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Agrarianism in Agricultural Education: A Narrative Study

Michael J. Martin[1], Kellie Enns[2], and Katherine Hartmann[3]

Abstract

Agriculturalists can be divided into broad ideological camps with differing value sets. While many different groups exist, there are two primary ideological groups: (1) conventional or agrarian populists and (2) non-conventional or neo-agrarians. Agricultural education students' values about agriculture shape how they will work in their future classrooms, schools, and communities, as well as how they will interact with students and community members. The purpose of this narrative study was to describe undergraduate agricultural education students' conceptualization of their values about agriculture. The findings from this study highlighted the polarization of ideologies in American agriculture. The agricultural education students' conceptualization of agricultural values was largely conventional. Some students formed conventional agriculture values as they grew up, while other students experienced a change of their values towards conventional attitudes while in college. Students' responses to others with differing values ranged from indifferent to negative. These differences indicate a real challenge for post-secondary agricultural educators. Students have the right to maintain their own values in agriculture, however they must be able to work with others who have differing values. Research is needed to evaluate effective ways to help students learn how to work with people who have differing agricultural values.

Keywords: agricultural values; agrarian ideologies; neo-agrarianism; agrarian populism

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Introduction

Agrarian ideologies explain the norms and rules of groups associated with agriculture. Agrarian ideologies are comprised of a variety of agricultural values (Gutek, 2004; Marx, 2000; Montmarquest, 2000; Murphy, 2001). These agricultural values often mimic the diversity of our society. Some agricultural values are more liberal, such as those advocating for organic agriculture or food justice, while other are more conservative, such as those that resemble rural morality and incorporate the importance of tradition (Martin & Enns, 2017). Researchers have identified a variety of contemporary agrarian ideologies, including neo-agrarianism, agrarian populism, critical agrarianism, and Black agrarianism (Carlisle, 2013; King et al., 2018). Ideologies are comprised of a value set which provide groups of people with identity and purpose. Agrarian ideologies and their subsequent values are important for agricultural educators to understand as they emerge in our classrooms, programs, workshops, and in the public spaces where educators often work. Agrarian ideologies can provide people with community and group inclusion, as well as form barriers for those with different value sets (Gutek, 2004). We need to understand how agrarian ideologies and agricultural values create inclusion and exclusion norms for agricultural educators.

[1] Michael J. Martin is an Associate Professor in the Agricultural Education and Studies Department at Iowa State University, 201 Curtis Hall, Ames, IA 50011, mjm4@iastate.edu
[2] Kellie Enns is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at Colorado State University, 301 University Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80523, kellie.enns@colostate.edu
[3] Katherine Hartmann is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Agricultural Education and Studies Department at Iowa State University, 201 Curtis Hall, Ames, IA 50011, kh4@iastate.edu

Research into agrarian ideologies and values can be found in areas such as sociology (Gutham, 2004), history (Carlson, 2000), policy (Bradley, 1995), and popular press (Pollan, 2008). Agricultural education researchers have also explored agrarian ideologies in recent years across a range in contexts, at times highlighting the potential for agricultural values to be exclusionary, such as the role of Southern Agrarianism in the formation of the National FFA Organization (Martin & Kitchel, 2013). Research has also explored how differing agrarian ideologies can form rules for inclusion and exclusion at higher education institutions of agriculture (Martin & Wesoloski, 2018). The challenges of working with differing agrarian ideologies in a variety of contexts, including Extension (Martin, 2016a) and general outreach settings (Martin, 2016b) has also been explored. While research into the agrarian ideologies in agricultural education is not exhaustive, the work indicates that agricultural education in the context of these publications leans toward conventional agricultural values (i.e., agrarian populism) (Martin & Enns, 2017; Martin & Kitchel, 2013). There is only one study which explored agrarian ideologies and agricultural values in agricultural education students (Martin & Enns, 2017). There needs to be more data driven research exploring how pre-service educators, as well as students and educators, conceptualize and operationalize agrarian ideologies and agricultural values.

