

ABSTRACT

HALIM, MIRZA FARZANA. Ushering NC Women in Agritourism towards Success: Challenges and Opportunities. (Under the direction of Dr. Carla Barbieri)

In today's challenging economic landscape, farmers are compelled to develop innovative enterprises to supplement farm income. Agritourism, defined as the offering of recreational and educational activities to increase farm revenues, is a rapidly growing farm enterprise in NC. Evidence indicates that women are the primary contributors of agritourism development, yet they are profiled as less successful than men. However, there is limited research on whether women's reduced agritourism performance is the result of myopic economic assessments that do not account for gender differences in conceptualizing "success", and this knowledge gap limits the efficacy of outreach efforts to improve their success. Therefore, we undertook a study with the following objectives in relation to women in agritourism: understand their definition of success, identify the challenges they face and the opportunities they have for overcoming those challenges. We used a combination of qualitative methods (mini focus groups, nominal group exercise, interviews) among 20 women involved in agritourism across 16 counties in NC. We analyzed transcribed discussions using a thematic coding scheme. Findings reveal that besides general indicators of entrepreneurial success (e.g., contentment, peer-recognition), participants felt successful because agritourism provided appreciative customers and ensured the perpetuation of their farms. We found that lacking reliable staff and institutional support, managing growth, constantly facing new challenges and having multiple tasks were major challenges agritourism women face. Participants identified that peer-partnering and the growing consumers' interest in local foods/farming and in agritourism as main opportunities for

succeeding. Importantly, although some women reported to be still discovering those opportunities, others had already expanded their offerings by capitalizing on them. In conclusion, our findings support incorporating economic and non-economic indicators in the assessment of and skill-building programs for agritourism women, which is critical given the increasing economic importance of agritourism in NC and women's pivotal role in its development.

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Ushering NC Women in Agritourism towards Success:
Challenges and Opportunities

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Mirza Abdul Halim and Hosne Ara Halim, whose contributions in my achievements are far beyond than I could ever comprehend!

BIOGRAPHY

Mirza Farzana Halim was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh where she completed her Bachelors in Business Administration from Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka. Upon graduating, she briefly worked in a multi-national banking institute and later worked in an international non-profit organization for several years. During her non-profit job, she gained substantial experience in the international development field through project implementation work and by attending multiple national and international trainings and conferences. In 2011 she enrolled into North Carolina State University as a graduate student in the Master of International Studies program with a concentration in sustainable development. She gained experience by working for an international non-profit located in Raleigh, and later worked as a Research Associate at Department of Crop Science. In 2014, she enrolled as a full-time student at department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management where she worked both as a Research Assistant and a Teaching Assistant. During the program, she worked on multiple research projects, including various forms of rural tourism, climate change, recreation ecology, and partnership and collaboration. She is interested social science research specifically on issues regarding tourism as a tool for rural development, sustainable development, climate change, and human-environment interaction.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER I	1
INTRODUCTION	1
Problem Statement and Research Questions	4
Need for the Study	7
Study Definitions	9
CHAPTER II	11
LITERATURE REVIEW	11
Profiling the Entrepreneur and Agripreneur	11
Theoretical Framework	13
Dynamic Learning Framework (DLF)	13
The Attributes of the Entrepreneurial Dynamic Learning	16
Defining Entrepreneurial Success: Women’s Perspectives	19
The Mosaic of Professional and Personal Aspects in Women’s Success	20
Entrepreneurial Challenges Constraining Women’s Success	23
Women Entrepreneurs in Agriculture and Agritourism	29
Overcoming Challenges	34
Entrepreneurs’ Pursuit of Opportunities	35
CHAPTER III	38
RESEARCH METHODS	38
Research Design	38
Data Generation	43
Protocols	44
Data Analysis and Interpretation	46
CHAPTER IV	49
STUDY FINDINGS	49
Profiling Study Participants	49
Voicing Women’s Meaning of Agritourism Success	52
Major Challenges Women in Agritourism Face	61
Overcoming Challenges	69
Opportunities for Women in Agritourism	76
CHAPTER V	84

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	84
Discussing Key Findings	86
Our Balance is Horrible... We Work Full-time... We're Fed. We're Happy	87
People Think I'm Just a Mother... They Think I'm an Employee	89
One of the Top Five on My Winter Plan is Managing My Growth (Sophia).....	92
I Don't Think of Anything as Unsolvable!.....	92
I Think It's Limitless as Long as You Have a Creative Mind.....	96
Study Implications.....	97
Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research	101
Final Insights	103
REFERENCES.....	104
APPENDICES.....	125
Appendix A: Recruitment Script & Screening Questions	126
Appendix B: Consent Form.....	130
Appendix C: Focus Group Protocol	132
Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol	141

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Number of participants by region and agritourism involvement.....	42
Table 2: Participants' demographic indicators.....	50
Table 3: Types of agricultural production and agritourism offerings among participating farms	51
Table 4: Occurrences of various aspects constituting women's success	52
Table 5: Occurrences of challenges among women in agritourism.....	62
Table 6: Occurrences of strategies used to overcome challenges	70
Table 7: Occurrences of opportunities for success among women agripreneurs	76
Table 8: Existing literature in relation to themes within subjective success	84
Table 9: Existing literature in relation to themes within challenges.....	85

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Steps of the Dynamic Learning process	15
Figure 2: Attributes of the critical learning process	17
Figure 3: Aspects defining women’s subjective success	21
Figure 4: Challenges female entrepreneurs face.....	25
Figure 5: Challenges faced by female agripreneurs	31
Figure 6: Role of opportunities in entrepreneurial pursuits.....	36
Figure 7: Farm location of study participants by county and region	41
Figure 8: World cloud of challenges emerged from the free-listing exercise	62
Figure 9: Strategies to overcome challenges in various stages of DLF	93

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Global population growth has left today's agriculture with the enormous duty of feeding seven billion people worldwide (Pretty et al., 2010). However, such task is coupled with major issues challenging the efficiency of food production and consumption. On the demand side, growing world population, increasing calorie consumptions, shifting dietary habits towards high fat-high sugar foods, and emerging newer health concerns (e.g. rising incidents of type I Diabetes), are considered to be major challenges facing agriculture today (Foley et al., 2011; Pretty et al., 2010). Dwindling availability of additional cropland, allocating more lands to animal-based agriculture, along with major social challenges, such as unequal food accessibility and distribution, climate change, falling commodity prices associated with selective subsidy, and increasing input costs, are all exerting pressure on the way agriculture production takes place (Foley et al., 2011; Pretty et al., 2010). This current scenario is leading to de-agrarianization, a term denoting the occupational adjustment (e.g., off-farm employment), livelihood reorientation (e.g., development of on-farm diversified enterprises), social re-identification (e.g., interruption of farm succession), and spatial relocation (e.g., farmers moving away from rural areas), that small farmers are experiencing, which has become a major concern as it increases food insecurity regionally and globally and it is changing farmers' lifestyle and practices (Bryceson & Jamal, 1997; Bryceson, 2002; Juvan & Ovsenik, 2008; MacDonald et al., 2000; Myer & De Crom, 2013).

Owing to challenges in agriculture production and the subsequent decrease in earnings and profitability, farmers are being compelled to move away from traditional production practices and towards alternative income generating options either by incorporating non-agricultural activities into their farms, or by seeking off-farm employment (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008). Agritourism is defined as “farming related activities carried out on a working farm or other agricultural settings for entertainment or education purposes” (Gil-Arroyo, Barbieri, & Rich, 2013). It has emerged as an alternative source of income for farm households (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Hara & Naipaul, 2008; McGehee & Kim, 2004; Nilsson, 2002; Tew & Barbieri, 2012; Lagravinese, 2013; Lucha, Ferreira, Walker, & Groover, 2014; Schilling, Sullivan, & Komar, 2014; Schmitt, 2010). Furthermore, agritourism is encouraged because of additional benefits it brings to farm households and society overall, such as, support for maintaining rural lifestyle (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Lagravinese, 2013; McGehee & Kim, 2004), creation of employment for family members (Lucha, Ferreira, Walker, & Groover, 2013; McGehee & Kim, 2004; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007), and heritage preservation (Lagravinese, 2013; LaPan & Barbieri, 2014). This change in the agricultural landscape is reflected in the United States of America (U.S.), where there has been a substantial increase in the number of farms offering agritourism opportunities. In five years, from 2007-2012, there was a 42% increase in the number of farms providing agritourism and recreational services (USDA: NASS, 2012).

With the rise in agritourism in the U.S., it is important to pay attention to women’s involvement in it, especially given their historical participation in the broad agricultural field. Women around the world play a significant role in planting, weeding, postharvest processing, and food preparation (Meinzen-Dick, et al., 2011). Studies estimate that women provide up

to 90% of the labor involved in rice production, for selling in markets in Southeast Asia and up to 80% of the labor for agriculture production for household consumption (Coughlin & Thomas, 2002; Pehu, Lambrou, & Hartl, 2009). Women's involvement in agriculture may take the form of both paid (usually hired) or unpaid (family) labor, the latter often allocated from other household activities (Peterman, Burhman, & Quisumbing, 2014). Despite women's significant involvement in agriculture, the literature suggests that there is gender inequality in accessing agricultural resources (e.g., technology, land) and inputs (e.g., seeds, fertilizer), social and human capitals, property rights, and decision making power (Meinzen-Dick, et al., 2011; Pehu, Lambrou, & Hartl, 2009). Still, female involvement in agriculture is actually on the rise in many regions around the world (Pehu, Lambrou, & Hartl, 2009). For example, in the U.S., national agricultural statistics have shown an increase of women's involvement in agriculture in the last fifteen years; specifically, there has been almost 38% increase in the number of principal female operators from 1997 to 2012 (USDA: NASS, 2007; 2012).

In line with women's heavy involvement in agriculture, they also play a pivotal role in developing, maintaining, and innovating agritourism enterprises (McGehee, Kim, & Jennings, 2007). Although limited in number, studies across the world (e.g., Australia, UK, Ireland, US, New Zealand, Greece) consistently show that agritourism enterprises are primarily managed by female entrepreneurs (Anthopoulou & Koutsou, 2011; Jennings & Stehlik, 2000; Johnsen, 2003; Lagravinese, 2013; McGehee, 2007; Schmitt, 2010). Women are also the driving force behind value-added activities (e.g., food preserves, crafts, quilts) developed to complement agritourism offerings (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; McGehee & Kim, 2004). In addition to such active involvement in agritourism, evidence also indicates

agritourism women are more motivated than their male counterparts in pursuing a set of family, economic, and market-related goals (McGehee, Kim, & Jennings, 2007). For the purpose of this research, agritourism entrepreneurs will be mentioned as agripreneurs throughout the rest of the paper.

In spite of women's active involvement in rural entrepreneurship, their success measured in terms of business economic performance and turnover, or owner's income often reveals that female-owned businesses have lower success rate than male-owned ones (Anthopoulou, 2010). Studies specifically related to agritourism showed that female operators earn significantly less than male ones; the average difference in the U.S. was over \$35,000 (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008). Despite such difference in economic performance, little research has explored the obstacles specifically female agripreneurs face in achieving success (McGehee, 2007).

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The section above has so far argued that female involvement in agriculture, and more specifically in agritourism, contributes significantly to farm productivity and income generation. Women play a crucial role in setting-up, running, and innovating these ventures. In parallel, they are the ones whose labor either remains unrecognized, as is the case with unpaid family farm labor, or they earn less than their male counterparts. Given women's increased contribution to agriculture, pivotal involvement in agritourism, and low economic performance, it is important to identify the challenges hindering their success. Such a need can be deconstructed in four key questions deserving in-depth exploration as justified below.

Research on female entrepreneurship is plagued by methodological and theoretical shortcomings (Ahl, 2006). Within women's entrepreneurial path, there is a major gap in articulating the meaning of success from the viewpoint of the female entrepreneurs, which usually leads to the imposition of pre-conceived notions of success (e.g., larger revenue generation). So, the first question we pose through this research is "*How do female agripreneurs define success?*" Since the scholarship of agritourism has not yet yielded female agripreneurs' definition of success, we will borrow from the literature in relevant areas to present an overview of attempts that have helped define success following an emic approach. Therefore, we will be using the study participants' own expressions and language to define success (Schwandt, 2007).

Understanding success from female entrepreneurs' viewpoint advances our understanding of the priorities for female entrepreneurs. However, it is likely that they face barriers in reaching their own goals or what they consider to be success. Consequently, we also need to shed light on what challenges they face in achieving their self-defined success. Since there has been limited research that looks specifically at female agripreneurs, the challenges identified in this paper are based on studies that examine challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in general. Therefore, in answering the research question, "*What are the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs involved in agritourism?*", future studies will be able to measure success based on parameters that are relevant to women. This paper will first provide an overview of the challenges for female entrepreneurs that have been identified in the literature. Next, the paper will explore the challenges that agripreneurs face that are specific to women's operation of agriculture and agritourism businesses.

In addressing the issue of gendered notion of success among female entrepreneurs, learning about what constitutes success to the entrepreneurs and what barriers they face in reaching their desired success depicts half the picture of their entrepreneurial journey. If we are to effectively identify and subsequently address issues of gender difference in success for agritourism entrepreneurs, then we also need to learn about how is it that the entrepreneurs navigate through the barriers they face with the goal of reaching their self-defined notion of success. The third research question posed by this paper is, “*How do female entrepreneurs overcome the challenges they face in operating agritourism enterprises?*” By answering this question, we intend to identify factors that are critical for women in agritourism to overcome challenges and thereby achieve success.

Finally, as these women continue their ventures in the face of numerous challenges, they likely find opportunities to capitalize on, that allows them to grow and thrive as entrepreneurs. Therefore, in advancing women’s place in agritourism sector, it is important to identify what external factors are helping their businesses. The last question, “*What are the opportunities women agripreneurs find in conducting their businesses?*”, will help to document any external opportunities that these agripreneurs find conducive to them and their businesses as women.

In summary, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do women agripreneurs define success?
2. What are the challenges women agripreneurs face in achieving their self-defined success?
3. How do women agripreneurs overcome those challenges?
4. What are the opportunities women agripreneurs have as entrepreneurs?

Need for the Study

Research on women entrepreneurs has been marred by a number of shortcomings, mainly because of their one-sided empirical focus (Gatewood, Carter, Brush, Greene, & Hart, 2003), inadequate theory development (Brush, 1992), and systematic exclusion of influential factors such as structure, history, and culture (Chell & Baines, 1998). Notably most entrepreneurship studies have applied instruments developed under male-biases (Moore, 1990; Stevenson, 1990) and have a narrow view of success, focusing almost entirely on business ‘hard measures’ (Kalleberg & Leicht, 1991; Loscoco & Robinson, 1991; Parasuramana, Purohita, Godshalk, & Beutell; 1996). Success measured in terms of business’ economic performance and turnover or by owners’ income often reveals lower success rates among females as compared to males (Anthopoulou, 2010), resulting in an overall understatement of low entrepreneurial success of women (Brush, 1992; Hisrich & Brush, 1984). However, evidence suggests that women have a very different notion of success (Greene, Hart, Gatewood, Brush, & Carter, 2003), which may explain reduced entrepreneurial performance of women when evaluated through male-driven hard measures.

In response to such knowledge gap, this study will follow a pragmatic philosophical approach to construct the female agripreneurs’ definition of success, while also taking into account the inherent values in their perspectives (Samdahl, 1999). Such definition, although emerging from the agritourism context, will likely be also meaningful and applicable to female entrepreneurs in a broader context; therefore, this study contributes to the theoretical advancement of both agritourism and rural entrepreneurship. Additionally, such definition can later be tested using quantitative methods for further generalization. Research has noted that policies created without the input of women reinforce farm stereotypes (e.g., farm wives

or small-town homemakers) and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality (Wells & Tanner, 1994). Singling out the obstacles that women agripreneurs face in achieving their self-defined success and the set of actions they use to overcome these barriers have two-fold applications. Firstly, the obstacles identified can be tested further to identify gender-based differences in the types of obstacles agripreneurs face, which can be used to better tailor capacity building opportunities. Secondly, understanding how agripreneurs overcome these barriers has policy implications as such knowledge can shed light to formulate targeted strategies to aid female agripreneurs at a larger scale.

This study is especially important to North Carolina's (NC) rural economic development where agritourism has increased significantly in the last years. NC agricultural statistics showed a nine-fold increase in the number of agritourism farms between 2002 and 2012 (USDA: NASS, 2007; 2012), following a six-fold increase of agritourism-related revenues between 2002 and 2007 (USDA: NASS, 2007). Such growth will likely continue in the upcoming years mostly because of increasing tendencies of traveling as a family, shorter trips by car, multi-activity trips, desire to help out local farmers, and reconnect with rural lifestyles (Carpio, Wohlgenant, & Boonsaeng, 2008; Cordell, 2008). The increased attention on local food production in NC also indicates a positive augury for agritourism in the state (Curtis, Creamer, & Thraves, 2010; Kline, Barbieri, & LaPan, 2015). This study is also important upon taking into consideration the increase of women farm operators in the U.S. and NC in particular. From 2002 to 2007, the number of women principal operators increased almost 30%, accounting in 2007 for 14% of the nation's 2.2 million farms (USDA: NASS, 2007). Specifically in NC, the proportion of women principal operators has increased from 8.9% in 1997 to 13.3% in 2007 (USDA: NASS, 2002; 2007). In light of the concomitant

growth of agritourism and women farm operators at both national and state levels, understanding the meaning, challenges, strategies to overcome challenges and opportunities associated with the success of agritourism in NC warrant special academic attention so that the potential of agritourism can be appropriately harnessed.

Study Definitions

For the purpose of this research, the following definitions will be used to denote the specific terminology.

Agritourism: Farming related activities carried out on a working agricultural facility for leisure, recreation, or education purposes (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013).

Agripreneur: Someone who undertakes any type of entrepreneurial activities in the agricultural sector (Birwa, Lakra, Kushwala, Meena, & Kumar, 2014). In this study, the term that will be used to specifically refer to entrepreneurial farmers engaged in or pursuing agritourism as a means of earning livelihood.

Constraints: Jackson (1988) defined leisure constraints as factors inhibiting people's ability to participate in leisure activities, to spend more time doing so, to take advantage of leisure services, or to achieve a desired level of satisfaction. From such definition, this study expands its meaning to any factor hindering or limiting individuals' participation in any activity, specifically agritourism development.

Emic approach: The research philosophy of constructing meaning from the insider's viewpoint, avoiding the use of pre-defined constructs (Schwandt, 2007).

Entrepreneur: Individual who starts and conducts an enterprise or business and assumes full control and risks; entrepreneurs are also the source of growth through innovation or opportunities (Cantillon, 2010; Evans, 1942; Gartner, 1988; Umoren, 2010).

Entrepreneurial success: Personal satisfaction experienced from the both financial and non-financial outcomes of an entrepreneurial venture (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Lechler, 2001; Solomon & Winslow, 1988).

Motivation: Psychological mechanisms that govern individual's intentional process (Mitchell, 1982).

Opportunity: The chance to meet market need through a creative combination of resources to deliver superior market value, the process of which usually evolves over time (Ardichvili, Cardizi, & Ray, 2003; Casson, 1982; Kirzner, 1973; Schumpeter, 1934).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks and literature that were used to guide the study conceptualization and design. In the first section, we delineate the profile of entrepreneurs and agripreneurs as portrayed in the current literature. The following section summarizes the theoretical framework used in this study. The Dynamic Learning Framework will be used to explain the complex process of entrepreneurial learning. The next section overviews the constructs that constitute women's subjective success. The remaining two sections discuss the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs and female farmers respectively. Since, female agripreneurs are both entrepreneurs and farmers in their identities, both types of challenges are explained to capture a comprehensive view of the challenges that female agripreneurs may face in carrying out their businesses. The last section discusses how entrepreneurs utilize opportunities that enable them to overcome challenges.

Profiling the Entrepreneur and Agripreneur

Entrepreneurs are defined in numerous ways, yet a universal definition has not been reached (Shaver & Scott, 1991; Solomon & Winslow, 1988). Three philosophical approaches are predominantly used to frame entrepreneurship and entrepreneur definitions (Solomon & Winslow, 1988; Stevenson & Sahlman, 1989): (1) the functional approach emphasizes the individual's interaction with the environment (Cope, 2005); (2) the personality approach stresses the unique set of inherent, stable, and enduring personality characteristics that predispose certain individuals to undertake entrepreneurial activities (Greenberger & Sexton,

1988); and (3) the behavioral approach focuses on how individuals with certain characteristics tend to behave, by postulating that individual's personality characteristics are secondary to their entrepreneurial behavior (Gartner, 1988; Low & MacMillan, 1988).

Agripreneurs are individuals undertaking any type of entrepreneurial activities in the agricultural sector (Bairwa, Lakra, Kushwala, Meena, & Kumar, 2014). In addition to being entrepreneurs, they are also farmers and as such they demonstrate a composite profile that comprises both typical farmers' and entrepreneurs' characteristics and values. Entrepreneurs are usually profiled as innovative, confident and optimistic individuals who tend to be competitive and achievement oriented (Bruyat & Julien, 2000; Carland, & Carland, 1992; Shane, Locke, & Collins, 2003; Hornardy & Aboud, 1971; McClelland, 1987; Shediak, 2014; Solomon & Winslow, 1988); they are also risk-takers who enjoy taking control of situations (Hornardy & Aboud, 1971; McClelland, 1987; Murugesan, 2010; Shaver & Scott, 1991; Shediak, 2014; Solomon & Winslow, 1988). Entrepreneurs are also hardworking skilled individuals who tend to possess business knowledge (Hornardy & Aboud, 1971; McClelland, 1987; Shediak, 2014).

