RELATIONSHIP OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION METHODS AND LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE 2002 FARM BILL: A STUDY OF SELECTED COMMODITY-SPECIFIC, GENERAL AGRICULTURAL, AND NATURAL RESOURCES ORGANIZATIONS

A Thesis

by

CHRISTA L. CATCHINGS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

August 2004

Major Subject: Agricultural Education

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Approved as to style and content by:

Gary J. Wingenbach (Chair of Committee)	Tracy Rutherford (Member)
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ABSTRACT

Relationship of Organizational Communication Methods and Leaders' Perceptions of the 2002 Farm Bill: A Study of Selected Commodity-Specific, General Agricultural, and Natural Resources Organizations. (August 2004)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Gary J. Wingenbach

The purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of organizational communication methods used by selected commodity-specific, general agricultural and, conservation or natural resources organizations to disseminate information about the Farm Security and Rural Investment (FSRI) Act of 2002 within their organizations. A secondary purpose was to evaluate if preferred organizational communication methods related to organization leaders' perceptions of the FSRI Act of 2002. Previous studies have assessed organizational communication methods and members' perceptions, but little research has been completed on the combination of these variables.

The instrument used in this study was derived from modified versions of Sulak's (2000) 1996 Farm Bill survey, a similar instrument by Catchings and Wingenbach (2003), and Franklin's (1975) organizational communication survey. The target population (N=300) was all selected Texas organizations' board members. The accessible population (n=160) were selected Texas organizations (commodity-specific, general agriculture, and conservation or natural resources) board members. There were 70 respondents with a response rate of 44%.

The respondents from this study were mostly board members from a commodity-specific organization and were 46 to 55 years old. They had attended college or completed an undergraduate degree, were raised on a rural farm or ranch, and currently live on rural farm or ranch.

The respondents from selected Texas organizations indicated that they had some knowledge about 17 of the 18 primary issues or programs in the 2002 Farm Bill.

Selected Texas organizations board members strongly agreed that their respective organizations wanted to meet their primary objectives and information about important events or situations were shared within their organizations.

The respondents strongly agreed with the statement "farm organization coalitions were essential for enacting the 2002 Farm Bill," and "farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill."

This study summated and correlated the perceptions of organizational communication methods and perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. Through that correlation, this study can conclude there was a moderately significant and positive relationship between perceived organizational communication methods and perceived levels of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family and friends who supported me through this passage of knowledge with all of its trials and tribulations. This study has helped me redefine how I look at research; it has also redefined how my family and friends look at research. None of this would be possible or endurable without the love and support of my family and friends.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Organizations have been studied to show how effectively leaders and members within an organizational setting can communicate (Conrad, 2000). Members and leaders of organizations also have been studied to determine how, as an organizational unit, these groups perceive something that may or can affect their entire organization. Organizations can use organizational communication to show how effective its leaders and members are in communicating a common knowledge using a variety of communication channels or skills (Conrad, 2000).

Communication channels can be informal and formal. Informal communication is networks composed of a number of people from an organization who are linked by inconsistent patterns of communication (Conrad, 1994). Informal communication networks are not apparent groups of people. They are also groups of people who can be identified as cliques within an informal network who do not meet at a physical place. Formal communication channels within an organization are viewed as being bureaucratic or a controlled type of communication. Formal communication channels also have

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forms of written policies and procedures (Conrad, 1994).

Communication Theories

Organizations choose channels of communication that can define who receives information first and to what level (i.e., member, leader) the information goes next (Conrad, 1994). Farmer, Slater, and Wright (1998) studied the opinions of organizational publics on particular topics, and found what degree do organizational members shared the same vision for their organization as does their leader and determined the specific role of channels of communication and sources used to help achieve these goals. Farmer, Slater and Wright's (1998) study wanted to determine if the methods used in organizations to communicate goals were used by the organizations' leaders and were those methods effective.

Farmer, Slater, and Wright's (1998) study showed that a two-way symmetrical communication model would help achieve a shared goal or agenda within an organization; through this perspective, organizations can become apparent to inform and listen to the public that surrounds them. The authors' perspective showed that "the leader who encourages input from all levels of the organization is more likely to succeed than the leader who seeks to impose his or her goals/agenda through either coercion or persuasion" (1998, p. 222). This process of deciding which way information should flow can depend upon what communication method is being used by the organizations' organizational leaders.

After the communication methods are identified, organizational leaders have to decide how to apply those methods to the extensive range of differing views on policy that the organization represents, and what political philosophy each organization leader possesses (Knutson, Penn, & Boehm, 1995). Sulak (2000) recommended further research was needed to understand organizations leaders and members' needs of their perceptions of farm bill policy. This study would like gather perceptions of farm bill policy and indicate whether those perceptions relate to organizations' perceived communication methods used.

Statement of the Problem

There is a need to indicate that perceptions about farm policy could be related to organizational communications methods. The results of this study will provide data that will determine communication methods used by organization leaders' and how those methods could relate to the development of agricultural policy.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study was to determine selected Texas commodity-specific, general agricultural, conservation or natural resources leaders' organizational communication methods, and possible relationship to their organizational leaders' perception of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Objectives

Four specific objectives guided this study.

1. Measure selected commodity-specific, general agricultural, and natural resources organization leaders and members' knowledge of the 2002 Farm Bill.
2. Determine perceptions of organizational communication methods used in commodity-specific, general agricultural, and natural resource organizations.
3. Determine board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.
4. Determine if significant relationship existed between organizational communication methods and board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is relevant to develop an understanding of organizational communication and its impact on an organization. This literature review focused on an enhanced understanding of communication processes in an organization and how those processes affect organizational perceptions. Some of the literature provided brief definitions of perception, and theoretical and applicable definitions of organizational communication. These definitions helped identify organizational communication methods that were used. For a group to realize the effectiveness of communication depends upon the understanding, perceptions, and behaviors of individuals involved within a group (Wilson, 1964).

This study strongly supports the importance of using good communication channels in establishing meaning for those within an organization and for aligning organizational groups behind the goals of the organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Hass, Sypher, and Sypher (1992) reported that little is known about how organization members come to know the goals, views, impact, or the perceptions those goals might have on organizational outcomes.

This literature review defined communication methods and identifies how communication methods could relate the perceptions held by commodity-specific, general agriculture, and natural resources organizations' board members.

Perceptions

This study operationalized the definition of perceptions and used it to assess impacts of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 on commodity-specific, general agriculture, and natural resources organizations. Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2003) defines perception as "a capacity for comprehension; a result of perceiving; to attain awareness or understanding of; a mental image; awareness of the elements of environment through physical sensation." Perception is defined in terms of its meaning and its object; thus, awareness cannot be described apart from its objects (Kelley, 1986). Perception is indirect; it is not based on inference, problem solving, or computation (Sulak, 2000).

The operational definitions for perception in this study belong to individuals, but communication processes define how individuals share those perceptions to enlighten others (members). Scant literature exists to reference how communication relates to perceptions. There is a need to understand both communication methods and perceptions of farm policy. There has been research on perceptions held by agriculture organizations' board members, producers and agribusiness people.

Sulak's (2000) results indicated that the 1996 Farm Bill would affect members of national agricultural organizations. Sulak found all organizations had collaborated with other organizations, but had little influence on the outcomes of the 1996 Farm Bill. Sulak's participants perceived agriculture committee chairs and congressional leadership had input on the 1996 Farm Bill. The 26 participants in Sulak's study deemed commodity programs as the most important provision of the 1996 Farm Bill. The study restated the

need for agricultural organizations to work together because it would help them gain strength to influence agricultural policy development. Sulak recommended further research be conducted to help understand agriculture commodity leaders' and members' needs in future farm bills.

Mark, Daniel, and Parcell (2002) studied Kansas producers' and agribusiness professionals' perceived changes in agricultural policy from 1996 to 2000. Their results indicated changes occurred in Kansas producers' perceptions of federal agricultural policy between when the 1996 Farm Bill was implemented and four years later. Kansas producers' perceptions were more favorable toward the 1996 Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act (FAIR) in 1996 than they were in 2000. The researchers concluded that the needs and perceptions of both groups would be useful to policy makers in the development of the Farm Security and Reform Investment (FSRI) Act of 2002. Information gathered from Kansas producers' perceptions of farm policy would be useful to policy makers to better assess producers' opinions about legislation. These perceptions would allow Kansas political and other interest groups to comprehend how different organizations viewed governmental policy. Few studies have shown that perceptions of organizations' leaders are affected by farm policy or legislation.

Communication Theories

Communication is a process through which people, acting together, create, sustain, and manage meaning with verbal and nonverbal signs and symbols within a particular context (Conrad, 2000). Robinson (1976) defined communication as the ongoing, interactive process through which entities relate symbolically. When people are communicating, "to accomplish a common purpose," an organization is created (Barnard, 1938, p. 82). The way people in these groups relate to each other is through lines of communication. The "lines of communication are the potential for communication, imposed by the presence of the organizational structure, which exists between all individuals and sub-units of the organization" (Robinson, 1976, p. 15).

Organizational Communication Methods

Communication is an interactive process that originates within organizations. Conrad (2000) stated that organizational communication differs from the process definition, of communication given above because of the difficulties with context and people. To resolve these difficulties, organizations can add a dimension to their communication by creating an environment that requires people within the organization to communicate due to a shared purpose (Conrad, 1994). An organizational dimension of communication can improve the organization as a whole. People/members will communicate with colleagues/other members at work either because they like them or because they have a shared purpose or task to complete.

For members to communicate effectively in organizations requires prior knowledge about a variety of communication skills. Effective communication occurs

when organization members or leaders understand the relationship between effective communication and the operation of organizations (Conrad, 1994). Members and leaders need to understand how to choose communication strategies appropriate to different organizational situations. Leaders and members need to see which lines of communication, informal or formal, would work best to help disseminate their information dependent upon the situation faced by each organization.

When organization leaders want effective communication, they should provide a vision of a "realistic, credible, attractive future for [the] organization" (Nanus, 1992, p. 8). The ability to communicate an organization's shared purpose or objectives with members and other entities has become an important assignment of a leader in an organization. Successful leadership and successful organizations result when members of the organization — from the leaders down — share the same vision (purpose) or agenda (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Bennis and Nanus (1985) believed communication fosters creative processes and communication separates managers from leaders. Leaders are the so-called catalysts for effective organizational communication.

Channels exist that organizational leaders can use if they want effective communication in their organizations. Channels are a process whereby messages are transmitted from a source to a receiver(s). Communication channels come in two forms: formal or informal, both equally effective in transferring thoughts, ideas, and feelings between individuals. A channel can be a person, a memo, a symbol, or a sound. Hack (1993) reported that channel selection within an organization is critical to the success of

communicative endeavors, particularly in terms of channel clarity, quality, and availability.

Effective organizational communication involves formal and informal channels. Formal communication channels in an organization illustrate the official structure for an organization. Communication channels tend to follow closely the organizational hierarchy (Redding & Sanborn, as cited in Blake & Haroldsen, 1975). Blake and Haroldsen suggested formal channels use organizational networks with officers of the organization as participants. Members and leaders who use informal communication channels share information through formally established channels for purposes defined and accepted by their organizations (Conrad, 2000). Some organizations use a bureaucratic or traditional channel of communication. Bureaucratic organizations' members identify their administrative staff or board members as people who are responsible for maintaining their organization's line of communication (Conrad, 1994). Formal communication within an organization shows the organization is prone to have written policies and procedures, their job-related communication will flow through the chain of command, they will have written criteria, and their decision-making abilities will be centralized near the top of the organization (Conrad, 2000).

Informal communication channels develop from interpersonal communication networks established over time by people with common purposes and interests through face-to-face interaction (Blake & Haroldsen, 1975). Informal channels are interpersonal networks with recipient-transmitters as participants. Within informal communication networks, people can form friendships and create a network of interpersonal relationships

(Conrad, 2000). When members communicate with other members of their informal organizations networks, members can maintain their identities, gain a sense of self-respect, meet their sociability needs, and exercise some degree of control over their working lives (Roberts & O'Reilly, 1978).

Organizational communication can contribute to change and innovation. In today's organizational environment, change is inevitable and is an ongoing process (Stone, Singletary, & Richmond, 1999). For change to take effect, both formal and informal communication channels must support the new idea. When leaders of an organization introduce changes using formal communication, they end up forcing members of their organization to adopt and use the new idea. Farmer, Slater, and Wright (1998) found this type of communication led to low adoption rates or poor use of the change. A leader who encourages input from all levels of the organization is more likely to succeed than are leaders who seek to impose shared purpose through either coercion or persuasion (Conrad, 1994).

