

Retention of underrepresented groups in corporate agribusinesses: Assessing the intentions of underrepresented groups to remain working for corporate agribusinesses

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ABSTRACT

It is projected that the majority population will become the minority population by 2050. In order to serve the needs of an ethnically diverse U.S. population, corporate agribusinesses are encouraged to employ an ethnically diverse workforce. The purpose of this research was to understand how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in the workplace affects the intent of underrepresented groups to remain in working for their current corporate agribusiness. In current agriculture research, there are very few studies that focus on the experiences of underrepresented groups in corporate agribusinesses. There is also very little research and public information that provides the number of underrepresented students who are recruited and retained in corporate agribusinesses from year to year. For this reason the author sought to explore the experiences of underrepresented groups who work for agricultural organizations and gain an understanding of factors that impact their intentions to maintain a career in the field.

Using a phenomenological qualitative research study design, individual interviews were conducted with underrepresented employees from various corporate agribusinesses from across the United States. A review of the findings indicate that underrepresented groups who work for corporate agribusinesses are satisfied with their jobs in terms of compensation, work/life balance, and the opportunities for advancement. Yet, they are sometimes faced with micro-aggressions, at times feel they are treated differently because of their race, and often work in cultural climates that lack inclusion and/or cultural intelligence. As a result the majority of the participants who participated

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in the study felt that they would remain with their corporate agribusiness employer until they found a new company to work for, started their own business, or a better opportunity presented itself.

The findings from this study also show that anyone seeking employment in corporate agribusinesses need to have effective communication skills, cultural and emotional intelligence, agricultural competency, and a true passion for their field of agriculture in order to be successful in the industry. Other findings show that underrepresented groups and their White counterparts need to be educated on the contributions that underrepresented groups have made to the agricultural field in efforts to change the negative perceptions that underrepresented groups have about agriculture.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to George Washington Carver. He asked God to provide him the secrets of the world but God told him, “I will give you the secrets of the plant instead. His inquiry of God led him to discover over 500 uses of the peanut and made him one of the greatest scientists of all time”.

George Washington Carver is a perfect example of how we should exercise faith. He showed us that we can ask God to show us the secrets of the world, with blessed assurance that He will lead us on a journey to discover secrets that He created specifically for us to reveal. Glad I asked for the secret, when will you?

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

There are several reasons why corporate agribusinesses in the United States are focusing on diversity recruitment; however, the three main reasons are because of a change in the country's demographics, a need to accurately reflect the nation's demographic breakdown in corporate settings, and the desire to maintain diverse and productive working environments. According to CNN, the majority population will become the minority population by 2050 (Broughton, 2008). The Hispanic population is expected to triple and reach 137 million people by 2050, the African American population is expected to make up 15 percent of the population and reach about 65 million people, and the Asian American population is expected represent 9.2 percent of the population and reach 40 million people (Broughton, 2008). The aforementioned projections mean that supply and demand will also change for corporate agribusinesses.

To meet the needs of an ethnically diverse population, a workforce that is reflective of the ethnically diverse population is desired (Diversityinc, 2014; Llc, 2009; Worth, 2009). In order to thrive in a globally centered economy and have an edge in research, development, and international affairs, corporate agribusinesses would benefit from recruiting underrepresented groups aggressively. If an organization is unwilling to create an ethnically diverse workforce, they show an unwillingness to cater to the changing market place and will experience a loss in revenue (Diversityinc, 2014; Llc, 2009; Worth, 2009). In an effort to create an ethnically diverse workforce, it is encouraged that corporate agribusinesses recruit students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges, and international institutions.

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Recruitment cost companies thousands of dollars each year. On average U.S. corporations spend \$3,300.00 per individual on a variety of recruitment efforts (Diversityinc, 2014; Llc, 2009; Worth, 2009). That is an average cost of 72 billion per year that a company budgets for travel, food, hotel, company paraphernalia, and any other expenses that an employer may encounter when recruiting future employees (Diversityinc, 2014; Llc, 2009; Worth, 2009). To this end, corporate agribusinesses should strive to make a profitable return on investment in the individuals they recruit to provide their company an innovative and adaptive edge, because thousands of dollars are lost if those employees are not retained.

Each of these three points equal one common theme, if a company wants to remain competitive and thrive in demographic change that is to come in the U.S., they must have the mindset that “Diversity Makes Cents”. This means that corporate agribusinesses must have the mindset to capitalize on the investment they make in recruitment by striving to select and retain candidates that reflect the changing population and have the skill sets that promote innovation and adaptability (Diversityinc, 2014; Llc, 2009; Worth, 2009). Due to the rapidly changing demographics of the world population, it would make sense to seek out a diverse workforce that will be representative of the population it serves. Unfortunately, the changes in the ethnic makeup of the country can create challenges for underrepresented groups to enter and remain in corporate agribusinesses. Some of these challenges underrepresented groups may encounter as a result of the ethnic makeup of the country include, but are not limited to; being denied entry level positions into corporate agribusinesses, underrepresented groups being denied promotions, and underrepresented groups being subjected to an increase of micro-aggressions in the workplace. These challenges can are often the result of underlying triggers and fault lines that surface due to the demographic changes in the country.

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By 2050, the population will double and Caucasian males will no longer be the majority employed in the workforce (Yen, 2012). This means some companies may feel there is no longer a need to implement or enforce affirmative action laws that protect underrepresented groups from being overlooked as qualified applicants for job positions (Yen, 2012). Historically, the cultural climate in the agricultural business sector shows favoritism towards White males. If affirmative action laws are no longer implemented, underrepresented groups may be overlooked for entry-level positions and advancement opportunities (Hannum, Mcfeeters, & Booyesen, 2010; Yen, 2012). Historically, written and unwritten laws were put into effect that created barriers for opportunity despite the demographic make-up of a population (Finalcall.Com, 2009; Staff, 2009). This means there is an even greater cause for concern in regards to the recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups in corporate agribusinesses. It also means that corporate agribusinesses will need to recruit an ethnically diverse workforce today, in order to ensure they meet the needs of tomorrow's population. However recruitment is not where corporate agribusinesses should stop when it comes to building an ethnically diverse workforce, they must also work to retain the underrepresented population that they hire.

A growing cause for concern in the field of agriculture is the availability and distribution of healthy foods in low income areas across the U.S. (Franco, Diez Roux, Glass, Caballero, & Brancati, 2008). In order to raise sustainable awareness on this topic, a plan of action should be established that includes educating, recruiting, and retaining an ethnically diverse workforce in the agricultural field (Alston, English, Graham, Wakefield, & Farbotko, 2011; Anderson, 2013; Ponds, 1993). To implement this plan, there must be an effective use of recruitment and retention strategies and techniques that cater to underrepresented groups. As our nation continues to grow ethnically, we need equal representation of all cultures and ethnicities to be involved in how our

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food and natural resources are grown, distributed, and priced in agriculture businesses (Ponds, 1993). Having ethnic diversity in corporate agribusinesses provide a wide range of thoughts and experiences that can help determine how problems in the field are solved. Corporate agribusinesses cannot accurately provide insight on what resources to produce on a local or global scale without the input of a diverse population from different cultural, economical, and ethnic backgrounds (Anderson, 2013; Carolan, 2006; Homan & Greer, 2013; Ponds, 1993).

As the U.S. economy becomes globally centered and the gap between economic statuses continues to widen, corporate agribusinesses will need to increase their knowledge on the needs of people around the globe (Broughton, 2008; Jones & Larke, 2003; Ponds, 1993). Developing ethnic diversity within corporate agribusinesses ensures the needs of a variety of customers are met. Ethnic Diversity within corporate agribusinesses can also create a greater understanding of the various marketplaces being served and improve the quality of customer service and products offered (Herring, 2009). Ethnic diversity can also strengthen problem solving teams within the corporate agribusinesses. The diversity of thought from an ethnically diverse problem solving team can assist in generating effective ideas and narrowing down those ideas to develop highly effective solutions to agricultural problems (Herring, 2009).

There are some researchers who believe that diversity in the workplace can cause a decrease in profits, production time, and resources (Hannum, Mcfeeters, & Booyesen, 2010; Herring, 2009). Conflicts among employees that stem from triggers, fault lines, various problem-solving styles, and cognitive levels can make it difficult to bring unity to ethnically diverse work environments (Hannum et al., 2010; Kirton, 2003). Employees in ethnically diverse work environments that can not cope with these issues effectively may experience ineffective communication, high turnover rates, quantity over quality, and work avoidance

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(Hannum et al., 2010; Herring, 2009; Kirton, 2006). Yet, in the mist of the conflict, some researchers believe conflict forces diverse groups to be higher level thinkers and more effective problem solvers (Herring, 2009). The diversity of an individuals' experience, culture, beliefs, and attitudes can aid a group during collaborative efforts to decide if they need to shift into new paradigms or regenerate and reorganize previous ideas that the group previously generated (Hannum et al., 2010; Herring, 2009; Kirton, 2006).

While agriculture employs 1 out of 5 people in the U.S. the majority of individuals employed in agriculture are not a reflection of the underrepresented population (Warren, 2002). Underrepresented groups are often encouraged to seek educational and career opportunities in agriculture, but fail to receive information needed to be successful (Warren, 2002). Further, underrepresented groups sometimes fail to pursue agriculture careers due to the association of agriculture with slavery (Faulkner, Baggett, Bowen, 2009; Kirton, 2003; Ponds, 1993). The majority of underrepresented groups in the U.S. believe agricultural careers are associated with strenuous work activity that involves manual outside labor in cotton and tobacco fields (Ponds, 1993). Parents also have a major influence on their child's career path. Parents of underrepresented children often encourage them to seek careers unrelated to agriculture due to the negative connotations with the field (Alston et al., 2011; Faulkner et al., 2009). For example, they normally encourage their children to become doctors, lawyers, and engineers (Faulkner et al., 2009).

Underrepresented groups who do decide to seek career and educational opportunities in agriculture are usually influenced by someone knowledgeable on the career field. Current research on recruitment and retention initiatives that are geared toward underrepresented groups in agriculture are focused in the area of education (Vincent, Henry, & Anderson 2012). There is

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little to no research that focuses on the career decisions of underrepresented groups who graduate with agricultural degrees. Secondly, there is little to no research on the retention of underrepresented groups who are employed by corporate agribusinesses (Alston et al., 2011; Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, 2008; Ponds, 1993).

Despite the implementation of diversity scholarships and career related programs from organizations such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Future Farmers of America, there are very few underrepresented students enrolling in colleges of agriculture across the country (FAIS, 2013) This could be attributed to a lack of interest in agricultural professions from underrepresented groups (Alston et al., 2011; Esters & Bowen, 2005; Faulker et al., 2009). With that being said, how can we ensure corporate agribusinesses are hiring an ethnically diverse workforce if underrepresented groups are not interested? More importantly, how can we ensure corporate agribusinesses are creating an environment that will foster the success of underrepresented populations who have the intent to obtain a career with corporate agribusinesses? Without research focused on the retention of underrepresented groups who work in corporate agribusinesses, we may never experience an ethnically diverse corporate agribusiness sector. Ponds (1993) supports this premise as she quotes an author who says, “Environmental professions have done an admirable job of removing the barriers that kept women from joining their ranks. However, the profession's record in increasing the percentage of minorities taking up environmental careers can only be called poor.” (p. 5).

It is important to note that the experience of an individual and how it affects them can determine how they respond or interact in various settings (Herdman & McMillian-Capehart, 2009; Solorzano, 2010; Vincent et al. 2012). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) examines the intent of individuals to perform a variety of tasks based on their attitudes, subjective norms of

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the environment they are in, and the amount of perceived control that they have in regards to their success or failure (Ajzen, 1991; Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). Individuals are more willing to perform if an environment is constructive and welcoming. They also have a greater intent to perform if they possess positive attitudes and perceptions about the individuals with which they interact. The purpose of this study will be to examine the intent of underrepresented groups to remain in an agricultural career upon graduation based on their attitudes, norms of the company, and perceived control over future success.

Statement of the Problem

Diversity, in every sense of the word, tends to play an important role in the advancement of businesses. Diversity of thought, experience, culture, and ethnicity can provide a wealth of knowledge to be used in problem-solving and the advancement of a business. With the understanding that diversity is a necessity, the agricultural field, as a whole, has recognized that there is a need to increase ethnic diversity within. Although the agriculture field has realized ethnic diversity is needed, underrepresented groups who choose to pursue a career in corporate agribusinesses may face opposition in regards to career advancement. Underrepresented groups may have to work harder to obtain upper level management, leadership, and CEO positions (Alston et al., 2011; Hom et al., 2008; Ponds, 1993; Soloranzo, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Wingfield, 2007).

Additionally, the lack of research on the topic of diversity and inclusion in regards to the corporate agribusiness must be addressed. There is little to no research that focuses on recruitment, retention, and the experiences of underrepresented groups in corporate agribusinesses (USDA, 2008, Monsanto, 2014; MANRRS, 2014). To recruit and retain underrepresented groups in corporate agribusiness, we must inquire about their on the job

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experiences in predominantly White cultural climates and how businesses provide an inclusive environment.

The final issue to be addressed is retention. The need for an increased amount of recruitment and retention for underrepresented groups has been recognized in corporate agribusiness. For recruitment and retention rates to increase, it is suggested that a change occurs in the cultural climate, there is an increase in underrepresented mentors, and cultural intelligence is enhanced among majority culture employees in corporate agribusinesses (Alston et al., 2011; Bowen, 2001; Davis, 1991; Denson & Chang, 2009; Ponds, 1993; Tapia & Kvasny, 2004). Various subjective norms and perceived control over an individual's ability to succeed in an environment that is culturally different from what they are used to can be a determining factor in underrepresented groups being retained also. If an individual has deep seated attitudes and beliefs about the majority culture in the work place and the environment in which they work is perceived to confirm their beliefs, they are less likely to be motivated to remain in the environment and will only be able to cope with the situation for a limited amount of time (Kirton, 2006; Ponds, 1993). Thus, the decrease in retention of underrepresented groups in corporate agribusinesses and USDA will likely occur if the cultural environment does not change to fit the needs of a diverse workforce.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to analyze the intent of underrepresented groups to remain employed with their current corporate agribusiness employer, based on their experience. To guide this study, the following research question was developed:

How does attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in the workplace affect the intentions of underrepresented groups to remain working for their current corporate agribusiness employer?

Definition of Terms

Agribusiness: Any firm whose profits are dependent on or derived from the eventual harvest of agricultural production or natural resources. An agribusiness is uniquely characterized by its on-going need to adapt to several forces including; the biological phenomena of nature, weather conditions, changing consumer preferences for foods and fiber and the global supply and demand for the products of this harvest (D.W. Block Associates, 2014).

Diversity: The degree of intra-organizational representation of people with different group affiliations of cultural significance (Herdman & McMillian-Capehart, 2009).

Fault lines: Constitutional dynamics of multiple demographic attributes that can potentially subdivide a group. Faultlines may or may not be active in an organization but they are always present. They may form along attributes among gender race age nationality and other demographic factors (Hannum et al., 2010a).

Intent: Assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try; how much of an effort they are planning to put forth (Ajzen, 1991).

Social identity: The groups to which people belong on the basis of shared characteristics such as gender religion race sexuality and etc (Hannum et al., 2010a).

Stereotypes: An exaggerated belief associated with a category with the function to justify our conduct in relation to that (Solorzano, 2010).

T.A.C.T: The acronym T.A.C.T stands for Target, Action, Context, and Time. Target is an objective to be reached or acted upon, Action is the specific behavior engaged in for the purpose of achieving the objective; the Context is the larger environment in which the behavior occurs;

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and the Time is perceived by the scope and duration of the behavior being examined (Fuller, 2012).

Theory of Planned Behavior: A theory designed to predict and explain human behavior in specific contexts (Ajzen, 1991).

Triggers: An action or series of actions that make an inequity or inequality related to social identity noticeable. A trigger is an event that involves at least two social identity groups that cause social identity to become activated in varying degrees. For an event to be a trigger at least two members from the same id group attribute the actions to their social identity group or the social identity group of the other party (Hannum et al., 2010).

Underrepresented Groups: Minority group whose percentage of the population at a given institution is lower than their percentage of the population in the country (Top Law Schools.com, 2013)

Significance of the Study

Diversity and inclusion is a difficult issue to address (Hannum et al., 2010). For years, people all over the world have fought for equality, but because of the complex issues associated with diversity and inclusion, the reality is that discrimination remains. Despite the fact that we may never eliminate issues with diversity and inclusion in society, we can seek to understand the intent of underrepresented groups to continue working for corporate agribusinesses based on their attitudes, subjective norms, and their perceived behavioral control. By understanding their intent, we can ensure underrepresented groups are submerged in a social climate that promotes success and encourages constructive feedback about job performance in corporate agribusinesses. Agriculture as a whole must also aim to dilute, undercut, and eliminate racism using effective diversity and inclusion strategies and techniques (Solorzano, 2010). By

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conducting this particular study, we can address and prepare underrepresented groups for interaction with different cultures, behaviors, and attitudes of the majority population. We can also address the need for more research to be conducted in the area of diversity and inclusion within corporate agribusinesses. This study will also promote the importance of enhancing cultural diversity in the overall profession of agriculture.

Research in diversity and inclusion, in regards to agriculture, is centered in the area of education. There is little research that focuses on the employee's job satisfaction in corporate agribusinesses. Knowing the experiences of individuals in corporate agribusinesses is important because it provides further research to agriculture educators on the importance of recruiting and retaining underrepresented groups. It is rare to find information on the job satisfaction of agriculture employees or the pride they may have in performing their jobs. The 2007 U.S. census of agriculture provided evidence of an increase of underrepresented groups who work on farm operations nation-wide (National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2008). Yet, the media and higher level positions in corporate agribusinesses do not reflect these statistics. The media rarely focuses on the contributions of farmers to our society, and when it does underrepresented farmers are not mentioned (Rivas, 2013). By conducting this study, the researcher provided insight on those employed in corporate agribusiness. By focusing on the experiences of underrepresented groups who are employed by corporate agribusinesses, how they have made contributions to their work place, and how they give back to their communities, may help increase awareness about career opportunities in corporate agribusinesses.

With the increase in scholarship programs to aid in the recruitment of underrepresented groups in agriculture education, more research is needed that ensures that students are being

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Methodology

To fulfill the purpose of this study, qualitative interviews were conducted with underrepresented groups who currently work for a corporate agribusiness and have obtained a bachelor's and/or a master's degree(s) in agriculture. The first interview was the structuring interview and the second interview was the data gathering interview. Structuring and data gathering interviews are critical for conducting individual interviews in qualitative research (Hein, 2013).

Structuring interviews cause the participant to be aware of the importance of the interview and describe why the interviewer is conducting the research. This interview allows time for the interviewer and interviewee to become comfortable with one another. It also allows time for the interviewer to discuss moral issues, the consent forms, outline the data gathering interview, and answer any questions that might be asked by the interviewee (Hein, 2013). Once the structuring interview was complete, the participant was provided approximately three-days to reflect on the information collected and to decide to progress to the data gathering interview.

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The data-gathering interview was used to collect data on the phenomenon in question. The data-collecting interview was only conducted once and the interviewer collected all the information needed in this one session. The interview provided consisted of a series of questions structured to obtain data based on the purpose of the respective study. Once the data was collected, it was transcribed and coded to understand the themes that emerged.

Limitations of the Study

The data collected in this study only reflects the responses of a limited number of employees from corporate agribusinesses. The data collected does not reflect the experiences of all underrepresented groups across the United States who work for corporate agribusinesses.

Summary of Chapter One

In order to serve the needs of an ethnically diverse U.S. population, corporate agribusinesses are encouraged to employ an ethnically diverse workforce. Due to the lack of knowledge that most underrepresented groups have about agriculture, most fail to choose careers in the agriculture field. There is also little to no research on the experiences of underrepresented groups who are employed by corporate agribusinesses, which means there is little to no information on how underrepresented groups view their experiences in the agriculture workforce. Without creating an inclusive cultural environment within agriculture and measuring the outcomes and experiences that underrepresented groups have, U.S. agriculture may not grow to meet the food and fiber needs of the population. We must meet the needs of underrepresented groups in corporate agribusinesses in the U.S., as well as around the world. Without representation of underrepresented groups in decision-making positions, we may never meet or understand the agricultural needs of the underrepresented population.

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The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) examines the intent of individuals to perform based on their attitudes, subjective norms of the environment they are in, and the amount of perceived control they have in regards to success or failure (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992; Ajzen, 1991). Individuals are more willing to perform if the environment is constructive and welcoming. Individuals also have a greater intent to perform if they possess positive attitudes and perceptions about the environment and people with which they interact. This study focused on the intent for underrepresented groups to remain in an corporate agribusinesses based on their attitudes, norms of the company, and perceived behavioral control over their future success.

Based on cross referenced research, one can assume underrepresented groups would remain working for their current agribusiness employer if they are satisfied with their jobs, have opportunities to obtain higher level positions, and work in culturally inclusive environments. Research also shows that recruitment of underrepresented groups may increase if there is an increased number of underrepresented mentors in higher level positions within corporate agribusinesses (Alston et al.,2011; Bowen, 2001; Davis, 1991; Denson & Chang, 2009; Ponds, 1993; Tapia & Kvasny, 2004). History shows there is a negative image of agriculture that resognates with underrepresented groups due to slavery and mistreatment. This image may never be changed, unless there are underrepresented groups advocating for the careers that agriculture field can provide.

To conduct this research, the TPB was used to examine the intent of underrepresented groups, who are currently employed by corporate agribusinesses, to remain employed with their current employer based on their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The research was conducted using phenomenological interviews that were recorded and then

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transcribed. The transcriptions were used to identify sub-themes that were used to evaluate the data collected.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Underrepresented groups are an asset to the agricultural field because of the continual emergence of ethnic diversity in the United States, and the continued focus to serve a global market. If we fail to have representation from diverse groups, we will face difficulty understanding the food and resource needs of the cultures that the U.S. agriculture field serves. With this understanding, how can the needs of underrepresented groups be taken into consideration by the U.S. corporate agribusinesses if we fail to recruit and retain underrepresented groups in stakeholder and management positions?

Corporate agribusinesses have realized the need to increase ethnic diversity, but there is little information on their efforts in creating a diverse and inclusive workforce. DiversityInc. and The World's Great Place to Work Institute award companies around the world for being excellent organizations that support antidiscrimination, global employment, leadership training, inclusive work environments, and talent mapping. To receive these awards, a company must execute proactive management that encourages diversity and inclusion. Receiving this award may or may not prove the execution of proactive management is effective. This could mean that diversity management is discussed and all employees have been to training that focuses on the importance of inclusion, but there is no evidence of the execution of diversity management in the workplace. It could also mean that an organization has shown growth in ethnic diversity in certain divisions of the company, like IT or human resources, but statistically lack ethnic diversity in the company as a whole.

Research conducted with participants who are employed by corporate agribusiness are scarce in scholarly journals. With the wealth of research and knowledge in agriculture education

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on recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups, there should be just as much, if not more research, on the long-term effects of efforts to retain underrepresented groups in corporate agribusinesses. As the need to secure funds for college increases, agriculture related scholarships may become more appealing to underrepresented groups. So, creating an all-inclusive atmosphere in the workplace is vital to ensure underrepresented groups are recruited and retained in corporate agribusinesses.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) focuses on why individuals choose to perform or not to perform specific behaviors based on their attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. TPB is relevant to this body of work because it takes into account volitional control when understanding an individual intent to perform a task. Volitional control is defined as a psychological state that enables persistent goal striving (Kim & Bennekin, 2013). For example, when someone believes they have control over a situation and have available resources to assist them in accomplishing a goal, they have a greater intent to perform and succeed. When someone perceives they have little or no control over a situation and no resources to help them to succeed, they may have little to no intent to continue to pursue a goal. This chapter will provide an in depth explanation of the TPB and the relevance it has to the study. This chapter will also provide an analysis of previous research that provides data that supports the conduction of this study.

