

DO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FOOD ACTUALLY
HAPPEN? A QUALITATIVE STUDY ABOUT THE
FOOD-BASED COMMUNICATION HABITS OF
FEMALE CONSUMERS.

By

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Abstract:

Agricultural organizations have encouraged farmers and others involved in the agricultural industry to discuss their experiences with consumers and to have meaningful conversations about food. While agriculturalists are encouraged to share their stories on the internet through social networking platforms and blogs, they are also encouraged to have interpersonal conversations about food and agriculture. Due to the elevated concerns of mothers about food, and the nature of women and social capital, mothers are a force to communicate about food and agriculture.

This qualitative study utilized in-depth interviews with mothers with agricultural backgrounds to answer four research questions: (1) What information are mothers sharing and receiving about food? (2) How does information they receive affect mothers' food purchasing decisions? (3) How do mothers characterize their relationships with those that they are having conversations about food and their connections with those individuals? (4) How are mothers utilizing emotion and personal relationships to share information with others about agriculture and food?

Using constant comparative method, participants' responses were organized into themes. The themes that emerged were information sharing is often limited to certain scenarios, information receiving is mainly online, concerns about food are common, strangers are easiest to talk to about food and agriculture issues, and social pressures exist but are not felt by all.

While some mothers were willing to discuss food and agricultural issues with others, many participants were hesitant to discuss them to avoid tensions with acquaintances and those they were close to. As a result of their hesitance, mothers are not having the conversations encouraged by agricultural organizations. Some mothers feel judgment from their peers in the form of social pressure while grocery shopping which means relationships influence on food purchasing. This study provided insight into the standpoint of mothers with agricultural backgrounds. Agricultural communications practitioners should use this information to give women the tools to have conversations about food and agriculture without fear of causing tension. Agricultural communications educators should use the results of this study to provide students with an idea of how mothers will communicate with each other about agricultural and food issues.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural organizations have encouraged farmers and others involved in the agricultural industry to discuss their experiences with consumers and to have meaningful conversations about food (Tevis, 2018). In an interview with *Successful Farming*, Roxi Beck with Look East, a public relations and communications agency specializing in food and agriculture, shared that, “Unless [agriculturalists] understand the values driving concerns and skepticism, we may fail to address their key issues. Dig deeper, and show empathy” (Tevis, 2018, para. 11). While agriculturalists are encouraged to share their stories on the internet through social networking platforms and blogs, they are also encouraged to have interpersonal conversations about food and agriculture. Due to the elevated concerns of mothers about food, and the nature of women and social capital, mothers are a prime force to communicate about food and agriculture with those around them.

Background and Setting

Women and Food Buying

Although strides have been made in gender equality, homemaking, grocery shopping, and food preparation are still often considered women’s realms (Cockburn-Wootten, Pritchard, Morgan, & Jones, 2008). In many households, women are thought of as the “prime nurturers of

men's and children's bodies," which leads to the burden of making food-purchasing decisions falling on the woman's shoulders for households (Cockburn-Wooten, 2008, p. 408). Women, according to Feminist Standpoint Theory, have a different life experience and communicate in a different way than men (Alfred, 2009). The Private Label Manufacturers Association (2013) notes this different life experience extends to grocery shopping:

The study found women for the most part continue to take on the greatest share of the responsibility when it comes to the routine shopping for groceries. Three out of four women do more than half the shopping for their households, while two out of three do 75% or more of the shopping. Only about one in four women indicate they get significant help with the shopping from others on a routine basis, while just 15.5% say others contribute as much as they do or more to the household shopping. (p. 4)

Furthermore, 83.3% of women surveyed believed there is a difference between the way men and women make food purchasing decisions, and 58.2% surveyed felt women are more likely to be influenced socially when making food purchasing decisions than men (PLMA, 2013). According to research by the Hartman Group, the inequality is not limited to grocery shopping as 56% of women in their study reported they were the sole decision-maker of what to buy in their household (2018).

The Center for Food Integrity (CFI) found women are more concerned about food system issues than men, and mothers in particular are more concerned about the food cost increases than other groups (2015). A later CFI study found mothers feel pressure from others to provide healthy food for their children yet feel less pressure to eat healthy themselves (2018). In the same study, mothers reported they prefer to utilize search engines when looking for information about their food (CFI, 2018). The most searched food topics in this study were ingredients in food, impact of food on health, and food safety (CFI, 2018). Women were also more likely to want to know more

about agricultural processes (CFI, 2018). A 2011 study showed mothers play a large role in influencing their children's later food-related decisions and are typically responsible for their children's diets (Johnson, Sharkey, Dean, McIntosh, & Kubena). Laws et al. (2019) found mothers use the internet and Facebook to find the majority of their information relevant to dietary health and food information.

Food Information Transparency

A movement toward food transparency and conversations about food has been a topic of public concern in recent years. Howard (2005) found in a survey of five counties on the Central Coast of California that 59.8% of survey respondents did not believe they knew enough about how their food is grown, processed, transported, and sold. In addition, 59% of the respondents in the same study felt it was difficult to find information about the process food goes through from farm to fork. This desire for transparency has influenced an increased want for interactions between food consumers and food producers. A study in Florida found both producers and consumers value social interactions between the two groups, and shared that this element was one of the biggest benefits of selling or buying food products locally (Conaway & Goodwin, 2013). In this study a consumer explained they valued learning about agricultural production practices from the local farmers they interacted with; they were also more understanding if a producer was not certified organic or fit under another label of what they expected from their food (Conaway & Goodwin, 2014). A consumer in the Florida study was quoted as saying:

Well, I find one other advantage and this is me, personally...I actually like the social interaction of speaking to the person I'm buying it from. You get a lot of really neat stories if you just stop and listen to people. (Conaway & Goodwin, 2013, p. 11)

Beyond the stories and information that transfers through local food purchasing, consumers also explained they felt they received better customer service when doing business with a local

producer, “The customer service with...with the local, local people is amazing. You don’t get it from anywhere else. They’re great” (Conaway & Goodwin, 2013, p. 11). Consumers in the study also emphasized the need for education about food and agriculture, specifically for young people. One consumer also referenced the importance of parents’ influence on their children’s food choices, and shared that they felt buying healthy food and eating healthy food was a learned behavior (Conaway & Goodwin, 2013).

Only 25% of respondents to a 2018 CFI study strongly agreed they trust the modern food system. Furthermore, only 42% of respondents believed the food system is headed in the right direction, and only 25% of respondents believed U.S. meat animals are humanely treated (CFI, 2018). Public interest in food production is not limited to the United States; there is global interest in the food system and food production (Arnot, Vizzier-Thaxton, & Scances, 2016). Proponents of food information transparency argue if consumers have more information about what is in their food and how it is produced, they will be able to make better food-purchasing decisions and buy healthier food (Cairns & Johnston, 2018). Beyond that, many argue because food is such an integral part of the daily lives of consumers, they should be interested in the process behind producing their food (Schiefer, Reiche, & Deiters, 2013). Livestock industry experts, including livestock facility design specialist Temple Grandin, are among the vocal proponents of food transparency:

I have worked over 40 years in this industry and I am proud of the improvements I helped achieve. We need to show it. Consumers do not like sudden surprises. U.S. consumer’s rejection of finely textured beef, which is recovered from fat trimmings caused several large plants to close. A major problem with this issue was lack of listing the recovered beef on the label. The meat industry needs to be transparent and explain and show everything we do. (Grandin, 2014, p. 467)

In an effort to be transparent in agriculture, and improve public perception of practices like slaughter, Grandin was a part of The Glass Walls project, an effort by the American Meat Institute to show what happens in a slaughterhouse to the public (North American Meat Institute, 2013).

Consumers' attitudes about an issue are thought to be related to the level of transparent communication they receive (Rumble & Irani, 2016). Furthermore, perceived transparency of communication is a "significant predictor of attitude toward the communication" (Rumble & Irani, 2016, p. 66). Attitude is connected to behavior, which means high perceived transparency could have a positive impact on behavior (Rumble & Irani, 2016). Rumble and Irani (2016) recommended practitioners combine transparent communication and personal relevance when communicating to their audience:

Practitioners should also explore ways to make communication about the livestock industry more personally relevant to their target audience. Identifying shared values of the target audience and the industry may allow for practitioners to provide communication that motivates the audience to process the information. (p. 68)

Food transparency is difficult to achieve, as "appropriate transparency systems requires cooperation within the sector" (Schiefer et al., 2013, p. 284) and essentially demands all participants in the food production process buy into the same system of transparency (Schiefer et al., 2013). Eakin et al. (2016) said efforts to increase food transparency have often focused on only one part of the food system "or have tended to be framed in particular disciplinary discourses" (p. 757), which results in increased transparency in one portion of the food production system but often fails to improve transparency at other levels (Eakin et al., 2016).

Although the burden of transparency falls on all members of the food production system, "the U.S. public views food companies and farmers as the groups most responsible for trust-

building transparency” (Arnot et al., 2016, p. 2221), which results in a heightened need for those groups to communicate about agriculture (Arnot et al., 2016). The need for transparency in communication about food has also changed the way food companies and farmers communicate with consumers:

No longer is it sufficient to rely solely on science or to attack our attackers as a means of protecting self-interest. This new environment requires new ways of engaging and new methods of communicating if we want to build trust, earn and maintain social license, and protect our freedom to operate. Moreover, we need to recognize that consumers are not a homogenous group. (Arnot et al., 2016, p. 2221)

To build trust, increase transparency, and connect with consumers, Arnot et al. encouraged those involved in the food system to strive to communicate with consumers rather than force feed them statistics:

How can the food system connect with consumers who reject science? The goal should not be to win a scientific or social argument, but to find more meaningful and relevant methods to introduce science in a way that encourages thoughtful consideration and informed decision making.... Food system experts can be more effective when they first establish shared values and then providing factual and relevant information. (2016, p. 2223)

The concept of reaching consumers through emotion and transparency rather than hard facts is encouraged by many agriculture organizations through conferences, websites, and other venues to increase transparency on the production level of the food system.

Communicating with Emotion

Using emotion and relationships to communicate with consumers about agriculture and food has become popular among agricultural organizations because of research emphasizing transparency. In an article about the 2017 Mid America CropLife Association meeting, keynote speaker and author Michele Payn was cited as encouraging attendees to focus on emotion when communicating to consumers about agriculture and food, “How are we going to fight the challenge of where our food comes from?... It has to come down to emotion, not science, not facts, and not research” (Sfiligoj, 2017, para. 6). An American Farm Bureau Federation article published in 2018 encouraged farmers and agriculturalists to invest in others, be open to opposing and new viewpoints, and always be ready to share when trying to communicate with consumers about agriculture (Perry, 2018). In particular, this article encourages agriculturalists to build relationships and utilize emotional appeal when communicating about food production, “Keep a couple of personal examples backed by facts and specific statistics in your back pocket. This will help you capitalize on opportunities by appealing to others through both science and emotion” (Perry, 2018, para. 8).