Critical organization personnel, such as opinion leaders, liaisons, managers, and others should be involved and encouraged at all levels of purpose development if the new ideas are to succeed (Shatshat & Shin, 1981). The development of a shared purpose in an organization can illustrate how the leaders of an organization try to implement change. These new implemented changes could be how the organization adopts organizational policy, how it differentiates itself from other organizations, or how as the leaders of the organization perceive governmental policy and legislation as it implies new changes. Rogers (1995) suggested changes within a group fail primarily because organizations do

not target people in communication networks who determine if change is adopted and continued. Most leaders know if they want an idea to be disseminated, they need support from their peers or people in the formal networks. People in informal networks are important and influential because they become part of the gauge that determines success or failure of the leader's idea (Rogers, 1995). How an organization copes with change in large part determines whether they will succeed or fail (Farmer, Slater, & Wright, 1998). Organization's leaders need to focus more on how they will inform and communicate with their peers and members about change.

Organizational communication attempts to understand how an organization operates and what behaviors or perceptions are present in the leaders and members of that organization. Pace and Faules (1989) stated if an organization wants to improve, it must improve its organizational communication. There are universal elements that can be discovered and used to change an organization and these elements relate to the desired outcome of the organization, according to Pace and Faules (1989).

Communication is one of the universal elements of every organization. Wilson, Goodall, and Waagen (1983) define organizational communication as an "evolutionary, culturally-dependent process of sharing information and creating relationships in an environment designed for manageable, cooperative, goal-oriented behavior" (p. 23). Leaders who understand effectiveness of organizational communication can affect change within their organization and influence their shared purposes.

Application

Organizations use communication channels to disseminate messages or information to members. Communication simultaneously moves through other channels without manager's knowledge or consent. When organizations are in doubt about how to disseminate information, Stone, Singletary, and Richmond (1999) suggest they follow the proper communication channels within their organization. Many decisions in organizations are made by members or groups of members who share expertise and alternative views in group settings rather than by an individual (Murthy & Kerr, 2002).

Farmer, Slater, and Wright (1998) described communication as a persuasive model that showed the influencing strategies of a top-down model. The purpose of their study was to identify the opinions organizational publics had on particular topics. A two-way asymmetrical model was used to conceptualize communication as a two-way process incorporating scientific research. The two-way asymmetrical approach showed management does not want to incorporate employees' ideas; rather, managers want to know what employees think so they can easily convince employees to accept management's perspective and goals. Farmer, Slater, and Wright (1998) found a significant relationship between shared vision (purpose) and communication from the leader.

A downward (top-down) model has certain communication requirements that need to be met:

a) there must be sufficient amounts of information flowing from subordinates to the top of the organization; b) there must be effective communication from the top

> of the hierarchy to the bottom; and c) employees/members must be given any information that will encourage them to act in conformity with the desires of the organization (Conrad, 1994, p.172).

The organization will function at less than optimal efficiency if any of these communication processes breaks down (Snyder & Morris, 1984).

Within the upward (bottom-up) model we see where other researchers such as Follett and Barnard (Conrad, 1994) wanted to improve the interpersonal relationships between supervisors/leaders and workers/members. For an organization to use the upward or informal method there are also requirements that need to be met. The model needs:

> a) members of the organizations are complex, thinking beings rather than mechanical parts of an organizational assembly line; b) their decisions about how to act are influenced by a complicated set of personal feelings, interpersonal relationships, and social pressures; and c) communication processes – formal and interpersonal – are necessary elements of effective organizations (Conrad, 1994, p. 204).

Channels for bottom-up communication are often not readily available, particularly at the interface between the organization and its clientele (Fett & Frohlich, 1983). Bottom-up, or the interactive strategy of communication, involves participants or members who are equally responsible. When participants organize themselves, they can identify what is important to them, explore their alternatives, and then evaluate their own developmental process. Bottom-up communication reinforces participation in a group.

De Mare (1989) conducted a study that identified three levels of communication within organizations: formal organization communication, opinion leader level, and the informal grapevine. With formal communication patterns, organizations are close to being "task-oriented and follow a chain of command in which each supervisor interprets the messages he or she receives and sends only necessary and relevant information up or down the chain" (Conrad, 1994, p. 172). Organizations that use a form of formal communication are currently in a formal network, which is an imposed or "mandated" network (Aldrich, 1976, Jablin & Putnam, 2001, p. 445). Monge and Contractor (2000) stated formal networks were acknowledged as the "channels of communication through which orders were transmitted downward and information was transmitted upward" (Weber, 1947; Jablin & Putnam, 2001, p. 445).

Many other scholars, (Barnard, 1938; Bostdorff, 1985; Davis, 1953) became aware that formal networks failed to capture many of the important aspects of communication in organization. These scholars studied and discussed the importance of informal communication and grapevine (Monge & Contractor, 2000). Informal grapevine is entwined throughout the organization with branches going in all directions. This informal communication system is the human side of the organization, which is maintained by employees communicating among themselves and sharing information (Crampton, Hodge, & Mishra, 1998). Researchers (Baskin & Aronoff, 1989; Davis, 1953) concurs the grapevine is an inevitable part of organizational life because informal networks are a natural consequence of people interacting.

A study by Davis (1979) indicated informal networks transmit messages faster than do formal ones. Most information transmitted by the grapevine is accurate (Crampton, Hodge, & Mishra, 1998). Other researchers make estimates on the accuracy of the grapevine method, but Crampton, Hodge, and Mishra, stated "even if the grapevine is accurate as much as 90% of the time, it is the 10% or more that is inaccurate, that can cause organizational problems" (p. 570). Crampton, Hodge and Mishra found that managers' positions within their organizations affected their perception of grapevine activity. When formal communication is not imminent, the grapevine can take over and fill in the informational gaps (Crampton, Hodge, & Mishra). Organization leaders or managers need to decide if they want to have informal activity, such as the grapevine, or if they want to find another method that will help disseminate the organizations' shared purpose.

Communication methods such as the formal and informal grapevine are deemed parts of a communication network. When communication networks, like informal and formal networks, are present and reoccurring in multiple settings, they are called network forms. Network forms, as stated by Jablin and Putnam (2000), are flexible by nature and have a dynamic communication linkage to connect multiple organizations into new entities that can create products or services using well-communicated shared purposes or objectives. Organizations need to review how they can use these flexible and dynamic communication links to benefit their organizational leaders' during developmental and adoption processes.

Organizations

All cultures have formal organizations within them (Conrad, 2000). An organization is a collection of hierarchically arranged individuals linked in an overall structure characterized by task specialization and horizontal differentiations among individuals to accomplish a series of interconnected tasks (Drasgow & Schmitt, 2002). Modern organizations are large and complex, and thus depend more on effective communication for their operation (Conrad, 2000).

The organizations in this study are information vehicles carrying organizational message(s) from leaders to members and from members to the public. Organizations have become a gathering place to learn about the world and to socialize with others (Stone, Singletary, & Richmond, 1999). Burke (1984) stated in today's culture, people spend most of their life working within and for some type of organization (profit, non-profit, or not-for-profit). Research has shown people spend most of their time in an organization of some type. It is important that people learn the basics about effective and successful communication in the organizational environment (Burke, 1984).

In a span of eight decades, farm policy makers have treated agricultural organizations as a conduit between attaining information and communicating it to the world. Farm organizations have battled to show how well organized and effective they were during those same 80 years (Sulak, 2000). During the 1930s, with the start of commodity programs, agriculture organizations began losing political influence (Sulak, 2000; Catchings & Wingenbach, 2003). Commodity legislation during that time caused a direct economic impact on particular groups (Bockstael & Just, 1991). These particular

groups were agricultural organizations and others who had a stake in farm policy (Sulak, 2000). Agricultural organizations play an integral part in policy enactment and implementation of new farm bills (Catchings & Wingenbach, 2003). The history of agricultural organizations runs parallel to our political and economic traditions (Wiest, 1975).

Many agricultural organizations, such as Texas Farm Bureau, emphasize grass-root lobbying (Browne, 1995). Agricultural organizations have procedural capacities to accept or reject variables including efficient, economic policy, interest-group pressure, or other myriad of often-competing sources of influences (Browne & Paik, 1994). Such beliefs display the need for agricultural organization members to provide pertinent information to their farm organizations' leaders and lobbyists in order to achieve their policy objectives or shared purposes.

General Agriculture Organizations

General farm organizations tend to emphasize economic issues and the general farm program framework (Morrison, 1970). There are many complex issues surrounding the structure of agriculture, including rural development, farm and rural credit, market competition, farm structure, agricultural labor, and commodity check-off programs. These complex issues, and sometimes-conflicting views of producers, make policy choices extremely difficult (Lubben, Simons, Bills, Meyer, & Novak, 2001). With these complex issues and difficult policy choices there needs to be more assessment of perceptions of policy held by people, producers, and organizations involved. Sulak's (2000) study recommended further research involving leaders and members of farm

organizations. Sulak also stated research examining the needs of members of an organization and how their leader understood those needs is long overdue.

General agriculture organizations focus on broad farmer interests, while others such as the Texas Cotton Growers Association are organizations who specialize in the concerns of one particular agricultural commodity. Conflicts can arise between commodity groups because of the identification of their members' intentions. It can become difficult to distinguish between members who join the organization to support policy or those who join for economic reasons (Knutson, Penn, & Boehm, 1995). Farm organizations, such as Texas Farm Bureau, are usually based on voluntary membership, and most leaders at the local levels of the organization are volunteers (Sulak, 2000).

National Farm Bureau Federation

General farm organization is the National Farm Bureau Federation (NFBF). On their Web page, they stated their mission is "to implement policies that are developed by members and provide programs that will improve the financial well-being and quality of life for farmers and ranchers" (National Farm Bureau Federation, n.d.). The National Farm Bureau Federation is an independent, non-governmental, voluntary organization governed by and representing farm and ranch families in local, state, national, and international levels. At each of the Farm Bureau levels, we see the same statement about being the "Voice of Agriculture" (NFBF, n.d.)

Texas Farm Bureau

The level of association in relation to the National Farm Bureau Federation used in this study and reviewed for this paper was the Texas Farm Bureau. The Texas Farm

Bureau (TxFB) was founded in 1933. TxFB is governed by its members and financed by voluntary dues. It grew from a fledgling organization into one of the largest groups of farmers, ranchers, and rural families in the world (Texas Farm Bureau, n.d.). One of Texas Farm Bureau's most important principles is its grass roots policy development. This grass-root development allows members of the TxFB to be originators of all organization messages about policy, which is debated and then adopted at the county, state, and national levels.

As TxFB prepares for a new century, it vows to help work for a strong local and state government, enhance public perception of agriculture, and achieve an economic climate that will improve net farm income (Texas Farm Bureau, n.d.). The Farm Bureau organization also "believes that legislation and regulations favorable to all sectors of agriculture should be aggressively developed in cooperation with allied groups possessing common goals" (NFBF, n.d.). Organizations like the Farm Bureau at both the national and state-levels (i.e., Texas Farm Bureau), are looking for ways to possess common goals.

Commodity-specific Organizations

Some agricultural organizations focus on one particular commodity and the issues surrounding it. The commodity-specific organizations reviewed in this study were Plains Cotton Growers, Rolling Plains Cotton Growers, South Texas Cotton and Grain Association, Southern Rolling Plains Cotton Growers, Texas Corn Growers Association, Texas Grain Sorghum Association, and Texas Wheat Producers Association. Commodity

organizations, such as those for wheat, corn, and cotton, find it easier to support specific policy recommendations, than can general farm organizations (Sulak, 2000).

Among the thousands of organizations, some of can be deemed special interest groups because most of their activities are based on providing information providers to policymakers (Browne, 1995). Suppliers of information on policy issues and the policy processes, such as special interest groups, play an important role in the development of law (Knutson, Penn, & Flinchbaugh, 1998). Interest groups provide the motivating force for the policy process by identifying and solving problems (Knutson, Penn, and Flinchbaugh, 1998). Some of the organizations in this paper could be deemed special interest groups because some focus their attention on conservation, commodities, and natural resources policy issues.

Conservation or Natural Resources Organizations

Texas Wildlife Association

One more organization reviewed for this study was a conservation or natural resource organization, which is the Texas Wildlife Association (TWA). In 1985, TWA was formed by a group of ranchers, wildlife managers, and hunters dedicated to the conservation, management, and enhancement of wildlife and wildlife habitat particularly on private lands. TWA is a statewide organization that is an active supporter in the state and national political arenas for wildlife and natural resource conservation. TWA knows that up to 97% of Texas' land is designated as private land and close to two-thirds of the U.S. is privately owned. TWA's passion about Texas wildlife and natural resource conservation helped it to become part of this study. TWA stated they "separate

themselves from other conservation and hunting organizations by primarily focusing its mission on private landowners and their ethical relationship to the land" (Texas Wildlife Association, n.d.).