Diversity and inclusion research provide a contextual understanding of the challenges of working in agricultural education. There is a need to explore the complexities of diversity and inclusion in agricultural education. For example, researchers found that agricultural teachers and FFA advisors encounter difficulties recruiting diverse students and creating an inclusive environment. They identified issues ranging from student interactions, recruiting students of color, structure of programs, and program design (Barajas et al., 2020; Cano & Moore, 2010; Elliott & Lambert, 2018; Hoover & Scanlon, 1991; Jones &. Bowen, 1998; Jones et al., 2021; Lavergne et al., 2011; Phelps et al., 2012; Talbert & Larke, 1995; Vincent et al., 2012; Warren & Alston, 2007).

While there are examples of agricultural education programs serving a diverse student population (Roberts et al., 2009), the research highlights the challenges faced by agricultural education programs. While these studies provide insight into diversity and inclusion in agricultural education, the role of agricultural values in creating an inclusive environment requires additional research to explore this phenomenon further. The exploration of agricultural values in agricultural education would provide another mechanism for understanding the problem of diversity and inclusion in agricultural education.

This study will explore how conceptualizations of agricultural values can lead to a more inclusive or exclusive environment. The need for this study is great as society in the United States is becoming more fractured (e.g., Packer, 2021). Agricultural educators do not work in a vacuum and research should explore how they perceive and function regarding their values. While agrarian ideologies are just part of the ideological forces which influence agricultural educators, they do present an important opportunity for research. This study explores how university students majoring in agricultural education conceptualize these perceived differences they have with others regarding agricultural values.

Conceptual Framework – Agrarianism

This study utilized agrarian ideologies as a conceptual framework. Ideologies are the values and norms which guide groups of people in action and thought (Gutek, 2004). Ideologies are an essential part of the social human experience and can range from political ideologies to cultural and ethical ideologies. Ideologies must be understood as umbrella values which encompass diverse groups of people. Ideologies are contextual and can shift between regions, time, or even groups of people. While these groups may be categorized as having the same ideology, they may have differing sets of values which set them apart. There are often predominant ideologies expressed when exploring the context of agriculture in United States.

While the nuances within agrarianism are significant, we utilized the broad categories of neo-agrarianism and agrarian populism (Martin & Enns, 2017) to assist in conceptualizing agriculture values.

Neo-agrarianism is generally described as more liberal with a focus on non-conventional agriculture practices, while agrarian populism is framed as more conservative, favoring more conventional agricultural techniques (Martin & Wesoloski, 2018). For example, organic agriculturalist and food justice advocates may both fall under the ideology of neo-agrarianism, they have differing value sets which may find them in conflict on specific issues. Thus, it is important to remember that ideologies can help explain the motivations and actions of a group, however it can be difficult to equivocate two groups of a similar ideology. Finally, not everyone would align themselves to an agrarian ideology and outsiders may have little knowledge of these ideologies. People outside of agricultural groups may still find some identity and solidarity in neo-agrarian or agrarian populism if they choose, however.

The neo-agrarian ideological movement emerged as a response to the changes to rural communities after the Green Revolution and Environmentalism movements from the 1960s and 1970s. Neo-agrarian advocates have sets of values that could generically be called non-conventional (i.e., liberal). These agriculturalists believe in protecting the environment and agricultural laborers. Neo-agrarianism also encourages consumers to have a greater awareness and participation in their food systems. These attributes are often priority over the concerns of the quantity of agricultural production. There is an emphasis on equality in the food systems with many neo-agrarians (Berry, 1977; Freyfogle, 2001; Jackson, 1985; Lyson, 2004). There are differences within neo-agrarian groups around access and economics because the free market aspects of non-conventional agriculture are sometimes at odds with the equity and justice groups within neo-agrarianism (Carlisle, 2013; Guthman, 2008; King et al., 2018).