Farmers are usually profiled as individuals who simultaneously foster a set of values that are *economic* or *instrumental*, such as profit maximization and business expansion (Brodt, Klonsky, & Tourte, 2006; Duesberg, O'Connor, & Dhubhain, 2013; Ilbery, 1983; Maybery, Crase, & Gullifer, 2005, Solano, Leon, Perez, Herrero, 2001), *social*, such as family time and information exchange through social networks (Brodt, Klonsky, & Tourte, 2006; Gasson, 1973; Ilbery, 1983; Maybery, Crase, & Gullifer, 2005; Solano, Leon, Perez, Herrero, 2001), *expressive*, such as being creative and proud of ownership (Gasson, 1973; Ilbery, 1983), and *intrinsic* such as independence and chosen lifestyle (Duesberg, O'Connor,

& Dhubhain, 2013; Gasson, 1973; Ilbery, 1983). Put together, agripreneurs' highly value innovation (Brodt, Klonsky, & Tourte, 2006), diversification (Willock et al., 1999) and environmental stewardship (Brodt, Klonsky, & Tourte, 2006; Willock et al., 1999). Given their profile, agripreneurs are vulnerable to stress (Willock et al., 1999).

Agripreneurs have been broadly characterized as having a mix of economic and non-economic values (McGehee, 2009; Nickerson, 2001). Economically, agripreneurs are driven to create additional income for their farms and their families, to fully utilize farm resources, and to keep up with changing market forces (Anthopoulou, 2010; Barbieri, 2010; McGehee et al., 2002; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). At the same time, agripreneurs are driven by their desire to continue farming, enhance the quality of life of themselves and their families, maintain rural lifestyle, and educate the public about agriculture and rural life (Barbieri, 2010; Getz & Carlsen, 2000; McGehee, 2002; Nickerson, Black, & McCool, 2001; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Sharing entrepreneurial characteristics, agripreneurs also demonstrate the qualities of being dynamic and innovative (Anthopoulou, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The Dynamic Learning Theory, which informs the process of overcoming entrepreneurial challenges through knowledge accumulation, has been used to guide this study. The section below elaborates on this framework.

Dynamic Learning Framework (DLF)

Entrepreneurs function in a world of uncertainty in multiple fronts such as financial well-being, psychological well-being, career security, and family relations (Liles, 1974).

These uncertainties pose challenges for entrepreneurs, which take various forms depending on the context, the environment, and the skills of the entrepreneur (Shaver & Scott, 1991). The way entrepreneurs overcome these challenges can be explained through the Dynamic Learning Framework (DLF), which captures the dialectic interaction between the environment and the learning process of entrepreneurship (Cope, 2005). Specifically, this framework explains the learning process through which entrepreneurs face challenges, react to them, learn from them, and ultimately overcome them.

For a long time, the entrepreneurial theory has been approached from functional, personality, or behavioral perspectives (Stevenson & Sahlman, 1989). However, these approaches do not adequately explain the interactive nature between the entrepreneur and the environment, and do not adequately capture the dynamic nature of learning process (Cope, 2005). Hence, the DLF emerged as a way to encompass the fluid and interactive process of entrepreneurial learning as individuals navigate through their ventures. The learning process can be broken down into three distinct stages: Accumulated Knowledge, Reflective Thinking and Critical Learning, and Generative Learning and Application (Figure 1).

The first DLF stage, Accumulated Knowledge, implies that individuals come to the entrepreneurial arena with a knowledge composed of a unique stock of past experiences, business skills and personal abilities accumulated over time (Harvey & Evans, 1995; Minniti & Bygrave, 2001; Reuber & Fisher, 1999). Given the complexity of the entrepreneurial process, individuals' learning process is interactive, and learning itself is cumulative in nature (i.e., their new knowledge is built onto their previous levels of knowledge) and such knowledge shape the entrepreneurs' learning process (Minniti & Bygrave, 2001).

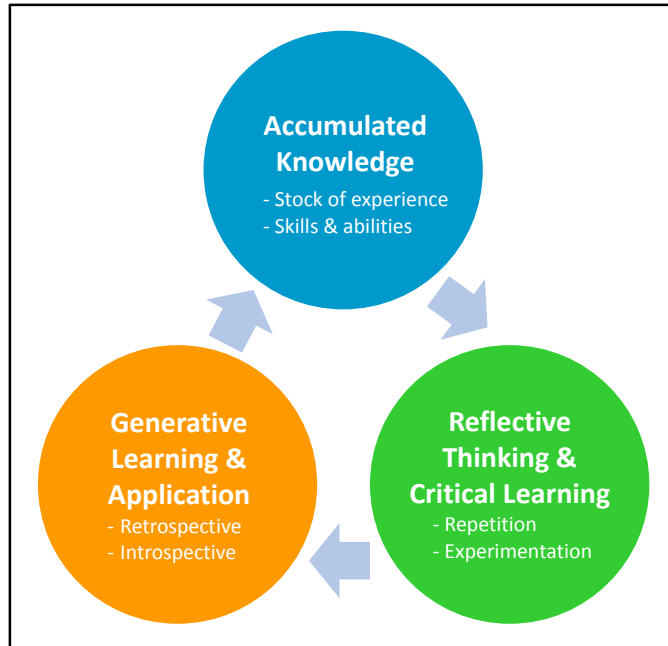


Figure 1: Steps of the Dynamic Learning process

The second DLF stage, Reflective Thinking and Critical Learning, is the most important and complex one because this stage suggests that entrepreneurs enhance their knowledge through an iterative process of thinking and action (Cope & Watts, 2000). This stage implies that whenever entrepreneurs face a challenge, they first reflect on their past experiences and knowledge to devise a solution. If such a solution fails, entrepreneurs feed the resulting outcome back into the process to redefine their strategy; they continue such repetition and experimentation process until they are able to formulate a favorable outcome to overcome their challenge. According to the literature, the challenges entrepreneurs face serve as stimulators that compel reflection on previous experiences and knowledge; such stimulation leads to higher learning outcomes (Cope, 2003), catalyzes future entrepreneurial actions, and enhances their problem-solving skills (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Boud, Cohen, & Walker 1993; Mezirow, 1991).

The final DLF stage is Generative Learning and Application, and it happens when the outcomes of the previous stage instigate a new way of doing something (e.g., a new process), clarify a problem, or develop a new skill (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). Scholars have suggested that this type of learning is both retrospective and prospective. It is retrospective because it enables entrepreneurs “to abstract and generalize across contexts, to recognize patterns and to build relationships between different situations and events” (Cope, 2005; p. 386). It is also prospective because it leads to “higher-order skills that are generalizable and lead to a greater transfer of learning” (Henry, 1989; p. 29). It also should be noted that generative application may not happen immediately followed by the actual learning event; more critical and challenging forms of learning usually require time to put their experiences into perspective and to effectively apply the learning later (Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1993; Reuber & Fisher, 1999). Once Generative Learning and Application occurs, the learning outcomes and solutions are fed back into the process as part of the entrepreneur’s Accumulated Knowledge.

The Attributes of the Entrepreneurial Dynamic Learning

Entrepreneurial learning occurs from hands-on and seminal experiences. Entrepreneurs are constantly learning as they manage their business (Hines & Thorpe, 1995; Reuber & Fischer, 1993), which leads to low and high levels of learning through gradual and incremental experiences (Applebaum & Goransson, 1997; Burgoyne & Hodgson, 1983). Entrepreneurs also have seminal (exceptional) periods of learning, attained from critical experiences, which have profound impact in shaping entrepreneurs’ approach to work and lifestyles, and even challenge their beliefs and assumptions (Cope, 2003; Deakins & Freel,

1998; Rae & Carswell, 2000). Such difference in the type of impact has encouraged some researchers to place more emphasis on seminal learning events than cumulative nature of routinized learning (Mezirow, 1991). To fully conceptualize the dynamic process of entrepreneurial learning requires us to recognize its three interrelated attributes (Figure 2).

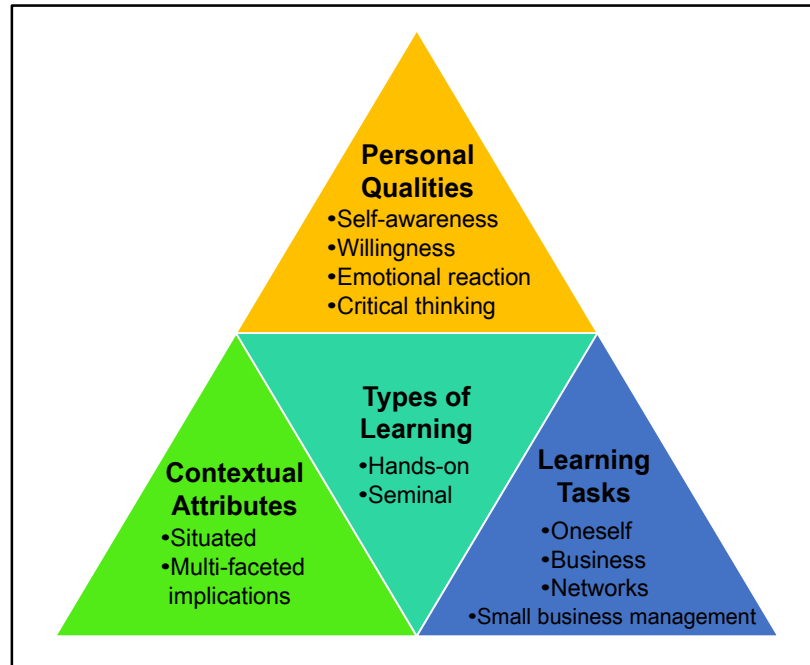


Figure 2: Attributes of the critical learning process

First, entrepreneurs require a set of *Personal Qualities*, usually summarized as having a sharp sense of self-awareness, strong willingness to experiment upon new situations or opportunities, emotional reaction, and high levels of critical thinking that help them to learn from past experiences in a meaningful manner (Cope, 2005). This willingness to experiment is very important since it helps entrepreneurs to address challenging issues and compels them to question their taken-for-granted beliefs. In their learning process, entrepreneurs also have

the ability to take advantage from the wider context of personal and business relationships, making every actor in their complex network a learning agent (Hines & Thorpe, 1995).

Secondly, the critical learning process is *Contextual* because it is situated and has broad implications. Critical learning is situated because it takes place within a social setting formed by multiple and overlapping communities of knowledge and practice (Holman, Pavlica, & Thorpe, 1997). Hence, entrepreneurs learn as they are interacting with a wide array of stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, peers, experts, and policy makers (Boussouara & Deakins, 1999). Such learning has social, financial, and emotional implications, which are interconnected to a large extent. For example, a certain learning experience may have negative financial implications, which brings negative emotional reaction to the entrepreneur, while the individual also has to face social implications that the experience brings (Cope & Watts, 2000; Cope, 2003).

The final attribute of the entrepreneurial learning process is composed of the different *Learning Tasks*, defined as the set of knowledge acquired about oneself, the business, small business management, and networks (Pittaway & Thorpe, 2013). Cope (2005) defined these four types of tasks as: (a) recognizing entrepreneur's strengths and weaknesses, personal objectives, interests, and motivations as well as awareness of their role within the business; (b) identifying business's strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities, needs and requirements for growth, and available resources (e.g., staff), which ultimately guide the organization's future direction; (c) learning about the procedures, functions and systems pertaining to small businesses, such as recruitment, compensation, and financial monitoring; and (d) gaining insight about the business network that includes existing and potential stakeholders, with the aim to maximize the benefits they can obtain from advisory agencies

(e.g., professional associations) and support services (e.g., banks, insurance). The last learning task also includes learning about the nature and management of business relationships and is considered as the overarching force to get critical learning to function effectively (Cope, 2005).

Defining Entrepreneurial Success: Women's Perspectives

Entrepreneurial research has thus far attempted to describe and measure success, which is a broad and multi-dimensional construct, in multiple ways (Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008). The meaning of success has evolved over time and varies across societies. The historical centrality of men as the provider for the family living has resulted in the masculinization of many human life aspects (O'Neil, Hopkins, & Bilimoria, 2008; Drew & Murtagh, 2005; Faludi, 1991), including the academe. The focus of men as breadwinner has shaped a masculine definition of success revolving around the provision of material goods; thus, the more goods a man accumulates the more successful he is (Doyle, 1983; Drew & Murtagh, 2005; Dyke & Murphy, 2006).

Women have historically faced a different set of expectations and their success is judged by their achievements in the relationships they forged in private realm (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Levinson & Levinson, 1996). Although over time women have gradually emerged outside their private realm into professional careers, expectations of the society at large have not evolved and women are still expected to carry out their care-giving role if choosing to take on additional public responsibilities, resulting in their need to choose less financial rewarding—but more flexible—careers that allows them to fulfill their domestic roles (Simon, 1995; McKeen & Bu, 2005; Orenstein, 2000).

The predominant masculine worldview of society along with its economic-driven evolution, where work has become the chief mechanism of fulfilling different roles, has resulted in the empirical measurement of success based on external indicators, usually in monetary terms (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Hutchings, Lirio, & Metcalfe; 2012). Briefly stated, traditional values associated with the construct of career success seem to be male dominated (Ahl, 2006; Eccles, 1994; O'Neil, Hopkins, & Bilimoria, 2008; Orser & Leck, 2010). However, the gender difference does not end at the mere construct of success as some scholars have suggested; while women's career development path may not necessarily be different than men's, it is more complicated owing to the challenges imposed by gendered social contexts (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Fitzgerald & Crites, 1980).

Recently a call for incorporating internal or subjective indicators of success has emerged, which is measured according to individual's own criteria (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Lirio et al., 2007). Such a call is especially important to respond to in gender-related studies, as Dyke and Murphy (2006) found that significantly more women, as compared to men, considered their ability to reject the traditional notion of success as an important aspect of their own success (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Rosener, 1990).

The Mosaic of Professional and Personal Aspects in Women's Success

The definition of women's success is constructed by a mosaic of aspects related to their professional and personal identity. Upon close examination it becomes clear, some of those professional and personal aspects are intertwined in a mixed category, thus resulting in three distinct strands of constructs related to their subjective success (Figure 3).

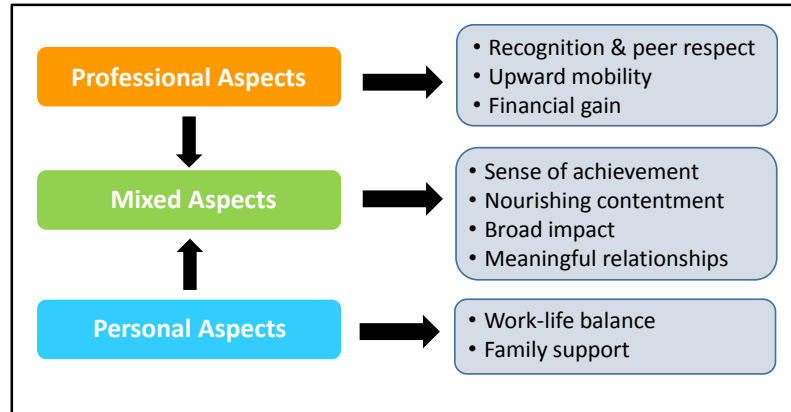


Figure 3: Aspects defining women’s subjective success

Aspects of women’s professional success, although reinforce personal values, are closely connected to women’s professional identification (Lee et al. 2006). Three professional aspects are found in the literature: recognition and peer respect; upward mobility; and financial gain. First, women consider the *Recognition and Peer Respect*, which is defined as being respected by peers because of their good reputation, sense of responsibility and dedication, to be an important component of success (Dyke & Duxbury, 2011; Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Lee et al., 2006; Lirio et al., 2007; Sturges, 1999). Some women intend to gain interpersonal recognition by helping others professionally, while others aim for a broader professional recognition of their efforts (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). *Upward Mobility*, by advancing in the professional hierarchy, is also an important aspect of women’s success (Lee et al., 2006; O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). Finally, women also consider *Financial Gain* as an important component of their organizational success (Butter & Moore, 1997; Dyke & Duxbury, 2011). While women’s professional aspects of subjective success are not widely different than their male counterparts, women generally tend to define it as a more

encompassing construct, placing their professional emphasis within their holistic personal success (Sturges, 1999).

The meaning of women's success is also constructed by two aspects they deem important in their personal lives: work-life balance and family support. *Work-life Balance* is one of the most dominant themes that emerge as personal aspect of women's success (Dyke & Murphy, 2011; Lee et al., 2006; Lirio et al., 2007; Sturges, 1999). Balancing workload with personal priorities and family life is an important indicator of women's success for women expressed it in intrinsic terms, like happiness, and not in extrinsic rewards (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Lirio et al., 2007; Sturges, 1999). This work-life balance is closely related to flexibility of the choice of career as well as the task itself. Women report that work-life balance is possible when they have enough flexibility to do what they wanted with their work and career (Lirio et al., 2007). Women also refer to *Family Support* when defining success because it is critical to accommodate work demands. Such support is usually referred to as emotional assistance—especially from spouses—to negotiate stress and as the provision of information—usually from parents—to prepare them for their careers (Lirio et al., 2007).

In addition to the aforementioned distinct professional and personal values, the uniqueness of women's perception of success is highlighted by a set of four mixed aspects that overlap their professional and personal lives: sense of achievement; nourishing contentment; broad impact, and meaningful relationships. *Sense of Achievement* is also considered an important component of success for women because they highly value learning and growing (Lee et al., 2006; Lirio et al., 2007; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). Such a sense of achievement is reinforced by succeeding at challenging tasks and taking on pioneering initiatives (Sturges, 1999), as well as having the chance to work on something about which

they are passionate (Lirio et al., 2007) or that they find interesting (Lee et al., 2006).

Nourishing Contentment is another aspect of women's subjective success because they are keen to be involved in activities that fulfill their potential and enables their growth (Buttner & Moore, 1997; Dyke & Duxbury, 2011; Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Lee et al., 2006; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Sturges, 1999). Such contentment involves in parallel the fulfillment of their professional and personal commitments (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Lee et al., 2006), which ultimately leads to their personal growth, individual skills improvement, and professional development (Buttner & Moore, 1997).

The opportunity to create a *Broad Impact* in their personal and professional arenas is also an important aspect of women's success (Lee et al., 2006; Lirio, 2007; Sturges, 1999). Women seek to contribute in a way that bear long term positive outcomes to the organization (Lee et al., 2006) and to the wider society (Lirio et al., 2007). *Meaningful Relationships*, at both professional and personal/family levels, are considered to be a major component of success for women (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Lirio et al., 2007; Rosener, 1990). Women considered having strong professional relationships with their peers and subordinates to represent group success that is more meaningful than their individual careers accomplishments (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). Likewise, women also consider that fostering and maintaining strong family relationships with their spouse and children is crucial to their success (Lirio et al., 2007).

Entrepreneurial Challenges Constraining Women's Success

During the 1990s, the number of women entrepreneurs increased, contributing heavily to the global economy (Gundry, Ben-Yoseph, & Posig, 2002). Between 1987 and

1999, the number of women-owned businesses increased by 103% in the U.S., and the employment provided by these businesses grew almost five fold, with agribusinesses being one of the highest growing industries (National Foundation for Women Business Owners, 1999). Despite the contribution to society, many primary industries, such as construction, transportation, and agriculture, remain largely male dominated, which poses a greater burden to women's success in addition to the challenges naturally affecting such industries (Center for Women's Business Research, 2001). Difference in entrepreneurial growth between genders also indicate that women likely face different sets of challenges than men or face the similar challenges and are affected worse than men (Gundry, Ben-Yoseph, & Posig, 2002). In addition, women also continue to face challenges posed by patriarchal societies where women are subjected to discriminatory treatments (Kabeer, 2000; Kantor, 2003) This section summarizes the seven different challenges that tend to affect the operation and success of female owned businesses; these are access to resources, access to business networks, lack of relevant training, limited business skills, role expectation, structural barriers, lack of credibility, and limited growth opportunity (Figure 5).

One of the biggest hurdles female entrepreneurs face in comparison with their male counterparts arises out of their differential *Access to Financial Resources* (Babaeva & Chirikova, 1997; Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004; Buttner & Moore, 1997; Godwin, Stevens, & Brenner, 2006; Hisrich & Brush, 1984; Levent, Masurel, Nijkamp, 2003; Loscoco & Robinson, 1991; McClelland, Swail, & Ibbotson, 2005; McKay, 2001; Winn, 2005). Women are less likely to secure external sources of funding (Coleman, 2000) during the start-up (Carter & Rosa, 1998) as well as growth periods (Still & Walker, 2006) of their entrepreneurial development. Even in instances where women are able to secure large loans,

they tend to be charged a higher interest rate (Coleman, 2000) and face higher collateral requirements than their men counterparts (Greene, Hart, Gatewood, Brush, & Carter, 2003).

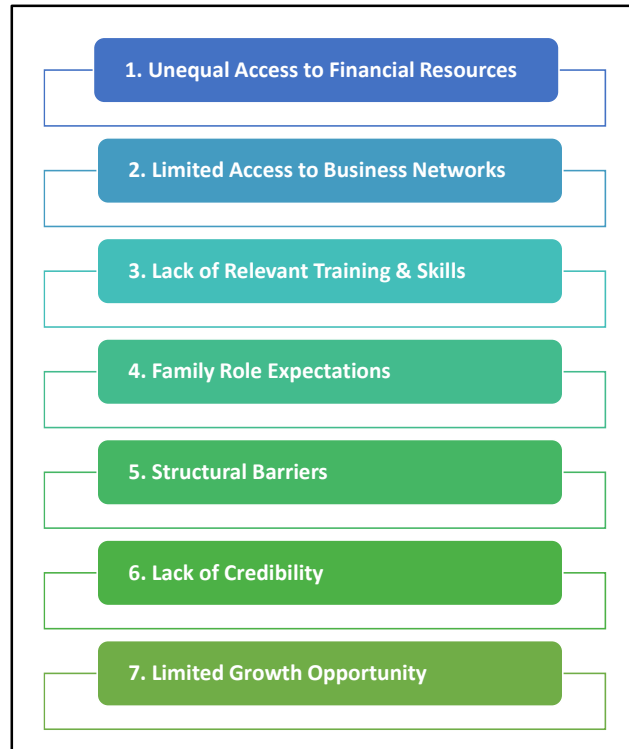


Figure 4: Challenges female entrepreneurs face

Women’s reduced access to financial resources is even higher for enterprises that are facing a rapid growth, which pushes entrepreneurial women to spend their business and personal earnings and even to incur in personal debt to finance further business development (Gundry, Ben-Yoseph, & Posig, 2002). Furthermore, in instances where men and women were both refused credit, their reasons for refusals varied. Men were more likely to be refused credit based on their companies’ business sector and their own lack of educational attainment, whereas women were likely to be refused credit on the basis of their lack of

business experience and their domestic circumstances (Carter & Rosa, 1998). While applying to institutional financiers, or asking for loans from family or friends, women are likely to come up against the assumption that ‘women can’t handle money’ (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004; p 262).