Other websites, conferences, and agricultural organizations have also encouraged utilizing emotion and personal connection when talking to consumers. The United Soybean Board (USB) echoed the emotion in communication thought process in an article posted to their website, “Instead of spouting facts, let consumers know you care and are committed to growing a safe food supply for your family and their families. Remind them that farmers are consumers, too” (USB, 2014, para. 11). Panelists at the Farm Progress Show in 2016, discussed the importance of communicating on a personal level to show consumers farmers care about producing ethical and safe food (Steimel, 2016). At the 2018 Florida Ruminant Nutrition Symposium, University of Florida Horticultural Sciences professor and department chair Kevin Folta encouraged audience members to establish rapport with consumers and share their story of agriculture, “It is not about

how we do it, it is why we choose to do what we do” (Folta, 2018, p. 71). Furthermore, Folta encouraged audience members to be a friend of consumers rather than an authority on agriculture to create a trusting relationship (Folta, 2018). At the urge of conference speakers, the Center for Food Integrity, and prominent agricultural organizations, farmers and agriculturalists are encouraged to share about food production through their relationships and emotion.

For agriculturalists to be effective in communicating with consumers, simply sharing emotionally charged information with anyone who will listen is not typically the key to successful persuasion (Dubois, Bonezzi, & Agelis, 2016). Dubois, Bonezzi, and Agelis (2016) stated, “Information received from people we feel close to tends to be more influential than information received from people we feel distant from” (p. 714). Derlega and Chaikin (1977) described previous research that claimed individuals are more comfortable with sharing and receiving information from strangers, however they contended that instead, “subject perceive that it is more appropriate to disclose to a friend than to a stranger, which does not support the notion of a ‘stranger on the train’ phenomenon” (p. 109). This is further supported by Jehn and Shah (1997) who found self-disclosure and information-sharing are much more common in groups of friends than acquaintances.

Problem Statement

Consumers are thought to encounter social pressures when purchasing food. Kim, Lusk, and Brorsen (2018) suggested when choosing to purchase organic food, consumers do so as a result of social pressure. As a result, agriculturalists are encouraged by agriculturally related organizations to communicate with others about the food and agriculture industry (Stebner, Ray, Becker, & Baker, 2015). Common rhetoric has encouraged communication based in interpersonal communications, however there is very little research existing in the agricultural communications discipline about interpersonal communication (Tevis, 2018). Research is needed to determine if

the interpersonal communication methods encouraged by farm magazines and organizations are occurring and the perceptions of these communication efforts.

Purpose & Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe interpersonal relationships and conversations between mothers that are occurring about food and agriculture. Four research questions guided this study on mothers and communication about food:

1. What information are mothers sharing and receiving about food?
2. How does information they receive affect mothers' food purchasing decisions?
3. How do mothers characterize their relationships with those that they are having conversations about food and their connections with those individuals?
4. How are mothers are utilizing emotion and personal relationships to share information with others about agriculture and food?

Limitations of the Study

It was assumed the mothers interviewed self-reported accurate information. This study was limited to mothers with agricultural backgrounds in Oklahoma and aimed to gain a deep understanding of mothers' motivations for food purchasing and where they were finding or sharing information about food purchasing. This study also only examined the relationship between mothers and their conversations about food, rather than including all involved in the food production system. The study cannot be applied to all women or all mothers. Findings from this study are not generalizable.

Significance

Women are the primary food buyers in the majority of American homes and are more concerned with learning more about their food than their male counterparts (CFI, 2015; PLMA,

2013). In an effort to increase consumer knowledge about the food system and agriculture, agricultural organizations have encouraged farmers and agriculturalists to communicate about agriculture through emotion and building personal relationships (Folta, 2018; Perry, 2018; Steimel, 2018; Sfiligoj, 2017; USB, 2014). Programming relative to women in agriculture has also become more prominent in the agricultural industry, and it commonly encourages women to communicate with others and share their experiences in agriculture and with food. Due to women's role as the predominant food purchaser in the majority of homes and their increased probability to be influenced socially by others, it is important to understand how women are making these decisions, and if it is the result of their personal relationships with others.

There exists a gap in the literature about whether women are building these relationships and sharing their stories of agriculture. This research seeks to discover if mothers in agriculture are building relationships with others in and outside of agriculture and sharing information with each other about food and agriculture. It also hopes to reveal if mothers in agriculture have any of their own questions about food and agriculture and where they answer those questions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women and Food

Women's role in food purchasing has been analyzed to determine the thought processes, methods, and other factors that are involved in their role. Cockburn-Wootten, Pritchard, Morgan, and Jones (2008) analyzed the journals of 13 United Kingdom mothers in heterosexual relationships to determine if grocery shopping was used as a leisure activity for the women and the effect of grocery shopping responsibilities on the family dynamic. In addition to finding the women in the study were primarily responsible for grocery shopping, they also determined "rather than providing an empowering space for leisure, grocery shopping actually reproduced and positioned these women within traditional discourses of housewife and mother, thus restricting their access to clearly defined and valued leisure time" (Cockburn-Wootten et al., 2008, p. 407). Although strides have been made gender equality, homemaking, grocery shopping, and food preparation are still often considered women's realms (Cockburn-Wootten, Pritchard, Morgan, & Jones, 2008). Furthermore, Chrisinger et al. (2018) found when grocery shopping for their family, women make significantly healthier food purchases than men.

Women have a nuanced relationship with food, and it is often contradictory, "Women are expected to deny themselves food in order to remain sexually attractive and, at the same time, they have to feed their partners and children with healthy and nutritious meals" (Charles & Kerr,

1986, p. 537). While not all women have an unhealthy relationship with food, it is common for women to have a distorted view of food, the concept of health, and—as a result—their body image (Charles & Kerr, 1986). In their 1986 article about feminism and food, Charles and Kerr attempt to explain this relationship:

Food, as well as being a ‘fattening’ enemy is a comfort and is resorted to at times of emotional stress. Women’s ‘normal’ relationship with food lies on a continuum of which the eating disorders are extremes and is a product of their structural position in society. (p. 537)

Women’s relationship with food means they may spend more time and effort thinking about food, eating, and nutrition (Charles & Kerr, 1986). This time and effort is even further increased when a woman becomes a mother, because she is now responsible not only for her own health, but also for that of her partner and children (Charles & Kerr, 1986).

The concentration on self which the dominant image of slimness and sexual attractiveness involves does not rest easily with ideologies of maternity and maternal love and most women experience a profound contradiction between these two aspects of femininity. They spend their lives struggling to remain slim and therefore attractive to their husbands by denying themselves food, while at the same time they have to be perfect mothers, going through one or more pregnancies, which 'plays havoc' with their figures, and having to feed their children, their husbands and themselves in a way that is nutritionally and socially satisfying. These conflicting ideologies are materialised in the contradictory and problematic relationship that women have towards food. (Charles & Kerr, 1986, p. 539)

Mooney, DeTore, and Malloy (1994) echoed the assertion that women’s relationship with food is often complicated. Their study found the perceived nutritious value of a woman’s meal effected

perceptions of her body type, attractiveness, intelligence, conscientiousness, and calmness (Mooney, DeTore, & Malloy, 1994). In this study, women formed less favorable opinions of other women when they were basing their opinions on food or eating behavior as opposed to other behaviors (Mooney, DeTore, & Malloy, 1994).

With the rise of public interest in food and where food comes from, women have led the way in some arenas (DeLind & Ferguson, 1999). DeLind and Ferguson's (1999) study, which arose from a woman involved in community-supported agriculture (CSA) asking if the rise in popularity was a women's movement, showed how much thought women give to food in comparison to men. Once it was noted women's involvement in a CSA group in Michigan was much higher than men's, DeLind and Ferguson (1999) utilized ecofeminism, social role analysis, and the empowerment paradigm to assess why this was happening. DeLind and Ferguson found men joined CSA groups to improve their own quality of lives and grow personally, while women joined the groups in order to build community. While the participants did not define their involvement as a political women's movement, it was in fact that.

Returning, then, to our original question, "Is this a women's movement?" Certainly in Ackelsberg's (1988) sense. GIP is an example of a women's political movement.... It is easy to see CSA as both a social and physical space within which relationships of everyday life, practical gender concerns that relate to women's life positions and experiences, can be variously expressed. And, it is through the expression of the practical, through the creation and recreation of connections and coalitions around the practical, that, according to Ackelsberg, the personal becomes political. But there's the rub. For [this CSA], at least, no one spoke of the CSA as a vehicle for raising consciousness of gender relations or subordination. (DeLind & Ferguson, 1999, p. 198)

While the women did not see their involvement in the CSA as a political movement, their involvement was inherently political and encouraged women to get out of their homes and better their community (DeLind & Ferguson).

Communication and Food

Communication and food are inherently tied because face-to-face contact remains the predominant method of communication (Hampton, Sessions, Her, & Rainie, 2009) and food is “at the center of human culture” (Blackburn, Yilmaz, & Boyd, 2018, p. 12). Communication is a primary part of human existence, to the point where 70% of our waking hours are spent in communication with others (Poucher, 1970). Poucher (1970) stated, “communication occurs because of a desire to affect” (p. 29). Interpersonal communication has long existed in agricultural communications, albeit typically targeted within the industry rather than externally (Agunga, 1989). Kim, Lusk, and Brorsen (2018) suggested organic food purchasing decisions are influenced by social pressure, and that “purchasers of organic food may want to resist efforts to promote organic food if its appeal is largely a way of demonstrating social status among those who already have it” (Kim et al., 2018, p. 380).

Various studies have analyzed the decisions consumers make when purchasing food. A study by Gorham, Rumble, and Holt (2015) utilized cognitive dissonance and framing to analyze how individuals made food purchasing decisions in regard to the locality of their food’s origin. The researchers found four themes emerged from their focus group discussions: the participants stated local food was “(1) grown in a certain area, (2) statewide, (3) regionally, and (4) nationwide” (p. 5). This shows how consumers have different perspectives of what different terms mean, and what they mean in terms of certain foods. Some participants in the study considered local foods to be those that were grown in an area closer to them than the entire state,

whereas others considered local food to be anything grown in their country (Gorham, Rumble, & Holt, 2015).

Goodwin, Chiarelli, and Irani (2011) found of 10 messages meant to create a positive image of the agricultural industry, only four were successful in doing so in a focus group. The messages were positively received included preservation of natural resources, stewards of the land, wide-open green pastures, and sustainable growth. Participants reported their perceptions of agricultural messaging were based on media and advertisement content (Goodwin, Chiarelli, & Irani, 2011). This study concluded because six of the 10 messages presented were viewed as unfavorable, agricultural communicators should focus on consumer viewpoints to improve the effectiveness of messaging.