Theoretical Framework

The framework for this study is an expanded version of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). This theory was chosen to provide understanding and insight on the intent of underrepresented groups to remain employed with a corporate agribusiness. The TPB was designed to demonstrate that general attitudes are implicated of human behavior and to discuss why individuals decide to perform or not to perform specific behaviors (Ajzen, 1991; Pierce, 2012). The TPB was derived from the theory of reasoned action (TRA), a function of belief that the likelihood of performing a particular behavior will lead to a specific behavior (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). TPB and TRA share the commonality of intent (Ajzen, 1991; Pierce, 2012). Intent is defined as indications of how hard people are willing to try or how much effort one is willing to exert to perform a task (Ajzen, 1991). In other words, the TPB proves that the greater the intent that an individual has toward performing a behavior, the more likely it will occur (Ajzen, 1991; Pierce, 2012). Where the TPB is different from TRA is in an individuals' desire to account for full volitional control (Ajzen, 1991; Madden et al.; 1992). Volitional control is defined as a psychological state that enables an individual to maintain motivation and be persistent in various tasks that are necessary when striving to attain goals (Kim & Bennekin, 2013; Husman, McCann, & Crowson, 2000). The TPB does not assume every intention is based on volitional control, but does take into account that intentional behavior can only be present if the behavior is carried out by the will of the individual (Ajzen, 1991; Madden et al., 1992; Pierce, 2012). TPB includes other factors such as the availability of resources and opportunities like money, social climate, and time because they have an effect on the intent of someone performing a certain behavior (Pierce, 2012).

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The original version of the TPB examines three factors that heavily influence intent. These three factors are attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991; Pierce, 2012). Attitude focuses on the negative or positive feelings an individual has in regards to the behavior that they must perform (Pierce, 2012). Subjective norms focus on the positive and negative perceptions of others in regards to the task that an individual must perform (Pierce, 2012). The third factor is perceived behavioral control, which is defined as an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest (Ajzen, 1991; Madden et al.; Pierce, 2012). Perceived behavioral control is another factor that TPB has and the TRA does not. Perceived behavioral control is often compared to Bandura's definition of self-efficacy (Pierce, 2012). Self-efficacy is defined as a measure of how well an individual perceives he or she can perform a certain behavior to deal with prospective situations (Pierce, 2012).

TPB has served as the framework for studies that focus on individuals' behaviors that involve a choice among alternatives. Examples of these choices include abortions, smoking, or career choices (Ajzen, 1991). A study conducted by Breukelen, Vlist, and Steensma used TPB to understand voluntary employee turnover in the Royal Netherlands Navy (Breukelen, et al., 2004). They used TPB to assess the intentions of participants to remain with the Navy after their initial commitment term of 4 years and to assess what internal and external factors may have created their favorable attitude and environment for them to re-enlist or retire from the Navy. This study is unique in the fact that little to no research has examined the intent of underrepresented groups to remain in agriculture businesses. The researcher will use the TPB to examine the intent of underrepresented groups to remain in the agriculture businesses on their

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attitudes on social climate, their perceptions of their abilities to succeed, and the availability of resources to help them be successful in their career.

To explain how TPB relates to the intent of underrepresented groups to remain in corporate agribusinesses, the example of a new African American female hire by the name of Nicole, will provide insight on how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control can shape the intentions of an individual's behavior. Nicole is a new hire at a corporate agribusiness in North Dakota. She is energetic, engaging, and loves to participate in activities that promote networking and relationship building. Nicole became involved in agriculture during her junior year in high school when she joined Future Farmers of America (FFA). After joining FFA, she developed a passion for agriculture and a desire to inspire other underrepresented groups to pursue a profession in agriculture. Everything Nicole has experienced that has been directly related to agriculture has been enjoyable and exciting. She thrived in her agriculture related classes, joined agriculture organizations, and volunteered with 4-H while in college. Her new position with a corporate agribusiness brings the same type of satisfaction in regards to being involved with the community, meeting new people, and learning about various job enhancing opportunities. Yet her intent to remain in her current position is at stake due to her working relationships with her co-workers and superiors (Deci & Ryan, 2004, Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011).

Nicole has a boss who is never around and when he is around he complains about how she goes about her daily tasks, how she does everything wrong, and how her lack of knowledge about grain elevators will be detrimental to her success. Nicole's boss also micromanages via email and tells her what to do and when to do it. If something is not done in a specified time frame the way he wants it done, he sends disheartening emails which make her feel incompetent

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and less than worthy of the opportunity in front of her. With only 2 months of working on the job, Nicole is struggling to press on but keeps working to learn all she can. She has a desire to pave the way in agriculture for more underrepresented individuals like herself and continues to work hard despite her feelings of being attacked. Nicole is a first year hire and has joined the team with three other individuals who are also first year hires. Two of the three first year hires are White males and the other hire is a White female. Her counterparts seem to be making an easy transition into the job and are recognized for their progression and success within the department (Deci & Ryan, 2004, Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011). Nicole is also one of eight people of color in her office. There are three African Americans, two employees are from India, and one person is of Asian descent. Only one of these employees holds an upper level management position.

After three months of being in her new job position, Nicole's office receives a new boss. This boss plays a totally different role. This boss allows Nicole to express her concerns at work, provides a scaffold for her to learn about her job, and lets her explore various projects and encourages her questions. He also creates an autonomous atmosphere by allowing Nicole to set her own deadlines and praises her in emails once she has successfully completed a project. Also when she makes a mistake he lets her know it's okay and that making mistakes is a part of her growth in the company. Nicole now feels confident in her position and her intrinsic motivation to continue has increased drastically because of her contextual change (Deci & Ryan, 2004, Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011). She now has a stronger desire to remain in the agricultural business sector as a result of this change.

Nicole's behaviors were fueled by attitudes, perceptions, and perceived behavioral control. Her newfound competence about her job, how she related to her new boss, and how she

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was given control to complete her task enhanced her intrinsic motivation and changed her perceptions on how she could succeed. This will be true for all individuals but how each person is motivated and their intent to remain in the agricultural business sector will be different. You can also see how a context change (a new boss) enhanced her motivation to succeed and increased her desire to remain in the agricultural business sector. You can also see how her level of satisfaction and enjoyment of her job increased when her boss changed, which also creates an example of intrinsic motivation and an attitude change toward her boss and her company (Deci & Ryan, 2004, Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011).

Literature Review

Attitudes

Attitudes are defined as the behavioral tendency for one to respond positively or negatively to an event, object, institution or person. Underrepresented groups tend to have negative attitudes towards agriculture and this has contributed to the low representation of these groups in the profession. Some of the factors that contribute to these negative attitudes are a decrease in farms, lack of agricultural exposure for today's youth, and the poor economic climates for agriculture (Warren, 2002). These attitudes can be changed. In a study conducted by Dr. Esters and Dr. Bowen (2005), high school students' perceptions about the field of agriculture were changed to positive ones through their enrollment in agriculture focused high schools. However, some student's ultimate career choice was shaped by family members and agriculture was not on the list of career choices that their families had envisioned for them (Esters, Levon T & Bowen, 2005). Encouraging students of various ethnicities to work with/in racially underrepresented communities will help change the mindset of parents toward agriculture. It will provide both adults and youth the opportunity to learn about agriculture and have hands-on experiences with students pursuing agriculture careers that are not farm centered (Faulkner, Baggett, Bowen, & Bowen, 2009).

Another reason underrepresented students may have negative attitudes about pursuing a career in agriculture is because of few underrepresented agricultural professionals with whom they have come in contact. Underrepresented groups need to see Hispanic, Latino, Asian, or African American faces associated with agriculture in order to become more interested in the career path (Dwyer, 1975). People are more likely to join a profession if they have supervisors,

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co-workers, or mentors who are of the same ethnicity, religious background, or sexual orientation (Tapia & Kvasny, 2004).

Underrepresented groups also associate agriculture with slavery. The negative history and experiences associated with underrepresented groups in the U.S. in regards to agriculture, causes them to shy away from agricultural careers. African Americans in the U.S. for example, have a history of being forced to engage in long days of hard work in cotton and sugarcane fields for little to no pay. Hispanic Americans have a history of working long hours for little to no pay in corn and tobacco fields, while having to move from place to place, depending on the season, to find jobs that would provide for their families in both the U.S and in other countries (Nichols, Jimmerson, & Nelson, 1993). Some underrepresented groups feel as though they have worked hard to obtain higher levels of education that provided them with opportunities in professions such as professors, surgeons, engineers, and business owners, and going back to the work of their ancestors would cause them to move backwards in society and social status (Ponds, 1993). Underrepresented groups also feel agriculture is a profession that provides a salary that would be inadequate for the lifestyles of modern times.

The U.S has also transitioned from being an Agrarian society. Today, there are larger and fewer farms across the nation (Elder, 1994; Strange, 2008). About 50 years ago, it was the opposite. Summertime for the educational system was created because of the harvest schedule for farmers. As technology has progressed there is less need for youth to stay home and help in the fields. Technology has also become more advanced and has reduced the amount of manual labor for today's farmer. Newly designed tractors, genetically modified seeds, and automated farm equipment has decreased the need for large farm families and hired help.

Subjective Norms

Subjective norms focus on the positive and negative perceptions of others in regards to the task that an individual must perform (Pierce, 2012). When underrepresented groups enter into majority work environments they may feel invisible, underworked, overworked, undervalued, disrespected, or as if they are not good enough for the job (Soloranzo et al., 2000; Wingfield, 2007). These feelings can sometimes come from attitudes or beliefs that underrepresented groups have from previous life/job experiences or reflect from historical events. Other times these feelings occur because managers or team members look over underrepresented groups because there are so few of them. This may cause underrepresented groups to feel as if their co-workers look down on them or feel they are incapable of completing a task.

In a study conducted by Wingfield (2007), that explored the gendered nature of racism in the workplace and its effect on underrepresented groups, she found that women of color who are underrepresented in their work environment often play a role that portrays them as intimidating or threatening in the workplace in order to feel respected and trustworthy for completing a task. They may also exhibit these behaviors so they will not be given task that may make them uncomfortable or cause them to feel undervalued. The study also reported that some African American males, who are underrepresented in their work environment, often play a more passive role at work. They feel as though if they speak their mind or voice their opinions too strongly, they may be portrayed as the “angry Black man.” This may cause their managers or peers to see them as passive and looked over for lead positions (Wingfield, 2007).

In a study conducted by Lynch (2001) at Virginia Tech, students were asked to describe their emotional and interactional experience as students attending a predominantly White institution. Students expressed that they felt they needed to always be on time, turn in

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assignments extra early, or perform above and beyond in every task (Lynch, 2001).

Underrepresented groups often feel this way not because they have a desire to perform well, but because they feel the majority population feels as though all underrepresented groups perform at low levels and do not possess the ability or skills to succeed (Alston et al., 2011; Soloranzo et al., 2000; Wingfield, 2007). These negative perceptions of how majority populations feel about underrepresented groups can have either positive or negative effects on how underrepresented groups complete a task or challenges they are faced with. Some individuals make choose to complete the task they are faced with despite what the majority population feels. Others may quit or choose to place themselves to an environment where they feel accepted.

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control is defined as an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty to perform the behavior of interest. Underrepresented groups may find it difficult to interact with the majority populations at their jobs. Underrepresented groups may experience subtle or blatant forms of micro aggressions, which makes interacting in their work environment difficult. Micro-aggressions are stunning automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes of superiority and constitute a verification of inferiority (Solorzano, 2010). An example of a micro-aggression would be someone from the majority culture saying, "You people eat a lot of chicken right?" Hearing negative statements from a boss or co-worker could cause self-doubt or could make it difficult for underrepresented groups to stay focused on their jobs. If underrepresented groups find it difficult to perform in their environments or they receive negative feedback directly or indirectly, they could be less motivated to stay within an environment. Micro aggressions can create an environment of little perceived behavioral control for underrepresented groups. Hearing statements such as, "They only hired him/her because we

need to meet a quota” or “I’m surprised you were able to accomplish this task so well” can make it difficult for a person of color to believe in their ability to be successful at their jobs (Soloranzo et al., 2000; Tapia & Kvasny, 2004; Wingfield, 2007).

Often, underrepresented groups in agriculture settings and in corporate settings have expressed that they experienced difficulties advancing to new positions because of the color of their skin (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solorzano et al., 2011). They have also been told that their work was not good enough and some have even been accused of advancing because of the work of others.

Underrepresented groups have also discussed the barriers experienced when obtaining higher level positions and the negative feedback they have received from co-workers, even in the midst of them implementing ideas that benefited the company. Yet, they still were motivated to move forward because they had the intent to pave the way for others just like them (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solorzano, 2010).

Job Readiness

Employers have made it clear that the next generations of college graduates entering into the workforce are not as prepared to perform daily tasks and meet the needs of the company or organization as generations past. This statement refers to the majority of college graduates regardless of ethnicity. Today, employers are seeking employees who have more than just the average job training skills. They want employees who are well rounded and who held high academic standing while in college. More importantly, they want employees who have excellent oral communication skills, personnel management skills, and can foster human relationships. Personal traits such as good character, initiative, and leadership skills are also of high importance to employers (Berle, 2007).

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In a recent study by Garton and Robinson at Iowa State, employers in the horticulture industry provided their opinions on what skill sets were most important for their employees to possess. The most important skill was time management and the least important was marketing skills. Essentially, they wanted to make sure that their employees had more soft skills like communication and organization. Employers are prepared to provide students with the hard skills like marketing and training on computer programming that will be unique to their job positions, but some soft skills and basic computer literacy (example: Microsoft Office) should be skills that students already have a strong foundation in (Garton & Robinson, 2006).

Another study by North Eastern University, which examined the views on college student preparedness for the workforce and higher education, found that most business leaders believe the U.S. educational system has failed at preparing students for the workforce and students in both developed and emerging countries are more prepared for upon graduation to enter into the workforce than American students (Northeastern University, 2013). The study also found that 73% of the employers interviewed believe that most college graduates lack the skills to succeed and that the employee skill gap may continue to widen between today's workforce and the substantial majority (Northeastern University, 2013). When employers were asked if they expected to see a change in the level of workforce preparedness in American college graduates over the next fifteen years, they were divided in their response (Northeastern University, 2013). Twenty-seven percent said there would be a change and American students would become more prepared than their international competition, thirty-two percent said they would be less prepared, and thirty nine percent said they would be equally prepared (Northeastern University, 2013). As a solution, ninety-seven percent of the employers suggested that institutions of higher learning in the U.S. should create more opportunities for experiential learning and eighty-nine

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percent suggested adding a curriculum that taught and supported entrepreneurship (Northeastern University, 2013).

Employers are also seeking employees who are culturally intelligent and possess a sense of global competency. As the world continues to become smaller, companies are beginning to serve a global market. Hunter (2004) expanded on the importance of teaching students to think with a global perspective. He provided several terms related to global competency and each had several similar meanings. The terms stated that individuals should be able to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries, to work effectively in different cultural settings, think with a global mindset, and be able to personally adapt to change and differences. Individuals seeking employment that have studied abroad or have experience working in different cultural environments than their own, have an advantage because they have immersed themselves in a different cultural setting than their own (Hunter, 2004). These individuals are better prepared to work in diverse organizational contexts and have an awareness of diversity in various contexts that can lead to better team performance and create better results for businesses and educational institutions (Eyler, 2002; Hunter, 2004; Janson, 2008).

Diversity and inclusion is an issue that has plagued the U.S. for decades and yet the field of agriculture is still very far behind in recruiting and retaining underrepresented groups (Alston et al., 2011; Esters, Levon T., 2007; Faulker et al., 2009). As the U.S. continues to grow, adopting a global mind set is more important than ever, especially when it comes to how we perceive the importance of food and natural resources. Without equal representation and a diversity of ideas in the field of agriculture, the U.S will fail to grow food and create resources with the best interest of the entire nation in mind (Bowen, 2001).

Motivation

In addition to the theory of planned behavior there needs to be a focus on the aspect of intrinsic motivation and how it plays a major role in why underrepresented groups intend to remain or intend to leave the agriculture business career setting. The theory of self-determination (SDT) and the sub theory of cognitive evolution theory will help explain the aspect of intent in regards to motivation further (Deci & Ryan, 2004, Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011).

SDT focuses on differentiating motivation in regards to it being autonomous or controlled. Autonomous orientation is behavior regulated by interests and self-endorsed values (Deci & Ryan, 2004, Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011). Controlled orientation is behavior that is micro-managed or controlled (Deci & Ryan, 2004, Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011). CET is a theory that focuses on how extrinsic factors effect intrinsic motivation while also factoring in context and situation (Deci & Ryan, 2004, Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011).

According to Ryan and Deci, humans were designed to be inherently active, intrinsically motivated, and oriented to develop naturally through integrative processes (Deci & Ryan, 2004, Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011). These characteristics should develop over time, they do not have to be learned, and can be shaped by an individual's social environment. When examining the TPB, we know that attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms share those same characteristics. In order for underrepresented groups who work in agriculture businesses to develop these characteristics, there needs to be proper nurturing in their work environment. Without proper nurturing, underrepresented group may experience less than optimal development, experiences, and behaviors in their work environments. It also could mean

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their levels of motivation will be low and their integration to operate effectively could be nonexistent (Deci & Ryan, 2004, Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as the positive emotional reaction an individual has towards their job (Breulelen, Van Der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004). An individual's perception of job satisfaction is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Since job motivation is determined by an individual's perceptions there has been recent debate over how job satisfaction is defined and studied. Currently, job satisfaction is viewed as a global definition or thought to be defined the same by most individuals. Research is now finding that job satisfaction is not a universal concept but varies by individuals. Recent studies have shown that there are similarities in individuals' perceptions of job satisfaction but the preferences of certain aspects of job satisfaction vary. Job satisfaction cannot be measured on a global scale and can vary by job. When studying a specific occupation, job satisfaction is measured by an individual's preference, and is not determined by a global scale (Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004; Van Breukelen et al., 2004).

Some similarities of job satisfaction among individuals includes having an interesting job, good relationships with boss and co-workers, high income, independent work environment, and clearly defined opportunities for career advancement (Egan et al., 2004; Van Breukelen et al., 2004). Other factors include an individual's perception of how they are empowered at their job, rewards for hard work, inspirational leaders, and a clear understanding of their roles and duties (Breukelen et al., 2004). When an individual perceives their job satisfaction is not met, they tend to isolate themselves at work. Job satisfaction does impact an employee's attitude toward their job and their intent to perform. If an individual is not satisfied with their job they

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could become less committed, find excuses to miss work, and possibly quit and find another job with a different company or in a different career field (Ajzen, 1991).

A high determinant of job satisfaction is organizational culture and structure (Egan et al., 2004; Van Breukelen et al., 2004). According to recent studies focused on job satisfaction, communication and relationships with supervisors and colleagues play a major role in the perceptions of a positive organizational culture and structure (Breukelen et al., 2004; Egan et al., 2004). Underrepresented groups who enter into agriculture careers could perceive their work environment or organizational culture as unsatisfactory because perceived communication barriers between them and their White counterparts (Denson & Chang, 2008; Herdman & Mcmillan-Capehart, 2009; Soloranzo et al., 2000; Wingfield, 2007). They may also have preconceived notions that they must work harder than others because of the color of their skin in order to prove themselves and be viewed as worthy for job advancement opportunities. Their perceptions could create intent to work harder or create feelings of withdrawal in the work place (Ajzen, 1991; Kirton, 2006).

Recruitment of Underrepresented Populations in Agriculture

The recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups in the agricultural field is a difficult task. The lack of knowledge underrepresented communities in regards to what a career in agriculture can provide is evident when we examine the enrollment statistics of colleges of agriculture across the country. Negative perceptions, a lack of knowledge about agriculture, and its connotation with slavery make it difficult for individuals to be recruited into the agricultural field (Anderson, 2013; Esters & Bowen, 2005; Faulker et al., 2009; Lynch, 2001).

Underrepresented groups who pursue agriculture usually do so because of prior hands on experience in agriculture, family ties to agriculture, or they receive scholarship money to provide

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a way to pay for college (Lynch, 2001). Scholarships that target underrepresented students in the agricultural field seem to be more prominent at both 1890 and 1994 land grant institutions at the undergraduate level. The USDA's 1890s scholarship is one scholarship in particular that recruit underrepresented students and retains them in the agriculture field after graduation. This scholarship provides underrepresented students with an annual summer USDA internship, a monthly stipend while in school, travel and lodging to the national MANRRS conference, and a job position with USDA upon graduation.

Another opportunity underrepresented groups have to enter into agricultural businesses is through the Monsanto Leadership program. This program recruits underrepresented groups from HBCU's. Students from various majors who apply and are accepted receive an all-expense paid trip to St. Louis, Missouri to tour the headquarters and interview with the department of their choice. This program has aided underrepresented groups by providing them with hands on job training and experience (Monsanto, 2014).

Despite the recruitment efforts being made to increase the number of underrepresented students in the agricultural field, the retention rates are still low and the climate still show favor to White males (Faulkner et. al, 2009; Solorzano, 2010). The lack of finances creates a barrier to higher education for some underrepresented groups. As a result, some underrepresented groups will enter agriculture as a last resort. This means they will take low level job opportunities in agriculture related fields just to make ends meet and may never gain the opportunity to move up the corporate ladder because they lack the education and resources to excel.

The Strategic Workforce Plan from the USDA for 2008-2010 is a plan that discusses recruitment and retention plans for the workforce (USDA, 2008). It shows that in 2007 minority employees accounted for 22.2% of permanent employees, 19% of non-senior executive

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supervisors and managers, and 16.9% of senior executive employees. We can also see that there are few underrepresented group members holding higher-level positions. At the senior executive level, there are still far more majority populations holding these positions. About 77 percent of the senior level staff is White and the majority of them are male. It is apparent by data provided by USDA that the higher the pay grade, the wider the gap becomes between Whites and underrepresented groups (USDA, 2008). This data shows that underrepresented groups are at the lower end of the pay scale. In 2007, the USDA also showed that only about 20% of the new hires were from underrepresented groups. That means about 70% of the people hired were White men (USDA, Strategic Workforce Plan 2008 - 2010, 2008).

Sustainable Retention of Underrepresented Groups in Agricultural Businesses

Companies who pride themselves on being diverse may not necessarily be inclusive. Meaning they may have an ethnically diverse workforce but lack an environment that makes underrepresented groups feel they are an asset to the company (Diversityinc, 2014; Llc, 2009). So many agricultural businesses, and agricultural based entities, recruit underrepresented groups just to fill this undisclosed quota, but don't take the time to ensure underrepresented groups feel like they are wanted or even needed in the company (Diversityinc, 2014; Llc, 2009). This can lead to a lack of job satisfaction for underrepresented groups, which in turn leads to a lack in productivity and a loss in revenue for the company. Some researchers believe that an increased amount of diversity can create chaos because of the various backgrounds, variations in strengths, and the dynamics of how innovative and adaptive a group may be (Hannum et al., 2010; Herring, 2009; Homan & Greer, 2013). This means that companies must have a plan that will create inclusivity across the entire company.