The Texas Wildlife Association has found many ways to enhance itself in the political arena. TWA has many accomplishments inside the Texas legislature. In 1995, TWA assisted in passing a noteworthy piece of legislation, Proposition 11, which was "a proposed amendment to the Texas Constitution which allowed landowners to change the use of their land from traditional farming and ranching to active wildlife management and retain his/her agricultural ad valorem property tax valuation of that land" (TWA, n.d.). TWA has been in the political arena to make sure its' members have a stance in certain related wildlife and conservation legislation. TWA's mission is "to serve as an promoter for the benefit of wildlife and for the rights of wildlife managers, landowners, and hunters in educational, scientific, political, regulatory, legal, and legislative arenas" (TWA, n.d.).

Some organizations are concerned with establishing a government-relations program, which creates positive awareness among legislators as to an organization's particular activities and contributions (Boone, Tucker, & McClaskey, 2002). Boone, Tucker, and McClaskey concluded an organization's interpersonal relationships and communication with and among congressional aides should be increased to help ensure the organization a better governmental relationship. In addition, the identification of other possible channels of communication being used to reach congressional aides should be identified for distribution of important information.

Members from these organizations described in this literature review participated in this study. Those organizations' members and leaders' organizational communication methods were identified and compared to their perceptions of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Farm Security Rural Investment (FSRI) Act of 2002

Agriculture programs are protected by the implementation of the FSRI Act of 2002 until 2007. Gorton (2001) stated that Congress modifies and renews many United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and consequentially the Farm Bill is the collection of those modifications and renovations. Farm Bill legislation grants support to farmers and rural America — by providing income support, commodity credit, and other programs to alleviate potential hardships that U.S. farmers and other Americans may face (Gorton, 2001).

Current programs, such as the federal conservation programs, and the food and fiber policy benefit from history and economic evolution, but are still largely directed to specific commodity producers (Browne, 1980). These connected "programs are the specific assignments that allow the bureau to undertake tasks within its area of expertise after problems have been identified" (Browne, 1980, p. 12).

Lubben et al. (2001) concluded the current economic climate is different than it was during the development of the previous two farm bills. The economic climate "is shaped by current economic conditions in agriculture, and also federal budget and spending decisions" (Lubben et al., 2001, p.1). Americans have experienced many policies and programs across this span of time and have been given an instructive and invaluable lesson, which at a very minimum could help us avoid the obvious mistakes of

the past (Lubben et al). These mistakes can be avoided but they also can be valuable lessons for learning how and why new farm bills are made.

Most commodity organizations make valid attempts to provide input to the farm bill, but research is vague regarding the value of this input (Catchings & Wingenbach, 2003). Commodity organizations have attempted to improve their political stance by increasing relationships with congressional aides in Washington, D.C. Some farm organizations specialize in federal legislative programs on behalf of producers and some emphasize education, research, and marketing (Sulak, 2000).

While current farm policy is making strides toward greater market orientation, a careful evaluation of today's diverse farm structure and increasingly consumer-driven marketplace revealed severe misalignment among policy goals, program mechanisms, and outcome (Lubben et al., 2001). The scope and complexity of the new farm legislation suggests the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and other USDA agencies' tasks are to create regulations to implement FSRI, while educating producers of the provisions, alternatives, and benefits available to them (Mark, Daniel, & Parcell, 2002).

Westcott, Young, and Price (2002) reported the new farm bill addressed a number of broad issues related to the needs of farmers and other stakeholders, including assuring an income safety net for producers, enhancing risk management options, supporting conservation and environmentally beneficial practices, improving agricultural trade opportunities, and assisting small and limited-resource farms. These authors also found the FSRI Act of 2002 provided income support for wheat, feed grains, upland cotton, rice, and oilseeds through three programs: direct payments, counter-cyclical payments,

and marketing loans. While versions of the 2002 Farm Bill covered the ever-growing, important conservation programs, FSRI 2002 included an expansion of land retirement programs by raising the maximum acreage permitted in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and placing more emphasis on wetlands (Westcott, Young, & Price, 2002).

Sulak's (2000) study identified selected organization leaders' perceptions of the 1996 Farm Bill impact on members of national commodity organizations. Sulak concluded organizational leaders perceived they worked together with other commodity group's leaders to influence the 1996 Farm Bill's outcome, but in reality, they had little actual influence on the bill's outcome.

Policy development is a decision-making process involving (a) recognizing and defining the problem, (b) outlining the issues, (c) developing alternative solutions, (d) choosing a policy solution, (e) putting the policy into effect, and (f) appraising its effectiveness (Stone, Singletary, & Richmond, 1999). Communication about new legislation amongst organization members, leaders, lobbyists, and legislators can influence the outcome of policy objectives. Perceptions of organizational communication methods and the use of those methods within and between these groups can influence decision-making in the policy development process. Sulak (2000) recommended further research be conducted to determine communication lines, channels, or methods between organization members and their leaders.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to identify organizational communication methods and their possible relationship to the perception of 2002 Farm Bill and the forming processes for selected Texas commodity-specific, general agricultural, and natural resource organizations while learning about the 2002 Farm Bill.

Objectives

1. Measure selected commodity-specific, general agricultural and natural resources organization leaders' and members' knowledge of the 2002 Farm Bill.
2. Determine perceptions of organizational communication methods used by commodity-specific, general agricultural, and natural resources organizations.
3. Determine board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.
4. Determine if organizational communication methods are related to organizational board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The type of research, selection of respondents, instrumentation, validity and reliability, collection of data, and quantitative analysis of data, and research objectives used in this research are described in this chapter.

Research Design

This study used a quantitative ex-post facto design, and was correlational in nature. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) stated the ex-post facto design allows researchers to discover possible relationships in a behavior pattern after causes have affected any other variables. This study was designed to determine selected Texas organizations board members' knowledge of certain 2002 Farm Bill primary issues and programs, organizational communication methods used, and perceptions of the 2002 Farm Bill. The conceptual schema for this study was based on research performed by Sulak (2000), and Catchings and Wingenbach's (2003) studies, which focused on National Commodity board members perceptions of 1996 Farm Bill and selected Texas commodity board members' perceptions of 2002 Farm Bill respectively.

Data were collected for a specific population using a modification of Sulak's (2000), Catchings' and Wingenbach's (2003), and Franklin's (1975) surveys. Sulak's survey assessed perceptions of elected/employed leaders of national agricultural organizations. Catchings' and Wingenbach's survey was a modified version of Sulak's

(2000) survey; this survey assessed the perceptions of selected Texas commodity board members. Franklin's (1975) survey assumed organizational communication from 246 groups representing 10 sites in four major industries. All three surveys used and modified were based on descriptive and causal-comparative designs. Casual-comparative methods show the cause-and-effect relationships between phenomena, and can detect relationships between variables (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

There were four dependent variables and five independent variables in this study. The dependent variables were perceived knowledge of primary issues and programs from the 2002 Farm Bill, perceived perceptions of organizational communication methods, perceived perceptions of primary issues and programs from the 2002 Farm Bill, and perceived influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. The independent variables included in this study were age, education, residence community, family ownership of farm or ranch, and organization affiliation.

Due to the sensitivity of human research in social sciences, Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board–Human Subjects Research approval was needed to conduct research. This research study was reviewed, and approval and was granted (**IRB #2004-0028**) on February 9, 2004 (Appendix A).

Population and Sample

The population for this study included all selected Texas organizations board members. The target population of Texas commodity-specific, general agricultural, and natural resources organizations (N =300) leaders and board members) selected were deemed to have a stake in the 2002 Farm Bill. The sample for this study was purposefully

selected; the Texas Farm Bureau, selected agricultural commodity organizations, and Texas Wildlife Association were selected. The accessible population (n = 160) was evidently less. A total of 70 respondents from selected Texas organizations (commodity-specific, general agriculture, and conservation or natural resources) board members completed the survey for a response rate of 44%. Email reminders were sent out to select Texas organizations executive officers approximately twice per month. Despite repeated and unsuccessful follow-up procedures to non-respondents, caution is warranted against generalizing the results of this study beyond the accessible population.

Participation from all commodity-specific, general agriculture and natural resources organization's leaders were voluntary, and their names and any other identifiable information was keep confidential. These organizations were selected based on availability and their initial stake or involvement in the 2002 Farm Bill.

Instrumentation

The survey used for this study was both a pencil and paper instrument and an Internet site (Appendix C). A customized mixed-mode method was used to collect information from selected respondents by e-mail and first, this study later using paper surveys to collect information from the remainder of the respondents (Schaefer & Dillman, 1998). Dillman (2000) stated even though E-mailed and Web surveys gain favor with surveyors, a formidable barrier to their use is the fact that many people do not have access to the Internet. The mixed-mode method offered an opportunity to compensate for the weaknesses of each method (Dillman, 2000).

The items selected for the survey were both descriptive and reactive in nature. A modified version of Sulak's (2000) 1996 Farm Bill survey, Catchings' and Wingenbach's (2003) Farm Bill survey, and Franklin's (1975) organizational communication survey will be used to collect data. Steps used in conducting this questionnaire survey were based on procedures described in Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996).

This study used Sulak's (2000), Catchings' and Wingenbach's (2003), and Franklin's (1975) instruments to form a cross-sectional survey and uniform questionnaire, which illustrated similarities and differences of perceptions and communication processes between commodity-specific, general agricultural, and natural resources organizations. Minor editing and word changes were made to the final version of the research instrument.

Catchings and Wingenbach's (2003) modified Sulak's (2000) questionnaire by selecting questions to acquire commodity board member's perceptions of the 2002 Farm Bill. The questions selected for the instrument, used in this study, centered on major issues, which were deemed important in the 2002 Farm Bill. Issues and programs were based on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) informational Web site about the 2002 Farm Bill.

Throughout the Farm Bill Information Web site, there are linked pages that allowed the viewer the ability to go to commodity, conservation, agricultural trade, nutritional, farm credit, rural development, and research, forestry, and energy program pages (United States Department of Agriculture, February 23, 2004). For this study, issues/programs were selected from the commodity, conservation, agricultural trade, farm

credit, and energy programs. These programs were deemed relevant to participants and were included in this study. The Web site offered other information to show its viewers that the USDA found ways to compare the 1996 Farm Bill to the 2002 Farm Bill. The USDA Web site shows provisions from the 1996 Farm Bill were kept or what modifications were made in the 2002 Farm Bill.

There were four parts with sections made up of questions included in the instrument used for this study (Appendix C). The first part was the section had questions that allowed respondents to rate their knowledge and importance about selected 2002 Farm Bill issues/programs, and their perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. This first section of part one consisted of twenty questions asking the respondent to rate the issue or program. These twenty questions had one issue or program (bio-technology; bio-terrorism/bio-security; commodity distribution programs; conservation compliance requirements; Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act; counter-cyclical payments; country-of-origin labeling, crop insurance; direct payments; emergency loans; environmental quality incentive program; farm credit systems; farm ownership loans; food safety; food stamp program; loan deficiency payments (LDPs); marketing assistance loans; operating loans; payment limits; and wetland protection) per question and were included from the USDA's Farm Bill Information Web site. The respondents used a Likert-type scale to rate these issues using discriminate levels of knowledge (1 = No knowledge…4= Extremely knowledgeable).

Section two of part one assessed the perceptions of the participants. This section had the same twenty issues or programs to assess whether different organizational leaders

ranked as their top programs. Section two asked the participants to rank order (1 = Most important…10 = Least important) the same twenty 2002 Farm Bill issues or programs. The issues or programs (bio-technology; bio-terrorism/bio-security; commodity distribution programs; conservation compliance requirements; Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act; counter-cyclical payments; country-of-origin labeling, crop insurance; direct payments; emergency loans; environmental quality incentive program;, farm credit systems; farm ownership loans; food safety; food stamp program; loan deficiency payments (LDPs); marketing assistance loans; operating loans; payment limits; and wetland protection) were listed on the USDA's Farm Bill 2002 Information Web site.

Section three of part one in the survey used another Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree…4= strongly agreed, or 0 = No opinion) to measure respondents level of agreement with 10 statements in regards to the 2002 Farm Bill. One of the statements on the instrument stated "The 2002 Farm Bill impacts conservation programs, farm production, or natural resources issues more than previous farm bills." The responses in this section would help determine the respondents' perceptions about influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Part two consisted of three sections that related to the communication. The first section of the communication part of this survey had some questions related to how organizations either provided information or training about the 2002 Farm Bill or did not. The next two sections' goal was to assess what communication methods used by selected Texas organization leaders. Section two of communication part had 15 questions that

assessed the value organizational leaders' placed on sources of information that they could have used to educate their organization or themselves about the 2002 Farm Bill. The 15 question used a Likert-type scale (1 = No Value…4=Extremely Valuable, 0= Not Applicable). Respondents were asked to rate 15 sources of information used to learn about the 2002 Farm Bill. The sources were selected and modified from Sulak's (2000) national commodity board members, and Catchings' and Wingenbach's (2003) surveys. The lists of sources were expanded and examples were given on some to better prompt the participants.