The Role of Social Media

“The proliferation of social media applications such as online communities, social networking sites, or blogs gives the public new means for receiving, and importantly, providing information” (Rutasert et al., 2013, p. 84). With the increase in popularity of social media, consumers have become just as much a source of information for other consumers as companies and government agencies (Rutasert et al., 2013). Social media provides a virtual word-of-mouth phenomenon that is effective in sharing information with a large amount of people through “a few keystrokes” (Rutasert et al., 2013, p. 87). In addition, consumers rely on the information shared with them via social media from their friends, peers, family, and others they perceive as being like them (Rutasert et al., 2013).

Blackburn, Yilmaz, and Boyd (2018) found Reddit posters primarily used online conversation threads to share recipes when talking about food. They also discussed the taste, smell, value, and health of their food as factors they considered when preparing and purchasing food. In addition, social media users have been found to share information about food in the

context of healthy versus unhealthy as well as share what food they consumed for the day (Vidal, Ares, Machin, & Jaeger, 2015).

Communication about food and agriculture takes many forms, and has become more common societally (Blackburn, Yilmaz, & Boyd, 2018). Women remain the predominant food purchasers in society (Cockburn-Wooten, Pritchard, Morgan, & Jones, 2008), and therefore their attitudes and habits when it comes to food communication and purchasing have been subject to many research studies.

Women in Agriculture

As far as women in production agriculture are concerned, O'Brien (1986) established many dairy farm women are predominantly involved in farm management decisions rather than doing manual farm work traditionally done by men. O'Brien found women involved in farm management were involved in "record keeping, estate planning, purchasing land, borrowing money, using computers, and determining long range goals and objectives" (p. 2). In Beach's (2013) study of perceptions of women on the farm, it was found many interviewees considered women to have a supporting role in production agriculture. When two farmers interviewed for the study were asked if they thought their children would take over the farm, they responded they did not because they have daughters, which to them meant it was obvious they would not farm (Beach, 2013). Two other participants also referenced the idyllic image of farm women their husband's lunch in the field. One of these farmers referenced this image because it is the role his wife fulfills, and the other referred to it to explain his wife does not fulfill the "idealistic" role due to her off-farm work (Beach, 2013).

Pilgeram and Amos (2015) found although the number of women working as a primary farm operator is increasing, many still acquire their farmland in the traditional way of marrying a man who already had land. Other methods of access to farmland included acquiring it later in life

through a divorce or after saving a majority of their life's earnings, or at a young age by combining their financial resources with their husband (Pilgeram & Amos, 2015). This echoes Beach's (2013) findings that male farmers do not typically consider their daughters candidates for farm inheritance because of their sex. Keller (2014) found women who farmed in Wisconsin faced "institutional, interactional, and symbolic levels of the gender system as they attempted to be recognized as farmers" (p. 75). Although the number of female farm operators has increased in recent past, the gendered nature of agriculture and farming means the majority of women in agriculture and with agricultural backgrounds do not consider themselves to be their farm's primary operator (Beach, 2013). The gendered differences in agriculture and farming result in men and women having different experiences in agriculture, and therefore a different story to tell about the industry (Pilgeram & Amos, 2015; Beach, 2013; O'Brien, 1986).

Transparency

Previous research has explored transparency in agricultural communications (Stebner, Ray, Becker, & Baker, 2015; Rumble & Irani, 2016). This is a result of increased consumer interest in food and agriculture, and practitioners of agricultural communications have been encouraged to share more with consumers about the industry and find a connection point with their audiences (Stebner, et al., 2015; Rumble & Irani, 2016).

The importance of agricultural communications was established by Martin (1970) who asserted it is important to provide consumers with good information about agriculture after President Lyndon Johnson's Committee on Consumer Interest noted four concerns about industry and the lack of communication consumers were receiving:

1. They are unable to judge quality, chiefly because of rapidly changing products and the increasing variety of products and services. More than 2,000 new food products alone are added to the market each year.

2. They lack information about how to complain if a products or service is unsatisfactory.
3. They are concerned about quality deterioration.
4. They lack knowledge about how industry determines prices, about what consumer services are provided to them, and about how to buy. (p. 9)

Martin also noted that around the time of publishing the agricultural industry was beginning to actively communicate with the public.

To provide messaging, it is vital to understand how to share information with consumers. Howard (2005) found 46.1% of consumers preferred to receive information about their food through webpages and the internet. Stebner, Ray, Becker, and Baker (2015) found with the increase of internet usage, the influence of bloggers on food purchasing decisions has increased. In 2015, Kansas Farm Bureau hosted a farm tour for four different bloggers without an agricultural background that had a national readership (Stebner et al., 2015). The bloggers noted the farmers they visited with seemed very transparent with information, and this transparency helped them to have greater trust in the American food system (Stebner et al., 2015). In addition, the tour helped to clarify the reasoning behind agricultural practices and animal welfare the bloggers had been concerned about. Finally, the bloggers were surprised to learn the farmers they met were highly educated (Stebner et al., 2015). This study concluded that by talking to farmers, consumers and influencers can make more informed food purchasing decisions (Stebner et al., 2015).

Rumble and Irani (2016) found consumers' attitudes about a message increased if they perceived it was high in transparency. This study found transparency in food communication could make an even greater difference in perceptions of agriculture as younger generations begin purchasing their own food, "The results of this study indicate the use of transparent communication, specifically when communicating with those in the Millennial Generation, would

be beneficial to the livestock industry. Transparent communication is likely to result in more favorable attitudes among the Millennial Generation” (Rumble & Irani, 2016, p. 67). Furthermore, this study encouraged communications practitioners to find a common ground with consumers in their communication, “Identifying shared values of the target audience and the industry may allow for practitioners to provide communication that motivates the audience to process the information. Identifying overlapping values in their differing cultural systems is essential to narrowing the communication gap between producers and consumers” (Rumble & Irani, 2016, p. 68). Livestock industry experts, like livestock facility design specialist Temple Grandin, are among the vocal proponents of food transparency. Grandin has urged those involved in production agriculture to share video footage of their facilities, invite the public to participate in farm tours, and audit of slaughter plants to increase transparency with consumers and increase public trust (Grandin, 2014).

Feminist Standpoint Theory

While studies using feminist theory in agricultural communications have not been found, relevant research about this topic can be borrowed from other disciplines. Feminist standpoint theory is, at its most basic, the claim “that women’s lives are systematically and structurally different from men’s lives and, that these differences produces different (and differently complete) knowledges” (Wood, 2005, p. 61). Hekman (1997) argued feminist standpoint theory remains relevant even after the original feminist movement due to the unique experience of women.

Standpoint theory builds in an analysis of power relations, describing dominant conceptual schemes as the outcome of knowledge produced exclusively from the social activities of the powerful in society (typically, although not necessarily, men). It is then argued that a more complete basis for knowledge can only be found by starting from the

perspective of women's experiences and lives, as well as from the lives of other social groups ordinarily excluded from the dominant social order. (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995, p. 14-15)

Feminist standpoint theory qualitative research does not seek to “hold up a mirror to participants' views” (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995, p. 15), instead it seeks to give voice to individual women's experiences. Furthermore, feminist standpoint theory research does not aim to paint a complete picture of women's experiences:

Feminist standpoint theory asserts that knowledge is constructed within a social location and historical context, that knowledge is always partial, and that certain social locations—when politically activated—enable a fuller view of reality. (Sweet, 2018, p. 225)

While feminist standpoint theory used to refer to a singular standpoint of all women, it is now accepted that there are multiple feminist standpoints, just as there are multiple female experiences (Hawkesworth, 1999).

Gender Inequality

As a result of feminist movements throughout the 20th century, women's involvement in the workplace and other pieces of the public sphere has increased in the past half-century (Frejka, Goldscheider, & Lappegard, 2018). Although strides have been made gender equality, homemaking, grocery shopping, and food preparation are still often considered the women's realms (Cockburn-Wooten, Pritchard, Morgan, & Jones, 2008). In many households, women are thought of as the “prime nurturers of men's and children's bodies,” which leads to the burden of making food-purchasing decisions falling on the woman's shoulders for households (Cockburn-Wooten, 2008, p. 408). Male involvement at home remains significantly lower than women's involvement at home, creating what is called the second shift (Frejka et al., 2018). Mothers, in

particular, still perform the majority of domestic responsibilities in the home (Kurtz, 2012), showing a need for further research on mothers' involvement in domestic spheres and their decision-making processes. In addition, because mothers are performing the majority of domestic responsibilities—for example, food purchasing and preparing—they are a role model for their children in performing these responsibilities (Croft, Schmader, Block, & Baron, 2014). A 2011 study found mothers play a large role in influencing their children's later food-related decisions and are typically responsible for their children's diets (Johnson, Sharkey, Dean, McIntosh, & Kubena). Laws et al. (2019) found mothers use the internet and Facebook to find the majority of their information relevant to dietary health and food information.

A unique experience that mothers have is that their work is never done, even when the family is on vacation (Quinn & Mottiar, 2012). While both men and women typically do less chores during a family holiday, the chores that do get completed are often completed by mothers (Quinn & Mottiar, 2012).

While on holiday some domestic responsibilities are simply not engaged in and others are shared much more than they are at home. But this is not the case with all domestic responsibilities and the focus groups show that participants feel that they maintain their gender roles and responsibilities, and parental roles, while on holiday and in so doing, create efficiencies which allow them and their families to maximize the holiday experience. Thus the holiday environment is still one in which gender inequality in terms of domestic chores exists although the inequality is less extreme and it is notable that the women see this state of affairs as an efficient way to maximize the enjoyment of the family. (Quinn & Mottiar, 2012, p. 207)

Many times, rather than looking for a reprieve in gender inequality in their domestic roles while on holiday, mothers are instead simply looking for a disruption in their routine (Quinn & Mottiar,

2012). To maximize efficiency and increase the enjoyment of their family, some mothers in Quinn and Mottiar's (2012) study reported staying back to pack lunches and bags while their partner took the children ahead to begin the day, showing how often even on vacation the more routine chores fall to mothers.

Religious views can sometimes further complicate the gender roles in a home and further the individual female experience (Naime & Timmons, 2014). Members of the Church of the Latter-day Saints in Utah, who generally have among the largest family sizes in the country, are subject to very specific gender roles due to their religious and cultural views (Naime & Timmons, 2014). When fathers in this community do help with food shopping and preparation, the fact that they are purely helping instead of taking primary responsibility highlights the gender inequality in the community (Naime & Timmons, 2014).