The second challenge female entrepreneurs often face is regarding *Access to Business Networks*, which negatively affects their access to information, credit, and training opportunities, potential business partners and new market entry (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004; Gundry, Ben-Yoseph, Posig, 2002; Hisrich & Brush, 1984; Levent, Masurel, & Nijkamp, 2003; McKay, 2001; Still & Walker, 2006; Weiler & Bernasek, 2001; Winn, 2005). Studies have demonstrated that network affiliation has a great explanatory power for performance and, thereby, has a high significance on firm profitability (Lerner, Brush, & Hisrich, 1997), because it provides business related information during the start-up phase and access to mentors for guidance and counsel support (Lerner, Brush, & Hisrich, 1997). However, female entrepreneurs are frequently left out of formal or informal business associations and, thus, are at a disadvantageous position regarding sources of information and advice for operating businesses (Still & Walker, 2006).

Another challenge female entrepreneurs often cite is the *Lack of Relevant Training and Skills* during both business start-up and expansion phases (Hisrich & Brush, 1984; McClelland, Swail, Bell, & Ibbotson, 2005; McKay, 2001). Such limitation, generally in terms of reduced business skills, manifests into an array of related legal problems (e.g., business registration processes), managing inefficiencies (e.g., dealing with business stakeholders), and limited financial (e.g., managing cash-flow) and technical know-how (Babaeva & Chirikova, 1997; Hisrich & Brush, 1984; McClelland, Swail, Bell, & Ibbotson,

2005; McKay, 2001; Still & Walker, 2006). As a case in point, women's limited education was found to be the major constraint to apply to financial institutions in a study conducted in New Zealand (Fay & Williams, 1993).

Family Role Expectations is crucial to a female entrepreneur's ability to face and successfully manage business challenges (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004; Gundry, Ben-Yoseph, & Posig, 2002; Loscoco & Robinson, 1991; McClelland, Swail, Bell, & Ibbotson, 2005). While career opportunities for women have changed over the last few decades, the family role model has not changed much (Winn, 2005). Expected family responsibilities rooted in gender-based cultural and social values are a challenge that entrepreneurial women face (Levente, Masurel, & Nijkamp, 2003), which sometimes is manifested through resistance from family and friends to their entrepreneurial endeavors (McKay, 2001). Although the conflict derived from family responsibilities is evident for married women with and without children (Shragg, Yacuk, & Glass, 1992), the former experience a higher level of stress because of managing both their businesses and their households (Winn, 2005).

Overall, family demands along with work pressure often affect entrepreneurs' interpersonal relationships negatively, leading to heightened level of stress (Hisrich & Brush, 1984). However, social pressure has a different effect between genders. Positive family influence was found to enhance men's successful business ventures, while higher commitment to domestic responsibilities reduces the women's time commitment to their businesses (Loscoco & Robinson, 1991). In terms of taking up bigger business challenges, women often face unfavorable environments, and are likely to prioritize balance of work and life over size of business (Still & Walker, 2006). This role expectation is a complex outcome

of the interaction among various social, cultural, political, and economic factors that render this challenge significant for female entrepreneurs.

Female entrepreneurs operating in male-dominated patriarchal settings tend to face a complex set of *Structural Barriers* which affect them in the personal as well as professional realm (Goldwin, Stevens, & Brenner, 2006; Lerner, Brush, & Hisrich, 1984; Levent, Masurel, & Nijkamp, 2003; McKay, 2001). Not only do women have to overcome the cultural barriers in pursuing their entrepreneurial goals, but they also have to face discrimination from a male-dominated supplier system that has biases against female produced goods and services and extortion from various stakeholders (Babaeva & Chirikova, 1997; Weiler & Bernasek, 2001). Structural barriers also means that women's differential information needs during business start-up or need for support services are not addressed (McClelland, Swail, Bell, & Ibbotson, 2005). These structural barriers impede the alleviation of some of the more practical challenges that female entrepreneurs face in carrying out business functions.

Female entrepreneurs face the challenge of *Lack of Credibility* owing to a number of socio-cultural and structural factors (Gundry, Ben-Yoseph, & Posig, 2002; Shragg, Yacuk, & Glass, 1992). Socio-culturally, women's entrepreneurial endeavors are tainted by patriarchal expectations even when they undertake the dual work and family responsibilities (Marlow, 1997) and suffer from not being perceived as serious entrepreneurs (Gundry, Ben-Yoseph, & Posig, 2002). Although women's socio-cultural status reduces their credibility in setting up their businesses (Bruni, Gheraldi, & Poggio, 2001), women still may be willing to accept the entrepreneurial risk because they already face a more hostile and prejudicial work environment (Bellu, 1993). Structurally, women are perceived as lacking the necessary

characteristics for successful entrepreneurship (Buttner & Rosen, 1989), which often results in a negative self-perception and increases their intrapersonal barriers (Shragg, Yacuk, & Glass, 1992). Thus, the lack of credibility not only challenges women to succeed in their entrepreneurial pursuits within a male-dominated world but also increases their burden to overcome interpersonal barriers.

A final challenge faced by female entrepreneurs is their *Limited Growth Opportunity* primarily because of the sectors in which their enterprises operate (Buttner, & Moore, 1997; Rosa, Carter, & Hamilton, 1996; Still & Walker, 2006). Women tend to lead enterprises related to service, retail, and health and beauty, which although require low start-up capital and have small staff size (Still & Walker, 2006), are characterized by their slow growth (Buttner, Moore, & Dorothy, 1997). As a result, women tend to operate small size operations with reduced opportunities for a significant growth (Buttner, & Moore, 1997).

Women Entrepreneurs in Agriculture and Agritourism

As aforementioned, female entrepreneurs at large face a set of obstacles hindering the operation of their businesses, which are worsened when their entrepreneurial ventures fall within the agriculture sector. Improving female productivity in agriculture is crucial for attaining the Millennium Development Goals (Pehu, Lambrou, & Hartl, 2009) because their participation in agriculture has direct and indirect influences on the sustainability of agricultural productivity, food security, increased nutrition, and poverty alleviation (Meizen-Dick, 2010). Thus, it is of merit to assess the different types of obstacles that female entrepreneurs face in their agricultural operations. The following section elaborates on seven different challenges female agripreneurs commonly face: namely, unequal land rights, lower

access to inputs, reduced access to information, unequal access to markets, gendered extension system, gender gaps in rural institutions, and customs and social norms (Figure 6).

Evidence from around the world suggests that one of the most pressing issues female farmers face is *Unequal Land Rights* (Doss, 2001; Duvvury, 1989; Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009; Phiri et al., 2004; Pusker, 2013; Quisumbing, 1994; 1996). Women in general seem to face greater land insecurity since they have to deal with unfavorable statutory and customary land tenure systems (Ragasa, 2012). Land inheritance through customary law or through marital property and inheritance rights seem to put women at a disadvantageous position; even in cases when they inherit land property from their husbands, they are often excluded from gaining formal title to the land (Benschop, 2004). Often, customary laws allow eviction or stripping off women's titles to land they might inherit from husbands (Agarwal, 2003). This insecurity adversely affects their ability to secure irrigation water and in many instances they lose land rights when irrigation projects are initiated or are excluded from irrigation projects altogether (Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010). In societies with equal inheritance values, such as North America, farmers tend to pass the farmland to their male offspring aiming to perpetuate the family farming practice (Salamon, Gengenbacher, & Penas, 1986), despite women being able to inherit land from her parents or as a widow after the husband dies (Salamon, 1995).

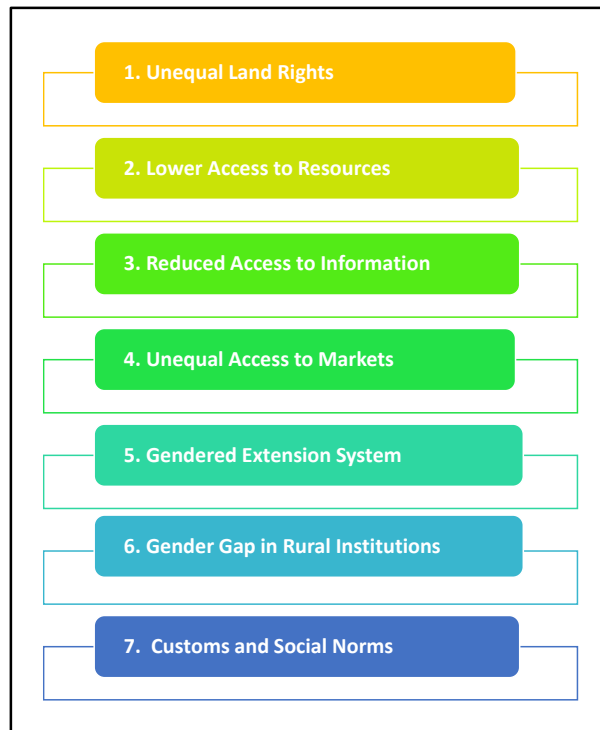


Figure 5: Challenges faced by female agripreneurs

Women in agriculture face tremendous challenges in *Access to Resources* such as credit, draft animals, tools, and technology, and these may adversely affect their productivity (Doss, 2001; Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010; Peterman, Behrman, & Quisumbing, 2009; Quisumbing, 1994; Ragasa, 2012). Financially, they are often constrained by high collateral and interest rates that inhibit their ability to secure sufficient credit (Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010). This in turn affects their ability to purchase inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, and machinery among others. Lack of credit sometimes limits a female farmer's ability to adopt commercial high yield varieties and other complementary inputs (Doss, 2001). Owing to greater financial capital, men are more likely than women to own draft animals, soil fertility inputs, crop production technologies, agricultural tools, and capacity to hire

additional farm labor, thus increasing their overall productivity (Peterman, Behrman, & Quisumbing, 2009; Quisumbing, 1994; Ragasa, 2012).

Female farmers are constrained by their *Reduced Access to Information* regarding a wide array of production function and support services that undermine their production capacity (Doss, 2001; Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009; Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010; Ragasa, 2012). Inability to access timely and appropriate information on legal land rights reinforces women's already disadvantageous position in the rural society (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009). Female farmers' lower literacy rate negatively affects the information they can obtain and the ability to effectively use such information, which limits their ability to adopt new technologies or to correctly use them (Peterman, Behrman, & Quisumbing, 2009; Ragasa, 2012).

Female farmers also face *Unequal Access to Markets* due to lack of information on market prices, difficulty with modes of transportation, and fear of harassment (Roos & Gladwin, & Spring, 2000; Pandolfelli & Quisumbing, 2010). In instances when they are able to access product markets, female farmers usually secure lower prices for their outputs as compared to those men obtain (Horrell & Krishnan, 2007), resulting in overall less revenues (Njuki, Kaaria, Chamunorwa, & Chiuri, 2011). Women's inability to access markets have far-reaching repercussions in the global economy. Kasente, Lockwood, Vivian, and Whitehead (2002) documented that countries with export potential are constrained to expanding their exports due to their female farmers' limited contribution to local agricultural markets.

Women's limited access to resources, information, and market intelligence is exacerbated by a *Gendered Extension System* that is men-dominated (Due, Magayane, &

Temu, 1989; Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010; Peterman, Behrman, & Quisumbing, 2009; Quisumbing, 1994, Ragasa, 2012). Extension agents in developing countries often prefer to work with the household decision-maker who are always perceived as male (Pusker, 2013). The decision to collaborate with the men is based on the assumption that knowledge passed onto male farmers will automatically get passed onto their wives, which is often not the case (Ragasa, 2012). Even though female extension agents serve a higher percentage of female agripreneurs in general (Puskur, 2013) and female agripreneurs prefer working with female extension agents because they are more accommodating toward their needs (Due, Magayane, & Temu, 1997), women's entrepreneurial needs are not adequately addressed in reality because extension systems are dominated by male agents (Puskur, 2013).

There is also a significant *Gender Gap in Rural Institutions and Policy* promoting improved technology use and access to resources. Local organizations (e.g., water-user associations, producer associations) significantly influence the adoption of new technology and access to key resources (Peterman, Behrman, & Quisumbing, 2010; Pandolfelli, Meinzen-Dick, & Dohrn, 2008). However, women's participation and leadership in these organizations are limited although these have been proven crucial to increase their productivity and profitability (Acharya & Gentle, 2006; Agarwal, 2003; Meinzen-Dick et al., 2011; Ragsa, 2012). Female farmers also face barriers derived from policies limiting their eligibility to access agricultural incentives or innovation programs (Doss, 2001; Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009) or from gender blind legislation in which men stand to benefit more (Ragasa, 2012).

Lastly, women are also constrained by a myriad of *Customs and Social Norms* that are usually associated with the patriarchal values of rural societies (Ogunlela & Mukhtar,

2009; Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010; Quisumbing, 1994). Women are often expected to carry out the role of the primary caregiver and when she also engages in farming and/or entrepreneurial responsibilities, time allocation becomes a major challenge (Quisumbing, 1994). Balancing the two roles of family and farm, women are left with fewer opportunities to engage in social capital building opportunities, which further hinders their ability to access resources, information and markets (Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010; Ragasa, 2012). In societies across the globe, reduced social capital also translates into unequal property rights (Duvvury, 1989) and sometimes prevents remedial policies from taking proper effect (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009).

Overcoming Challenges

Reviewing the literature on how female entrepreneurs overcome challenges they face gives us a sense that these individuals do not adhere to a uniform strategy in addressing these issues. Rather, they follow a more adaptive style by adjusting their strategy in successfully overcoming individual challenges (McClelland, Swail, Bell, & Ibbotson, 2005). A wide body of literature suggests that women engage in entrepreneurial ventures because it allows them to fulfill entrepreneurial desires as well as overcome societal gender perceptions imposed on professional women (Buttner & Moore, 1997; McClelland, Swail, Bell, & Ibbotson, 2005). An overarching theme that also emerges is the motivation, aspiration, and commitment behind starting their own business that also pushes the female entrepreneurs to overcome the challenges they may face (Brush, Carter, Gatewood, Greene, & Hart, 2004; Babaeva & Chirikova, 1997).

Appropriate training and higher levels of education appear critical to enable women to overcome challenges related to reduced business know-how and role expectations, and to better access financial capital (Carter, Brush, Greene, Gatewood, & Hart, 2003; Win, 2005). Buttner & Moore, (1997) found that the allure of the business challenges push women into entrepreneurship, perhaps indicating that challenges experienced helps them fulfill their own potential. Thus, fostering resources to support balancing women's business responsibilities and family expectations can help them to successfully perform in their entrepreneurial ventures (Babaeva & Chirikova, 1997; Gundry, Ben-Yoseph, & Posig, 2002).

Research also suggests that women who are able to capitalize on their social capital are able to successfully overcome a number of business challenges. For example, Levent, Masurel, and Nijkamp (2003) found that ethnic entrepreneurs who are able to gain access and cater to their ethnic market or business networks within their communities are able to successfully maintain their operation and gradually expand into non-ethnic markets. Other studies also suggest that women entrepreneurs may partner with their male peers to gain access to a number of resources and business networks (Godwin, Stevens, & Brenner, 2006).

Entrepreneurs' Pursuit of Opportunities

Entrepreneurs as individuals identify and pursue certain opportunity that leads to newer goods or services production or new organization creation (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). To understand how entrepreneurs overcome challenges by pursuing certain opportunities, we need to pay attention to how these opportunities come into existence to entrepreneurial individuals and what factors lead to their exploitation. Shane and Venkataraman (2000) proposed an integrated framework that explains the relationships among a wide array of factors (e.g., availability of information, personal values) that

intervene throughout the entrepreneurship process. They conceptualized entrepreneurs' pursuit of opportunities as an interactive process of population level factors, such as entrepreneurial alertness, information, social network, and personal traits (Ardichvili, Cardozo, & Ray, 2003), that influence the materialization of certain opportunities by certain individuals (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Specifically, this conceptual framework breaks the utilization of opportunities into various phases (existence of opportunity, discovery of opportunity, decision to pursue an entrepreneurial opportunity, modes of exploitation), each of which having a given set of intervening factors (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Any given opportunity goes through the four stages to materialize as a business venture, as can be seen in Figure 4.

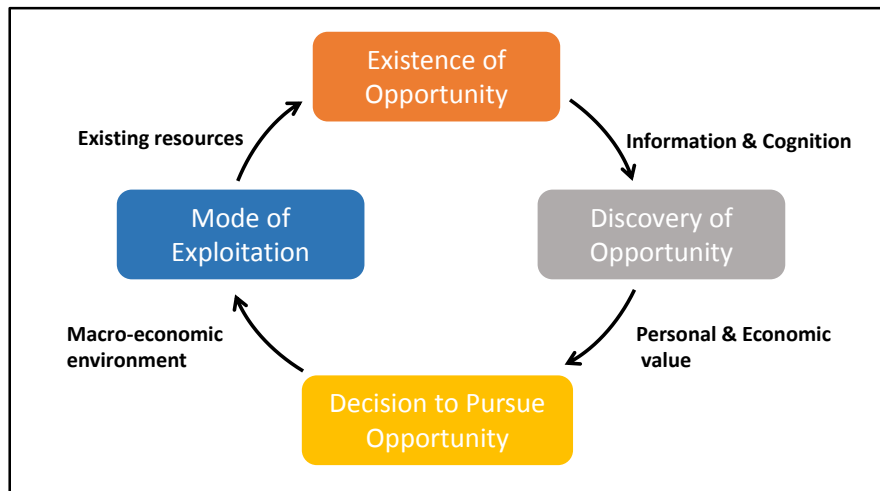


Figure 6: Role of opportunities in entrepreneurial pursuits

The *Existence of Opportunity* step is defined by the set of existing resources that have the capacity to be converted into new goods, services, or organization methods through a means-ends entrepreneurial relationship (Casson, 1982; Kirzner, 1997). The next step

involves an actual *Discovery of the Opportunity* because it does not suffice for the opportunity to merely exist but individuals have to act upon them and subsequently turn them into an entrepreneurial fruition. Two factors intervene in this step: the possession of necessary information to identify the opportunity and the cognition of the value of these opportunities (Busenitz & Barney, 1996; Shaver & Scott, 1991). Entrepreneurs have a varied stock of information, usually not readily accessible to the wider population, which influences their ability to recognize and select certain opportunities. Entrepreneurs also have the cognitive ability to recognize new means-end relationships from the existing opportunities.

The last two steps demark the actual entrepreneurial activity. The *Decision to Pursue an Entrepreneurial Opportunity* depends on the personal and economic value the opportunity brings to the entrepreneur. Among the many entrepreneurial opportunities, the entrepreneur will pursue such that is meaningful to themselves. At the same time, the entrepreneur's decision is also influenced by evaluating the cost of alternative business ventures. The *Mode of Exploitation* step is defined by the macro-economic environment, composed by existing policies including industry regulations, market conditions (e.g., existing competition), among others, that either fosters or hinders entrepreneurial development.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

This research aims to develop the subjective meaning of success and identify the challenges female agripreneurs face and the process through which they are able to overcome these challenges. Given that the extant literature does not provide generalizable constructs of women's subjective success or challenges for female agripreneurs, we did not undertake this study with a pre-determined definition of these constructs. Rather, our study will identify emerging constructs by letting our study participants delineate how they conceptualize their own entrepreneurial success. In essence, through this research we give voice to female agripreneurs to use their own perspectives to define their successes and to identify the opportunities that enabled them to overcome the challenges they face. With such an aim, a qualitative research design was deemed to be best suited. This chapter details the research methods we used in this study, specifically related to its design, study sample, and data generation, analysis, and interpretation.

Research Design

We employed qualitative methods of inquiry in this study because conceptualizing the meaning of women's subjective success, and identifying the challenges and process of overcoming these challenges, occur in the agripreneur's intricate social context where life and business intersect. Using qualitative methods enabled us to understand the social context in which these women operate and incorporate such context in the discourse of women's subjective success. Specifically, we used a combination of focus groups, nominal group exercises, and semi-structured open-ended interviews for data generation. The combined use

of these methods to explore the same set of constructs enabled us to carry out methodological triangulation that increased the depth of the data generated (Flick, 2014). In essence, this methodological triangulation—specifically, focus groups, and interviews exercise—allowed us to converge the various data sources to understand the whole phenomenon of female agripreneurs’ experience regarding their success and challenges.

We chose to use focus groups to capture the context of entrepreneurial success because this technique fosters the interaction of people within a group and is conducive to sharing insights with a specific topic that would be otherwise less accessible (Morgan, 1997; Patton, 2002). We were cognizant that focus groups may create an environment where some individuals are more prominent in voicing their opinions compared to others (Morgan, 1997). To reduce individual’s dominance and to include everyone’s opinions, we used nominal group exercises within focus groups (Deip, Thesen, Motiwalla, & Seshardi, 1977). Through the guidance of a moderator, the nominal group exercise facilitates the generation and ranking of ideas, which serve to foster further discussion within a group (Cantrill, Sibbald, & Buetow, 1996; Van de Ven, & Delbecq, 1974). Thus, the use of nominal group technique not only helped us to identify and prioritize the set of challenges and learning strategies participating agripreneurs experienced, but also ensured that every participant got the chance to contribute in a meaningful way and inhibited the narrative dominance of a few individuals (Patton, 2002).