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There are several ways in which a company can create a culturally inclusive environment. One being that the company's vision and/or mission statement should reflect a desire to create a culturally inclusive environment (Diversityinc, 2014). In addition, the mission statement must be carried out in action by every level of management (Diversityinc, 2014). When employees see all levels of management practice a certain behavior, they are more likely to follow in their footsteps.

Companies should also create a diversity and inclusion council. The members of this council should be trained on how to create an inclusive environment in the workplace and informed on the cultural demographics of the company (Diversityinc, 2014). This way they know the population they are serving and they can ensure they have the proper representation from each ethnic group on the council. This council should also create a vision statement, mission statement, and goals to accomplish for the year (Diversityinc, 2014). The goals should be measurable and feedback should always be collected in all of their efforts from employees. This will ensure they are making informed decisions on the programs, policy changes, and goals they set as a council. So often companies have separate organizational groups within the company that can create division amongst ethnic groups. For instance there may be a group call the African American Council, the Asian American Society, or the LGBT Alliance. This can sometimes create division and encourage the separate groups to form cliques and never become aware of the other cultures around them (Diversityinc, 2014; Herdman & Mcmillan-Capehart, 2009; Herring, 2009). So having one council where each group can discuss similarities, differences, and create programs that promote inclusion and awareness is an effective strategy.

Companies should strive to imbed diversity and inclusion in all that they do. Diversity and inclusion should be discussed in all business meetings, discussed in regular conversation,

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and reference points should be made to diversity and inclusion when a teachable moment presents itself (Diversityinc, 2014; Worth, 2009). Companies can also strive to report and praise areas of progress in diversity and inclusion to the entire company. For instance, if a company has a goal to hire 5 more Hispanic managers in a year, an update on that endeavor should be reported in the first quarter of the year. This can establish trust and makes a statement that the company is really serious about making a change and being the diversity leaders they aspire to be (Diversityinc, 2014; Worth, 2009). It also aids in maintaining the momentum in the company as they strive to make diversity and inclusion more than just a topic of discussion but a part of their work ethic.

Companies should strive ensure that diversity and inclusion is a company initiative and not just one imposed to “fill a quota”. In order to do this, companies should research what practices other companies have adopted in regards to diversity and inclusion (Diversityinc, 2014; Worth, 2009). This is clearly an important dynamic for all companies, so learning what they have done successfully can generate ideas for their own company. Companies should also work to avoid assuming that just because certain diversity and inclusion practices work in one division of that company that they will work for all of them. There is no cookie cutter method when it comes to diversity and inclusion. For instance, just because IT has adopted certain inclusion practices, does not mean it will work in production (Diversityinc, 2014; Worth, 2009). They have different work environments, different interaction aspects, and just an overall difference in culture. Finally, companies should advertise and act upon diversity and inclusion endeavors in a manner that perspective employees know without asking that diversity and inclusion is a top priority. In commercials, billboards, the website, company tours and most importantly in the interview, perspective employees should never have to question a company’s commitment to diversity and

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inclusion. Genuine efforts in diversity and inclusion will speak volumes on their own
(Diversityinc, 2014; Herdman & Mcmillan-Capehart, 2009; Herring, 2009; Worth, 2009).

Chapter Two Summary

The TPB is designed to look at the intent of an individual and how they are motivated internally and externally. This study will use the TPB to explore if underrepresented groups in agribusinesses have an intent to remain in the field of agriculture based on their attitudes, perceptions, and preconceived control of the environment around them.

The literature shows that underrepresented groups are being advised to seek careers in the agricultural field. To feed an ethnically diverse nation, we need an ethnically diverse group of people in charge of our food decisions. The lack of underrepresented groups in the field, the association of agriculture and slavery, the career guidance from family, and shift from an agrarian culture in the U.S. to an industrial society has played a role in underrepresented groups not choosing a career in agriculture.

Underrepresented groups who do choose to pursue a career in agriculture may face difficulties in coping with being the only underrepresented group in a classroom or job setting. They may also face more obstacles than the majority population when it comes to obtaining job promotions and opportunities for advancement. Underrepresented groups may also struggle with adapting and not adopting the culture of the majority groups in the work setting. Sometimes underrepresented groups feel as though they must act a certain way in order to be accepted in the majority culture. This may result from the majority culture lacking cultural intelligence and interactions with groups of people who are different from themselves. As a result underrepresented groups may feel inferior and may choose to pursue a different career where there is a more diverse population present.

Despite the increase of recruitment the retention of underrepresented groups in agriculture still needs improvement. A paradigm shift in the cultural climate is long overdue in

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agriculture. There is change being made but if the U.S. agricultural industry wants to remain competitive and relevant, they will need to make some serious progression in the near future.

Reflexive Statement

I am a Master's of Science candidate in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University majoring in Agriculture and Extension Education. I am an African American female from a small rural farm community in North Carolina. I am 25 years old, single with no children. Growing up on a farm allowed me to learn about the business of agriculture at a very young age. My parents both were raised on small farm operations. They grew tobacco, cotton, soybeans, potatoes, and had small gardens. Both families were prominent farmers in the African American community due to their operations. They owned land and were successful at marketing and selling the products. I gained experience driving tractors, attending small farmer and rancher conferences, and collaborating with researchers from The School of Agriculture from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T) and North Carolina State University. Our family often provided farm tours to showcase our operations for researchers and students at these institutions.

I did not realize how blessed and privileged I was to have the above experiences until my father's family was awarded the Small Farmer of the Year Award, awarded by North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, in 2006. During the event, I learned how important my family farm operation was to our family and our community. It also became evident that our family represented for underrepresented farmers across the nation. As I continued the quest to become more involved in agriculture, I was motivated to participate with the Institute for Future Agriculture Leaders (IFAL) during the summer of 2006. During this event I learned that agriculture was more than just farming and that if I obtained a degree in agriculture, it would provide me with numerous opportunities. It was also during IFAL that I gained a passion for diversity. Ultimately, I applied to and was accepted at North Carolina A&T State University.

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North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University laid the foundation for my education and interest in researching the benefits of diversity and inclusion related agriculture programs. During my tenure at A&T, I traveled abroad to Izmir and Istanbul Turkey. The purpose of my trip was to learn the structure of agribusiness in Turkey and how it compared to the structure of agribusinesses in the U.S. The trip to Turkey sparked my interest in cultural diversity and prepared me for the cultural experience I would have at Kansas State University (K-State) the following summer. At K-State, I participated in a summer internship in the Diversity and Inclusion Department of the College of Agriculture. This opportunity allowed me to work with underrepresented students ages 10 to 16 years who were curious about the history of agriculture and the contributions that African-Americans made to the profession. It was also during this internship that I had the opportunity to work on an experiment at Haskell University on a Red-Elm seed project.

My experience at K-State in diversity and horticulture would prepare me for my next internship with a major seed company. The company that I worked for is very well known and it provided me with the foundation for my thesis topic. I was the one of seven females and the only African American employed at my site. On a daily basis I faced micro-aggressions and I was told on more than one occasion that I was not good enough to be employed with this company because I was African American. I was also told that the only reason I received the job was to help meet a quota. While working for this company I also noticed female and seasonal workers (who were Hispanic) at the site were often disrespected and looked down upon.

As a result of my experience I have a strong desire to help other individuals who may be experiencing similar situations. I have several friends who interned with the same company and had a very similar experience. A couple of them even decided to leave the profession of

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agriculture all together because of how they were treated. I believe underrepresented groups will develop a greater intent to enroll and remain in agriculture business if they are aware of the possibility for a successful career. Underrepresented groups need to know they have equal opportunity in obtaining raises, higher level positions, and feel as though they are an asset to a company in order to remain there. If underrepresented groups perceive they can be successful in an environment, the likelihood of them remaining increases.

I also believe that underrepresented groups will have a greater intent to remain in agriculture business if they have positive attitudes about their job climate. This would involve underrepresented groups feeling welcome in their work environment by their co-workers and supervisors who are of the majority culture. If they feel welcomed in an environment without feeling inferior, the likelihood of remaining in the environment will increase.

Another belief I have about the intent of underrepresented groups to remain in agriculture is that their intent will decrease if they are subjected to negative normal behaviors in the organization. For instance, if underrepresented groups are constantly singled out or questioned about their life style or culture in a negative way they will have a greater desire to quit their job. Diversity should be embraced as important, not inferior.

To address each of the issues discussed, I believe there should be mentors for the managers who are a part of the ethnic majority in agribusinesses. These mentors could be part of an underrepresented group. This would help guide the majority culture managers they have questions or concerns about how to be culturally conscious when working with a diverse team or group. Managers often receive training on how to be culturally inclusive, but when putting the training into practice they may struggle. Managers often receive training on how to be culturally inclusive but often struggle when expected to implement the practice. Having a mentor would

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allow managers an outlet to ask questions that may be uncomfortable for them to ask others. It may also assist them with strategizing on how to change the cultural climate from non-inclusive to inclusive. That type of transition is not easy so having mentors can be helpful.

When conducting this research, I expect that the majority of underrepresented groups who work for agribusinesses have experienced micro aggressions and have considered resigning from their job. Most underrepresented groups face adversity every day and have learned to cope, but I am sure they have thoughts of quitting on more than one occasion. I also expect to hear from many of the interviewee's that their negative experiences have created a strong intrinsic motivation to prove to others that they can be successful in this environment against all odds

In closing, I do hope that the results of this research create awareness of the overall treatment of underrepresented groups in agriculture businesses. I also hope that it will generate an effective action plan on how to prepare underrepresented groups for what they may experience in agriculture business and/or prompt agriculture businesses to develop a plan of action to change their cultural climate.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

There has been an increase in the efforts to recruit underrepresented groups in the agriculture field but there is little to no research on how many of those recruited are being retained. Studies conducted by various researchers such as Ponds (1993), Lynch (2001), Faulkner (2009), suggests there needs to be a change in the cultural climate of agriculture to recruit and retain underrepresented groups. Based on this information, one can assume the same measures should be taken in the agribusiness realm. With little scholarly research available on the recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups in agribusinesses, this study will attempt to collect data on this phenomenon on the basis of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

The purpose of this study was to analyze the intent of underrepresented groups to remain employed with corporate agribusinesses based on their attitudes, perceptions, and perceived behavioral controls. Underrepresented groups who have been employed for two years with an agribusiness and have earned a bachelor's degree and/or master's degree in agriculture will be interviewed individually to discuss their attitudes, perceptions, and perceived control in their workplace environment. This study is a qualitative phenomenological evaluation study. Before conducting the study, the researcher received IRB approval from the Virginia Tech IRB approval board. Once approval was received the researcher began to solicit participants.

Subjects were solicited by asking corporate agribusiness employees, who identified as an underrepresented group, attending an agriculture conference to participate in the demographic survey for the study. The researcher visited the information booths of all corporate agribusiness at the career fair and asked all employees to participate in the survey.

Project Overview & Research Design

A phenomenological research design was chosen for this study because it relies on the lived experience of humans to explain a phenomenon. Phenomenological research focuses on the experiences of the participants in an organization or program and how those experiences contribute to the overall functioning of the environment or program (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Researchers who conduct phenomenological research search for commonalities between participants who have experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Creswell stated, “The basic purpose of phenomenological research is to reduce individual experience with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (2013, p. 76). The phenomenological research design uses in depth dialogue and reflection to reveal the ultimate meaning of a person’s experience (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The purpose of phenomenological research is to provide in-depth description, interpretation, and critical self-reflection (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The design is relevant to this study because of the focus on the experiences of underrepresented groups in predominantly White working environments and how those experiences have affected their intent to remain in agriculture business.

Phenomenological research uses in-depth interviews that allow the researcher to understand the deeper meaning of the participants’ experiences and how they express those experiences through words (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). In-depth interviews with underrepresented groups will provide the interviewer with insightful information in regards to the experiences of underrepresented groups in agricultural businesses and provide agriculture education with information that has not been collected. Understanding the experience and intent of underrepresented groups to remain in agriculture businesses may lead to higher retention and a more inclusive cultural climate.

Population and Sample (Subject Selection)

Population: Participants in this study were comprised of underrepresented groups who have been employed by an agriculture business for a minimum of two years and have obtained a bachelor's degree and/or master's degree in an agriculture discipline. The businesses were located throughout the United States and will remain anonymous. Participants were identified and solicited during an agriculture conference. Prospective participants were administered a demographic survey.

Sampling: The researcher used the purposeful sampling method, Criterion sampling. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research to select individuals who have experienced a phenomenon and can purposefully provide insight and understanding to the phenomenon in question. Criterion sampling selects participants who all meet the same criterion for a study and creates a selection process that assures you receive participants who have experienced a certain phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). A snowball sampling method will be implemented in the event there are not enough participants solicited at the agriculture conference to participate in the survey. A snowball method is defined as a recruitment method that employs research into participant's social networks to access specific populations (Browne, 2007). The snowball method is viewed by some as biased because it does not use random sampling method and selects participants by relying on social networks (Browne, 2007). It is recommended that 5 to 25 participants be selected for interviewing in phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). For this study, a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 participants were selected. Individuals were asked to take a demographic survey that will identify them as candidate to participate in the structuring interview.

Instrumentation

The qualitative phenomenological design will be used to conduct semi-structured in depth interviews using open-ended questions. The questions identified who would meet the criterion of the study and provided valuable information for future research.

The data gathering interview questions were used to guide the study. It is intended that the questions allow the researcher to examine what factors influenced the participants' decision to remain employed with their current employer, the cultural climate of the organization, participants' attitudes toward their work environment, and how much control participants feel they have over their success with the company. The collected data from the interview questions provide corporate agribusinesses with insight on how to retain underrepresented groups. The data gathering questions can be found in Appendix A.

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, the researcher should clearly convey his/her experiences, relationships, and bias towards the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The process described above is implemented to help the researcher set aside their personal biasness. This allows the researcher to focus on the participants' experience without inferring outcome that may be similar to their own experience (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Researchers can express their personal biasness through bracketing or by using a reflexive statement. Bracketing is used to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process (Tufford, 2011). The process of bracketing is often not understood or widely used by qualitative researchers (Tufford, 2011). For this study, the researcher used a reflexive statement which served as a simultaneous awareness of self and other and of the interplay between the two (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Reflexive statements are a

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commonly used method in qualitative research and it should be noted that all biasness will not be removed from the researcher in any qualitative study (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

The participants completed a demographic survey, a structuring interview, and data gathering interview. The demographic survey is important in this research because it will identify participants who meet the criteria of the study. Structuring and data gathering interviews are critical to conducting individual interviews in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The structuring interview informed participants of the purpose of the study and will ensure they meet the criteria to participate in the data gathering interview. The data gathering interview collected the data to answer the research question pertaining to the study.

The demographic survey will provide information about a potential participant in regards to them meeting the criteria needed to participate in the study. Participants for this study were required to have earned a bachelor's and/or master's degree(s) in agriculture, be a member of an ethnically underrepresented group, currently employed with a corporate agribusiness and have worked with them a minimum of two years. Other questions were asked to provide more information about the participant's background, but the additional information will not be a determining factor for their participation in the study. Individuals that met the criteria for the study they were notified via email with an invite to participate in the structuring interview. The participants were asked to respond with a time, date, and location (if applicable) that best fits their time schedule to participate in the structuring interview.

The structuring interview allows time for the interviewer and participant to become comfortable with one another. It also allows time for the interviewer to discuss moral issues, discuss the consent forms, outline the data gathering interview, and answer any questions that

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might be asked by the interviewee (Hein, 2013). The documentation and information used for this interview can be found in appendix C. The structuring interviews lasted 15 to 25 minutes. Prior to initiating the structuring interview, participants signed an informed letter of consent. Each participant read the informed consent letter and signed it to verify their willingness to participate in the structuring interview. If the structuring interview was conducted via phone, the consent letter was emailed to the participant five days prior to the structuring interview. The participants were asked to return the signed form via email/fax at least 24 hours prior to the structuring interview.

Once the structuring interview was conducted, the participants were given three days to reflect on the information they were provided. This provided them time to decide if they would continue their participation in the study. If individuals decide to participate in the data gathering interview, they would sign the consent form and email it to the researcher. The participant will also choose an interview date and time that works best for them and provide the interviewer a pseudonym that will aid in the protection of their identity. The pseudonym will be a name chosen by the participant and should be a name that will not have any relation to their true identity.

The data-gathering interview is used to collect data on the phenomenon in question. Participants answered a series of questions that have been formulated based on the TPB. This interview will only be conducted once, and the interviewer should plan to collect all the information needed in this one session. The data-gathering interview lasted on average 50 minutes and was recorded. The open-ended questions asked in this interview prompted the participants to share their thoughts and insights into: (a) their intent to continue their career with their current corporate agribusiness employer (b) their attitudes toward their profession, (c) their perceived behavioral control over their success and (d) subjective norms that they may encounter

Assessing intentions of underrepresented groups working for corporate agribusinesses on the job. The data gathering interviews were recorded and took place in person or via conference call. Once the data gathering interviews were complete, they were transcribed and prepared for data analysis by a professional transcriber who was compensated for their time. Each participant chose a pseudonym for themselves during the structuring interview to keep their identity anonymous.

The data collected from the structuring interviews were analyzed by transcribing and coding. In addition to manual analysis, the researcher used NVivo to assist with the organization of the data collected. NVivo allowed the researcher to easily view transcripts, highlight themes, and create memos. Qualitative researchers recommend that a combination of manual and an electronic means of data analysis be used to achieve a holistic and organized view of the research (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Welsh, 2002).

Data Analysis

The steps that phenomenological researchers follow to conduct data analysis are essentially the same (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The interview transcripts are analyzed using a form of holistic text analysis that is based on analytic procedures (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The first step in this process is was to organize the data. For this particular study, the audio from the recorded interviews were transcribed. Transcribing is the presentation and interpretation of words (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). After the data was transcribed, the researcher allowed participants to view the transcription to ensure their words were what they intended to convey.

The next step involved reading the transcribed data and memo where necessary. It is suggested that researchers read transcripts numerous times to obtain a holistic view of the text before moving on to the third step (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). It is also

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suggested that while reading through the text, the researcher make notes or memos (short phrases, ideas, or key concepts) throughout the text to remind them of questions or concepts that may arise while reading the transcripts (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The third step involved describing, classifying, and interpreting data into codes and themes. This step required the transcripts to be read in segments and searching for statements that are self-contained and relevant to the phenomenon. The statements should be excerpted individually. Excerpting is defined as taking a segment from a text for the purpose of analysis (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). After excerpting data, the researcher should discuss, compare, and contrast the excerpted segments. The selected excerpts were used for further analysis. After excerpting the researcher will identify codes, categories, and generate themes.

Coding requires one to analyze the collected data/information and find evidence for the codes and themes chosen. A code is “a word or short phrase that captures and signals what is going on in a piece of data in a way that links it to a more general analysis issue” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). After coding one is able to place the collected data into the developed themes and categories. A category is a theme or an umbrella into which two or more codes have fallen (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). These categories enrich the findings of the research as they emerge from the data (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). A theme is a declarative phrase or sentence that describes patterns, process, connections, or insights within the data (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

The next step required the researcher to interpret the data. Interpreting the data requires the researcher to focus on the data in the themes and categories and search for the overall meaning of the data (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The researcher used literature

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from similar studies and their own hunches and insights to interpret the data they have collected (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

The final step was to visually represent the data. This means formulating the results into a table, figure, or matrix. This helped when presenting the results of the data to a variety of audiences (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

Timeline

Interviews were scheduled upon receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The representatives for each corporate agribusiness present at the agriculture conference was administered a card which provided the survey link which, prompted them to take the survey at their earliest convenience. The researcher obtained a business card from each representative in order to obtain an email address from them. On the same day that survey cards were provided, the researcher sent an email reminder to each participant that was given a survey link card. The email served as a reminder to take the survey. All participants were given two weeks to respond to the call for structuring interviews. Less than 10 participants responded to the call for structuring interviews after a two week time period, so another week was added to the timeline to resend another request for participation. When 4 participants responded, the structuring interviews began to take place. The structuring interviews took place over the course of 2 weeks. Each structuring interview lasted between 15 and 25 minutes. Structuring interviews were not recorded and took take place via conference call or in person. The next interview that was conducted was the data-gathering interview. After the structuring interviews were completed, participants were asked to suggest names and contact information for individuals who met the criteria of the study and who would be willing to participate. The snowball method of soliciting participants was implemented because more participants were needed to conduct the study. Once

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the suggested participants were contacted, the process completed until this point was repeated. The data gathering interviews were 45 to 50 minutes in length. Data gathering interviews were conducted over a 2-week time span. Data gathering interviews occurred in person or by conference call and were recorded. The interviews took place Monday-Saturday between 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Once all the data gathering interviews were administered, the data analyses began. The process for data analysis was completed over a 4 to 6 week time span.

Limitations of the Study

Circumstances that limit the study from being generalized to the population were limited access to list serves and contact information for underrepresented employees at corporate agribusinesses. The population of this study was limited to the companies who attended the agriculture conference. There was no other method to contact participants or corporate agribusinesses through a listserv because it would be an issue of confidentiality. If there was another method to contact all major corporate agribusinesses to solicit participants for the study, there may have been more ethnic and gender diversity amongst the participants. There may have also been a more diverse demographic in terms of the divisions represented from each company.

Chapter Three Summary

This study explored how the participants' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in the workplace affected underrepresented groups' intent to remain employees with their current agribusiness employer. The study was conducted to provide data for future recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups into the corporate agribusiness sector, in hopes that corporate agribusinesses become more diverse and inclusive. Chapter three provided the following sections: descriptions of the research design, methods, population, sampling method, data collection, data analysis, the timeline, and research limitations. To accomplish the

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study objectives a demographic survey was conducted which, was followed by a structuring interview, and concluded with a data gathering interview. The data analysis was conducted using a phenomenological qualitative research design. Chapter four presents the results obtained from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

As previously stated in the first three chapters, the purpose of this study was to understand the intent of underrepresented groups to remain employed with their current corporate agribusiness employer. Using the theory of planned behavior (TPB) this study sought information in regards to the intent of underrepresented groups to remain employed with their current corporate agribusiness employer based on their attitudes towards their company, subjective normal behaviors they experience in the work environment, and perceived behavioral control over their future success. The results of the demographic study will be discussed first. Next, the demographic information of those who participated in the data gathering interview will be discussed. Finally, the data that was collected will be presented. The data will be presented by describing the themes and sub-themes chosen to analyze the study. Quotes from the interviews will also be provided to explain the themes and sub-themes for the study.

Demographic Survey Results

The data-gathering interview consisted of sixteen questions. Of the sixteen questions, participants had to meet the criteria of four questions to be selected as a participant in the data-gathering interview. The criteria that participants were required to meet were as follows: (1) Identify with an ethnically underrepresented group, (2) possess either a bachelor's and/or master's degree(s) in agriculture, (3) work for a corporate agribusiness, and (4) possess no less than two consecutive years of experience with the current or previous agribusiness employer. The other questions in the demographic survey were asked to gain a better understanding of the participant's background and create an opportunity to develop recommendations for future studies based off their responses.