Previous research has shown religious devoutness is "consistently the strongest determinant of values, attitudes, and behaviors with regard to home, community, and work activities, as well as social and political issues" (Morgan, 1987, p. 301). Furthermore, individuals who are religiously devout are more likely to ascribe to traditional gender role attitudes (Morgan, 1987). Globally, both culture and religion impact gender inequality in regard to education (Cooray & Potrafke, 2011). However, other research has shown while religion is correlated to gender inequality, there is not a single religion that stands out as the most unequal (Seguino, 2010).

Fenton (1995) addressed the difficulty researchers have when studying media and its effects on women due to the vast array of media available. She noted economic structures, characters, genres, and the audiences that are appealed to must all be considered when analyzing media in the context of feminist theory, which is part of what makes it so difficult. All of the aforementioned media have an effect of women, but it is difficult to identify how much or what

kind of effect each medium has individually since women view an onslaught of various media each day (Fenton, 1995).

Because according to feminist standpoint theory women experience life differently from men, it is important research specific to women continue to seek to describe their life experiences such as parenting and food buying (Wood, 2005). In addition to domestic roles and vacations, women also experience friendship and information sharing differently than men (Walker, 1994).

Women and Friendship

Women are stereotypically thought to use friendships to talk, share emotions, and feelings (Walker, 1994). Walker (1994) found women share less than the literature indicates and a woman's class status can also impact how much she shares in intimate relationships. Women who prioritize their family over their career or those who do not work in a paid role outside the home tend to follow the stereotypical model of female friendships the most (Walker, 1994). Although women who work outside the home were found to not share as much in friendships as those who stayed home or prioritized their families, in Walker's (1994) study they still identified female friendships as being emotional and supportive. One woman who worked outside the home defined friendship as, "sharing, caring, being there for each other," (Walker, 1994, p. 250) and a middle-class woman defined friendship as, "a special interest in another person, an it shows caring and openness" (Walker, 1994, p. 250). Walker (1994) found when defining friendship, women emphasized "support, talk, and sharing feelings" (p. 250). Women also use activities, which are thought to be primarily elements of male friendships, as ways to spend time together (Walker, 1994). However, while men use activities as the central part of their friendship, women simply use activities as a vessel for talking and sharing information (Walker, 1994).

Women experience also experience friendships in the workplace differently than men (Morrison, 2009). Women are more likely to give and receive emotional support from their

workplace friends, and may make a decision to leave their workplace based on the strength of friendships they have with their coworkers (Morrison, 2009). However, women's job satisfaction does not necessarily increase if they have more friends in a workplace (Morrison, 2009). Women will often "tend and befriend when distressed and/or dissatisfied" (Morrison, 2009, p. 10), and therefore they often will make closer friendships with their coworkers if they are dissatisfied with their job (Morrison, 2009).

While Aleman's (2010) "College Women's Female Friendships: A Longitudinal View" study was specifically focused on the friendships of college women, many of the same ideas can be applied to the female friendship structure. The study found women used their same-sex friendships for "support of their thinking and their ideas," "as a source for different and diverse perspectives," and "as sources of information and advice" (p. 554). Aleman found many of the women whose friendships lasted post-college discussed "children, romantic partnerships, work relations" and family as well as greater values (p. 567). Relationships and friendships both utilize social capital in their dynamics.

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory is "part of the wider system of structural relations and subjective beliefs that are associated with inequalities of resources and power" (Alfred, 2009, p. 3). In addition, it is also "concerned with how the social relationships, particularly those embedded in the family and community" are useful in developing cognitive and social abilities (p. 4). Social capital is not based on "what you know, but who you know" (p. 5). Social capital theory states the human relationships one has are an important asset that can be "capitalized in times of need, leveraged for capital gain, or enjoyed purely for the human interaction it affords" (Alfred, 2009, p. 5). Social capital also contributes to the level of trust individuals have in those they perceive as having social capital (Ball et al., 2010).

Social capital, however, is not limited to access. Zimmer and Henry (2017) found individuals do not tend to sacrifice quality when seeking information from those with social capital. They suggested individuals utilize their interpersonal networks to find the person with the most social capital on a topic, “individuals leverage their inter-personal network and then select individuals who they feel will provide the best quality information instead of trading that off against how easily they can get to another” (Zimmer & Henry, 2017, p. 15). Zimmer and Henry (2017) noted their findings only apply to interpersonal sources, rather than impersonal sources like a computer as a social actor.

Women are thought to be rich in social capital among other women, “which often manifest[s] in group solidarity and a shared identity, brought about by exploitation, discrimination, or exclusion from key civic roles” (Alfred, 2009, p. 8). While social capital has been thought to benefit “communities and households regardless of gender,” Alfred noted this cannot be taken for granted because “social capital cannot be free from inequalities that arise from structural power differences in society, because these differences contribute to many of the disadvantages women experience in various spheres of their life course” (p. 9). Ganapati (2012) highlighted some of social capital’s failings in relation to gender. Ganapati (2012) argued for future research about gender and social capital theory, because in accordance with feminist standpoint theory “women’s networks are different from men’s networks” (p. 420) and established that “women are more likely to rely on smaller-scale informal networks” (p. 420).

Furthermore, because social capital comes from positions of power, in many male-centric societies it is nearly impossible for women to achieve a large amount of social capital because they are unable to reach the leadership roles men are (Alawiyah & Held, 2015). In lower income systems, many programs that seek to use a woman’s social capital for the benefit of the larger group end up taking advantage of that woman’s resources and make it difficult for her to attend to her own responsibilities (Alawiyah & Held, 2015). Women’s participation in these volunteer-

based organizations also further the income inequality between men and women because many times women are not compensated for their time (Alawiyah & Held, 2015). The main benefit women receive from their participation in these programs is that they are able to extend their networks to other women, build a larger support system, and increase the influence among their social circle (Alawiyah & Held, 2015).

Balbo and Mills (2011) found pressure from someone that is considered to have a lot of social capital is influential enough to persuade a couple to have a second or third child. While family planning decisions and food purchasing seem unrelated, this study shows how important the influence of close friends and family can be on someone's major life decisions, "The findings indicate that heightened social pressure from parents, relatives, and friends increases the likelihood that a parent intends to have another child" (Balbo & Mills, 2011, p. 346), let alone smaller ones like what food to purchase at the store (Balbo & Mills, 2011). While it has been suggested consumers purchase organic food as a result of social pressure (Kim, Lusk, & Brorsen, 2018), research has not been found showing the impact of social capital on mothers' food buying decisions.

Summary

Because of the public's interest in food and agricultural practices, feminist standpoint theory, and social capital theory, it is important to discover if mothers in agriculture are having conversations about food and agriculture. Furthermore, it is important to understand what topics are commonly discussed by mothers with their conversation partners and what issues they perceive as important when discussing food and agriculture in interpersonal settings.

Because women use their friends as a forum for discussion about issues that affect their lives (Aleman, 2010), it is relevant to discover if food is one of the topics they discuss. It is also of interest to discover if Oklahoma mothers in agriculture consider anyone in their communities

to have a strong influence or social capital (Ball et al., 2010) when it comes to ideas about food and agriculture. By including mothers who have been involved in agricultural organizations, it can also be determined if mothers are having conversations about food and agriculture, as encouraged by many agricultural organizations.

In the Stebner et al. (2015), study bloggers perceived the farmers they interacted with as being transparent, which resulted in a greater trust in American food. This is further proven by Rumble and Irani's (2016) study found high perceived transparency of agricultural products results in more positive attitudes about those products. Because of this, if those who have agricultural backgrounds share information about the industry, consumers will have a better attitude about the food system and a greater trust in food products (Rumble & Irani, 2016). In addition, because information received from those we feel close to holds more weight than those we feel distant from (Dubois, Bonezzi, & Agelis, 2016), if those with agricultural backgrounds share information about the industry with those they feel close to it will result in even higher attitudes about the American food system.

The inherently different experience women have going through the world means they will experience food and agriculture as well as conversations about those topics differently than men (Wood, 2005). Mothers' heightened awareness of food and their societally imposed responsibility to provide nutritious and filling meals for their partners and families also contributes to this difference of experience (Charles & Kerr, 1986). Furthermore, the ways women utilize friendships for talk and emotional support should mean they will talk about their concerns about food and agriculture with their friends (Walker, 1994).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

This study investigated mothers' interpersonal communication habits in an in-depth manner via qualitative research, specifically semi-structured interviews. According to Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001), qualitative research "seeks depth over breadth and attempts to learn subtle nuances of life experiences as opposed to aggregate evidence" (p. 524). Whittemore et al. wrote that while quantitative research is more generalizable, qualitative research is contextual and specific to the situation being described (2001). Creswell and Poth (2018) explain qualitative research can be difficult to define because it is vast and ever-changing, "from social construction, to interpretivism, and then on to social justice in the world" (p. 7). In the 2011 *SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, qualitative research is defined as the following:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world.

Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in

their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3)

While this definition makes clear the impact qualitative research can have on the world and human environment, it lacks specific information about qualitative research design and the ways qualitative research can be approached in its methodology. Therefore, Creswell and Poth (2018) offer a more methods-based definition:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change. (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 8)

As opposed to other forms of research, qualitative research design is emergent, which means “the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed and all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect data” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 44).

Qualitative research is done to “empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45). Unfortunately, the inherent nature of interviewing and research creates uneven power dynamics as the researcher is responsible for initiating the conversation, leads the conversation, and introduces the topics discussed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To try to decrease the power imbalance between researcher and participant, it is

vital for the interview to seem as collaborative as possible, and for the participant to be given in a setting that is comfortable for them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, a researcher should seek to gain support from participants by informing participants they are a part of a research project, explaining to them the purpose for the project, and not deceiving the participants about the purpose for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In-depth interviewing provides a way to understand how individuals feel about a phenomenon they are experiencing and to contextualize that phenomena (McCracken, 1988). McCracken (1988) stated “Qualitative methods are most useful and powerful when they are used to discover how the respondent sees the world” (p. 20). He contends an in-depth interview is the best way to understand the respondent’s views and get a full impression about how they feel about the phenomenon (McCracken, 1988). Creswell and Poth (2018) defined an interview as “a social interaction based on a conversation” (p. 163). “Interview questions are often the subquestions in the research study, phrased in a way that interviewees can understand” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 164). In an interview, the researcher discovers how a participant feels about phenomena in their own words, and can get more information about a participant’s experience than could be found in a survey or another less descriptive method (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Focus groups, a form of interviewing, can be beneficial as participants may prompt each other to reach conclusions or share information they may not share on their own (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, participants that are more vocal or have strong opinions can overpower other participants in a focus group and begin a spiral of silence in which participants who dissent with a statement may not voice their dissent (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews can vary in type, and one-on-one interviews may vary between “the interviewee and the interviewer being physically located in the same room, talking face-to-face using technology, or talking over the phone” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 164).