The use of semi-structured individual interviews allowed us to elicit additional insights from select participants (Flick, 2014), especially from long-term entrepreneurs who, according to the Dynamic Learning Process, may have developed an accumulated knowledge and thus may require more time to recall their experiences than more recent ones (Harvey &

Evans, 1995; Reuber & Fisher, 1999). These interviews were conducted following a set of pre-determined open-ended questions to ensure efficient use of participants' time, although given freedom to elaborate on specific emerging themes (Patton, 2002). To capture the intricacies of varied entrepreneurial experiences, we conducted most of the individual interviews after we completed the focus groups to make sure that agripreneurs with different profiles (in terms of length of agritourism involvement, type of agritourism offering, and duration of agritourism in a year) were included in the study. Interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached. The use of interviews also gave the opportunity and time to more experienced agripreneurs to recollect and share their entrepreneurial successes and challenges at greater lengths (Patton, 2002).

Study Sample

Our study sample was designed to comprise a heterogeneous group of female agripreneurs in NC to ensure richness of discussion and data generation (Flick, 2014) and to capture differential learning entrepreneurial experiences (Minniti & Bygrave, 2001). Specifically, we sought to include participants representing a spectrum of agritourism operations in terms of involvement (i.e., number of years, number of months of active operation per year) and specialization (i.e., type of activities offered). We also placed effort to include participants from different age-groups and at different family life-cycle stages (e.g., age of their children), as well as to capture the unique geographical and landscape features of different regions throughout the state as they shape agricultural production (Gao, Barbieri, & Valdivia, 2014; Gil Arroyo, Barbieri, & Rich, 2013).

We followed a two-step procedure to select our study participants. First, we developed a list of 75 potential participants in collaboration with representatives from strategic associations related to agritourism (i.e., Agritourism Network Association, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture), NC Cooperative Extension, and state public universities (Appalachian State University, NC State University, University of North Carolina at Wilmington). Then, the lead researcher contacted potential participants over the phone to obtain pre-determined information regarding their agritourism operations. Screening questions included: if they are the primary agritourism operator of the farm, who started the farm and the agritourism operation, length of agritourism involvement, and length of active agritourism operation in a year, and some demographic information (i.e., including marital status, if they have children, and ages of children) (Appendix A).

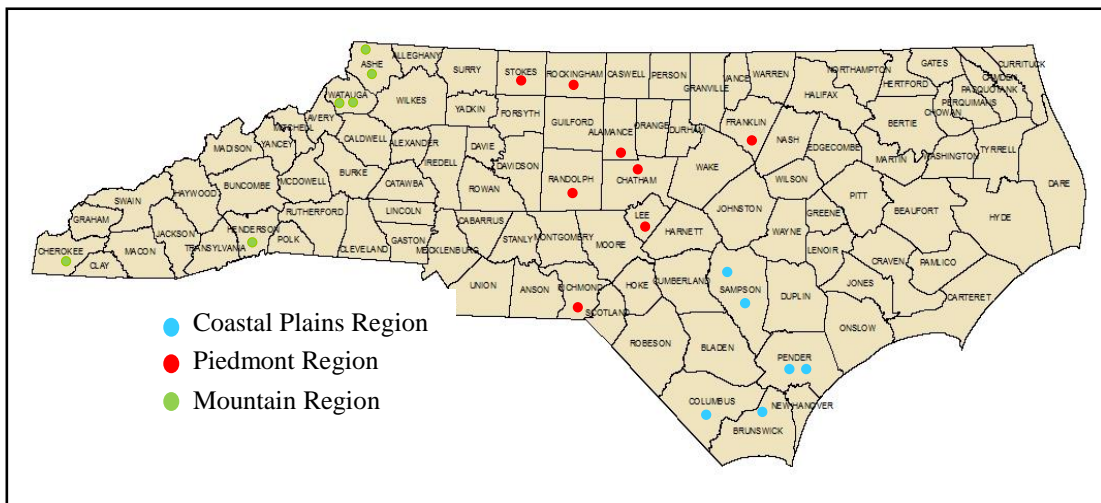


Figure 7: Farm location of study participants by county and region

Our screening yielded 33 agripreneurs who were subsequently invited to participate in focus groups or individual interviews based on their time availability. As pre-determined, all selected participants offered agritourism opportunities for at least three months throughout the year on a regular basis. Twenty agripreneurs from sixteen counties dispersed across the Mountain, Piedmont, and Coastal Plains regions of NC agreed to participate in the study (Figure 7). We assembled three groups, each in one NC region, with a total participation of 10 entrepreneurs from nine different counties (Table 1). It is worth mentioning that in the Coastal Plains and Mountain focus groups four farmers cancelled in the last minute or not showed up for different personal or business reasons.

Table 1: Number of participants by region and agritourism involvement

Heterogeneity Indicators	Number of Participants		
	Focus Groups/Group Interview	Interviews	Total
<i>Region</i>			
Coastal Plains	3	4	7
Piedmont	5	3	8
Mountains	2	3	5
<i>Length of Agritourism Operation</i>			
5 years or less	5	5	10
6-9 years	2	1	3
10 or more years	3	4	7
<i>Active Agritourism Operation (months per year)</i>			
0-2 months	1	1	2
3-6 months	3	5	8
More than 6 months	6	4	10

Given the reduced number of people that responded in each region and last minute cancellations, we conducted mini focus groups in Piedmont and Coastal Plains and a group interview in the Mountains. Mini focus groups provided us greater details on the lengthy

experiences of the entrepreneurs who had great deal to share given their heavy involvement in agritourism (Krueger & Casey, 2009). For the group interview, we followed the same protocol as the focus group, but the conversations became more fluid to account for the smaller group dynamics (Flick, 2014). We interviewed 10 additional entrepreneurs across the state, representing seven additional counties. Besides their geographical dispersion, focus groups and interviews comprised a diverse composition of participants in terms of agritourism involvement.

Data Generation

To ensure quality of data generation and avoid a number of research errors, we employed rigorous measures to ensure trustworthiness and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For ensuring trustworthiness, we made sure that unknown biases are not entering into the research (Henderson, 2006). To achieve this, we maintained an audit trail of changes made to the questions used for focus groups, memos to reflect researcher's biases and reflections of the focus groups, and the note-takers' memos of observations. To further ensure trustworthiness during the interviews, the interviewer summarized and read the main themes that emerged back to the participants to have a quality-check in place. Credibility was maintained by keeping notes and memos during the research process and also through a process of reflexivity on the part of the researcher (Henderson, 2006; Mayes & Pope, 2000).

During the mini focus groups and the group interview, to ensure that all the participants were contributing meaningfully and were comfortable sharing their thoughts, the moderator closely followed the facial expression and other non-verbal gestures of the participants (Krueger & Cassey, 2009). We had at least two team members conducting each

mini focus group and the group interview and two researchers conducting most of the individual interviews. One was responsible for guiding the discussion while the other one focused on taking notes and recording observations. All discussions and interviews were audio-recorded, resulting in 750 minutes of recording, and then were transcribed verbatim. Additionally, after each focus group and interview, the lead researcher wrote memos on the experience and her own impressions of the participants, which also acted as source of data during the analysis. Through these memos and notes, the researcher made note of all possible sources and types of biases that may have influenced the data generation and was cognizant of those during the analysis process.

Protocols

Each focus group and interview started with the researchers introducing themselves, explaining the research goals, and laying out the ground rules and measures of confidentiality. Thereafter, we obtained written consents from each of the participants (Appendix B). The physical setting of the focus group offered a neutral space for the entrepreneurs and spontaneous conversations were encouraged by the moderators so that a more natural and fluid conversation, that eases the expression of opinions of the participants, may occur (Puchta & Potter, 2004). Likewise, the location of the interviews were determined in consultation with the interviewees, prioritizing their availability and comfort. The focus groups and interviews were guided by a set of pre-determined questions, but the researchers allowed rooms for adjustment as too much structure may restrict the spontaneous exploration of the research topics (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Patton, 2002).

The focus groups started by asking participants to introduce themselves and to share something they were proud of at their farms as an ice-breaking exercise. Data generation on the four study topics (i.e., meaning of success, entrepreneurial challenges, strategies for overcoming challenges, and opportunities) started with nominal group exercise and followed similar procedures. Participants were asked to list down as many possible responses as they can think of the particular topic. Then, the moderator created a comprehensive list with inputs from the participants. The moderator asked the group if any other item needed to be added to the list. When the participants felt that the list covered all their ideas, they were provided with colored stickers and asked to rank-order the items on the list based on its perceived importance to each individual (Carney, McIntosh, & Worth, 1996). We retained the lists from all individuals after they had completed their exercises and these were also treated as a source of data. The list ranking was used to start the group discussion based on the most pressing issues. Appendix C includes the focus group protocol with estimated timing.

During the interviews, the interviewer asked questions following the semi-structured guide (Appendix D), and then let interviewees elaborate on their experiences. Once the interviewer finished all the questions from the interview protocol, the second researcher provided a summary of all the themes that emerged from the interview. Then the interviewer relayed them back to the interviewee, asked her to rank order them, and confirm that the interview adequately captured all the aspects they are interested in conveying. In instances where there was one interviewer, she was responsible for taking the notes, then summarizing them and relaying them back to the interviewee for ranking.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The focus group and interview recordings were transcribed into word documents and names and any other forms of identification were removed and replaced with an alias. All the lists and ranking generated through nominal group technique was later used to create word clouds to show the meaning of success, perception of challenges, and opportunities for women agripreneurs. Transcribed data, along with notes and lead researcher's memos were stored in a secured, digital format that was only to be accessed by the researcher and the supervisor, to ensure complete anonymity of the participants (Webster, Lewis, & Brown, 2013). Given that the three methods were used to explore the same set of constructs, we combined all data garnered to delineate a complete picture of female agripreneurs' experience.

Data were uploaded into a qualitative data organization software (QSR N*Vivo version 10) for coding. A coding frame, derived from the literature review, was used to find patterns and develop themes (Flick, 2014; Lincolk & Guba, 1985). Therefore, before we started coding the transcribed data, we developed codes for the specific constructs of success, challenges, and opportunities that had been identified in the literature. Once we started coding the data, we identified and coded any additional theme that might emerge under these categories and built onto the existing coding frame. By including entrepreneurs with various profiles, we were able to capture a comprehensive picture of female agripreneurs' perceptions of success, the challenges they face, the process of overcoming challenges, and opportunities for achieving success, across the participants' various life-cycle stages.

During the coding process, the researcher generated memos to aid in the development of relationships among themes. Once all text was coded and a number of substantive

categories had been identified, we used thematic coding scheme to further refine and differentiate between previously identified categories (Flick, 2014). Once several categories emerged, relationships were established among the central category and the other themes. During the coding process, if a sentence or a paragraph were coded once under a theme, it was counted as one. After the open coding was complete, each emerging theme amounted to a total number of times it appeared throughout the data, which was then documented as ‘number of occurrences’ (*n*). By repeating this process, the central categories also received a total number of occurrences from the themes within each category. We employed methods of constant comparison when establishing relationships among the variables and interpreting them (Flick, 2014). Firstly, all variables that are applicable to each category were compared and then related categories were integrated. Then, relationships among meaningful variables were used to construct the definition of women’s success, identify their pressing challenges, and document the learning process used to overcoming these challenges.

During data interpretation, we strived for quality assurance in terms of transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To address transferability, we employed a constant comparison method. Specifically, we used constant comparative method during data interpretation. This was done so that hypotheses can be developed for future investigation (Glaser, 1969). We pursued confirmability by using a combination of methodological triangulation and having independent coders in the research team. Data from verbatim transcriptions were triangulated with observational notes and researchers’ memos when analyzing data to identify patterns. After coding was complete, team researchers who were not involved in the coding discussed the emerging themes and central categories; any disagreement was resolved by reaching consensus (Spillet, 2003). Peer-debriefing was

conducted with a researcher not involved in data collection who provided critical review of the accuracy and completeness of data analysis procedures and interpretation (Spillet, 2003).

CHAPTER IV

STUDY FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings that emerged from data analyzed through a combination of qualitative techniques. The first section portrays an overall profile of our study participants to set the context for the remainder of the study findings. In doing so, the profiles provide information on life-cycle, occupation, agricultural production practices and agritourism offerings. The sub-sequent sections present findings in response to the four research questions in the following order: women entrepreneurs' definition of success; the challenges they face in achieving their self-defined success; how they overcome challenges; and the opportunities they have for achieving success. In addition to our thematic analysis of the data generated through this study, the sections will also present the results of the free-listing exercises carried out during data generation.

Profiling Study Participants

Our participants had a diverse demographic profile. Their ages ranged from mid-twenties to early seventies, although most seemed to be either in their 40's to 50's ($n = 9$) or over 60 ($n = 8$); only three were on their 20's to 30's (Table 2). In tandem with their age, participants were at different life-cycle stages with children in various age groups. At the time of data generation, one agripreneur had an infant child, another one pre-teen children, and four were raising teenagers; the remaining participants had adult children. Seven participants had children living with them on the farm. Four participants did not have children, two of whom were single. All participants self-reported being full-time farmers;

among them, three became involved in farming following a lay-off from their previous jobs and remaining began their careers in farming after retirement. Additionally, five participants reported having off-farm jobs, either full or part time. Most of our participants were White and two were African-American.

Table 2: Participants’ demographic indicators

Alias	Observed Age	Life-Cycle Indicator	Primary Occupation
Abby	Early 30’s	Infant child	Off-farm full time job
Charlotte	Early 40’s	Teenage child	Farming
Amelia	Mid 60’s	Adult children	Farming as retirement occupation
Olivia	Mid 60’s	Adult children	Farming as retirement occupation
Alice	Early 70’s	Adult children	Farming as retirement occupation
Emma	Late 30’s	Pre-teen and teen children	Farming
Violet	Early 60’s	Adult children	Farming
Elizabeth	Early 40’s	Single without children	Farming
Lucy	Early 50’s	Adult children	Farming
Scarlett	Mid 20’s	Single without children	Off-farm part time job
Claire	Late 50’s	Married without children	Farming as retirement occupation
Rose	Early 60’s	Adult child	Off-farm full time job
Ivy	Late 50’s	Adult child	Off-farm part time job
			Farming as retirement occupation
Luna	Early 50’s	Teen and young adult children	Farming
Nora	Late 40’s	Teenage child	Farming
Anna	Late 50’s	Adult child	Farming
Emily	Early 60’s	Adult children	Off-farm full time job
Sophia	Mid 50’s	Young adult children	Farming
Ruby	Early 70’s	Adult children	Farming as retirement occupation
Julia	Early 60’s	Married without children	Farming as retirement occupation

As purposefully sought, our participants had a diverse agriculture and agritourism profile (Table 3). Most of the participating agripreneurs were raising animals, either poultry or small stock ($n = 8$) or large animals ($n = 7$). Six farmers had small-scale gardens growing a variety of plants including herbs, flowers, and vegetables and four had fruit orchards growing apple, blueberry, and blackberry. Few were involved in traditional row crop production, such

as growing corn, soybean, sorghum, and hay. Three were growing specialty crops, including a variety of mushrooms, herbs, and vegetables. Four participants produced honey and six processed their agricultural production in a variety of value-added products, such as jam, preserve, ciders, and cheese.

Table 3: Types of agricultural production and agritourism offerings among participating farms

Farm Production and Offerings	Number of Participants
<i>Agriculture-Related</i>	
Poultry and small stock	8
Livestock (large animals)	7
Small scale garden	6
Value-added production (e.g., preserve, jams, cider, cheese)	6
Row crop production (e.g., corn, sorghum)	4
Fruit orchards (e.g., apples, blueberries)	4
Honey production	4
Specialty crop production (e.g., mushrooms)	3
<i>Agritourism</i>	
Farm and orchard tours	18
School field trips	8
Picnic facilities	8
Pick-your-own	6
Private and public events (e.g., wedding, festivals)	4
Farm-based recreational activities (e.g., corn maze, hay ride)	3
Accommodation services (e.g., guest house, camping)	3
Other	1

In terms of agritourism activities offered on the farm, an overwhelming majority of 18 farms offered farm tours to visitors. Another prominent agritourism activity was school field trips (n=8). Six farms offered pick-your-own and four hosted a variety of private (e.g., weddings) or public (e.g., festivals) provided venues for events such as weddings, picnic, music shows, movie shows, and other private events. Few farms offered farm-based

recreational activities, such as corn maze and hay-rides ($n = 3$) or farm-based accommodations, such as guest houses and camping grounds ($n = 3$).

Voicing Women’s Meaning of Agritourism Success

A total of ten themes constituting women’s self-definition of success emerged. Different professional (i.e., recognition and peer respect, having appreciative customers, financial sustainability, upward mobility), personal (i.e., work-life balance, family support), and mixed (i.e., being constantly on the move, pursuing happiness, perpetuating family farm, broad impact) aspects on how women in agritourism self-define their success emerged from participants’ discussion (Table 4). All aspects of success, other than perpetuating family farm, occurred across the various life-cycle stages.

Table 4: Occurrences of various aspects constituting women’s success

Aspects of Women’s Subjective Success	Number of Occurrences	Life Cycle		
		20’s-30’s	40’s-50’s	60’s-70’s
<i>Professional Aspects</i>				
Having appreciative customers	114	√	√	√
Gaining recognition and peer respect	75	√	√	√
Ensuring financial sustainability	74	√	√	√
<i>Personal Aspects</i>				
Having family support	105	√	√	√
Debating the work-life balance	26	√	√	√
<i>Mixed Aspects</i>				
Being constantly on the move	166	√	√	√
Creating broad impact	95	√	√	√
Pursuing happiness	68	√	√	√
Perpetuating the family farm	20		√	√

From participants' professional viewpoint, ***"Having appreciative customers"***, in terms of ensuring customer satisfaction and building long-term relationships, was an important element defining women's success in agritourism because it led to customer retention and access to wholesale markets. Rose, who is passionate about her high-quality craft cheese described, *"I feel most successful when people taste my cheese and like go crazy about it. I just really like it. It makes all that other hard work worthwhile. I think that's more than anything. I wanted to make really good cheese."* Building long-term relationship with retailers, for example, allowed them to access wholesale markets, as Ivy mentioned, *"If it's the wholesalers, they talk. If you have a good reputation with other growers, if they don't have what somebody's looking for they're going to recommend you."*

"Gaining recognition and peer respect" emerged as another professional dimension to conceptualizing success by these agripreneurs. Many emphasized on being known as the "expert" in their fields. Charlotte, although still young in age (early 40's) and in small-stock farming (five years of experience), shared her pride:

"To me it means not a lot of people do this in North Carolina, you know, in other states they do, but and already, you know, I have people call me that want to start up their own meat business or whatever, so or just have meat for the family, but they will call me and ask me, you know, this is happening, how do I fix this and that kind of thing, so just having that reputation and, you know, if a chef out there needs meat they go oh call [name removed]"

Women also placed importance on building their farm brand as part of gaining recognition. Scarlett, a farmer in her mid-20's mentioned, *"I mean if people know your name when they, even if it's just regionally, like if people recognize your name when they go to a restaurant"*

that buys your food....” For others, gaining recognition from their neighboring community and their peer farm community was also important. Elizabeth, who lives away from her family, stated:

“Having the respect of other farmers was the positive feedback from the community. I mean in addition to the respect of other farmers that you get when you do work hard whether you make any money or not. If you work your butt off they, you know, acknowledge that...I enjoy that children recognize me. You know the kids in my CFA know that I’m a woman and that they can become farmers if they’re little girls. I mean really it seems like the boys are much more interested but I like that the girls know that their farmer is a female.”

The study participants also conceptualized their success as ***“Ensuring financial sustainability”*** of the farm on a yearly basis. As Amelia, a retired school teacher, stated, *“Just that from January 1 to December 31, can we start January 1 next year or is it going to be folded? And wanting to make the farm to be sustainable within itself, not that we’re having to supplant constantly.”* Such financial stability meant not only to pay hired staff but also to cover their own earnings. In the words of Abby, who currently has to supplement her farm income from her day-job illustrated, *“To me it’s my full-time job. I want to see a salary and, you know, I have no health insurance. I would like to see that business come up to be a full business and sustain my family, myself and whoever I hire....”* To achieve such financial stability, participants pointed out the need to diversify their revenue streams. For example, Sophia described the need for diversification on her orchard farm:

“I tell everybody every year Mother Nature has a very weird sense of humor and so I, you know, for us we try to – I heard early on, not just agriculture but other conferences, multiple revenue streams is so huge for a farmer. And so from different fruits, so if I lose the peaches I still have my berry season. I’m going to have apples, I’m going to have grapes, I’m going to have pecans, I’m going to have pumpkins, I’m going to have veggies. You know or I lose a percentage of all of them are different and then in addition you have the group tours that come through and my different events that we do and things I offer that buy – our bakery is another revenue stream. My apple cider is its own revenue stream here. So we try as many as we can so the impact of loss of one is not a huge impact for the organization.”

