

AGRARIAN STUDENT ACCULTURATION TO THE UNIVERSITY: THE CASE OF
SECONDARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

by

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B.A., Ottawa University, 2008
M.A., New Mexico Highlands University, 2010

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

The transition to college offers students the chance to explore, experiment with, and eventually begin to solidify their identities (Boyd, Hunt, Kandell, & Lucas, 2003), but for students from agricultural backgrounds, leaving home to head to a more urban area for college constitutes a threat to identity (Breakwell, 1986; Cicognani, Menezes, & Nata, 2011; Proshanksy, 1978). Although education research concerning rural students is plentiful (e.g., Antos, 1999; Donehower, Hogg, & Schell, 2012; Durham & Smith, 2006; Lester, 2012), research specific to agrarian students is sparse (e.g., Dees, 2006).

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to explore and describe the experiences of students from agricultural backgrounds as they transitioned to college and how the transition impacted self-perceived identity. In particular, this study inquired into the difficulties and successes faced by study participants, as well as strategies used for coping with the transition from their agrarian homes to their more urban university setting. Four male and four female participants attended a university situated in the Midwest and majored in agricultural education. These university participants were invited to complete two qualitative interviews, submit photographs they felt represented their home and school lives, invite the researcher to observe any facet of their university experience, and submit the most meaningful assignment completed in college. Additionally, three male and two female high school students anticipating the transition to college were interviewed about their perceptions of the upcoming transition.

Analysis of research data revealed that participant identities were impacted by the transition to college, their agrarian backgrounds, and their university experiences. Twenty-three distinct codes emerged from the data and were further categorized into six patterns: *merging worlds*, *differences and tensions*, *“it’s in my blood,”* *continuing educational legacy/impact*, *finding self-identity*, and *can I go home?*

This study’s results highlighted, first and foremost, the need for universities to keep statistics on rural student enrollment. Additionally, this study emphasized the need for teachers, advisors, and counselors to be mindful of students’ backgrounds and future plans. Finally, this study demonstrated the importance of exposure to more urban areas and educational opportunities for easing the transition to college in students from agricultural backgrounds.

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Approved by:

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Dedication

For all of the farmers who have gotten me here and to whom I owe my life.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

I grew up on a hog, cattle, sheep, and row crop farm. My brother and I were the first in our immediate family to complete bachelor's degrees. While my brother, who first attended an agriculturally-focused community college on a livestock judging scholarship, seemed to adapt quickly to college, and thrived once he arrived at Land Grant University (pseudonym), I felt incredibly out of place at college. Still, I persisted in my pursuit of higher education.

Once I began teaching at the college level, post-graduate school, I noticed that the farm students tended to interact very little with their classmates. Most seemed to complete their homework adequately, but their withdrawal from the classroom community, which I sought to establish, reminded me of my own feelings of isolation in college. I began to experiment with bringing agriculture into the classroom in the form of readings about agricultural issues and activities requiring agricultural skillsets, such as using livestock judging to teach argument. While I saw an increase in agrarian student involvement, I still wished to gain a deeper understanding of agrarian student issues, prompting me to choose agrarian student acculturation to college as my dissertation research area.

Statement of the Problem

Although rural students are less likely to attend college than their urban or suburban counterparts (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001), rural student college attendance rates did increase, from 35% attending a four year college in 2003 to 42% in 2007 (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Snyder & Dillow, 2010). A recent study showed that 50% of students from poor rural high schools and 65% from high income rural schools enrolled in college from 2010-2012 (National Student Clearinghouse, 2013). With a rising number of agrarian or rural students enrolling in the university, it is essential that educators understand their unique backgrounds and assist them in acquiring additional functional skills. In particular, post-secondary educators should attend to the unique concerns of rural agrarian students because “the increased complexity of agricultural business has led many career farmers to enroll in local two-year colleges. Four-year colleges, however, typically require rural youths to move away from home and demand a more distinct break from the rural environment and culture” (McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001, p. 250). The “distinct

break” from their homes indicates the need for agrarian students to develop ways of coping with their new environment, and increases the likelihood that rural agrarian students will experience stress upon starting college.

Rural studies in the United States tend to focus on K-12 students (e.g., Durham & Smith, 2006; Eppley, Shannon, & Gilbert, 2011; Keis, 2006; Lester, 2012; Stockard, 2011; Wake, 2012) although some are more generalized and do not focus on any one level of education (Donehower, Hogg, & Schell, 2007; Donehower, Hogg, & Schell, 2012; McGrath, 2001). While there are a fair number of published studies and articles concerning rural K-12 students, fewer studies address rural or agrarian students in post-secondary education. Those studies which do address rural students and post-secondary education tend to focus on educational aspirations and enrollment and graduation rates (Antos, 1999; Byun, Irvin, & Meece, 2012; Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001). The existing literature’s focus on rural student issues is not necessarily problematic, and does have the potential to address a wide range of issues facing rural agrarian students. However, further research focused on agrarian students is needed to deepen understanding of uniquely agrarian student issues, particularly in the area of acculturation. The comparative paucity of studies addressing rural student acculturation to college is troubling, as academic researcher bell hooks (1994), in discussing racial minorities, recalled having observed students “become unable to complete their studies because the contradictions between the behavior necessary to ‘make it’ in the academy and those that allowed them to be comfortable at home, with their families and friends, are just too great” (p. 182). While hooks (1994) addressed cultural differences based on race, her concept could easily be applied to any group experiencing a cultural shift in attending college. This kind of contradiction between college and home could occur for any student. However, it seems more likely that those students whose home community is significantly physically and socially different from the college community would experience such damaging contradictions.

Research Design

Due to the fact that the research sites did not maintain data on attendance rates of rural or agrarian students, a qualitative study was deemed appropriate. In order to maximize the number of potential participants, the study focused on university students majoring in agricultural

education, as experience and anecdotal evidence suggested that these students would be primarily agrarian. Additionally, a sampling of agrarian high school students from a nearby high school were located to provide confirmation of some university participant findings. To help ensure that a well-rounded picture of participants' transitions to college was obtained, participants were asked to participate in one or two face-to-face qualitative interviews, submit photographs representing home and university life, submit the most meaningful assignment completed thus far, and invite the researcher to observe anything the participant felt was important to understanding his/her life.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study was guided by two theoretical viewpoints: Place Identity and New Agrarian Theory. Place Identity, as relevant to this study, consists both of the base theory and the potential threats to place identity. Place identity has been utilized in research on both secondary and post-secondary institutions, although its use outside of education is perhaps more common (Cicognani, Menezes, & Nata, 2011; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011; Proshanksy, 1978; Proshanksy et al., 1983). New agrarian theory, though perhaps less common in education research, still has relevance in that it explicitly connects agrarian students, place identity, and post-secondary education (Berry, 2010; Major, 2007; Major, 2011; Zencey, 1985).

Place Identity

The study called upon place identity as the basis for interpreting participant identities, threats to participant identities, and coping mechanisms used by participants. In addition to being utilized by other researchers, use of place identity with a special focus on threats to place identity flows logically from the problem of agrarian students transitioning to college. That is, research has already shown that identity and threats to identity influence academic performance, including persistence in school, making it relevant to a study of how a particular minority group transitions to college (Boyd, Hunt, Kandell, & Lucas, 2003; Cicognani et al., 2011; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011; McGlone & Aronson, 2006; Sherman et al., 2013; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002).

Place identity theorizes that a person's personality and other identity features are shaped by the geographical locations in which they were raised or have spent significant time (Cicognani et al., 2011; Lengen & Kistemann, 2012; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011). This

place identity is made up of three subdimensions: place attachment, place dependence, and group identity (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011), which are explored later. Place identity, and its subdimensions, is important to identity as a whole because “much of what we are depends upon where we live and the experiences that we have had there” (Cicognani et al., 2011, p. 34). If successfully established, place identity can enable a sense of belonging and purpose, even in those experiencing shifts in place and/or identity (Cicognani et al., 2011).

Before considering the relevance of place identity to research of agrarian students transitioning to college, a definition of place identity must first be constructed. The common definition of place identity as constructed by an individual in relation to his/her physical environment (Breakwell, 1986; Cicognani et al., 2011; Proshansky, et al., 1983; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011) provided the basis from which Marcouyeux and Fleury-Bahi (2011), supported by the previous work of other scholars, divided place identity into three subdomains: place attachment, place dependence, and group identity. Because this study aimed to examine place identity as a whole, all three subdimensions of place identity were considered.

Place attachment, or “an effective link between an individual and a specific place that generates a will to maintain relationships with that place” (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011, p. 346), is what Marcouyeux and Fleury-Bahi (2011) described as the affective dimension of place identity. Proshansky, et al., (1983) argued that home is the place most important to identity development, which in turn causes individuals to judge every new place against their home. It follows that individuals who have formed strong, positive place attachment could struggle if they had to live in settings dissimilar to their home for an extended period of time. However, there is limited information on how students or others who have moved away maintain a relationship with their hometowns, though research has demonstrated that attachment to hometown predicted such things as homesickness or intention to return home in college students (Cicognani et al., 2011, p. 36). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that the move to college can reduce the ability of home to represent self, resulting in college student concern with a loss of place or attachment to home (Cicognani et al., 2011, p. 36).

The second subdimension, place dependence, referred primarily to the quality of available physical and social resources of a place (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011). The behavioral dimension of evaluating and accessing resources can become a very complicated dimension of place identity when a person is forced to leave a place to which they are attached in

order to access resources, such as education, that are not available in the place to which he/she is attached (Cicognani et al., 2011, pp. 35-36).

Finally, the group identity dimension of place identity, defined as a person's "social integration in the group(s) of people who live in that place" (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011, p. 347), represented the social dimension. Cicognani et al. (2011) focused on the sense of community, a concept that fits easily as a subset of group identity, which is the degree to which a person feels part of an available, supportive, dependable social structure, or, in other words, that he/she belongs (p. 34). As seems logical, sense of community increases with the number of years lived in a particular place (Cicognani et al., 2011, p. 34).

Threats to a place-based identity, then, may come in any of the three subdimensions. This study sought to determine what, if any, aspects of moving to college posed threats to the identities of rural agrarian participants. It seemed likely that such a shift in physical location, from a farm to a town or city, could strain a participant's sense of place identity and, thus, play a role in the "evolution of identity" (Breakwell, 1986, p. 34). In particular, I drew on place identity theory (Cicognani et al., 2011; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011; Proshansky, et al., 1983) to establish that the drastic shift in physical location, resource accessibility, and available social groups could constitute a threat to the identities of agrarian students.

New Agrarian Theory

New agrarian theory asserts a challenge to rural agrarian student identity, as well as to their home community's identity, when they are faced with new places and people who may not share their values, particularly their valuation of different places (Berry, 2010; Major, 2007; Major, 2011; Zencey, 1985), calling to mind place identity and the many threats to identity safety mentioned above. This study, in examining the transition of agrarian students from the farm to college, sought to describe the relationship of student participants to both their home and university communities. In so doing, I hoped to reveal any pressures, either to leave or return to the home community, felt by student participants, thereby linking place identity with new agrarian theory. It should be noted, however, that this investigation did not find any support for new agrarians' common critique of education, asserting the educational system's complicity in the destruction of rural America (Berry, 2010; Major, 2007; Major, 2011; Zencey, 1985).

New agrarian theory has made efforts to separate itself from its historical roots in agrarianism, which privileged rural life and people above all else (Major, 2011). However, new agrarianism maintains the view that the agrarian way of life is under threat (Berry, 2010; Major, 2011; Zencey, 1985). Most often used in literary and economic discussions, the social critique that grows out of new agrarian theory also addresses and has relevance to higher education (Berry, 2010; Major, 2007; Major, 2011; Zencey, 1985). In particular, critique based in new agrarianism accuses schools, particularly post-secondary schools, of educating students with the intention of leaving their farms and home communities, rather than valuing the return to the farm (Berry, 2010). This accusation grows out of new agrarian theory's emphasis on the importance of place to the healthy functioning of people and communities (Berry, 2010; Major, 2007; Major, 2011; Zencey, 1985).

New agrarian theory is primarily concerned with applying the values and practices of farming, such as the importance of place and community, to present-day society, including education, retail, and entertainment (Major, 2011). Although agrarianism no longer calls for a total return to the family farm, it does ask that all people take responsibility for basic agricultural knowledge, such as where their food comes from (Berry, 2010). In fact, agrarianism asks that we, as a nation, begin to take better care of our lands, our communities, and our people (Major, 2007), calling on farm community values such as helping out neighbors and conservation (Berry, 2010). These agrarian values, though they may be learned at home, are regularly challenged by our "antirural" society, more focused on business and industry than agriculture, Major (2011) asserted, and so he called on educational systems to make a place for agrarian students, rather than asking students to choose between their homes or their educations. This study interrogated current agrarian students' perceptions of educational systems, and, therefore, the incorporation of agrarian values into our current educational system.

Though I was unable to locate any studies in education utilizing new agrarianism as a theoretical lens, which Major (2011) would argue is evidence of the devaluation of agrarian life and values, new agrarian theory has clear relevance to the study. In asserting the importance of place to healthy living (Berry, 2010; Major, 2007; Major, 2011), new agrarianism has set the stage for this study's examination of acculturation successes and difficulties of agrarian students.

Research Questions

This study was driven by the overarching research question: RQ#1. Do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' transition to higher education influence their identities?

The following subsidiary research questions were also addressed:

RQ#2. Do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' agrarian backgrounds influence their identities?

RQ#3. Do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' university experiences influence their identities?

Purpose of the Study

Given that the bulk of the available research concerning rural agrarian students focused on K-12 students or entry to college, a study that expands our understanding of how rural agrarian students acculturate to the four-year university setting is needed. This study aimed to interrogate the experiences of agrarian secondary agricultural education students as they transitioned from their farm homes to the university. The results of this study will, I anticipate, allow instructors to better understand and connect with their students by developing a framework for effective teaching via differentiation for agrarian students. Primarily, however, this study focused on gathering and presenting the stories of agrarian secondary agricultural education students entering college as a means of describing their experiences, laying the foundation for further research.

Significance of the Study

This study explored the experiences, particularly the identities, of agrarian secondary agricultural education students as they transitioned from their farm homes to the more urban university environment. The results of this study offer instructors a better understanding of their agrarian students. Additionally, this study adds to the sparse literature on the topic of agrarian student acculturation (e.g., Dees, 2006), and offers a Midwestern perspective, as opposed to Dees's (2006) Appalachian study. Simply put, this study increases the depth of knowledge about rural agrarian students in the university and produces a framework for effective teaching for agrarian university students via differentiated instruction.

Limitations & Delimitations of the Study

This study had several clear limitations. It was difficult, actually impossible, to judge what percentage of the agrarian population of the university was represented, as such demographic information was not collected on the student body. Unfortunately, no people of color were represented in the study, as whites represented 75.7% of the university's enrollment, while other races, ethnicities, and cultures made up only 13.8% (The University Registrar's 20th Day Counts). An additional 2.1% of students chose not to identify their ethnicities, and 8.4% were classified only as "International Students" (The University Registrar's 20th Day Counts). Rural Consolidated High School's (pseudonym) ethnic diversity was similar, with 79.7% of students in the district identifying as white and 20.3% identifying as African American, Hispanic, or other (District Report Card, 2013-2014). The university's and high school's Midwestern location also meant that all study participants were originally from the Midwest. Therefore, the ability to generalize from this population to non-Midwestern populations is quite limited.

I also placed certain delimitations on the study. Due to my interest in agrarian secondary agricultural education student perceptions of their own identities and transitions, I did not seek to interview other figures in their lives. Instead, I focused on what student participants had to say about agrarian student acculturation experiences. Additionally, I focused on agrarian secondary agricultural education students, as defined in the study, rather than including all rural or agrarian students as a means of focusing the study on a more specific population more likely to share common traits and thereby allowing me to paint a clearer picture of the population.