Population & Sample

The population for this study was mothers from agricultural backgrounds in the state of Oklahoma within a 60-mile radius of Stillwater. This geographic region was selected because it was accessible and kept the participants in a similar social system. Participants with agricultural backgrounds were targeted to see if they were communicating to consumers in the ways recommended by agricultural organizations and to discover where the mothers get their information about food if they need it. Participants were purposefully selected via the snowball method through county Extension agents, who had contact with the sample group through Annie's Project, 4-H volunteer involvement, or other Extension programming. Purposeful sampling is "the primary sampling strategy used in qualitative research.... The inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 326). For qualitative research, it is recommended researchers use purposive samples because, "social processes have a logic and a coherence that random sampling can reduce to uninterpretable sawdust" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27). The snowball method of sampling, "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 159).

In other words, Extension personnel were asked to recommend individuals who would have knowledge of sharing information about food and agriculture (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The email sent to Extension personnel can be found in Appendix C. At the end of the interviews, participants were asked to recommend others for participation. Sampling occurred until data saturation was reached. Saturation occurs when no new information is discovered about the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Half of the participants were recommended by Extension personnel, and the other half were recommended by participants. The sample consisted of nine mothers between the ages of 25 and 60. All participants had at least one child who lived in their home. Participants'

children varied in age, as some had children who were toddlers and others had at least one child over the age of 18. Two participants were pregnant. They resided in a five county area of north central Oklahoma. All participants had an agricultural background. Participants ranged from the primary operator of a production agricultural operation to mothers whose current involvement in agriculture was limited to their children exhibiting livestock at local fairs.

Table 1

| <i>Sample description</i> | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Amber | Family farms/ranches; homeschooled her children; has two pre-teen children |
| Bailey | Family ranches; grew up out of state; has an elementary aged child and a toddler |
| Carly | Primary operator of her family’s farm; partner works off-farm; has two teenagers |
| Dora | Family farms part-time, both she and her partner work off-farm; has one child out of the house, a teenager, and two pre-teens |
| Ellie | Family is beginning to re-enter production agriculture, both she and her partner work off-farm; has a toddler |
| Fran | Family owns a value-added beef operation where she holds most of the direct marketing responsibilities, interacts with customers on a daily basis; has one elementary aged child and one toddler |
| Ginny | Family has a small farm, both she and her partner work off-farm; has one child that is a teenager and one that is a pre-teen |
| Holly | Family farms/ranches, she works off-farm; has one child that is a toddler |
| Ivy | Family ranches; officer in a county agricultural organization; has two children that are pre-teens and one that is a toddler |

Instrument

The interview questions were developed based on previous women in agriculture studies (Beach, 2013; Cairns & Johnston, 2018; Cockburn-Wooten et al., 2008; Kim, Lusk, & Brorsen, 2018), as well as my interest in the topics of conversation about food purchasing. The interview began with questions establishing the participants’ demographics and progressed into questions about how they make food purchasing decisions and where they get their information about food purchasing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although the relationship between an interviewer and interviewee inherently creates an unequal power dynamic, I allowed participants to ask questions

of me about my research and background to make them feel more comfortable answering candidly (Crewell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, the power dynamic was disrupted because the interviewees chose the location of the interviews.

Questions were then asked about participants' conversations about food and food purchasing, and who they have food purchasing conversations with. The interview contained questions regarding if women were having conversations about food and who they were having these conversations with. I also asked them to explain why they are or are not having these conversations and why they have them with those they do. To help ensure the instrument was credible, the question guide was reviewed by agricultural communications faculty members before it was utilized.

Data Collection

Description

Data collection began by accessing the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension website to find the contact information for Extension personnel in counties in a 60-mile radius around Stillwater, Oklahoma. The Extension personnel were then emailed (Appendix C) and asked to recommend mothers in their county who would be interested in participating in the study. Half of the participants were recruited via Extension personnel. Once Extension personnel responded with their recommendations, I contacted the participant via their email address or phone number, whichever was given to me. When the participant responded that they would be a part of the study, I then worked with them to schedule when we would complete the interview and where in their community it would be held. Except for two phone interviews, the interviews were conducted in various places in the participants' towns that were convenient for the participants. Two interviews took place in a coffee shop or deli in the towns where the respective participant

lived, one took place in a university conference room, two were phone interviews, and four took place at the participants' workplaces.

As previously mentioned, two of the interviews were phone interviews and seven were in-person interviews. The phone interviews began with me reading the oral consent script (Appendix E) in order to get the participant's oral consent. The in-person interviews began with the participants reviewing and signing the written consent form (Appendix F). After the participants consented to participation in the study, interview took place with guidance from the interview guide (Appendix D). At the end of each interview, the participants were asked if they knew anyone to recommend for participation in the study, which is how the remaining half of the participants were recruited.

Interviews were audio recorded for internal consistency and to ensure accuracy during analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Following the completion of the interview, the audio recording was removed from the recording device and saved to an encrypted computer file. After transfer to the computer, audio files were transcribed verbatim to assure the accuracy of quotations and to make it possible to code the interviews for analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A few of the interviews did contain factors worth noting. One phone interview was interrupted when the participant's child called them from the phone but was completed at a later date. During the second phone interview, the participant was in a van full of other people for the duration of the interview, which could have affected her willingness to respond to questions candidly, although when asked if she was comfortable answering the study questions candidly and truthfully in that setting she responded that she was. In addition, during one of the interviews that took place at a deli, the shop was very busy, causing a relatively high amount of background noise. During this same interview, the participant's husband came into the deli for lunch and briefly interrupted the interview before it was completed. The participant referenced her husband

repeatedly during the interview, and although he did not speak to me, his presence for part of the interview could have influenced the participant's answers. During data collection, the state of Oklahoma suffered severe flooding, which caused for two of the interviews to be rescheduled due to road conditions. It is possible the impacts of the severe flooding impacted the extensiveness of the answers the participants gave, due to a need to return home to help with disaster relief.

Data Analysis

Constant comparative method was utilized to analyze the data. Where some methods of data analysis either code data and then analyze it and others look for emerging themes to inform new theory, constant comparative method combines both methods (Glaser, 1965). Glaser (1965) stated the following:

The purpose of the constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis is to generate theory more systematically than allowed by the second approach by using the explicit coding and analytic procedures. At the same time, it does not forestall the development of theory by adhering completely to the first approach which is designed for provisional testing, not discovering, of hypotheses. (p. 437)

In constant comparative method, the data "are not coded extensively enough to yield provisional tests.... The data are coded only enough to generate, hence, to suggest, theory" (Glaser, 1965, p. 438). Constant comparative method provides for suggesting a number of hypotheses that can be applied to a general phenomenon. However, it is important to note that while hypotheses about a general phenomenon are suggested, constant comparative method does not provide conclusions that can be made about all data or all phenomena (Glaser, 1965). Constant comparative method or analysis is useful in research using interviews because:

Employing a systematic comparative analysis allows for a thorough understanding of how the question response process is informed by respondents' unique social locations....

Using the [constant comparative method], we gained a richer understanding of the constructs these questions are likely to capture. (Ridolfo & Schoua-Glusberg, 2011, pp. 434-435)

Boeije (2002) outlined steps researchers should use for constant comparative analysis. The steps identified for this study were

- “1. Comparison within a single interview,
2. Comparison between interviews within the same group,
3. Comparison of interviews from different groups,
4. Comparison in pairs at the level of the couple, and
5. Comparing couples” (p. 395).

These steps are not necessarily fully applicable to all studies. The Boeije study involved dyads that added steps to the analysis that may not be always be relevant (2002). This study only included one group, and therefore steps one and two are the only relevant steps to this study. Step one, comparison within a single interview, generates a summary of each interview and develops the codes that are utilized throughout analysis (Boeije, 2002). In step two, after all interviews have been coded individually, the interviews are compared with each other to identify patterns, non-patterns, and the primary themes that emerge within the interviews.

After audio recording transcription, the transcripts were analyzed to find common themes among the interviews to determine widely held sentiments by the sample. The themes identified were information sharing is often limited to a certain scenario, information receiving is mainly online, concerns about food are common, strangers are easiest to talk to about food and agriculture issues, social pressures exist but are not felt by all, and no participants are consciously

using emotion in their communication. The transcripts were coded to determine where individuals are receiving or sharing information, and the types of information the individuals wish they had access to. If the participants identified any individuals as someone they considered an expert on an issue, those experts were considered to have social capital. In addition, if participants reported feeling social pressures from those around them, it was determined social capital had a role in that pressure.

Measures of Validation

“In the discussions about grounding qualitative research, validity receives more attention than reliability. The question of validity can be summarized as a question of whether the researchers see what they think they see” (Flick, 2009, p. 387). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are terms typically used to describe rigor in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

“Credibility refers to the accuracy of the documentation, the reliability of the producer of the document, the freedom from errors” (Flick, 2009, p. 258). Participants self-reported the information they shared in their interviews was truthful, and the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to assure that the information included in the findings were free from errors.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified triangulation as a way to assure that a study is credible. According to Thurmond, “many researchers strive to design studies that will not only give a multidimensional perspective of the phenomenon but will also provide rich, unbiased data that can be interpreted with a comfortable degree of assurance” (Thurmond, 2001, p. 253), and this study design can be accomplished through triangulation. Triangulation is the concept of “using two known points to locate the position of an unknown third point, by forming a triangle”

(Thurmond, 2001, p. 253). There are many forms of triangulation, including data source triangulation and theoretical triangulation (Thurmond, 2001). The three types of data sources are “time, space, and person” (Thurmond, 2001, p. 254). This study utilized data from different county locations (space) and different people. In addition, this study used theoretical triangulation because information from both social capital theory and feminist standpoint theory were utilized to interpret study findings and compare them to the answers given by the respondents (Thurmond, 2001).

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the research findings can be applied in settings other than that of the study (Flick, 2009). A thick description of the data collection and analysis process was provided to provide the information needed for a future researcher to repeat this study, or to make it transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick descriptions allow for a future researcher to determine if the study is applicable to their study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

It is, in summary, *not* the naturalist’s task to provide an *index* of transferability; it *is* his or her responsibility to provide the *data base* that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316)

Simply defined, “Thick description means that the researcher provides details when describing a case or when writing about a theme” (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There are various ways to provide a thick description, including field notes, observation protocols, and transcriptions of participant responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Flick, 2009).

Dependability

Dependability is the qualitative research criteria that replaces quantitative research’s reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell and Poth explain this by saying that “Rather than

reliability, one seeks dependability that the results will be subject to change and instability” (2018, p. 256). Dependability is accomplished through an audit of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The auditing process is “Based on the procedure of audits in the domain of financing” (Flick, 2009, p. 392). The audit is performed to ensure that the research process was done appropriately and that the data was interpreted accurately (Flick, 2009).