Section three of the communication part of this survey had questions that were included from parts of Franklin's (1975) organizational communication survey, and were modified to fit the present study's instrument. There were 17 questions in this communication part of the survey, which allowed the participants to answer questions viewing their organization as a whole. These 17 questions used a Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree…4 = Strongly Agree, 0 = No Opinion). Franklin (1975) used Taylor and Bowers' (1972) survey of organizations questionnaire. Franklin (1975) selected his sample from a data bank containing the responses to Taylor and Bowers' (1972) questionnaire. Taylor and Bowers' (1972) survey was used in studies of organizational processes and in organizational development programs. This study used parts from both Franklin's (1975) study and Taylor and Bowers' (1972) Survey of Organizations questionnaires. This study modified Franklin's (1975) questions that had questions ranging with items related to organizational climate, managerial leadership, and peer leadership, and all three items were used in this study. In Franklin's study, these three

items had indices and organizational climate had decision-making practices, human resource primacy, motivational conditions, and communication flow. For this current study only two indices out of the organizational climate item, which were decision-making and communication flow were used. The managerial leadership had four indices in Franklin's (1975) study, for this study only two indices were used, supervisory support and supervisory team building. The last item of peer leadership had four indices in Franklin's study and only two of these indices were used in this study, which were peer support and peer interaction facilitation.

There were four organizational climate itemed questions, three managerial leadership itemed questions, and ten peer leadership-itemed questions. The first four questions from section three of the communication part of the survey asked question like, "Organizational objectives are announced with no opportunity to raise questions or give comments." These questions coincide with questions out of Franklin's (1975) items of organizational climate and the decision-making practices index. Questions like "My organization wants to meet its primary objective" and "Information is widely shared in my organization" are questions out of the peer leadership items and the index of peer interaction facilitation. The following is another example question, "My organization plans and coordinates its efforts collaboratively." This question was part of the peer leadership item, which is under the index known as the peer interaction facilitation.

The last part, part four of the survey, had one section with five questions (8-12) that were designed to collect demographic information. Demographic information included age, education, residence community, family ownership of farm or ranch, and

organization affiliation. This section was used to identify different commodity-specific, general agricultural, and nature resources organization leaders.

Pilot Test

A pilot test was administered in February 2004 through a select group of participants. The pilot test provided feedback to the researcher concerning length and question structure. A group was selected out of the Texas Farm Bureau Association. The group consisted of five participants, who were not part of sample. The Texas Farm Bureau Association was selected because it had direct contacts with many other organizations in Texas. The TxFB organization had overall knowledge with concerns about public policy and agricultural policy, such as the 2002 Farm Bill. The length of the survey was changed and one question was modified after information was received from the pilot test.

A *t*-test was conducted to determine significant difference between pilot test and the sampled group. Only one significant difference was found in value of information sources, particularly for consultants. The pilot test group rated it as valuable; the sample group rated it less valuable. These questions were dropped from the data results because they did not coincide with the studies set objectives. This information is only generalized to the accessible population and cannot be generalized to the other variables alone.

Data Collection

Paper surveys (Appendix C) and Web-formatted surveys were sent to organization leaders or board members at the end of February 2004. A cover letter accompanied each paper-formed survey and Web-formatted survey. Cover letters

indicated participation was not mandatory and respondents had the privilege of electing not to return the survey (Appendix B).

The organization leaders or directors were given instructions to distribute, and collect the paper-formed surveys, or give the link of the Web-formatted on-line survey to their members. If the paper-formed surveys were used, organizational leaders or directors received a required number of return envelopes to mail them back to the researcher. After surveys were returned or collected, they were coded and kept confidential. Web-formatted on-line survey data were coded and kept in a password secured computer.

Correct follow-up procedures were administered for this study. Phone calls and E-mails were sent to organizations' leaders who had not responded by the middle of 2004. A second round of phone calls and emails were made to leaders who had not responded by March 30, 2004. Non-respondents were deselected and were not part of the target population.

Data Analysis

The reliability and content validity of this instrument was established by Sulak (2000), Catchings and Wingenbach (2003), and Franklin (1975). Supplementary verification of reliability was estimated by calculating Cronbach's coefficient Alpha on knowledge of primary 2002 Farm Bill issues and programs, $r = .91$; and perceptions of organizational communication methods used by organizations' board members, $r = .89$.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using the statistical software package, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS , 12.0.0, Inc., 2003). Descriptive statistics were calculated for

each variable. Statistics were derived for each section and the instrument as a whole. An alpha coefficient for all statistical procedures was set a priori at .01.

Demographic data were summarized using percentages and frequencies. In the first objective, respondents were asked to identify their knowledge levels concerning certain primary issues from the 2002 Farm Bill and this responses were from questions in section one of first part of the survey. The variable perceived knowledge as analyzed and described by calculating the means and standard deviations by level of responses.

In the second objective respondents was met by asking the respondents to indicate their values for different organizational communication methods, which from the third section of the communication part or part two of the survey. The variable perceived organizational communication methods used was analyzed and described by calculating the means and standard deviations by level of responses.

In the third objective respondents were asked to confirm their agreement levels for 12 statements measuring their perceptions of organizational influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. This objective was met by responding to questions section three of the first part of this survey. The variable perceived organizational influencers was analyzed and described by calculating the means and standard deviations by level of responses.

In the fourth objective, respondents' perceptions of organizational communication methods and perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill were summated and correlated to determine if a significant relationship existed. The

relationships between two variables with continuous scores were analyzed using Pearson's Product-moment correlations (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine selected Texas commodity-specific, general agricultural, and natural resources organization leaders' organizational communication methods used, and to evaluate how these methods could relate to their organizations' perception of the 2002 Farm Bill.

The four specific objectives that guided this study were to 1) measure selected commodity-specific, general agricultural, and natural resources organization leaders and members' knowledge of the 2002 Farm Bill; 2) determine perceptions of organizational communication methods used by commodity-specific, general agricultural, and natural resources organizations; 3) determine board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill; and 4) determine if organizational communication methods were related to organizational board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.

The respondents from this study were mostly board members from commodity-specific organizations (57%) and were 46 to 55 years old (40%). They had attended college or completed an undergraduate degree (56%), were raised on a rural farm or ranch (67%), and currently lived on rural farm or ranch (60%) (Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Frequencies of Respondents (N=70)

Variables		*f*[a]	%
Organization:	Commodity-specific	40	57
	General Agriculture	21	30
	Conservation or Natural Resources	7	10
Age:	<25	1	1
	26-35	10	14
	36-45	13	19
	46-55	28	40
	>56	17	24
Education	Undergraduate degree	39	56
	Attended college	15	21
	High School diploma	9	13
	Masters degree	5	7
	Doctoral Degree	1	1
Location where raised	Rural farm/ranch	47	67
	Rural community (Less than 5,000)	13	19
	Small city (50,001 to 200,000)	3	4
	Metropolis (Over 1 million)	3	4
	Town (5,000 to 50,000)	2	3
	City (200,001 to 1 million)	1	1
Currently Live	Rural farm/ranch	42	60
	Rural community (Less than 5,000)	12	17
	Town (5,000 to 50,000)	4	6
	Small city (50,001 to 200,000)	4	6
	City (200,001 to 1 million)	4	6
	Metropolis (Over 1 million)	3	4

Note. [a]Frequencies may not total 70 because of missing data.

Findings Related to Objective One

To accomplish the first objective, respondents were asked to identify their knowledge levels concerning certain primary issues from the 2002 Farm Bill. Eighteen issues and programs were included from the literature review to determine respondents' knowledge on issues and programs affecting their respective organizations (Tables 2-5). These questions were from the first section of part one of the survey.

Commodity-specific Organization Findings

Respondents (n = 40) from commodity-specific organizations indicated they were knowledgeable (M = 2.58 to 3.43) about ten (Crop Insurance, Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs), Direct Payment, payment limits, counter-cyclical payments, marketing assistance loans Conservation compliance requirements, operating loans, Country-of-origin Labeling, and Environmental quality incentive program) issues and programs. These same 40 participants indicated they had some knowledge about the last eight primary issues and programs, with mean ratings ranging from 1.59 to 2.46 (Table 2).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Commodity-specific Organization Board Members' Knowledge of Primary Issues in the 2002 Farm Bill (n=40)

Primary Issues	*M*	*SD*
Crop Insurance	3.43	0.59
Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)	3.33	0.76
Direct Payment	3.33	0.69
Payment limits	3.30	0.76
Counter-cyclical payments	3.23	0.90
Marketing assistance loans	2.87	0.73
Conservation compliance requirements	2.84	0.75
Operating loans	2.65	1.03
Country-of-origin Labeling	2.60	0.67
Environmental quality incentive program	2.58	0.78
Commodity distribution programs	2.46	0.64
Food safety	2.45	0.64
Farm Credit Systems	2.33	0.83
Biotechnology	2.30	0.61
Emergency Loans	2.26	0.75
Farm ownership loans	2.18	0.75
Wetland Protection	2.08	0.77
Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act	2.05	0.71
Bio-terrorism/bio-security	1.98	0.58
Food Stamp Program	1.59	0.59

Note. A Likert-type scale (1 = No Knowledge…4 = Extremely Knowledgeable) was used to measure board members knowledge of primary issues in the 2002 Farm Bill.

General Agriculture Organization Findings

Respondents from general agriculture organizations (n = 21) identified they were knowledgeable about eight of the primary issues or programs (Country-of-origin Labeling (C.O.O.L.), payment limits, direct payments, crop insurance, and loan deficiency payments (LDPs), counter-cyclical payments, operating loans, conservation compliance requirements) with mean ratings ranging from 2.55 to 2.90. These same 21 participants identified they had some knowledge about nine more primary issues or programs with mean values ranging from 1.90 to 2.35. The general agriculture organization respondents had almost no knowledge of the Food Stamp Program (M = 1.37) (Table 3).

Conservation or Natural Resources Organization Findings

Respondents from the conservation or natural resources organizations (n = 7) identified they were knowledgeable about Wetland Protection (M = 2.57). The same respondents indicated they were somewhat knowledgeable about twelve primary issues with mean ratings ranging from 1.71 to 2.29. The same seven respondents indicated they had almost no knowledge of seven primary issues: Commodity distribution programs, Counter-cyclical payments, Food Stamp program, Loan Deficiency payments, Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, marketing assistance loans, and payment limits (Table 4).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Selected General Agriculture Organization Board Members' Knowledge of Primary Issues in the 2002 Farm Bill (n=21)

Primary Issues	*M*	*SD*
Country-of-origin Labeling	2.90	0.77
Payment limits	2.71	0.64
Direct Payment	2.67	0.73
Crop Insurance	2.65	0.67
Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)	2.62	0.92
Counter-cyclical payments	2.57	0.81
Operating loans	2.55	0.83
Conservation compliance requirements	2.55	0.76
Environmental quality incentive program	2.35	0.93
Commodity distribution programs	2.35	0.81
Marketing assistance loans	2.35	0.67
Biotechnology	2.30	0.66
Food safety	2.29	0.64
Emergency Loans	2.14	0.48
Farm Credit Systems	2.10	0.70
Bio-terrorism/bio-security	2.00	0.55
Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act	1.90	0.77
Farm ownership loans	1.90	0.70
Wetland Protection	1.90	0.70
Food Stamp Program	1.37	0.50

Note. A Likert-type scale (1=No Knowledge…4=Extremely Knowledgeable) was used to measure board members knowledge of primary issues in the 2002 Farm Bill.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Selected Conservation or Natural Resources Organization Board Members' Knowledge of Primary Issues in the 2002 Farm Bill (n=7)

Primary Issues	*M*	*SD*
Wetland Protection	2.57	0.79
Conservation compliance requirements	2.29	0.49
Environmental quality incentive program	2.14	1.07
Crop Insurance	2.14	0.90
Bio-terrorism/bio-security	2.00	1.15
Farm ownership loans	2.00	0.82
Farm Credit Systems	1.86	0.90
Food safety	1.86	0.69
Direct Payment	1.71	1.11
Emergency Loans	1.71	1.11
Biotechnology	1.71	0.76
Country-of-origin Labeling	1.71	0.76
Operating loans	1.71	0.76
Commodity distribution programs	1.43	0.79
Counter-cyclical payments	1.29	0.49
Food Stamp Program	1.29	0.49
Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)	1.29	0.49
Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act	1.14	0.38
Marketing assistance loans	1.14	0.38
Payment limits	1.14	0.38

Note. A Likert-type scale (1=No Knowledge…4=Extremely Knowledgeable) was used to measure board members knowledge of primary issues in the 2002 Farm Bill.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Selected Texas Organization Board Members' Knowledge of Primary Issues in the 2002 Farm Bill (N=70)