Definition of Terms

Agrarian: Given the broad reach of the "rural," I limited the study to "agrarian" students. Similar to Thompson's (2010) definition of "agrarian" as referring to independent family farms, I defined "agrarian" as growing up living and/or working on a farm, ranch, dairy, or other food production business. This allowed me to eliminate those people who live in the country but have no connection to the livelihoods dependent upon the land. I chose to eliminate these potential participants because they presented possible confounding variables for the study. For example, someone who moved to the country but had no ties to agriculture would likely require different strategies for success in transitioning to college than someone who lived in a rural area most of

his/her life and was dependent upon the land for survival. Further, McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger (2001) divided participants into groups based on parent employment (farmers, professionals, and other) and found that there were differences in college enrollment between the groups. It therefore seems logical to explore differences in agrarian students' experiences at college as well. Thus, the goal of the study was to explore how the place-based identities of agrarian students were utilized to aid them in the process of transitioning to the university.

Agricultural Operation: Also referred to as a “farm” or “ranch,” among other things, an agricultural operation was defined as a location where animals or plants are grown for the purposes of food production. However, this did not refer to the average garden. To be referred to as an agricultural operation in the study, it must have been large enough to sell their product to be processed and eventually sold to consumers.

Higher Education: Higher education, as used in the study, referred to any post-secondary education. In particular, I worked with a four-year university, which here referred to any post-secondary institution granting bachelor's degrees or higher. This working definition is relatively common in colloquial usage. The terms “college” and “university” are interchangeable, both referring to four-year degree-granting institutions.

Land Grant University: Public university created through the Morrill Act (1862) to provide practical education for the working classes, including, but not limited to, agricultural courses of study.

Midwest: The term “Midwest” refers broadly to the expanse of land located between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. For the purposes of this study, Midwest referred only to that land located in the United States of America, although the land technically extends into Canada.

Place: Existing research concerning rural and agrarian students made clear that place was important, but what exactly does “place” mean? The obvious answer would be reference to a physical locale. However, Dorreen Massey (1994) encouraged us to think of places as “not so much bounded areas as open and porous networks of social relations” (p. 121), thus eliminating the requirement that “place” refer to any specific physical location. However, for the purposes of this study, place referred to physical location, although the influence of social relationships on research participants' acculturation was taken into account via the group identity element of place identity.

Place Identity: Place identity is a complex portion of identity formed by the geographic location(s) in which a person grew up or spent significant times during his/her formative years (Cicognani et al., 2011; Lengen & Kistemann, 2012; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). Subdimensions of place identity set out by Marcouyeux and Fleury-Bahi (2011) and explored in this study are place attachment, place dependence, and group identity.

Rural: Definitions of “rural” varied widely. The U.S. Department of Commerce (2010) defined rural as “all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area,” which meant areas with fewer than 2,500 residents qualify as rural. Similarly, the Office of Management and Budget defined rural areas by exclusion from metro and micropolitan areas (United States Department of Agriculture, 2012). Donehower et al. (2012), however, believed that “it is important to define rural not only demographically and geographically, but culturally as well” (p. 7). Therefore, they “define ‘rural’ as a quantitative measure, involving statistics on population and region as described by the U.S. Census; as a geographic terms, denoting particular regions and areas or spaces and places; and as a cultural term, one that involves the interaction of people in groups and communities” (Donehower et al., 2007, p. 2).

Secondary Agricultural Education: The study focused on students majoring in agricultural education at the secondary level. A secondary agricultural education degree allowed students to teach vocational agricultural courses at the high school level. The terms “secondary agricultural education” and “agricultural education” are used interchangeably, as the university at which the study was conducted only offered secondary certification in agricultural education.

Summary

Rural agrarian students are attending college in increasing numbers (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Snyder & Dillow, 2010). As agrarian students relocating to their chosen university, they face threats to their place-identities. This study aimed to tell the stories of the academic and social experiences of rural agrarian college students through the lenses of place identity and new agrarian theory.

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study. In this chapter, I established the need and purpose for the study, defined major terms, and introduced the identity and new agrarian theories that guided this study.

Chapter 2 will offer a literature review of the identity and new agrarian theories utilized in the study, as well as a review of existing literature concerning rural agrarian students and agricultural education. This literature review will demonstrate the need for further research with the agrarian student population and establish the connection between agrarian college students and place-identity theory.

Chapter 3 will describe the purpose for this research, as well as the methodology of the study. This chapter will rationalize the decision to utilize a qualitative design, specifically case study. A literature review supporting the decision to utilize case study will be included in this chapter.

Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study, and will include descriptions of each of the participants to establish reader understanding of their identities.

Chapter 5 will delve more deeply into the findings in the form of a discussion. Recommendations for implementation of the findings at various levels and for future research will also be presented.

Chapter 2 - Review of the Literature

As I examined the literature regarding rural college students, it became clear that many researchers considered the rural students' link to place as essential to their college aspirations and choices. For example, rural or agrarian student college success has been tied to visiting home, college location, and home-based social support (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Demi, Coleman-Jensen, & Snyder, 2010; Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; Guiffrida, 2008; McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001). This discovery led me to explore various place-bound identity theories as lenses through which to view agrarian student narratives of college transition.

Certainly place, along with other issues, such as religious background, family structure, politics, and educational resources could impact the adjustment of any student to their college environment. However, I chose to utilize place identity and new agrarianism to examine agrarian students' acculturation to the college environment because these theories encompassed multiple concerns of students moving to college, such as geographical differences, proximity to home, college setting, and contrast of college size to home community size. Although the three dimensions of place identity, that is place attachment, place dependence, and group identity, allowed for numerous factors impacting the transition to college, they were by no means all-encompassing. Nor can I assert that place was the most important factor impacting acculturation of agrarian students. However, the strong link of farming to a physical, geographical location makes place identity and new agrarianism logical places to begin examining agrarian student transitions to the university.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study utilized place identity and new agrarian theory. The importance of place has long been emphasized in research centered on rural students, particularly with relation to their transition to college (Antos, 1999; Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Dyer, Breja, & Wittler, 2002; Dyer, Lacey, & Osborne, 1996; Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; Humphrey, Stewart, & Linhardt, 1994; Lester, 2012; Williams & Luo, 2010; etc.), and so place identity seems a natural fit for studying agrarian students transitioning to college. New agrarian theory was chosen for its ability to connect agrarian peoples, transitioning to post-secondary education, and place identity.

Identity Theory

Place identity consists of “memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behavior and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human being” (Proshansky, et al., 1983, p. 59). In other words, place identity encompasses the personality as it is shaped by a person’s physical locations (Lengen & Kistemann, 2012; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011), which “enables that person to achieve a sense of belonging and purpose in his or her life” (Cicognani et al., 2011, p. 34). Therefore, “*by place-identity we mean those dimensions of self that define the individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment*” (Proshansky, 1978, p. 155). Identity formation is incredibly complex, though researchers agree that it occurs primarily in adolescence and consists of exploring attitudes, values, and beliefs (Boyd et al., 2003; McGlone & Aronson, 2006; Sherman et al., 2013). These areas of exploration may be subsumed under Marcouyeux and Fleury-Bahi’s (2011) three subdimensions of place identity: place attachment, place dependence, and group identity, although the focus on the social aspect makes group identity the more salient subdimension. Place identity entered strongly into this study because students entering college who hold strong place-identities will judge their new college environment against their home. “The individual’s personal or self-identity is not only defined by these various settings, but also by his or her ability and readiness to shift from one to another” (Proshansky, 1978, p. 163), which is put to the test when students are required to adjust to a new location. Not only is the physical shift difficult, but “attachment to places also involves social relations” (Cicognani, et al., 2011, p. 34), making the shift to a new location even more difficult, as it requires social shifts as well, as it requires a shift in “group identity” (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011, p. 347), at least temporarily.

Research indicated that identity formation was one of the greatest challenges faced by traditionally-aged college students (Boyd et al., 2003), and that those who had to move to attend college faced great changes, particularly in the disruption of their relationships with the places they came from (Cicognani et al., 2011, p. 42). The deep connection to a geographic location found in place identity helped students to achieve “a sense of belonging and purpose which give meaning to his or her life. Without exception, home is considered to be the ‘place’ of greatest personal significance in one’s life” (Proshansky, et al., 1983 p. 60). Therefore, it seemed reasonable to approach this study with the research-based premise that participants would not

only be in the process of fully forming their identities, but would also arrive at Land Grant University with some level of place identity already established. If that was the case, then participants could face threats to place identity based on the changes in physical location, available resources, and social group shifts, based on Marcouyeux and Fleury-Bahi's (2011) subdimensions of place identity.

Place attachment was perhaps the most straightforward threat. After all, Cicognani et al. (2011) revealed that a person's "place of residence is central for the self-concept" (p. 43), and that place identity gradually decreased for college students living far from home. This was likely because, due to moving to attend college, bonding with a particularly important place was disrupted, which could not only threaten identity, but also be overwhelmingly stressful for those with strong place attachments (Cicognani et al., 2011). Although it seemed inevitable that participants would face some level of threat to the place attachment dimension of their place identities, there were also methods of mitigating this threat, such as maintaining a connection with the place to which a person was attached (Cicognani et al., 2011). It is also important to note that Cicognani et al. (2011) found that students who planned to return home after completing their degrees maintained a greater sense of place identity and considered home more central to their identities than those who did not plan to return home.

Threats to the place dependence element of place identity are more difficult to identify. However, since place dependence involves the evaluation of the physical and social resources a place has to offer (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011), it follows that a person's place identity might be threatened if they evaluated their new place's resources more positively than the place with which they currently identify. This dimension would, of course, be intensely personal, as the desired social and physical resources vary by person. Therefore, this dimension was utilized less in analyzing study data than the other two.

The social aspect of place identity, called group identity by Marcouyeux and Fleury-Bahi (2011) and expanded on as "sense of community" by Cicognani et al. (2011), deals with a person's integration into the social groups found in a given place. Also referred to as social identity, the choosing or forming of social groups with which one identifies is an important part of identity formation with far-reaching effects, including academic performance (McGlone & Aronson, 2006). This sense of community or belongingness was influenced by whether or not the move was voluntary; rural agrarian students may feel that their move to college was a "forced

choice” if there are no college options near home (Cicognani, et al., 2011, p. 35). Although being forced to form new relationships due to moving could clearly be threatening to an individual’s sense of group identity, Cicognani et al. (2011) noted that students who moved for structural or functional motives, such as a lack of access in their hometown, maintained a higher sense of community with their hometowns than those who moved for other reasons, such as seeking independence from parents.

Regardless of the reason for the move, social identity represented a well-researched opening for threats to identity. According to Steele et al. (2002), once a person identified with a particular social group, there were as many as six potential areas of threat to identity, often based on stereotypes related to the chosen social group. The first of the six threats described was “the degree to which a social identity has minority status in a setting” (Steele et al., 2002), which had particular relevance to the present study, as rural students of which agrarians are a subset, were already a demonstrated minority in post-secondary settings (Antos, 1999; Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Demi et al., 2010; Esterman & Hedlund, 1995; Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001). The second and third sources of social identity threat arose when a new location did not favor a person’s chosen social identity or the social identity did not play any role in organizing the setting, resulting in feelings of marginalization and that the setting was dictating who a person could, or could not, be (Steele et al., 2002). The ideology and “sensitivity norms,” or political correctness, of a place also has the potential to affirm or threaten identities, along with the sixth and final potential threat, the clarity of a setting’s evaluative criteria (Steel et al., 2002). All six of these threats to social identity were studied in academic settings, and were shown to have the potential to impact grades, graduation and dropout rates, and other measures of academic performance (Steele et al., 2002).

Faced with so many threats to the social aspect of identity, termed group identity by Marcouyeux and Fleury-Bahi (2011), new college students, especially those from drastically different settings facing the need to completely reconstruct their social groups, must either refute the threats to identity or somehow deny the relevance of the threat to themselves (Steele et al., 2002). In other words, students must seek “identity safety” (Steele et al., 2002, p. 425). To achieve identity safety, students may use any combination of strategies from three major coping categories: relational strategies, contextual strategies, or individual strategies (Steele et al., 2002, pp. 425-432). Because this study did not focus on academic success, only those identity safety

strategies useful outside of the classroom are discussed here, though it should be noted that these might also impact academic performance.

Relational strategies are primarily concerned with intentional relationships that will help to extend identity safety to the individual in question. Friendships are one common relational strategy for achieving identity safety, but, though friendships with similar people may be affirming, Steele et al. (2002) asserted that befriending people from an opposing group perceived to devalue the social group of the student was helpful in proving that the new setting was less threatening than initially thought. These kinds of friendships seem counterintuitive, making it necessary that such research be made available to stakeholders. A second relational strategy is to find another person with the same social identity in the same setting who is succeeding, which demonstrated to the student that success could be achieved without altering his/her existing social identity (Steele et al., 2002). This was particularly true if the relationship with the mentor was built and sustained over time, and could even work with an out of group mentor, so long as the mentor was careful to be accepting and inclusive (Steele et al., 2002, p. 428).

More concerned with changing the setting's context or meaning, contextual coping strategies placed the onus on the institution or administration to help make the setting a place of identity safety (Steele et al., 2002). One very effective contextual strategy, demonstrated in test-taking situations, was to vary the number of minorities present; the more people like the participant, the less threatened the participant's social identity (Steele et al., 2002, p. 431). However, it is not practical for universities to ensure that students take courses with students almost exclusively like them, nor would it necessarily be the most beneficial option. What are universities to do, then, to aid students in feeling safe in their identities? Steele et al.'s 2002 study suggested that "where there is little safety in numbers, some identity safety can apparently be gained through a setting philosophy that explicitly values identity differences" (p. 431). In other words, when it is impractical or unwise to ensure that students are surrounded by peers with similar social identities, creating and advertising a philosophy that values the differences and ensures no discrimination based on them can be equally effective in establishing identity safety (Steele et al., 2002).

Finally, students may cope using individual strategies. The first strategy, "believing in the malleability of intelligence," required only that students consider intelligence something that could be improved upon, rather than fixed due to their particular social group, background, or

other factors (Steele et al., 2002, p. 433). Students may also implement the “stay in one place” strategy, in which a student would decide to “develop life contexts in which one is a stable, known entity,” in order to minimize both the need to change and the chance that people would feel the need to resort to stereotyping to predict or explain the student’s behavior or potential (Steele et al., 2002, p. 434). Although these two individual strategies are explicitly named in the research, individual coping strategies are, by their very nature, highly individualized. Therefore, it was expected that individual coping strategies not explicitly named in the research might surface in study participants.

These efforts to cope with potentially threatening changes are also called the “mediating change function” of identity. Proshansky, et al. (1983) defined the “mediating change function” of place-identity as occurring when “discrepancies between a person’s place-identity and the characteristics of an immediate physical setting” (p. 70) cause the person to begin to reduce or eliminate those discrepancies. The strategies for mitigating social identity threat, or achieving identity safety, described by Steele et al. (2002) constituted mediating change functions of identity. The individual can cope by changing their social position, removing some element of their social situation, or altering their own identity structure content or value in order to effectively function in their new social matrix (Breakwell, 1986, p. 79). However, they can also cope by clinging to their identity, finding others who will affirm their identity, and choosing to see themselves as capable in the situation (Steele et al., 2002). Regardless of the strategies used, this need to adapt to changing place means that, as human beings, our identities are constantly shifting. This study focused on how agrarian students adapted or maintained their identities when moving from their farm homes to the more urban Land Grant University setting.

New Agrarian Theory

Before explaining what new agrarian theory is, it seems imperative to explain what it is not. New agrarian theory, though it may call to mind agrarianism, and is sometimes called agrarianism or new agrarianism, does not elevate the farmer above all other workers or farm life above city life, as previous agrarian theory did (Major, 2011). Neither does new agrarian theory here refer to political movements, as much of the literature does. In fact, Major (2011) pointed out that

most new agrarian writers are not terribly impressed by critical and theoretical enterprises . . . some agrarian readers (and readers familiar with new agrarianism) might be baffled by my strategy of pairing new agrarian cultural criticism with an academic discourse that is typically referred to as *theory*. (p. ix)

The majority of new agrarians, according to Major (2011), were focused on economic and political action instead of academic discourse. Still, Major (2011) asserted, “agrarian theory can vitally enrich what often seem – to me at least – merely academic concerns, even as Rome burns” (p. x). Similarly, this study applied new agrarian theory to practical education practices, rather than economic or political issues.