Confirmability

Finally, confirmability is the neutrality of a study (Flick, 2009). Auditing, as described in the previous section is also used to determine confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order for an auditor to perform an in-depth audit of a study, a number of materials must be provided for them in the form of an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified Halpurn’s six categories of materials that should be provided in an audit trail. These six categories are raw data, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, materials relating to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Researcher Subjectivity

Explaining researcher bias helps the audience to understand how a researcher’s bias could affect the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have been involved in the agricultural industry since I was young through youth organizations such as 4-H and FFA, and attended conferences on the importance of advocating for agriculture throughout much of my formative years. Furthermore, I have attended conferences that encouraged women in particular to communicate about the agricultural industry through conversation topics thought to be traditionally female: food preparation and child rearing. Therefore, I have my own perceptions of how the agricultural industry encourages women to communicate. Furthermore, I identify as a feminist, and my feminist views on how women are communicated to and the roles they are societally expected to

fill colors my perceptions of the communications they receive. Throughout this study, I made every attempt to remove my viewpoints from that of the participants and to keep an open mind when analyzing the data. I have provided quotations as evidence for the interpretations I made from the participants' statements, and included any results that were discrepant.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The results of the study are reported by the study's four research questions:

1. What information are mothers sharing and receiving about food?
2. How does information they receive affect mothers' food purchasing decisions?
3. How do mothers characterize their relationships with those that they are having conversations about food and their connections with those individuals?
4. Are mothers are utilizing emotion and personal relationships to share information with others about agriculture and food?

The findings are divided between the research questions and then into themes and subthemes.

RQ 1: What information are mothers sharing and receiving about food?

Information sharing is often limited to certain scenarios.

All of the participants reported when they learn new information about food they share it with others, although the new information they learned and the methods they used varied. Many mothers reported sharing new information with those who they thought would have an interest in that information, although others said they share information on Facebook or another social media site in order to reach the most people with their information. Some of the participants

reported that generally the only information they shared was not about food, but about what to do with food—new cooking recipes.

Fran reported she tended to share new information only with those who she felt would be particularly interested:

We have actually a number of [customers] who know a lot about properties of food, both synthetic and natural... those are the type of customers that if I find something interesting, then I'll ask about it or I'll tell them about it.

Fran explained the majority of the information she shares with others about food and agriculture is in her role working with customers but she does encounter questions from other parents about agriculture and food when dropping her kids off for school:

If I have just delivered a calf, a lot of times I'm dressed in the, you know, the clothes I was at the farm with. Some [parents] will give me this look and won't say anything. But some of them will ask like, what do you do?

Fran shared, most often, other parents will ask her about hormones in food and antibiotics. She said when she is asked about these topics, she shares what she knows and encourages those asking to do their own research.

Carly, who works as the primary operator of her family's farm, shared she is comfortable sharing new information with most people and tries to do so. She shared about a time where she had a discussion with her cardiologist about animal fat and its effect on the human body, which lead to new training for dieticians at the clinic. Carly also explained she tries to share information about food and agriculture in a one-on-one setting whenever she gets the chance:

I spend a lot of time just trying to not like be an activist standing in the front of a room speaking, but being that mom who stands next to you in the line at the grocery store and

says, it's okay that they were out of organic Turkey Broth, you can use this and here's why. You know, that kind of thing. Lead from the back, if you will.

Ivy, who is an officer in her county's cattlemen's group and whose family operates a cattle ranch, shared when given the opportunity to share with others about food and agriculture through cattlemen's or another agricultural organization, she takes the opportunity. However, she shared she did not often share outside of those forums because she felt most of the people she interacts with have the same views on food and agriculture she does. If she found out anything new about food, Ivy said she would be most likely to share it with her sister.

Information receiving is mainly online.

All nine participants reported they receive most of their information about food from the internet and they typically search online for something if they want to learn more about it. A few participants reported more specific sources of information, but emphasized the internet is where they get the majority of their information about food. None of the mothers identified anyone specific within their social circles that had social capital when it comes to food.

Ellie listed bloggers like Farm Babe and Dairy Carrie as well as the social media profiles of scientists like Kevin Folta and Jayson Lusk as places where she goes for information about food. She also mentioned a large Women in Agriculture Facebook group and a Facebook page called Ag Bio World as sources she considers reliable when she wants information about food or agricultural practices.

There's this major Women in Ag group on Facebook that's got like 75,000 people in it, so you can ask questions on there and you're going to get a variety of answers, but you know, a lot of the women are doing that specific at home, whether it's growing strawberries commercially, you pretty well find a commercial producer on there for just

about anything. And so, I mean if you wanted to get somebody very not, you know, very true to the source, um, that'd be one place to go if you don't know.

Ivy shared while she knows she should research more about the information she finds on the internet; she tends to take the information she sees at face value because she is too busy to research more about it, "I think when I can find something that's fast and convenient that tries to use like just natural ingredients, then I am like, I'm more tempted to put it in my cart.... I'm like, Oh, this is, you know, a quick snack or something." After Ivy's three-year-old daughter was diagnosed with Type I Diabetes, she had to learn more about food and change the way she had previously cooked for her family. However, this did not affect the amount of time she has to put into food preparation, and she still takes most things she reads online at face value. Ivy shared in order to provide her daughter with a beverage variety, yet also limit sugary drinks, she had bought the sparkling water La Croix until she read an article about a concerning ingredient in the beverage:

Well I was buying those like La Croix for my little three-year-old because I didn't want her to drink pop, but she likes that fizzy. But then I saw something negative and so I did look it up online [to see if it was true].... If I see like an article, like the example I gave about the La Croix, because my daughter like, loved those. I can't remember what they said was in it, but I was like, dang it.

Dora, whose child also has a sensitivity to red food dye, said beyond the internet, she looks to her child's pediatrician and specialists for information about what food to feed her family.

Carly expressed frustration that she did not feel like individuals who are supposed to be experts in food and nutrition were actually educated about the information they were sharing with people. She shared during her time working with a dietician at a rehabilitation facility from a health complication she had, she felt the dietician's information was outdated:

The most upsetting thing to me about that experience was finding that we had to meet with a dietitian once a month or something. And her data was from the 80s. And I could tell that when she was telling us, and I met with her three times and I would go out and call a good friend of mine who lives in [another state], and say you can't believe what she's telling us. [The dietitian] was my age. So I knew she'd gone to college in the 80s. I said it's as if she's not updated anything since she went to college. And finally one day she gave us a handout and it was dated in 1984, and that's what she was giving us. And you know, I'm not going to say science itself changes, but our understanding of science that the things that science has revealed to us changes.

As a result of this experience, Carly has become frustrated with individuals who are supposed to be food and nutrition experts and now does most of her food research herself. She did report that she shared her concerns with her doctor at the rehabilitation facility, and was optimistic he would encourage the dietitian to update the nutritional information they were providing to patients.

RQ 2: How does information they receive affect mothers' food purchasing decisions?

All participants had at least 50% of the food purchasing responsibility in their homes. Three of the participants shared purchasing responsibility equally with their partners, and the other six were the sole food purchasers in their homes. Due to this, it was important to identify how these mothers with agricultural backgrounds are making their purchasing decisions.

Concerns about food are common.

While many of the participants initially expressed they have no concerns about food and agriculture, many later identified items they wished they knew or they wished they knew more about. Participants also identified concerns about the marketing of food products (labels), processed foods, food sensitivities, and food waste.

Amber, who works as a homemaker and homeschools her children, shared while her primary food concern is price, she is also very intentional about avoiding processed food and grocery shops by sticking out the outside edges of the grocery store, where she feels like she purchases the least amount of processed food, “My philosophy is you just stay on the outside of the grocery store, for the fresh stuff and stay out of the middle.” Fran shared the same concerns about processed food and echoed the shopping the edges approach:

When we shop the supermarket, we shop the, the, um, the edges. We don't shop a lot in the middle and we really try to stay away from processed food. So I think that's probably the rule in our home is to try to buy real food with as few ingredients as possible.

Ginny expressed she also has concerns about processed food, but her family is so busy sometimes they have to go with what foods are easiest, “We avoid artificial sugars. I mean we try to avoid that. We try to avoid processed stuff, but we also are realistic in making our lives work.”

Dora shared her food concerns stem from her child's sensitivity to red food dye:

You know, our 11-year-old has had some processing issues and stomach issues and anxiety issues. Bless his heart. He's kind of been through it. But it made me do a lot more research on red dye in food and things along those lines.... We haven't eliminated that from his diet and he's fine now, but it's taken a lot of doctors and medicines, which I'm not a fan of.

Due to her child's sensitivities, the majority of Dora's conversations surrounding food and her associations with food have to do with red food dye.

Another participant, Holly, shared her biggest concerns about food is the misleading labeling of many products in the grocery store: “There's a lot of just like fake labeling, I guess. That is annoying to me.” She specifically identified non-GMO labeling, gluten free labeling, and

restaurants calling their food “clean” as labels she disagrees with and feels like are misleading consumers.

Carly shared she has a lot of concerns about food waste, in our food system and therefore she always makes sure to take home leftovers when she eats at a restaurant:

Food waste is a big concern of mine. My own home is not as good at that as we should be. Everything we don't eat goes to the chickens, but still I consider that waste even though I know they're recycling it, if you will. I get very frustrated.... But I just think worldwide, especially in the U.S., it's really almost exclusively in the U.S., food waste is something that we really need to pay attention to. And there's different reasons for that. I think one of the primary ones is people buy what they feel pressured to buy and then they get home and they don't really want it or like it.

Carly also shared she is very concerned by what she feels is a common belief in the U.S. and Europe that organic food is better, and she does not feel that it is accurate.

RQ 3: How do mothers characterize their relationships with those that they are having conversations about food and their connections with those individuals?

Almost all nine of the mothers in the study shared they predominantly talk about food and agriculture with close family members, however most of those conversations were about meal preparation rather than the ingredients in food and agricultural processes. Participants identified that strangers and close friends or family are easier to talk to about food and agriculture issues. Some participants reported feeling influenced by social pressures when buying food, and others reported being aware of social pressures, but not being influenced by them while at the grocery store.

Strangers are easiest to talk to about food and agriculture issues.

When asked if strangers, acquaintances, or close friends/family are easiest to talk to about food and agriculture, the respondents gave varying answers. Bailey shared she found it easiest to strangers about food and agriculture because she is worried about the impact it could have on her relationships with her acquaintances and close friends:

It can be a hot topic that like really like draws strong emotions from people. And I would hate for something as simple as food to cause a riff in our relationship. Um, so it's, it's probably one of the reasons why I don't seek out to have those conversations because I'm like, it's not affecting me. As long as they are feeding their kids, really what business is it of mine?