Agrarian populism emerged during the 1990s as both a response to neo-agrarianism and an attempt to fill the political void left after the massive depopulation of rural communities and the agricultural workforce during the Green Revolution and Farm Crisis of the 1980s. Agrarian populism advocates would have more conventional (i.e., conservative) agricultural tendencies. A tenet of this ideology is that agricultural production and business efficiency should be concerned with feeding a growing world population and providing on-going access to an affordable food supply. Environmental concerns are framed, at times, from the perspective of increasing and maintaining agricultural production and protecting future generations of agriculturalists. Moreover, there is an emphasis on rural traditions and rural morality. While there are important differences between members of the groups (i.e., regional differences, farmers versus ranchers, etc.), the ideal of rural life is important. Finally, agrarian populism ideals are at times utilized by multi-national businesses to create an alliance with agrarian populists. This alliance is more rhetorical and political than actual, nonetheless this ideal is unique to agrarianism in United States history (Borlaug, 2000; Conway, 2012; Hanson, 1996; Martin & Enns, 2017; Miller & Conko, 2004; Murphy, 2007). Figure 1 outlines the key values of both neo-agrarianism and agrarian populism.

Figure 1

Agrarian Ideologies and their Associated Values

Neo-Agrarianism	Agrarian Populism
- Environmental Responsibility - Equality & Justice in the Food System - Local & Organic Production Emphasis - Heightened Consumer Food Awareness and Participation	- Importance of Rural Morality & Traditions -Attention to Sustainable Agricultural Management Practices - Agricultural Production Efficiency - Ties with Large Markets & Corporations

Both conceptualized ideologies represent the dominate and sometimes privileged viewpoints within agriculture and thus can have little connection to groups who are not privileged (Guthman, 2008). Exceptions within the dominate ideologies exist, such as food justice (Allen, 2008) and critical agrarianism (Carlisle, 2013), which have a particular bend to serving underprivileged groups. Neo-agrarian and agrarian

populist ideologies lean towards white, middle-class viewpoints and often leave out people from lower socio-economic groups, people of color, women, and indigenous populations. In response to these issues, researchers have begun exploring ideologies which can frame agriculture from the values of these groups. For example, Black agrarianism articulates a vision of agriculture which empowers black farmers and landowners, while challenging white dominance in places like the Rural South (King et al., 2018).

The descriptions provided for both neo-agrarianism and agrarian populism are broad and can miss certain nuances of a person or a group of people. For example, organic dairy operations could be considered situated in neo-agrarian ideals, however these dairies can operate at the scale of conventional dairies and thus display more agrarian populist attributes at their core. Neo-agrarians and agrarian populists both argue that agricultural work is meaningful to the individual and beneficial to society. These attributes are essential to agrarian ideology throughout the history of the United States (Marx, 2000; Montmarquest, 2000).

While these similarities are important, the differences between neo-agrarianism and agrarian populism are significant. While many students and agriculturalists do not identify as belonging to a group with these titles, it is important to note that most everyone has values or ideologies that are closely aligned to one set of values or another. For the purposes of this study, we sought to understand how values consistent with this conceptual framework explain situations and occurrences that occur within the agriculture industry.

Purpose

The purpose of this narrative study was to describe a select group of undergraduate agricultural education students' conceptualization of their values about agriculture. The following objective guided the study:

1. Explore how the agricultural values shape how the agricultural education students interacted with other people

Methods

This study utilized a narrative methodology to explore how seven agricultural education students conceptualized agriculture values and how these values influenced their ideologies. Narrative research is a valuable tool to allow people to tell their own lived experiences (Riessman, 2008). The interview process is the central feature of narratives. The interview is a co-constructed event with the interviewer's voice having an influence on the interviewee's dialogue (Spector-Mersel, 2010). The interviewer was aware of the power dynamic between him and the students during the interview process, and carefully worked to not create bias in students' opinions throughout the questioning process (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Our intention was to encourage participants to explore their experiences and values about agriculture. The voice of the participants was kept intact by utilizing block quotes as much as possible.

The population of this study was seven agricultural education students enrolled in the Colorado State University (CSU) agricultural education program. All the students self-identified as White with six coming from European descent and one from European and Middle Eastern descent. Five of the participants were female and two were male. They ranged in grade-level from freshman to graduate student. The participants came from a variety of geographical backgrounds in the US: one from the rural Midwest, one from the urban Pacific Region or west coast, one from the urban Southwest, and four from rural Mountain States. Furthermore, the participants self-identified from a wide variety of agricultural backgrounds: two from hobby farms, two from small farming operations, one from families not in production agriculture, and two from families in large-scale agriculture production.

