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to describe the unique challenges regarding personal lives, barriers unique to women in the field, and mentoring and support systems available to women involved in agricultural and extension education at the university level. The objectives included:

1. Identify support systems available to women in agricultural and extension education at the university level.
2. Identify perceptions of women in agricultural and extension education at the university level regarding balancing personal life and career and barriers unique to the gender.

## Methodology

Focusing on the open-ended questions included in a descriptive survey by SeEVERS and Foster (2002), a qualitative research design was used to develop this study. Two techniques were employed to accomplish the objectives of this study: selected survey statements and historical research. Miles and Huberman (1994) noted more general conceptual themes can be used when ordering qualitative data. The researchers attempted to blend inferences drawn directly from the survey statements and group those statements according to themes.

The population consisted of all women listed as teaching faculty in agricultural and extension education programs found in the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) member directory for 2001. Using a census (N=66), the original instrument contained six sections. This study centered around sections Three, Four and Six of the original instrument. Sections Three and Four addressed roles as mentors and protégés within the profession as well as any perceived barriers and challenges that might have been experienced as a female educator. Section Six provided the opportunity to share thoughts and comments about their experiences. The actual questions utilized for this paper as they

appeared in the original questionnaire are below:

- *Have you ever encouraged another woman involved in agricultural and extension education at the university level?*
- *Have you ever received encouragement from another woman involved in agricultural and extension education at the university level?*
- *Have you ever discouraged another woman involved in agricultural and extension education at the university level?*
- *Have you ever been discouraged by another woman involved in agricultural and extension education at the university level?*
- *Do you believe you made personal sacrifices in order to achieve the level of achievement you have reached in your career? Please explain the nature of those sacrifices.*
- *Given the opportunity, would you make those same sacrifices over again?*
- *Do you feel you have experienced any barriers or challenges in your profession due to your gender? Explain.*
- *What do you perceive to be the greatest barrier faced by women in the agricultural and extension education profession at the university level (whether personally experienced or not)?*
- *Would you encourage others to pursue a career similar to your own, why or why not?*

Face and content validity of the original instrument were assessed using a panel of experts in research/statistics, secondary teacher education and agricultural and extension education. Minor changes were made in the wording of some items. Reliability was assessed using a test-retest procedure with 22 women who were listed in the 2001 Directory of the American Association of Agricultural Education but did not have teaching responsibilities. A minimum agreement of 85% was set a

priori. No statements, questions or subcategories were changed. Two hundred and sixty-six comments from 53 respondents were grouped into themes.

### Findings and Discussion

Participant responses to the open-ended sections of the survey were sorted based on similarity of responses (Patton, 1990). Based on this analysis of the data, we identified three emerging themes: 1) Women in the field who feel encouraged seem to be happy and have a strong commitment to their role in the profession; 2) Mentoring networks and support systems are too few and do not meet the needs of the women in the field; and 3) Barriers to women in the profession are real and need to be addressed. The following discussion will identify key points gleaned from the data and provide supporting evidence via representative quotes from participants. In order to maintain authenticity of the original meanings, the comments reported may include grammatical errors. The researchers chose to remove any possible identifying factors, such as locations or names, in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

#### *Objective 1*

Identify support systems available to women in agricultural and extension education at the university level.

*Theme 1: Women in the field who feel encouraged seem to be happy and have a strong commitment to their role in the profession.*

This theme category reflected several positive and uplifting concepts among the women in the field. The belief that their work is important and they are making valid contributions to the profession is apparent. This belief brings with it a strong feeling of satisfaction and contentment.

*Women do make a difference in agriculture. Our voices need to be (not only) heard but listened to. A woman's perspective to ag*

*is unique and worthy of serious consideration.*

*(I) find great satisfaction working with students at this level, also I feel there is a tremendous need for females to participate in research and teach our students primarily b/c they will offer a different perspective than our male counterparts.*

Other participants related much gratitude for having the opportunity to do the work they love, often noting the perceived effects their role will have on future generations: "It has been very rewarding for me to have a job I love, and I believe it served as a good example to my children and grandchildren." Many of these participants also noted the flexibility associated with their positions even with the high number of working hours per week.