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A total of thirty-two individuals signed the informed consent and participated in the demographic survey. Out of those thirty-two participants, the total response rate to the succeeding questions varied from 15 to 29 respondents. Out of twenty-nine participants who responded to the gender question, 45% were male (n = 13) and 55% were female (n = 16). Out of twenty-six respondents, the ages of participants ranged between 23 and 45. Ninety six percent (n = 28) of the participants identified with the ethnical background of African American (n = 27) and 4% of the participants were Hispanic (n = 1). Out of 29 respondents 62% (n = 18) were single, 28% (n = 8) were married and 10% (n = 3) were divorced. Out of 14 people who responded, 50% (n = 7) had two children, 29% of the participants had 1 child (n = 4) and 21% had 3 to 5 children (n = 3).

All participants indicated they resided within the United States (n = 29) and their locations were placed in seven regions to help conceal identities. The regions are: **Central Region** (Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wyoming), **Eastern Region** (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington, DC), **Farwest Region** (Alaska, Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington), **Midwest Region** (Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, West Virginia, and Wisconsin), **South Atlantic Region** (North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia), **Southern Region** (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee) and the **Southwestern Region** (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Texas). The South Atlantic region was indicated by 67% (n = 17) of the participants, 16% (n = 5) lived in the central region, 3% (n = 1) were from the eastern region, 3% (n = 1) were from the Midwest, 9% (n = 3) were from the southern region, and 3% were from the southwestern region (n = 1).

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Table 4-1

Participants Location by Region

Answer	Response	%
Central Region	5	17%
Eastern Region	1	3%
Farwest Region	1	3%
Midwest Region	1	3%
South Atlantic Region	17	58%
Southern Region	3	10%
Southwestern Region	1	3%
Total	29	100%

In regards to education, out of 28 respondents, 57% (n = 16) earned a bachelor's degree, 32% (n = 9) indicated a master's degree, and 10% (n = 3) earned doctoral degrees', which two indicated receiving a degree in Christian education.

Table 4-2

Participants' Highest Degree Completed

Answer	Response	%
2-year college degree (Associate's)	0	0%
4-year college degree (Bachelor's)	16	57%
Master's degree	9	32%
Other, specify:	3	11%
Total	28	100%
Other, specify:		
Doctorate in Christian Education and Master 's in Chemistry		
Doctorate in Christian Education		
Ph.D		

Out of 26 respondents, 19 participants attended a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) and 7 participants attended a predominantly White institution (PWI).

Table 4-3

Participants' attendance at a HBCU or a PWI

Answer	Response	%
HBCU	19	73.%
PWI	7	26.%
Total	26	100%

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Out of 14 respondents, 21% (n = 3) had degrees in agricultural economics, 21% (n = 3) had degrees in business administration, and 14% (n = 2) had degrees in chemistry. The other degrees held were, marketing, leadership, agronomy, mechanical engineering, and accounting.

Table 4-4
Participants' College Major

Answer	Response	%
Agriculture Economics	4	21%
Business Administration	3	21%
Chemistry	2	14%
Other, specify:	5	42%
Total	14	100%

In regards to employment information, the demographic survey showed that out of 27 respondents, 85% (n = 23) work for corporate agribusiness, 7% (n = 2) work for educational institutions, and 7% (n = 2) worked for the state or federal government. Out of 16 respondents two have worked for their current employer for 1 year or less, five have worked for their employer for 2 to 5 years, four have worked for their employer for 5 to 10 years, and 5 of them have worked for their employer for over 10 years. Out of 28 respondents, 46% (n = 13) work 40 to 49 hours a week, 39% (n = 11) work 50 to 59 hours a week, 10% (n = 3) work 60 to 69 hours per week, and 3% (n = 1) work 30 to 39 hours per week. Before working for their current employer, 59% (n = 17) of 29 respondents did not work for an agribusiness prior to their current employer and, 41% (n = 12) did work for an agribusiness prior to their current employer. Those that said they did not work for an agribusiness prior to their current employer choose to work for an agribusiness because of their interest in agriculture, love for the mission of agriculture, and because of the company is a leader in the profession of agriculture. Finally, out of 29 respondents 17 of them hold management, supervisory, or lead positions. The names of employers have not been disclosed to keep the identity of the employer's and the respondents anonymous.

Based on the information collected from the demographic survey, 14 respondents were contacted for a structuring interview. Two of the participants failed to respond to the invitation to participate in the structuring interview. They were contacted three times via email. After conducting the structuring interview, it was determined that three participants did not meet two or more of the mandatory criteria required to participate in the study.

Data Gathering Interview Participant Demographics

This section will explain the demographics of the individuals who met the criteria to participate in data gathering interview. There were eight participants who met the criteria to participate in the data gathering interview. Each participant identified as African American. Out of eight participants, 75% (n = 6) of them were male and 25% (n = 2) were female.

The majority of the participants live in the South Atlantic Region (50%), one participant lives in the Central Region (12.5%), 1 participant lives in the Farwest Region (12.5%), 1 participant lives in the Eastern Region (12.5%), and 1 participant lives in the Southern Region (12.5%). Out of the eight participants, two were married with children.

Table 4-5
Participants’ Location by Region

Answer	Response	%
Central Region	1	12.5%
Eastern Region	1	12.5%
Farwest Region	1	12.5%
Midwest Region	0	0%
South Atlantic Region	4	50%
Southern Region	1	12.5%
Southwestern Region	0	0%
Total	29	100%

One of the participants has five children and the other has two children. Both participants who are married with children are male. Out of the eight participants 50% (n = 4) of them were

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between the ages of 25 and 30, 33% (n = 3) of were between 31 and 35, and 12% (n = 1) participant was older than 40.

In regards to education, only 1 of the 8 participants held a graduate degree.

Table 4-6
Participants Highest Level of Education

Answer	Response	%
2-year college degree (Associate's)	0	8%
4-year college degree (Bachelor's)	7	87.5%
Master's degree	1	12.5%
Other, specify:	0	0%
Total	8	100%

Out of the 8 participants, six (75%) attended an HBCU and two (25%) attended a PWI for their undergraduate degree. The one participant who obtained a graduate degree, obtained a bachelor's at an HBCU and obtained a master's at a PWI. Out of the 8 participants, 7 participants earned degrees in Agribusiness/Agriculture Economics and one participant earned a degree in Plant Science.

In regards to employment information, each participant works for a corporate agribusiness. Each participant has worked in agriculture their entire career. Two of the participants work 60 to 69 hours a week, five participants work 50 to 59 hours per week, and one participant works 40 to 49 hours a week.

Category/Subtheme Schematic

The themes for this study were derived from the theory of planned behavior, which is the theoretical framework of this study. Attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, overall intent, and reasons for obtaining a degree in agriculture will serve as the themes, as they were the basis for which the questions for the interview were determined. In addition to the

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themes, the subthemes were developed during the research and are based on the responses from the individual interviews. Appendix D has an extensive list of themes and sub themes.

Pseudonym Information

Pseudonyms were chosen by each participant to conceal their identity. The chart below provides the pseudonyms for each participant and demographic information that will assist in the analysis of the data.

Table 4- 7
Participants Pseudonyms, Ages, & Region

Name	Age Range	Region
Chris	31-40	South Atlantic
J.C.	40+	Far West
Linda	25-30	Central
Nelson	31-35	Southern
Rick Porter	31-35	South Atlantic
Sebastian	25-30	Eastern
Dr. Xavier	25-30	South Atlantic
Dr. Yrus	25-30	South Atlantic

Results from Interviews

Each interview was conducted following a qualitative interview guideline (See Appendix D for interview guidelines). The interview questions for this study can be found in Appendix A.

Attitudes

Attitudes are used to assess an individual's positive and/or negative reactions from performing a behavior. Research shows that attitudes of underrepresented groups are either negative or uninformed toward the profession of agriculture (Anderson, 2013; Esters & Bowen, 2005; Faulker et al., 2009; Lynch, 2001). The participants in this study have both positive and negative attitudes towards their current employer. Their attitudes have been categorized by using the following sub-themes: (1) Passion (2) Agricultural Competency (3) Opportunities for Advancement (4) Job Satisfaction (5) Social Relatedness.

Passion

The participants had a strong desire to work in the agriculture profession. Their passion gave life to the overall mission of corporate agribusinesses, which is to feed a rapidly growing population without depleting our natural resources. The responses from participants are a direct reflection of previous researchers who have found that job satisfaction comes from intrinsic motivation (Van Breulelen et al. 2004). The responses from participants support previous research that have found individuals to be motivated by interest and self-endorsed values (Deci & Ryan, 2004; Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011). Based on their responses, the participants in this study have an interest in agriculture and are self-endorsed to fulfill the mission of corporate agribusinesses; to feed a growing population without deleting our natural resources.

Table 4-8
Participants' Description of their Passion for Agriculture

Participant	Response
Dr. Yrus	<p>“I have a passion for what I do, however my job is not my ideal job but it has helped me to develop skill sets and improve skill sets in areas that also have helped open other opportunities out for me.”</p> <p>“I have to have a passion for what you do. I may not in the ideal position I would want to be in but my foundation is Ag and I do work for an Ag company. If I have passion for it, which I do then in shouldn't be anything to divert me from moving forward here; which means if you don't have passion for the foundation, then it is not for you.”</p>
Linda	<p>“I'm not just, like a banker, I'm not just sitting on a desk or something like that. So</p>

	<p>like one day I will be at my desk, the other day I will be in North Dakota or I could be in California or somewhere else so I get to travel a lot which I like. I get to see different parts of agriculture and then like I said I'm helping feed the world, um, which is definitely important because we have to eat, so I really like, like that aspect of my job.”</p> <p>“Our population is going to double by 2015, and so we are working on how we can meet the demand for food. So if, I mean, my job matters, it's, I would say the satisfaction or the gratification isn't right away, but, I I'm helping people eat, people that have nothing to do with agriculture, and I love that part of my job”.</p>
Nelson	<p>“First of all, I love what I do. I love farming. I love plant production, growing plants. I feel like I have a special connection with nature. I have what they call a green thumb. I have a true fondness and likeness to the land. It's my passion and I try to put it on as many people as I can and be contagious as I can for people to really love and respect the land that we are living on.”</p>
Sebastian	<p>“It's about feeding the world, feeding the growing world, you know, having solutions and developing solutions and really putting those solutions into play in an effort to feed the growing world. It's something that is often said and we often have to remind ourselves of, but at the end of it, that's what gets me going”.</p>

Agricultural Competency

Based on the participants' responses, there is an advantage to having a farm background and/or educational background in agriculture when working for a corporate agribusiness. The participant's attitudes reflected confidence in having an agriculture background because their

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background knowledge provided them an overview of the business. Their responses also reflect a need for underrepresented groups to learn about the history of agriculture and the contributions that underrepresented groups have made to the profession over the course of history.

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Table 4-9

Participant's Descriptions of the Advantages of Having an Agriculture Background when working for a Corporate Agribusiness

Participant	Response
Dr. Xavier	<p>“I have an extensive agriculture background and I have learned with agriculture that is a risky business because you never know what lies ahead. You never know if you have a good crop or good livestock. You never know if disease may fall.”</p> <p>“The fact that I know what I’m doing gives me the upper hand. I don’t want to be arrogant but I am humble at the same time and willing to learn, but I feel like what I do I am good at. “</p>
Chris	<p>“It just makes good sense and it helps and it helps that my background is in ag. That’s what I studies so it makes sense to stay in the major.”</p>
Dr. Yrus	<p>“An agriculture background provides additional opportunities in your career. Having a business degree you are more focused on optimizing your business and getting profit, but having an agribusiness background and attending a school with an agriculture focus I know I can relate to students, or to the field team or with the ones talking about soil. I can understand what they are talking about- it may not be in depth but I can understand and that knowledge can open the door for networking opportunities as well. So having that specialty allows you to move forward”.</p>
Nelson	<p>“A lot of people have been robbed of agricultural knowledge and a true agricultural experience. Every civilization since the beginning of time, the backbone is agriculture.” Us, people of color mainly African American’s, were brought here on an agricultural basis. They (underrepresented groups) need to understand that. That’s a lot of investment that some person or persons put together to bring them</p>

all the way from one country or continent, sailed the across the ocean to another one in order to make a profit off of them. Like I said it is the backbone of every civilization. People are rich to this day off of the labor that happened from the slave trade.”

Opportunities for Advancement

Participants felt that there were a vast amount of opportunities available to them because of their decision to work in a corporate agribusiness. Some participants saw advantages for advancement because they identify as part of an underrepresented group. A few participants also felt that underrepresented groups would have a vast amount of opportunities in corporate agribusinesses because of the retirement of the baby boomer generation. Others felt that the vast amount of opportunities in corporate agribusinesses stemmed from the need to seek out employees who can provide innovative solutions that will result in feeding a growing population.

Table 4-10
Participants Descriptions of Opportunities for Advancement with their Corporate Agribusiness Employer

Participant	Response
Sebastian	<p>“A lot is often said about the population reaching nine billion by 2050, and there are a lot of companies that are invested in meeting the needs of the population, and I’ve had the opportunity to work with these other companies in different capacities throughout my career. I’ll say that the opportunities are really vast and endless from a global positioning to the different things that we’re doing in trait technology to, you know, the quality of people that we have, the culture that we have. It’s</p>

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	really, really just unlimited opportunities, unlimited possibilities.”
Chris	“I think the advantages of continuing the career centers around that the world population is growing and as long as people need food, we probably will have opportunities for gainful employment.”
J.C.	“The industry is experiencing a significant amount of growth primarily due to increasing populations and the need to feed an increasing population with a limited natural resource, so there are opportunities that abound within this company and other agribusiness companies to meet that new challenge, and for the new opportunities for continued career development and growth.”
Rick Porter	<p>“I think first off our company is the leader in crop protection chemicals in the world so the company is thriving. We have some pretty lofty budget goals by 2020 and we are working hard to reach those goals. If you look at the ag history as a whole I think it’s a pretty safe industry in terms of job security”.</p> <p>“Also the fact that I am a minority, there is going to be opportunities because there are not a lot of people that look like me. So as I move up in the company, there’s going to have to be opportunities for people who look like me going forward. And like I say, it might be a box checking exercise, but I am willing to play that part because if I’m able to move up with that I am able to pull other people up. That’s the way I try to see it.”</p>
Dr. Xavier	“I feel like I am my only person that wants me to move up. I don’t have a really good support system. I feel like there is no one there that says, I want to see you here, you know”? “Talking to other people that are of my same race and skin color when I tell them of my goals and what I am trying to do as far as succeeding with

this company they kind of discourage me for the simple fact that they may have been working for the company for 20 some plus years and they say that they have never seen anybody with my race or color in those positions. I may as well look for another job. That is constant stuff that I hear on a daily basis from different people that I talk with of the same race and color.”

“But being the person that I am as far as a go getter and trying to prove people wrong it’s kind of my extra push to keep moving up and to keep trying to break barriers that maybe one day a guy in my shoes can say if Dr. Xavier can get there, I know I can. So that is my motivation to try to keep pushing.”

Job Satisfaction

Participants spoke of the disadvantages to working in agriculture. There were very few mentioned from participants in this study. Disadvantages to a job can stem from a lack of job satisfaction or a lack of personal preferences (Egan et al., 2004). The findings for this study indicate that the disadvantages to working for an agribusiness were few in number, but the disadvantages mentioned by each participant seemed to be in direct correlation to previous research studies that focus on underrepresented groups in majority population work and educational environments. The responses varied from each participant. Some participants felt there were no disadvantages while others felt they were not appropriately compensated for the amount of work that they do daily.

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Table 4-11

Participants' Descriptions of Job Satisfaction

Participant	Response
Rick Porter	“The ag industry doesn’t tend to pay you the value for your role as other companies would outside of the Ag industry. So that’s one knock on it and if it was a more metropolitan area that would make this job much more attractive”.
Sebastian	“I think that at times, in agriculture, things can get somewhat narrow, and what I mean is that we’re really working in one specific realm. I mean, agriculture is agriculture. Again, depending on the company you work for, and luckily, I work with a company that works through several different businesses and several different crop groups, so it’s diverse in that realm, but at the end of the day, it’s agriculture, and, you know, while that is something that is very interesting and something that’s very exciting, it’s also something that’s somewhat narrow and that the problems and the challenges that we have are somewhat straight-lined as opposed to, you know, the tech field and some different opportunities”
J.C.	“Disadvantages.....I can’t think of any”.
Rick Porter	“We have a lot of flexibility in terms of work/life balance, which with a lot of companies you don’t have that. I don’t have anyone who is micro-managing me. If I need to travel, I can travel. If I don’t want to travel I don’t necessarily have to.”
Chris	“Financial gain, some sense of security whether it’s true or not. It’s to be determined. A growing and well-respected professional network, some of those intangibles, work-life balance, respect from your peers.”
Rick Porter	“If it becomes stagnant and I stay a little too long, things get repetitive. That would

	probably be the only think that I could think of right now. If the opportunities weren't there.”
Linda	“If all of a sudden my forward movement just stopped and I felt, and I felt like it was because I was a woman or I was a minority and I was doing a job that I saw other people being continually promoted, I would have to take a look on whether or not this was the company for me, um, I have never been, I don't know, spoken to in some kind of crazy way by people at work, so that really isn't a factor, um, I would just say if I were to, if I were to get stagnant or unable to move, um, how I wanted to professionally, or if I had to move somewhere crazy, uh, with my job that I probably would not be able to stay.”
Chris	“If you had zero influence, which would be one. If compensation didn't keep up with what I believe my value is that would be another. For me those are probably the two. I guess at some point, relocation that would be beyond what I would be willing to do. I have limits around that as well.”

Social Relatedness

Despite the presence of job satisfaction, the participants did feel that being part of an underrepresented group was a disadvantage to working for an agribusiness. Previous studies reveal that underrepresented groups who are immersed in Caucasian dominated environments experience negative treatment because of the color of their skin (Denson & Chang, 2008; Herdman & Mcmillan-Capehart, 2009; Soloranzo et al., 2000; Wingfield, 2007). The responses from participants indicate there is a need to change the cultural climate of corporate agribusinesses in order to create a sustainable workforce that is ethnically diverse.

Table 4-12

Participants' Descriptions of Social Relatedness Issues within their Corporate Agribusiness Employer

Participant	Response
Dr. Xavier	<p>“I hate to say it but the color of my skin could be a disadvantage to me just because for the simple fact that I don’t see people of my skin color or my race in these upper level positions.”</p>
Linda	<p>“Traditionally it’s a conservative company and then there are a lot of White males that work in the company and the majority of our customers are also White males. So I feel like there is always that pre-conceived notion because you are a woman and you are a minority, that people always ,well not always, but some people challenge what you say. So you always have to make sure all of your I’s are dotted and your T’s are crossed because if you don’t they just discount what you say because of what you look like”.</p>

Subjective Norms

Subjective norms are defined as the positive and negative perceptions of others in regards to the task that an individual must perform (Pierce, 2012). These perceptions can sometimes come from attitudes or normative beliefs that underrepresented groups have from previous life/job experiences or reflect from historical events. Other times these feelings occur because managers or team members overlook underrepresented groups because there are so few of them in the workplace. This may cause underrepresented groups to feel as if their co-workers look down on them or feel they are incapable of completing a task. Participants’ responses that pertained to this theme were grouped into three subthemes of cultural climate, mentor support, co-worker/supervisor support, and social identity.

Cultural Climate

The participants of this study provided insight on the cultural climate within the corporate agribusiness they are employed by. The responses from the participants indicated an environment that is dominated by White males, changing at a slow pace, competitive, and diverse but not ethnically diverse.

Table 4-13

Participants' Description of the Cultural Climate within their Corporate Agribusiness Employer

Participant	Response
Chris	<p>“Cultural climate – I guess is depends. Like with any organization, particularly if they are large, I would say there are cultures and then there are sub-cultures.</p> <p>Generally speaking, I would say the cultural climate reflects pockets of entrepreneurship and people are generally accepting of new ideas.”</p> <p>From a diversity standpoint there is work to do there. I’ve never felt like I’ve been held back because of it, but certainly you know there is work to be done because there are not many people here that look like me in the positions in which I’m in – or on the commercial track that I’m on.”</p>
Dr. Yrus	<p>“It is a global company, so it is diverse. However, the minority is not the majority.</p> <p>Where I work it is really diverse in terms of educational background. So it is nice to have that diversity here and there are several minority groups present where I work as well. So there is a good balance of diversity in terms of my peers but when you move up in position, there is not a lot of ethnic or cultural diversity, and at times it could be disappointing and discouraging because you don’t see someone similar to you in higher positions.”</p>

Nelson	This is a Caucasian, male-dominated industry, therefore, a lot of the cultural norms are set by Caucasian males. So, even women and, you know, underrepresented people as far as people of color have to align to those cultures first”.
J.C.	“To fill positions created by our upcoming retirements, there’s a lot of organizational change that’s taking place, and so that’s, you know, something that we’re working through as a company, and it’s common and natural when you have, you know, changes in the organization.”

Co-worker/Supervisor Support

Previous research on job satisfaction shows that employees have higher levels of job satisfaction when they have built positive relationships with their peers and management (Egan et al., 2004; Van Breukelen et al., 2004). Support rendered from family members and upper level management appeared to be very important to each participant. When support was not received from co-workers and supervisors, participants relied on the family and their desire to pave the way for other underrepresented groups as motivation to succeed.

Table 4-14
Participants’ Description on Co-worker/Supervisor Support Provided within their Corporate Agribusiness

Participant	Response
Linda	“One of my good friends that I started with, she left the company. I would say that her experience, being a woman and being a minority is totally different than the experience that I’ve had. So I think it may be just different positions that we’ve held within the company and the people that we worked with that probably, helped make her decision to leave the company. As far as my experiences, they

	<p>have been fine. I wouldn't say there's anything that I, I don't know, haven't expected just being a minority in a very White male dominated company, so I don't know, I feel like it's kind of the world we live in.”</p>
Sebastian	<p>“I have a tremendous support system, both through my company, through individuals in my company, as well as through, you know, external organizations, such as MANRRS, and, you know, just different groups I've got an opportunity to work with.”</p> <p>“I've been lucky in that especially working for the company that I work for, I've seen very, very positive, you know, role models, mentors and folks in influential positions throughout my career that have really steered me and really put it in me that agriculture, it's the place to be, and that positivity goes a long way, and, I mean, it's really a great support system that I have in my company, as well as outside my company, and there's folks who I lean on that work for, you know, even competitive companies, but, you know, seeing those examples and having that around you, it's invaluable.”</p>
J.C.	<p>“The supervisors that I've had over the years, you know, have encouraged me to continue in this field, you know, so I've been fortunate to have, you know, a very supportive group of individuals that I've been able to learn from and to be mentored by”.</p>
Rick Porter	<p>“The beginning of last year, I went to the head of marketing, which is actually past my boss and just had a conversation with him about the next steps and what I need to do to prepare myself for the next level. We had a conversation and he found out some things about me and where I wanted to go and kind of what my</p>

aspirations were. And from there he kind of started kind of networking with other groups and kind of put me on a path to kind of get to where I wanted to be. I think I'm on the right path now. I know he's (the head of marketing) in my corner. I also have a new boss that just came in from overseas and he's aligned as well in terms of where I want to go and what I need to do to get there."

Mentor Support

Mentorship was a heavily discussed avenue for support from the participants. The majority of the participants had mentors that played an important role to their current success. Some participants discussed how they had become mentors for incoming employees in order to provide the same guidance they were once provided. Participants also discussed how they developed agriculture mentor programs outside of work, in order to change the negative perceptions of agriculture that some underrepresented groups may have.