The research team was made up of three individuals. One member of the research team conducted the interviews and served as the lead researcher. All three of team members were involved in data analysis,

provided broader context for findings, and established credibility in the research protocols. Two members of the research team had taught school-based agriculture. The third research team member had experience in STEM education as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion in educational settings. The research team had a mixture of agricultural backgrounds and values representing both neo-agrarian and agrarian populist perspectives. While the team had various backgrounds, we intentionally focused our data analysis on the values expressed by the participants and tried to be unbiased in our interpretations. For example, we challenged each other on our individual bias around our own individual agricultural values to interpret the agricultural values more accurately being expressed by the participants. This process of member checking for bias led to another round of coding in the data analysis process.

We provided the agricultural education students with a welcoming environment during the interview and continually reinforced a relaxed atmosphere throughout the interaction. This setting enabled students to relax and open-up about their feelings on agricultural values. Furthermore, we acknowledged the enormity of the scope of our investigation as well as the emotions involved with this study. We recognized the right of the students to have their values. Our goal was not sway people away from their values in agriculture. Values are central to what we do daily as they shape how we think and act, which is especially evident when we work with agriculture groups (see Hanson, 1996; Berry, 1997, etc.). We were also not specifically advocating for different agricultural values. We challenged students' views only to the details and the reasons for their beliefs. Finally, we emphasized individual values over whole ideologies, as this would be easier for students to discuss, and ideologies are comprised of values.

The data from this study centered on individual interviews with each participant. The interviews ranged from 40 to 80 minutes long. The participants were recruited for this study from an agricultural education course offered in the Colorado State University (CSU) agricultural education program. Their involvement in the study was voluntary and did not affect their standing in the course. The participants were informed of their rights according to the guidelines set forth by the CSU Institutional Review Board (IRB), which included not answering sensitive questions or terminating the interview at any point if they so desired. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed with pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants.

The interview protocol focused on eliciting participants' views of agriculture by exploring how their families and communities thought about agriculture (Kvale, 1996). We utilized an example from the media, *God made a Farmer* (Dodge Ram, 2013) and *Scarecrow* commercials (Chipotle Mexican Grill, 2013), to elicit participants' views. The *God made a Farmer* commercial leaned towards conventional agriculture values while the *Scarecrow* commercial learned towards non-conventional agricultural values (Martin, 2014). The students were shown these commercials in an agricultural education class and the interviews occurred soon afterwards. The interview protocol utilized the following questions:

1. Do you agree or disagree with what is presented in the commercials?
2. Describe the community where you grew up.
3. What were the normal agricultural activities of your family and/or people in your community?
4. How important is your agricultural identity to you?
5. How do people from your community and/or family describe people who do not share your agricultural values?

These questions provided the opportunity for students to talk about their beliefs, however probing questions were important because the ideas which emerged differed by participant. We utilized different probing questions for each participant to ensure we garnered a clear understanding of their conceptualization of agriculture.

We utilized a thematic analysis for our narrative data (Reissman, 2008). The data analysis process consisted of six steps. First, we read through all the transcripts individually to identify significant and

common ideas in participants' discussions of agricultural values. Second, we met to discuss what we found and to identify general themes. Next, we individually re-read the transcripts and coded the data based on the newly established general themes. Fourth, we met to discuss our findings and identify the persistent themes of the study. The students' conceptualized agriculture by the following themes: 1) passionate about [conventional] agriculture; 2) interacting with the public, who seems to have no connection to agriculture; 3) clashing with those who have differing agricultural values; and 4) finding some form of a middle ground on agricultural values. We then read the transcripts again to find examples from the data which exemplified the persistent themes. This step also required a us to review the emerging data to ensure that our own biases towards agricultural values were not leading to a misrepresentation of the data. Finally, we met to discuss significant ideas which emerged from the findings.