Carly noted she felt strangers were the easiest to talk to about food and agriculture, but added she felt like acquaintances were the most difficult to talk to about the topic:

[Speaking with] strangers is always the easiest, to be honest. I doubt that that would be different for anybody. For me, [speaking with] really close friends is not too hard. It's those ones in between. A professional acquaintance, somebody I go to church with... someone that our circles kind of intersect, but we're not really friends. Those are very hard for me because you risk offending them and yet, you know, you've got to continue to do whatever it is your circles rotate and you're going to still see each other. And those are the ones that have been the hardest for me.

Holly shared she found it relatively easy to talk to her family and friends about food and agriculture:

Probably I would say my family and my friends [are easiest to talk to] I think one, you're just more comfortable with those people and also probably because they probably tend to,

you know, they'll agree with you when you share that information with them. And I think that's just human nature, you know what I mean? Like it's easier to preach to the choir than it is to somebody that you're going to ruffle their feathers.

Holly added she felt like strangers were easier to talk to than acquaintances, but that it depended on the setting and if it was appropriate:

I'm kind of outspoken sometimes. I probably wouldn't have a problem talking to strangers about it. I guess it depends on the arena, or where I think they might be leaning a little bit.... An example is I was at a banquet, sitting across from somebody, and she said that she was a, I don't even remember what they're called...she only ate fish...pescatarian. So I didn't know what that was, so I was like this is new to me. So I had no problem asking her what does that mean and why she has chosen to do that.

Social pressures exist but are not felt by all.

Many of the participants reported that while they are aware of the social pressures that face mothers in regards to food buying, they try to ignore them. Some did, however, admit to caving to social pressures from those around them.

Carly shared that while she is confident she can make the best food purchasing decisions for her family, she still finds herself feeling social pressures while at the store:

If I'm going to be buying soda pop or Coke or whatever you want to call it, Dr. Pepper, you know, I always have this feeling like, oh, make sure nobody's looking because they're going to judge that.... There's other things that you could put in your cart. You can have a bottle of wine and a thing of coffee, and nobody thinks anything about it, but you put some pop in your car and all of a sudden there's this judgment, you know?

Fran shared while she does not personally feel many social pressures from those around her, she has already noticed that her young children are impacted by social pressures and food marketing:

You know, it's really interesting because when my kids go to school, they have to pack their own lunches, and we take snacks every, you know, there's a rotation and [the social pressures are] not necessarily from other moms.... You know, as a parent, it was surprising to me that how young, our kids are and that they're influenced, um, you know, by advertising and marketing. Yeah. I can't, I think I can count on one hand the times I've actually taken my kids to McDonald's in their lives, and yet every time we drive by McDonald's, you know, they say they know it, they know Happy Meal, those kinds of things.

Ginny shared the social pressures she feels make her feel both better and worse about how she buys and prepares food for her own family:

In my mind, I have the friends that you know are all about frozen, more junk food. And so it's like I try to, okay, tell myself that I'm not at the bottom of the barrel, you know, because it could be worse. But then, you know, you have the friends that cook everything fresh and I would say cook more in-depth meals than I do. So it's always like, God, I'm sure they, you know, no wonder they're skinny; they eat a lot healthier, you know, you have those comments. But ours is really just more about survival.

RQ 4: How are mothers utilizing emotion and personal relationships to share information with others about agriculture and food?

None of the participants shared they intentionally used emotion and personal relationships when sharing information with others about agriculture and food. Most of them reported they tried to correct misinformation when possible, but sometimes they would stay quiet to avoid conflict.

Bailey shared she often avoids sharing information about food and agriculture with her close friends and family to avoid a rift in the relationship:

I think a lot of it is misinformation. Like they, they believe that this is better than that.

They don't know why they believe it, but they've been fed that information. And for you to tell him that, well, it's really not true. Like nobody likes to be told that they're wrong.

Um, so I'm like, I'm not saying that's not safe, it's just not better than that to that extent. Um, I think anytime you're playing with people's belief system it is more charged than like, you know, two plus two equals four.

Ginny shared that a lot of the time she listens to hear what concerns others have about food and agriculture but doesn't enter the conversation herself:

I don't engage in a lot of those conversations because ... the theories are great, but when it comes down to the reality of feeding the world, that sounds dramatic [but it's not realistic].... I tend to just roll my eyes and leave the conversation.

Carly, however, said she does tend to correct people when they share misinformation, and said she prefers to do so in a private forum:

On social media, it's very common for me to read some misinformation about food. And I don't, I don't comment on their thread because I kind of feel like, that's like standing in front of someone's speech and calling them a liar or something. So what I will do is direct message them, text them, whatever or call them. Maybe if I know I'm going to see them in a few days and just say something privately to them, hey, that source you cited, you might want to check into that, that's not real reliable.

Fran reported the majority of the time when she shares information about food and agriculture with others, it is purely about the beef her family produces:

We've had, like, we've had our beef tested for, um, fatty acid profile, right? So I can say that our beef, um, you know, we have run a sample. Um, you know, obviously every sample is going to be different, but you know, some of these things that you see in like grass-fed beef, yes, we did some testing. It held true.

Amber shared that while homeschooling her children, she has encountered several mothers who have different opinions from her about food and agriculture, but she shared that she tends to not engage with them. Furthermore, she did not feel like many of the things they did were necessary, "They were getting together on a Friday about fermenting something, and I'm like, I'm not gonna ferment on a Friday. I don't have time for this."

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Conclusions and Implications

RQ 1: What information are mothers sharing and receiving about food?

Mothers are predominantly receiving information from the internet, and this information is impacting their food purchasing decisions, like with Ivy and her daughter's La Croix. This is consistent with findings mothers prefer to utilize search engines when looking for information about their food (CFI, 2018). Beyond a generic Google search, participants identified bloggers, scientists, and doctors as reliable sources of information about food which is consistent with previous research (CFI, 2018). Some participants shared frustration about individuals who are positioned as experts about food or nutritional information having inaccurate or outdated information that they were sharing.

As far as sharing information, some participants are using face-to-face interactions with strangers, acquaintances, and friends/family to share about agriculture and food, if they have the chance. Others utilize Facebook and other social media to share articles about food or to correct an individual's comment. However, still others, like Ivy, only share information about food and agriculture when provided a forum that is explicitly for sharing that information. The participants'

willingness to share information with those they are close to, and their references to their friends, mothers and sisters, is consistent with previous research showing the closeness of female friendships and their basis on talking and support (Aleman, 2010; Walker, 1994). Several participants shared concerns that they would cause tension with their acquaintances if they shared about food and agricultural issues, which is consistent with the strangers on a train phenomenon (Derlega & Chaikin, 1977).

RQ 2: How does information they receive affect mothers' food purchasing decisions?

The participants' concerns about processed food and the impact of various foods on their children is also consistent with research that showed the most searched food topics are ingredients in food, impact of food on health, and food safety (CFI, 2018). However, although many agricultural organizations are encouraging women with agricultural backgrounds to become considered experts on food in their social circles (Perry, 2018), these women have concerns of their own about the ingredients in processed foods, food waste, and the marketing of food in the grocery store, which shows there is a gap in what information is available to them. Mothers, like Ivy, will change their purchasing habits if they read something negative about a product, which shows that information that they receive about food does affect their buying habits.

The majority of the mothers in the study were the primary food purchasers and preparers in their families, which was consistent with previous research (Frejka et al., 2018). In addition, six of the women worked away from home in addition to their domestic responsibilities, which is evidence of the second shift concept that women experience (Frejka et al., 2018). The second shift concept is most prevalent, which is evidence of the unique feminist standpoint that mothers have (Frejka et al., 2018). Furthermore, the women in the study described making food purchasing decisions based on concern about their children's health, which is consistent with the unique responsibility women feel for the health of their children and husbands (Cockburn-

Wooten et al., 2008). Finally, while not all women in the study felt social pressure when buying food, some reported feeling judged by their peers while purchasing food, which is a unique feminist standpoint.

RQ 3: How do mothers characterize their relationships with those that they are having conversations about food and their connections with those individuals?

Relationships between the mothers in the study and those who they were communicating with are characterized as one of three things: strangers, acquaintances, or close friends/family. Carly's assertion that strangers are the easiest to talk to about food and agriculture echoed Derlega and Chaikin's (1977) strangers on the train phenomenon that asserts people will share information with strangers they would not share with those they know because of the impression that they will never see the stranger again. Carly's assertion that acquaintances are the most difficult to talk to is consistent with Derlega and Chaikin's (1977) findings, and her explanation that she feels like she must avoid making those relationships tenuous because she has to have a working relationship with her acquaintances explains why she may find those she has no connection to easier to communicate with.

The desire to primarily communicate with strangers and those that one feels close to is not novel, and has been found in previous research. As mentioned in chapter one, Dubois, Bonezzi, and Agelis (2016) stated, "Information received from people we feel close to tends to be more influential than information received from people we feel distant from" (p. 714). Therefore, by communicating with those they have a close relationship with, participants could be more influential on the people they are sharing information with than if they were constantly broadcasting it to everyone they encounter.

The participants' admittance to feeling social pressures from those around them shows someone, if not multiple people, in their circles hold social capital. Furthermore, it echoes

previous research that has shown food purchasing is impacted by social pressures (Kim, Lusk, & Brorsen, 2018). This is best demonstrated by Carly's concern about purchasing soda in a space where others may see her and comment.

RQ 4: How are mothers utilizing emotion and personal relationships to share information with others about agriculture and food?

Participants did not identify that they are using their emotion and personal relationships to share information with others about food. In fact, a few of the participants reported actually going out of their way to not engage with others and sharing correct information with others when incorrect information was being shared. The participants that did report sharing information with others explained they felt many consumers were facing a lot of misinformation in the marketplace and expressed frustration with the amount of misinformation there is about food.

Bailey's explanation that she does not share information because people do not like to be told they are wrong on a topic shows what holds many of the participants back from communicating with others about food and agriculture. Previous research has encouraged agriculturalists to communicate with those who have received misinformation by identifying shared values before communicating to narrow the gap between producers and consumers (Rumble & Irani, 2016). Developing shared values leads to a heightened feeling of closeness, and people tend to be more receptive of information from those they feel close to (Dubois, Bonezzi, & Agelis, 2016).

Recommendations

For Practitioners

Practitioners in the agricultural communications field should utilize the information in this study to understand they need to share information with mothers with agricultural

backgrounds before they position themselves as an expert on food and agriculture in their communities. By understanding that women tend to share information with their close friends and family rather than strangers, practitioners can help to equip women with agricultural backgrounds with the ways they can best share about food and agriculture and keep from alienating those they care about. This includes helping them to realize what their shared values are when they are trying to communicate (Rumble & Irani, 2016). In addition, it is important to encourage women to share with those they are close to because that closeness causes their information to hold more weight than information from a stranger (Dubois, Bonezzi, & Agelis, 2016). Furthermore, they need to equip mothers with the tools to build relationships and share their emotional story about agriculture and food rather than just telling them to do so. Finally, practitioners need to be aware that mothers in agriculture have concerns about food that need addressed so they can be comfortable advocating for the industry.