While “the farm continues to provide the ideological backbone to agrarian social critique” (Major, 2011, p. 22), new agrarianism does not push for a universal return to the farm. Instead, new agrarians apply the values, work, and natural elements associated with the farm to their social and cultural critiques (Berry, 2010; Major, 2011). In particular, new agrarians emphasize the importance of place, and therefore place identity, for both the individual and the community to function well, leading to extensive social critique (Berry, 2010; Zencey, 1985). New agrarian theory is, therefore, sometimes accused of being judgmental, sentimental, or nostalgic. However, Major (2011) argued, “the best agrarian writing looks at the past and tries to salvage what was worthy, but it also sees much that was not” (p. 21).

Still, while the importance of place does not mean that all people should return to farming, it is important to note that agrarianism does not encourage young people to leave the farm, either. In fact, one of the key tenets of new agrarian theory is to challenge the idea “that success in education is measured by how well we prepare our students to leave home to compete in a world economy” (Major, 2007). For example, Wendell Berry (2010), in his collection of essays ranging from literary criticism to social critique, lamented the trend of people growing up on the farm and leaving for school, never to return. This leaving trend, he said,

is institutionalized not in great communal stories, but in the educational system. The schools are no longer oriented to a cultural inheritance that it is their duty to pass on unimpaired, but to the career, which is to say the future, of the child. (Berry, 2010, p. 162)

In other words, agrarians such as Berry do not necessarily object to the leaving of young people, but to what they perceive as the educational system encouraging students not to return to

the land. Agrarian theory is utilized “to expand the marketplace of ideas and combat the ‘antirural prejudice’ with which agrarians contend both within and outside the academy” (Major, 2011, p. 19), making it particularly relevant to an examination of agrarian student acculturation to the university. In fact, Berry (2010) asserted that colleges, even agricultural colleges, were key players in the destruction of agrarian life and communities. Certainly, agrarianism admits, not all of those raised on farms should return to them, as “farmers must tend farms that they know and love” (Berry, 2010, p. 210), and such love does not exist in all farm youth.

Whether or not a person farms, “contemporary agrarianism asks that we begin to see the intersection between the land and our lives as something for which we can and should take responsibility” (Major, 2011, p. xii) as a natural outgrowth of “learning a sense of place” (Major, 2007). For example, Berry (2010) asked that readers consider “that eating is an agricultural act” (p. 145) and that those who are regularly termed “consumers” ought to instead think of themselves as “participants in agriculture” (p. 145). It is the responsibility of all people, Berry (2010) claimed, to know where their food comes from and to ensure that it was produced responsibly.

It is quite clear that new agrarian theory has relevance to examination of rural and agrarian students in the university. After all, such students are the focus of the struggle between achieving a “better” life and returning to the farming life they know. Now, “the question is whether new agrarianism can wrest its small share of attention from academia, which possesses a sometimes blinkered worldview that primarily reflects urban and suburban concerns” (Major, 2011, p. 19).

Related Research

Much of the existing literature concerning rural students focuses on K-12 education (e.g.: Azano, 2011; Durham & Smith, 2006; Eppley et al., 2011; Keis, 2006; Lester, 2012; Stockard, 2011; Wake, 2012), with relatively little literature focusing specifically on agrarian students (e.g.: Esterman & Hedlund, 1995; McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001) or agricultural education (e.g.: Davalos & Griffin, 1999; Rayfield, Croom, Stair, & Murray, 2011). There is, therefore, a lack of literature exploring rural and/or agrarian students majoring in agricultural education at the university level. However, among the available literature on rural agrarian students in the university, three major categories appear: 1) agricultural education, 2) comparison

to non-rural students, and 3) acculturation. While these areas are not, in themselves, problematic, and have the potential to address a wide range of issues facing rural agrarian students, further research is needed to add to the depth of knowledge, particularly in the area of the agrarian population's acculturation to the university environment.

Agricultural Education

Agricultural education is a relatively broad term, and could include both the agricultural education major or career path and the inclusion of agriculture in any course throughout all levels of education.

Land Grant Universities

A review of the literature on agricultural education would be incomplete with a review of land grant universities. Created by the Morrill Act (1862), land grant institutions were purposed with teaching “such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts . . . in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.” Prior to the Morrill Act (1862), “post-secondary education in the US was designed to serve the privileged class, focusing primarily on teaching classics,” but with the advent of land grant colleges and universities, “the applied agricultural needs of students” were finally addressed, and college became a relevant option for the working class (Parr, Trexler, Khanna, & Battisti, 2007, p. 524). Furthermore, progressive educators successfully argued for hands-on learning by doing in the form of university farms and labs (Parr et al., 2007). The Morrill Act (1862) contained provision for use of the funds provided by the state “for the purchase of lands for sites or experimental farms,” such as progressive educators argued for (Parr et al., 2007).

The literature reflected shifts in land grant curriculum to accommodate cultural shifts as well. Sustainable agriculture, including organic farming and other alternative agricultural methods, were gaining popularity in land grant institution agriculture programs, though not necessarily in official curriculum (Parr et al., 2007).

Agricultural Background as Minority

The United States Air Force Academy considers students from rural agricultural backgrounds to be a minority, and one that they showcased in their recruitment brochure (U.S.

Air Force Academy, n.d.). With only around 20% of students in the United States attending rural public schools (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014), rural students with agrarian backgrounds were already a minority, and with between 42% and 65% of those rural students attending college (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; National Student Clearinghouse, 2013; Snyder & Dillow, 2010), rural agrarian students were clearly in the minority at college, including the United States Air Force Academy.

While few Midwestern area universities tracked rural or agrarian student enrollment, Espenshade, Chung, and Walling (2004) stated that undergraduate admissions officers in assembling a first-year class that best meets institutional goals and values routinely give extra weight to numerous other student attributes, including athletic ability, musical talent, rural background, socioeconomic status, gender, alumni connections, leadership ability, geography, and unusual life experiences. (p. 1423)

Although rural background was listed in the factors that might aid a student in achieving admission to an elite post-secondary school, it was not as significant as more traditional factors, such as race, previous family connection to the school, or test scores (Espenshade et al., 2004).

Gender

As a traditionally male field, it was no surprise that education and organizations related to agriculture were not initially open to women (Foster, 2001; Trauger et al., 2008). In fact, the National FFA Organization did not allow women to become members until 1969 (Foster, 2001). It was not surprising, then, to learn that, as of the spring of 2000, just a little over 15% of agricultural education teachers in the United States were female (Foster, 2001). This percentage had remained steady since around 1988 (Foster, 2001). The number of female agriculture teachers stood in sharp contrast to the 47% of FFA members, and 50% of FFA leaders who were female (National FFA Organization, 2014).

Women working on the farm also faced difficulty accessing needed education, either from agricultural extensions or their male counterparts, although none of the women in Trauger et al.'s (2008) study had obtained an agriculturally-related college degree. Furthermore, farming women expressed a preference for learning from other women, as they tended to “trust other women farmers” (Trauger et al., p. 438, 2008). The paucity of female agricultural educators (Foster, 2001), then, presented a barrier to educational attainment.

Agricultural Education Majors

The agricultural education major is intended to prepare students for a career of either teaching secondary agriculture courses or working as an agricultural extension agent. It would seem logical that students choosing these careers would have agricultural backgrounds. However, Scofield (1995) found that approximately 40% of Iowa State College of Agriculture students came from urban backgrounds. In his address to the University of Illinois Agricultural Education Advisory Council, Gomes (1994) revealed that, over the previous nine years, College of Agriculture enrollment at the University of Illinois had consisted primarily of students with no agricultural background, with less than 30% from some form of agriculture. Dyer et al. (1996) confirmed Gomes's (1994) findings in their study of the 1994-1995 freshman class at the University of Illinois. Only 22.2% of freshmen enrolling in the College of Agriculture came from a farming background (Dyer et al., 1996). Dyer et al. (1999), in their study of the 1996-1997 freshman class at Iowa State University, found that 47.5% of College of Agriculture enrollees had farming backgrounds.

Although many studies found that a majority of agricultural education majors did not come from agricultural backgrounds, studies also found that persistence in the agricultural education program was predicted by background and experience with agriculture. Dyer et al.'s (1996) study of freshmen entering the University of Illinois's College of Agriculture in the fall of 1994 revealed that 94.9% of students who had taken agriculture courses in high school intended to pursue an agricultural career, compared to only 52.9% of students who did not take agriculture classes in high school. The percentage of persistence increased with involvement in agricultural clubs or organizations, with 97.7% of FFA members and 86% of 4-H members expressing plans to pursue an agricultural career. These findings were confirmed by Dyer et al.'s (1999) study at Iowa State University. Of those freshmen enrolling in the College of Agriculture at Iowa State University during 1996, 54% had taken at least one agriculture class in high school, and of those, 97% intended to pursue an agriculturally-related career (Dyer et al., 1999). This percentage increased with involvement in agricultural clubs, such as FFA, with a 98.2% intention to pursue an agricultural career, and 4-H, with a 97% rate of intent to return to agriculture (Dyer et al., 1999). By comparison, of freshmen enrolled in the College of Agriculture at Iowa State University without having taken high school agriculture courses, 90.5% reported an intention to enter an agricultural career after graduation (Dyer et al., 1999).

Agriculture in the Classroom

Some existing literature regarding rural agrarian education focuses on the benefits of including agriculture in all levels of education. Utilizing agriculture in education calls to mind vocational courses. However, focusing on agricultural examples in any subject, from math to composition, could constitute the inclusion of agriculture in education. Students need not be majoring in or looking forward to a career in agriculture in order to make effective use of agriculture in the classroom; they simply need to be gaining knowledge of agricultural issues. The literature on incorporation of agriculture into the curriculum included general works, such as Donehower et al.'s (2007 & 2012), which encouraged agricultural education, in both traditional and nontraditional classroom settings, as a method of "reclaiming the rural." Although their goal was to improve the success of all students, rather than just to "reclaim the rural," some schools have implemented agricultural education as a central tenet of their curriculum. Researchers and instructors cited the practical application offered by agriculturally based curricula as offering students genuine assignments and, therefore, increased student success (Donehower et al., 2012; Troop, 2009). Lester (2012) suggested the use of place-based education, which emphasizes the economy, resources, and issues of the local community, agricultural or otherwise, to improve literacy rates in rural schools, but her ideas, such as virtual field trips, while quite simple for teachers to implement, were supported in her article by only anecdotal evidence. Still, Lester's (2012) suggestions are both practical and indicative of the importance of considering the needs of rural agrarian students in the classroom.

One Chicago high school took incorporation of agriculture into education much further than any other examples cited here. The school was located on a farm and taught its students agricultural industry skills (White 1996). Not only did the agriculturally based school maintain a highly successful graduation rate of 91%, as compared to the 61% graduation rate of other city schools, it also improved on the district's 30% four-year university placement rate by sending 72% of its graduates to four-year universities (White, 1996). School administrators credit the school's success to the fact that the curriculum emphasized non-farming agricultural industry careers in hopes of keeping more of its youth involved in agriculture (White 1996). Foulke, the school's farm manager, said that "most children who grow up on farms these days want to leave. 'It seems odd,' he says. 'Fewer farm kids are willing to stay in the business, and here people are banging down the door to get in.'" (White, 1996). Foulke saw the agricultural high school as a

way of teaching essential skills, whether the student chose a career in agriculture, business, education, or any other field (White, 1996). Notably, the school benefited students both with and without prior agricultural knowledge or experience (White, 1996).

Limited research has focused on the attitudes of college students toward agriculture and retention of agricultural education students. In a study of pre-service elementary education majors at the University of Missouri-Columbia, Humphrey, Stewart, and Linhardt (1994) discovered that students' experience working in agricultural operations and having family who own and work on agricultural operations was positively correlated with confidence in teaching agricultural concepts. Additionally, students who reported a higher knowledge of agriculture also reported more positive perceptions of agriculture (Humphrey et al., 1994). A similar study focused strictly on the attitudes of students in the college of agriculture at the University of Illinois and reported that students in the college of agriculture had generally positive attitudes toward the field of agriculture (Dyer et al., 1996). However, not all students in the study intended to graduate from the college of agriculture, although 94.9% those who had come through a high school agriculture program intended to graduate from the college of agriculture, and that percentage increased to 97.7% if the students were also in FFA (Dyer et al., 1996, p. 36). Similarly, Dyer et al. (2002) found that "students with experience in agriculture, who were enrolled in high school agriculture classes, who were 4-H or FFA members, or who were from less populated areas were more likely to complete their degrees" (p. 496) from the college of agriculture.

Comparison to Non-Rural Students

Although agriculturally influenced educational strategies were effective for both rural and non-rural students, there are numerous differences between rural and non-rural students. For example, researchers often explored and wrote about the disadvantages facing rural students, particularly with regards to college aspirations and enrollment and graduation rates (Antos, 1999; Byun, Irvin, & Meece, 2012; Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Demi, et al., 2010; Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; Hutchins, Meece, Byun, & Farmer, 2012; McGrath, 2001; McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001). The findings of such studies, however, sometimes conflicted. For example, one study asserted that agrarian and non-agrarian students enrolled in college at approximately the same rates (McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001, p. 253). However,

another study compared agrarian students to rural non-agrarian students (Esterman & Hedlund, 1995), and found that agrarian students were less likely to plan to attend college than their rural non-agrarian counterparts, as well as highly unlikely to remain on the farm. Still other studies found that rural students were less likely to attend college than urban or suburban students for reasons including economic disadvantage, lack of family history with college, and accessibility (Antos, 1999; Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Demi, et al., 2010; Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001), even though rural students were equally as academically prepared as their non-rural peers (Guiffrida, 2008, p. 8). In fact, Grimard & Maddaus (2004) found that “rural youth are less likely to attend college than youth from metropolitan areas, and that this statistical gap is growing” (p. 30). Antos (1999) bemoaned the lower enrollment rates of rural students and attributed it, in part, to the lower educational aspirations of rural students. Whatever the potential differences in college aspirations, Williams & Luo (2010) determined that whether students came from an urban or rural environment did not impact their likelihood to remain in college during their first year, though their home’s proximity to the university did greatly impact their persistence.

Similarly, numerous studies agreed that rural Appalachian students faced many barriers to college education (Ali & Saunders, 2006; Ali & Saunders, 2009; Ali & McWhirter, 2006; Dees, 2006; Hendrickson, 2012; Snyder, 2007). A study of rural Appalachian youths’ expectations of attending college found that they relied heavily on parents for support, and although there are several benefits to perceiving parents as sources of support, potential disadvantages exist because of the rural isolation and a dearth of a wide range of employment opportunities to which parents living in this area are exposed. . . . Thus, an overreliance on parents as sources of information may put these youth at a considerable disadvantage in gaining admission to college. (Ali & Saunders, 2006, p. 46)

Clearly, relying almost solely on parental support could put any student at a disadvantage when adjusting to college, but Ali & Saunders (2006) found rural students to be more prone to such reliance.

Also focused on the unique concerns of rural students, Irvin, Meece, Byun, Farmer, & Hutchins (2011) worked from the assumption that rural youth, particularly poor rural youth, faced “numerous developmental challenges [which] substantially increases the chances for educational problems” (p. 1225), such as economic hardship, “geographical isolation, limited

community resources, and conflicting values related to post-secondary educational and vocational attainment” (p. 1226). For example, they determined that high-poverty rural youth tended to do worse academically if attending schools in which all grades, K-12, were located in the same building (Irvin, Meece, Byun, Farmer, & Hutchins, 2011). High-poverty rural youth performed better if attending school in an isolated rural area (Irvin, Meece, Byun, Farmer, & Hutchins, 2011). In later, more detailed work, Irvin, Byun, Meece, Farmer, & Hutchins (2012) examined the relationship between various facets of identity, such as race and parental education, and perceived barriers to higher education in rural students. The results were mixed, as some personal factors were predictive of perceived barriers and others were not (Irvin, Byun, Meece, Farmer, & Hutchins, 2012). Hutchins, Meece, Byun, & Farmer (2012) investigated rural students’ college and work expectations following high school, as well as what factors influenced their expectations. Although these studies cited numerous influences on rural student college or career choice, in a study of what college recruitment strategies were effective for rural and urban students, only one statistically significant difference was found: rural students valued the campus visit more than urban students (Hodges & Barbuto, 2002, p. 6). Therefore, it stands to reason that place is of more importance to rural students when choosing a college or university.