We rigorously followed qualitative standards during the study (Freeman et al., 2007). Credibility in qualitative works focuses on the accuracy of the findings. We maintained credibility by presenting the participant's voice in long block quotes. Furthermore, the research team challenged each other in the data analysis process to protect against our own biases (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010). Transferability is the ability that findings must be applied to other similar contexts. We facilitated this by using provided details about each participant when we utilized their quotes. We tried to maintain dependability of the findings by finding differing themes in the transcripts. For example, the third and fourth themes are different in their tone of voice towards people with differing agriculture values, creating two separate themes from similar concepts (Tracey, 2010). Finally, we built confirmability in this study by developing an extensive audit trail (Ary et al., 2002).

Findings

Findings were organized by the four themes of the study: 1) passionate about agriculture values; 2) interacting with the public who seems to have no connection to agriculture; 3) clashing with those who have differing agricultural values; and 4) finding some form of a middle ground on agricultural values.

Passionate about their Agriculture Values

Participants in this study talked about their passion for agriculture. Steven had grown up in a small town in the Mountain-West. He believed his values were self-evident, "…I'm a white male. I guess that was kind of just inferred, you know, oh, okay, I'm a white male. Rural agriculture—that kind of comes out…." Some participants related to the conceptualization of agriculture portrayed in the *Dodge Ram Truck* (Dodge Ram, 2013) commercial. Rick, who grew-up in the Mountain West on a farm, said, "I'd say I'm both [practical and idealistic about agriculture] just because I'm really passionate about it… [the] *Paul Harvey* commercial I really enjoyed it…. If I can't sit down and talk to somebody about agricultural sort-of-things, then I get pretty bored." Jenny, who was also from the Mountain-West and lived on a small farm, expressed how important agriculture was to her family when she talked about her brother's passion for agriculture. Her brother had a particularly strong agricultural identity which made Jenny connect agriculture to family. She said, "he's very numb, he doesn't show a lot of emotion for anything… but when it comes to farming and being on the tractors and welding and things like that, he really loves it." Steven, Jenny, and Rick were examples of students who grew up in rural communities and identified themselves as having strong agricultural values.

Susan was a different case. She had grown-up in the Southwest in a metropolitan area. She had a few hobby horses; yet she described herself has having very little contact with agriculture values until she came to CSU and met her future fiancé. She explained her passion for agriculture by comparing herself to her fiancé.

> He [Susan's fiancé] can be so passionate about a field of corn and I'm like, "It's corn." I get that it's your livelihood and where your money comes from, but he can get almost obsessive

> in my mind. Then in turn, I look at how I treat my horses and I'm like, "Ooh, I'm just as obsessive."

Susan would later describe how she became passionate about agriculture while at CSU. We anticipated the participants' comments indicated strong agriculture values, leaning towards conventional agricultural values; we wanted to explore how these values were expressed when working with people who expressed similar and divergent values.

Interacting with the Public who seems to have no Connection to Agricultural Values

The participants started to have differing viewpoints when they talked about the general public's view of agriculture or rather interacting with people without strong agricultural values. These comments centered on people they perceived to have no connection to agriculture. Carol was from an urban area on the west coast. She expressed frustration with her community's lack of agriculture knowledge and simplistic consumer view of agriculture:

> I think it's a complete difference because back home a lot of people… just automatically think, "Oh yeah…" when you ask them where their food comes from, "…the grocery store". They don't know anything about the process or what goes into it. There are quite a few people who are like, "Well, organic's better for you and this and that." And only take what the media has to say. People here at CSU grew up on farms and ranches and grew up on working cattle ranches and know the whole process and know that agriculture is their way of life and that it feeds the entire country. Without it you wouldn't be eating. But there are so many people that are "Oh, it's not that big of a deal, just go to the store and we'll always have food." No, that's not it. There's a lot that goes behind it and there's a whole process that you don't even have a glimpse of.

Erica expressed a slightly different view about her community. She was from a hobby farm in the Midwest and had experienced some negativity from her classmates who did not have strong agricultural values. She said, "In the school they would look down upon [me] for having cows… that was definitely my separation [socially], cows. Horses were fine because we [in the community] had [families with] million-dollar horses." Carol and Erica acknowledged that their agricultural values had made them outsiders to their peers who seemed to not have strong agricultural values.