All of the participants in this study reported referencing online sources for information about food and agriculture, which shows agricultural organizations should continue to be proactive in their online presence and share information about the industry. This is consistent with Howard's (2005) finding that more and more people prefer to receive information about food via online sources. In addition, practitioners should utilize social media groups and bloggers to share information about food and agriculture, as it is the way some participants shared information with others. Furthermore, high-profile social media profiles have a heightened perceived trustworthiness (Stebner et al., 2015).

Agricultural communications educators should use the results of this study to help their students have a realistic understanding of the ways mothers in agriculture communicate about food. Furthermore, the concerns the participants in this study have about food and agriculture show that simply because someone is involved in agriculture does not mean they are an expert on the industry and should not be positioned as such.

For Future Research

I recommend future researchers consider repeating this study and adding a group of mothers without an agricultural background to see if there are any differences between mothers with agricultural backgrounds and those without. This would also make the study more intersectional. Fenton (1995) argued in favor of intersectional feminist theory:

Women speak from multiple standpoints, producing multiple knowledges. But this does not prevent women from coming together to work for specific goals. Feminists in the twentieth century have done precisely this and have, as a consequence, changed the language game of politics. And, ultimately, this is the point of feminist theory. (p. 363)

While Fenton argued for the validity of feminist theory that is not just limited to benefitting cisgender, heterosexual, white women, this idea of intersectionality can be applied to the inclusion of women with various backgrounds in research due to the importance of highlighting diverse experiences. Furthermore, this argument for intersectionality in feminist research would also encourage future researchers to seek out women of various economic backgrounds, different geographic locations, ethnicities, and life stages. The women who participated in this study were all white mothers in heteronormative relationships in a few counties of Oklahoma. Future research should assess the communication habits and perceptions of women in different geographical regions, from different races, different economical backgrounds, and other variances of diversity.

Beyond this, I feel more research should be done to assess the social pressures that mothers face when purchasing food and how they either do or do not identify those pressures. Many participants in this study initially reported not feeling social pressures when buying food, but then related anecdotes that illustrated them feeling social pressures. The intricacies of these social pressures and which foods/agricultural products they are related to could be beneficial for

further understanding why mothers buy what they buy. Specifically, studies that ask mothers to identify which products bring them the most self-consciousness during purchasing, or that track how often mothers purchase products with certain labels could show the influence of social pressure on buying habits. Future research should also consider performing a social network analysis on one community of women to determine if there are women in that community that hold a larger amount of social capital than others and assess how the women who hold social capital share information with others.

Two participants in this study had children with special dietary concerns that changed the way the mothers bought and prepared food. The affect that dietary sensitivities and allergies of their children have on mothers' food purchasing decision-making would make for an interesting line of research, as these mothers may have a different perspective on food concerns than mothers whose children do not have these concerns. In addition, research showing how the mothers of children with food-related sensitivities affect their children's later food purchasing decision-making and overall health could be beneficial.

Qualitative interviews can only be utilized to describe a phenomenon that is happening and give voice to those who are experiencing it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Future research should seek to uncover why mothers communicate about food and agriculture, and seek to describe the larger populations methods for doing so. By utilizing a mixed methodology approach to this topic, researchers could uncover a way to motivate mothers to share more about food and agriculture.

Finally, it could be interesting to repeat this study and include men. Although they were intentionally left out of this study to focus on primary food buyers, more households are sharing domestic duties like grocery shopping (Frejka et al., 2018), and so men's decision-making process when food purchasing is becoming more relevant.

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doi:10.1111/ijcs.12405

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A IRB Exemption



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 03/27/2019
Application Number: AG-19-16
Proposal Title: Do conversations about food happen face-to-face? A qualitative study about the food-based communication habits of female consumers.

Principal Investigator: Alyssa Rockers
Co-Investigator(s): Angel Riggs, DWAYNE CARTMELL
Faculty Adviser: Quisto Settle
Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s):

Processed as: Exempt
Exempt Category:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in 45CFR46.

This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma State University IRB

APPENDIX B
IRB Exemption Modification



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Application Number: AG-19-16
Proposal Title: Do conversations about food actually happen? A qualitative study about the food-based communication habits of female consumers.

Principal Investigator: Alyssa Rockers
Co-Investigator(s): Angel Riggs, DWAYNE CARTMELL
Faculty Adviser: Quisto Settle
Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s):

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Study Review Level: Exempt
Modification Approval Date: 07/03/2019

The modification of the IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46. The original expiration date of the protocol has not changed.

Modifications Approved:

Modifications Approved: Changed title to: Do conversations about food actually happen? A qualitative study about the food-based communication habits of female consumers. Removed women with no agricultural experience from the study as their quota of this population has been achieved. Addition of option of phone interview procedures and associated oral consent process and script.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved.
2. Submit a status report to the IRB when requested
3. Promptly report to the IRB any harm experienced by a participant that is both unanticipated and related per IRB policy.
4. Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the OSU IRB and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
5. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Sincerely,

Oklahoma State University IRB
223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078
Website: <https://irb.okstate.edu/>
Ph: 405-744-3377 | Fax: 405-744-4335 | irb@okstate.edu

APPENDIX C
Recruitment Guide for Extension Personnel

Hello,

I am a master's student at Oklahoma State University studying agricultural communications under the supervision of Dr. Quisto Settle, assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership, and am seeking women with children to participate in a study about the types of conversations they are having with other mothers about food purchasing. As extension personnel, I was wondering if you knew of any women with agricultural backgrounds in your communities that would be good candidates for this study.

The study will consist of an in-person interview with myself and will last between 30 minutes and 1 hour. I am willing to meet them in their communities at their convenience. If you have any individuals to recommend, I would appreciate it if you could respond to this email with their names and contact information or if you could share my contact information with them. I can be reached at 417-359-6358 or alyssa.rockers@okstate.edu for more information.

Thank you,

APPENDIX D
Question Guide

Question Guide

This study on communication habits about food purchasing decisions is specifically targeting mothers. Individuals without children and that are not female or femme-identifying will not be assessed.

1. First off, can you share with me a little bit about yourself?
2. Are you married?
3. Do you have any children? What are their ages?
4. Do you live in a city, suburb, town, or on a farm?
5. Do you consider yourself to have an agricultural background?
6. What types of organizations are you involved with? Do you volunteer anywhere?
7. Are you the primary food buyer in your home?
8. If you have questions about what food you should purchase or what is in your food, where do you go for answers?
9. What do you wish that you knew about food?
10. What things do you try to consider when buying food?
11. Do you feel any social pressures when you're buying food?
12. Do you commonly have conversations about food? Who do you have those conversations with?
13. What concerns do you have about food? Do you think others share those concerns?
14. Is there someone that you consider to be an expert on food? What is your relationship with this person?

15. Do you know someone who produces agricultural products? What type of relationship do you have with that person?
16. Do you typically ask agricultural producers about the ways they produce food? If so, how does this affect your purchasing decisions? If not, why not?
17. If you learn something new about food, do you share that with others?
18. Does anyone you know instigate conversations about food? If so, describe these conversations. How do you engage in these interactions?
19. If you were to have a conversation about food, who would you be most comfortable with having that conversation with? Why those individuals?
20. Do you have any individuals to recommend that would be interested in participating in this study?

APPENDIX E
Written Consent



Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership

CONSENT FORM

Do face-to-face conversations about food actually happen? A qualitative study about the food-based communication habits of female consumers.

Background Information

You are invited to be in a research study of women's face-to-face communication about food. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time. You can skip any questions that make you uncomfortable and can stop the interview at any time.

This study is being conducted by: Alyssa Rockers, master's student in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership, under the direction of Dr. Quisto Settle, assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: you will be asked to answer a series of questions about your background, the conversations that you have with others about food buying, and your relationship to those you talk with about food.

Participation in the study involves the following time commitment: Interviews will last between 30 minutes and one hour, depending on the depth of your answers to the questions.

Compensation

You will receive no payment for participating in this study.

Confidentiality

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a code number/pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.

We will collect your information through interviews. This information will be stored in a password protected folder on an external hard drive. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the code list linking names to study numbers will be destroyed. This is expected to occur no later than Fall 2020. The audio/video recording will be transcribed. The audio/video recording will be kept as part of the study records indefinitely.

Contacts and Questions

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human research participants at Oklahoma State University has reviewed and approved this study. If you have questions about the research study itself, please contact the Principal Investigator at 417-359-6358, alyssa.rockers@okstate.edu If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer or would simply like to speak with someone other than the research team about concerns regarding this study, please contact the IRB at (405) 744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.



Approved: 03/27/2019
Protocol #: AG-19-16

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have my questions answered. I consent to participate in the study.

Indicate Yes or No:

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study.

Yes No

I give consent for my data to be used in future research studies:

Yes No

I give consent to be contacted for follow-up in this study or future similar studies:

Yes No

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____



Approved: 03/27/2019
Protocol #: AG-19-16

APPENDIX F
Oral Consent Script

ORAL CONSENT SCRIPT

By taking part in this interview, you are consenting to take part in a research project for a master's thesis at Oklahoma State University. During this interview, you will be asked to share information about your background, your experiences having conversations about food and agriculture, and the types of conversations that you are having about food and agriculture.

The interview will be audio recorded and then transcribed. All recordings and transcriptions will be saved in encrypted files, and any identifying information will be kept confidential. Participating in this research project does not give you any direct benefits, and you will not receive any compensation for your participation. You can opt out of the study at any time, or choose not to answer any questions.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research study, its procedures, risks and benefits, please contact, Alyssa Rockers, at 417-359-6358, alyssa.rockers@okstate.edu or Dr. Quisto Settle at qsettle@okstate.edu.

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about research or your rights as a participant, please contact the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to speak to someone independent of the research team at (405)-744-3377 or send an email to irb@okstate.edu.

Based on the information I just provided to you, do you agree to participate in my research project?

YES

NO

Participant ID #: _____

Person Obtaining Verbal Consent: _____

Date: _____

VITA

Alyssa Lee Rockers

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: DO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FOOD ACTUALLY HAPPEN? A QUALITATIVE STUDY ABOUT THE FOOD-BASED COMMUNICATION HABITS OF FEMALE CONSUMERS.

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2019.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in General Agriculture/Communications at Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri in 2017.

Experience:

Refereed Poster Presentation:

Rockers, A., & Settle, Q. (2019). *The research paper review process and advice for new authors and reviewers*. Poster submitted for presentation at 2019 National Agricultural Communications Symposium, Birmingham, AL.

Employed as a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources from January 2018 until May 2019.