Primary Issues	Commodity-Specific		General Agriculture		Conservation or Natural Resource		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Crop Insurance	3.43	0.59	2.65	0.67	2.14	0.90	3.06	0.80
Direct Payments	3.33	0.69	2.67	0.73	1.71	1.11	2.96	0.90
Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)	3.33	0.76	2.62	0.92	1.29	0.49	2.90	1.01
Payment limits	3.30	0.76	2.71	0.64	1.14	0.38	2.90	0.95
Counter-cyclical payments	3.23	0.90	2.57	0.81	1.29	0.49	2.82	1.03
Conservation compliance requirements	2.84	0.75	2.55	0.76	2.29	0.49	2.69	0.75
Country-of-origin Labeling	2.60	0.67	2.90	0.77	1.71	0.76	2.60	0.78
Marketing assistance loans	2.87	0.73	2.35	0.67	1.14	0.38	2.53	0.86
Operating loans	2.65	1.03	2.55	0.83	1.71	0.76	2.52	0.97
Environmental quality incentive program	2.58	0.78	2.35	0.93	2.14	1.07	2.46	0.86
Food safety	2.45	0.64	2.29	0.64	1.86	0.69	2.34	0.66
Commodity distribution programs	2.46	0.64	2.35	0.81	1.43	0.79	2.32	0.77
Biotechnology	2.30	0.61	2.30	0.66	1.71	0.76	2.24	0.65
Farm Credit Systems	2.33	0.83	2.10	0.70	1.86	0.90	2.21	0.80
Emergency Loans	2.26	0.75	2.14	0.48	1.71	1.11	2.16	0.73
Farm ownership loans	2.17	0.75	1.90	0.70	2.00	0.82	2.07	0.74
Wetland protection	2.08	0.77	1.90	0.70	2.57	0.79	2.07	0.77
Bio-terrorism or Bio-Security	1.98	0.58	2.00	0.55	2.00	1.15	1.99	0.63
Consolidated Farm & Rural Development Act	2.05	0.71	1.90	0.77	1.14	0.38	1.91	0.75
Food Stamp Program	1.59	0.59	1.37	0.50	1.29	0.49	1.49	0.56

Note. A Likert-type scale (1=No Knowledge…4=Extremely Knowledgeable) was used to measure board members knowledge of primary issues in the 2002 Farm Bill. Knowledge levels ranged from 3.06 to 1.49.

Selected Texas Organizations Findings

Overall, objective one results showed that respondents from the selected Texas organizations (*N = 70)* had some knowledge about seventeen of the primary issues with mean ratings ranging from 1.91 to 3.06. Overall, respondents from the selected Texas organizations reported almost no knowledge of the Food Stamp Program (*M* = 1.49) (Table 5).

Selected Texas Organizations Rankings

Respondents from selected Texas organizations ranked the primary issues or programs mentioned in the literature and listed in objective one. Organization board members' ranked the top ten primary issues that were significant each selected Texas organizations (Tables 6-8) and to all selected Texas organizations (Table 9). Points were awarded based upon the frequencies of all groups. All of the board members who responded to the issues or programs ranked as number 1 were later multiplied by 10 points. This process continued until the last issue was ranked as number 10, was multiplied by 1 point. Overall, the top 2002 Farm Bill issue for all respondents was direct payments, which had a weighted rank score of 412. The issues ranked two through five were counter-cyclical payments, crop insurance, payment limits, and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs). Overall, the same respondents ranked food safety as number ten, which had a rank score of 103 (Table 9).

Table 6

Commodity-specific Organization Respondents' Ranking of Primary Issues or Programs in the 2002 Farm Bill (n=40)

	Weighted Scores											Group
Primary Issues or Programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Score	Rank
Direct Payments	130	72	48	28	6	0	4	0	2	4	294	1
Counter-cyclical payments	60	81	48	35	24	0	4	3	2	3	260	2
Crop insurance	80	54	40	14	30	5	4	9	4	3	243	3
Payment limits	90	0	48	14	12	35	8	3	6	4	220	4
Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)	20	54	48	28	24	20	4	3	4	4	209	5
Conservation compliance requirements	10	9	16	7	24	20	20	9	10	2	127	6
Marketing assistance loans	30	18	16	14	6	5	8	12	6	6	121	7
Country-of-origin Labeling	0	27	16	14	24	25	4	9	0	1	120	8
Environmental quality incentive program	0	9	8	7	24	20	24	15	4	2	113	9
Biotechnology	10	9	0	14	18	10	20	15	6	1	103	10
Operating loans	30	9	8	21	6	5	8	6	4	4	101	11
Farm Credit Systems	10	0	8	7	24	10	4	21	16	0	100	12
Food safety	10	9	8	7	24	5	16	9	6	2	96	13
Commodity distribution programs	10	0	16	7	24	10	8	6	2	3	86	14
Emergency Loans	10	0	24	7	6	5	16	6	4	4	82	15
Farm ownership loans	10	9	8	0	6	5	16	9	8	3	74	16
Bio-terrorism/bio-security	10	9	0	7	6	0	8	12	8	2	62	17
Food Stamp Program	0	27	0	0	12	0	8	6	2	4	59	18
Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act	0	0	0	7	12	5	4	9	8	5	50	19
Wetland protection	0	9	0	7	12	0	4	9	2	3	46	20

Note. [a]Overall rank was determined by weighting rank scores in reverse order; 1st place rank scores received ten points each, while 10th place rank scores received one point each. Individual weighted scores for each source were summated to derive the overall rank.

Table 7

General Agriculture Organization Respondents' Ranking of Primary Issues or Programs in the 2002 Farm Bill (n=21)

	Weighted Scores											Group
Primary Issues or Programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Score	Rank
Counter-cyclical payments	20	45	24	28	6	5	0	3	0	2	133	1
Crop insurance	30	27	16	14	24	0	4	6	4	1	126	2
Direct Payments	50	18	8	14	6	5	4	9	0	1	115	3
Payment limits	20	27	24	14	6	0	12	6	0	1	110	4
Country-of-origin Labeling	30	9	24	7	18	0	8	9	0	0	105	5
Food safety	30	27	8	7	24	0	0	3	2	0	101	6
Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)	30	18	8	21	0	5	0	9	4	2	97	7
Biotechnology	0	18	24	7	18	0	12	3	4	0	86	8
Bio-terrorism/bio-security	0	27	16	14	12	10	0	3	2	1	85	9
Operating loans	20	27	16	0	6	0	4	3	6	0	82	10
Conservation compliance requirements	0	27	16	0	12	10	8	3	0	2	78	11
Environmental quality incentive program	0	9	16	14	12	5	8	6	2	0	72	12
Farm Credit Systems	10	9	8	7	6	20	4	6	0	1	71	13
Commodity distribution programs	20	18	0	7	12	10	0	3	0	0	70	14
Marketing assistance loans	0	18	8	7	0	10	12	9	2	2	68	15
Emergency Loans	0	0	24	7	18	0	4	6	4	0	63	16
Farm ownership loans	0	9	8	14	12	10	4	0	2	1	60	17
Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act	10	9	24	0	6	0	0	6	2	0	57	18
Food Stamp Program	10	9	16	0	6	0	8	0	0	1	50	19
Wetland protection	10	0	8	0	12	0	0	6	2	0	38	20

Note. [a]Overall rank was determined by weighting rank scores in reverse order; 1st place rank scores received ten points each, while 10th place rank scores received one point each. Individual weighted scores for each source were summated to derive the overall rank.

Table 8

Conservation or Natural Resources Organization Respondents' Ranking of Primary Issues or Programs in the 2002 Farm Bill (n=7)

	Weighted Scores											
Primary Issues or Programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Score	Rank
Wetland protection	30	9	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	44	1
Environmental quality incentive program	10	18	8	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	42	2
Farm ownership loans	10	0	0	0	0	5	4	0	0	0	19	3
Conservation compliance requirements	10	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	4
Operating loans	0	0	8	7	0	0	0	3	0	0	18	5
Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	2	0	16	6
Farm Credit Systems	0	9	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	14	7
Marketing assistance loans	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	2	0	8	8
Bio-terrorism/bio-security	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	2	1	7	9
Crop insurance	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	1	7	10
Emergency Loans	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4	11
Direct Payments	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	12
Food safety	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	13
Biotechnology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	14
Commodity distribution programs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
Counter-cyclical payments	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
Country-of-origin Labeling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
Food Stamp Program	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19
Payment limits	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20

Note. [a]Overall rank was determined by weighting rank scores in reverse order; 1st place rank scores received ten points each, while 10th place rank scores received one point each. Individual weighted scores for each source were summated to derive the overall rank.

Table 9

Selected Texas Organizations Respondents' Overall Ranking of Primary Issues or Programs in the 2002 Farm Bill (N=70)

	Ranking Weighted Scores											
Primary Issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Score	Overall
Direct Payments	180	90	56	42	12	5	8	12	2	5	412	1
Counter-cyclical payments	80	126	72	63	30	5	4	6	2	5	393	2
Crop insurance	110	81	56	28	60	5	8	15	8	5	376	3
Payment limits	110	27	72	28	18	35	20	9	6	5	330	4
Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)	50	72	56	49	24	25	4	12	8	6	306	5
Environmental quality incentive program	10	36	32	21	42	25	32	21	6	2	227	6
Country-of-origin Labeling	30	36	40	21	42	25	12	18	0	1	225	7
Conservation compliance requirements	20	36	40	7	36	30	28	12	10	4	223	8
Operating loans	50	36	32	28	12	5	12	12	10	4	201	9
Food safety	40	36	16	14	48	5	16	15	8	2	200	10
Marketing assistance loans	30	36	24	21	12	15	20	21	10	8	197	11
Biotechnology	10	27	24	21	36	10	32	18	10	2	190	12
Farm Credit Systems	20	18	16	14	30	35	8	27	16	1	185	13
Commodity distribution programs	30	18	16	14	36	20	8	9	2	3	156	14
Bio-terrorism/bio-security	10	36	16	21	18	10	12	15	12	4	154	15
Farm ownership loans	20	18	16	14	18	20	24	9	10	4	153	16
Emergency Loans	10	0	48	14	24	5	24	12	8	4	149	17
Wetland protection	40	18	8	7	24	5	4	15	4	3	128	18
Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act	10	9	24	21	18	5	4	15	12	5	123	19
Food Stamp Program	10	36	16	0	18	0	16	6	2	5	109	20

Note. [a]Overall rank was determined by weighting rank scores in reverse order; 1st place rank scores received ten points each, while 10th place rank scores received one point each. Individual weighted scores for each source were summated to derive the overall rank.

Findings Related to Objective Two

To achieve the second objective respondents were asked to indicate what value their organization placed on different organizational communication methods (Tables 10-13). The values of selected Texas organization board members' perceptions of organizational communication methods used in their respective organizations were measured using a Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree… 4 = strongly agree).The responses to these questions came from section three of part two of the survey.

Commodity-specific Organization Findings

The commodity-specific organization respondents (n = 40) strongly agreed their organizations wanted to meet its primary objectives (M = 3.63), the board members' informational needs were adequately met within their organization (M = 3.54), and information was widely shared in their organization (M = 3.53). These three questions or statements that were agreed with were from section three- part two of the survey and the question were related to Franklin's peer leadership item and with the index of peer interaction facilitation. The same commodity-specific respondents agreed with the rest of the fifteen organizational communication methods with values ranging from 3.11 to 3.49 (Table 10).

General Agriculture Organization Findings

General agriculture organization respondents (n = 21) strongly agreed that information about important events or situations were shared within their organization (M = 3.63), their respective organizations wanted to meet its primary objectives, information was widely shared in their organization (M = 3.60), and organizations'

board members' encouraged members to exchange opinions and ideas (M = 3.55). The general agriculture board members did not disagree with any of the organizational communication methods (Table 11).

Conservation or Natural Resources Organization Findings

The conservation or natural resources organization respondents (n = 7) only "agreed" with all the organizational communication method statements. These eighteen organizational communication methods had means ranging from 2.75 to 3.50. The conservation or natural resources organizational board members did not strongly agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with any of the organizational communication methods (Table 12).

Selected Texas Organizations Findings

To complete the second objective, selected Texas organization respondents (n = 70) rated their levels of agreement to certain organizational communication methods. These questions were from section three of part two of the survey. As a group, respondents strongly agreed their organizations wanted to meet its primary objectives (M = 3.61), and information about important events or situations were shared within their organizations (M = 3.51). These two statements or questions were questions related to Franklin's peer leadership items and peer interaction facilitation index. Overall, the respondents agreed with the last sixteen organizational communication methods and they did not disagree or strongly disagree with any of the organizational communication methods (Table 13).