Susan was upfront on how her views about agriculture had changed since being in college. Susan described herself as having non-conventional agriculture values. However, her views had matured once she became more knowledgeable about agriculture while in college. She said, "I see where some of it [arguments against conventional agriculture] may be a little sugar-coated and not actual fact, and I see where it does open people's eyes if they don't know agriculture." Susan acknowledged the role agricultural education can play in developing values for agriculture beyond just consumerism. She also provided a small glimpse into how values might be able to shift slowly over time and education.

Sandy had a different story to tell about how the public, not directly connected to agriculture, viewed agriculture. She had grown up on a farm in the Mountain West and valued her conventional agriculture roots. She was angered when her CSU multicultural class described conventional agriculture values as negative.

> It was like a video on this guy… talking about how conservatives are bad and how farmers are bad because we take government money, and we think that it's fine when we're subsidized and but then when we help other people and give government handouts it's not okay, and it just really made me mad because it basically said that … it generalized not only conservatives but it specifically talked about those in agriculture and farmers, and it just really made me mad because I am one of those. Some of the things that he was saying about were not true. How we take government money and how we thought it was fine when the government was giving us land historically, especially in Eastern [STATE], and how they were giving us… land as long as we did something with it and that it was okay, but it's not okay to help other people out. I don't know because it really put a really

> bad perception [on us] and generalized us as well. It was even more hurtful that a lot of the people in my class felt the same way and I did not…

Sandy's experience was revealing. The instructor was not outwardly advocating for neo-agrarian agriculture, yet they were advocating against the values that surround conventional agriculture. Sandy was left frustrated with this argument and possibly out of her element because the discussion was not focused on agricultural production systems. She did not advocate for her values and chose to leave the room rather than get embroiled in the debate. Sandy's experience set the stage for the participants' views about people directly involved in agriculture who had different values than her own.

Conflicts with those who have Differing Agricultural Values

Some of the participants expressed negative views when discussing people who had differing values of agriculture. We elicited these comments by asking students to reflect on media which presented a different view on agriculture. Students were asked to reflect on the *Scarecrow* commercial. The commercial caused a variety of negative reactions for students who held conventional agricultural values. For example, Carol said, "Whoever created that is really good with media and being able to try and convert someone to a nut's idea...." Jenny described people who would identify with the *Scarecrow* commercial as being bad and opposite of herself, family, and community. She said, "Liberal, that's a word on our list of setoffs with us – [we are] very hardcore conservatives." Jenny would later use phrases like "hippies," "organic," and "living natural" to describe liberal people who had neo-agrarian agricultural values. Jenny discussed how her negative feelings towards people with non-conventional agricultural values emerged from experiences in her community. She described how conventional agriculturalist would be figuratively attacked by non-conventional agriculturists. She said, "Don't trust them because they could turn on you and take away your livelihood – which was fair game…. If they got a hold that you were doing anything illegal or anything bad, it was called in immediately." Jenny was not the only participant who talked about hostility with and towards people with differing agricultural values.

Rick was one of the few participants who had dealt with non-conventional agriculturalists while working on his family's conventional farm. He described how people who he called "hippies" came onto his family's land and told his family to stop working. Rick carried these experiences with him to CSU. He reported experiencing the same open defiance to his family's conventional farm by classmates who had non-conventional agricultural viewpoints. Rick was frustrated by these encounters. He said:

> I've been confronted with that [organic farming mentality] in my environmental economics class. My first thought always is to say, "Good God, you're stupid for doing that." That's my first thought. Then I try to listen, but normally I just get mad, but I don't say anything.

The feelings of animosity from Jenny and Rick were strong in relation to people with differing values about agriculture. Strong responses were often considered, but at times kept to themselves as they didn't want to engage with others that seem to not know or care. Not all participants expressed such strong responses.