Our study participants placed importance on avoiding debt as crucial to ensuring financial stability of their farms. Anna, emphasized her priority of avoiding debt, *“And loans, we’ve always just paid for everything. We kind of like to not owe money...to begin with so we’ve paid for everything. What we’ve done is we upgrade as we have money.”*

In relation to their personal lives, our participants placed emphasis on **“Having family support”** as part of their self-defined success, which entailed the actual division of farm work among the household members and their family’s recognition of women’s work in the farm. Luna described how she and her husband divide the agritourism and agricultural tasks of their farm as, *“I’ve handled the business side of it and mostly all the agritourism side of it. [Name removed] does—he orchestrates all the crops. Yeah, yeah, the workers, manages the workers. I manage the corn maize and pumpkin patch staff and the produce staff in the spring, but it’s a team effort.”* Worth noting, participants discussed receiving support from

family members who are both actively involved in farming operation and those who are not. For example, Scarlett, whose farm is located far away from where her family resides, mentioned, *“I’m pretty lucky to have the support of family, you know, they are not able to support me financial that much which is fine, they’ll even come up sometimes and help me – I mean they’re obviously kind of far in Raleigh.”* The indirect support these women received from their family, in terms respect for their farm work, also defined their success. Olivia, whose adult children live in another state, described her conviction as:

“And yeah, I’m happy—my children say they’re proud of me. My family likes what I’m doing, think it’s good that I’m doing something I like. They come and visit every couple of months, but they don’t—I don’t care what they think. And what I think, especially for my son and daughter, as long as I’m happy they’re happy.”

“Debating the work-life balance” was a major focus in our study, although discussing this paradigm took different directions. For some, work-life balance was important, and participants explained that they pursue it through implementing different strategies, such as outsourcing farm work (e.g., *“I outsource my payroll. Anything I can outsource I do. But there’s certain things you are not able to outsource”*, Luna) or finding reliable people to help out at home (e.g., *“I hope to be able to have someone more able to take care of him—find someone more dependable...and maybe be here more often”*, Emma). However others, like Abby who is a young mother raising a toddler, were very vocal about rejecting this paradigm:

“I try to get home and get my stuff done in the home but it’s livable. Yes, that’s the hardest part for me is getting the house—keep the house cleaned up

and all that stuff, and I've just—I have to quit trying to expect myself to do that so yeah. Yeah, just as little as I can do it, but that's the last thing that gets attention.”

Participants also referred to aspects involving their professional and personal lives as part of their success. Among those, the most prominent aspect of women's success was identified as *“Being constantly on the move”*, which emphasized both, their freedom and willingness to stay active as an individual and owning their business growth. Choosing to stay busy held two different meanings depending on the participants' lifecycle. Those who were in or close to their retirement age, as Claire, viewed their pursuit of agriculture and agritourism as a way to stay engaged, *“With our situation we do this as something to keep us active, you know, in retirement. I don't want to, you know, we don't want to just sit and rot away.”* For younger farmers, instead, choosing to stay busy was a way of fulfilling their potential. Emma, who in her late 30's is raising three adolescent children while running a farm with husband described:

“Really just having a busy day. I love to be busy. I don't like downtime. So, having lots of customers, having a lot to do, whether it's cleaning up, whether it's washing produce baskets, moving things around. Whatever it is. If I've been busy and I've had good customer interaction for the day, then I've had a happy day—happy, successful day.”

Participating agripreneurs were very vocal in their passion of moving forward in life and embracing the challenges that may come their way. Julia, in her early 60's who took up farming as retirement career delineated her view as, *“Forward momentum I think. Yeah, forward momentum. It's never standing still in the moment, always looking forward to what*

can you do better, how do you improve-what's next? How do you grow?" Along the same lines, these women were determined to own the growth of their operations and be personally responsible for everything on their farms. Anna, a passionate goat-dairy farmer in her late 50's expressed about prioritizing the quality of her work:

“You know... we like to do things small. My personal philosophy is number one there's only two of us, but when you get bigger you lose control. And it's like with the cheese. You know everything is really handmade. You know I have custom made commercial equipment, but it's small. I mean I pasteurize my cheese in 15 gallon batches... You can control the quality.”

When prompted about whether being constantly on the move implied to move up in the farming and agritourism ladder, most agripreneurs rejected the notion as they feel having already enough responsibilities on their farms. However, they credited pursuing flexible solutions as allowing them to pursue constant growth and mobility. Elizabeth, who runs an organic farm, commented:

“Yeah, being flexible and being persistent, saying okay if this one doesn't—if Plan A doesn't work, Plan B, if Plan B doesn't work—say you know refusing to believe there's not a solution, you know, like sometimes I go well there's just no solution, you know, there is no solution. But there is. You just have to open your mind wide enough to see what it is which is, you know, hard sometimes.”

“Pursuing happiness” through their farm responsibilities was an important element of women's self-defined success that reached both the personal and professional realms of

our participants, even when farm work is more demanding than their other responsibilities. Charlotte, a mother of two boys, described how she enjoyed farming even its difficulty:

“For me it is because I got laid off five years ago and I decided I wanted to do something I want to do. This makes me happy to do. It’s not always happy. That’s when it’s flooding outside of rain. But you know it’s something I enjoy doing and I’ve had so many people ask me, you know, why don’t you quit? You could find an easier job, you know, whatever, and it’s a lot of hard work. But I enjoy it and that’s—the happiness part of that is I guess I should have put that on my success because it is what makes me happy to do this. And I get satisfaction. I enjoy it even though it’s hard work.”

The women agripreneurs mentioned “*Creating a broad impact*” beyond the realm of their farm as success. Such broad impact came in different ways, such as educating the public about farming and building a collective reputation for the farming, which for some was accomplished through sharing their farms with visitors. Olivia, who went into farming as a retirement career explained: “*To me being successful—our mission is to share our farm with other people, like families with kids who’ve never been on a farm. We have school groups come in so for us like last night we were leaving the guest house and the people in there – oh this is so nice, this is really nice.*” Others, like Luna who runs her agritourism operation on a century farm, emphasized giving back to society in different ways, “*So being involved in the business community no matter what county you’re in... And only by being involved in supporting your local YMCA or supporting your local Boys and Girls Club does your business grow.*”

As mothers and women in agriculture, participants viewed inspiring youth as important to their notion of success. Luna mentioned instilling work ethic among her children by means of demonstration was part of her success, “*All four of my children have very strong work ethics and are very driven and that on a large part is due to them seeing their dad and I work. It’s not a 9:00 to 5:00 job, they know that.*” As a young farmer, Abby emphasized her role as setting an example for the future generation:

“A big thing with creating more young farmers and women farmers... Right now we have more women farmers coming up, and at the farmers market it’s mainly women running the booths... And I love it! And they’re actually the ones out there, you know, milking the cow, raising the goats and the rabbits. That’s the way for us.”

For others, creating broad impact also constituted sowing the seeds of success in their young employees and in their own children. Emma, a full-time farmer who holds a degree in education explained:

“I feel that I’m successful because we’re training kids and most of the time, they go on to college, such as Duke [University]. We’ve had graduates from Duke. We have one that just entered Duke University. Had some kids going to State [NC State University]. And you know, that just makes us feel good that we’ve trained these kids and we’ve had a hand in their education and they’re going on to do bigger and brighter things.”

“Perpetuating the farm” was another aspect of success identified by our study participants, irrespective of owning multi-generational or first-generation farms. Abby, who

farms with her husband on his family farm after it was left un-farmed by the previous generation discussed the importance of keeping the property as a working farm:

“You know my husband is a 7th generation [farmer]... He learned everything from his grandfather. He went to school for it and we’re saving the farm. That’s one of my things is we’re saving farmland that’s been in the family since 1790’s, it’s been there. We’ve watched all the farms around us become developments. We’re the only one right now in this area with a dairy so it’s horrible to see that and we want our son, you know, we want other people to come on the farm and say hey, you know, farming is hard work but it becomes a passion. I love getting eggs every day and, you know.”

Major Challenges Women in Agritourism Face

Through the free-listing exercise, our study participants identified 30 different challenging factors that women agripreneurs face in achieving their self-defined success (Figure 8). The ranking exercise showed that the challenges related to employees, money and time were the most recurrent. Participants’ subsequent discussion of these challenges, from most to least pressing, yielded 11 challenges that affect women’s success in agritourism (Table 5). As with success, most of the challenges women experienced appeared across participants from all life-cycle stages. Ensuring family farm only occurred among the women in their 60's to 70's and managing growth was not present in the group in their 20's to 30's.

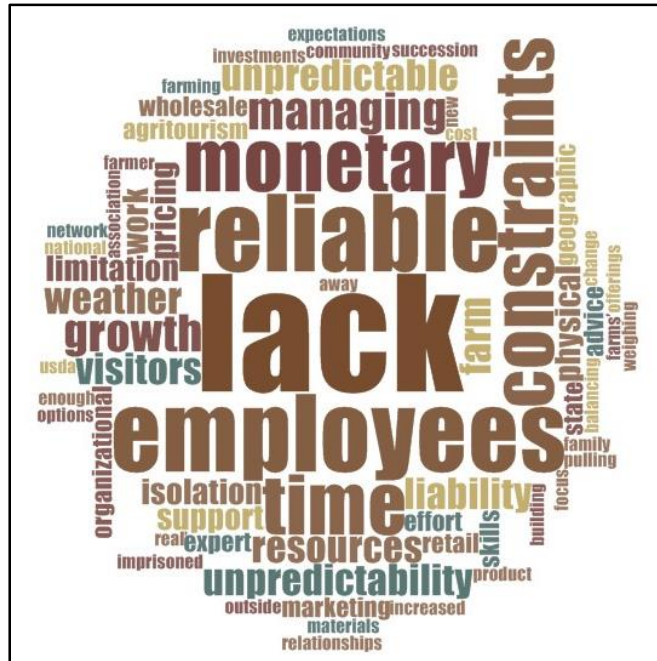


Figure 8: World cloud of challenges emerged from the free-listing exercise

Table 5: Occurrences of challenges among women in agritourism

Challenges of women in agritourism	Number of Occurrences	Life Cycle		
		20's-30's	40's-50's	60's-70's
Lacking reliable staff	124	√	√	√
Managing growth	103		√	√
Lacking institutional support	87	√	√	√
Ensuring farm perpetuation	82		√	√
Keeping up with pluriactive role	74	√	√	√
Facing new challenges constantly	67	√	√	√
Not being embraced as real farmers	53	√	√	√
Having limited access to resources	51	√	√	√
Dealing with gender norms	50	√	√	√
Having inconvenient location	49	√	√	√
Balancing demand of livelihood with traditional roles	36	√	√	√

The most prominent challenge was “*Lacking reliable staff*”. Women agripreneurs expressed frustration in not being able to find and retain reliable staff due to a general

shortage of reliable and skilled workers. This was particularly problematic owing to the seasonal nature of most of these businesses and agritourism in particular. Ivy, a Christmas tree grower operating a choose-and-cut farm, elaborated on the challenge of finding seasonal staff because the bulk of her business falls within a considerably narrow window in the year, *“The same thing, it’s having employees—because it’s what I do, like I was looking for wreath makers. It’s very seasonal. It’s hard to find people who just want temporary work...for four weeks out of the year. And that’s very difficult.”* This problem is compounded by the fact that both, employees and employers, find trainings offered by associations to be unhelpful. This lack of reliable staff added to the agripreneurs’ burden of work, and kept them from investing in long-term planning and diverting their attention to actual expansion for the farm, which in turn may hinder their capacity to harness the growth potential of the farm. Nora, who runs her agritourism operation with her elderly father, delineated her inability to pay adequate attention to certain tasks *“I wish... I could afford to hire somebody to do some of the stuff that I haven’t taken care of for a long time, with me being spread so thin in so many different areas.”*

Another prominent challenge was **“Managing growth”**, which was expressed as women’s difficulty to maintain a desired quality and manage liability issues while growing their business; for some, it also meant their ability to manage growth with aging. Participants were especially concerned with maintaining the quality of products and services as a priority and they were hesitant to grow their agritourism operation because they would no longer be able to personally ensure the quality of their offerings. Within this theme, most of the agripreneurs felt that critical liability threats also emerge when new products and services are added to their operation, and they were uncertain about their capacity to get appropriate

insurance coverage. Ruby, a retired schoolteacher who manages an orchard and offers a wide variety of recreational activities said *“We’ve got to look at what we’ve got and what we’ve added; do we need more insurance if we add this?”*

“Lacking institutional support for agritourism” was another prominent concern, as participants often felt a lack of state effort in fostering their business growth and in encouraging and educating the public about agritourism. These women also pointed to the prevalence of a mainstream monopoly in accessing grants, many times by male operated businesses, and the resulting feeling of exclusion from business networks. Alice, a farmer who has been running her farm of specialty products for 15 years explained the situation:

“I applied for a \$10,000 grant to grow my processing capability at the farm, and it was specifically earmarked for innovation. Is there anything in North Carolina that’s more innovative than growing truffles and making truffle products? If there is I don’t know about it. You know who got that grant? Somebody that does chicken farming that built these things that you can move from one place to another... Well the guy who got that grant—I mean it was a man. And every so often I run into a situation where there’s meaningful conversations among truffle farmers and people who are doing research in this area and nine times out of 10 the people who are exhibiting success in collaboration and networking are men.”

These problems were exacerbated by the fact that agritourism is not broadly recognized as agriculture and thus creates obstacles in obtaining necessary insurance for their operations. Nora, who grows maize primarily to offer a corn-maize to visitors explained, *“When I say agritourism insurance, I’m not really just meaning the event, the crop. I think it needs to be*

recognized that, even though I'm not harvesting that crop, that is my income, that's my source of income." The presence of ambiguous regulations and the inconsistent support from relevant associations added to this problem. Claire, an elderly farmer in fiber production, and offering farm tours puts it succinctly, *"Our national association has taken a turn and they're really focusing on marketing the end product, but that's definitely the commercial market. They're forgetting about us little guys and that's going to kind of bother me too."*

Our study noted the challenge of ***"Ensuring farm perpetuation in the family"*** among the participants especially in face of the next generation's lack of interest in farming. This stemmed from the concern over keeping the farm in the family as well as keeping it from becoming a non-agricultural development. The study participants pointed out that ensuring the financial stability and success of the farm are crucial in encouraging the next generation's involvement. Uncertainty about next generation's interest in farming also meant that the participants feared possible loss of generational knowledge if no family member takes it up in future. Amelia, a multigenerational farmer with two adult children, none of whom is interested in taking up farming in the future said, *"How do you keep that in the family that land? And it's been in my husband's family since the mid 1800's. What's going to happen after our generation? Because none of the ...children... have no desire."*

Participating agripreneurs also struggled with ***"Keeping-up with their pluriactive livelihoods"*** because of the many work responsibilities they had to carry out. Many were maintaining either part or full-time jobs, which was in addition to their extensive daily agricultural tasks and carrying out the bulk of their agritourism workload. Rose, a retiree who runs a dairy farm and also holds a part-time job at an association describes her difficulty to balancing between devoting time for the farm and her job *"You're tied to the farm, yeah, and*

it comes first. You can't tell the girls, I'll milk you later. [During] Difficult births you got to be there." Additionally, the farm business demands administrative tasks (e.g., accounting, tax filing) that need to be completed within a certain timeframe. Abby who is a relatively young agripreneur, holding a full-time job, who is also mother to a 10-month old child explained her situation as, *"Like after you worked all day, you're on the farm and who wants to go home and do the books."*

Such pluriactivity was worsened with women's struggle of ***"Balancing the demands of their livelihoods with the traditional roles,"*** which often stemmed from lack of spouses' cooperation. Claire, who in her 60's is battling a chronic illness, expressed her challenge as, *"For me personally it's just been now the amount that I have to take on versus you know husband's willing to take on."* Additionally this challenge was compounded by the perception of falling short on others' expectations and caring for the family, and the demands of childcare. Rose, a retiree running a goat dairy farm, explained the dilemma of choosing between what her husband would like to do in his retirement and their obligations to the farm, *"My husband really wants to travel now and we're kind of at this decision point like what are we going to do, how do we?—because finding someone to farm-sit [is difficult]. What if they call and a goat is sick and we're in like another country?"*

As most of the women were non-commodity small-scale farmers, they also complained of often ***"Not being embraced as real farmers"***. Being women—and young as some pointed out—often put them at an even more disadvantageous position. Scarlett, a young start-up farmer operating a one-acre land explained her frustration *"...being taken seriously ...is a little bit of struggle depending on who you're talking to because people think farm and they think like really big thing with tractors and stuff."* Participants felt isolated

because there are very few women farmers (*“Historically men have owned farms and run farms. There’s not a critical mass of female farmers yet to make this happen”*, Alice), and they found it difficult to collaborate with male farmers (*“I used to be with Cooperative Extension and I’d go out to farmers and they were older men. [They think] You don’t know anything, you know, and I had to fight”*, Abby). Elizabeth, who is a transplant in her current location and lives and runs the farm operation on her own, elaborates on her frustration:

“That’s the thing, like people just blow you off until you raise hell, and then, you know, then you’re a bitch so you go back to this like respect of other farmers, you know, I mean what do you do when, you know, the basic attitude toward you is disrespect. And it’s not being generated by how I behave toward people.”

Many participants discussed **“Facing new challenges constantly”** as a recurrent burden on them. These challenges stemmed from different causes that fall beyond their control, such as those related to agriculture uncertainty (*“Looking at the total crop. And you know it’s very rare to have 100 percent of the crop; you just don’t expect [that]”*, Ruby), weather events (*“The weather is unpredictable; this year is the most rain that we’ve had”*, Luna), the seasonality of agritourism (*“...being a seasonable business I have to make the most of what I have to get inspiration and motivation...”*, Sophia) and even unexpected calamities. Julia, who faced significant loss in her first year of business due to road closure expressed her concern, *“...that was the year of the rockslide on Highway 64 at Oakley Gorge. So this road was closed for six months. That was very difficult.”* Few women also added recent loss of family members, who used to be actively involved in the farm operation, as their ongoing challenge.

Women in agritourism also discussed at length about ***“Having limited access to important resources”***, mainly in the form of financial shortcomings and apprehension of getting into debt that might compromise their business. Elizabeth, who is single and runs the farm without any family help described her monetary constraint as, *“I do not borrow money. If I don’t have money I don’t do it.”* Participants also reported lack of information on other critical issues as hindering their potential. For example, they found it difficult to price their products in the face of competition from wholesale and chain retailers and the increasing input prices caused by subsidies. Amelia, an herb farmer in her 60’s, expressed difficulty of accessing market information for pricing, *“We have the challenge of pricing our products all the time. You know! Where do you find what is a good base?”*

Participating women also felt they are ***“Dealing with gender norms that limit their potential as entrepreneurs”***. They explained that visitors have a limited understanding of the demands of farming and hence often posed an obstacle maintaining the normal routine of farms’ activities. Rose, a first generation dairy farmer, described the situation as, *“So tourism for me is a problem... because they used to just show up, and you’d be in the middle of the cheese making and they’d say can I have a farm tour?”* Additionally they mentioned that their communities are uncooperative because men have historically maintained a primary role in agriculture and women are primarily expected to be caregivers. Emma, who has to devote her time between caring for her child with chronic illness and running the agritourism business expresses her frustration:

“...most people think that I am just a mother. And a lot of men come up here to speak with my husband and I’ll say, he’s not here, can I help you and they will say, well I need to talk to you husband about buying—and they may want

to buy a large quantity of something and I can help them with that. So, to me, that's a—the number one challenge is men thinking that—and some women do it also—that I don't have a role here and that I can't help them, just because I am a female. It's hard because we have so many that come in and prefer to only speak to a male. And even if it's someone under me, just like one of our regular employees, they would rather speak to them versus me, but just because I am a female. So, I just have to step in and say, I'm co-owner, can I help you with something.”

Finally, the agripreneurs reported that ***“Having an inconvenient farm location”*** significantly hinders their capacity to reach markets, especially when they are remotely located. They felt that this could be overcome with greater state support by providing better signage or additional facilities. Abby, who was raising a toddler at that time of the study, explained how she has to travel considerable distance to take her livestock to a processing plant, *“It's the inconvenience and the fact that they want enough farmers or there's not enough in this area to keep a processing plant around here. We don't have what we need in this area.”*

Overcoming Challenges

As our study participants discussed the challenges they face in being agritourism entrepreneurs, they also elaborated on strategies they have adopted on the farm that allow them to manage or overcome the challenges (Table 6). These strategies are directly related to their agricultural responsibilities, resulting in either adjustment or modification of their tasks, to ensure smooth operation of the farm. From the discussions, nine strategies emerged:

maintaining flexibility, learning from experiences, prioritizing tasks, pitching in to get it done, planning ahead, keeping up with policies, controlling growth, and exploring unusual solutions. Other than maintaining flexibility and exploring unusual solutions, strategies our participants used to overcome their challenges were consistent across various life-cycle stages. Notably, women agripreneurs in their 20's to 30's did not mention these two as ways to overcome their challenges.

Table 6: Occurrences of strategies used to overcome challenges

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges	Number of Occurrences	Life Cycle		
		20's-30's	40's-50's	60's-70's
Learning from experiences	100	√	√	√
Maintaining flexibility	77		√	√
Prioritizing tasks	44	√	√	√
Planning ahead	32	√	√	√
Pitching in to get it done	30	√	√	√
Controlling growth	30	√	√	√
Exploring unusual solutions	25		√	√

The most recurrent strategy was “*Learning from experiences*”, either their own or others’, was a very common strategy our study participants used to overcome challenges. Julia explains her learning farming experiences as she recently became a full-time farmer after her retirement from teaching, “*And it’s a huge learning curve. (...) So that’s going to be something for me to learn. And figure out. But I’m learning about soil, which is new to me. My first 50 years—farming? No, I had no experience with this.*” She later explained how she will need to learn about policy after her recent total loss of her blueberry patch, “*So I hadn’t registered my blueberry bushes as a crop which I guess means that when that fails I can’t get*

assistance because I haven't registered it. So this year—this winter one of the things I'm going to do (...) is try and figure out this maize of paperwork.” Many women also mentioned how they kept an open outlook to generating ideas and learn from other farms' experiences. Violet stressed how kept abreast with what her peers were pursuing, *“Because that's what other farmers are doing. And I look at those as—I look at a farm to see what they're doing to see what might work on my farm. That's why I watch [name 1 removed] farm. I watch [name 2 removed] farm.”*

Additionally, our agripreneurs discussed learning about farming and operation from their previous generations, whether they were farmers by profession or passion. Abby, whose parents were not farmers by profession, described her learning experience as, *“I think, you know, my parents were small farmers too and it wasn't a job. They made it interesting for us. It was more learning and a hobby for them but I think that's why we loved it more.”*

The next most recurrent strategy to overcome challenges was **“Maintaining flexibility”** because women felt the need to remain open to alternative solutions or multiple ways of approaching a given problem on the farm. Luna, an experienced agritourism operator, shared how she had to extend her agritourism season due to a recent and usual long period of heavy rain:

“You have to be very flexible. And adjust yourselves pretty much. And so we have experimented with staying open past that first Sunday in November. And it's never been successful. The only reason that we're doing it this year is because of all the rain that we had. And so with that being said instead of closing November the 1st this year we're closing November 14th.”