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for Commodity-specific Organization Respondents' Perceptions of Organizational Communication Methods Used in Their Organization (n=40)

Organizational Communication Methods	*M*	*SD*
My organization wants to meet its primary objectives.	3.63	.489
My informational needs, as a director, are adequately met within my organization.	3.54	.505
Information is widely shared in my organization.	3.53	.506
Information about important events or situations is shared within my organization.	3.49	.601
My organization plans and coordinates its efforts collaboratively.	3.49	.507
Decision makers have access to all available information in my organization.	3.47	.506
I encourage members to exchange opinions and ideas.	3.47	.557
Organizational objectives are announced with no opportunity to raise questions or give comments.	3.43	.728
My organization makes decisions and solves problems well.	3.43	.502
Organizational members have knowledge that is communicated to decision makers.	3.42	.500
Organizational members are receptive to my ideas and suggestions.	3.35	.538
Organizational objectives are announced and explained with opportunities to ask questions.	3.34	.745
Specific alternative objectives are crafted by leaders, then members are asked to discuss them, indicating the objective they think is best for the organization.	3.32	.530
Decisions are made at levels with the most adequate and accurate information available.	3.26	.554
Members in my organization listen to me.	3.26	.554
Organizational objectives are created and are discussed, and sometimes modified by members before being issued throughout the entire organization.	3.24	.597
After decisions are made, people affected by those decisions are asked for their ideas.	3.11	.785

Note. A Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree…4 = strongly agree) was used to measure board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill and agreement levels' means ranged from 3.63 to 3.11.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for General Agriculture Organization Respondents' Perceptions of Organizational Communication Methods Used in Their Organization (n=21)

Organizational Communication Methods	*M*	*SD*
Information about important events or situations is shared within my organization.	3.65	.587
My organization wants to meet its primary objectives.	3.60	.503
I encourage members to exchange opinions and ideas.	3.55	.605
Information is widely shared in my organization.	3.37	.831
Organizational objectives are announced with no opportunity to raise questions or give comments.	3.35	.745
Members in my organization listen to me.	3.32	.478
Organizational objectives are created and are discussed, and sometimes modified by members before being issued throughout the entire organization.	3.30	.657
Decision makers have access to all available information in my organization.	3.30	.657
Organizational members have knowledge that is communicated to decision makers.	3.30	.571
My organization makes decisions and solves problems well.	3.26	.452
Organizational objectives are announced and explained with opportunities to ask questions.	3.25	.786
Decisions are made at levels with the most adequate and accurate information available.	3.25	.550
My informational needs, as a director, are adequately met within my organization.	3.20	.523
Organizational members are receptive to my ideas and suggestions.	3.16	.501
My organization plans and coordinates its efforts collaboratively.	3.15	.489
After decisions are made, people affected by those decisions are asked for their ideas.	2.90	.912
Specific alternative objectives are crafted by leaders, then members are asked to discuss them, indicating the objective they think is best for the organization.	2.70	.923

Note. A Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree…4 = strongly agree) was used to measure board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill and agreement levels' means ranged from 3.65 to 2.70.

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics for Conservation or Natural Resources Organization Respondents' Perceptions of Organizational Communication Methods Used in Their Organization (n=7)

Organizational Communication Methods	*M*	*SD*
My organization wants to meet its primary objectives.	3.50	.548
My organization makes decisions and solves problems well.	3.50	.548
Organizational objectives are announced with no opportunity to raise questions or give comments.	3.40	.548
My organization plans and coordinates its efforts collaboratively.	3.33	.516
Organizational members are receptive to my ideas and suggestions.	3.25	.500
Members in my organization listen to me.	3.25	.500
Organizational members have knowledge that is communicated to decision makers.	3.20	.447
Decisions are made at levels with the most adequate and accurate information available.	3.20	.447
I encourage members to exchange opinions and ideas.	3.20	.447
Information about important events or situations is shared within my organization.	3.17	.408
Decision makers have access to all available information in my organization.	3.17	.408
Organizational objectives are announced and explained with opportunities to ask questions.	3.00	.707
Information is widely shared in my organization.	3.00	.894
My informational needs, as a director, are adequately met within my organization.	3.00	.707
Organizational objectives are created and are discussed, and sometimes modified by members before being issued throughout the entire organization.	2.83	.408
Specific alternative objectives are crafted by leaders, then members are asked to discuss them, indicating the objective they think is best for the organization.	2.83	.408
After decisions are made, people affected by those decisions are asked for their ideas.	2.75	.957

Note. A Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree…4 = strongly agree) was used to measure board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill and agreement levels' means ranged from 3.50 to 2.75.

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics for Selected Texas Organizations Respondents' Overall Perceptions of Organizational Communication Methods Used in Their Organization (n =70)

	Commodity-specific (*n* = 40)		General Agriculture (*n* = 21)		Conservation or Natural Resources (*n* = 7)		All Respondents (*n* =70)	
Organizational Communication Methods	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
My organization wants to meet its primary objectives.	3.63	0.49	3.60	0.50	3.50	0.55	3.61	0.49
Information about important events or situations is shared within my organization.	3.49	0.60	3.65	0.59	3.17	0.41	3.51	0.59
I encourage members to exchange opinions and ideas.	3.47	0.56	3.55	0.61	3.20	0.45	3.48	0.56
Information is widely shared in my organization.	3.53	0.51	3.37	0.83	3.00	0.89	3.43	0.67
Organizational objectives are announced with no opportunity to raise questions or give comments.	3.43	0.73	3.35	0.75	3.40	0.55	3.40	0.71
Decision makers have access to all available information in my organization.	3.47	0.51	3.30	0.66	3.17	0.41	3.39	0.55
My informational needs, as a director, are adequately met within my organization.	3.54	0.51	3.20	0.52	3.00	0.71	3.39	0.55
My organization makes decisions and solves problems well.	3.43	0.50	3.26	0.45	3.50	0.55	3.39	0.49
Organizational members have knowledge that is communicated to decision makers.	3.42	0.50	3.30	0.57	3.20	0.45	3.37	0.52
My organization plans and coordinates its efforts collaboratively.	3.49	0.51	3.15	0.49	3.33	0.52	3.37	0.52
Organizational objectives are announced and explained with opportunities to ask questions.	3.34	0.75	3.25	0.79	3.00	0.71	3.29	0.75
Organizational members are receptive to my ideas and suggestions.	3.35	0.54	3.16	0.50	3.25	0.50	3.28	0.52
Members in my organization listen to me.	3.26	0.55	3.32	0.48	3.25	0.50	3.28	0.52

Table 13 continued

Organizational Communication Methods	Commodity-specific (n = 40)		General Agriculture (n = 21)		Conservation or Natural Resources (n = 7)		All Respondents *(n = 70)*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Decisions are made at levels with the most adequate and accurate information available.	3.26	0.55	3.25	0.55	3.20	0.45	3.25	0.54
Organizational objectives are created and are discussed, and sometimes modified by members before being issued throughout the entire organization.	3.24	0.60	3.30	0.66	2.83	0.41	3.22	0.61
Specific alternative objectives are crafted by leaders, then members are asked to discuss them, indicating the objective they think is best for the organization.	3.32	0.53	2.70	0.92	2.83	0.41	3.08	0.73
After decisions are made, people affected by those decisions are asked for their ideas.	3.11	0.79	2.90	0.91	2.75	0.96	3.02	0.83

Note. A Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree…4 = strongly agree) was used to measure board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill and agreement levels' means ranged from 3.61 to 3.02.

Findings Related to Objective Three

The third objective was achieved by asking respondents to confirm their agreement levels for 10 statements measuring their perceptions of organizational influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill (Tables 14-17).

Commodity-specific Organization Findings

Respondents from commodity-specific organizations strongly agreed with the statement "their respective farm organization coalitions were essential for enacting the 2002 Farm Bill" ($M = 3.93$) and they strongly agreed, "that farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill" ($M = 3.88$). Commodity-specific organization respondents also strongly agreed with the statement "farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than non-farm organizations" ($M = 3.63$), and "their respective organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill" ($M = 3.62$). The same respondents agreed with five other statements with ratings ranging from 2.66 to 3.03. These same respondents disagreed that the 2002 Farm Bill impacts farm production more than previous farm bills ($M = 2.36$); they did not strongly disagree with any of the statements (Table 14).

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics for Commodity-specific Organization Respondents' Perceptions of Influencers Affecting the Final Outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill (n=40)

Statements	*M*	*SD*
Farm organization coalitions were essential for enacting the 2002 Farm Bill	3.93	0.27
Farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	3.88	0.34
Farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than non-farm organizations	3.63	0.59
My organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	3.62	0.54
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts conservation programs more than previous farm bills	3.03	0.66
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts natural resources issues more than previous farm bills	2.97	0.63
Non-farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than farm organizations	2.95	0.70
Interests of the environmentalists were opposites of farmers for the 2002 Farm Bill	2.82	0.69
Non-farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	2.66	0.75
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts farm production more than previous farm bills	2.36	0.72

Note. A Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree…4 = strongly agree) was used to measure board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. Agreement levels of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill means ranged from 3.93 to 2.36.

General Agriculture Organization Findings

Respondents from general agriculture organizations (n = 21) strongly agreed farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill (M = 3.57). They agreed with eight other statements with ratings ranging from 2.62 to 3.48. The same respondents disagreed with the statement "non-farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill" (M = 2.45). General agriculture organization respondents did not rate any of the statements as "strongly disagree" (Table 15).

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics for General Agriculture Organization Respondents' Perceptions of Influencers Affecting the Final Outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill (n=21)

Statements	*M*	*SD*
Farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	3.57	0.60
Farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than non-farm organizations	3.48	0.75
Farm organization coalitions were essential for enacting the 2002 Farm Bill	3.45	0.76
My organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	3.45	0.51
Non-farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than farm organizations	3.19	0.75
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts conservation programs more than previous farm bills	3.05	0.62
Interests of the environmentalists were opposites of farmers for the 2002 Farm Bill	2.95	0.78
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts natural resources issues more than previous farm bills	2.86	0.73
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts farm production more than previous farm bills	2.62	0.74
Non-farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	2.45	0.89

Note. A Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree…4 = strongly agree) was used to measure board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. Agreement levels of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill means ranged from 3.57 to 2.45.

Conservation or Natural Resources Organization Findings

Respondents (n = 7) from conservation or natural resources organization agreed with the statement "farm organization coalitions were essential for enacting the 2002 Farm Bill" (M = 3.40). The same respondents agreed with eight more statements with ratings ranging from 2.75 to 3.25. The respondents did not strongly agree or strongly disagree with any of the statements listed (Table 16).

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics for Conservation or Natural Resources Organization Respondents' Perceptions of Influencers Affecting the Final Outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill (n=7)

Statements	*M*	*SD*
Farm organization coalitions were essential for enacting the 2002 Farm Bill	3.40	0.55
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts farm production more than previous farm bills	3.25	0.50
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts natural resources issues more than previous farm bills	3.25	0.50
Farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than non-farm organizations	3.20	0.45
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts conservation programs more than previous farm bills	3.20	0.45
Farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	3.00	0.71
Non-farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than farm organizations	3.00	0.00
Non-farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	2.75	0.50
My organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	2.75	0.50
Interests of the environmentalists were opposites of farmers for the 2002 Farm Bill	2.40	0.89

Note. A Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree…4 = strongly agree) was used to measure board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. Agreement levels of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill means ranged from 3.93 to 2.40.

Selected Texas Organizations Findings

To complete the third objective, members of all selected Texas organizations were asked to rate their level of agreement with 10 statements. Overall, respondents strongly agreed with the statement "farm organization coalitions were essential for enacting the 2002 Farm Bill" ($M = 3.74$), and "farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill" ($M = 3.71$). The same respondents also strongly agreed with the statements "Farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than non-farm organizations" ($M = 3.55$), and "their respective organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill" ($M = 3.51$). As a group they agreed with the statement "the 2002 Farm Bill impacts farm production more than previous farm bills" ($M = 2.51$). The respondents did not disagree or strongly disagree with any of the statements (Table 17).

Table 17

Descriptive Statistics for Selected Texas Organizations Respondents' Overall Perceptions of Influencers Affecting the Final Outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill (N=70)

	Commodity		General Agriculture		Conservation or Natural Resources		All Respondents	
Statements	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Farm organization coalitions were essential for enacting the 2002 Farm Bill	3.93	0.27	3.45	0.76	3.40	0.55	3.74	0.54
Farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	3.88	0.34	3.57	0.60	3.00	0.71	3.71	0.52
Farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than non-farm organizations	3.63	0.59	3.48	0.75	3.20	0.45	3.55	0.64
My organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	3.62	0.54	3.45	0.51	2.75	0.50	3.51	0.56
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts conservation programs more than previous farm bills	3.03	0.66	3.05	0.62	3.20	0.45	3.05	0.63
Non-farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than farm organizations	2.95	0.70	3.19	0.75	3.00	0.00	3.03	0.70
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts natural resources issues more than previous farm bills	2.97	0.63	2.86	0.73	3.25	0.50	2.95	0.65
Interests of the environmentalists were opposites of farmers for the 2002 Farm Bill	2.82	0.69	2.95	0.78	2.40	0.89	2.82	0.74
Non-farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill	2.66	0.75	2.45	0.89	2.75	0.50	2.60	0.78
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts farm production more than previous farm bills	2.36	0.72	2.62	0.74	3.25	0.50	2.51	0.74

Note. A Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree…4 = strongly agree) was used to measure board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. Agreement levels of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill means ranged from 3.93 to 2.36.