Demi, et al. (2010) found that, “as parental education increases, the type of enrollment one year post high school increases (from not enrolled in college, to two year college, to four year college)” (p. 16), although rural students attending four-year colleges were still less likely to have parents with at least a bachelor’s degree than their suburban and urban counterparts (Byun, Irvin, & Meece, 2012, p. 473). Rural students were also more likely to attend public colleges than urban or suburban students, and they maintained GPAs as high as or higher than their urban and suburban counterparts, even though rural K-12 curriculum was notably less intense than urban and suburban curricula (Byun, Irvin, & Meece, 2012, p. 473). The fact that research demonstrated differing college choices, but relatively equal college success, as measured by GPA, indicated that rural students, though different from their urban and suburban counterparts, must have had some successful acculturation strategies in order to overcome such differences and find success in college.

Acculturation

Researchers may disagree on how rural and non-rural students compare, but there is little room to debate the idea that rural student college completion is a concern. Suburban students were 61% and urban students a shocking 106% more likely to earn their bachelor's degree than rural students (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012, p. 425). Therefore, in addition to K-12 education and college aspirations, some studies examined rural agrarian students' experiences at college. For example, Guiffrida (2008) found the success of agrarian college students to be related to maintaining "strong connections to members of their home communities" (p. 15). In an effort to determine factors which made rural college students successful, Byun, Meece, & Irvin (2012) investigated rural student support systems and found church attendance and parents of students knowing each other to be significant indicators of college success (p. 429). This was notably different from the Ali & Saunders (2006) study, which found that an over-reliance on parents was detrimental to rural student success, because Byun, Meece, & Irvin (2012) emphasized the use of multiple support systems, rather than relying primarily on parental support and prior knowledge. The idea that social supports aided rural college students in achieving college success confirmed earlier findings that rural agrarian students' college enrollment was at least partially determined by social structures (McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001, p. 260). For this reason, studies showed, support of the agrarian community was an important factor in encouraging agrarian student enrollment in college (McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001, p. 260). This was extremely important, as

the increased complexity of agricultural business has led many career farmers to enroll in local two-year colleges. Four-year colleges, however, typically require rural youths to move away from home and demand a more distinct break from the rural environment and culture. (McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001, p. 250)

However, this break from home was somewhat mitigated by the fact that 53% of rural students attended college in a rural area (Guiffrida, 2008, p. 4). Still, "rural youth with a stronger bond to parents may experience conflict when deciding whether or not to attend post-secondary schooling, which often requires a move away from the home community" (Demi, et al., 2010, p. 16). It logically followed, then, that students who believed their parents would disapprove if they chose not to attend college were more likely to enroll in some form of post-secondary education

(Demi, et al., 2010, p. 16), although the same was not true for urban or suburban students (Byun, Irvin, & Meece, 2012, p. 478).

In one of few studies with a purpose similar to that of the proposed study, to explore how rural agrarian students experienced the transition from high school to college, Dees (2006) utilized journal entries to explore the acculturation strategies used by rural Appalachian students first entering college. Dees (2006) found three major acculturation strategies utilized by rural Appalachian university students: assimilation, separation, and integration. However, in focusing only on the areas in which students needed to adapt, Dees (2006) failed to represent the entirety of the adjustment process. In other words, ways in which students felt well-prepared for college by their rural background were not explored. Therefore, this study inquired as to ways in which agrarian students felt that their backgrounds benefited their college acculturation.

Amidst the varying views and findings of rural and agrarian research, there was one commonality: the importance of place. Studies cited the importance of returning home for visits (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Guiffrida, 2008), home and college location (Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; Guiffrida, 2008), and home-based social support (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Guiffrida, 2008; McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001) as essential to rural student enrollment and success in college programs. In order to be able to return home for visits, rural students would need to attend college close to home, which helped to explain why 53% of rural students attended college in a rural area (Guiffrida, 2008, p. 4). Once they arrived on campus, rural students were more likely to participate in intramural athletics than urban or suburban students, and those who participated in Greek life or other social clubs were more likely to earn a bachelor's degree than those who did not participate, lending credence to the idea that rural students thrive in community (Byun, Irvin, & Meece, 2012, pp. 474 & 478).

Summary

While extensive literature on rural students exists, the paucity of research specifically focusing on agrarian secondary agricultural education students and their acculturation to college calls for more investigation. Prior research, as discussed above, indicated that rural and/or agrarian students have unique needs as compared to their urban/suburban counterparts. Therefore, it is only logical that this minority group be further investigated so as to understand and better accommodate their particular needs through differentiated instruction.

Chapter 2 has introduced relevant literature for the proposed study. This literature review has included an in-depth discussion of the theoretical framework of the study, based in identity theory and new agrarian theory, as well as a review of existing literature concerning rural and/or agrarian students. Existing literature more commonly addressed rural than agrarian students, and covered only a portion of the concerns affiliated with college acculturation, leaving holes in the literature which this study attempted to begin to fill.

In Chapter 3, a detailed methodology for the study will be described. In particular, Chapter 3 will address the influence of an earlier pilot study on the research design, including methodology, settings, participants, and data collection and analysis. Finally, establishing credibility, maintaining an ethical study, and the role of the researcher will be addressed.

Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study, and will include descriptions of each of the participants to establish reader understanding of their identities.

Chapter 5 will delve more deeply into the findings in the form of a discussion. Recommendations for implementation of the findings at various levels and for future research will also be presented.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Given the previously established status of agrarian university students as a largely overlooked group in both acculturation and differentiated instruction research, this study set out to describe agrarian agricultural education student experiences and to extrapolate suggestions from this qualitative data. Therefore, this study made careful use of qualitative research design, research questions, and participants. Additionally, data collection methods and data analysis methods, along with strategies for establishing trustworthiness and ethical considerations, work to lend credibility to such a qualitative study.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of agrarian agricultural education students as they transitioned from their farm home to the more urban Land Grant University. Educators have long emphasized the importance of knowing their students in order to teach most effectively (Noddings, 1992). The paucity of research concerning the acculturation of agrarian students to the university creates a need for this study (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Guiffrida, 2008). The population chosen for this study consisted of four female and four male agrarian agricultural education students attending Land Grant University, as well as three male and two female agrarian students attending Rural Consolidated High School. The Land Grant University group was chosen for the fact that their common future career, as agricultural educators, seems to indicate an affinity for the agrarian culture in which they were raised. The Rural Consolidated High School group was utilized primarily to offer confirmation of some Land Grant University findings and to demonstrate consistency in thought process across the transition. Ultimately, this research aimed to deepen understanding of agrarian agricultural education students' experience of the transition to college and thereby offer suggestions for making the transition as smooth and positive as possible to agrarian students, counselors, and professors.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is uniquely positioned to explore issues, "to study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured,

or hear silenced voices” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). Given the limited literature on the topic of rural agrarian student college acculturation, exploration was necessary in order to determine how agrarian students adapted to the college environment. Hancock and Algozzine (2006) asserted that qualitative research is better suited for situations in which little literature exists on the precise topic than quantitative research, as qualitative research allows researchers “to explore a host of factors that may be influencing a situation” (p. 8), rather than only a limited number of potential variables. Additionally, “although words may be more unwieldy than numbers, they render more meaning than numbers alone” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). Therefore, I chose to complete a qualitative study in hopes of conveying as much meaning as possible with regards to agrarian student transitions to college.

This study was primarily concerned with “*participant perspectives*” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 7) rather than objective statistics, as their unique perspectives would be more useful in understanding how the participants experienced their transition from home to college than quantitative data. After all, the focus of qualitative research is “persons’ lives, stories, behaviors, but also about organizational functioning, social movements, or interactional relationships” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). Still, the options within qualitative research are numerous: ethnography, case study, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry, for example. Each of these methodologies offered a unique way of exploring and explaining agrarian student college experiences. However, given the purpose and timeline of this study, I chose a case study approach.

Influence of Pilot Study

This study was influenced by a pilot study conducted in the year prior to the current study. The pilot study consisted of qualitative interviews with four agrarian university students. Much like this study, the pilot study asked agrarian college students to tell about their transition from their farm home to the university setting. However, the pilot study employed a qualitative, narrative analysis methodology. Each of the four agrarian university students completed two qualitative interviews focusing on their transition from home to college. Interviews were then analyzed and coded.

The analysis of the pilot study data resulted in five major coding categories: access, coping, stereotypes, education, and responsibility to agriculture. Although full results are

available in the pilot study and in forthcoming articles based on the pilot study, I will highlight a few of the most interesting results here. The “access” code, more commonly seen as “lack of access” in the literature, was coded as simply “access” in the pilot study because agrarian students expressed that they had experienced both the typically discussed lack of access, but also access to resources unavailable to urban and suburban students, such as FFA programs. “Coping,” while admittedly too broad a coding category in retrospect, encompassed expected agrarian student needs to adjust to environmental and social differences at college, which are not fundamentally different from any new college student’s adjustment. “Stereotypes” was perhaps the most interesting category in need of further research. Female participants explained that they felt others assumed that they had come to college in order to escape the farm, while males noted no such assumptions. Included in the “Education” code was the usefulness of college for farming and communication, as well as that they believed their agricultural background provided them with a sense of connectedness unavailable to their urban and suburban peers. Finally, most participants noted a “Responsibility to Agriculture,” including a desire from all four participants to return either to home or to another agricultural endeavor.

Many implications for further research could be drawn from the pilot study. For example, differences in acculturation based on gender, socioeconomic status, and years at the university were all alluded to in the pilot study results, but could not be fully explored given the interview protocol and number of participants. More specifically, given the small number of participants in the pilot study, further research with larger, more racially diverse populations is called for.

Although the pilot study yielded interesting results, it also prompted me to make some changes to the proposed study. In particular, the pilot study caused me to reconsider the methodology, theoretical underpinnings, setting, and interview protocol of the proposed study. The pilot study demonstrated to me that, though valuable for its in-depth look at participants, a proper narrative inquiry requires months of contact with the participants, which was not feasible for the current study.

Certainly the place-identity and threatened identity theories were effective in the pilot study, though an identity theory more often utilized in education was adopted for the present study. Pilot study participant discussions of differing values from their classmates also led me to explore theories that would help to illuminate these differences. I stumbled upon new agrarian theory, utilized primarily in literary and social critique, almost on accident. New agrarianism

offered a unique way of looking at agrarian participants and at the educational system they inhabit, and so it was added to the study.

The current study utilized an online questionnaire for the collection of initial demographic and background information, due to lessons learned from the pilot study. In-person, qualitative interviews, such as those utilized in the pilot study, are time-consuming and require not only finding common times to meet, but also transcribing first interviews before scheduling follow-up interviews. These scheduling issues are difficult enough for any researcher and participants. However, during the pilot study, I discovered that scheduling in-person interviews with agrarian students whose agriculturally-based job schedules were dependent upon the weather was nearly impossible. Even for those study participants who were not working in agricultural jobs at the time of the proposed study, online data collection allowed them to answer questions when it was convenient for them. I was also able to more quickly design follow-up questions for the in-person interviews, as there was no transcription to complete prior to being able to formulate follow-up questions. However, in the current study, follow-up questions were asked in an in-person, open-ended, qualitative interview format, as is more widely accepted in qualitative research.

Finally, participant discussion of their desires to return home or to another agrarian career prompted interest in the transition back to the home community. Specifically, I added questions to the questionnaire and interview protocols to probe participant perceptions of how their college experiences may impact their eventual return to their home communities, if they plan to return.

Case Study

This study utilized a descriptive case study design (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2010). Frequently used in the social sciences, “a *case study* is a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 54). Merriam (2010) defined case study by saying, “What makes a case study a case study is the unit of analysis; that is, a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 456), echoing Stake’s (2005) earlier definition. However, it was also defined as a research strategy or results format (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Creswell (2013) called case study a “methodology: a type of design in qualitative research that may be an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry” (p. 97). Moreover, “*case study* research involves the

study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97), which seemed well-suited to exploring the impact of the transition to the university on agrarian secondary agricultural education students. In fact, case study required examination of the setting or context (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27). This case study involved studying one issue, agrarian secondary agricultural education student acculturation to the college environment and its impact on their identity, across several participants in two research sites. Additionally, case study utilized small populations. Creswell (2013) recommended that case studies include between one and four cases, and Merriam (2010) emphasized that case studies focus on “a single person, a program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific policy” (p. 456). This study examined one topic, agrarian students’ transition to college, across two cases, that of agrarian secondary agricultural education students and that of agrarian high school students anticipating their transition to college.

Even within case study, however, there were several types of case studies from which to choose. Types of case studies included historical organizational, observational, life history, document, community, situation analysis, sociological, and microethnography, to name a few (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). This case study, with its focus on interviewing a narrow segment of the university student population and confirm those findings with a small portion of high school students, did not neatly fit any one case study type. However, it was most closely aligned with the microethnography, which “most often refers to case studies done either on very small units of an organization (a part of a classroom) or on a very specific organizational activity” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 60). In this case, the study included only agrarian students and, in the case of Land Grant University participants, only those majoring in agricultural education were eligible, representing an even smaller percentage of an already small population. Similarly, at Rural Consolidated High School, only agrarian students intending to attend college at some point were eligible, severely limiting the population to be studied.

Hancock and Algozzine (2006) described case studies as “analyses and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by space and time” (pp. 9, 11). Creswell (2013), in addition to emphasizing that case studies featured a case within a system bounded by time and space, also noted the importance of having “contextual material available to describe the setting for the case” (p. 123) to more firmly establish the bounded system. The “in depth study of a bounded system can employ a variety of quantitative and/or qualitative data” (Merriam, 2010, p. 456).

However, this study focused on qualitative data. The bounded system, then, for this case study came in two parts, one bounded system for each research site. For Land Grant University, the time boundaries were clearly defined by the research time frames, that is, the spring semester of 2014. However, defining the spatial bounded system was somewhat difficult, as most participants were living either on campus or in University City, but one participant was living elsewhere while completing her student teaching. Therefore, for Land Grant University participants, the physical bounded system was considered Land Grant University, and more specifically the agricultural education program, in that all participants had to be connected to, and were required to occasionally be physically present on, the physical campus. Contextual information was also collected, with photograph submissions, most important college assignment submissions, and the opportunity to invite the researcher to observe participants in any setting, though submission of all contextual items were optional and at the comfort of the student. The Rural Consolidated High School case was much simpler, as the time frame, spring semester of 2015, and physical location, the high school itself, were well and easily defined. For high school participants, contextual information included only observations in normal school environments, such as classrooms or sporting events, due to the sensitivity surrounding research on minors.

Merriam (2010) insisted that, although case study focused on the bounded system, that “bounded system is of course embedded in the larger sociohistorical context in which it exists [*sic*]” (p. 456), and “accounting for this context is one of the strengths of case study research (p. 456). Therefore, although all participants were part of either the bounded system of the agricultural education program at Land Grant University or the Rural Consolidated High School case at the time of the study, I also gathered information on their wider school community and home community contexts. This contextual information was gathered from all participants via interview questions, such as those asking them to explain their friendships and communities both at school and at home. Additionally, Land Grant University participants were asked to provide photographs representing who they were at the university as well as at home, if they felt comfortable doing so. In this way, the sociohistorical context was accounted for, although through the lens of the participants, due to the research focus on how the participant saw, understood, and experienced his/her shift between communities.

Instrumental Case

This study focused on an instrumental case (Creswell, 2013, p. 98; Stake, 2005, p. 445) of agrarian agricultural secondary education students, although a secondary case of agrarian high school students anticipating attending college was added to confirm some university student findings. In other words, the purpose of the research was not only to explore the experiences of agrarian students transitioning from the farm to college, but also to offer insight into such transitions; offer a counterpoint to generalizations about rural students, of whom agrarian students are a subset; and to provide a starting point for future research focusing on this agrarian population.

Data Collection

Data collection in case studies involves multiple sources of data, including interviews, observations, documents, and any other data sources available on the case (Creswell, 2013; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The primary data source for this study was qualitative interviews with agrarian students both at the university and high school levels. University student participants were also asked to complete an online questionnaire to assess their fit for the study, provide one photograph they believed to be representative of themselves in their rural home and one they believed to represent themselves in their college communities, write narratives to accompany the photographs, submit a copy of at least one completed course assignment that participants believed was most meaningful, and be observed in any setting they wished. Additionally, high school participants were observed in their regular school environments, such as classrooms and sporting events.