Having such a flexible mind-set also extended to agripreneurs' personal lives. Claire, who has an off-farm full-time job, elaborated how by remaining flexible she was able to accommodate demand of two professions, "... *sometimes something comes up and I have to be home or my husband has to be home because an employee didn't show up and it's cheese-making day and it has to happen. Yeah, so being able to really flex at a moment's notice if you have to.*"

As many of the agripreneurs suffered from their pluriactive roles, they stressed on consciously "**Prioritizing tasks**" in an attempt to not get overwhelmed by the variety of responsibilities they have to carry out while making sure that their farms are still functioning properly. This prioritization encompassed agricultural, administrative, as well as off-farm tasks. Luna, explained how she prioritized her motherly and farming tasks during busy seasons:

"... The main thing at the core of it all is, at the end of the day for me and my family, keeping our family together and maintaining some type of normalcy each day, whether it's a meal or something we do in the morning sometimes. Just a routine even though it's a hectic and busy season in the Fall and the Spring. But we have birthdays that fall during October and November and, you know, you have to work hard to be sure those aren't overshadowed. It's a dance, and I mean there is no true definition of balance... and there's just so many hours in the day. You have to prioritize your schedule."

Within their prioritization strategies, many women made a habit of routinely taking care of the farms' administrative tasks to avoid falling behind and have tasks piled up. Alice shared, "*I struggle with the same thing. It's the last thing I want to do but I do force myself to do it*

once a month. I do everything once a month. There's one day that I do that. I am going to do the books.”

In addition to tackling day-to-day tasks, women agripreneurs also stressed the importance of **“Planning ahead”** to ensure their farm viability. Although Scarlett is still at the start-up phase of her farm, emphasized on her next year planning, *“Next year is going to look very different I think, you know, just got some different plans for business structure and stuff like that.”* More experienced farmers also seemed to hold equal importance of operational planning. Sophia, who for over 10 years has divided her time between her orchard and her family in two different states, explained how she uses her family time to plan ahead for the next season:

“I’ll be leaving for a month and go spend some time there (...) I need the break. It gives me perspective. And we always say that first week that we’re looking to go on a cruise. We go—we don’t even mention the orchard. You know we just—we have to have a week to decompress and get away from it and get a little bit of perspective, and then we start our planning and go for the next season from there.”

“Pitching in to get it done” was a common strategy women used to reduce the demand of farm work and lack of reliable staff. Although such strategy was commonly used within the farm household, sometimes could be extended to their friends. Olivia referred to how she and her husband had clearly divided the farm tasks, *“We decided that we would break up—he takes to all animals. I do the books, I’ve taken the guest house, the big rentals, the school tours, so if he wants to breed rabbits let him go ahead. He’s going to take care of*

them.” Abby mentioned how they called friends for help and reciprocated in kind during her last pregnancy:

“...we do square bails. So it’s my husband and I and that’s it, you know. He’ll drive and I’ll do the bails, then I’ll drive, you know. Last year I was expecting so I really couldn’t do that during hay season. I was pretty big but we struggle and we’ll bring friends on, you know. If they have farms they’ll say okay, you cut hay this week and we’ll cut next week. We’ll help you and you help me and that way we’re not paying anybody. We’re just scratching each other’s backs for a little while. That works.”

As many agripreneurs struggled with effectively managing the growth of their farms and operations, they mentioned “***Controlling growth***” as a strategy to set a comfortable pace for themselves. Claire, an elderly farmer explained how she consciously chose to keep the farm operation manageable:

“The barn can certainly accommodate 20 alpacas, but what we currently have in acreage, yes, we could clear more but it also takes away from the ease of care, the way we designed this facility, but we’re – we currently have 17 so we’re thinking and some of those – three of them for sure and possibly a fourth one we will have contracts on between now and next spring. That we might even go back to about 15 or possibly even a little fewer, so we don’t want – I want to be able to take care of them ourselves.”

Given the nature of agritourism, controlling growth also include to keep visitors at an optimal management level, either by cutting down visiting hours, limiting visits to weekends, or by

offering structured activities. Rose explained how she has limited her visiting times, especially regarding her new night tours that includes ‘bake your own pizza’:

“We now ask people to call and that’s helped some except people call 30 minutes before they want to come and I still have to say no, you can’t come. So we have a new thing we’re doing next year and we’re only going to offer tours at very limited times (...) Friday and Saturday nights are when tours happen.”

Given the entrepreneurial mind-set of these women, it is not surprising that they often described “*Exploring unusual solutions*” to solve their challenges. Charlotte explained how she was able to compensate her staff shortage in a win-win scenario, *I have an extra house on my property, so I rent the house out to a family and he doesn’t pay rent. He does like 16 hours a week of work. So I have \$60 a week for him not to have to pay.*” Elizabeth mentioned she was not shy to ask help from visitors with physically demanding tasks:

“Well I think—I’m very opportunistic, you know, if somebody comes by for some other reason I have no hesitation in saying here, help me put the tiller on the tractor while you’re here, you know, and if they don’t like that they don’t have to come back, you know. But just whenever, you know, I don’t mind asking for favors and then if there’s nobody to do something I just wait, you know, you just have to wait. You have to, you know, reassign your task, you know, say okay, I can’t do that [by myself].”

Opportunities for Women in Agritourism

In addition to identifying the challenges that women agripreneurs face and documenting how they overcome them, participants were also cognizant of the array of different opportunities that are available to them by dint of being involved in farming and agritourism (Table 7). Based on the current market trends, institutional focus, and available technology, the study participants outlined the following opportunities: embracing the value of agritourism, opening windows of opportunity, responding to public interest to learn, getting institutional support, celebrating local roots, and using resources in new ways. Across the life-cycle stages, we did not see any difference in the opportunities these women identified for their businesses.

Table 7: Occurrences of opportunities for success among women agripreneurs

Opportunities for Achieving Success	Number of Occurrences	Life Cycle		
		20's-30's	40's-50's	60's-70's
Embracing the value of agritourism	175	√	√	√
Opening windows of opportunities	115	√	√	√
Responding to public interest to learn	95	√	√	√
Benefitting from institutional support	94	√	√	√
Celebrating local roots	82	√	√	√
Using social media for promotion	80	√	√	√
Using resources in new ways	49	√	√	√

The most prominent opportunity that women in agritourism identified was “*Embracing the value of agritourism*”, which recognizes a manifold of tangible (e.g., financial, marketing) and inspirational (e.g., demonstrating women’s contribution, influencing future generations) values. Most importantly, agritourism was recognized as a

farm entrepreneurial diversification strategy that enabled farmers to capitalize on their existing strengths while providing financial security. Julia, who runs a private campground in her diversified farm explained:

“Diversity is very important. We’ve watched so many people fail in this economy and we started in this economy... We’ll be the only trout pond. So what we’re going to be is the entertainment factor, come catch your dinner. So anyway, yeah, we’ll have three [goats] in milk so the next project is learning to make soap and of course with the beeswax I’m going to make some lotions and balms and things like that. So production because once the pond is up and running, the blue building out there, one end of it is going to be a farm store... Selling our produce, and the eggs and mushrooms.”

Another important contribution of agritourism that participants mentioned was its marketing power, as the activities they offer serve to position their farms as a unique farm. Rose, whose dairy farm is located away from any major urban area, described, “... *We are overwhelmed with people who want to come to the farm and visit and see. They want to learn about goats. We have no problem selling our kids [goats] in the spring. People – I’ve already got orders for the kids for March now. (...) To me, it’s also a marketing tool.*” Many also viewed their involvement in agritourism as a tool to recruit extra labor during peak seasons because of the additional income agritourism brings. Amelia, described an interesting arrangement for availing extra help from a friend for planting the seedlings in Spring:

“Because of the money, thing is that I have a friend who she's a little older than I am. She comes and works for me in January and February helping us pot up and things, getting ready for our spring sale, so I don't pay her until

July when I have money come in. I'm not having anything come in in January and February. In July she wants to get paid to take her beach trip.”

The other two benefits that these women discussed were intangible in nature but carried long-term implications. Many of our study participants viewed their involvement in agritourism to gain visibility and demonstrate to society that women can do more than only household chores. Alice running her farm for 15 years, explained with passion, “*When we are there telling the story about the farm when these people come, you know, then they see that we know. We know what’s going on. We’re not just doing the cooking and the cleaning and the bookkeeping.*” Some entrepreneurs also discussed that agritourism was a good channel to inspire an innovative entrepreneurial mind-set to the future generation of farmers.

Women also perceived that agritourism was important for “***Opening windows of opportunities***”, especially to foster collaboration partnerships with peer farmers and other businesses. In this regards, Claire, who runs a small farm specialized on animal fiber production, stated about her partnership with a neighboring tourism business:

“Virtually 100 percent of our sales are from the farm not too far down the road, a really nice bed and breakfast, the [name removed]. Every July they have a wine festival where they feature North Carolina wines. And they set up with some—a number of vendors...crafts, local artisans, and they always invite us, and we don't take everything, it's just down the road, it's easy, so....And besides we get to participate in the wine festival for free.”

Some agripreneurs elaborated that collaborations were win-win situations because it facilitated knowledge sharing among peers and created a sense of community, which strengthens the industry as a whole. For example, Ivy commented about the cut-your-own

Christmas trees growers, *“And if we see something on the horizon then we’re going to share that information and say look, you might be wanting to look for this on your farm (...) So there’s a lot of camaraderie in the industry I think.”* These women also detailed how collaborations are helpful to complement strengths and compensate weaknesses. For example, Scarlett, who is thinking to expand her farm operations delineated:

“It’s strengthening connections because we all have different skills and sets of people that we know. Actually this also ties together, like one person I’m bringing on is not necessarily like a farmer, but he is a web designer and marketer and he’s like I want to be a person that goes and talks to restaurants, like I love talking to people. So I’m like cool because I’m really introverted. I don’t want to do that.”

Many of these agripreneurs thought that ***“Responding to public interest to learn”*** was an opportunity for agritourism development given the upward trend in people’s desire to learn about food and farming. As the public’s interest in food sources is increasing, farmers are also viewing it as important for the society. Ruby, a retired school teacher who offers school tours emphasized educational aspects of visiting farms, *“People are realizing... hey, this is important and I want my children to learn about this, and I want—this is a great experience just to come to the farm and to say I’ve been to the farm.”* To such an end, participants were very enthusiastic in sharing their farm and their knowledge about farming and food, even if visitors were driven by nostalgia. Luna, who offers a variety of recreational activities on her farm explained:

“I think the public is more interested in visiting farms. Especially families that are...maybe that have relocated to the area from another state and then they’re

looking to make memories and do things with their families on a farm.

Maybe they have some type of memory of their grandparents' farm.”

Many women voiced that **“Benefitting from institutional support”** either from associations, NC Cooperative Extension Service, and the government in general, was enhancing their ability to grow and develop their agritourism endeavors. In Claire’s view, her relevant regional affiliate was providing a lot of important support: *“Our regional affiliate—oh it’s fantastic. I mean our website is really through them (...) We’re piggybacking, it’s a marketing website, but still that’s what we use for our website right now because I don’t have the time or the expense. But it’s worked well for us.”* Additionally, NC Cooperative Extension Service was often mentioned as a primary source of assistance for many of these women. Sophia, who is the second generation running an apple orchard, compared her situation versus her parents when they first started out:

“We’ve been blessed. And my parents said at the beginning it was hard of finding out how to—the beginnings of everything was hard...But once they kind of got in with a couple, you know, the apple growers, North Carolina Department of Ag, I just keep them and NC State, you know, have just been huge resources to us.”

Many also mentioned NC government’s impetus to promote agritourism within the state and referred to various programs that they see materializing in the near future. Luna, who is actively involved in various agritourism associations, put her optimism succinctly, *“You’re going to see grants available through the USDA. You’re going to see maybe some grant money available through your local Department of Agriculture. There’s a lot of opportunities there if the type of venture fits the farm, you know, every agritourism farm is different.”*

Having talked about the resources and support available to them, the women also recognized the effort they need to put in for availing and capitalizing on these resources.

Because of the recent emergence of **“Celebrating local roots”** among people who seek locally crafted/grown products, participants realized that this is an opportune moment to brand and promote their products as local and authentic, and thereby to increase their market share. Abby, a passionate young farmer viewed this phenomenon as, *“Growing markets right now. Everyone is becoming more interesting in farming and purchasing local and all natural right now so that's a plus. That's a plus. That's a big one for us as a growing market.”*

Moreover, there is also a recent focus among large corporations to promote local products. Participants agreed that while big corporations’ definition of local might be debatable, these farmers were not hesitant to join the trend, which ultimately increases the opportunities for local farmers. Luna, who sells a variety of vegetables and fruits year-round viewed, *“You have Lowe's Foods and Food Lion and Wal-Mart doing huge campaigns of locally grown products. [But] Define local. But I think it's also—the way I see the positive effect of that would be people are at least becoming aware of [local products]”*

The widespread trend in **“Using social media for promotion”** was another opportunity agripreneurs perceived, especially because it is free and has a high market reach. Emily, who runs a family farm with her husband and two sons, mentioned, *“Our son, our eldest son, [Name removed], is the social media guru. He keeps all of that going almost on a daily basis. He posts things. (...) And I just share everything he puts out, but he's the one posting and I'm sharing. It's free. You just can't not do it.”* Social media also brought the possibility of reaching markets and that would be difficult to capture with more traditional

media. Ruby, explained how they used social media to promote the family farm, which ultimately was recognized among the top 10 orchards by USA Today:

“This year we were nominated by—USA Today, called us one of the top orchards in the United States. And what they do with this—they have 20 farmers that they pick and I think—they say they go through and look at your website and do this...So what you had to do was get people to go to their website, USA Today, and vote and you want them to vote every day...tell people vote for us today. Remember to vote for us today. And I even boost the post. You know you can boost it on Facebook. And that was a big help, that one. So we got in the top 10.”

Finally, these agripreneurs, who are inherently entrepreneurial in their approach mentioned “*Using resources in new ways*” as another opportunity for their agritourism success, which entailed being innovative and opportune at the same time. Olivia shared innovative way of her existing resources on the farm:

“Our property had two houses on and okay how—why are we going to have two houses? We didn’t want full-time tenants so we started using it as a guest house and the first couple years, okay we may have one person every month or so but we started listing on a different sites and we’ve just been—in the year that we’ve been with this different site our income has—it’s unreal. We have—we may have one week a month that’s vacant.”

For some, innovation meant re-purposing tools and equipment to serve some unmet needs. Amelia, described how they repurposed an old wood boiler to heat their greenhouse for growing herbs year-round:

“We found a wood boiler stove that someone had in the community someone had passed away. They, you know, we got it for little or nothing and my husband’s a great make it work kind of guy. And so we call her Bertha, and Bertha heats the greenhouse. The cold frame we had we can actually pump heat in there now if we need to, especially in the spring for us when we’ve got lots of plants and we can get a freeze late. And a cold frame wasn’t good enough. So he can pump enough in there to keep it above freezing and that so was a big thing and what happened.”

This chapter overall presents the profile of women agripreneurs who participated in our study as well as their agriculture and agritourism offerings. With regards to the four research topics: definition of success, perception of challenges, strategies to overcome challenges, and opportunities for business, a highlight was that most themes emerged across all our participants, regardless of their life-cycle stages.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our study provides pioneering findings related to the success of women involved in agritourism from a subjective perspective (Table 8). Specifically, our findings expand the definition of women’s subjective success by adding four new aspects to the relevant literature: having appreciative customers, being constantly on the move, pursuing happiness, and perpetuating the family farm. Having appreciative customers was added to the professional aspect, while being constantly on the move, pursuing happiness, and perpetuating the farm were added to the mixed aspects of women agripreneurs.

Table 8: Existing literature in relation to themes within subjective success

Themes in Women’s Subjective Success	Emerging	Confirming	Opposing	Expanding
<i>Professional Aspects</i>				
Having appreciative customers	√			
Gaining recognition and peer respect		√		
Ensuring financial sustainability		√		
<i>Personal Aspects</i>				
Having family support		√		
Debating the work-life balance			√	
<i>Mixed Aspects</i>				
Being constantly on the move	√			
Creating broad impact				√
Pursuing happiness	√			
Perpetuating the family farm	√			

While our study participants were vocal about portraying their views of success, they also identified a number of challenges that posed difficulty in achieving their self-defined success. Some of the emergent challenges faced by women agripreneurs confirm (Table 9)

those reported in the overall entrepreneurial literature (i.e., not being embraced as farmers, having lower access to resources, dealing with social norms, and juggling women’s traditional roles). Notably, however, these women also identified six distinct challenges not previously reported in the literature: lacking reliable staff, managing growth, ensuring farm perpetuation, playing pluriactive role, constantly facing new challenges, and inconvenient location of farms.

Table 9: Existing literature in relation to themes within challenges

Themes in Women’s Challenges	Emerging	Confirming	Expanding
Lacking reliable staff	√		
Managing growth	√		
Lacking institutional support			√
Ensuring farm perpetuation	√		
Keeping up with pluriactive role	√		
Facing new challenges constantly	√		
Not being embraced as farmers		√	
Having limited access to resources		√	
Dealing with gender norms		√	
Having inconvenient location	√		
Balancing demand of livelihood with traditional roles			√

Importantly for women agripreneurs, we found that our participants were constantly evolving as entrepreneurs as they seek to learn more about various aspects of their businesses while strategizing to overcome their various challenges. They reaped their learning from past experiences, both their own and others’, through prioritizing tasks and completing them by seeking help, and planning for the future. Strategies to overcoming challenges mainly entailed modifying or adjusting their tasks to ensure more effective farm operation. By positioning these strategies within the Dynamic Learning Framework (DLF), we were able to

qualitatively untangle how women agripreneurs interacted with their surroundings. In these women's narrative of successes and challenges, our study also paved the path to identify opportunities for further agritourism success. Most salient opportunity for our participants was embracing the value of agritourism in different ways because they considered agritourism to open windows of various business opportunities. These opportunities are especially timely because of the growing interest in the public to celebrate their local roots and interest to learn about local food and farming.

Discussing Key Findings

The demographic composition of our sample is similar to the current agricultural landscape in the US. We had only three young farmers (20-30's) with most falling in their mid-adulthood (40-50's) or falling in the retirement age (60-70's), which is consistent with the ageing farming population in the US and the small, but steady, proportion of younger generation who is taking up farming as a profession (USDA: NASS, 2007; 2012). The prominent presence of participants involved in agritourism as their retirement careers as well as small number of young individuals venturing into farming with an entrepreneurial mindset has also been reported as a national trend (Barbieri, Mahoney, & Butler, 2008; Tew & Barbieri, 2012; Ahearn, 2013).

The diversity within our sample also suggests that agritourism is an entrepreneurial option for farmers at different life-cycle stages (from women in their 20's-30's to those in their 60's-70's) and is dedicated to a wide spectrum of agricultural production including traditional (e.g., row crops) and non-traditional (e.g., shitake mushroom) crops and livestock (e.g., alpaca) and value-added production (e.g., jams, cheese), which have also been

documented in previous studies (Barbieri, Mahoney, & Butler, 2008). The variety of agritourism offerings of our participants also resonates with the diversification strategies fueled by the creativity of agripreneurs who capitalize on their existing resources to offer innovative recreation, hospitality and educational experiences to the public (Barbieri, 2014).

Our Balance is Horrible...We Work Full-time...We're Fed. We're Happy (Abby)

Abby summarizes one of our strongest findings, in the sense that perpetuating the farm is not necessarily a component of success among women in their 20's-30's. This is possibly because they are still in the phase of developing their enterprises and are yet to think about what happens to the farm in their absence, as these women either do not have children and unmarried or have young children. When discussing their definition of success, a noteworthy finding was that most of our participants rejected the notion of work-life balance, a statement that is very prevalent in the extant entrepreneurial literature (Lee et al., 2006; Lirio et al., 2007; Sturges, 1999). However, this rejection resonates with the idea that women tend to reject traditional notion of success, whatever those may be, as important to their subjective success (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Rosener, 1990). Women's outright rejection of the need to balance their work and personal lives is a testament to the fact that they are more realistic in their views and prioritized what they considered as achievable. In such prioritizing quest, some women were not hesitant to obtain help, either by outsourcing tasks for their personal (e.g., childcare) or farm (e.g., accounting) responsibilities, or just forgoing chores they don't believe important or profitable (e.g., house cleaning).

It is important to situate this task prioritization within the notion of women's sense of happiness. Existing literature portrays women's success as embedded in their perception of

contentment (Buttner & Moore, 1997; Dyke & Duxbury, 2011; Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Lee et al., 2006; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Sturges, 1999). However our study findings go beyond the notion of contentment as through prioritizing farming and agritourism activities over household chores was equated with happiness. In a similar vein, our study confirms that having family support is important for entrepreneurial women in the form of support with farm work and women's emotional realm (Lirio et al., 2007), while getting support for household obligations (e.g., childcare) did not emerge. This finding may be related to women's prioritization of their professional realm over their personal lives as important cornerstone of their success.