Findings Related to Objective Four

Selected Texas Organizations Findings

To accomplish the fourth objective, selected Texas organizations respondents' perceptions of organizational communication methods and perceptions of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill were summated and correlated to determine if a significant relationship existed (Table 18). The relationships between two variables with continuous scores were analyzed using Pearson's Product-moment correlations (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Table 18

Significant Correlation Coefficients among Selected Variables (n = 70)

Variables	1[a]	2[b]
1. Perceptions of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill	-	.42**
2. Perceptions of organizational communication methods used by selected Texas Organizations		-

Note. Four-point scales were summated to determine respondents' overall perceptions of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill and perceptions of organizational communication methods. [a]Perceptions of Influencers ranged from 5-37 (M = 29.85, SD =5.48). [b]Perceptions of Organizational Communication Methods ranged from 2-68 (M = 54.66, SD = 9.70).
**p<.01.

A moderately significant, positive relationship (r = .42) existed between respondents' perceived organizational communication methods and perceived levels of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of This Study

The purpose this current study was to determine if a relationship existed between selected Texas organizational board members' perceptions of organizational communication methods and perceptions of influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Objectives

1. Measure selected commodity-specific, general agricultural, and natural resources organization leaders' and members' knowledge of the 2002 Farm Bill.
2. Determine perceptions of organizational communication methods used by commodity-specific, general agricultural, and natural resources organizations.
3. Determine board members' perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.
4. Determine if organizational communication methods were related to organizational board members' perceptions influencers of affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Summary of Methodology

This study used a quantitative ex-post facto design, and was correlational in nature. The conceptual schema for this study was based on the research performed by

Sulak (2000), and Catchings and Wingenbach's (2003) studies, which focused on National Commodity board members perceptions of 1996 Farm Bill and selected Texas commodity board members' perceptions of 2002 Farm Bill respectively. Data were collected from a specific population using a modification of Sulak's (2000), Catchings and Wingenbach's (2003), and Franklin's (1975) surveys. The accessible population (n = 160) was selected Texas organizations' (commodity-specific, general agriculture, and conservation or natural resources) board members. A total of 70 board members or leaders completed the survey for a response rate of 44%.

The survey u ed was both a pencil and paper instrument and an Internet site. For this study, a customized mixed-mode method was used to collect information from selected respondents by e-mail, first and later using paper surveys for the remaining respondents (Schaefer & Dillman, 1998).

Summary of Respondents

Bartlett, Kotrik and Higgins (2001) stated since social research studies often use data collection methods such as surveys and other voluntary participation (e-mailed surveys) methods, the response rates are typically well below 100%. Due to the limited response rate (n = 70) this study does not provide an extensive account for all Texas organizations' board members. The findings cannot be generalized to the total population, but they give insight into the knowledge, perceptions, and values held by commodity-specific, general agriculture, and conservation or natural resources organizations' board members.

The respondents in this study and in Catchings' and Wingenbach's (2003) study did not respond well to surveys, therefore, a lower-than-expected rate was anticipated. The respondents were not surprisingly different from Sulak's (2000) study. For this study, respondents were from commodity-specific organizations, between the ages 46 to 55, reared in a rural location, and currently lived in a rural location. More than half of the respondents had attended college or received an undergraduate degree. The combination of age and percentage of degrees held leads itself to helping provide leadership with the selected Texas organizational boards.

Statistically we can determine from the results that there is a need for more equal representation throughout all of the selected Texas organizational board members. The researcher realized a need to focus on responses not received, rather than on the ones that were received. Catchings' and Wingenbach's (2003) study stated that even though board members value the privacy of their organizations' membership information, a true account of their board members' and their respective organizations' members' perceptions about U. S. farm policy cannot be attained without greater access to the population of interest.

One of the primary recommendations made in Catchings' and Wingenbach's (2003) study stated there should be increased cooperation between Texas agricultural commodity organizations. This study concurs with Catchings and Wingenbach's recommendations that more researchers need to add more organizations to their list of studied commodity organizations. This study sought to add not just commodity-specific organizations, but also more general agriculture and conservation or natural resources

organizations. Sulak (2000) stated that because of the large number of memberships within an organization and the distribution of organizations on which members of various farm and non-farm organizations are dependent that complications will occur during the developmental process for alliances among other organizations (farm or non-farm).

Objective One

Key Findings

Throughout the results for objective one, each organization indicated their board members' knowledge of the primary issues and programs in the 2002 Farm Bill. Overall, respondents were more knowledgeable about crop insurance. Commodity-specific respondents' ranked crop insurance as their number two primary issue or program in the 2002 Farm Bill. Commodity-specific respondents ranked direct payments as their number one primary issue or program in the 2002 Farm Bill.

General agriculture respondents indicated they had a trace more knowledge about Country-of-Origin labeling (C.O.O.L.) than crop insurance, compared to the overall responses on crop insurance. However, the same respondents ranked crop insurance as their number two primary issue or program, where as they ranked C.O.O.L. as their number five primary issue or program in the 2002 Farm Bill.

Conservation or natural resources respondents were knowledgeable about wetland protection, but they only had some knowledge of crop insurance comparative to the knowledge of crop insurance by the overall respondents. Conservation or natural resources respondents ranked crop insurance as the tenth primary issue or program in the

2002 Farm Bill, whereas wetland protection and environmental quality incentive programs were ranked as a number one primary issue or program in the 2002 Farm Bill.

Conclusions Related to Objective One

It can be concluded that overall, respondents in this study identified their highest level of knowledge for the primary issue concerning crop insurance. This finding was related to the higher percentage of commodity-specific respondents and allowed the mean average to be pulled closer to their organization, by a higher population percentage.

Implications Related to Objective One

Implications are that some of the findings parallel the findings in Catchings' and Wingenbach's (2003) study, where they indicated commodity organization respondents were more knowledgeable about issues and programs that would "have the most impact on their organizations and probably held the greatest relevance to their livelihoods" (p. 13). The respondents overall knowledge and rankings of primary issues or programs in the 2002 Farm Bill reflects what was found in Sulak's (2000) national commodity board leaders' study. The only difference between this study and Sulak's, or Catchings' and Wingenbach's studies is this study's respondents perceived the importance of environmental issues higher than did respondents for Sulak, or Catchings and Wingenbach. Overall, respondents ranked two environmental issues or programs in the top ten of the overall rankings of primary issues or programs in the 2002 Farm Bill. Respondents ranked "environmental quality incentive program" as number six and "conservation compliance requirements" as number eight. The results indicate

organizational board members were knowledgeable about most of the issues they were ranking as important primary issues.

Recommendations Related to Objective One

The study agrees with Catchings and Wingenbach (2003) findings indicate that there is still a need for more studies with equal representation of all Texas organizational board members. More studies like this study and future ones will help fellow Texas organizational board members understand the knowledge and importance levels of issues or programs in current farm policies. More studies should have equal or all representation from conservation or natural resource organizations, to test whether their board members' perceptions are comparative to respondents in this study.

Objective Two

Key Findings

Throughout the results for objective two, each organizational board member indicated their perceptions of organizational communication methods. Overall, respondents in this study identified their highest levels of agreement with the organizational communication method, "My organization wants to meet its primary objectives." This method coincides with the method used in Franklin's (1975) study. This method was under the item of peer leadership and was indexed as peer interaction facilitation. This finding is related to the higher percentage of commodity-specific respondents and allows the mean average to be pulled closer to their organization by a higher population percentage.

Commodity-specific respondents' strong agreement levels imitated the agreement levels of the overall organizational communication method, "My organization wants to meet its primary objectives." General agriculture respondents also strongly agreed with the same overall organizational communication method but they agreed stronger slightly with the method, "Information about important events or situations is shared within my organization." Conservation or natural resources organization respondents only agreed with the overall organizational communication method that mentioned their organizations' primary objectives are met. The organizational communication methods mentioned within each separate selected Texas organization's respondents went along with Franklin's (1975) item of peer leadership and under the index of peer interaction facilitation. Overall, respondents did not disagree or strongly disagree with any of the organizational communication methods.

Conclusions Related to Objective Two

It can be concluded that all respondents want their respective organizations to meet their primary objectives and to receive information about events or situations shared within their respective organizations. It can also be concluded that the organizational methods that perceived higher agreement levels coincided with Franklin's (1975) peer leadership item and peer interaction facilitation index. This lends well that organizational members were assembling to make sure their meetings were having their objectives set and met, and that information about those objectives, events or situations were later shared with others in their respective organizations.

Implications Related to Objective Two

This conclusion implies there are ways for organizations to set objectives; organizations can add a dimension to their communication by creating an environment that requires people within the organization to communicate due to a shared purpose (Conrad, 1994). Shared purposes are comparative to objectives set by organizational board members.

The shared purpose and/or objectives are organizational dimensions of communication and help improve communication within organizations. People/members will communicate with colleagues/other members at work either because they like them or because they have a shared purpose or task to complete. Successful organizations result when members of the organization — from the leaders down — share the same vision (purpose) or agenda (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

Recommendations Related to Objective Two

It is recommended that more research involving Texas farm and non-farm organizations, and other organizations is needed to gather perceptions of and use of organizational communication methods. Additional study should involve finding ways to see if one organizational communication method is used more often than others and how that method is used to communicate within a given organization. Researchers could look at which style of organizations communication is being used, using Franklin's (1975) items of organizational climate, managerial leadership, and peer leadership. As indicated in this research, the respondents strongly agreed their respective organizations wanted to

meet its primary objectives; with more research, organizations and the public can determine these objectives and compare them to other organizations objectives.

Researchers may find it beneficial to research different organizational communication methods set by selected Texas organizational board members to better understand their shared purposes or objectives, or if the information about events or situations are being shared, not just with peers, but with all members in their respective organizations.

There is scant literature to reference how communication relates to perceptions. There is a need to understand both communication methods and perceptions of farm policy. Researchers also need to develop an understanding of how organizations can resolve political predicaments (Bennis and Nanus, 1985) with the use of communication methods (Conrad, 1994) and perceptions (Mark, Daniel, & Parcell, 2002; Catchings and Wingenbach, 2003). Based upon the results found, there could be more research using a qualitative research approach. This approach allows the researcher the ability to be "concerned with the process, rather than the outcomes or products…and the researcher is descriptive and interested in the meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures" (Creswell, 1994, p. 145). This approach allows the research to follow the process of organizational communication and see how organizational communication methods can help or hinder the development of perceptions within an organization.

Objective Three

Key Findings

Throughout the results for objective three, each organizational board member indicated their agreement with 10 statements about their perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. Overall, respondents identified their highest level of agreement with the statement, "Farm organization coalitions were essential for enacting the 2002 Farm Bill."

Conclusions Related to Objective Three

It is concluded that commodity-specific respondents' strong agreement levels replicated the agreement levels of the overall organizational influencer affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. General agriculture respondents did not strongly agree with the same overall organizational influencer, but they strongly agreed with the organizational influencer, "Farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than non-farm organizations." Conservation or natural resources organization respondents only agreed with the overall organizational influencer, and they also agreed with, "The 2002 Farm Bill impacts farm production more than previous farm bills." This statement was one of the least agreed with statements throughout the overall respondents on organizational influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. Overall, respondents did not disagree or strongly disagree with any of the organizational influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Implications Related to Objective Three

Catchings and Wingenbach's (2003) study indicated there was a shift between national (Sulak, 2000) and state-level commodity board members' (Catchings & Wingenbach, 2003) perceptions of organizational influencers affecting the final outcome of a farm bill. National commodity board members in Sulak's (2000) study perceived the Agriculture Committee Chairs and congressional leadership had the most influence on the 1996 Farm Bill information process. Sulak concluded the national commodity organizations had little or no influence on the outcome of the 1996 Farm Bill. Catchings and Wingenbach's (2003) study disagreed with Sulak's conclusion, because their study showed that state-level commodity board members perceived their respective organizations strongly influenced the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. The respondents in this study were analogous with Catchings' and Wingenbach's respondents' agreement and perceptions levels of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Overall, this study showed that respondents strongly agreed their respective organizations (farm organizations) influenced the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill, which mirrors the findings in Catchings' and Wingenbach's study. The shift between national commodity organizational board members, state-level commodity board members, and other selected Texas organizations could be related to the multitude of House Committee on Agriculture hearings that allowed commodity groups to present specific recommendations for the new farm bill (Mark, Daniel, & Parcell, 2002; Catchings & Wingenbach, 2003) study. This study shows these inferences could be the result of a heterogeneous, rather than homogeneous (Catchings & Wingenbach, 2003),

respondent group's collective perception their organizations' input had great impact in forming the 2002 Farm Bill**.** The findings for this study concurs with Mark, Daniel and Parcell's (2002) conclusions the needs and perceptions of both groups would be useful to policy makers in the development of farm policy, such as the Farm Security and Reform Investment (FSRI) Act of 2002 and future farm bills.