Concerns

Bogdan & Biklen (1998) pointed out that, in case study, a researcher chooses between attempting to capture a “typical” or “representative” case or a unique one (p. 60). However, researchers who pursued “typical” cases for the sake of generalizability quickly found that there seems to be no such thing, and so settled for identifying a case that fell close enough to “normal” to garner acceptance of its presentation as “typical” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 60). This study did not seek out either the unique case or “typical” case of agrarian secondary education student acculturation. Rather, the study was simply purposed with exploring and describing the case of agrarian agricultural secondary education students as it existed at Land Grant University. Still, I recognized the difficulty of writing up a case study without slipping into referring to the results

as either typical or unusual and sought to guard against such assertions. Due to the limited available research on Midwestern agrarian students, it was important to recognize that not enough data existed to truly categorize cases as typical or unique, which helped to guard against such assumptions.

Further, “perhaps because a case study focuses on a single unit, a single instance, the issue of generalizability looms larger here than with other types of research” (Merriam, 2010, p. 461). Although I did not argue for overarching generalizability, it was my genuine hope that these results offered insight into the experiences of agrarian students transitioning to college, as well as encouraged further research on the topic. The idea of transferring knowledge from case studies to similar situations was not uncommon (Merriam, 2010), although Stake (2005) cautioned that researchers “pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationships – and fail to pass along others. They know that the reader, too, will add and subtract, invent and shape – reconstructing the knowledge” to make it relevant to and useful for their own situations (p. 455). Given that I once experienced the transition to college as an agrarian student, I recognized the danger of reading and writing my own experiences into the study results. Inter-coder reliability measures and peer review aided in guarding against this sort of personal transmission as much as possible.

Internal Sampling

Although every effort was made to contact all agrarian secondary agricultural education students, and no participants who scheduled initial interviews were weeded out later, Bogdan & Biklen (1998) pointed out that the same amount of time did not need to be spent with each participant (p. 61). Those participants who “are more willing to talk, have a greater experience in the setting, or are especially insightful about what goes on. . . . become key informants” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 61) and therefore warranted more time than other participants. Although concerned that I might miss out on valuable information or interesting stories, I did opt to spend less time with participants whose initial interviews yielded little. Sheldon, for instance, offered some interesting pieces of data, but was less forthcoming and did not respond to two attempts to schedule a follow-up interview, and so I focused my time on scheduling interviews with participants who were more outspoken and responsive. However, I did maintain the data from Sheldon’s interview, as there was value in his stories, and his perspective was supported by other participants, lending credibility to his responses.

Qualitative Interviews

This study utilized semi-structured interviews, in which participants were asked open-ended, qualitative questions. While the questions were drafted prior to the interviews, the order was flexible, based on participant responses, and questions were often rephrased to increase participant understanding (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). This style of interview was selected because “fewer, more open-ended questions . . . will generate the best data” (Merriam, 2010, p. 459). Additionally, due to the fact that participants sometimes realized things about themselves during the interviews and that I often summarized or restated participant responses during the interviews, allowing participants to correct my summary, data truly felt “co-authored” (Kvale, 1988). Finally, “semistructured interviews incite interviewees to express themselves openly and freely and to define the world from their own perspectives, not solely from the perspective of the researcher” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 40). Therefore, qualitative interviews allowed for checking data and early conclusions even while collecting data.

Research Questions

Although qualitative researchers “may have a general idea of how they will proceed and what they are interested in, to state exactly how to accomplish their work and what specific questions they will pursue would be presumptuous” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 49). Therefore, this study was designed to address the following research questions, though not all of these questions were answered to the same degree.

Overarching Research Question (RQ1)

How do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' transitions to higher education influence their identities?

First Subsidiary Research Question (RQ2)

How do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' agrarian backgrounds influence their identities?

Second Subsidiary Research Question (RQ3)

How do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' university experiences influence their identities?

Settings & Participants

The study's settings and participants were carefully chosen to aid in the exploration of the acculturation of agrarian students to the university setting.

Setting

Data collection took place at a state university, Land Grant University, and a nearby Rural Consolidated High School. Student participants were allowed to be at any stage of high school or college education (undergraduate or graduate), so long as they were students at Land Grant University or Rural Consolidated High School at the time of data collection.

Land Grant University was located in a predominantly rural area with a strong agricultural economy and culture. As of the 2013 census, University City had a population of approximately 56,000 (United States Census Bureau). While already a relatively small city, this number also included the student population of Land Grant University, approximately 24,500 in 2013 (University Media Guide, 2015), and many soldiers and families residing in the city for close access to the nearby army base. Surrounded by pastures and field, the city boasted one Wal-Mart, one Target, one Walgreens, and an assortment of fast food restaurants. For more formal dining, University City featured such chains as Applebee's, Carlos O'Kelly's, and Texas Roadhouse. To get from one end of the city to the other required only ten to fifteen minutes, and everything you needed could be found within walking distance of most residences. The city limits were sharply marked by the beginning of pastures and cropland. More specifically, data collection took place in the secondary agricultural education department of Land Grant University. Agrarian agricultural education student participants were sought at Land Grant University and data collected during the Spring 2014 semester. Although no classes were excluded from the study, attempts to recruit participants were made in Land Grant University agriculture education courses, when allowed by the instructor.

Rural Consolidated High School data was collected from students living on farms during the Spring 2015 semester. Grades 10, 11, and 12 at Rural Consolidated High School were informed of the study and offered the chance to participate via in-class presentations from the researcher. Rural Consolidated High School was located in the middle of wheat fields and cattle pastures. It was not in a town or city, but rather in the middle of several small towns, many of which did not make state atlases published at the time of research. While all participants lived on

farms, their addresses were for towns with populations of 150 or fewer. The nearest mall was approximately one hour away, and fast food averaged approximately one half hour away from participant homes. Rural Consolidated High School was located approximately one hour from University City.

Participants

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, thirteen participants were located for in-depth data collection. Four male and four female participants from Land Grant University and three male and two female participants from Rural Consolidated High School were ultimately chosen. Given the recommendation that case study research studies contain relatively few participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 74), each potential student participant was checked against the following criteria:

1. Participant was raised on a farm or ranch operation comprising the family's primary occupation during, at a minimum, the ten years prior to entering college.
2. Participant was, at the time of the study, a full-time student majoring in agricultural education at Land Grant University or a current student at Rural Consolidated High School.
3. Participant expressed interest in discussing their experiences.

The study used a triangulation of purposeful sampling methods: quota sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling. Purposeful sampling was chosen because "one has to select the case that will yield information that can best address the study's purposes" (Merriam, 2010, p. 458), and those students who had grown up living and/or working on farms presented the best options to address the study's purposes. Although some potential participants who had grown up in the country with a working knowledge of the farm could potentially have contributed, I chose to exclude them through purposeful sampling in order to keep the study clearly focused on students from farming backgrounds. Participant recruitment information flyers were hung around Land Grant University and distributed to professors, department heads, and other interested parties. This flyer distribution constituted a form of quota sampling. Convenience sampling was also implemented by way of attending and presenting in classes to which I was able to gain access and asking rural students I knew to suggest other rural agrarian students. Finally, participants were asked to recommend other potential participants, which was snowball sampling. Rural Consolidated High School students were sought only through

convenience and snowball sampling, as no advertising was needed, since the total high school population was around 70 I shared information about the study in 10th, 11th, and 12th grade English classes, and asked participants to offer names of other students who might qualify for the study. Because I was able to reach 100% of the 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students, there was no need for any other sampling method. I made an effort to represent the following groups in my study: male, female, Caucasian, non-Caucasian. Although the utilization of the agricultural education department at Land Grant University made it easier to identify both male and female agrarian students at the university, the largely Caucasian population in both cases hindered representation of other ethnicities in the study.

Participant recruitment information flyers (see Appendix A) were posted around the university campus as well as on Facebook in the hopes of gaining access to more students. These same flyers were also sent to the university's dean of agriculture and professors in the English and Agriculture departments, so as to reach agricultural education students enrolled in both agriculture and general education courses. I also made a participant recruitment presentation at the Agricultural Education Club meeting at Land Grant University. Finally, participants who responded were asked to recommend that other agrarian students contact me to participate in the study.

Data Collection Methods & Data Sources

Prior to searching for participants or beginning data collection, I obtained the approval of the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Initially, this meant completing the training modules produced by the IRB to ensure that I was aware of data collection protocols and potential issues. Following completion of the training modules, I completed the IRB forms, submitted them to the University Compliance Office, and awaited approval. While awaiting approval, I began to set up an online "course" through Land Grant University's course management system, which was utilized for agrarian student data collection at Land Grant University. This online platform included the use of open-ended online questionnaires to gather data from university students. The first few open-ended questionnaires consisted of demographic and other basic participant information, with no more than one or two questions per questionnaire (see Appendix B). These initial open-ended questionnaires confirmed the university participants' agrarian background and enrollment in agricultural education and, thus,

their eligibility for the study. Participants were able to access and submit each open-ended questionnaire multiple times. Therefore, I was able to monitor participant progress, but there was no pressure to complete all questions at once.

Upon completion of the first open-ended questionnaire, participants who met study requirements were asked to complete an initial in-person, open-ended, qualitative interview (see Appendix C). This interview was audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. Following transcription and initial analysis, follow-up interviews were scheduled. Follow-up questions, specific to each individual participant, clarified, asked for further information about, and expanded upon previous responses.

Finally, university participants were asked to submit two photographs: one they felt represented who they were in relation to their rural farm home community, and one which represented who they were in relation to their university community. The collection of these photographs was intended to “probe how people define their world” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 146). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) termed such photographs “found photographs,” as the researcher does not take them but instead collects photographs others have taken (p. 142). These photographs were accompanied by narratives, with prompts provided to assist participants in composing the narratives (see Appendix D).

Research with Rural Consolidated High School students began in Spring 2015, following an approved amendment to the original IRB approval. After hearing a presentation inviting agrarian students to participate in the study, interested students took home a parental information and consent form (see Appendix E). If that form was returned with an approval signature, the student then scheduled time for an in-person, qualitative interview, though two graduating seniors opted to complete their interviews by email due to their busy schedules. These interviews took place during the school day, always with teacher permission during a study hall hour, either in the school library or in the researcher’s classroom. These audio-recorded interviews lasted approximately one hour and were based on a bank of initial and follow-up interview questions (see Appendix F). Interviews were transcribed and coded as they were completed.

Data analysis began as soon as data were received. Participant descriptions, for example, were drafted for each participant as soon as their online open-ended questionnaires were completed. Notes about emerging themes and potential codes were recorded after each interview

was transcribed. This constant comparative method of analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) is discussed in more detail below.

Table 3.1 Data Sources & Analysis

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Sources of Data</i>	<i>Data Analysis Strategies</i>
How do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' transition to higher education influence their identities?	Student questionnaire Student interviews Student narratives Student photographs	Coding (NVivo) Establishment of patterns
How do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' agrarian backgrounds influence their identities?	Student questionnaires Student interviews Student narratives Student photographs	Coding (NVivo) Establishment of patterns
How do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' university experiences influence their identities?	Student questionnaires Student interviews Student narratives	Coding (NVivo) Cross-case analysis Establishment of patterns

Data Analysis Methods

The case study utilized the constant comparative method of data analysis to allow for coding and analysis during the data collection process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 66). In the constant comparative design, “formal analysis begins early in the study and is nearly completed by the end of data collection” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 66). Per Miles and Huberman (1994), data analysis consisted of recursive, ongoing stages (pp. 10-11). Hence, examination, coding, analysis of emerging themes all occurred during data collection, though the writings were understood to be drafts open to revision based on further findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the constant comparative method,

“simultaneous data collection and analysis allow the researcher to make adjustments to collect the best data” (Merriam, 2010, p. 460), allowing unclear questions to be revised, necessary follow-up questions drafted, or a new viewpoint to be added by way of a new participant. In this study, participants from Rural Consolidated High School were added when I realized that they could help to confirm the kind of high school experiences Land Grant University participants were describing.

Coding

Following data collection, responses to initial and follow-up questions were coded, as the first step in analysis. Inquiry was guided by place-identity and new agrarian theory, although I also sought other insights. Initially, I sought out “regularities and patterns” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 171) and chose words and phrases to represent those patterns. Creswell (2013) suggested “aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code” (p. 184) and then reducing and combining the codes into approximately five or six themes (p. 185). Although I did not use all of Creswell’s (2013) terminology, I did choose to follow Creswell’s (2013) advice and allow the codes to emerge from the data rather than utilizing a priori codes. I also reduced the codes into patterns, though I kept more than the five or six themes suggested by Creswell (2013).

In developing codes from the data, I followed Hancock and Algozzine’s (2006) suggestion that reported findings “must reflect the purpose of the research and respond to the questions under investigation” (p. 61), although certainly other codes and patterns emerged which were unrelated to the research questions. In fact, patterns, and the codes making them up, were categorized and reported under each research question. Codes not relevant to the current study or research questions were set aside for future writings on the topic.

All questionnaire and interview data was loaded into QSR International’s NVivo 10 software, after being stripped of actual names and any other identifying information. Questionnaires and interviews were saved within NVivo by the pseudonym assigned to the participant. I then read through each questionnaire and interview multiple times, seeking common themes, repeated ideas, and other seemingly important ideas. I used the NVivo software

to code these pieces of data, which allowed me to look easily at ideas across questionnaires, interviews, and participants.

After all questionnaire and interview data was coded within NVivo, I used the software to examine the frequency with which each code was utilized, both within each participant's responses and across all participants. While the qualitative nature of my research meant that I was not looking for any specific percentage or number of uses, being able to easily see how frequently a specific idea came up in responses made it easier to quickly determine which data was richest and most valuable, as well as if I had reached data saturation.

Photographs, though interesting and important data, presented some data analysis challenges, as there are no words to be coded. (Note that the narrative captions accompanying the photographs did undergo the same coding and analysis described above.) Analysis of photographs began with learning the context of that photograph, in order to understand the purpose of the photographer, as a photograph taken for an agricultural marketing campaign, for example, differs greatly from a candid photograph in terms of goals and, therefore, information it contains (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). "When we study photos, we ascertain clues about what people value and the images they prefer—how they like to be pictured and how they picture others" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 145), and these found photographs indicated not only what the photographer found important, but what the participant valued, as they chose the photographs they wanted me to see. According to Riessman (2008), "investigators 'read' images and texts for meanings related to their research questions, theories, philosophical positions" (p. 179), indicating a need for close, repeated examination of photographs, similar to the close and repeated examination of questionnaire and interview responses. I examined each participant's photographs for similarities and differences between the participant's perception of themselves in relation to their home and college communities. Each photograph was also closely examined for similarities and differences from all other participant photographs.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Central to any qualitative study is the need to establish trustworthiness of data that cannot be confirmed with statistics. This study utilized clarifying researcher bias, member checking, crystallization, and peer review to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Clarifying Researcher Bias

Creswell (2013) recommended clearly outlining any potential biases on the part of the researcher at the outset of the study. No matter how careful a researcher is to avoid bias, “all researchers shape the writing that emerges, and qualitative researchers need to accept this interpretation and be open about it in their writings” (Creswell, 2013, p. 215). In an effort to remain conscious of and open about my own potential bias, I kept record of my thoughts and feelings throughout the process, per Bogdan and Biklen (1998). That list eventually morphed into the reflection presented at the end of Chapter 5, which is the visible evidence of my attempt to remain aware of and thus minimize my bias.

Member Checking

Member checking refers to asking participants for their input concerning the conclusions drawn from their questionnaires, interviews, and other data (Creswell, 2013). Although participants cannot be forced to participate in member checking, every participant was given the opportunity to read over and comment on or question the research findings and discussion, paying particular attention to information associated with their pseudonym.

Crystallization

By collecting varied forms of data (e.g., questionnaire, interview, photograph, narrative), seeking both university and high school agrarian student perspectives, and utilizing a case study design in which multiple artifacts were collected, the proposed study seeks to achieve crystallization. Crystallization is utilized most often in ethnography and autoethnography, but fit with this study, as it valued not only multiple viewpoints, but “combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text” (Ellingson, 2009, p. 4). Therefore, the case study sought to intentionally represent multiple viewpoints on the acculturation of agrarian students to the university, thereby achieving crystallization.