*It's really a good situation; the hours are many, but flexible, and I think I'm making a difference in the way our future teachers think. It's nice to be able to have a positive impact on the future of such a great program as AED.*

An undercurrent of strength and awareness of the challenges facing them surfaces in many of the participants' comments. Often a 'tongue in cheek' approach was infused in their explanation of gratitude and level of job satisfaction: "Can't wait for a man to bring me happiness. Also, I'm glad God has given me the opportunity to be where I am today. I enjoy my work." Still, an underlying peril lies in the belief that "the wrong type of women" should be excluded from the ranks of women at the university level. As with all issues regarding diversity, the temptation to judge others may result in excluding exceptional people because they are different from our own prototype. The obvious concern for maintaining a standard reflects the passion these women have for their profession.

*I believe there are many women who would make a contribution*

*to the profession. I do believe that some individuals are more qualified than others and it is important that we maintain that quality, not with women but with anyone entering the profession. We are only as credible as those who represent us. With that said, those who I have spoken to about entering aed at the university level have only been those I feel have the necessary qualities to be positive additions to the profession. I would discourage someone if I felt they did not have what it takes.*

*Theme 2: Mentoring networks and support systems are too few and do not meet the needs of the women in the field.*

While some of the respondents felt that women faculty in agricultural and extension education were supportive, the support was also considered to be rather unintentional and non-formal, such as getting together at professional meetings for short discussions. None of the participants indicated that they had formal mentoring relationships with women in the field. As one faculty member noted:

*It seems as a group in this profession we do well to encourage each other. I feel there have been several women in aed who have offered encouragement, mostly without their knowing, they have done so by being role models for those of us early in our career.*

Other participants agreed that there are several women in the field who have served as role models, but that women in agricultural and extension education really have “few strong role models, and few allies who accept both males and females.”

This lack of apparent formal mentoring also has led to discouragement and a sense among some participants of not always knowing how to “act” around others in order to be accepted. As one example, a participant related “I also had a male

*advisor who told me I should go into aged curriculum or something like that rather than becoming a university professor because ‘all women in aged are real b\_\_\_\_\_’.” Numerous reports were related of similar instances to discourage women from entering the profession. One participant commented, “Some women in higher ed have had to fight to get there.”*

This same woman felt that this fighting spirit kept some female faculty members from mentoring junior females in the profession because that survival instinct intuitively makes them “seem threatened by others who are newcomers.” Participants also noted the lack of both male and female mentors for young women entering the field and lamented that the disparity in numbers of males versus females creates problems when trying to seek help and advice from male colleagues:

*(I am in a) very male dominated department. Men offer little or no help, show little concern for well-being of females.... Seem to tolerate us, but that’s about all.*

*My male counterparts do not know how to mentor a younger female. They could use a workshop on mentoring.*

Lack of appropriate role models and mentors for female faculty in agricultural and extension education have also evolved into issues of self-esteem and the belief they are not respected among their male counterparts. A large portion of the participants felt that women are not respected and regarded as equals, not only in rank and pay, but in terms of the types of professional courtesies and collaborations necessary to building rapport and camaraderie—important factors to a mentoring process. A recurring and consistent belief expressed by participants was that women are NOT viewed as equals by their male counterparts in multiple areas:

*I feel that I have to do more work to prove myself to my male counterparts.*

*Not worth the time to be treated like a little girl and glorified secretary.*

*Not included in research proposals/discussions with others in the profession. (I would hope) To be recognized as knowledgeable, well prepared individuals who have a passion for agriculture too.*

*Condescending attitudes and lack of recognition—underestimation of our abilities.*

*Powerful men who discount (women's) scholarship and the extra emotional labor work women seem to get.*

#### *Objective 2*

Identify perceptions of women in agricultural and extension education at the university level regarding balancing personal life and career and barriers unique to the gender.

*Theme 3: Barriers to women in the profession are real and need to be addressed.*

There are always challenges to be faced when entering any profession. For women in agricultural and extension education, those challenges are often unique to their gender. Although anyone with a family and a career suffers the challenge of meeting the demands of both their family's needs and the obligations of the job, women face the more complex physical issues of pregnancy and childbirth. The realities of the possible health concerns in the role of a potential mother are quite different than those of the potential father. There seems to be an undercurrent of fear that because of potential health concerns, pregnant women will not be accepted by their male peers.

*I am still putting off starting a family—NO FEMALE in our dept. has had a child while working here. Some have children, but were not working in*

*the dept. through pregnancy. I fear that there is a view that women are not as "productive" before, during and for a while after pregnancy.*

*Not married and no children. Would like to have a family, but can't seem to find a man willing to put up with me—a woman with a PhD isn't all that common to describe, also if I have a child—who would raise him/her? I fear day care.*

Our society still looks to the female, in general, to be the main caregiver of the family and see that the home runs efficiently. In effect, this means women with families hold down two careers not one. In addition there can often be internal conflicts within a two-career family. When these women are also working toward tenure, the stakes are quite different.