Table 4-15
Participants Views on the Importance of Receiving & Providing Mentor Support When Working for a Corporate Agribusiness

Participant	Response
Sebastian	<p>“You don’t have to necessarily have a mentor, you know, a minority mentor by any means, but I find that having, you know, multiple mentors that does different things for you, I think that that’s important in that it gives you very unique perspectives on different issues, so I know that for me, I had mentors in my school that weren’t minority, you know, for the majority of my time while I was attending school”</p>
Linda	<p>“So my mentor is a White Caucasian guy and I think he's good. We really don’t talk about how to deal</p>

with issues I may face as a person of color or as a woman, we just talk about or we go through general scenarios or things I need help with. I do have an unofficial mentor, and if something like that (an issue with being a woman or a person of color) comes out that's who I would feel most comfortable, talking through those scenarios and discussing how I should have handled the situation".

J.C.

"The first manager that I worked for when I was a trainee at a college was very, very, you know, inspirational to me as I started out, and then, you know, just along the way, I've been able to work with a great group of folks that continue to keep me inspired."

"Actually, I have one mentee that I have responsibility for now who's just starting out in the business with this company. You know, I enjoy being able to train, coach and develop people to be able to achieve, you know, higher levels of performance on a day-to-day basis."

Nelson

"Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences, otherwise known as MANRRS, I take pride in educating those students, as well and letting them know about the doors of opportunity that lie before them. And then try to help them and groom them – the ones that are gifted and the ones who are capable, polishing off their talents, sharpening their skills and getting them ready to take off where I leave off".

"I've also put together a few projects on my own time and dime. One project is foundation that I put together with two of my colleagues. We just go into the urban schools and teach young African American children how to grow crops for themselves."

“But people like myself – you really don’t acquire mentors. You talk to the people that you look up to and your mentors tend to acquire you because they appreciate the dedication you put into what you are doing and after that you start running into people who want to help you instead of you having to go beg people or ask people for their time”

Ethnic Social Identity

Being a member of an underrepresented group in the agricultural business sector can at times be difficult. For instance, one may experience isolation, micro-aggressions or struggle socially because of the barriers they perceive to be in the workplace because of ethnicity. In terms of being an African American in a corporate agribusiness setting, the majority of participants reported they felt the need to prove to their White counterparts they are capable to work just as hard and deserve equal opportunities (Anderson, 2013; Esters & Bowen, 2005; Faulkner et al., 2009; Lynch, 2001). Even with the support from within the company some participants seemed to somewhat expect an occurrence of micro aggressions or meeting people who were not culturally intelligent.

Table 4-16

Problems that Arise for Underrepresented Groups Because of their Ethnic Social Identity

Participants	Response
Dr. Xavier	“In fact I feel like they are threatened by one, me being the person that I am – a young, educated Black man and two, just being a Black man period that one day they might have to listen to me. You know the thought of a Black man telling them what they need to do probably just eats’ them up at night.”
Nelson	Some day’s people in management they might make life harder on you and

	<p>sometimes it is unwarranted. With agriculture being such a Caucasian dominated industry, you often find yourself in a position of having to prove yourself, but that doesn't last very long.”</p>
Chris	<p>“I would say early on you find the reality of when you walk into a meeting room and they don't know who you are; they are wondering should you be here? Or do you really work for the company? When you are in corporate or headquarter type of environment it is a little less so, but when you are out in the field and they don't know that you are with the company, I would actually wear a company shirt to ensure that I didn't have to explain to fifty people in a room why I was there.”</p>
Linda	<p>“I was out at a farm show standing next to a piece of equipment representing my company and a guy came up to me and he was like 'it's a culture shock, isn't it?', and I'm like 'I'm sorry sir, what do you mean?'. He was like 'you know, all this farm equipment' and I'm like 'no actually, I have grown up on a farm all my life, not really a big deal.’”</p>
Dr. Yrus	<p>I don't feel like I am an odd ball- I don't anymore because it is more of a personal experience when you have that mentality of thinking that everyone is watching you or I am an under-representative so I am going to be treated differently. When you think like that, and you expect it, because the power is through your tongue and when you speak it, it will come to light. So you need to change the way you think. Change the way you feel. When you start bringing that energy around you, it is going to last and it is hard to make the energy go because you already started your day and you don't want to be bothered or you are mad because X, Y, Z and I am telling you can't play that.</p>

Chris	<p>“I’ll never forget when I moved here and started working for this company. I went golfing with a guy and at the end of a round, (we had shorts on), I looked around and I had a tan line from my socks. He was like wow, I hate to be crazy but do African American people tan? He said I mean, I’m sorry I don’t have a racial bone in my body. I just have never been around any [Blacks]...”</p> <p>“I would say early on you find the reality of when you walk into a meeting room and they don’t know who you are; they are wondering should you be here? Or do you really work for the company? When you are in corporate or headquarter type of environment it is a little less so, but when you are out in the field and they don’t know that you are with the company, I would actually wear a company shirt to ensure that I didn’t have to explain to fifty people in a room why I was there.”</p>
Dr. Yrus	<p>“Definitely bringing your 'A' game because underrepresented groups, well certain underrepresented groups, are looked at differently, I mean all groups are looked at differently, but the majority population has different perceptions towards certain minority groups. With that being said you have to change that perception and you can’t be that person that they already perceive as an angry person or a bitter person. Sometimes when you defend yourself it could come off as an attitude and that is what you don’t want, to appear- you being defensive.”</p>
Rick Porter	<p>I definitely would say you have to work harder as a member of an underrepresented group. You have to work harder; you have to make those connections. It’s often times tough to walk that fine line between being the angry minority or challenging Black because that is how you are going to be viewed depending on how passionate you are about the subject matter.”</p>

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control is defined as an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty to perform a behavior of interest. Previous studies show that underrepresented groups face barriers to success when they attempt to obtain upper level management positions. The findings for this study show that underrepresented groups do face barriers in regards to upward mobility in corporate agribusinesses and when attempting to gain entry into corporate agribusinesses as well. The findings provided for this theme produced three sub themes. The subthemes in this category are challenges to success, recruitment and retention, and what skills underrepresented groups need to succeed.

Challenges to Success

Everyone experiences challenges on their journey to success. Yet for underrepresented groups the challenges they experience will sometimes stem from racial fault lines rather than from a competitive standpoint. This is not always the case but previous research findings prove this to be an experience that underrepresented groups often have and the findings for this study prove the same. In addition to experiencing challenges to success because of their race, the participants also spoke to challenges that underrepresented groups may encounter because their counterparts may lack emotional intelligence.

Table 4-17

Participants Descriptions of Challenges to Success that Underrepresented Groups May Encounter in Corporate Agribusinesses

Participant	Response
Dr. Xavier	“Most of your big time farmers are descendants of plantation owners, so there is still stuff in those generations and in their blood that’s kind of hard to get out, especially if you are taught that way as a young child. That’s what they have

learned. That's what they know. And even in the professional world, they try to put a smile on their face and try to be as professional as they can but it is just so far that they want you to get."

There is always room for opportunity, but you are not going to have that support system like other groups will. Since I have been here what I am learning is that even though I have a degree and an extensive agriculture background and know what I'm doing, as an African American if someone was to come up here with the same criteria that I have and was White they would get the position.

I applied for a position and I know I met the criteria as far as on my resume, and there was another guy, a White guy who was working with the company for only six months, but those six months he had been in that same field versus my years of being with the company in various positions. You know they chose this White guy over me just because what? I don't know.

J.C.

We just operate in an environment that requires us to perform at our best at every level, and there's less and less time for holding people back because of a certain difference in background, and that's why more and more companies are focusing on diversity and inclusion because it's required that we be able to be diverse in our thinking and creative in our approach because the challenges, you know, continue to increase, and we have to be flexible to anyone's capability to perform whoever they may be."

"There's always going to be some question about people's capability and their abilities to perform at a certain level. However, from what I've seen in a few different companies that I've worked for, the competitive environment is so strong

that companies are looking for those that have talent wherever they may be and whatever their background might be, so it's been my experience that you have an opportunity to show what you can do, and really, regardless of race or ethnicity or creed, if you're a solid performer, companies can't help but create opportunities for those individuals to perform."

Nelson

"I'm here to carry out whatever my mission is, you know. I'm here to do my job. With that being said, you know, the challenges and all of that, you know... I don't come to work to be uplifted. I'm uplifted when I get here, and so whatever they say, you know, they can say whatever they want to say. I mean not everybody's going to be on the Nelson bandwagon, and everybody's not going to, you know, like me as much as I do. So, with that being said, it's just, you know, you just have to come in with your own sense of self and your own presence and understand that you represent so much more than yourself when you come in as an underrepresented group because a lot of times, the perception of you will be transformed with all the rest of the people who come in behind you that are members of that same group."

Rick Porter

"I was in my prior role for a number of years and I was trying to get out and just wasn't making any headway and there were a number of positions that had come open. I knew for a fact that with my skill set, everything that I have done in my career that I would have been the logical choice for those roles but it just wasn't happening. So, that is why I made the decision to go ask my boss and go to the head of marketing to get some inside as to what I need to do."

"In a lot of cases in the ag industry, there are not a lot of minorities, so some doors

	<p>open up to where the company needs to check a box. So you might be that person that steps into that role in order for them to check that box. Once you get in that role so they can check that box, you can't get lost in the fact that you are just there as that token to check that box. You have to perform and you have to be better so to speak than everyone else, so you don't get stuck in that position."</p>
Sebastian	<p>"If you become good at your field, if you become good at your craft, you being who you are, particularly being part of underrepresented group, could serve as something that's beneficial for you because you are not someone who's a dime a dozen, you know".</p> <p>"So are there going to be issues or are there going to be challenges? Absolutely, but I don't foresee them being something that is directly reflective of me being part of an underrepresented group."</p>
Chris	<p>"I've not really found any real challenges here. I would say when you go out with your customers, you still get a bit of that (micro-aggressions) and it helps once your credentialed. Once they say hey, this is Chris and he has been in the industry for 15 years, then there is instant credibility just for the fact that you probably know something and you could help them. Simply because you are coming in with a seasoned position from headquarters, so, some of that stuff just goes away because of respect and that comes over time. It doesn't happen overnight".</p>

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups into corporate agribusinesses is discussed because it addresses the difficulties they face in order to gain employment with corporate agribusinesses. The participants reflected on this topic with very eye opening

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statements that indicate there are uncontrollable barriers that underrepresented groups face when seeking employment with corporate agribusinesses. Some of those barriers include gaining entry-level positions, a lack of underrepresented groups in upper level positions, and a lack of underrepresented groups seeking education and employment in the field of agriculture.

Table 4-18

Participants Description of Recruitment and Retention with their Corporate Agribusiness Employer

Participants	Responses
Rick Porter	<p>“The hardest part is really getting your foot in the door. We’ve had a number of interns who have come in and we’ve seen them do just as good a job as a Caucasian intern. But they are looked upon as they didn’t meet the expectations of the powers that be, the hiring managers over there, but the Caucasians did. We see that quite a bit.”</p> <p>“I would say we do a decent job versus a great job bringing in underrepresented groups because we haven’t had the support of our company in order to really go out and actively recruit and do some of those things. I do have some individuals who are part of the recruiting effort that I speak to on a daily basis and we talk about the fact that there are not a lot of minorities represented in these programs that we run and we fund. So, there is some work going on. There is a diversity group that is being formed in our company to try to look into some of those things and trying to level the playing field some. So, the discussions are happening. They are just happening a little slower than we would like them to.”</p>
Chris	<p>“Not everyone, but let’s just say a good share of agribusiness employees are aging, of the baby boomer generation and they are retiring. So, the careers in</p>

agriculture right now are really plentiful because people are retiring and there aren't a whole lot of ag majors regardless of race. There are just not that many people studying in ag right now. So if you are ag-bus and I think a lot of agribusinesses are starting to respect diversity and recognize the benefits of that". "I mean you would think that the opportunities are wide open for underrepresented groups because the population is so thin, but I've seen many come through since I've been here. I've mentored some, I've tried to have influence over some that I could and very few survive here is the reality".

Dr. Yrus "Recruitment and retention has been something they have been working on. How do you bring in Ag students who are non-traditional students into your company and make them feel welcome among the others is the question we are asking. We do have a great diverse company but we also know Ag began years, years, years, years ago with Native Americans and then moving into slavery and then moving up to equipment and now technology. So it has changed over years, generations- but there is still a mentality there when you do go out there and visit your farmers and the business partners. And that mentality needs to change because soon America will be a country over 50 percent of minorities"

Dr. Xavier "I need to stand up and work with other underrepresented groups to form an organization. That way if anybody has problems, they can meet with me or someone else that can relay the message to upper management, who can ensure new protocols are implemented. Because if nobody says anything, they will just keep walking over us, you know, until we are all gone"

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Skills and Training Needed

It seems that all individuals seeking employment in agricultural businesses need to understand that the environment is highly competitive and in order to succeed you need to be well prepared. The participants provided extensive amounts of advice that they feel will help assist underrepresented groups when planning to apply or seek internships/jobs with agriculture businesses. These suggestions can be helpful to all individuals but they have a primary focus on educating and informing underrepresented populations on how to gain entry-level positions in agricultural businesses. There is an emphasis on educating underrepresented populations because there are very few opportunities for underrepresented groups to gather together and obtain this advice from people of color who work in the agricultural business sector. Corporate America in general also feels that most American students are not equip with the skill sets needed to succeed in corporate America, so recommendations from direct sources are important for all individuals.

Table 4-19

Participants Descriptions on Skills Needed by Those Seeking Employment in Corporate Agribusinesses

Participants	Responses
Chris	<p>“No. I don’t think that the majority of any people have the skill sets needed. I think they can obtain them. The question is once they are aware that they need them, how fast do they take it seriously and do it?”</p> <p>“So definitely being able to think fast on your feet, network, definitely being able to adapt, proving that perception wrong by knowing who you are and doing your job right and willing to learn, willing to fail and willing to be rejected. Because everything is not participation group award, you have to compete. These are some of the best of the best of the best in the industry. So I think those are challenges that anyone who will come in, under-representative, or representative, or minority, majority, if you don’t have that patience, if you don’t understand failure, that it’s a part of life and you have got to keep on going. If you don’t understand rejection, if you don’t understand change, that is going to follow you wherever you go. It doesn’t matter who you are.”</p>
J.C.	<p>“They need to have a desire to think critically and to challenge levels of performance. They need to be willing to and have an eager desire to learn. They need to be adaptable and flexible to a variety of changes in responsibility, as well as changes in location. So those are some things that are kind of key right off the bat.”</p>

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Willingness to Adapt

This responses that lead to the development of this subcategory were focused on relocation and being able to accept feedback. Relocation can be a huge barrier for underrepresented. Most agribusinesses are located in rural areas where the population of underrepresented groups can be somewhat non-existent. Feedback can also be difficult to take if you do not have the right attitude to adapt and change to meet the needs of the company.

Table 4-20

Participants Views on the Importance of Adaptation When Seeking Employment with a Corporate Agribusiness

Participant	Response
Chris	<p>“Everyone is not necessarily cut out for it. Being quick on your feet – things like that are really important. So, I don’t know if it was so much about the ethnic background as it is about the skill set per say. You have to be able to adapt. The extent that you can adapt to various situations will be an indicator to how successful you will be. Being able to adapt doesn’t change who you are”.</p> <p>“When getting feedback this is important to remember. The thing is when you get that feedback that you take it to heart or you go into denial phase. If you go into denial phase your tenure is probably not long. If you go into let me take it to heart – it doesn’t mean you change who you are but you should know when I communicate/interact with that person this is how they perceive it.”</p> <p>“They also need to be flexible; they need to be able to say I can relocate. I mean coming in and saying hey, I’m not going to relocate in your first five years is kind of tough. You can’t limit what you are going to do, particularly if you are in a multi-location, multi-national, global type company. If it is a local company that probably works out great, but if you are trying to work with a larger company, you</p>

	<p>have to adapt, and larger companies are not for everyone either. But, if you want to survive in a larger environment like that then being re-locatable is pretty important”</p>
Dr. Yrus	<p>“I was the only under-representative for a year and half in my team, in my department. But you can’t come in with that negative mentality or that perception of “They don’t know me: they don’t know who I am.” Because when I say change, not only you have to adapt to change but others have to adapt to change and when you don’t know their background the best way to get to know people is to network and talk to them at work, outside of work- you don’t have to spend all day with them but that is how they get to know you because the way you are going to get your job next time is are they familiar with you? Are they comfortable with you? Do they know you? Do they like you? Like a popularity contest”</p>

Communication/Networking

Communication and networking skills are also very important skills to have when entering into the workplace as well. The participants in this study discussed the importance being able to communicate verbally, though body language, and electronically. They also spoke on how important it is to network and interact with different individuals in and outside of the company.

Table 4-21

Participants Views on the Importance of Having Good Communication/Networking Skills when Seeking Employment with a Corporate Agribusiness

Participant	Response
Chris	<p>Communication is big as well. Email communication is much larger. I think most people coming into an organization like this that are particularly new, don’t realize</p>

how important email communication is and how the tone of email communication can get misinterpreted really fast and thinking twice before you hit send. Little things like that can all of a sudden...like wow that person is really sharp or man that person is not very friendly, they've got a really bad attitude and things like that. So just making sure you understand your communication style as well as the people receiving it is really important.”

Dr. Yrus “It is going to be challenging for those who do not know how to write emails and be mindful of typos. I have typos here and there. For instance in an email yesterday I said concur instead of conquer. That was a typo, but if you are continuously doing it and you can't structure a sentence and you are writing like you are texting someone, then how can I put you on my team to write a proposal for a project or manage a budget? Sending a message to someone and texting them or however, instead of picking up the phone and calling is not good. We get busy, I get busy all the time but there is something different between talking on the phone and texting. Saying good morning, those common grounds, I mean, it is the basic skill sets that we miss in life that can carry us far in our career, in our family, with our family-with anything. I am afraid of the generation coming up now because all they do is text.”

Linda “They need to be able to communicate effectively. I guess an example I would give is, when you talk on the phone to somebody, they should not be able to tell what race you are. So, I mean I know that sounds bad but sometimes that's your first impression of someone and because they work in agriculture companies, if you do not sound White, then I feel like you have already discounted yourself right out the

gate. So I think that's important."

Willingness to Learn

As discussed earlier in the findings, education is important. The participants in this study felt continuous learning about agriculture, learning about their corporate agribusiness employer, and learning about other cultures was a valuable desire to have when wanting to move into higher-level positions.

Table 4-22

Participants Views on Being Willing to Learn When Seeking Employment with a Corporate Agribusiness Employer

Participants	Responses
Dr. Xavier	<p>“But nobody can take that from me – my knowledge. I feel like I try to learn as much as I can. I mean I don’t want to sound arrogant but, I am humble enough to listen to other people.” The guy that they chose over me for the job I applied for can translate to the other workers in Spanish. I feel like nowadays, especially agriculture business they look for hiring Spanish speaking people”</p> <p>“I feel that misrepresented groups need some sort of education to excel in agribusiness. Some misrepresented employees have many years of experience, but are not able to move up in the company because they lack a degree or in some case a high school diploma. Education is good, and its sad underrepresented groups are hindered from raises and promotions due to the lack of education.”</p>
Sebastian	<p>“I think the most important skill that anyone can have is the ability to learn. I mean, even if you grew up on a farm and you come from the ideal background that would, you know, quote, unquote, “have you, you know, be successful in the</p>

	agriculture field,” you still need to have a great ability to learn and a want to learn, a want to succeed. I’d say, overall, that’s the most important thing.”
Linda	“If you work for agri-business companies you should just start learning more about agriculture and so I feel like a lot of, um, I guess minorities use the excuse like 'oh, but I didn’t grow up with it', well I mean that’s fine, a lot of people didn’t grow up with different types of things but you can learn about it, so I feel like we use that as an excuse as to why we don’t know things about agriculture.”
Nelson	You can never learn too much, you know, you can never know enough, you know. Learn as much as possible, and you know, if you got questions, never be afraid to ask them because there's plenty of things that won’t come about unless you ask. You know, some people just kind of sweep things under the rug and they really don't have an understanding of it and it ends up kind of costing them and your integrity can be on the line. Myself young in my career, you know, that was one of those things I had to learn myself.

Be Proficient in Applications

Having a thorough understanding of computer applications was another skill that participants all individuals pursuing a career with a corporate agribusiness should have. Research shows that the majority of students seeking entry-level positions in corporate America lack proficiency in programs like Excel and SPSS (Garton & Robinson, 2006; Northeastern University, 2013). The participants indicated a lack of proficiency in computer applications when working with entry level employees and interns.

Table 4-23

Participants Views on Having Proficient Knowledge in Computer Applications When Seeking Employment with a Corporate Agribusiness

Participant	Response
Chris	<p>“In addition to that, things like technical skills are table stakes. I ask people all the time when I’m out speaking to students, about their Excel skills. Typically I walk away thinking they don’t have them because it takes more than I can add one cell plus another cell equals the combination of the two. I can get kids in high school that can do that. But, to really take Excel to the next level in my opinion is a big deal. Organizations today...I don’t really care what industry it is, what in agribusiness it is – data is king. Anywhere you look today it is all about data. You’ve heard the term big data now; it’s everywhere, so if data is king the question is how do you manage your data? Even if you have great big enterprise systems to manage you data, they all export to Excel. If someone wants you to do further analysis it’s in Excel. And if all I can do is sort then I’m not going very far when I try to analyze a hundred thousand lines of data. So, really knowing Excel in my opinion is important.”</p>

Cultural Intelligence/Emotional Intelligence

Being able to understand other cultures and knowing when to display emotions was expressed by participants as being an important skill set to have. Being that agriculture is a predominantly White male occupation; underrepresented groups often encounter individuals who lack interaction and understanding of other cultures. The responses from participants provide evidence that there is a need for underrepresented groups to understand how to handle those

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encounters. Therefore training on cultural and emotional intelligence is beneficial before seeking employment with corporate agribusinesses.

Table 4-24

Participants Views on the Importance of Having Cultural Intelligence/Emotional Intelligence when seeking employment with a Corporate Agribusiness

Participant	Response
Chris	<p>“If you want to be in a leadership position within an organization, you’ve got to figure out how to make that work because if you don’t you’ll limit yourself. Nobody wants to work for someone that doesn’t listen and understand me versus the next guy or the next person.”</p> <p>“I was fortunate enough before coming to work with this organization to work for another global organization as an intern in Midwest Illinois. There were two people in town that looked like me and they were adopted by a pair of doctors in the town. Outside of that, there were none. So they just hadn’t had experience being around. They hadn’t had any racial prejudice or anything. They just didn’t know”</p> <p>“Anytime you mix cultures, it’s tougher. If people don’t know, they just don’t know. So when you start mixing cultures it’s no different... that’s more of a Caucasian/African American thing, but it’s not different that me saying I’m not an expert on the Indian culture. We have a lot of support within that culture here today and you have to go the extra mile to understand their culture and to insure when I communicate that I am not offending them. Go out to lunch with them, understand food choices, and understand why we do this. I don’t have to agree with any of it, but just understanding it helps the company”.</p>

Sebastian	“I’ve interacted with individuals who have never personally interacted with someone like myself before and have openly told me that, and at the end of the day, you know, I tell myself that people are people, you know, and it’s really finding that common ground and really in closing those barriers”.
Chris	“If you are on the up and up, either you are moving or they’re moving and if one little dynamic change and all of a sudden it’s like a new day. So, it’s kind of one of those things where don’t get so frustrated where one person forces you to do something that really negatively impacts your whole career because it is probably not worth it unless you have another option that you really want to explore. If that happens then I get it but, if you generally like the company and just don’t like the person you have to deal with, wait the storm out. So the advice that I would give to people who goes through those kinds of things is realize in most corporate environments – you know in good companies you have pretty good turnover – not turnover with people leaving, but turnover where you are progressing to the next role. So very little things last for long.”
Nelson	“This is a male, Caucasian-dominated industry, they may not understand some of the cultural norms of other people, you know, so you have to kind of acclimate yourself to their culture so, you know, you are used to getting to work at 7:30 or 8 o’clock but in the agriculture industry, it’s usually 6:30 or 7 and what kind of perception does that give about you, you know. “ “Some people could take that as, you know, you might not be as dedicated or your work ethics and that you may not work as hard. It could really kind of put you in a bad place down the line because they don’t understand you, you know, and when

you start to gravitate towards people of color and start disassociating yourself from these people who kind of run the industry, that kind of puts a... they... it worries them in a way, you know, that you don't want... it kind of puts out a perception that you might not be a team player, and that's how they perceive you even though, you know, you just might like the evenings by yourself.”