Our study also elucidates the notion of creating a broad impact, which is defined in the literature in very vague and idealistic terms (Lee et al., 2006; Lirio, 2007; Sturges, 1999). We found that such broad impact comes in different ways, from making contributions to local organizations, mentoring youth and educating the public. This new definition implies the agripreneurs' need to contemplate the well-being of surrounding communities as important element of the success of women agripreneurs. Although we did not find direct support for establishing meaningful relationships as a distinct element of women's success (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Lirio et al., 2007; Rosener, 1990), that notion was embedded in a number of themes that did emerge in our study. For example, establishing long-term relationship with customers, getting recognition from the community, and inspiring the success of farm employees and next generation of farmers were aspects of their self-defined success.

The three new mixed aspects (i.e., being constantly on the move, pursuing happiness, and perpetuating the family farm) that emerged from our study should also be noted because

these suggest that the success for women agripreneurs is a complex construct that comprises the fulfillment of both their personal values and their professional pursuits. This finding may be related to the notion of ‘farm household’, which denotes the complex inter-dependency of the different realms (e.g., personal interests, agriculture responsibilities, off-farm employment) of all members of farm household as they seek to maximize the benefits of their farm and household (Knickel & Renting, 2000; Benjamin, 2004). In this sense, these women are passionate professionals who do not always distinguish between their personal and professional aspirations; rather, the entrepreneurs often project an amalgamation of the two (Lee et al., 2006) in their quest of the farm household well-being.

People Think I’m Just a Mother... They Think I’m an Employee (Emma)

Findings showed that managing growth as a challenge was not prevalent among young women, while perpetuating the family farm only occurred later in women’s life-cycle. This could be because young women are still focusing on building their businesses and are not concerned about unmanageable level of growth. In contrast, older women, who generally had adult children capable of taking over the farm in the future, may have a clearer picture of the future of their farm as retirement is fast approaching. So, perpetuation becomes a concern as women agripreneurs become older and start to think about farm in their absence.

As widely reported in the entrepreneurial literature, our agripreneurs tend to suffer from lack of credibility and acceptance by the virtue of being women (Gundry, Ben-Yoseph, & Posig, 2002; Shragg, Yacuk, & Glass, 1992). Furthermore, challenges of women in agritourism are aggravated beyond their gender because they operate in a male-dominated industry that questions the legitimacy of agritourism as a farming activity. Participants’ sense

of isolation and neglect was also perceived when approaching support institutions, which is manifested in the limited access to resources available to women farmers (Doss, 2001; Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010; Peterman, Behrman, & Quisumbing, 2009; Quisumbing, 1994; Ragasa, 2012). An example of institutions limiting access to resources was delineated as participants' difficulty in accessing grants, which usually go to well-established male-operated businesses that are well rooted in agricultural networks, which also happen to be male-dominated. In our sample we did not find evidence of unequal land right as a major issue, which is not surprising as most of the extant literature on this topic pertains to developing countries with largely gender biased legal structures (Doss, 2001; Duvvury, 1989; Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009; Phiri et al., 2004; Pusker, 2013; Quisumbing, 1994; 1996).

Women entrepreneurs have long wrestled with juggling traditional roles with their professional activities, which limits both the start-up and subsequent successful growth of their operations (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004; Gundry, Ben-Yoseph, & Posig, 2002; Loscoco & Robinson, 1991; McClelland, Swail, Bell, & Ibbotson, 2005). We found evidence of this challenge among our agripreneurs who seemed to be pursuing their agritourism operations in the face of inadequate support from their families. Husbands often emerged as critical counterparts who focused only on farming and agritourism tasks that they deemed desirable and left less appealing tasks and most demands of family life (e.g., caring for children) to the participants. As a result, women held themselves responsible for not meeting everyone's expectations in the family, resulting in higher level of stress on their part (Winn, 2005).

Our findings revealed a new set of challenges that women agripreneurs face. The most pressing ones emerged from reduced access to resources (e.g., reliable staff, dependable

suppliers, pertinent information), which impedes on the smooth operation and organic growth of their farms. Limited resources challenged their desire to maintain the high quality of their offerings. Women voiced their difficulty in finding reliable staff, a problem that is symptomatic of the decreasing availability of agricultural labor in developed countries (Kandel, 2008), which is further compounded in agritourism farms due to its seasonality (MacDonald, 2014). The limited access to human (reliable staff, technical knowledge) and financial resources have manifold repercussions in various aspects of these women's businesses, especially in properly pricing their products and acquiring additional insurance to account for growth on farms.

Many of the challenges our participants discussed bear consequences on their household income and livelihood. Lack of reliable suppliers, constant threats of unexpected challenges (e.g., weather uncertainty, unexpected calamities), competition from mass produced products, and inconvenient location were all identified as either adding to the cost of production or decreasing their profit margin, both of which ultimately hurt the farm's profitability. This ultimately results in falling income for the farm household, pushing farmers to opt for alternative livelihoods including off-farm employment (Juvan & Ovsenik, 2008; MacDonald et al., 2000; Myer & De Crom, 2013). The participating women were passionate farmers who cared deeply about farming and their lands. Many were preoccupied with the uncertain future of their farmlands as often their sons and daughters are not interested in farming. While conservation easements are an option for preserving the farmland, it does not guarantee that the agricultural business will remain in the family (USDA ERS, 2015). This decrease in farm profitability and possible functional reallocation of farmland ultimately paves the way for de-agrarianization, which is a major concern in the

world and US, especially owing to its implications on global food security (Bryceson & Jamal, 1997; Bryceson, 2002).

One of the Top Five on My Winter Plan is Managing My Growth (Sophia)

Women's perception of the growth of their farm merits further discussion, as this theme strongly appeared linked as an element of success, as challenge, and even as a mechanism to overcome challenges. These entrepreneurial women emphasized being able to grow at a comfortable pace while ensuring desired level of quality as critical part of their success. However, as the business continue to grow and participants were no longer able to personally oversee the whole operation, growth turned into a challenge. So, while they desire growth for their respective business, it is the pace and level of growth that is their concern. As growth appeared as a perceived challenge, it is not surprising that these women are also cognizant of controlling the level of business growth as a strategy to overcome this specific challenge. This strategy included consciously limiting visitors to the farm and designated specific visiting hours so that the agricultural tasks are not interrupted. In brief, there seems to be strong focus on maximizing farm and household benefits from their agricultural and entrepreneurial pursuits (Knickel & Renting, 2000; Benjamin, 2004).

I Don't Think of Anything as Unsolvable! (Julia)

Rather than feeling helpless by the many challenges they face in managing their agritourism operations, it was evident that study participants were actively devising strategies to modify farm tasks aimed at overcoming their challenges. Analyzing participants' strategies in response to their challenges through the Dynamic Learning Framework (DLF) lens results

in a learning process that accumulates knowledge, fosters reflective thinking and critical learning, and generates new learning and application (Figure 9).

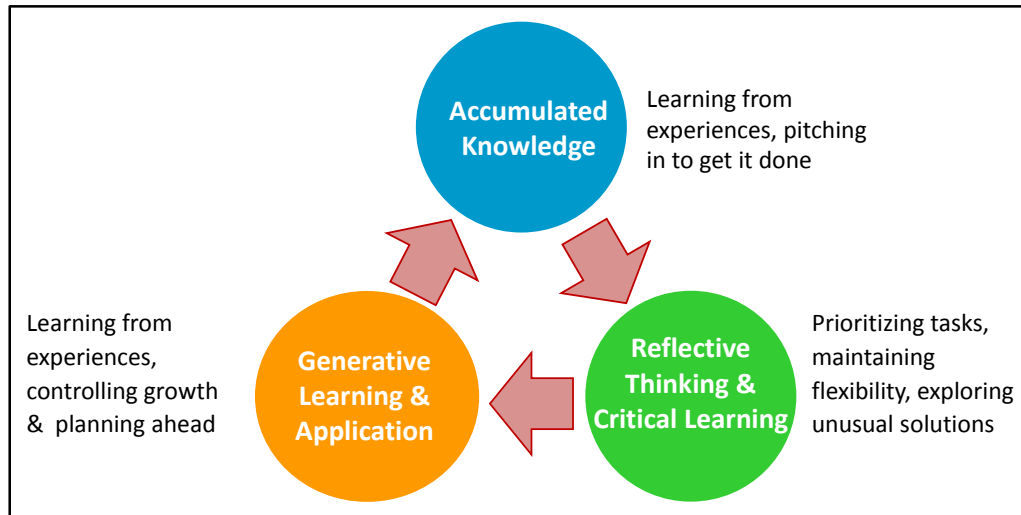


Figure 9: Strategies to overcome challenges in various stages of DLF

Firstly, by learning from their own and others' experiences and getting help from others, the agripreneurs demonstrated they were Accumulating Knowledge in terms of enhancing their stock of experience (e.g., reviewing insurance coverage, reaching out associations) and their farming, business, and agritourism skills and abilities (Minniti & Bygrave, 2001; Reuber & Fisher, 1999; Harvey & Evans, 1995). Secondly, these women also demonstrated they reached the Critical Learning stage as they were thoughtful about their experiences (Cope & Watts, 2000) and their strategies (i.e., prioritizing tasks, maintaining flexibility, exploring unusual solutions). Importantly, participants shared how they experimented with and repeated various strategies until finding a desirable solution (i.e., what work/does not work on their farms) at this second learning stage (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Boud, Cohen, & Walker 1993; Mezirow, 1991). Thirdly, although we found

evidence that participants were in the DLF's Generative Learning and Application stage (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Cope, 2005), the occurrence of retrospective learning (i.e., from past experiences, controlling growth) was more prevalent than the prospective learning (planning for the future). This may be associated with the inherent uncertainty of farming and the general wide variety of agritourism offerings, leading these women to elaborate more on their strategies to overcome past challenges rather than planning uncertain future directions.

When examined the overcoming of challenges across participants' life-cycle stages, we found that maintaining flexibility and exploring unusual solutions did not appear in the young women. This could be because these women are fairly young and are still working on developing their businesses and their path to success. So they might be more risk averse to try unusual solutions and could be trying to address their challenges in more conventional ways, rather than trying multiple solutions. Overall, learning from past experiences and maintaining flexibility were more common strategies among these women, which implies that they have fewer formal technical learning opportunities. This can be related to the lack of relevant training and skills, especially from formal training, and facing barriers in male-dominated business spheres as the challenges of women entrepreneurs (Goldwin, Stevens, & Brenner, 2006; Hisrich & Brush, 1984; Lerner, Brush, & Hisrich, 1984; Levent, Masurel, & Nijkamp, 2003; McClelland, Swail, Bell, & Ibbotson, 2005; McKay, 2001).

From our study, regarding the types of learning, we found support for hands-on learning as participants emphasized their flexible mindset to focus on solving problems (Hines & Thorpe, 1995; Reuber & Fischer, 1993). However, evidence of seminal learning experiences was not strong in our sample (Cope, 2003; Deakins & Freel, 1998; Rae & Carswell, 2000), with the exception of one entrepreneur who manages all technical (farming)

and managerial aspects of her farm as a result of her father's death. This finding could be attributed to the fact that hands-on learning experiences are more common occurrences and hence easier to recall for agripreneurs. The three attributes of the DLF entrepreneurial learning process (personal qualities, contextual attributes, learning tasks) also emerged in these women's discussions. Personal qualities that enable learning were found among participants, especially in terms of willingness to try different options, strong emotional reactions (e.g., negative emotions expressed in relation to a business loss, unexpected calamities), and prudent decision-making (e.g., weighing alternative investment decisions), as suggested in the literature (Cope, 2005; Hines & Thorpe, 1995).

Our findings partially support contextual attributes of learning. On the one hand, we found that most solutions were situated within the social and economic realities of individual farms. As Holman, Pavlica, and Thorpe (1997) suggested, they were unique strategies as they were in line with specific needs our participants' businesses. On the other hand, our participants did not have an explicit awareness of the multi-faceted implications of learning. However, many of their examples showed how a challenge posed cascading effect on the business. For example, dedicating time for staff training to ensure quality led to higher time required for production and ultimately higher cost of production. Evidence of Learning Tasks, the final learning attribute, also emerged when agripreneurs discussed specific actions (i.e., tasks) they had to carry out to overcome a specific challenge. All four types of tasks of learning stated in the literature emerged in our study (Cope, 20005; Pittaway & Thorpe, 2012), namely: oneself (e.g., identify one's strengths and weaknesses), business (e.g., learning about different soil types), business networks (e.g., participating in relevant associations), and small business management (e.g., coping with staff shortage).

I Think It's Limitless as Long as You Have a Creative Mind (Nora)

In addition to their learning path, participants also voiced the breadth of opportunities they, as agripreneurs, are currently encountering. Participants' decision to pursue agritourism as an opportunity was mainly rooted in economic considerations (e.g., marketing purposes, strategic partnership development), which is extensively reported across the agritourism and entrepreneurial literature (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2008; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; McGehee & Kim, 2004; Nickerson et al., 2001; Shane & Venkatarman, 2000). Even the current opportunity to capitalize on social media, something the participants were well aware of, stemmed from a pure capitalistic mindset, driven by its free access and high-return on time investment. Our findings confirm that as women evolve in their entrepreneurial venture—especially through their businesses growth and their networks expansion—they kept furthering opportunities for their agritourism operations (Pittaway & Thorpe, 2012; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). These results reinforce the important role that access to information and cognition play in the decision making process (Ardichvili, Cardozo, & Ray, 2003).

The external business environment seemed to play an important role in the types of opportunities on which the agripreneurs were capitalizing. In line with existing literature that point to the shift in global consumer preference towards locally produced foods (Gilg, Barr, & Ford, 2005; Kline, LaPan, & Barbieri, 2015), our participants identified public interest in learning about food and farming, as well as increased demand for locally produced food, as their agritourism businesses opportunities. Social media emerged as a ubiquitous opportunity for most of these businesses. However, as Shane and Venkatarman (2000) point out, having an opportunity is not enough unless it is exploited. And our participants are doing so as they

were actively pursuing social media to create awareness, increase customers, and enhance the reach of their business (Jones, Borgman, & Ulusoy, 2015), with the exception of one entrepreneur who chose not to engage in social media, attributing the decision to her age (Wamba & Carter, 2014). In brief, participating agripreneurs have gone through the whole opportunity pursuing process, from discovering to exploiting opportunities, in benefit of their businesses.

Study Implications

Our study advances the scholarship and practice of women agripreneurs towards their entrepreneurial success. From the scholarly perspective, this study responds to the need to explore subjective views of women's success as they likely have a broader set of expectations than men (Ahl, 2006; Gatewood, Carter, Brush, Greene, & Hart, 2003). Our study adds to the current theoretical understanding of subjective success by identifying a suite of professional, personal, and mixed aspects that fulfill women agripreneurs as women and as entrepreneurs. In this regard, we conclude the necessity to capture the complexity of entrepreneurship by including non-economic along economic indicators when measuring women's success. Failing to do so is likely to produce results that are skewed in favor of objective measurements of success and thereby undermine the socio-economic contributions of businesses driven by women, especially when contrasted with their male counterparts (Rosa, Carter, & Hamilton, 1996).

The identification of six new challenges agritourism women perceive in their agritourism ventures enriches the entrepreneurial and agritourism literatures, which was previously limited on this topic (Ahl, 2006; McGehee, 2007). The discussion of challenges

and the process of overcoming them among our participants elucidates a strong dialectic (challenge-reaction) process in entrepreneurial learning. In face of a given challenge, entrepreneurs seek solutions (reactions) that they can then apply to overcome the challenge. Response to such reaction can result in correcting current business practices or adopting new ones (if positive) or finding an alternative solution (if negative). The juxtaposition of this dialect process with the opportunities for agritourism that emerge from the current external environment (e.g., local food initiatives) is providing entrepreneurs the possibility to extend and innovate their offerings to capitalize on favorable market trends. Thus, putting the dialectic learning process and opportunities together, emerging entrepreneurial practices can be conceptualized as either strategies for overcoming existing challenges or for market maximization.

In light of study findings, practical implications can be drawn related to challenges and opportunities women agripreneurs face, which relevant agencies (e.g., extension service, farming associations) can implement to increase women's opportunities for success. While assisting women in overcoming challenges is critical for their agritourism success, it is equally important to help them capitalize on the suite of opportunities the market is currently presenting. In doing so, we need to recognize that external business factors, such as institutional support, access to networks, and policies, are both a challenge and an opportunity, depending on whether an individual entrepreneur has access to the relevant information and considers it to produce adequate personal and economic value. Herein lies the individual differences among entrepreneurs in their level of access to information, which stresses the need that government and non-government support agencies make a conscious

effort in reaching those farms that remain outside their current recipients and facilitate access to information across all agripreneurs.

In crafting support programs and target policies, it is important to acknowledge that although women agripreneurs may not necessarily feel marginalized, they have to continuously push through prevalent gender hegemony to pursue their entrepreneurial livelihoods. Unfriendly institutional structures that often favor well-established male-driven businesses and limit access to a diversity of resources (e.g., technical information, development grants, insurance) are major concerns that should be overcome. This could be done by correcting the two underlying causes: (1) agritourism not being considered as real agriculture and (2) women entrepreneurs, who are often small-scale non-traditional farmers and who are often not deemed as legitimate farmers.

To alleviate the aforementioned situation, a two-prong awareness initiative needs to be undertaken. Firstly, it is imperative to create a collective narrative that elevates women's recognition as entrepreneurs and as farmers. Such narrative should be founded on the economic contribution that women agripreneurs bring to their farm households (family and business) as well as the many social, environmental and economic benefits their farms bring to surrounding communities (e.g., job creation, natural resources stewardship). Women, as main actors in agritourism, should orchestrate efforts with policy makers and agriculture support agencies in crafting and advocating for such a narrative. Given current market trends, advocacy efforts could capitalize on branding efforts to increase the consumption of local products and authentic services.

Secondly, it is important to establish a support system for women agripreneurs that fosters and advances their success. This could be achieved by establishing a fluid

communication between these women and relevant support agencies (e.g., agritourism associations, extension services), so that these agencies can adjust their programs to address women's entrepreneurial shortcomings (e.g., branding and pricing, market entry, liability insurance). In parallel, networking opportunities among female agripreneurs can be created so as that they can support each other in their entrepreneurial quest. For example, a system can be established that would enable mentoring (i.e., established women mentor young or start-up agritourism farmers). Developed in tandem, both initiatives can enhance the credibility of women-led agritourism businesses and alleviate over time the current disadvantageous position many currently hold.

Specifically, agencies should consider supporting the development of networking platforms so that women agripreneurs can learn from each other's experiences. Towards such a goal, extension agencies could also partner with existing associations that already are facilitating the interaction across agritourism entrepreneurs, for example, the NC Agritourism Networking Association and the North American Farm Direct Marketing Association. It is also advisable that government sponsored agricultural programs become more vested in enhancing women's entrepreneurial preparedness, as we found that our participants perceived these institutions as not being helpful enough in overcoming their challenges. Given the strong presence of NC Cooperative Extension Service in the practice of agriculture throughout the state, their proactive involvement would facilitate a more fluent dialogue and information exchange among groups of women and support agencies. In doing so, entrepreneurial women would increase their credibility as entrepreneurs and farmers, and become confident in approaching such establishments.

Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study is limited to a sample of women agripreneurs actively involved in agritourism in the state of NC (U.S.), which carries two limitations. While adopting qualitative methods of inquiry enable the generation of in-depth findings regarding the subjective success, challenges, and opportunities of women agripreneurs, these may not be generalizable to the entire population of agripreneurs. Secondly, we consciously chose only women agripreneurs to compose our study population to construct an emic definition of agritourism success and identify specific challenges and opportunities. These findings may only be applicable to women agripreneurs and cannot be generalized to male agripreneurs.

Our study altogether included 20 women at various life-cycle stages as the mini focus groups and the group interview had a relatively small number of participants. To enhance the transferability of the results, in conducting subsequent interviews, we purposefully chose women at various stages of their lifecycles. However, while considering agripreneurs at various life-cycles, there were only three participants in the 20's-30's age group. While our data do include views from this group, the insights captured in this study might not be comprehensive for women in this specific life-cycle stage.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that our mini focus groups and group interview constituted a relatively smaller number of participants because of unexpected weather-related, last-minute declinations. During the months of September and October (2015), NC experienced unusually high levels of rainfall, which led to a workload increase for many agripreneurs and the adjustment in farm operating hours. While these events did not compel us to radically change our data generation methods, we needed to make slight adjustments to account for different group dynamics in smaller groups. Although there are other

unavoidable and unpredictable circumstances such as this one, a practical lesson for future research entailing agritourism operators is to schedule data generation sessions for groups at a more conducive time. Although we recognize that agripreneurs tend to have a busy schedule throughout the year, January or February may entice greater participation because this time does not coincide with major events (e.g., Halloween, Christmas) thus farmers generally have lighter (administrative) work load.

Taking into account the scholarly and empirical contributions of our study, as well as the aforementioned limitations, we also identified several avenues for future research. Having paved the foundational understanding of challenges and opportunities for women agripreneurs, future research should be conducted using quantitative methods to produce results generalizable to a greater population (e.g., women at various life-cycle stages, state, national levels). In doing so, future research could be expanded to other states with vibrant agritourism scenes (e.g., Texas, New Jersey) that can serve as benchmark for NC (e.g., how to improve policies to overcome challenges). Findings from such research would lend better understanding regarding the effects of policy and other business aspects on women's entrepreneurial process. Future research could also identify differences among women agripreneurs at various stages of development (e.g., start-up, long-term entrepreneurs) as to how they access various business related information (e.g., preferred methods), their information sources (e.g., government agencies, non-for-profit associations), as well as the types of information that are more readily available to them. Future studies should also explore the possibility of developing an integrated framework to conceptualize new business venture creation as a response to a business challenge or an external opportunity.