Peer Review

Often referred to as inter-rater reliability, particularly in quantitative research, peer review involves asking a peer outside the study to carefully examine and question the study, including everything from methods to conclusions (Creswell, 2013). While the doctoral committee certainly serves that purpose, I also sought out another doctoral candidate to participate in peer review and debriefing throughout the entirety of the study. A peer in the

department of Curriculum & Instruction was asked to code approximately 6% of the data in order to determine intercoder reliability. The first intercoder consistency was 76%. However, after discussion and revision of code definitions, the researcher and peer reviewer reached an agreement rate of 97%.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting research via an online portal, such as that provided by Land Grant University, and collecting personal photographs present special concerns for ethical handling of data, particularly where confidentiality and anonymity are concerned. The addition of high school participants, only one of whom was old enough to legally consent for himself, added another layer of ethical responsibility.

Informed Consent

University participants were asked to meet with me once, prior to completing any data collection, to complete informed consent, as required by the IRB. High school participants were given a letter of consent to take home and discuss with their parents. If both the high school student and his/her guardian consented to the study, the student returned the signed and dated form to me. All participants received a copy of their signed and dated consent form for their records. These forms also allowed students or their parents to opt out of certain portions of the study, such as photo collection or audio recording.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

The confidentiality of participants was maintained by utilizing pseudonyms for all names, locations, and identifying features in all study-related materials. Furthermore, all data was kept confidential. Only my major professor and I saw the data prior to the application of pseudonyms, and all data was stored on an encrypted, secure network and will be destroyed after three years.

Photographs provided by participants, in addition to being safely stored, were not considered for publication if they included other persons or recognizable geographic markers. Photographs were not sought from high school participants in order to add a layer of protection for them, due to their status as minors. Additionally, express consent was sought for all photographs deemed useful to publish along with the findings.

Role of the Researcher

In order to follow Creswell's (2013) recommendation that researchers disclose their stance on and resulting potential bias in their research, I must acknowledge my vested interest in the study. I grew up on a cattle, hog, sheep, and crop farm. I completed an undergraduate degree only about thirty minutes from my home, in large part due to my reluctance to leave the area. I spent many of my weekends at home, working on the farm. At the time, though I had no intention of taking over the family farm, I did intend to work as a schoolteacher in the area in order to be available to help on the farm at any time. My adjustment to college, even though near my home, was extremely difficult. For the first time, I was surrounded by people who did not share my values, particularly where agriculture was concerned. I decided to attend graduate school in order to ensure a future for myself off the farm. However, I found my graduate level institutions both to be more agrarian-friendly, due to their relatively rural, agrarian settings. Since attending graduate school, I have come to embrace my agrarian identity, and have plans to return to farming on some level.

My own experience, then, indicated that the transition to college could be a rough one rife with stereotypes. Additionally, the attitudes encountered at college can have a great impact on an agrarian student's attitude toward their agrarian identity and future plans. However, the pilot study helped to break down these expectations and revealed that not all agrarian students have quite the same experience. In an effort not to bias participants, I revealed only that I was an agrarian student. I feared that revealing my struggles might encourage students to focus only on the negative, even though I wanted to hear about both the positive and negative college transition experiences.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the design of the study. The influences of the pilot study on the proposed study design were quite significant, even prompting me to choose case study as the methodology and alter data collection methods. The case study, along with research questions, participant selection methods, and data collection methods, was laid out. Additionally, chapter 3 has addressed ethical considerations and acknowledged my potential biases. Finally, methods of data analysis and the limitations and delimitations of the study have been acknowledged.

Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study, and will include descriptions of each of the participants to establish reader understanding of their identities.

Chapter 5 will delve more deeply into the findings in the form of a discussion. Recommendations for implementation of the findings at various levels and for future research will also be presented.

Chapter 4 - Research Findings

The recent rise in popular culture references to the farm, particularly in advertising, such as the Ram Trucks commercial, “So God Made a Farmer,” demonstrates the public fascination with the farmer’s quaint way of life. However, universities have yet to recognize the agrarian students in their classrooms as a unique population. With agrarian students attending universities in increasing numbers (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001; Snyder & Dillow, 2010), and a common university focus on helping all students to achieve to the best of their ability, it is only logical that agrarian students, considered a minority by the United States Air Force (U.S. Air Force Academy, n.d.), would warrant educators’ attention. While agrarian students are not yet widely regarded as a minority population, it is clear that they both exist and attend university in much smaller numbers than urban or suburban students (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012; Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001).

Participant Descriptions

This study focused on eight agricultural education majors at Land Grant University, four male and four female, as well as five high school students attending Rural Consolidated High School, three male and two female. Given the qualitative case study design of this particular study, it was essential to begin with an understanding of the participants. The identities of the participants were central to the findings, lending them even more importance than might be typical for case study research.



Figure 4.1 Lisa (fourth from left)

Lisa (University Senior)

Lisa (pictured below, fourth from the left) was raised on a large family farm in the Midwest, including 3,500 acres of row crops, 1,100 acres of

hay, and 425 cow-calf pairs. Additionally, her family ran a custom-cutting business, in which they cut, baled, and put up other people's hay. During interviews, Lisa described herself as "a farm girl from a small town who wants to teach youth about the agricultural industry and that has an appreciation for both rural and urban life." Lisa's farm was located about fifteen to twenty minutes from the town where she attended high school. As of the 2013 census, the town where Lisa attended high school had a population of approximately 5,500 (United State Census Bureau). She grew up in a rural area with easy access (within thirty minutes or less) to shopping, restaurants of various types, movie theaters, and other entertainment options. Lisa mentioned that she grew up feeling that there were very few students like her, with a strong agrarian background and interest.

Audrey (University Sophomore)

Audrey graduated from a small rural high school as part of a graduating class of thirteen.



Figure 4.2 Audrey

The town where her high school was located boasted a population of nearly 800 in 2013 (United States Census Bureau). The nearest city with a mall was just under an hour away, making access to conventional entertainment possible, but time consuming. At the time of the interview, Audrey's favorite part of her family's farm growing up was the 100-125 head of cow calf pairs they ran with their eight Angus bulls. Her family also grew soybeans, wheat, and grain sorghum, though. The cattle operation inspired her to earn her minor in Animal Science, and she hoped to eventually get a masters in the field.

Whether she achieved her education goals or not, Audrey said, "I don't really see myself doing anything other than agriculture."

Paul (University Freshman)

The only participant who did not grow up on a farm, Paul's life in a small town of approximately 600 still centered on agriculture. While in high school, he worked on a farm



Figure 4.3 Paul at His Farm Home

running 1,500 head of cattle and farming over 10,000 acres of land. Although he grew up primarily working on a farm, rather than living on one, Paul said, “I call myself a farm kid because that’s what I love and all I know. I would not fit into any other category.” He frequently reiterated his love for manual labor during our interviews. In fact, Paul was one of few participants who actively sought agricultural jobs while attending Land Grant University, and was firm in his resolve to create his own farm after college.

Jared (University Senior)

The FFA Pope (so named by his classmates for his extensive knowledge of the FFA organization) described himself as “a nerd at heart” and the “stereotypical farm kid, [but] there’s also that side of me that science fiction, fantasy, art, dance, I mean, I like jump into everything. I love trying new adventurous, I up, his family’s cattle operation some show interviews, he in the part of education grew up in approximately



Figure 4.4 Jared (photo chosen by participant to represent farm self)

things and so I’m very guess you could say!” Growing livelihood depended on a small of about 150 head, along with calves and pigs. During named his faith, his involvement agricultural industry, and being as keys to his identity. Jared

grew up in approximately 160 in 2013 (United States Census Bureau), attended grades K-8 in West City, population approximately 4,500 in 2013 (United States Census Bureau), and requested to attend high school in Mink, population approximately 4,000 in 2013 (United States Census Bureau), for the purpose of participating in

FFA. Although relatively close together, none of these towns or cities was particularly urban. None of the towns had a mall, although both Mink and West City each had one movie theater.

Stephanie (University Junior)



Figure 4.5 Stephanie

Stephanie was “rural at heart and always will be.” She was an energetic, talkative young woman very confident of herself. She grew up on a small family farm where her family ran cow calf pairs, grew a variety of crops, and put up and sold their own hay. Stephanie attended a very small high school, graduating as part of a class of 23. At the time of the interview, she chose not to reveal her hometown, though she estimated that the town where she attended high school had a population of around 200, leaving her with very little access to shopping or entertainment.

Danielle (University Junior)

“A small town girl” who found herself in college, Danielle (pictured here, far right)



Figure 4.6 Danielle (far right)

described herself as a girl “just getting her schoolwork done who wants to go back to a rural area.” She grew up on a cow calf production farm running 150 head of cattle and growing corn, wheat, milo, soybeans, and alfalfa. She expressed a desire to return to Western University State, ideally to her hometown, which boasted a hospital, high school, grade school,

and dollar store. Her hometown was located approximately three hours from Land Grant University.

Scott (University Sophomore)

Scott was a fifth generation farmer/rancher, and grew up on 500 acres of crop ground,



Figure 4.7 Scott (right) with his Father

producing feed for his family’s 400 head of beef and show cattle. His family also sold any excess crop to help make a little extra money. Scott attended high school in a nearby town with a population of approximately 800 (United States Census Bureau, 2013). The nearest Wal-Mart, hospital, and other such resources were located approximately twenty minutes from Scott’s family farm. When asked to talk about who he was, Scott responded firmly

by saying, “without agriculture, I’d be nothing.” He was a very independent, confident young man with an eye to returning to the farming life that shaped him.

Sheldon (University Freshman)

Although his father was a silage cutter all his life, Sheldon didn’t consider himself a farm kid until he reached the 8th grade, when his family got some cattle and farm ground. Even then, he said he didn’t feel he made much impact on the farm, though it certainly made an impact on him. The family lived in and worked out of a small town of 200 until Sheldon was about fourteen, at which point they moved to a farm outside of Sym, population approximately 2,900 (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Beginning in 8th grade, Sheldon and his family had 70 head of cattle and grew wheat and corn. With a hospital, Subway, Taco Bell, and public schools, Sym offered access to very basic needs and entertainment, though the nearest mall was approximately an hour and a half away. (Sheldon opted not to submit any photographs.)

MaryKate (High School Senior)

An outgoing senior at the time of her interview, MaryKate was quiet and shy, but not afraid to stand up for herself or her friends. She grew up on a crop and hog farm, including both her own family and her uncle. The farm was located near a small town of nearly 200 (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Located just a little over an hour from University City, MaryKate's town did not contain any restaurants, major stores, or other common forms of entertainment. The town did feature a church, park, community center, post office, liquor store, and a mechanic's shop, though. (Photographs not collected from high school students.)

John (High School Junior)

John was a high school junior with a big personality. Known for impersonating John Wayne and Johnny Cash, John was an energetic, outgoing young man always wearing jeans or overalls and boots. Most importantly, though, during the interview, John defined himself by his hard work, being the sole person in charge of his approximately 400 acre farm. This level of responsibility is rare at the age of 17, but John prided himself on it, and felt it garnered respect from adults and classmates alike. John was solely responsible for growing wheat, beans, milo, and hay, which he both put up and sold. Until the summer of 2011, John also milked dairy cattle. Additionally, John had part ownership in 135 head of cattle with his boss, for whom he took care of cattle year round. The nearest town to John's farm boasted a population of approximately 100 (United States Census Bureau, 2013), and offered access to a bank, church, and café, though fast food was still around a half hour away. (Photographs not collected from high school students.)

Kelli (High School Junior)

Kelli first appeared shy, but was actually quite outspoken once she became comfortable. She was a junior in high school at the time of the interview, and heavily involved in school activities, noting FFA as her favorite. She grew up on a cattle and crop production farm, raising soybeans and wheat. Kelli's farm was located near the same small town of nearly 200 (United States Census Bureau, 2013) as MaryKate's, with access to multiple restaurant choices approximately half an hour away, and movie theaters approximately one hour away. Kelli's farm was run by both her family and her uncle, due to her father's tragic death prior to the research. (Photographs not collected from high school students.)

Bob (High School Sophomore)

Although he grew up near a city with a population of approximately 1,800 (United States Census Bureau, 2013), when asked to explain who he was, Bob's immediate response was "a farm kid." Although one of the largest cities in the area, Bob still had to drive an hour to access a movie theater or mall. Bob was among the loudest students in the sophomore class. His jeans, overalls, work boots, and enormous personality didn't allow any student to miss his farm-kid presence. Although they had stopped raising hogs by the time of the interview, Bob and his family still ran cattle and grew corn, wheat, milo, and hay. (Photographs not collected from high school students.)

Max (High School Senior)

Tall, quiet, and highly intelligent, Max was always well-dressed and had a fun, snappy comeback on the tip of his tongue. At the time of the interview, Max was a graduating senior, the oldest of four children, and had grown up living and working on a farm raising crops, cattle, and hogs. His family farm was located very near to the same city as Bob's, providing him with more urban access than some, but still a one-hour drive to highly varied restaurant options or a movie theater. (Photographs not collected from high school students.)

Data Analysis Methods

Data for this study were collected from two groups, forming two cases. The first data collection took place during the Spring 2014 semester at Land Grant University. This case targeted agrarian students majoring in secondary agricultural education. Eight participants, four males and four females, elected to participate. All were asked to complete two in-person interviews, submission of at least two photographs, and submission of the most meaningful college assignment completed thus far. The most meaningful assignment request was often met by a lack of an assignment or submission of an assignment completed in an agriculture course. Only those meaningful assignments that demonstrated intentional inclusion of agriculture in non-agriculture classes are discussed here. Please note that photographic data is not analyzed until the next chapter due to the level of explanation needed to fully understand and analyze the photographs. Additionally, participants were given the opportunity to request my presence at class, work, clubs, or other activities whose observation might lend itself to the research. The second case, that of agrarian students attending Rural Consolidated High School, consisted of

three male and two female students, all planning to attend college. High school participants completed one interview and were observed in the English classroom setting.

Following data collection, all interviews were transcribed and identifying information removed. The resulting transcripts, along with other data provided by the participants, such as photographs and schoolwork, were entered into the NVivo program for reliable storage and efficient coding. However, none of NVivo's auto-coding features were utilized.

Once each piece of data was entered into NVivo, I read through it multiple times, marking segments of data with relevance to the research questions. I primarily sought data points that would answer the overarching research question: RQ#1. Do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' transition to higher education influence their identities?

The following sub-questions were also addressed:

RQ#2. Do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' agrarian backgrounds influence their identities?

RQ#3. Do agrarian secondary agricultural education students' university experiences influence their identities?

Data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection, described as the best strategy by Merriam (2010). With analysis of each bit of data, new codes were developed, prior codes were adjusted, and tentative findings were recorded. For example, early in the data analysis process, the code "Friendly College Culture" was created, but was dismissed when analysis of more data revealed more specific and accurate coding options for that data, e.g., "Interconnectivity & Relationships." As more data was collected and entered, I was able to begin to compare the data and label patterns appearing across the data. Per Merriam (2010), "this iterative process of qualitative data analysis leads to solid and well-supported findings" (p. 460).

It should also be noted that the first case, that of agrarian students in Land Grant University's secondary agricultural education program, was collected, coded, and analyzed first. Approximately one year later, data from the second case, that of Rural Consolidated High School's agrarian students, was collected and examined. These two cases were separated in large part due to issues of access. The second case became available after the first case had already been collected and partially analyzed. However, separating the two cases was also essential, as Bogdan and Biklen (1998) encouraged keeping separation of cases in order to avoid confusion of names, information provided, or other facts of the separate cases.

Once all data was entered and coded, I began reading and rereading the data contained under each code. I was then able to complete code mapping, based on the method described by Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002), to make coding more coherent. I began by separating the initial codes into groups that seemed to “hang together,” or have a common thread (see Initial Codes in Tables 4.1 – 4.4). I then determined a “pattern” or theme under which the codes that hung together fit (See Patterns in Tables 4.1 – 4.4). Finally, I grouped these patterns and codes in columns under each of the research questions (RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3). Codes were categorized as answering the overarching question one, sub-question two, and/or sub-question three. Codes not fitting into any of the groups are still listed, but were either deemed irrelevant and were not examined further in this study or were utilized only to provide contextual information about participants. In an effort to make the research and coding process transparent, a chart for each research question, including sample data points, initial codes, and emerging patterns, are provided below alongside the analysis for the coordinating research question. A comprehensive table including all three research questions may be found beginning on page 71.