“Those are some of the things that I've learned from my career so far. I may not have tried to come off in a certain way, but because I'm not like everyone else (not White), then it just comes out that way... in ways that kind of attack. I have to show myself as a team player, and it usually ends up that I end up with the work that others should be doing around me.

Dr. Yrus “I knew they wanted to see things, you know, see certain sides of me but having a great manager, having a great team helps. Knowing when to pick your battles helps. Sometimes, I am very cautious of what I say, how I say, when I say it but sometimes you could catch me off on a bad day but I try and I try to think of how would they perceive it and that is one thing my manager always told me about perception”.

Why Agriculture

In order to understand the participant’s intent to remain in agriculture, it was important to understand their reasons for pursuing an education and career in agriculture. Research shows that participants choose a profession based on the influence of family members, mentors, and financial security (Anderson, 2013; Faulkner et al., 2009; Vincent et al., 2012). Understanding the participants’ attitudes about the profession and their previous involvement with agriculture

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provided insight on their intent to remain in the field. By collecting this data, educational institutions can develop recruitment strategies based on the responses of the participants. The recorded responses from the participants indicated that influence from family members, mentors, scholarships, and having a farming background influenced their decision to pursue a career in agriculture.

Table 4-25

Why Participants' Chose a Career in Agriculture

Profession	Responses
Dr. Yrus	<p>“In high school and one of my friends came up to me in the hallway and said, "Hey! Do you want to join this club with me?" And I was like "What type of club?" "And so she told me it was an agriculture club. And I was like "Agriculture? Really? That is so geeky of us." And said "Sure!" And so we had a club meeting, she ran at people around, she became president, I attended and it was an agriculture club”</p> <p>“So I originally attended my Alma matter because of their teaching academy program, but ended up in Ag. Since then I was involved with MANRRS and became president, vice president, participate, volunteered, did everything I was supposed to do in high school I went off to college and continued my education. Prior to college I did a summer program internship and that way my decision on where I wanted to go and if I wanted to do Ag. I got a great advisor- professor- still my professor to this day; I can hear his voice- and just the family feeling with my fellow friends, classmates.”</p>
Dr. Xavier	<p>“I chose the field of agriculture as a career because it’s something I love to do. I</p>

	<p>am fascinated how a small seed can feed families and how well kept livestock can reproduce and be used for not only food, but clothing as well.”</p>
J.C.	<p>“Well, you know, I enjoyed business courses in high school, and I liked working with plants, and that’s where it was suggested that I study agribusiness, and then as I learned more about it and as I began to study in college. My parents actually encouraged me to pursue a career in agribusiness.”</p>
Linda	<p>“I actually got my first scholarship to a non-land grant school, so um, it was just going to be business but when I got a scholarship to a land grant school, they had an agriculture program and so that’s kind of how I got into, um, agri-economics, agri-business, so ideally it was always number 1 but until I actually.”</p> <p>“So I actually grew up on a dairy farm, and we had, um, tobacco and hay so it was just part, I don’t know, part of me growing up, so I majored in ag-econ and then I’ve always known of my company growing up in, so I was like in the ag sector sure, It really wasn’t a, a structured like 'oh, well this is a ag company, I grew up in agriculture I know about it', so it just kind of clicked.”</p>
Chris	<p>“My brother studied ag-bus, he had a job when he got out and it seemed like a pretty good deal to me”. Then my academic advisor said if you come here I can give you a full ride and I’m not one to turn down money, so I’m in. He guaranteed me if I did what I needed to do, I’ll make sure you have a job when you graduate. And he did. It was kind of like all history from there.”</p>
Rick Porter	<p>“Actually there was a guy from the college I went to that came to my high school that asked me if I was interested in an ag scholarship. My first response was I don’t want to be a farmer. That’s what I knew about ag. He corrected me and said</p>

	ag is anything that is not man-made, which kind of put it in perspective.”
Nelson	“I feel like this is my purpose. It wasn’t an accident that I ended up in the field that I’m in with the skills that have I’m focused on the mission at hand and the goal that I am trying to shoot for.”
Sebastian	“It’s funny. It really happened almost by happenstance. The university I attended had a great agricultural program, fantastic agricultural program, and I happened to taking an introductory ag econ class, which was just something that, at the time, my advisor picked it, but I just built such a relationship with that professor. He’s an advisor, as well, and, you know, he holds a pretty high position now, but at the time, he was, like, the assistant dean or something like that of the school, so he really steered me towards agriculture, and he was talking about it all the time, the excellent opportunities in ag, and I don’t know, it just made sense for me.”

Overall Intent to Remain in Agriculture

The following statements provide insight to the overall intent of the participants to remain employed with their current agribusiness employer and to remain employed in the agricultural business field. Some participants had intentions to remain based off their passion while others had intentions that stemmed work/life balance. Some participants also felt that they would remain with the company for now, but in due time they would leave their current employer to pursue dreams of starting their own agribusiness.

Table 4-26

Participants Overall Intent to Remain Employed with their Corporate Agribusiness Employer

Participant	Response
Dr. Xavier	<p>“I am only here to gain experience and to provide for my family. I am blessed and thankful to have the position, but if I find something better, with a different company, I will leave this company. I will always remain in agriculture because I am passionate about it. But at the moment I am fighting to move up in regards to my position, and I am the only underrepresented person at the level I am at and I see none above me. I will continue to work hard to break this barrier but if a better opportunity comes along I will take.</p>
Nelson	<p>“To teach people that have distanced themselves from agriculture for whatever reason that may be, to try to educate them. To bring them back to the beauty of agriculture instead of the negative connotation that some people have experienced and/or created. “I enjoy my job because of the challenge that’s ahead in knowing how many people could be affected by my failures or successes. This type of challenge can put you in a position where you really take it (your job) serious and the successes you have are very rewarding.”</p>
Rick Porter	<p>I think I have a pretty good reputation. So, with that said I think I do have a pretty clear career path within this company. To go somewhere right now and start over is not something I’m looking to do. If the opportunity presented itself I might take a look at it, but right now I’m comfortable where I’m at and I think I have the right people in my corner t kind of move my career along.”</p> <p>“All in all, I enjoy my job. It’s a new role for me. I’ve been in it a month and a half. I really enjoy my job; it’s opened a lot of doors for me. Hopefully it will</p>

	<p>open a lot of doors in the future as well. The ag industry as a whole, there are some barriers that do exist that we need to continue to try to work through, but overall it's a good industry. It will continue to thrive and that's pretty much it."</p>
Sebastian	<p>"I would leave you know if the company did not invest in me or believe in me, you know, that could be very uncomfortable and could make it challenging for me to do my job, and, you know, if it ever got to that – and hopefully, it won't – but if it ever got to that, I can see that being something that at least makes me evaluate my current position"</p>
Linda	<p>"I'm employed, um, I don't feel like they are going to fire me anytime soon, but I should always be looking for something better, if its maybe a different position within the company or something different outside of the company. I feel like sometimes, um, my progress or my creativity is kind of smothered a little bit, not because I'm a woman, not because I'm a minority but just because that's the way the company is."</p>
Dr. Yrus	<p>"Agriculture is something that will never go away, unless something happens to the world. But knowing that it is our foundation and knowing that I am still involved, I am still pursuing the opportunities here and also going like recruiting at conferences has helped. I love going to conferences seeing the hunger, the drive, the adrenaline rush in students who I was once like and very passionate about Ag and wanted to learn and do something different- help change the world."</p> <p>"It is like I get reduced over each year from different things but when I start recruiting with the company I work for I am instantly recharged knowing that I can help change someone's perception about ag and I can still educate them and</p>

still mentor and motivate them. I think that is a large percentage of the reason why I continue to stay in Ag.”

“Sometimes I do think to myself like "Man, why didn't I think about becoming a surgeon?" Or why didn't I think of becoming something that makes more money or something more interesting at times?" But Ag is interesting and I didn't think I would be good at it.

So I do see myself continuing to move forward with both (corporate agribusiness and personal agribusiness) career- it is just which one will become more prominent than other and how will I be able to balance both. I have really loved being a part of something that impacts all of our lives and that is the reason why I am in Ag now and will continue to be in Ag and will continue to educate people and why I will be starting my own company in that is centered on agriculture.”

Chris

“I don't know about remaining with the company. I think in some respects the company begins to have an identity of its own after a while. Certainly I've got lots of relationships throughout the company that have certainly helped me to get to where I am today. For me, again I studied agriculture, so it's kind of what I do or what I know. I can certainly operate outside of agriculture without a doubt. After a while you get to a point where you're doing business. You just happen to be in agriculture. I happen to enjoy it. I don't think there is any one person that is keeping me in the industry. I would say it is just more about the combination of great relationships that I have established over the years.”

Summary

The results for this study were arranged by using the theory of planned behavior, which is the theoretical framework of the study. Attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, overall intent, and reasons studying agriculture will serve as the themes, as they were the basis for which the questions for the interview were determined. The findings for the data were presented in this chapter. Chapter five will discuss the findings of the study. The discussion, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for further research will also be discussed in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Recommendations

A brief overview of the study will be presented at the beginning of this chapter. The overview will restate the problem, the research question, and methods used to conduct the study. This chapter will mainly focus on summarizing the results, comparing and contrasting findings of previous research, and discussing recommendations for future research.

Statement of the Problem

By 2050 the demographics of the U.S. population will drastically change and half the population will consist of what the world now considers to be underrepresented groups. With the changing demographics of the population there is a need to increase ethnic & cultural diversity in corporate agribusinesses, research on the lived experiences of underrepresented groups who are employed by corporate agribusinesses, and a need to address the effectiveness of recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups in corporate agribusinesses. While corporate agribusinesses are slowly realizing the need for cultural and ethnic diversity within their workforce, there is an immediate need to address how corporate agribusinesses will meet the agricultural needs of a rapidly growing population. In order to meet the needs of a growing population, it is suggested that corporate agribusinesses create an ethnically diverse workforce that will not only assess but understand the needs of underrepresented groups.

In order to create an ethnically diverse work force, there will need to be an increase of academic research on the lived experiences of underrepresented groups who are employed by corporate agribusinesses. Understanding the lived experiences of underrepresented groups in corporate agribusinesses will provide researchers and corporate agribusinesses with insight on how to develop a plan to create an inclusive environment for underrepresented groups to thrive

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and excel within the company (Alston et al., 2011; Hom et al., 2008; Ponds, 1993; Soloranzo et al., 2000; Wingfield, 2007).

Purpose and Research Question of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the intent of underrepresented groups to remain in agriculture careers upon entering into a job position. To accomplish the purpose of this study, the following research question was developed:

How do attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in the workplace affect the intent of underrepresented groups remain employed with their current corporate agribusiness employer?

Review of Methods

The research was conducted using quantitative methods with a phenomenological focus. The first phase of the research consisted of conducting a demographic survey to identify participants who met the criteria of the study. The second phase consisted of inviting the demographic survey participants, who met the criteria of the study, to participate in a structuring interview. The structuring interview was conducted to ensure participants understood the participation requirements of the study. The third phase of the research consisted of participants completing the data-gathering interview. During the data-gathering interview, participants provided responses to the interview questions that were developed to provide the researcher with data to answer overarching research question. The final phase of the research involved the analysis of the data using excerpting and coding.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

Attitudes

Attitudes are defined as the behavioral tendency for one to respond positively or negatively to an event, object, institution or person. The responses from participants in this study revealed factors that influenced their attitude toward their corporate agribusiness employer. The sub-themes identified internal and external factors that determined their attitudes and influenced their intentions to remain with their current agribusiness employer. The sub-themes are as follows: (1) Passion; (2) Agricultural Competency; (3) Opportunities for Advancement; (4) Job Satisfaction; and (5) Social Relatedness.

Passion

The participants in this study were passionate about their profession. When reviewing the statements in table 4-8, the participants believe their profession has meaning and purpose. The desire to feed a growing population was a common theme among the participants in regards to why they were passionate about their career. Their agribusinesses mission to feed a growing population coincided with their personal goals and added to value to their career.

The responses from participants support previous research that has found individuals to be motivated by interest and self-endorsed values (Deci & Ryan, 2004; Van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2011). Based on their responses, the participants in this study have an interest in agriculture and are self-endorsed to fulfill the mission of corporate agribusinesses; which is to feed a growing population without depleting our natural resources. The responses from participants also reflect previous research, which has found job satisfaction to be a component of intrinsic motivation (Van Breulelen et al., 2004).

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Based on the comments in table 4-8, the connection between the participants and their employers seem to be strong. This can be attributed to the participants' personal passion for agriculture, their connection with the mission of corporate agribusinesses, and their desire to have a career with purpose. A study conducted by Hom (2008) stated that low turnover rates exist when an individual has a connection to the company's culture and values, they can execute the demands of the job, and they experience increased levels of satisfaction from rewards as they become more experienced (Hom et al., 2008).

Agricultural Competency

The participants' responses in table 4-10 reveal there is an advantage to having a farm background and/or educational background in agriculture when working for a corporate agribusiness. The participants' were confident in their ability to succeed because their educational background and/or farming background provided them an overview of corporate agribusinesses. A study conducted by Mitchell (1993) found that underrepresented groups who change their major to agriculture while in college have to become acclimated with the career field, which can make the transition difficult when their counter parts already have that background knowledge (Mitchell, 1993). Based on the results from the demographic survey in table 4-4, this study shows that the majority of those surveyed did not have an educational background in agriculture. The lack of historical knowledge, knowledge on career advancement, and hands on experience with agriculture could be attributed to the lack of underrepresented groups seeking employment and higher-level positions in corporate agribusinesses. Meaning, underrepresented groups may not have enough historical knowledge on the agriculture portion of the company; therefore, they do not seek to be in higher-level positions that do not reflect their educational background and experiences.

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Nelson's response in table 4-9 reflected a need for underrepresented groups to learn about the history of agriculture and how their ancestors played a role in establishing the foundation of this country.

A study conducted by Vincent et al. (2012) found that underrepresented groups who understood how agriculture historically impacted their culture, their families, and the lives of others pursued a career in the agriculture profession. The responses from participants in this study also indicated a need to teach underrepresented groups about the positive contributions their ancestors have made to the agricultural profession. Agricultural competency counteracts the negative images underrepresented groups associate with agriculture; which are slavery, farming, and poverty.

Opportunities for Advancement

Based on the statements in table 4-10, participants felt the opportunities for advancement were endless with a corporate agribusiness, because of the need to feed a rapidly growing population. The participants worked for companies that are viewed as global leaders in agriculture and technology. As a result of working for global companies, the participants realized they had opportunities for advancement domestically as well as internationally. The participants' realization of numerous opportunities in corporate agribusinesses is contrary to previous research that reported underrepresented groups were unaware of the career opportunities that agriculture has to offer. The findings of a study conducted by Jones (2003), showed that exposure to agriculture careers would have a moderate to high influence on underrepresented groups choosing a career in agriculture (Jones & Larke, 2003). All the participants in Jones study had degrees in agriculture, but the majority the participants stated

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they could not find careers in the field because of the limited job opportunities in their profession.

The majority of the participants in this study expressed an abundance of job opportunities in corporate agribusinesses, yet Rick Porter and Dr. Xavier's statements suggests there are still challenges that underrepresented groups face in order to obtain these positions. While the participants' employers provide multiple opportunities for advancement, research shows that the cultural climate can have a positive and/or negative effect on how underrepresented groups view those opportunities. When viewing the responses in table 4-10, participants 'expressed that opportunities are given and withheld because of their ethnic social identity. The participants' responses are similar to the findings of research conducted by Soloronzo and Delgado that have provided a means for a change in the cultural climate of majority populated institutions and environments (Soloranzo et al., 2000; Solórzano, 1998).

Job Satisfaction

The participants expressed positive attitudes towards job satisfaction, in regards to working for their corporate agribusiness employer. The majority of the participants were satisfied with their jobs in terms of work/life balance and opportunities for growth. The participants who stated disadvantages, in terms of jobs satisfaction, mentioned factors that stemmed from their geographical location, compensation, and versatility.

The majority of large corporate agribusiness has headquarters located in small Midwestern towns in the U.S. As a result, there are very few underrepresented groups who are willing to relocate because of the lack of cultural and social diversity present in those locations.

Sebastian stated that he felt a disadvantage to working for a corporate agribusiness was the lack of versatility in regards to problems and challenges in the field. The mission of most

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corporate agribusinesses is to feed the world. With that in mind, corporate agribusinesses are competing to generate the best technology and genetic traits that will produce optimum yields and maximum efficiency. In that regard, the focus can become narrow. Based on Sebastian's statement, depending on what sector of a corporate agribusiness you work in, you may only see one side of the business. This could mean there is a need for employees within corporate agribusinesses to seek out trainings, to network, and to consistently learn about their business as a whole. When employees are exposed to various parts of the company and have the ability to explore different career paths, they are more likely to experience job satisfaction. As a result, employers should promote trainings and learning opportunities for employees to increase their knowledge and understanding of the company as a whole.

As mentioned about, the majority of the participants' in this study were satisfied with their job, but they did discuss factors that would lead them to be unsatisfied with their agribusiness employer. Participants stated if upward mobility became non-existent, the cultural climate became unbearable, and they experienced disconnect with the company (in regards to their moral values) they would consider finding a new place of employment.

Social Relatedness

Participants did not mention many disadvantages in regards to working for their company, but one common theme across the majority of the participants was the awareness of their ethnic social identity. Participants felt that being African American played a part in how they were often viewed or treated by their co-workers and peers. Based on the responses participants have faced social discrimination or have known co-workers who have. Dr. Xavier's response in table 4-12 was in direct correlation with previous research by Herdman (2010) that states, an inclusive cultural climate is attributed to diverse upper level management, in

Assessing intentions of underrepresented groups working for corporate agribusinesses combination with diversity and inclusion practices (Herdman & Mcmillan-Capehart, 2009). Linda's statement was also very much in line with previous research, in regards to underrepresented groups having to work harder than their counterparts. Research in ethnic diversity provides evidence that the cultural climate in White majority settings can be stressful for underrepresented groups. Underrepresented groups often feel the need to prove they are worthy of the opportunities they have been given in majority populated career fields. These attitudes can be attributed to the desire to dispel the stereotypes and myths that the majority population has towards underrepresented groups (Nichols, Jimmerson, & Nelson, 1993; Soloranzo et al., 2000; Wingfield, 2007).

Subjective Norms

Cultural Climate

The participants made it clear in table 4-13 that agriculture is a white male dominated industry and ethnic diversity is somewhat non-existent. The participants' responses indicated that diversity existed in terms of education and work experience, but ethnic diversity was not prominent within their place of employment. As a result, underrepresented groups often feel the need to adopt and not adapt to their work environments culture (Wingfield, 2007). Research has shown that underrepresented groups, who come into majority White cultural climates, feel pressured to adopt their environments culture in order to be successful (Nichols et al., 1993; Soloranzo et al., 2000). Ethnic diversity in the workplace can create an environment where underrepresented groups can be confident in whom they are and openly share their cultural traditions with others. The participant's coincided with previous research and adds validity to the cause for change in the cultural climates of corporate agribusinesses.

Co-worker/Supervisor Support

Research states that an employee's connection with their supervisors and co-workers is an important factor in job satisfaction and shapes an employee's attitude toward the company as a whole (Deci & Ryan, 2010; Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004; Garton & Robinson, 2006). The participants in this study expressed various levels of satisfaction with their co-workers and supervisors. Some participants had positive relationships with their co-workers/supervisors, while others had to seek out assistance beyond their supervisors in order to be heard. There were also participants who knew fellow employees who experienced a lack of support from their co-workers/supervisors and ultimately left the company.

The participants who experienced support from their supervisors, felt their opportunities for advancement were greater as a result of those relationships (combined with hard work and competency of their profession). As stated earlier in the findings, Rick Porter felt his success could possibly stem from a need to meet affirmative action requirements, but his relationship with the head of marketing added confidence to his ability to succeed.

Mentor Support

Along with the support of co-workers/supervisors, participants stated the role of a mentor was equally important to their success. The participants believed having multiple mentors, with various backgrounds and experiences, was an essential tool for success when working in a corporate agribusiness. The participants also discussed their desire to provide mentorship to underrepresented groups and preparing them to be successful in the profession.

They were motivated to provide the same guidance and advice that was provided to them on their journey to success. J.C and Nelson both stated that they take pride in training and coaching others to be successful. Previous research findings show that underrepresented groups,

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who have mentors in an agriculture profession, are more likely to pursue a career in the field (Jones & Larke, 2003). Underrepresented groups, who take the role of a mentor in the agriculture profession, provide other underrepresented groups with the image of success in a white male dominated industry.

Ethnic Social Identity

The participants' in this study felt their race played a role in how the majority population viewed their actions and ability to succeed. Previous studies show that White Americans feel negatively toward underrepresented groups and have grouped them into levels of threat. They feel that African Americans and Hispanic Americans are threats to their safety, property and neighborhoods while they view Asian and Native Americans as threats to their group values and ideals (Hom et al., 2008).

The participants also expressed their experiences with micro aggressions and how they expect them as a result of being in an industry run by predominantly White males. The majority of the participants had experienced micro-aggressions and seemed to have responded to them appropriately due to their emotional intelligence. The statements from Linda and Chris in table 4-16 demonstrate that micro-aggressions should not always be taken as a deliberate action to marginalize. Some micro-aggressive statements are due to a lack of cultural intelligence due to limited exposure and interaction with other cultures and ethnicities. Research shows that some White Americans have no desire to expose and educate themselves on other cultures and/or ethnic groups. This is often a result of White supremacy and the idea that others should assimilate to their culture because they are the majority (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1998).

Perceived Behavioral Control

Challenges to Success

The participants in this study expressed various views on the challenges that underrepresented groups faced when seeking success in a corporate agribusiness. Table 4-17 demonstrated that some participants felt there were many opportunities for advancement in corporate agribusinesses, but by being African American they had to work harder than their counterparts to even be considered for those opportunities (Davis, 1991; Dwyer, 1975; Soloranzo et al., 2000). Some participants felt that everyone faced the same challenges in corporate organizations because the challenges stemmed from the competitive environment that is present in all American corporations. They felt that only the strong survive in corporate America, and you have to be great at what you do no matter your skin color.