Final Insights

Our study focused on women involved in agritourism as a means to construct their meaning of success, identify their challenges, and learn how they capitalize on opportunities towards their entrepreneurial achievement. By giving voice to these women, our study contributes to the entrepreneurial literature by incorporating four dimensions to the existing definition of women's subjective success. In parallel, our study also identified six challenges affecting women agripreneurs which not only contributes to the agritourism literature, but can also serve to develop educational materials and capacity building programs targeting women in agritourism. By juxtaposing women's challenges with existing business opportunities related to agritourism, our study makes specific recommendations for the NC Cooperative Extension and other relevant associations to increase women's entrepreneurial preparedness and foster their success. In brief, our study not only advances the theoretical discourse on women agripreneurs, but also sets the foundation for their further advancement in their farming practices and entrepreneurial ventures.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Script & Screening Questions

Purpose: This script will be used for communicating with individual female entrepreneurs over phone whose contact we will obtain from various associations. Objectives of this phone conversation are to determine whether they: (1) qualify as participants of this study, and (2) are better suited to participate in the focus group or the semi-structured interview. All the responses will be registered in a spread sheet, which will be deleted along with any form of identification upon completion of research.

Dear [insert name here],

Good day to you. I am Mirza Halim, a graduate student at Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management at NC State University. We are conducting a study to understand various aspects of women in agritourism. The goal of this study is to develop definitions of success from your point of view as well as identify various business challenges and opportunities that you come across as female entrepreneurs involved in agritourism.

Q. Are you interested to hear more about this research?

[If yes, then continue. If no, then thank them for their time and end script.]

For the purpose of this study, we will be conducting focus group and individual interviews, sometime in Fall 2015. The specific date and time will be fixed based on your availability and preference. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may abstain from answering any question, if you deem appropriate. All data will be reported at the group level and all responses will be stored on a password protected computer until completion of data collection. Once we have transcribed all the data in digital format we will

remove names and any other form of identification. The focus group is estimated to last about three hours and the interview about 30-60 minutes. As an incentive to participate in this research, we will be offering a small gift to everyone who completes either of the tasks.

One of the goals is to increase the diversity of our participants and based on the profile and your consent, you may participate either in the focus group or the individual interview. To that end, I will be asking you a few simple questions and record the responses. These responses will be permanently deleted once the research has been completed.

Q1. What is the name of your farm? (or confirm the farm name) _____

Q2. For how long has your farm been in operation? _____

Q3. Do you consider yourself as the primary agritourism person in your farm?

- Yes
- No

[If yes, then go to Q4, if no, then go to 3A] then thank them for their time and end script]

Q 3A. Who is the primary agritourism person in your farm?

- Your wife
- Your daughter
- Other: _____

[If the response is a woman then continue to Q 4, otherwise thank them for their time and end script]

Q4. For how long out of the 12 months of the year, is your farm open to visitors?

[If the response is less than three months, then thank them for their time and end script; if it is more than three months, then continue to Q5]

Q5. For how long have you been involved in the agritourism business? _____

Q6. Who started the farm?

- You
- Your spouse
- Your parents
- Other: _____

Q7. Who started the agritourism operation?

- You
- Your spouse
- Your parents
- Other: _____

Q8. What is your marital status?

- Married
- Unmarried
- Divorced
- Widowed

Q9. Do you have children?

- Yes. If yes,
 - How many? _____
 - How old are they? _____
- No

Q10. What is your preferred mode of communication?

- Phone: (____) ____ - _____
- E-mail: _____

- Mail: _____
- Other: _____

Q9. Is there anything you would like to know about our study or your participation?

[If yes, then answer any question they might have, otherwise continue]

Great! Once we have finalized all the details, you will be communicated via your preferred mode, with information on date, time and venue for your participation.

Thank you very much for your time and patience!

Appendix B: Consent Form

North Carolina State University INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study Women in Agritourism: Voicing their Success & Challenges

Principal Investigator Dr. Carla Barbieri

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of your success and challenges as an agritourism entrepreneur. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to better understand the entrepreneurial experience of female agritourism providers. Specifically, we would like to know better how you define success in your own terms, what are some of the business challenges you face and the opportunities you come across for overcoming those challenges.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer a number of questions or prompts. This might take three hours (for focus group participants) or about 60 minutes (for semi-structured interviews) of your time. The interaction will take place today at your current location.

Risks

There is no foreseeable risk, physical or emotional, of participating in this study. If you feel uncomfortable in answering any of the questions, you are free to abstain from responding.

Benefits

There are no known direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, study results will be used to develop programs to assist women involved in agritourism.

Confidentiality

The interview/focus group will be audio recorded. If you agree to be in this project, all reasonable efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality to the full extent allowed by law. Your name will not be associated with your responses in any written or oral report. Only those directly involved with the project will have access to the audio recordings. Once the audio files are transcribed, all real names and any other form of identification will be permanently removed and replaced with alias. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which can link you to the study. The audio and transcribed files will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office.

Compensation

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, participants will receive a small gift.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Dr. Carla Barbieri by phone (919.513.0351), email (carla_barbieri@ncsu.edu) or regular mail (Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management, North Carolina State University, Box 8004, 3028C Biltmore Hall, Raleigh, NC 27695-8004).

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator at dapaxton@ncsu.edu or by phone at 1-919-515-4514.

Consent to Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature _____ **Date** _____

Investigator's signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix C: Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Introduction

Estimated duration: 15 minutes

Welcome script:

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to participate in our focus group discussion today. We truly appreciate you taking the time to help us better understand the various aspects of success and challenges that female agritourism entrepreneurs, such as yourselves, face. Our research team consists of Mirza Halim, a graduate student at North Carolina State University, Dr. Carla Barbieri and Dr. Morais, Professors and Tourism Extension Specialists at the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management at NC State. Today, [insert name] will facilitate the group discussion and [insert name] will take some notes.

The agenda has been printed out and hope you have had the chance to look at it. We also have a consent form that we would like you to go over and sign. Before we start, let's take some time to take care of some housekeeping issues. The bathrooms in this facility are located [include details based on the facility] and we also have some refreshments available for you. Please let any of us know any if you have any question regarding the consent form and we would be happy to answer them. Please collect a name tag and put down your first name only.

For accuracy and to better capture your comments and stories, we will record today's session. Once the recordings have been transcribed, all names and any other form of identification will be removed from the text and replaced with alias.

Study Overview:

Overall, the purpose of this study is to learn about your successes and challenges as women in agritourism. Specifically, we have four goals for the focus group today. First we would like to learn about what success means to you. Second, we would like to know about the challenges you face as a female entrepreneur. Then, we would like you to identify any opportunity you can think of that helps you overcome the challenges you face. Finally, we would like to learn the process through which you overcome the challenges you face. In discussing these specific issues, we will carry out a number of activities, including individual and group brainstorming and ranking exercises.

Ground Rules:

You will find the ground rules printed out and placed on the table. Please keep these rules in mind during our discussion today. We would like you to share your thoughts and opinions in a free manner, but also to listen to others'. Please keep in mind that there is no right or wrong answer. You have been invited to this focus group because we consider that you can help us to understand the entrepreneurial experience of women in agritourism. We understand each of you are at different stages of your lives and agritourism operation. Such variation will help us to identify different challenges and opportunities at different stages of your business. But we need to hear from all of you. We are open to all ideas including ones that are different from what might have already been said. In brief, the success of this process depends on your willingness to think creatively, voice your ideas, listen to others' ideas, and maintain an open mind.

Icebreaker Activity (10 minutes):

Before we get started, let us go around the group and share a little bit about ourselves. In less than 2 minutes, please introduce yourself (name and where you live) and then tell us about your favorite hobby and why you like it.

Thanks for sharing!

Part I – Constructing the Meaning of Success

Estimated duration: 35 minutes

Materials required: Flip chart, marker

Ok, we are going to get started now with our first topic: What does success mean to you, for a woman involved in agritourism.

[The Question: “As a female agritourism operator, specifically at this stage of your operation,....What does success mean to you?” Will be placed on a flip chart so everyone can read it.]

Let us go around the table, starting with [insert name], go clock-wise and answer the question.

[After everyone participated and the group has discussed all issues]

Is there anything else you would like to add to this list?

[If anyone says yes, then we will add the item(s)]

[If no more items arise and there is time remaining, use the following probes]

- (i) Do you believe that being **recognized and gaining respect from others** is part of your success? [Probe for **Recognition and Peer Respect**]
- (ii) Does obtaining **higher responsibilities** in the farm mean being successful to you? [Probe for **Upward mobility**]
- (iii) Is securing **more profits/revenues** part of your success? [Probe for **Financial gain**]
- (iv) Can you explain whether balancing **work-load with family duties** means being successful? [Probe for **Work-life balance**]
- (v) Do you believe that getting your **family's support** in carrying out all your tasks is part of your definition of success? [Probe for **Family support**]
- (vi) Are **achievements** part of your success? [Probe for **Sense of achievement**]
- (vii) Do you think being **content** contributes to your success? [Probe for **Contentment**]
- (viii) Is **impacting the broader society** part of your meaning of success? [Probe for **Impact on Society**]
- (ix) Do you think that maintaining **meaningful relationships** is important to defining your success? [Probe for **Meaningful relationships**]

Great! The first part is complete, now let us take a five minutes break!

Part II - Identifying the Challenges of Women in Agritourism

Estimated duration: 45 minutes

Materials required: White paper, flip chart, marker, pen, blue stickers

We know that you, as women in business, have faced some (or many) challenges while developing or managing your agritourism operations. Specifically, thinking about the stage

of the business operation, you may also face challenges differently than other entrepreneurs. We would like to know more about the challenges that you face in conducting your business.

Task 1: Listing down all the challenges of female entrepreneurs (5 minutes)

Please take 5 minutes and list down all the challenges that you can identify, in the white paper that has been placed in front of you.

[The following question: “As a female agritourism operator...what are the challenges you face?” Will be placed on the flip chart so that everyone can read it.]

Task 2: Sharing the various challenges (10 minutes)

If all of you have completed your lists, then I am going to start putting together a comprehensive list from all of your responses on flip chart in front of you. By going around the table clock-wise, starting with [insert name], we would like you to start reading out the items from your list. If you have an item that has already been mentioned by someone else, then please read out the next item in your list.

[After exhausting the list] Is there anything else you would like to add to this list?

[If anyone says yes, then we will add the item(s). Otherwise, if participants feel like we have exhausted all the items, then we move on.]

[After participants have finished, and the following items have not appeared in the discussion, then use the following probes. In case they perceive it as a challenge, add it to the list]:

- (i) Do you believe that lack of **money** is one of your challenges? [Probe for **Accessing Financial Resources**]

- (ii) Do you believe that lack of **other resources** (such as land, technology, etc.) challenge your success? [Probe for **Accessing Other Non-financial Resources**]
- (iii) Is **lack of information** a challenge to your success? [Probe for **Access to Information**]
- (iv) Is not having access to **business networks** a challenge to achieving success? [Probe for **Access to Business Network**]
- (v) Should we add not having **adequate training or skills** to our list of challenges? [Probe for **Lack of Training/Skills**]
- (vi) Do you have any challenge in **accessing the amount of land** you need to have a successful agritourism operation? [Probe for **Land Rights**]
- (vii) Is **marketing** a challenge for your business? [Probe for **Access to markets**]
- (viii) Is not having adequate support from **institutions** a challenge in achieving success? [Probe for **Institutional system**]
- (ix) Do you believe that expectations from your family is a challenge? [Probe for **Family Role Expectations**]
- (x) Do you feel that **social pressures** affect your ability to achieve success as an entrepreneur? [Probe for **Social Norms**]

Task 3: Voting on the items of the comprehensive list (5 minutes)

Next we would like you to take the blue stickers in front of you and rank the 5 challenges that you think are most pressing for you. You can place all stickers besides one challenge or split them as you like.

Task 4: Ranking of the challenges (5 minutes)

OK, counting time! Let's take a 5 minutes break to stretch out while we count the stickers.

[The listed challenges will be counted to rank from the most to least important].

Task 5: Elaborating on each challenge and what it means (20 minutes)

Now we will discuss in detail about each of these challenges, starting from the most pressing one to the least.

Great! The second part is complete, now let us take a five minutes break!

Part III - Identifying Opportunities for Female Agritourism Entrepreneurs

Estimated duration: 35 minutes

Materials required: White paper, flip chart, marker, pen, red stickers

We know that you, as women in business, have come across various opportunities at various stages of your business. These opportunities may help you to overcome the challenges we discussed in the earlier section. Now, we would like to know more about the kind of opportunities you find useful in overcoming business challenges.

Task 1: Listing down all the opportunities of female entrepreneurs (3 minutes)

Please take 5 minutes and list down all the opportunities that you can think of, in the blank white pager that has been placed in front of you.

[The following Question: "As women, can you think about some opportunities you have to develop or manage agritourism that men don't have?" Will be placed on the flip chart so that everyone can read it.]

Task 2: Sharing the various opportunities (7 minutes)

If all of you have completed your lists, then I am going to start putting together a comprehensive list from all of your responses on the flip chart, just like we did for the last part. By going around the table clock-wise, starting with [insert name], we would like you to start reading out the items from your list. If you have an item that has already been mentioned by someone else, then please read out the next item in your list.

[After exhausting the list] Is there anything else you would like to add to this list?

[If anyone says yes, then we will add the item(s). Otherwise, if participants feel like we have exhausted all the items, then we move on.]

Task 3: Voting on the items of the comprehensive list (5 minutes)

Next we would like you to take the 5 red stickers in front of you and rank the opportunities that you think are the most useful to you. You can place all stickers besides one opportunity or split them as you feel appropriate.

Task 4: Ranking of the opportunities (5 minutes)

OK, counting time! Let's take 5 minutes break to stretch out while we count the stickers.

[The listed opportunities will be counted to rank from the most to least useful].

Task 5: Elaborating on each opportunity and how it helps (15 minutes)

Now we will discuss about the meaning of these opportunities. Can you please explain us what does [insert opportunity 1 here] mean to you as women and as women in agritourism.

[We continue by going down the list, by each item]

Great! The second part is complete, now let us take a five minutes break!

Part IV- Process of Overcoming Challenges

Estimated duration: 35 minutes

Materials required: Ranked list developed in Part II, flip chart, marker.

Now, we are interested to know how you overcome the challenges that you face as an entrepreneur. We would also like to know if there are resources that help you overcome them. For this, we are going to go back to our list of challenges and we will try to understand how you overcame each of them.

We will start with the one most pressing challenge from our list [we will read it aloud and write it down on the flip chart]. So how did you deal with this challenge? What resources did you need to overcome it?

[Discussion will continue moving down the ranked list until time runs out].

Wrap-up:

We really appreciate all your help. We got very good information today that will help us to tailor skill-building programs that target female entrepreneurs such as yourselves.

Before we leave, is there anything else on these topics that you would like to share with us?

Thank you again for coming all this way and sharing your ideas with us. Have a great rest of the day!

[Gifts will be handed out while shaking participant's hands]

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Introduction

Materials required: Audio-recorder, note-book, pen

Estimated duration: 5 minutes

Once we reach the designated meeting place, the research team will find a convenient seating arrangement for three people (interviewee, interviewer, note taker), so that the interview can be conducted smoothly. The note-taker will place him/herself so that s/he can listen to the whole interview and take notes. The audio-recorder will be placed at a spot from where it will be able to clearly capture the conversation. Once the interviewee joins the research team, we will briefly go over the goals of the research, explain some of the basic rules, and then move onto the interview.

Greetings:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in our interview today. We truly appreciate you taking the time to help us better understand the various aspects of success and challenges that female agritourism entrepreneurs, such as yourselves, face. Our research team consists of Mirza Halim, a graduate student at North Carolina State University, Dr. Carla Barbieri and Dr. Morais, Professors and Tourism Extension Specialists at the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management at NC State. Today, [insert name] will facilitate the interview and [insert name] will take some notes. We have a consent form here [handing the form to the interviewee], please read through it and sign the form. Please let us know in case you have any question.

We have a number of questions we would like to ask you. Sometimes we may also use a number of prompts to help you focus or recollect some aspects of your experience. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any of them, please feel free to let us know and we will disregard that question/prompt.

Study Overview:

The purpose of this study is to learn about your successes and challenges as women in agritourism. Specifically, we have four goals for today's interview. First we would like to learn about what success means to you. Second, we would like to know about the challenges you face as a female entrepreneur. Thirdly, we would like you to identify any opportunity you can think of that helps you overcome the challenges you face. Finally, we would like to learn how you overcome the challenges you face.

If you have any question regarding our study, feel free to let us know. If not, then let us start the interview.

Part I – Constructing the Meaning of Success

Estimated duration: 15 minutes

Question: As a woman in agritourism, what does success mean to you?

[In case the participant needs help in elaborating on her experience, use the probes below that have not been mentioned by the interviewee. In case the interviewee has mentioned any of the following constructs, make sure she has elaborated on them.]

Probes to ask/follow up:

- (x) Do you believe that being **recognized and gaining respect from others** is part of your success? [Probe for **Recognition and Peer Respect**]
- (xi) Does obtaining **higher responsibilities** in the farm mean being successful to you? [Probe for **Upward mobility**]
- (xii) Is securing **more profits/revenues** part of your success? [Probe for **Financial gain**]
- (xiii) Can you explain whether balancing **work-load with family duties** means being successful? [Probe for **Work-life balance**]
- (xiv) Do you believe that getting your **family's support** in carrying out all your tasks is part of your definition of success? [Probe for **Family support**]
- (xv) Are **achievements** part of your success? [Probe for **Sense of achievement**]
- (xvi) Do you think being **content** contributes to your success? [Probe for **Contentment**]
- (xvii) Is **impacting the broader society** part of your meaning of success? [Probe for **Impact on Society**]
- (xviii) Do you think that maintaining **meaningful relationships** is important to defining your success? [Probe for **Meaningful relationships**]

Question: Would you like to add anything else?

If the list has been covered, or extended by the participants, and if she feels that she has exhausted all the aspects of success, move onto the next part.

Part II - Identifying the Challenges of Women in Agritourism

Estimated duration: 15 minutes

Question: As a woman in agritourism, specifically at your stage of business, what are the challenges do you face?

[The note-taker will be writing a list of challenges mentioned]

[In case the participant needs help to elaborate on her challenging experiences, use the probes below that have not been mentioned by the interviewee. Make sure that the interviewee elaborates on the challenges mentioned.]

Probes to ask/follow up:

- (xi) Do you believe that lack of **money** is one of your challenges? [Probe for **Accessing Financial Resources**]
- (xii) Do you believe that lack of **other resources** (such as land, technology, etc.) challenge your success? [Probe for **Accessing Other Non-financial Resources**]
- (xiii) Is **lack of information** a challenge to your success? [Probe for **Access to Information**]
- (xiv) Is not having access to **business networks** a challenge to achieving success? [Probe for **Access to Business Network**]
- (xv) Should we add not having **adequate training or skills** to our list of challenges? [Probe for **Lack of Training/Skills**]
- (xvi) Do you have any challenge in **accessing the amount of land** you need to have a successful agritourism operation? [Probe for **Land Rights**]
- (xvii) Is **marketing** a challenge for your business? [Probe for **Access to markets**]

(xviii) Is not having adequate support from **institutions** a challenge in achieving success? [Probe for **Institutional system**]

(xix) Do you believe that expectations from your family is a challenge? [Probe for **Family Role Expectations**]

(xx) Do you feel that **social pressures** affect your ability to achieve success as an entrepreneur? [Probe for **Social Norms**]

Question: Would like to add anything else?

[If no, we will hand over the list of challenges to the interviewee and read it aloud; then we will ask the interviewee to rank the challenges, as applicable to her].

[Instructions for ranking: Please go through the list of challenges you have mentioned and rank order them. Please use 1 to indicate the most pressing challenges and go down to indicate the order.]

[Once the ranking is complete] Question: Looking at the list, could you please identify which is the most critical challenge to overcome?

[If the response is different from the most pressing challenge, ask her to elaborate why.]

Part III: Identifying Opportunities for Female Agritourism Entrepreneurs

Estimated duration: 15 minutes

We know that you, as women in business, have come across various opportunities while developing or managing your agritourism operations. These opportunities may help you overcome the challenges we discussed earlier. We would like to know more about the kind of opportunities you find particularly useful in overcoming the kinds of business challenges you face at this stage of your business.

Question: “As women, can you think about some opportunities you have to develop or manage agritourism that men don’t have?”

[The note-taker will be writing a list of opportunities mentioned]

[After 10/12 minutes] Question: Would you like to add anything else?

If the interviewee feels that she has exhausted all the opportunities she has as an agritourism entrepreneur, then we will read back her responses to her in the form of the list, hand over the list to her and ask her to rank the opportunities, as applicable to her.

[Instructions for ranking: Please go through the list of opportunities you have mentioned and rank order them. Use 1 to indicate the most important opportunity and do down to indicate the order.]

[Once the ranking is complete]

Question: Looking at the list, could you please identify which opportunity is the most important to become a successful entrepreneur?

[If the response is different from the most important opportunity, ask her to elaborate why.]

Part IV- Process of Overcoming Challenges

Estimated duration: 10 minutes

Now, we are interested to know more about the process of how you overcome the challenges that you face as an agritourism entrepreneur. We would also like to know if there are resources that help you overcome them. For this, we are going to go back to our list of challenges and we will try to understand how you overcome each of them.

We will start with the most pressing challenge from your list... So how did you deal with this challenge [insert specific challenge] and what resources did you need to overcome it? Is it still a challenge? [If so, what might help you overcome it?]

[After 10/15 minutes]

Question: Would you like to add anything else?

[If yes, then continue interview, if no then thank her for her time and end interview.]

Question: Before we leave, is there anything else on these topics that you would like to share with us?

Wrap-up:

We really appreciate your time and help with our study. We received very good insights today that will help us to tailor skill-building programs that target female entrepreneurs such as yourselves. Thank you again for sharing your ideas with us. Have a great rest of the day!

[Gifts will be handed out while shaking participant's hands]