Overarching Research Question (RQ1) Analysis

Nine codes, seven of which are shown in Table 4.1, were categorized as aiding in answering the overarching research question. Two codes that aided in answering the overarching research question did not fit either of the pattern categories. “Gender Differences” in the treatment of farm kids, employment of secondary agricultural education teachers, or adjustment of farm kids to college were noted by six of the thirteen participants. Although interesting, I determined that there was not enough information or consensus among participants for it to serve as a key finding. The other uncategorized code, “Self-Described Identity,” was both collected and coded primarily to aid in creating participant descriptions. However, descriptions of how participants felt they changed after moving to Land Grant University were utilized in the discussion of findings in the next chapter.

Table 4.1 Overarching RQ#1 Code Map

	Sample Data Points	Initial Codes	Patterns
<p>RQ#1: Does the transition from farm home to Land Grant University influence identity in agrarian students majoring in secondary agricultural education?</p>	<p>"I find that they're kind of two different worlds but yet they can merge. Like sometimes I feel like being athletic helps you on the farm, just by being stronger and quicker when you need to like, when cows are bolting and you need to move a little more agilely." (Stephanie, Interview #2)</p>	<p>Blended Benefits</p>	<p>1A. Merging Worlds</p>
	<p>"I like Land Grant University because it allows me to really stay involved with agriculture everywhere. Ya know, messing with a sheep during ag fest, at ag fest showing little kids different things about sheep." (Scott, Interview #2)</p>	<p>College-Farm Connection</p>	
	<p>"It's kind of hard for me to try to make connections because a lot of them are engineers and they have no agriculture background." (Paul, Interview #1)</p>	<p>Interconnectivity & Relationships</p>	
	<p>"There's no fast food restaurants. No Wal-Mart's. Well, I mean, to get to them you have to travel. Here it's just five minutes and you go, so if I need anything, I just go." (Danielle, Interview #1)</p>	<p>Access</p>	
	<p>"Like, if you go to college, if you're a city slicker and you want to go to college to learn how to be a beef producer, they, I don't really think they'd teach you everything. I mean, you gotta get out there and you gotta work for one to find out how everything works." (John, Interview #1)</p>	<p>"Colleges don't teach everything"</p>	
	<p>"I just think they need to be some type of agriculture, I mean, I think they need to live on a farm or work, ya know, be involved in the farm. Not necessarily a daily basis, but a weekly basis, a weekend basis, those types of people." (Scott, Interview #2)</p>	<p>Farm vs. City</p>	
<p>"When I first came here, it was a little hectic because it was a bigger town than what I was used to driving through. And a lot more people." (Paul, Interview #1)</p>	<p>Increased Population or Congestion</p>	<p>1B. Differences & Tensions</p>	

Further examination and analysis of the remaining seven codes resulted in two emerging patterns, Merging Worlds (1A) and Differences & Tensions (1B). Those patterns, and the codes they consist of, are analyzed below. The overarching research question, called “RQ#1” in table 4.1, focused on the transition from the farm home to college. Therefore, elements of both agrarian and university influence on identity may be seen here.

Pattern 1A: Merging Worlds

Every participant in the Land Grant University case felt the impact of the transition to college as that of merging their two worlds: agriculture and education. This merging of farm and college occurred in three ways, classified under three surface codes: blended benefits, college-farm connection, and interconnectivity and relationships.

Blended Benefits

One participant, Stephanie, explicitly noted that skills learned in her agricultural life were beneficial in her sports life and vice versa. Other participants also noted that traits learned on the farm, such as work ethic, were useful in college. However, due to the fact that only one participant explicitly mentioned the overlap of benefits between her agricultural and urban worlds, this code is not discussed further.

College-Farm Connections

Seven of the eight Land Grant University participants intentionally created a connection between their university experiences and their farm roots. Obviously, all Land Grant University participants created this connection via their choice to major in agricultural education. This code refers specifically to creating a connection to the farm in university life outside of agricultural classes.

Interconnectivity & Relationships

Seven of the eight Land Grant University participants cited their relationships, particularly those that spanned the high school to college transition, as useful in the transition. Interconnectivity refers to those relationships that began in high school and lasted through or were rekindled in college. In particular, Land Grant University participants cited relationships with students from other high schools formed through the FFA organization.

One of the five Rural Consolidated High School participants, MaryKate, also made note of the importance of relationships to the upcoming transition, and feared that she might have trouble forming the necessary relationships.

Pattern 1B: Differences & Tensions

Any student making the transition to college faces changes and at least some level of difficulty adjusting to the new college environment. It also stands to reason that students moving to college from a setting vastly different from the university setting would encounter more differences and tensions than a student from a setting similar to that of the university. For participants in this study, those differences and tensions manifested in four surface codes: access, “colleges don’t teach everything,” farm vs. city, and increased population or congestion.

Access

Seven of the eight Land Grant University participants and two of the five Rural Consolidated High School participants noted differences in access from their farm home to the university. This difference in access included opportunities to drive in cities before moving to University City as well as the marked difference in access to necessities and entertainment when moving from the farm to the city.

“Colleges don’t teach everything”

Only one Rural Consolidated High School student, John, made explicit note of the need for “hands on” experience, rather than just “book learning” at the university level. Therefore, this code is not discussed further. However, John’s statement, coded in vivo, did support the finding of tensions between the farm and university worlds. In John’s case, he placed more valuation on the farm, leaving the university to serve as a sort of secondary source of education.

Farm vs. City

Every single participant from both the Land Grant University case and the Rural Consolidated High School case contributed to the “Farm vs. City” code. Admittedly, this code is broad, encompassing any data point in which a participant contrasted farm and city in any way. This includes moments when a participant explained what a “farm kid” was by contrasting farm kids with city kids. Also included under this code are explanations of the differences and tensions participants experienced or anticipated experiencing upon moving to college. All

participants experienced or anticipated experiencing some form of contrast between their former farm home and current city home. However, the degree to which such difference was felt and methods of coping differed, as explored in the next chapter.

Increased Population or Congestion

One difference in moving from the farm to the university stood out. All eight Land Grant University students identified the increase in population and traffic as difference to adjust to, and four of five Rural Consolidated High School students anticipated the increase as an issue in adjusting to college. Due to the number of participants specifically listing the increase in population as a difference and issue in adjusting, this data was coded separately from the more general “Farm vs. City” code.

First Subsidiary Research Question (RQ2) Analysis

Research question two focused on how participants’ agrarian backgrounds influenced their identity formation, resulting in codes primarily related to participants’ farm homes. Nine codes, shown in Table 4.2, were categorized as aiding in answering research question two. Two patterns, “It’s in my blood” (2A) and “Continuing Educational Legacy/Impact,” (2B) emerged from further analysis of the codes related to research question two. Those patterns, and the codes they consisted of, are analyzed below.

Pattern 2A: “It’s in my blood”

The concept of inherited agrarian culture and ideals was common among participants. Each of the thirteen participants described portions of their identities, with particular attention to future plans, as the inevitable result of their agrarian background. Codes specifically identifying the specific elements of agrarian backgrounds useful in the college transition or decision-making process are detailed below: financial need for work, generational, place attachment, returning to the rural, “who’s gonna do it while I’m gone?,” and work ethic.

Table 4.2 RQ#2 Code Map

	Sample Data Points	Initial Codes	Patterns
RQ#2: Does agrarian background influence identity in agrarian students majoring in secondary agricultural education?	"my dad and my uncle and my grandpa . . . that's their job, that's their income. If I go straight back to the farm, it would be cutting their income if they were to give me some and it wouldn't be enough probably for them to be able to live off of." (Scott, Interview #2)	Financial Need for Work	2A. "It's in my blood"
	"I'm a fifth generation farmer, and my uncle and my dad are the fourth and my grandpa is the third, obviously. . . I don't know, I guess I'd just hate to see it die is kind of the thing." (Scott, Interview #2)	Generational	
	"And just, I mean, it's the only thing I've ever really known. And I like being able to drive past a pasture that's our land. If it came to the fact that it wasn't our land, it would be kind of weird." (Scott, Interview #2)	Place Attachment	
	"I want to live in the small area. I don't want to live in the city. And I do, I, the way I'm living right now is the way I would live back home. I don't go shopping, I stay in my dorm, do the work I need to do, I try working out on the farm. Now that I work on the pig farm, it's easier to do that." (Paul, Interview #2)	Returning to the Rural	
	"It would be hard, because, the way I look at it, who's gonna do all that farming while I'm gone? I'm the only one that does it" (John, Interview #1)	"Who's gonna do it while I'm gone?"	
	"So it just, there's no desire to work and there's no work ethic. They go to class, they complain that it's too long, and so they go back to their dorms and fall asleep. And they wonder why they can't get above a C in a class." (Paul, Interview #1)	Work Ethic	
	"I feel like everyone should know about agriculture but that's definitely not happening. So I just want to, stuff I learned as a child, I want to be able to teach kids about it" (Danielle, Interview # 1)	Enlightening City Folk	2B. Continuing educational legacy or impact
	"I just definitely did not realize all that FFA did for me until later on. And I think that's what is another major impact that made me go to it. Because I want kids to realize what it can do for you." (Danielle, Interview #2)	FFA	
	"the main reason why I majored in ag ed was inspiration. My teacher helped give me a lot of skills and inspired me to do my best, never stop. I wanted, he wanted to see me succeed, so that's kind of what I wanna do for my students is show 'em that anything's possible as long as they put forth the effort." (Paul, Interview #1)	Teacher Influence	

Financial Need for Work

Of the thirteen participants, five of the Land Grant University participants and four of the Rural Consolidated High School participants specifically noted financial need as a reason for pursuing a career off the farm, often in addition to continuing to farm. In some cases, participants intended to work off the farm while farming. Some participants wanted a “fall back” plan in case the farm failed or simply saw farming as an unreasonable goal and intended to leave the farm altogether. In all cases, the plans were driven by financial need, as evidenced by participant observations of their own family’s struggles to make ends meet on the farm.

Generational

Seven of the eight Land Grant University participants and four of the five Rural Consolidated High School participants noted generational ties as influential in their decisions about the future. These generational ties fell easily into two categories: ties to farming and ties to Land Grant University. In either case, participants felt that past generations’ experiences and expectations both should and did influence their identities, as demonstrated through their future plans.

Place Attachment

Place attachment refers to a tie to a specific location due to some form of connection with that particular piece of land. For six of the eight Land Grant University and two of the five Rural Consolidated High School participants, a particular location or plot of land was significant enough to influence identity in such a way that participants planned to return. In some cases, this meant returning specifically to the family farm he/she was raised on, while other participants planned to return to an area near their farm home to start their own farm.

Returning to the Rural

I found that a large percentage of the participants, seven of the eight from Land Grant University and two of the five from Rural Consolidated High School, took comfort in the fact that they would soon be returning to their rural comfort zone. In fact, participants noted that knowledge of their eventual return to a rural area made transitioning to college a bit easier, because they saw it as a necessary but temporary situation.

“Who’s gonna do it while I’m gone?”

Although only expressed by two participants from each research case, four total, concern over who would do the work of farming and/or teaching agricultural education if the participant did not was a particularly striking finding. Those concerned about continuation of the family farm felt that they were the only ones left to run it once their parents were unable. Those concerned about the continuation of agricultural education cited a shortage of agricultural teachers in the state, and no sign of a solution to that problem.

Work Ethic

When asked to explain the differences between farm and non-farm students, all Land Grant University participants and four of the five Rural Consolidated High School participants noted work ethic as a major difference. More than just a difference between themselves and their non-farm peers, though, participants described work ethic as something learned on the farm, something passed on to them due to their agrarian background. They not only saw themselves as hard workers, they enjoyed the hard work and attributed it to their agrarian upbringing.

Pattern 2B: Continuing Educational Legacy/Impact

Perhaps unsurprising, as all Land Grant University participants were majoring in agricultural education, all thirteen participants from both research groups saw educating others about agriculture, in some fashion, as important, not only to their identities, but also to the future of agriculture. This need for educating others fell under three surface codes: enlightening city folk, FFA, and teacher influence.

Enlightening City Folk

Only one participant, part of the Land Grant University case, did not note teaching non-farmers about farming as an important part of his identity and goals, although he did recognize that agricultural education teachers had a great impact on his life. The rest of the participants stated a need for non-farmers to know about farming, particularly as it related to food production, and referred to their futures in agriculture and/or agricultural education as driven, at least in part, by the desire to help educate people about agriculture.

FFA

The FFA organization, made up of 68% rural members (National FFA Organization, 2015), was noted by seven university and two high school participants as influential in their transition from home to college. The FFA organization was cited multiples times as helpful because participants found, or expected to find in the case of the high school students, friends at college who they already knew through FFA, giving them an instant friendship to help them navigate their new location. However, of more interest to Pattern 2B, participants explained that the FFA organization had taught them many things and been an integral part of their life in high school. Rather than leave the organization altogether, since membership ends at age 23 (National FFA Organization, 2015), all Land Grant University participants decided that they wanted to continue the organization’s legacy of leadership and education by becoming an agriculture teacher, which typically brings with it the FFA advisor position.

Teacher Influence

Although no Rural Consolidated High School participants noted the influence of teachers on their future plans to either return to farming or go into agricultural education, five of the eight university participants did note a connection. Those five university participants identified their high school agriculture teachers as at least part of the reason that they chose to return to agriculture and/or agricultural education. Because participants identified exclusively agricultural education teachers, this code overlaps with the FFA code, due to the agriculture teachers being FFA advisors as well.

Second Subsidiary Research Question (RQ3) Analysis

Research question three focused on how participants’ university experiences influenced their identity formation, resulting in codes primarily related to participants’ lives at Land Grant University, and therefore fewer data points from Rural Consolidated High School participants are seen under this research question than the previous two. Eight codes were initially identified, as shown in Table 4.3. Upon further analysis, these codes were classified into two patterns, “Finding Self-Identity” (3A) and “Can I go Home?” (3B). However, in the process, it was determined that the code titled “Friendly College Culture” was unnecessary, as its data points

Table 4.3 RQ#3 Code Map

	Sample Data Points	Initial Codes	Patterns
<p>RQ#3: Do the university experiences of agrarian students majoring in agricultural education influence their identities?</p>	<p>"the more I learn here at Land Grant University, I'd have to say the agriculture part of it's more important, just cuz I know the importance of it now. Like I knew it before, but now I understand it." (Paul, Interview #1)</p>	Confirmation	<p>3A. Finding Self-Identity</p>
	<p>"I guess part of the reason I came to college was to be able to interact with lots of people, but to be able to have that little bit of lax time every now and then and kind of be myself before I have to maybe not necessarily do things a little different than what I might truly actually like to do." (Scott, Interview #2)</p>	Free Time	
	<p>"I don't feel like you really have to find yourself until you really are on your own and you have to figure out what you want to do." (Danielle, Interview #2)</p>	Identity Freedom	
	<p>"coming here, just look at all the different diversity that there is here. I could get along with people just fine. And I could probably tolerate them for a long time. But none of them make me feel at home unless if they have a connection to agriculture." (Paul, Interview #1)</p>	My People	
	<p>"I really came to college to meet people, have fun, get away from the every day farm life for a while" (Scott, Questionnaire)</p>	Taking a Break	
	<p>"as far as going to a huge school where I only talk to a couple students here and there and then I go back home to a smaller community, I don't think that'll help me as much and could potentially hurt me a little bit, could become one of the city folk, if that makes sense." (Paul, Interview #1)</p>	Can't Go Home	<p>3B. Can I go Home?</p>
	<p>"Cuz I mean, there's a lot of older ag teachers out there and they've been doing the same thing for all these years, so just bring something different" (Danielle, Interview #1)</p>	New Faces & Ideas	

were either irrelevant to the research questions or contained in the “My People” code. Therefore, the “Friendly College Culture” code was eliminated and is not discussed further. The remaining codes, categorized under their correlating patterns, are analyzed below.

Pattern 3A: Finding Self-Identity

It is no secret that adolescents transitioning to college are still in the process of forming their identities (McGlone & Aronson, 2006; Sherman et al., 2013). In fact, Sherman et al. (2013) specifically noted moments of “academic transition” as important to identity formation. Codes under this pattern related specifically to participants’ efforts to explore their identities while attending Land Grant University. Identity exploration manifested in five surface codes: confirmation, free time, identity freedom, my people, and taking a break.