Recruitment and Retention

The participants in this study have stated that there are discrepancies in recruitment and retention in corporate agribusinesses and the process is in need of improvement. When viewing the responses from participants in this section, we see that underrepresented groups are often denied entry-level positions in favor of their White counterparts. The participants also mentioned that the internships designed to recruit underrepresented groups, in corporate agribusinesses, are failing to provide an experience that provides a scaffold to assist in their success (Hom et al., 2008; Mitchell, 1993; Tapia & Kvasny, 2004). One participant mentioned that underrepresented groups are leaving the internships because they are being racially discriminated against, they are thrown into rural areas and have little to no access to familiar cultural surroundings, and corporate agribusinesses refuse to change the process so they have a reason to cancel the diversity recruitment programs. The responses from participants coincide with the research

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findings that show underrepresented groups are denied entry-level positions and opportunities for advancement more often than their White counterparts. Research also shows that underrepresented groups are more likely to quit a job in the first two years of employment, if the company does not fit their cultural and moral values (Hom et al., 2008)

Skills Needed

The participants discussed a plethora of skills that all students need in order to succeed in corporate agribusinesses. Many of the skills mentioned were in direct correlation with previous studies that were conducted with the purposes of understanding the skills that students lacked when going into their career field. The following subthemes are a reflection of the skills mentioned most frequently by the participants of this study.

Willingness to Adapt

The participants' of this study felt adaptability was an important skill to have. When working for a corporate agribusiness underrepresented groups should be prepared to move to rural areas and be prepared to be one of very few underrepresented groups in their place of business. Both Dr. Yrus and Chris spoke to learning about cultures that are different from your own, being willing to travel, open to new experiences, and knowing who you are as a person; so that you know how to adapt but not adopt to the cultural norms of the environment. Participants felt the fast pace and competitive culture of corporate agribusinesses, requires everyone seeking a job in this profession to be ready for change.

Communication and Networking

The participants' expressed repeatedly that communication is the key to success in everything you do. Participants' mentioned that email communication, face-to-face communication, body language, and social media are important types of communication to

master. Participants felt that knowing when and how to communicate with various people based on their styles of communication was also important.

In this section, the participants' also reiterated how important it is for underrepresented groups to communicate a high level of professionalism in everything that they do. The participants expressed that individuals who are underrepresented should be prepared to modify their dialects, understand how to cater to a variety of audiences for presentations, and always communicate professionalism with their attire (Soloranzo et al., 2000; Wingfield, 2007). The responses in this section are also related to several research studies that focus on critical race theory and social identity.

Willingness to Learn

The participants' expressed the importance of learning on more than one occasion in their individual interviews. They all felt success is attributed to learning about yourself, learning about those around you, knowing your cultural background, and learning about your profession. Research studies in leadership, social identity, and diversity and inclusion provide results that are directly correlated to the participants' comments and state them as being important factors for an individual's success.

Proficiency in Computer Skills

The participants felt that understanding computer applications was important. Knowing how to use and understand the multiple functions of Microsoft Office, SPSS, or any other software is important for anyone seeking entry-level positions in every business. Research studies have shown that American Students lack these skills and there is a need for educational system to address this issue.

Cultural and Emotional Intelligence

The need for all individuals to have cultural and emotional intelligence was expressed repeatedly throughout the participants' interviews. The participants' responses indicated that micro-aggressions and racial discrimination are to be expected when working for corporate agribusinesses. As a result, participants felt underrepresented groups must be culturally and emotionally prepared to handle such encounters, in order to thrive in the non-inclusive cultural environment of corporate agribusinesses. The participants also discussed the importance of having cultural and emotional intelligence when acquiring leadership positions and how a lack of cultural and emotional intelligence amongst White supervisors and employees, has played a role in the non-inclusive cultural climate of corporate agribusinesses. Research shows that diversity policies are not enough to change the cultural climate in an organization. Researcher's data show that developing a diversity and inclusion plan, with effective implementation is the only way the cultural climate will change in predominantly White environments (Tapia & Kvasny, 2004).

Why Agriculture

The participants were influenced to pursue agriculture as a career because of a mentor, a family member, scholarship influence, hands on experience through farming, and from being educated on the benefits of a career in agriculture. Previous research findings have reported each of these factors to be influential in underrepresented groups choosing to pursue a career in agriculture (cite). Based on the participant's responses in this study, there is probable cause to continue to advocate for the increase of underrepresented groups in corporate agribusinesses, agriculture education, and industrial farming, because it can influence the increase of underrepresented groups who pursue careers in agriculture.

Intentions to Remain

The participants had mixed reviews in regards to their intentions to remain with their current agribusiness employer. All of the participants had a passion for agriculture, but not all of them had the same type of passion for their corporate agribusiness employer. As a result not all of them had a desire to remain with their employer until retirement. Some participants felt they would remain with the company, but they are in the process of establishing their own agribusiness, which may or may not cut their time short with the company. Others felt they would remain with the company, but if they were presented with a better opportunity they would have no issues with leaving. Participants also expressed their desire to leave the company, but had to remain, for financial reasons, until a better agriculture career related opportunity was secured. The latter of the participants loved their job and felt their agribusiness employer was ideal for their growth and success.

Emerging Themes

Emerging themes are defined as concepts (explanatory ideas) identified from the data in the first stages of analysis and given a label or code that describes them. For the purpose of this section, the themes identified here emerged throughout the later stages of analysis. There were several themes that emerged that were unexpected by the researcher. Social identity, faith in God, cultural competency, micro-aggression from customers, the difference in conversation both on and off tape, and the competitive cultural climate of corporate agribusinesses.

The presence of social identity research themes was present in all of the participant's interviews. It was apparent that the majority of the participants (either currently or previously in their career) felt the pressures to change their actions based on the perceptions of the majority population. Whether they had to change their appearance, how they spoke, or even how they

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approached a situation, their desire to change was based on being accepted by the majority. As the researcher assessed the responses of the participants, both on and off tape, it seems that most underrepresented groups have to become comfortable with who they are before they can be successful in what they do. In order to accomplish this, underrepresented groups should educate themselves on their historical background and the accomplishments their ancestors have made in society.

When viewing the responses of the participants who had more than 3 years in the business, you saw confidence that came from experience and the understanding of their personal strengths. The participants with more than 5 years of experience also spoke differently on their experiences with micro-aggressions because they had experience on dealing with the situations and were confident in knowing those experiences contributed to their overall success.

Another theme that came as a surprise to the researcher was the spiritual references made by participants. A few of the participants believed that their faith in God attributed to their success. Their relationship with God also determined how they viewed the challenges in which they faced. Those participants that did identify as believers in Christ felt that in their struggle they were fulfilling their purpose in life, which consisted of educating underrepresented groups on agriculture and blessing others through their testimony. It also was evident that these participants attributed their challenges not only to their race, but considered it as part of the process to be shaped and molded to share the gospel with the world.

Cultural competency was also discussed frequently from participants. The need to know your history as an underrepresented group seemed to be important to success in the agriculture industry. Underrepresented groups associate their historical background in agriculture to slavery and nothing more. Very few underrepresented groups, (in this study African Americans) don't

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know about the contributions of George Washington Carver, that a Black man created the cotton gin, and that Charles Henry Turner was a famous entomologist. Research shows that in order to be successful in a profession, you have to have a passion for it. Passion is developed from being educated on the profession, having experience in the profession, and knowing the historical contribution of others. Educating our youth, educating our youth's parents, providing hands on experience, and providing mentors in the profession of agriculture is the way to recruit and retain underrepresented groups in agriculture. Based on research, this claim will only come about when underrepresented groups educated themselves on the historical contribution of underrepresented groups in agriculture. It will not be taught in the school system, as we have seen historically, so this information will need to be taught by underrepresented groups, for underrepresented groups, and in the process shared with the majority population. Until White America understands they did not contribute to the technological advances in agriculture, they will forever believe they hold the reigns in how our food sources are produced and distributed.

Another emerging theme stemmed from the participants expressing how they experienced micro-aggressions from the customers of their employer. The researcher expected more of the micro-aggressions to extend from co-workers and supervisors, but it seems the customers lacked cultural intelligence as well. Participants did however mention that the micro-aggression experienced with customers were not reciprocated in a negative light, but they took it as an opportunity to educate others on their culture.

One theme that emerged that made it difficult for the researcher to adapt to, was separating the conversations she had with the participants on and off camera. With the identity of the participants at stake, they felt that some of their experiences could not be shared on tape. The

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conversations the researcher had with the participants off record were compelling and made it evident that their experiences had to be shared with the world.

Finally, the competitive nature of corporate agribusinesses was not a theme that the researcher expected to be discussed. Having worked in corporate America, the researcher had experienced the competitive nature of corporate agribusinesses, but vaguely considered it to be part of the challenges that underrepresented groups faced. In the midst everyone striving to succeed in corporate America, racial discrimination can be combined with the competitive environment to assist the majority population in their elimination of the competition they deal with. The researcher does not attribute this tactic to all of the majority population, but it does exist.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are for future research and better business practices based on the responses from participants in this study.

The researcher would recommend a study that focuses on the lived experiences of White Americans in predominately Black educational and business settings. A study on this topic will provide insight on how White Americans adapt in a cultural setting that is different from their own. It will also provide insight on how their family and friends feel about their decision to be in this type of setting. I also believe that a study on this topic will create an opportunity for White Americans to see how different underrepresented groups treat the majority population when the roles are reversed.

The researcher would also recommend that the study conducted in this paper be conducted in the government sector. Conducting this study with the government will create an opportunity for researchers to understand, compare, and contrast the lived experiences of

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underrepresented groups in the government and corporate agribusinesses. The study would also be beneficial because it would create an opportunity for a collaboration of ideas that may generate the best practices for creating an inclusive cultural climate and job satisfaction amongst employees.

A recommended business practice would be for corporate agribusinesses to create regulations that hold human resource employees responsible for recruiting a diverse population possible hires. A training session or having a third party come in and facilitate this process may be beneficial. Human resources should also strive to revert from stacking the deck so to speak with the children of employees at the company. This may be a perk for employers but if their children are not the best candidates they should not be provided a job opportunity.

Another recommendation the researcher would provide would be to have a third party come in to assist corporate agribusinesses with creating an inclusive environment for underrepresented groups. The training should be held for executive management all the way down to lower level management. Previous research shows that when information is communicated and practiced from the top down, it is received and practiced with a positive attitude by employees. When the entire company understands the reason for change and sees the change being upheld by leadership, they tend to feel connected to the change and follow suite.

The researcher would recommend that all educational entities that specialize in agriculture, teach a course that focuses on the contributions of underrepresented groups in the agriculture field. This will create a safe space for everyone to learn the truth about agricultural history in the U.S. and will hopefully create an avenue for this information to be shared. Future research in agriculture should focus on implementation of suggested research, in regards to how to improve diversity recruitment and retention in agriculture education and beyond.

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Without understanding how to implement the change, it will remain hypothetical and nothing will be proven.

The researcher would recommend that underrepresented groups strive to understand who they are, so they will be confident in other cultural settings. The goal is to adapt and not adopt the cultural practices of others. We do not want to lose ourselves or traditions and adopt someone else's just because you are in a different environment. You have to learn to be confident in who you are and know that others will respect you more because of it.

Conclusion

There is a lot of work to be done in the advancement of underrepresented groups in corporate agribusinesses. The work that has to be done exists within the corporations and within the communities of underrepresented groups. Based on the responses from participants in this study, underrepresented groups are struggling to gain entry in corporate agribusinesses, but if you can get your foot in the door you can be successful, but success will come with more challenges than if you were part of the majority population. With that being said, the participants in this study have a passion for agriculture and have succeeded based on their skill set, learning about themselves, their cultural background, and building relationships.

Yet in the end, only two participants could say they would remain with their employer with all other factors remaining constant. Some participants were seeking employment elsewhere, some were in the process of building the foundations for their own businesses, and others stayed because they were experiencing a time of growth in their career but expressed they would leave if the opportunity presented itself. The responses from participants in this study prove there is a need for a change in the cultural climate of corporate agribusinesses. It also creates probable

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cause for the agricultural education system to be evaluated, in regards to how all students are being prepared for the job industry.

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Appendix A

Survey & Interview Questions

Demographic Survey Questions

1. The informed consent was presented as the first question. Participants had to agree to the consent form before moving forward with the survey.
2. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
3. What institution did you attend for your bachelor's and/or master's degree(s)?
4. What is your gender?
5. How old are you?
6. What is your racial and/or ethnic identification?
7. What is the name of the corporate agribusiness you are currently employed with?
8. Did you work for another corporate agribusiness prior to working for your current employer?
9. If you answered yes to the above question, what corporate agribusiness or company did you work for and how long were you employed?
10. If you answered no to Question 8, where did you work prior to your current employer?
Why did you choose to work for an agricultural business?
11. What is your current job title?
12. How many years have you worked for your current employer?
13. How many hours do you work per week?
14. What State do you currently reside in?
15. What is your marital status?
16. How many children do you have in your family?

Interview Questions

1. What are the advantages to continuing your career with your current corporate agribusiness employer?
2. What are the disadvantages to continuing your career with your current corporate agribusiness employer?
3. Are there other factors associated with your intent to remain working for your current corporate agribusiness employer?
4. Do you feel that your family members, co-workers, supervisors, and agribusiness support your decision in pursuing a career in agriculture? Please explain.
5. Do you feel that your family members, co-workers, supervisors, and agribusiness disapprove of your decision in pursuing a career in agriculture? Please explain.
6. Are there any individuals who have motivated you to continue your career in corporate agribusiness?
7. What factors or circumstances would make it easy for you to continue your career in agriculture with this company?
8. What factors or circumstances would make it difficult for you to continue your career in agriculture with this company?
9. What skill do you feel underrepresented groups need to excel in agribusinesses?
10. Are there any other issues that come to mind when you think about your intentions to continue your career with your current corporate agribusiness employer?

Appendix B

Recruitment Materials

Recruitment Email

Hello, my name is Brielle Wright, and I am a master's student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University by way of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. I am conducting research involving a series of interviews with underrepresented groups who work for agribusinesses and have obtained a bachelor's degree in an agriculture discipline.

Your participation in this research will shed light on the experiences of underrepresented groups in the agriculture business sector. If you meet the criteria and are selected to participate in the study you will be compensated for your time. You would be committing yourself to be interviewed on two separate occasions. The first interview, which will be the structuring interview, would provide you further information about the research and allow to ask any questions that you may have about the interview process. The second interview, which would be the data gathering interview, would involve you answering a series of questions that inquire about your job experience. The first interview will last between thirty and forty five minutes. The second interview is projected to between forty five minutes and seventy five minutes. If you only complete the structuring interview you will be compensated with a \$10.00 subway card. If you complete the structuring and data gathering interview you will be compensated with a \$25.00 Visa gift card.

The information you share will be compiled with that of other participants and used to promote understanding of the experience of underrepresented groups in agriculture businesses. All information will be kept private and confidential and will be destroyed by August 2014. If you would like to participate in this study please follow the link below and fill out a survey. This survey will assist in gathering information that will be necessary for selecting participants to be interviewed for the study. You will be contacted is you are selected to participate within 24 hours/1 day after submission in regards to scheduling the structuring interview.

Thank you so much for your time and your willingness to shed light on this topic.

Kind Regards,
Brielle Wright

Orienting Instructions

Dear [participant's first name],

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. In interviewing you, I hope to develop a detailed understanding of the experiences of underrepresented groups in agriculture businesses. As I mentioned earlier, I am completing this study to complete my master's degree in Agriculture Extension Education at Virginia Tech.

Your participation in this study will involve two meetings with me. The first one, which we are doing today, gives us an opportunity to become better acquainted and to learn more about each other's backgrounds. It also allows me to explain the nature of my study and my reasons for selecting you, and to answer any questions that you may have. Before the data gathering interview takes place, please take some time to think about your experiences as an underrepresented group in an agricultural business and how they have shaped your intent to remain in the profession. For example, reflect on your experiences in the workplace and how your attitude or the attitudes of others have shaped your experience. Also think about how you have been able to excel in your job position and reflect on your relationship with supervisors and co-workers during the time that you have been in your current position. I would also like you to think about the ways in which being part of an underrepresented group has possibly shaped the way your co-workers perceive you. Similarly, think about the ways in which these relationships contribute to your desire to recruit other members of underrepresented groups to work at your organization. These issues may, of course, deal with only some aspects of your experience. Please reflect on any experiences that you see as relevant to our topic.

Some experiences may stand out more in your mind than others. For each of these experiences, please think about the thoughts, feelings, and any bodily sensations that occurred for you at the time. I would also like you to reflect on the context for each experience. This might include the circumstances or events that led up to the experience, the physical setting, or any other people who were present. As you think about your experiences, you may want to write down important thoughts or details so that you can refer to them during our interview. Doing this, though, isn't essential. During our interview, I will ask you a number of questions about your experiences of the ways in which your experience as an underrepresented group at an agricultural business has shaped your intent to remain in this profession. Please respond to these questions in whatever way you feel is most appropriate. **There are no right or wrong answers in this type of interview: I want to learn about your experiences, whatever they have been for you.** It is important that you describe your actual experiences, just as they happened for you. I will also ask you to describe your experiences in as much detail as possible.

As I mentioned earlier, I am working alone on this study. Your interview will be analyzed and written up for data analysis for my thesis project. All of the participants involved in this study will go through an identical process and a written report will be submitted to my committee and will be published at a later date. My interview with you is completely confidential and there will be no way for anyone to identify you. Once my study is complete, I will also contact you soon after my thesis defense to share the findings with you and to give you a copy of the written report. I also want to mention again that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your identity will be kept confidential at all times and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the study, or if you would like to discuss anything else with me, please don't hesitate to phone me at (910) 991-5385. I look forward to our interview!

Brielle Wright

Appendix C

IRB Consent Form

I. Purpose of this Research/Project

This study involves research, and its purpose is to explore the intent of underrepresented groups who are employed by agribusinesses to remain in their profession. The study will consist of interviewing 15 participants who currently work for an agribusiness and have been employed by the company for two years. I will be asked to describe my experiences on the above topic during a one-on-one interview with the principal investigator.

II. Procedures

My participation in the above-mentioned interview will involve sharing with the interviewer my intent to remain in my profession or to leave based on my experiences. I will participate in two separate interviews. The structuring interview, which I am in now, and the data gathering interview which will ask me questions related to my experience and intent to remain in the agricultural business profession. This structuring interview will take no more than one hour and will not be audio recorded. The data gathering interview will take no longer than one hour and twenty minutes and will be audio recorded. The interviews will take place via Skype or in person.

III. Risks

The risks associated with participating in this study are considered to be minimal.

IV. Benefits

The data collected from me during this study will be used for purposes of research and publication. If the interview data collected from me are used to complete this research, the principal investigator will provide me with a copy of the written report and discuss the findings with me after the research study has been completed.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

My identity, and that of any individuals who I mention, will be kept confidential at all times and will be known only to the principal investigator. The above-mentioned interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed. When the audio recording is transcribed, pseudonyms (i.e., false names) will be used for my name and for the names of any other individuals who I mention. If this transcribed interview is used to complete the above-mentioned research, these pseudonyms will also be used in preparing a written report of the study. Any details in the audio recording that could potentially identify me or anyone who I mention will also be altered during the transcription process. After the transcribing is complete, the audio recording will be stored securely by the principal investigator. This audio recording, all paper and electronic copies of the interview transcript, and this consent form will be erased or shredded promptly after the abovementioned research has been completed.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Tech will view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for overseeing the protection of human subjects who are involved in research.

VI. Compensation

For participating in the structuring interview and the data gathering interview I will receive a \$25 visa gift card. I will receive a \$10 subway card for participating only in the structuring interview.

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Approved March 19, 2014 to March 10, 2015

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

My participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. Similarly, I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. If I choose to withdraw from the study, any information about me and any data that I have provided

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will be destroyed. I am also free to choose to not answer any question, or to not complete any activity, and this choice will result in no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

VIII. Participant's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities: I have 3-5 days to notify the researcher that I will participate in the study, I have 3-5 days to sign the consent form and return it if I decide to participate, to participate in a one-on-one data gathering interview of no more than one hour and twenty minutes, as described in Section II above.

IX. Employment

My employment will not be affected by my decision to participate in this study, nor will my place of employment receive any information in regards to my participation in this study.

X. Participant's Permission

I have read and understand the *Informed Consent* and the conditions of this study. I have also had all of my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date _____

Signature of Participant

Printed Name

_____ Date _____

Signature of Principal Investigator

Brielle Wright _____

Printed Name

Should I have any questions about this study or its conduct, or participants' rights, I may contact:

Brielle Wright, Principal Investigator Phone: 910-991-5385

E-mail: bswright@vt.edu

Dr. David M. Moore, Associate Vice President for Research

Compliance

IRB Chair

Phone: 540-231-4991

E-mail: moored@vt.edu

Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board Project No. 14-260

Approved March 19, 2014 to March 10, 2015

Appendix D

Guidelines for Conducting the Structuring and Data Gathering Interviews

A. General Guidelines for Conducting the Structuring Interview

- **Do not conduct the actual structuring and data gathering interviews with your participant until we have completed discussing each of these topics in class.**
- Please note that although Laferriere (cited in Becker, 1986) uses the term *structuring interview*, it is not an interview in the strict sense of the term. It is more accurately described as an initial *meeting* that (a) allows you and the participant to become better acquainted and (b) allows you to provide the participant with important information about the study.
- **Do not interview a friend or a student who is currently enrolled in this course.**
 - **ETHICAL ISSUE:** interviewing a friend constitutes a serious dual relationship (you are functioning as both the researcher/interviewer and a friend) and therefore needs to be avoided; interviewing a friend can result in (a) awkwardness (for one or both of you) and other difficulties during the interview process, (b) an unwillingness or reluctance on the part of the participant to discuss certain aspects of the phenomenon (i.e., self-censoring), and (c) impoverished, incomplete, or otherwise compromised data
 - **thus, the above situation has the potential to do harm to the participant (i.e., having negative experiences as a participant), and it could also compromise your friendship**
- In choosing a participant, avoid dual relationships as much as possible (e.g., being in the same graduate program as the participant).
 - do not choose someone who is in the same graduate program as you are because you may be interacting with that person regularly in the future (e.g., courses, group work) and his or her participation in the research project could complicate, undermine, or otherwise compromise those future interactions
- **It is recommended that you take a paper copy of this handout (or a summary of parts of it) with you to the structuring interview, if you feel that it will help you to manage the interview and/or increase your comfort level. Do not use a laptop to view these instructions during the interview.**
- **Do not audio record the structuring interview.**
- Digital recording devices can be signed out at 1140 Torgersen Hall or GYM 220.
- Accommodate your participant if there are special circumstances (e.g., “This is the only time that I can meet with you for the interview, but I can’t find a baby sitter. Can I bring my child to the interview?”).

B. Specific Guidelines for Conducting the Structuring Interview

It is important to be thoroughly familiar with the following guidelines before you conduct the structuring interview with your participant.

1) **Choose a private (i.e., non-public) room that is free of interruptions or distractions.**

- the interview must be completed in a private setting
- it could occur in one of the meeting rooms in the Graduate Life Center, another private room somewhere on campus (do not use rooms in the Newman Library), or the participant’s own home
- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** it is important to select an interview room that prevents others from seeing the people in the room; if using a room at the GLC or another private room on campus, remember to close the blinds/curtains on any windows that others could potentially see into

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- remember, any room that you use needs to be booked for the time that you will be using it: it should not be used simply because it is unoccupied at the time
- ethically, it is often not appropriate to hold this meeting in the participant's workplace
- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** if the participant chooses to hold the interview at his or her workplace, discuss the ethical risks associated with doing so (e.g., confidentiality may be undermined)
- if you are conducting the interview in the participant's home, try to arrange for a quiet room, away from family, phone calls, pets, or other intrusions
- **the structuring interview should never take place in your own home or office, a graduate student office, a public area, or outdoors**

2) If you decide to book a meeting room at the Graduate Life Center, contact the Student Services Coordinator (540-231-9561 or lkeister@vt.edu).