Recommendations Related to Objective Three

As stated in the literature review, agriculturists' perceptions do change over time, and these changes influence agricultural policy at the national level (Mark, Daniel, & Parcell, 2002). This study did not measure perceptions over time. This study measured perceptions of different selected organizations. More research is needed to show if non-farm organizations have same influence, as farm organizations, on agricultural policy at the national level.

This study showed farm organizations were viewed as affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill, but non-farm organizations, like conservation or natural resource organization's respondents, also viewed farm organizations affected the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill. This study also concurs with statements made in Catchings' and Wingenbach's (2003) study and Mark, Daniel and Parcell's (2002) study that more research is needed to gather organizational board members and members' input. This input will be beneficial to policy makers as new farm bills are developed, written, passed, and executed.

Objective Four

Key Findings

Objective four determined if selected Texas organizations respondents' perceptions of organizational communication methods and perceptions of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill were correlated. The relationships between two variables with continuous scores were analyzed using Pearson's Product-moment correlations (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Conclusions Related to Objective Four

It is concluded there was a moderately significant, positive relationship ($r = .42$) existed between perceived organizational communication methods and perceived levels of influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Implications Related to Objective Four

An implication exists that as perceptions of organizational communication methods ratings are increased, then perceptions of organizational influencers affecting the outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill increase. Alternatively, if perceptions of organizational influencers affecting the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill increased, then perceptions of organizational communication methods will increase.

Mark, Daniel and Parcell's (2002) study found perceptions could change over time. This study did measure perceptions over time, but it did show that different organizational board members' perceptions could or would change considering their respective affiliations. However, as those perceptions change, positive perceptions of farm policy can be increased when specific organizational communication methods are

used. Based upon Franklin's (1975) study that showed that certain organizational communication have are itemized and indexed. This study showed that the peer leadership items and peer interaction facilitation index were used

These perceptions are useful to increasing our understanding of the phenomena under study. Even the small population present in this study helps us understand "information regarding farm policy can be useful to policy makers evaluating differences in policy impacts for farming operations of various sizes or geographic locations" (Mark, Daniel and Parcell, 2002).

Concerns regarding farm policy are raised and are applicable to organizational board members and their members. It should become a concern for educators including farm and non-farm organizations members, consultants, and lobbyists associated with selected Texas organizations (Sulak, 2000). Implying organizational board members need to identify those influencers and organizational communication methods could strongly influence the framing of future farm policies. Another implication is that organizational board members need to have their perceptions accounted for and measured in relationship to the organizational communication methods they use.

Recommendations Related to Objective Four

It is recommended that more research be conducted to identify which organizational communication methods increase perceptions of organizational influencers and vice versa. Researchers should conduct studies within organizations, not just as outsiders, but also as members of a respective organization. Such research could assess different variables correlating to organizational influence about farm policy and

organizational communication methods that are being used to determine if they concur with this study.

More research is needed on this topic. Qualitative methods should be used to help assess how perceptions those in this study are built and/or received within an organization. Qualitative research allows the researcher the ability to study the actual process, rather than the outcomes or products. Research topics such as organizational communication methods are better studied in a postmodern approach style (Creswell, 1994).

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

VPR
Office of the Vice President for Research

Office of Research Compliance

Administration and Special Programs

Academy for Advanced Telecommunication and Learning Technologies

Institute for Scientific Computation

Laboratory Animal Resources and Research

Microscopy and Imaging Center

Office of Business Administration

Office of Graduate Studies

Office of Sponsored Projects

Texas A&M University Research Park

Date February 9, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Christa Leigh Catchings
Agricultural Education
MS 2116

FROM: Dr. E. Murl Bailey, CIP, Advisor
Institutional Review Board
MS 1112

SUBJECT: IRB Protocol Review

Title: The Effects Selected Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Organizations' Communication Channels Have on Perception of the 2002 Farm Bill

Protocol Number: 2004-0028
Review Category: Exempt from Full Review
Approval Date: February 9, 2004 **to** February 8, 2005

The approval determination was based on the following Code of Federal Regulations
http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm

✓ **46.101(b)(1)**	_____ **46.101(b)(4)**
_____ **46.101(b)(2)**	_____ **46.101(b)(5)**
_____ **46.101(b)(3)**	_____ **46.101(b)(6)**

Remarks: Request of waived signed consent has been approved.

Texas A&M University

1112 TAMU
318 Administration Building
College Station, Texas
77843-1112

979.845.8585
FAX 979.862.3176

The Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University has reviewed and approved the above referenced protocol. Your study has been approved for one year. As the principal investigator of this study, you assume the following responsibilities:

***Renewal*:** Your protocol must be re-approved each year in order to continue the research. You must also complete the proper renewal forms in order to continue the study after the initial approval period.

***Adverse events*:** Any adverse events or reactions must be reported to the IRB immediately.

***Amendments*:** Any changes to the protocol, such as procedures, consent/assent forms, addition of subjects, or study design must be reported to and approved by the IRB.

***Informed Consent/Assent*:** All subjects should be given a copy of the consent document approved by the IRB for use in your study.

***Completion*:** When the study is complete, you must notify the IRB office and complete the required forms.

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

July 15, 2004

Mr. Steve Pringle
Texas Farm Bureau
Waco, TX

Dear Mr. Steve Pringle:

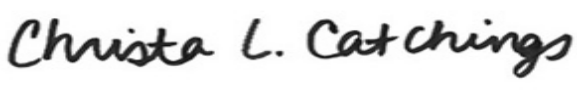
Will the 2002 U.S. Farm Bill affect agricultural practices in Texas? Texas agriculturists are among the nation's most productive, efficient and effective producers in the nation. Leaders from your organizations, *Texas Farm Bureau,* have been selected to voice their opinions about the U.S. Farm Bill. Your Field-staff members' responses are needed because they are representative of similar selected beliefs of other Texas organizations.

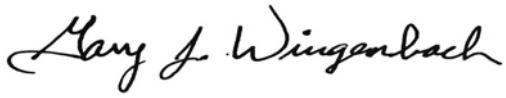
We appreciate your support in helping us collect data for this survey. At your next Field-staff meeting, we ask that you distribute one copy of the survey or the link, **Relationship of communication channels and leader's perceptions of the 2002 Farm Bill: A study of Selected Commodity-Specific and General Agricultural and Natural Resources organizations,** to each member along with a copy of the Informed Consent Form. You may deliver the link (http://www.ag-communicators.org/surveys/farmbillconsent.htm) to them via email or by any other means. Please tell your staff members that they can print the consent form and keep it. You can be assured your responses are anonymous and only group data will be reported in the results.

Please remind members to not write their names on any part of the survey. Members should know there are no correct or incorrect answers, but to answer each question honestly. Please convey our sincere appreciation to everyone for their participation in this study. When finished analyzing the results, we would be happy to share a copy of the final report with you. Again, thank you for your assistance and valued input in conducting this study!

Cover Letter Continued

Sincerely,





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College Station, TX 77843-2116

Dr. Gary Wingenbach, Committee Chair
2116 TAMU, Scoates 112 Hall
College Station, TX 77843-2116

APPENDIX C

SURVEY (PAPER-FORM) SENT PARTICIPANTS

PAPER-FORM

Selected Texas Commodity-Specific and General Agriculture and Natural Resource Organization Leaders' Communication Channels and Perceptions of the 2002 U. S. Farm Bill

1. Rate your knowledge for each of these 2002 Farm Bill issues, using the following scale.

NK=No Knowledge, **SK**=Some Knowledge, **K**= Knowledgeable, or **EK**= Extremely Knowledgeable

Issues	**NK**	**SK**	**K**	**EK**
Biotechnology				
Bio-terrorism/bio-security				
Commodity distribution programs				
Conservation compliance requirements				
Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act				
Counter-cyclical payments				
Country-of-origin Labeling				
Crop insurance				
Direct Payments				
Emergency Loans				
Environmental quality incentive program				
Farm Credit Systems				
Farm ownership loans				
Food safety				
Food Stamp Program				
Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)				
Marketing assistance loans				
Operating loans				
Payment limits				
Wetland protection				

2. Which of the following Farm Bill programs are most important to your organization? Please rank the top five programs only, using the scale **1**=**Most Important** to **5**=**Least Important**.
   ___Biotechnology
   ___Bio-terrorism/bio-security
   ___Commodity distribution programs
   ___Conservation compliance requirements
   ___Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act
   ___Counter-cyclical payments
   ___Country-of-origin Labeling
   ___Crop insurance
   ___Direct Payments
   ___Emergency Loans
   ___Environmental quality incentive program
   ___Farm Credit Systems
   ___Farm ownership loans
   ___Food safety
   ___Food Stamp Program
   ___Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)
   ___Marketing assistance loans
   ___Operating loans
   ___Payment limits
   ___Wetland protection
   ___Other _____

3. Respond to these statements by indicating your level of agreement using the following scale.

SD=Strongly Disagree, **D**=Disagree, **A**=Agree, **SA**=Strongly Agree, or **N/O**= No Opinion

Statements	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**	**N/O**
Farm organization coalitions were essential for enacting the 2002 Farm Bill					
Farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than non-farm organizations					
Farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill					
Interest of the environmentalists were opposite of farmers for the 2002 Farm Bill					
Non-farm organizations influenced the 2002 Farm Bill more than farm organizations					
Non-farm organizations strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill					
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts conservation programs more than previous farm bills					
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts farm production more than previous farm bills					
The 2002 Farm Bill impacts natural resources issues more than previous farm bills					
My organization strongly influenced the 2002 Farm Bill					

4. Has your organization provided its members with information about the 2002 Farm Bill?
_____Yes _____No

5. Has your organization provided its members with training on the 2002 Farm Bill?
_____Yes _____No

6. Rate the value of information obtained from these sources to learn about the 2002 Farm Bill. Respond with a check mark in the appropriate column using the following scale.

   NV=No Value, **SV**=Some Value, **V**=Valuable, **EV**= Extremely Valuable, or **N/A**=Not Applicable

Sources	**NV**	**SV**	**V**	**EV**	**N/A**
Radio					
Television					
Regional newspapers (Texas-based papers)					
National newspapers (*USA Today, Wall Street Journal*)					
Popular magazines (*Time, Newsweek, Nature*)					
Farm publications (*Farm Journal, Successful Farming*)					
Scientific Journals (*Journal of Agronomy, Journal of Extension*)					
Texas Cooperative Extension Service					
State Universities					
Consultants					
Congressional reports					
Agricultural Internet sites					
Non-agricultural Internet sites					
E-mail listservs					
Satellite technologies					

7. Please indicate your level of agreement for these organizational communication methods; use the following scale.

SD=Strongly Disagree, **D**=Disagree, **A**=Agree, **SA**=Strongly Agree, or **N/O**= No Opinion

Statements	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**	**N/O**
Organizational objectives are announced with no opportunity to raise questions or give comments.					
Organizational objectives are announced and explained with opportunities to ask questions.					
Organizational objectives are created and are discussed, and sometimes modified by members before being issued throughout the entire organization.					
Specific alternative objectives are crafted by leaders, then members are asked to discuss them, indicating the objective they think is best for the organization.					
My organization wants to meet its primary objectives.					
Information is widely shared in my organization.					
Information about important events or situations is shared within my organization.					
Decision makers have access to all available information in my organization.					
Organizational members have knowledge that is communicated to decision makers.					
Decisions are made at levels with the most adequate and accurate information available.					
After decisions are made, people affected by those decisions are asked for their ideas.					
My informational needs, as a director, are adequately met within my organization.					
Organizational members are receptive to my ideas and suggestions.					
I encourage members to exchange opinions and ideas.					
Members in my organization listen to me.					
My organization plans and coordinates its efforts collaboratively.					
My organization makes decisions and solves problems well.					

8. What is your organization's primary interest(s)?

_____Commodity-specific agriculture
_____General agriculture
_____Conservation/natural resources

9. What is your age group?
   _____25 years or younger
   _____26 to 35 years old
   _____36 to 45 years old
   _____46 to 55 years old
   _____56 years or older

10. Where were you raised?
   _____Rural farm or ranch
   _____Rural community (Less than 5,000)
   _____Town (5,000 to 50,000)
   _____Small City (50,001 to 200,000)
   _____City (200,001 to 1 million)
   _____Metropolis (Over 1 million)

11. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   _____High School diploma or less
   _____Attended college
   _____Undergraduate degree
   _____Master's degree
   _____Doctoral degree

12. Where do you live currently?
   _____Rural farm or ranch
   _____Rural community (Less than 5,000)
   _____Town (5,000 to 50,000)
   _____Small City (50,001 to 200,000)
   _____City (200,001 to 1 million)
   _____Metropolis (Over 1 million)

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