*My house is always dirty! I have made point to make time for my kids—I have one closet in my office with nothing but their clothes, toys and a pillow and blanket for naps. They seem happy with the situation. I am having a problem at the moment with a rather sticky situation—there is a great job in another state (my dream job actually) and I think I have a good chance at it. My husband however, is not at all happy because there is not a position for him at this time. I guess it's the old idea that men are supposed to get the good jobs and their wives will follow them, and now the tables are turned. It's not a fun time...*

Women in the United States still, on average, make only 76% of the take home pay of their male counterparts (U. S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, 2000). Perhaps this is an indicator of how women are valued in the field. It is not enough to be valued for your ability; true value is shown in both verbal and in more concrete forms, and women in agricultural

and extension education aren't sure of "where they stand" with their colleagues and administrators:

*Men question my qualifications all the time. Salary is 20,000 below my male counterparts at a same rank, education but less experience*

*Many times I have been the only female sitting at the table (aside from a support staff person). I sometimes feel like those at the table are excluding me from discussion...*

*Told because I had a husband with a good job, I (dept. head) don't need to waste a promotion on you.*

The number and intensity of perceived barriers can also lead to a decrease in self-esteem. Many participants noted incidents that spoke of the need for vast amounts of personal fortitude in order to remain in their chosen profession:

*Yes, spending time with my children. However, they have received benefits from my being at the university. Only time will tell—I almost forgot, husband left me because of my position, not enough time to do everything.*

*I supported myself through my doctoral degree program. I supported my young son and I was divorced and unemployed. I lived meagerly on my savings and supported my son by myself with no child support.*

*I feel that as a woman, I need more education and need to accomplish more quality work than male counterparts to receive the equal (or less) recognition for the work that I do. I have an assistant who is a man and people, new acquaintances, will automatically defer to him in meetings when I should be their first and primary contact—I need*

*to establish my credentials and gently let these people know that I'm the one in charge, not the male.*

Other participants noted concern that the lack of respect and appreciation afforded by male colleagues could have a negative effect on their relationships with clientele.

*Fitting in—it is unfortunate, but many of the upper level administrators are older males who still have stereotypes about our profession. I think females are valued people, but have to work more to become valued. We don't necessarily have the same things in common that "men" might have in common. Additionally, I think men in similar (assistant professor) positions are paid (and thus valued) more because of the perception that they are the "bread winner" in the family. I think if I were male, I would not STILL have the visiting status that my position holds.*

*I think as a total profession of aged, including secondary, there are still perceptions that women will not do as good a job as men. This can affect how students view us as being part of the profession, especially in our own state. It also affects how we might work with teachers in our state. I also know that within my department on campus, it appears that the input of women is valued less than the male faculty.*

Often the most challenging and difficult to change are those barriers that have no tangible form but merely exist through attitude and demeanor. These attitudes are often simply an offshoot of societal norms. The "expected" roles of men and women have remained similar for over 2000 years, changing them will take both desire and diligence.

*Tough one, you know the usual stuff—"that's a nice sweater," instead of "what is your research specialty?"*

*Ag Ed is a predominantly male profession and universities are managed mostly by men.*

*You can't have it all—family and career—someone has to be the "wife" taking care of home and family.*

*The "good old boy" system, the male dominated area of ag ed remains reluctant to accept the change of females in ag ed (esp. the older ones).*

Additional participants noted barriers including age and ethnic background. Participants in general seemed to become more aware of these issues as their careers advanced. Although there were some distinctly negative comments overall, most participants seemed to feel the barriers they faced were not insurmountable. In fact, participants often alluded to "better days ahead" and reflected that society and agricultural and extension education were changing.