- **Meeting Rooms B, C, or D** work best for individual interviewing
- the other rooms are larger and should be avoided because it is difficult to establish an appropriate atmosphere in rooms of this size
- if the Student Services Coordinator does not mention it to you, you should ask for your room booking to begin 30 minutes prior to your meeting time: this will give you time to be in the room and to prepare before the participant arrives
- avoid a situation in which your participant arrives at the room before you do!
- **you can also book one of these rooms on-line by going to: www.grads.vt.edu**
- also follow these guidelines when booking a GLC room for the data gathering interview

3) When meeting the participant somewhere other than his or her own home, make sure that you arrive at the meeting place at least 10 minutes before the scheduled time.

4) ETHICAL ISSUE: for reasons of confidentiality, the door should be closed after the participant has arrived (unless the participant asks to have it left open)

- before doing so, always ask the participant, "Do you mind if I close the door?"

5) It is important to engage in some general conversation before discussing the study: Don't launch immediately into a discussion of the study.

- this is important for building rapport but it should be kept to less than 10 minutes
- do not let informal conversation go on beyond this point: keep in mind what your ultimate goal is in meeting with the participant
- you can discuss a variety of topics but do not discuss the phenomenon that you will be exploring with the participant

6) Before proceeding further with the structuring interview, it is important to check again to see that the participant does, in fact, meet all six of the specific criteria for participation in the study. Do not discuss the three general criteria that were covered in class.

- Underrepresented group (non-white)**
- Currently works for corporate agribusiness and has been there 2 years**
- Has a B.S or M.S in an agricultural discipline**
- Experienced being the minority in the work place**

7) Discuss the general nature of the phenomenon that you are investigating for the project (i.e., graduate students' experiences of student life/family life conflict).

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- discuss this in a general way only: state the phenomenon or research question but do not give a detailed description of the various facets of the phenomenon that you have already identified for your interview guide (doing so is “leading”)

8) You should also share, briefly, relevant aspects of your own personal background, but do not discuss your own experiences with student life/family life conflict (doing so can be “leading”).

- in conducting an actual study, it would also be important to discuss the reasons for your interest in the phenomenon (this isn't relevant for this research project)

9) Discuss the nature of the procedure, as it relates to the participant's involvement in the research project.

- this would involve discussing the nature of the interview process (i.e., what will occur for the participant)

- e.g., “I have a number of questions that I will ask you about your experiences, and I would like you to respond to each one in whatever way you feel is most appropriate. Also, I would like you to describe your experiences in as much detail as possible. . . .”

- mention that you will be analyzing 30 minutes of interview material but that the actual interview may be slightly longer (i.e., 35 or 40 minutes); do not exceed 40 minutes in total

10) Ask the participant if she or he has any questions.

11) Discuss the other aspects of informed consent (use the consent form to guide you in this).

- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** if the participant says that he or she has seen consent forms in the past and that there is no need for you to explain each section of the consent form, you should politely explain how, ethically, it is important for you to cover this information (e.g., “I appreciate what you're saying, but as far as being a student who is learning about interviewing, it's important for me to discuss all of the information in this consent form with you.”)

- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** at this point, do not give the participant one of the consent forms to look at (you want the participant to remain focused on you and your discussion of the consent form's content)

- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** do not introduce humor into the consent process; informed consent is a serious matter and the use of humor/joking may convey to the participant that you don't take ethical issues seriously (e.g., “You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and if you do, I won't get angry with you!”)

- a) **Risks**
- b) **Benefits**
- c) **Uses to be Made of the Findings**
- d) **Confidentiality**
- e) **Anonymity**
- f) **Compensation**
- g) **Voluntary Nature of Participation/Right to Withdraw**
- h) **This Study Does Not Qualify As “Research”**
- i) **If You Have Any Questions or Concerns: Contact Dr. Hein**
- j) **Is Any of the Information That I Have Covered Unclear? Do You Have Any Questions?**
- k) **Please Read the Entire Consent Form and If You Have Questions About Any Part of It, Let Me Know. Otherwise, If You Are Willing to Participate in the Study, Please Sign and Date Both Copies**

- **important: only at step k) should you give the participant a copy of the consent form to examine**

- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** you and the participant must sign two copies of the consent form and he or she needs to be given one of these copies

- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** if the participant only scans the consent form (after you have asked him or her to read it), do not insist that he or she read it

- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** if the participant asks you, “Can I take this consent form home to read before I give you a decision?,” you should agree to do so; it would be unethical to say, “No, we need to sign these consent forms here.”

- the above situation will also require you to postpone steps 12) to 17) for a second structuring interview

l) One Copy of the Consent Form is For You to Keep and One Copy is For Me to Keep

- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** it is important to complete the informed consent process before asking the participant for a pseudonym, collecting basic demographic information, etc. (these activities are part of the study)

- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** do not show the instructor the signed consent form

- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** store the consent form in a secure place, as soon as possible after the structuring interview

12) Discuss the issue of choosing a pseudonym, but be sure to use the phrase “false name.”

- offer the participant a choice of (a) selecting his or her own pseudonym or (b) having you choose one

- tactfully ask the participant for another pseudonym if he or she (a) doesn’t give you an actual first name or a complete first name or (b) gives you a first name for someone of the opposite gender

- if the participant would like more time to choose a pseudonym, indicate that he or she can give you this information during the data gathering interview

- researchers do not normally ask participants to choose pseudonyms for other people who are discussed during an interview

13) Collect basic demographic information that is relevant to the study.

- this would include the participant’s age, marital status, age of significant other, occupation of significant other, number of children, age of children, current program of study, number of semesters in current program

- in collecting this information, do not begin exploring the phenomenon

- if the participant starts to provide you with a description of the phenomenon, tactfully ask her or him to hold that information for the data gathering interview (e.g., “That’s a very nice description of Would you mind holding on to that until our interview? I want to make sure that I capture that.”)

14) Discuss the orienting instructions (i.e., the preparation guidelines) with the participant and then give her or him a copy.

- it is important to review all significant aspects of the orienting instructions with the participant

15) Do not discuss the interview guide or give the participant a copy of it (this document is meant only for your own use, during the data gathering interview, and it should not be introduced during the structuring interview).

16) Discuss the issue of a date/time for the data gathering interview.

- sometimes, participants will indicate that they need to check their calendars, etc. before they can finalize a date and time for the next meeting
- give the participant an adequate amount of time to prepare for the data gathering interview: at least 4 or 5 days

17) Discuss with the participant his or her preferences for being contacted.

- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** contact is often by e-mail, but if a phone number is given, be sure to ask the participant whether your using it will undermine confidentiality in any way (i.e., will others be able to learn that she or he is participating in the study?)
- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** do not give the participant your home phone number if there is any possibility that someone other than you could answer the phone if the participant calls you (a cell phone or other phone number is required in this case)

18) Thank the participant for agreeing to participate.

19) ETHICAL ISSUE: if the structuring interview is held at a time when the GLC or another campus building in which you are conducting the interview is busy (i.e., a significant number of graduate students are present in the building), it is important to say goodbye to the participant while both of you are in the meeting room and to leave a few minutes after he or she has left

- it is also important to explain to the participant why you are doing this (e.g., “I want to make sure that your identity is kept confidential. . . . I want to avoid a situation where a graduate student who knows you or I might see us leaving together and draw the conclusion that you are a participant in my study.”)

C. General Guidelines for Conducting the Data Gathering Interview

- **I strongly recommend that you complete at least one mock interview with a friend, spouse, sibling, or other person before your actual data gathering interview with the participant.**
- **I recommend that you take a paper copy of this handout (or a summary of parts of it) with you to the data gathering interview, if you feel that it will help you to manage the interview and/or increase your comfort level (do not use a laptop to view these instructions during the interview).**
- The most important principle guiding the interview is “respect for the interpersonal encounter between the interviewer and the interviewee” (Becker, 1986, p. 108).
- The interpersonal atmosphere of the interview, including establishing good rapport, is essential for collecting credible data.
- Reflect on your comfort level in interacting with others.
- Rapport building involves skills that resemble those used by counselors.
- Qualities needed for qualitative interviewing include “empathy, authenticity, care, sensitivity, responsiveness, transparency, playfulness, and curiosity” (Becker, 1986, p. 113).
- The interviewer “is prepared, yet receptive; task-focused, yet personable; knowledgeable, yet naïve” (Becker, 1986, p. 115).
- **Do not ask the participant for permission to record the data gathering interview (she or he has already consented to this during the structuring interview).**
- Focus on concrete, lived experience: Participants need to provide concrete descriptions of their actual experiences (avoid interview situations in which the participant engages in speculation or theorizing).

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- Avoid allowing participants to express themselves in general, unsituated terms (i.e., avoid data that contain only the participant's generalizations about her or his experiences).
- Don't allow concerns that you have about the quality of the data you are collecting to cause you to become directive in your interviewing: Be sure that interview questions remain open-ended.
- **For each aspect of the phenomenon that you explore, focus on thoughts, feelings, and, if relevant, sensory experiences.**
- Keep the participant focused on her or his experiences, not what he or she thinks about those experiences.
- Interview questions often focus on process and meaning rather than on the participant's views of cause or effect.
- Interview questions direct the participant to specific aspects of the phenomenon without suggesting meaning.
- Monitor what the participant is saying and stay in control of the interview.
- Aim for a data gathering interview of 30 minutes. Remember, you are only exploring a portion of the experience of student-family conflict in the lives of graduate students. But it is important to continue until you find a natural place to end the interview: Do not stop the interview abruptly after 30 minutes. This is an important issue because it will allow the participant to experience some degree of closure as far as sharing her or his experiences with you.
- **Cover thoroughly those interview questions that you do explore during the 30-minute interview: Do not rush to complete the entire interview guide, which will result in "thin" data (at a minimum, though, the first eight interview questions need to be covered).**
- Keep a research journal in which you can record your reactions (both positive and negative) to the process and content of the interviews.
- Use a complete first name as a pseudonym.
- **As soon as possible after you have received your grade for this course, destroy (i.e., shred) the signed consent form and all paper copies of the interview transcript, erase the audio recording of the data gathering interview, and delete the electronic copy of the interview transcript from your computer.**

D. Specific Guidelines for Conducting the Data Gathering Interview

It is important to be thoroughly familiar with the following guidelines before you conduct the data gathering interview with your participant. While there is a need to follow these guidelines, it is also important that you be able to express your own interpersonal style. The examples that are given below reflect my own particular interviewing style, and you are free to phrase things differently. If you choose to do so, though, it is important that the fundamental information that is to be communicated to the participant be preserved.

Before the Recorded Portion of the Interview

1) Choose a room that is private (i.e., non-public) and free of interruptions or distractions.

- this meeting could occur in one of the meeting rooms in the Graduate Life Center, another private room somewhere on campus (do not use rooms in the Newman Library), or the participant's own home
- **ETHICAL ISSUE:** it is important to select an interview room that prevents others from seeing into the room; if using a room at the GLC or another private room on campus, remember to close the blinds/curtains on any windows that others could potentially see into
- remember, any room that you use needs to be booked for the time that you will be using it: it should not be used simply because it is currently empty
- ethically, it is often not appropriate to conduct the interview at the participant's workplace

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- if you are conducting the interview in the participant's home, arrange for a quiet room, away from family, phone calls, pets, or other intrusions (no one else should be present in the room or the immediate area outside of the room; this will almost certainly influence the participant's responses and invalidate the data collected)

- **the data gathering interview should never take place in your own home or office, a graduate student office, a public area, or outdoors**

2) When meeting the participant somewhere other than his or her own home, make sure that you arrive at your meeting place at least 10 minutes before the scheduled time.

3) Do a sound check before the participant arrives.

- a digital recorder or a laptop can be used

- if possible, use an audio recorder that has an external microphone

- **if you are using an external microphone, it should be placed out of the interviewee's direct line of sight (off to the side) but at a roughly equal distance between both of you (also place the recorder out of sight of the interviewee but near enough to you that you can reach it without having to get up from your chair)**

- **if a laptop is used, it should never be placed between you and the interviewee (place it well off to the side or behind you)**

- also, do not place a clock, watch, or other time device on the table between you and the participant: a time device should be kept out of the participant's view

- make sure that the recording equipment is working properly before the interviewee arrives

- if relevant, always bring extra batteries to the interview

4) Thank the participant for participating.

- e.g., "Thank you for taking the time to come today. I really appreciate it."

5) ETHICAL ISSUE: for reasons of confidentiality, the door should be closed after the participant has arrived (unless the participant prefers to have it left open)

- before doing so, always ask the participant, "Do you mind if I close the door?"

6) It is important to engage in some general conversation before discussing the interview: Don't launch immediately into a discussion of the interview.

- this is important for building rapport but it should be kept to less than 10 minutes

- do not let informal conversation go on beyond this point: keep in mind what your ultimate goal is in meeting with the participant

7) Indicate the general focus of the interview (i.e., the phenomenon of interest) and discuss the nature and purpose of the open-ended interview format that will be used, including describing what the participant can expect during the interview.

- e.g., "In interviewing you, I would like to learn about your experiences with . . . Have you taken part in a qualitative interview before? . . . Okay. Well, I have a number of questions that I will ask you about your experiences, and I would like you to respond to each one in whatever way you feel is most appropriate. Also, I would like you to describe your experiences in as much detail as possible. . . ."

- do not address the specific topics and/or interview questions that you will be covering during the interview

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- mention to the participant that you will be covering only some aspects of the phenomenon and that only the first 30 minutes of the interview will be transcribed
- do not mention to the participant that you need to have the interview finished within 30 minutes: this may make the participant feel rushed

8) Reassure the participant about the importance of her or his experiences.

- e.g., "I want to emphasize that I'm interested in learning about your experiences, whatever they may have been for you. There are no right or wrong answers. I want to know about your experiences just as they happened for you."

9) Discuss the preparation guidelines that you gave the participant during the structuring interview.

- e.g., "Last time, I gave you some guidelines to help you to prepare for our interview today. How were they?"

10) If the participant chose to provide you with a false name but didn't do so during the structuring interview, ask the participant if he or she has chosen one.

- tactfully ask the participant for another pseudonym if he or she (a) doesn't give you an actual first name or a complete first name or (b) gives you a first name for someone of the opposite gender

11) Explain about your use of the note pad or paper.

- e.g., "During the interview, I may write down some things on this note pad/paper. I use it as a way to remember points that I can then follow up with you about later in the interview."
- it is important to leave the note pad flat on the table (holding the pad upright and close to you can make you appear secretive, which can undermine rapport)
- **notes should be made only occasionally and they should be very brief (a few words or a phrase): they should only serve as a memory aid for the later use of probes**
- **the task of note taking should never distract you from your responsibility of attending to the participant**
- **don't use the notepad to record the participant's verbal (e.g., tone) or nonverbal (e.g., facial expressions, gestures) behavior: commit this information to memory instead**

12) "Do you have any questions?"

- below are some questions or comments that the participant may have; it is important to be prepared to respond to each of them, in case they arise

- e.g., "Well, I'm not really sure that I have anything very important to say. I mean, these are just my experiences."

- e.g., "I'm just wondering, you mentioned something about confidentiality the other day?"

- e.g., "Well, I'm a little bit nervous about the whole thing."

- e.g., "I'm just wondering, the other day you said that this was for some kind of research or something?"

13) "Are you feeling comfortable with the interview?"

14) "Would you like to start the interview now?"

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- this helps to decrease the power differential that is inherent in all interviewing (and also helps to build rapport)

During the Recorded Portion of the Interview

15) Do not start the recorded portion of the interview by stating the time, place, and the participant's pseudonym. Record this information after the interview, in your interview notes.

16) It is important to be well acquainted with all aspects of your interview guide.

- in conducting the actual data gathering interview, you should be able to glance down at the next question and ask it in the same form that it appears in the interview guide

- reading questions mechanically from the guide can undermine rapport

17) Do not omit interview questions because of a concern that they will cause the participant to feel uncomfortable.

- as the interviewer/researcher, you have an obligation to ask all of the interview questions and to use probes to expand the participant's responses fully

- you should stop the further use of probes for a particular interview question (or restating of the interview question) only when you sense discomfort from the participant

Maintaining Control of the Interview

18) Don't let the interview unfold like a casual conversation: It is important to be mindful and present during the interview.

- to ensure that the participant is providing complete answers to your interview questions, listen carefully to what is being said

- don't go on to the next interview question until you feel that you have obtained a comprehensive answer to the current interview question

19) Anxiety and a lack of experience on the part of the interviewer can sometimes cause the interview to proceed too quickly (i.e., the interviewer loses control of the interview).

- remember that, ultimately, you are in control of the pace of the interview

- monitor the pace of the interview: if it is moving along too quickly, make a conscious decision to slow it down

- don't rush to cover all of the questions in your interview guide: explore thoroughly what you *do* cover in the 30 minutes allotted for the interview

20) It may be necessary to give the participant feedback about the kind of information desired.

- e.g., "Thank you for your description of ____ but what I would like to focus on is your actual experience of _____."

21) If the interviewee has strayed off topic and is providing irrelevant information, give feedback about the kind of information desired. Do not let the person continue on for more than a minute or two.

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- e.g., “Those are very interesting insights but could I bring you back to the reading difficulties that you experienced in high school.”

22) If the interviewee has strayed off track and doesn't pause long enough for you to make a comment like the one above, an interruption will be necessary. If you need to interrupt the interviewee, always do it with respect and tact.

- e.g., “If I could just stop you here. I would like to go back to what you said earlier about the reading difficulties that you experienced in high school. . . .”

Probes, Prefatory Statements, and other Interview Skills

23) Probes need to be used to deepen the interviewee's response.

- you need to be familiar enough with these general probes that you can use them spontaneously, as needed (probes are normally not prepared in advance)

- keep in mind that probes need to be phrased so that they display the characteristics of effective interview questions (i.e., they need to be open-ended, singular, clear, presupposition less, and non-dichotomous, and avoid a “why” question format)

- there are three general types of probes: detail-oriented probes, elaboration probes, and clarification probes (see Patton, 2002)

- e.g., “When did that happen?” “Who was involved in that incident?” “What was done after you decided to talk to your instructor?” [**a detail-oriented probe**: these are used to generate more detail about something that the interviewee has said]

- e.g., “You mentioned that you were angry about the way you were treated by your instructor. Can you tell me more about that?” [**an elaboration probe**: these encourage the interviewee to keep talking]

- e.g., “You mentioned earlier that it was a ‘so-so relationship.’ Can you tell me more about what you mean by that?” [**a clarification probe**: informs the interviewee that more information or context is needed in order to clarify something that was said]

- use clarification probes with tact/diplomacy and imply that it is your fault that you have not understood the meaning of the information

24) To maintain rapport and continuity during the interview, it is important to use prefatory statements (e.g., a direct announcement format, a transition format) at key transition points in the interview.

- e.g., At this point, I would like to shift our focus and explore your experiences of conflict between the student and family parts of your life. This would include any ways that being a graduate student has interfered with your family life and vice versa.

25) It is also crucial to rapport that you be diplomatic in your phrasing of prefatory statements (as well as interview questions and probes).

Avoid: Let's turn now to your experiences at home.

Avoid: Let's talk first about your experiences at the daycare.

Avoid: Now we are going to switch the topic to discuss your experiences in the classroom.

Better: Now I would like to turn to your experiences at home.

Better: I would like to start by exploring your experiences at the daycare.

Better: Now I would like to ask you about your experiences in the classroom.

26) If the interviewee has already addressed an interview question before you are able to ask it, don't omit the interview question from your interview. Even when you feel that the interviewee's earlier description is complete (and this is often not the case), it is important to explore the interview question. You should make clear, though, that you are aware that the participant has already spoken about the topic. An attention-getting preface should be used in this case.

- e.g., "I know that you've already described some of your experiences as a graduate assistant, but could you please tell me about any other experiences that you've had as a graduate assistant."

27) An attention-getting preface should also be used when asking an interview question that will be difficult for the participant to respond to.

- e.g., "This next question may be hard for you to answer but . . ."

28) If you are unsure about the participant's use of a particular word or phrase, never assume shared meaning: Explore it further.

29) It is also important to use support and recognition responses, to let the participant know how the interview is going. Do not overuse these responses: Giving feedback two or three times during a 30-minute interview is sufficient.

- e.g., "Thank you. That's a very detailed description, and the information will be very valuable to me."

- e.g., "Thank you for that. That's a very nice description, and it really helps me to understand how graduate life has affected your children."

- e.g., "The experiences that you've shared with me so far in the interview have been rich, and they'll be very useful to me. Thanks."

30) To prevent undermining the rapport that you have developed with the participant, do not become preoccupied with how much time is left in the interview.

- you should check the time no more than once or twice during the second half of the interview (and it should be done discreetly)

31) If the participant begins to cry during the interview, it is best to say something like, "Why don't we stop here" and shut off the audio recorder. After the interviewee has regained her or his composure, ask, "Would you like to continue with the interview?"

- do not discuss this issue beforehand with the participant

32) Normally (but not for this group research project), it is important to end the interview with a question such as, "Is there anything else that you would like to add?" or "Is there anything else that you think would be important for me to know?"

After the Interview

33) Thank the participant for taking part in the interview.

- e.g., "Thanks so much for taking the time to share your experiences with me. . . ."

34) Never ask the participant to explain some aspect of his or her behavior that you observed during the interview. This could be very uncomfortable for the participant, and ethically, it could

be construed as doing harm to the participant. It is also outside of the scope of your role (and aims) as the researcher/interviewer.

- e.g., “When I asked you those questions about your children, you made much less eye contact with me. Why?”

35) Discuss again how only one transcript will be chosen for the group project and provide a timeline for your next (possible) meeting with the participant (to discuss the findings and to provide him or her with a copy of the research report). It is also important to mention that you will be contacting the participant to let her or him know whether the interview transcript was chosen for the group project (ethically, it is important to not leave participants wondering – or worrying – about this issue).

36) ETHICAL ISSUE: if the structuring interview is held at a time when the GLC or another campus building in which you are conducting the interview is busy (i.e., a significant number of graduate students are present in the building), it is important to say goodbye to the participant while in the meeting room and to leave a few minutes after he or she has left

- it is also important to explain to the participant why you are doing this (e.g., “I want to make sure that your identity is kept confidential. . . . I want to avoid a situation where someone who knows you or I might see us leaving together and draw the conclusion that you are a participant in my study.”)

37) Develop a post-interview note.

- as soon as the interview has been completed and the participant has left, you should write down your impressions of the participant (e.g., non-verbal behavior, general openness, mood, etc.), the general atmosphere of the interview, and the content and process of the interview

- remember, impressions fade quickly!

- also include information about yourself (e.g., your mood, your reactions to the participant and the content of the interview, any mistakes you made)

- this information is a valuable source of insights in your efforts to become more reflexive

- include the date, time, location of the interview, and the participant’s pseudonym in your note

38) Review the interview recording to assess the usefulness of the data collected.

- are the data sufficiently detailed?

- do the data capture concrete, lived experience?

- were any aspects of the phenomenon overlooked?

39) Evaluate yourself: How did I do?

- in reviewing the interview recording, it is also important to identify areas where you did well and areas where you need to improve