Finding some form of a Middle Ground on Agricultural Values

Some of the participants took a different position about people with differing agricultural values. They recognized people's alternative viewpoint, although they did not agree. Their positions were more conciliatory than the participants' views from the previous theme. Sandy described this position as, "…Even like organic agriculture, I think there is place in it. It's not my personal decision, but if they want to pay for it right now, we have enough sustainability in food just to keep us going right now..." Sandy still views the decision to eat organic foods as an economic decision rather than a manifestation of someone's non-conventional agricultural values. Nonetheless, the view she has is not negative towards people with non-conventional agricultural values. She also took this view while she was teaching a micro-lesson on organic foods. Sandy said, "I'm just there to teach them and to give them the knowledge. What they do with it is up to them. They decide; it's not my choice to try and force them into thinking a certain way." Sandy's views were shared by other participants.

Carol took it upon herself to learn the truth about the differing values and arguments of non-conventional agriculturalists. Her personal research on eating organic foods led her to the conclusion that this act was not necessarily negative and tried to find peace between the groups. Carol said, "There's no scientific benefit of eating organic. And there's nothing that's truly better or worse in that sense. If you want to go organic, go for it, but don't completely smash down other people's ideas and beliefs..." The approach that Sandy and Carol took to finding a middle ground was to overlook the values that might be driving people to choose a different form of agriculture than they would. They both approached the conversation as a personal decision based on economic opportunity. While this approach was more positive, they both bypass the complex reasons for the decisions which are typically embedded in differing agricultural values. Carol and Sandy are ignoring the fact that many people who eat organic foods would say they make this decision based on specific ideological beliefs rather than being financial capable to purchase organic food or having pseudo-scientific beliefs about nutrition.

Jenny was the only student to express a more complex understanding of people who have more non-conventional agricultural values. Jenny had previously expressed negative feelings towards experiences with non-conventional agriculturists. Towards the end of the interview, she displayed a more complete view of the people who practiced organic agriculture. She said:

> The organic side of things, I feel like it's a niche market; it's there. People like [it] really, but I can't say I personally do. Now while the organic farmers are probably extremely knowledgeable, and actually, probably have to know a decent bit more than we do in order to accomplish what we do with their basic fertilizers, tractors, things like that. So, I don't think that they're ill-educated or disconnected from the agricultural world; in fact, they have to be quite intelligent to accomplish such.

Jenny's ability to negotiate her negative experiences with differing values is significant. She seems to offer a logical point of view amongst more polarizing viewpoints. Still, she still did not discuss the complex differences in agricultural values which created these differences in the first place. None of the students interviewed seemed to be able to meaningful unpack their own agricultural values or articulate origins or reasons for differing set of values. Most interviews focused on the opposites of agriculture values, rarely acknowledging that there might be a middle ground or groups in the middle of the extremes.

Significance of Findings

The findings from this study highlighted the issues surrounding the polarization of agricultural values. There were two significant ideas which emerged from this study. First, this study highlights agricultural education students' conceptualization of agricultural values. Some students talked about how they traced their conventional agricultural values to their youth, while some did not adopt these values until they were in college. This indicates that some agricultural education students were able to change or develop their values of agriculture over time. This is most evident in the two students who were raised in urban communities and seemingly could have more easily identified with nonconventional agriculture values. We realize that not every person from an urban environment would naturally be inclined to nonconventional agriculture values. We also recognize that conventional agriculture values are often rural-centered.

This study also highlighted the ability (or lack thereof) of participants to manage their conceptualization of agricultural values when working with people who had different values. Some participants were more negative and non-conciliatory than others towards non-conventional agriculture. Some participants could not participate in discussions where non-conventionalist agriculture values were dominate, while others could more easily work with non-conventionalists values.

Discussion

The conclusions of this study are fascinating for agricultural education post-secondary instructors, as well as how the conclusions pertain to agricultural education students more broadly. The presence of conventional agriculture values in the students was not surprising (Martin & Enns, 2017; Martin & Kitchel, 2013), but that none of the students talked about having non-conventional agriculture values was surprising. While we must be cautious in broadly labeling these students as having solidly agrarian populist ideals, they focused their discussion points towards favoring agrarian populist values and positioning neo-agrarian ideals as points of conflict. This is interesting considering at least two of the students were from urban areas and were not exposed to conventional agriculture values while growing up (Guthman, 2008; Lyson, 2004). This points to an interesting possible phenomenon of collegiate agricultural education programs and college students, faculty, and/or staff influencing students' values and views of agriculture (Martin & Wesoloski, 2018).