*I think it's finding time to do all the things one needs to do to remain sane. Balancing our many jobs. I believe as the older generation moves out, it will be easier—some men still have the perception that we're just a bunch of girls who don't deserve the same respect. I know as a grad student, that when the secretary had to be out, our dept. head would ask the females—never the men—to catch the phone, type things, etc. Of course, one of the most open minded, progressive people in our industry was a retired professor, who at 87 still came to work everyday—so you can't stereotype people. I do believe, however, that the younger men*

*are much more accepting of us as equals.*

While sorting through the comments and perceptions of the women who participated in this study, it became apparent that most of the participants had mixed feelings about their roles in the profession. A lack of confidence about the value they bring to a field can gradually undermine the sense of well being that women may currently have. Both the women in agricultural and extension education at the university level and their male colleagues must seek to find new and definitive ways to eliminate those feelings of confusion in order to create a more harmonious and productive environment for us all.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The colonial United States saw the primary occupation of women as raising large families. Anywhere from 5 to 15 children were common, plus the care of any elderly family members. Women's lives were devoid of social activity and centered around common household chores including carding wool and cotton; spinning it into yarn; weaving and sewing; cleaning house; pickling and preserving; and making candles, soap, and home medicines. Laws forbade women to enter business. However, despite those laws, women assisted husbands and fathers, and sometimes as widows, they managed and worked in retail trades, agriculture, medicine and law, as well as in print shops, taverns and the undertaking business (Commission on the Status of Women, 1993).

By 1950, 1 of 3 women worked outside the home and half of the female workforce was married. Today, women make up 46% of the U. S. labor force (U. S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, 2001). The societal norms of expectation regarding women's roles are slowly changing. Agricultural and extension education is changing, but still is considered a nontraditional field for women. This fact added to the concept that women are still relative newcomers to many fields at the university level make the comments reported in this paper very insightful.

“Changes in education and societal thinking are key components in encouraging young women in non-traditional fields” (Johnson, 1997). As more women enter the field of agricultural and extension education, a stronger support network should develop. Responsible mentoring both by women on the same campus or field site of the new hire, and by other women in the field located at other institutions should become a routine priority. Department heads and other leaders in the profession should take the lead on needed mentoring connections for all new female faculty in agricultural and extension education. By analyzing the comments found in this study, perhaps we will determine a direction for the development of such networks. By comparing these comments with known information about other nontraditional fields pitfalls might be avoided. The Association of American Medical College reports that although many things have changed for women in academic medicine over the last 20 years, one thing has not. Since 1981, the proportion of women faculty at the rank of full professor has remained virtually constant at 10% (Croft, 1999). The prospect of achieving tenure and full professorship dims for beginning professionals facing these statistics.

The three themes reported in this study reflect a broad view of the issues facing women entering the profession of agricultural and extension education at the university level.

*Women in the field who feel encouraged seem to be happy and have a strong commitment to their role in the profession.*

While seemingly a positive outlook on the surface, this theme also warns of hidden pitfalls often common to those who must overcome adversity to achieve their goals. Often through the process of sacrifice, it becomes common for the human species to forget the Golden Rule. The challenge to the profession would be to seek alternative options for incoming women. It must be remembered that as women coming into a male dominated profession, we are, in effect, asking round pegs to fit square holes. Our challenge is to understand their unique

challenges and seek viable alternatives such as flextime, job sharing, extended tenure clocks, or compressed workweeks.

*Mentoring networks and support systems are too few and do not meet the needs of the women in the field.*

Are women treated differently or are they simply different? According to the so-called deficit model, women as a group receive fewer chances and opportunities in their careers, and so collectively have worse career outcomes (Sonnert, 1998). In the world of agricultural and extension education, the lack of mentoring systems reflects a lack of opportunity for women in the field. We know that women may be more likely than men to be socialized with general orientations and attitudes that reduce the drive toward professional success. Add to that equation limited role models and a non-existent support system and you have created a recipe for discouragement and failure. To offset the possibility of women failing to reach out to possible mentors, department heads and other leaders in the profession must help identify and connect mentors to all new female faculty in agricultural and extension education.

*Barriers to women in the profession are real and need to be addressed.*

The barriers perceived by women in agricultural and extension education may be far more real than we would like to think. One of the realities of these participants is their ability to adapt and overcome adversity. In fact, the women involved in this study would, for the most part, be perceived as high achievers and thought of as successful among their female peer groups. However, in science education and related careers, it has been shown that men and women interpret exactly the same behavior differently, and do so in ways that have important implications for their decisions and behavior (Sonnert, 1998). With that in mind, it becomes paramount that the issues and themes that have surfaced in this study be viewed with an open mind by both male and female members of our profession. In addition, it becomes critical

that administrators remain alert to the differences of their faculty and seek to provide alternative opportunities to both the men and women members of their faculty teams. To do less will rob future generations of the creative component found in the mix of a diverse and energized cohort of educators. Finally, to simply bring these issues into public view is not enough. Continual studies designed to monitor success and failure of women in agricultural and extension education are necessary if we are to continue to enjoy the benefits of a more diverse profession.

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