We must acknowledge that the students' agricultural values could have been shifting because of societal forces greater than those related to what they were experiencing in college. Research is needed to explore how the local culture of a program, college of agriculture, and university can influence students' conceptualization of agriculture. This acculturation is undoubtedly happening in these contexts across the nation because agricultural values are so important to how we work and think about agriculture. Research indicates that culture is always present in organizations as large as a college of agriculture (Schein, 2010). Furthermore, students are either having their values reaffirmed or challenged in college classrooms around the nation, which also provides possible research moments.

Another interesting phenomenon which emerged was the flight response that some of the students had when their agricultural values were challenged. They talked about how they were able to discuss their values to people in like-minded small groups and in non-threatening situations, but when students were in larger groups of people who had strong values that were different than theirs, they felt overwhelmed (e.g., DiAngelo, 2011). These incidents left students shaken, frustrated, and angry. We believe that these moments do not need to be as dramatic for students. The need for this investigation has been driven by the goal of introducing agricultural education to more urbanized and diverse areas nationwide. This will require more students to interact with people who may not have the same values as they do. Students will need training in how to talk to people with different values and how to react to those values expressed as different from their own.

As we stated before, we are not trying to force agriculture education students' values to change, however we know that the students must learn how to interact in these challenging situations. Instructional lessons, units, and training must be developed and utilized to help us accomplish this goal. This need is not unique to college students; the United States agricultural systems, interest groups involved in agriculture, and consumer preferences are ever evolving. Furthermore, many of these debates have been brought to center stage by the media (e.g., Miller & Conko, 2004; Murphy, 2007; Rodale, 2010; Vallianatos, 2006). Research should be conducted to evaluate the most effective way to help students learn how to work with people who have differing agricultural values.

This practical discussion of agricultural education students and colleges of agriculture is situated in the larger discussion of agricultural values in the United States. The students in this study were not ignorant of these bigger realities. They had personally witnessed clashes of agricultural values in America on a regular basis. For instance, almost every student in the study had seen both the Chipotle *Scarecrow* (2013) and Dodge Ram *God made the Farmer* (2013) videos before being involved in this study. They also had strong opinions concerning these videos. We did not focus much of the interview on the larger issues of agricultural values in society. Our focus was on the student and their personal views, nonetheless we recognize that the larger issues in society are just as important (Berry, 1977; Borlaug, 2009).

These findings reflect some of the tensions or clashes of ideas identified in other agricultural education research (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991; Jones & Bowen, 1998; Phelps et al., 2012; Talbert & Larke, 1995). We acknowledge that these issues are often beyond our realm of research and instruction, yet we cannot ignore these influences. Faculty members and stakeholders in agricultural education who want to engage students in communication and critical thinking skills regarding agricultural values need to be aware of these larger forces. Research is also needed to help properly position our students in the broader discussion of agricultural values.

We firmly believe that if include how to think, discuss, and work with differing agricultural values in our pre-service teacher curriculum, then incidents of students leaving situations which challenge their values will happen less often. Instead, they will be able to articulate their values with detailed arguments and could do so with confidence and control. They would not enter with or encourage hostility but would calmly discuss their convictions. The values of agriculture which are present today are not going away, and philosophical or practical differences in agricultural practices will probably not disappear with time.

We recommend that students experience a dialogical or even conversational education centered on these issues. There are numerus approaches to starting these conversations, including the approach utilized in this study (Martin, 2014). Moreover, more research is needed to explore the role of intersectionality in agricultural education, such as how race, ethnicity, and gender (e.g., Barajas et al., 2020; Cline & Weeks, 2020; Murray et al., 2020; Martin & Hartmann, 2020) are influenced by agrarian values, and how agricultural values are shifting with the broader ideological shifts in the United States. These experiences should emerge in agricultural education coursework, as they are crucial if we expect students to have compassion and be able to effectively educate people about agriculture regardless of their audience's values. We want students to work with their own and their audiences' values to deliver exceptional programming. Students need to have the skills to work in diverse settings to keep agricultural education strong throughout their careers and contact with the agricultural industry.

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