Confirmation

Six of the eight Land Grant University participants found confirmation of their agricultural backgrounds while attending university. In particular, courses, teachers, friends, or work experiences confirmed their agricultural knowledge or clarified agricultural knowledge that they already held. This code does not refer to confirmation of any other kind, only confirmation of agricultural knowledge.

Free Time

The need to adjust to having free time while at college, rather than being constantly busy on the farm, was noted by only three Land Grant University participants. However, it is still listed here for its support of the pattern, Finding Self-Identity, as free time required participants to decide how to occupy themselves.

Identity Freedom

The freedom to be whomever you want and do whatever you want at college is certainly appealing. Five Land Grant University participants observed that transitioning to college allowed them to try new things and explore who they were in ways they had not at home. Due to the fact that this is likely common to university students outside the population studied, this code is not discussed further, though some data points were cross-coded and are discussed in other sections, particularly the “Can’t Go Home” code.

My People

Six Land Grant University participants felt their transition to college cushioned by finding “their people.” In other words, by forming friendships with people like them, with similar backgrounds, experiences, backgrounds, and goals, in other words, similar identities, participants felt better able to successfully transition from home to college and, in some cases, back again. Additionally, one Rural Consolidated High School participant stated that he anticipated that he would be a loner until locating friends with similar backgrounds, such as those identified by the Land Grant University participants.

Taking a Break

According to four Land Grant University participants, farming is hard work, and the chance to take a break in college was appreciated. This break allowed participants to explore other facets of their identity and, in nearly all cases, to affirm their decision to eventually return to the farm. In fact, some participants even stated that they missed the farm work after being at the university for a short time.

Pattern 3B: Can I Go Home?

In addition to transitioning to college, some participants then looked ahead to the coming transition back to the farm. These seven university participants and one high school participant looked to the coming transition with some questions and concerns. Some saw primarily ways in which returning home would restrict their identity, concerned that they would be expected to be just like they were in high school. Others focused more on the opportunity to bring a younger generation and fresh ideas back to agriculture, which has historically been an older profession (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2012). The question of returning to the rural farm home was addressed in two surface codes: can’t go home and new faces and ideas.

Can’t Go Home

Though only noted by two participants, Paul and Stephanie of the Land Grant University case, it was striking that they felt returning home as the people they had become in college would be difficult. They felt the need to live up to who they were in high school and feared that they would be seen as having turned into “city people” after spending around four years at Land Grant University. Therefore, they faced the return to the farm with some trepidation.

New Faces & Ideas

At the same time as they were concerned about the ability to go home and maintain their new identities, Paul, Stephanie, and five of their peers at Land Grant University looked forward to introducing a younger generation with new ideas to the field of agriculture. Bob, a Rural Consolidated High School participant, also anticipated that attending college would allow him to bring new innovations, ideas, and energy to the farm upon his return. These new ideas included everything from crop and livestock care to newer technologies to make farming more efficient.

Inclusive Analysis

Six major patterns, seen in Table 4.4 below, emerged from qualitative data analysis, consisting of coding, recoding, and repeated readings of the data. Although all six patterns are important in understanding agrarian student experiences of the transition to college, further analysis revealed that one pattern in particular, Pattern 2A “It’s in my blood,” was the pattern around which most other patterns, codes, and data points centered. Without the attachment to place or generational ties to farming, codes found under Pattern 2A, many of the other codes and patterns simply would not exist. These two codes, and the “It’s in my blood” pattern as a whole, exemplified the importance of agriculture to the participants, and one of the key reasons for its importance. This affinity for agriculture and rural areas clearly impacted participants’ perceptions of Land Grant University, as demonstrated in patterns 1A and 1B (see Table 4.4). Without an affinity for agrarian rural spaces, the increase on population or differences in access would likely be unremarkable. Students who do not value their agrarian backgrounds are also unlikely to make the intentional connections to agriculture during college that are found under the “College-Farm Connections” code, or even to major in agricultural education. Therefore, while all six patterns were incredibly important to understanding this population, a deep understanding of just pattern 2A, “It’s in my blood,” would enable those working with the population to do so more effectively.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided an in-depth description of the participants, as relevant to the findings. Data analysis methods, with supporting citations, have been explained. Additionally, coding

Table 4.4 Inclusive Code Map

Research Question	Initial Codes	Patterns	
RQ#1: Does the transition from farm home to Land Grant University influence identity in agrarian students majoring in secondary agricultural education?	Blended Benefits	1A. Merging Worlds	
	College-Farm Connection		
	Interconnectivity & Relationships		
	RQ#1: Does the transition from farm home to Land Grant University influence identity in agrarian students majoring in secondary agricultural education?	Access	1B. Differences & Tensions
		"Colleges don't teach everything"	
		Farm vs. City	
		Increased Population/Congestion	
RQ#2: Does agrarian background influence identity in agrarian students majoring in secondary agricultural education?	Financial Need for Work	2A. "It's in my blood"	
	Generational		
	Place Attachment		
	Returning to the Rural		
	"Who's gonna do it while I'm gone?"		
	Work Ethic	2B. Continuing educational legacy/impact	
	Enlightening City Folk		
	FFA		
	Teacher Influence		
RQ#3: Do the university experiences of agrarian students majoring in agricultural education influence their identities?	Confirmation	3A. Finding Self-Identity	
	Free Time		
	Identity Freedom		
	Taking a Break		
	My People		
	New Faces & Ideas	3B. Can I go Home?	
	Can't Go Home		

methods have been made transparent, and related to research questions. Finally, findings were explained, organized under patterns and research questions.

Chapter 5 will expand on the findings presented in Chapter 4, with particular attention to providing participant narratives to support the findings. Based upon these findings, suggestions will be made for professionals working with the agrarian student population.

Chapter 5 - Summary and Discussion

Given that all participants self-identified as “farm kids,” all had a similarly agriculturally-based sense of identity. When these identities were faced with moving away from the rural farm home to a more urban university area, participants not only learned about themselves, but also coped in various ways. Most of these methods of coping, as well as choices related to identity, were a result of the influence of feeling that agriculture was in their blood.

Summary of Study

This qualitative case study utilized data collected from online questionnaires, qualitative interviews, observations, and participant-provided photographs and course assignments. This information was collected across two cases. The first case, that of agrarian students majoring in secondary agricultural education, featured four male and four female participants, all attending Land Grant University. The second case, that of agrarian students attending Rural Consolidated High School and with some intention of attending college, consisted of three male and two female participants. The second case was used primarily to gauge the consistency of agrarian student views of higher education across time.

The study was organized around and interpreted using identity theory. In other words, due to the drastic shift in location from home to college, a participant’s identity, and the potential changes and threats to it, was deemed key to a participant’s adjustment from home to college. Therefore, the qualitative interviews, photographs, most meaningful assignment, and observations were all interpreted through the lens of place-identity.

Findings

For continuity’s sake, the discussion of findings below follows the same format as that of chapter four. However, due to finding, via qualitative analysis, that Pattern 2A: “It’s in my blood” laid the foundation for many of the other patterns found in the data, discussion of that pattern’s relevance, and/or the codes falling under that pattern, have also been added to many of the patterns below.

Overarching Research Question (RQ1)

This research question sought a “big picture” view of the transition from farm home to college. Therefore, elements of both the rural agrarian and urban college worlds were present in the answers to this question. A breakdown of the codes, by pattern, may be seen in Table 5.1

This study’s overarching research question, RQ#1, asked, “Does the transition from farm home to Land Grant University influence identity in agrarian students majoring in secondary agricultural education?” Based on qualitative data analysis, the answer seems to be a resounding yes. In particular, the transition from farm to university prompted participants to view their two worlds, both key to identity, differently than they had previously, and forced them to utilize various adaptation strategies (Cicognani et al., 2011; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011; Proshansky, 1978).

Pattern 1A: Merging Worlds

Participants attending Land Grant University found that their two worlds, the University City world and the farm home world, overlapped and merged in their daily lives at Land Grant University. First, the two codes containing significant data, College-Farm Connections and Interconnectivity & Relationships, are discussed separately. Certainly some overlap can be noted in these discussions, but the explicit overlap of these two codes, and the resulting merging worlds, is discussed following the discussion of findings by code.

College – Farm Connections

Although all Land Grant University participants experienced the merging of their two worlds: farm and university, perhaps the most striking way in which their worlds merged was through the intentional action of the participants. Already, participants’ choice of agricultural education as a career path demonstrated a desire to intentionally link their lives to agriculture. However, seven of the eight Land Grant University participants went even further, intentionally linking their daily lives and coursework to agriculture, even while residing in University City. Some, like Audrey and Paul, found work on farms or ranches on or near the university campus in order to both earn money and remain connected to their agricultural roots. They certainly could have chosen other employment, and Paul did work three other jobs in addition to working on the hog farm, but these participants intentionally sought agricultural employment. In fact, Audrey described her workplace as an escape, where, she says, “I just get to go out and kind of forget

Table 5.1 RQ#1 Code Chart

1A. Merging Worlds		
Codes	Definitions	Data Point Samples
Blended Benefits (Not discussed here)	Participant notes overlaps between agricultural and non-agricultural elements of his/her life, particularly as helpful in succeeding in any area of life.	"I find that they're kind of two different worlds but yet they can merge. Like sometimes I feel like being athletic helps you on the farm, just by being stronger and quicker when you need to like, when cows are bolting and you need to move a little more agilely." (Stephanie, Interview #2)
College-Farm Connection	Participants intentionally bring agriculture into their courses and daily lives outside of the agricultural education program requirements	"I like Land Grant University because it allows me to really stay involved with agriculture everywhere. Ya know, messing with a sheep during ag fest, at ag fest showing little kids different things about sheep." (Scott, Interview #2)
Interconnectivity & Relationships	Relationships cited as helpful/hurtful in transitioning to college or to work after college, including relationships from home or college.	"It's kind of hard for me to try to make connections because a lot of them are engineers and they have no agriculture background." (Paul, Interview #1)
1B. Differences & Tensions		
Codes	Definitions	Data Point Samples
Access	Issues of differing access to entertainment or basic needs between rural and non including need for urban access and more access to entertainment after moving from home to college. Etc.	At home "I have to travel an hour to go to a mall. There's no fast food restaurants. No Wal-Marts. Well, I mean, to get to them you have to travel. Here it's just five minutes and you go, so if I need anything, I just go. But back home you gotta think ahead." (Danielle, Interview #1)
"Colleges don't teach everything" (Not discussed here)	Participant notes that college is not the key to learning all he/she needs to know	"colleges don't teach everything. Like, if you go to college, if you're a city slicker and you want to go to college to learn how to be a beef producer, they, I don't really think they'd teach you everything. I mean, you gotta get out there and you gotta work for one to find out how everything works." (John, Interview #1)
Farm vs. City	Differences in farm and city (people, life, values, etc), including definitions of either or conflicts between	"even though they didn't come from that ag background, they don't have the best work ethic, they may believe agriculture is the devil or stuff like that, I'll just bite my lip and carry on. I'll say something if I know something is wrong for a fact, but I more or less just take it with a grain of salt and don't start any fights" (Paul, Interview #1)
Increased Population and/or Congestion	Participants note a marked increase in the number of people, traffic, etc. when moving from home to college	"When I first came here, it was a little hectic because it was a bigger town than what I was used to driving through. And a lot more people." (Paul, Interview #1)

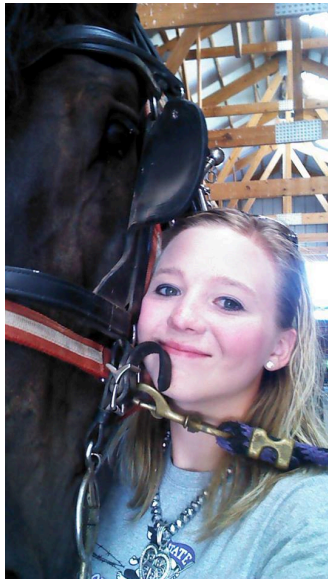


Figure 5.1 "Big Ben & I"

about concrete and, ya know, homework for a little while before I have to get back to reality” (Audrey). The “reality” Audrey spoke of was that of her university world, full of concrete, congestion, and the pressures and expectations of college life. In fact, when asked to provide photographs that represented who she was at the university, Audrey submitted the photograph in Figure 5.1, which she titled “Big Ben & I.” Although not a photograph of her university experience, strictly speaking, the photograph is from her workplace while attending Land Grant University. Audrey explained that she chose this photograph because “I have learned more about the industry and

myself through working there.”

Paul, who worked on the university’s pig farm, saw his work as helpful to eventually transitioning back to the farm. In fact, he made a conscious effort to live in University City the way I would live back home. I don’t go shopping, I stay in my dorm, do the work I need to do. I try working out on the farm. Now that I work on the pig farm, it’s easier to do that. (Paul)

For Paul, bringing agriculture into his daily life at Land Grant University was essential not just for the comfort such familiarity brought, but also to help ensure that he could transition back to the farm with relative ease after college. It is also notable that Paul not only worked on the farm, but continued to live the kind of lifestyle he saw as congruent with farm life. That is, minimal socialization and shopping, while maintaining a focus on the work at hand.

In addition to finding agricultural work while attending Land Grant University, participants also found other ways to bring agriculture into their classrooms at Land Grant University, even non-agricultural classes. For instance, in one of her education classes, which was not agriculturally focused, Audrey chose to create a scrapbook for her final. Audrey described her scrapbook’s link to agriculture by explaining,

on one of my pages, John Dewey is learning how to do, and so I talked about how my ag teacher talked to our local locker plant and they gave her a cow uterus and she brought it in and we had it spread out on the table after our reproductive unit. And like, we i.d.’d all the parts of a cow uterus and then we also learned how to A.I. a cow. And so all the non-ag kids who were like elementary majors . . . who weren’t used to like all that like hands

on life experience thing you would have in agriculture, they were all so taken aback by it.
(Audrey)

Although she could have easily chosen a topic unrelated to agriculture that would not have shocked her classmates, Audrey intentionally made the connection to agriculture, and thus created her most meaningful assignment in college, via memories of her high school agriculture class. Similarly, Paul chose to complete an assignment for his anthropology course by focusing on a world issue intricately tied to agriculture: world hunger. He could easily have chosen world issues unrelated to agriculture, such as poverty or educational access. Instead, like Audrey, he made an intentional choice to incorporate agriculture into a course not requiring any agricultural connection.

Sheldon also pointed out that being able to take agriculture classes helped him feel connected to the farm. When asked if he missed having livestock around, he responded, “To a point. Like, I’m in a class right now that we actually go judge animals, so that helps” (Sheldon). Similarly, Stephanie noted that her “animal science classes also helped with that. Like, I’m still learning, I still feel a part of [the farm]. Like, I love my beef science class I’m in right now” (Stephanie).

Participants also took advantage of Land Grant University’s relatively rural setting and agricultural connections, including hog, beef, horse, and dairy farms on campus grounds. Lisa, for example, visited her aunt and uncle’s ranch, located just south of University City, hiked the local wildlife area, or even drove around the university farms. She described such activities as “my little escape from town” (Lisa). Scott also stated that the university’s location and agricultural elements allowed him to find “some things I do so I’m not so, ya know, without [agriculture],” including the occasional visit to the Land Grant University farms, where he would “walk through the barn and see what’s going on or just those types of things, so I enjoy having them close” (Scott).

The area's Regional Stock Show, which took place every spring, was also a popular method of staying connected to agriculture for agrarian students. Land Grant University provided livestock for participants to show at Regional Stock Show, an opportunity that Scott, Stephanie, and Jared took full advantage of. Stephanie even chose to be at the farm, working with her heifer for Regional Stock Show "every day, even though you don't



Figure 5.2 Jared's "Blend" of Farm & University

have to be" (Stephanie). Jared asked that I come observe him as he prepared his heifer for Regional Stock Show, and I asked if I could photograph him while he worked with her. He agreed, and I was able to capture, through observation and photographing, his ease with livestock and with his peers, whom he readily provided with any assistance they needed. As Jared coaxed his heifer into the proper show stance, I snapped a few photographs, and he said "You can use that for one of my pictures. This is how who I am at college and home blend." He proceeded to point out that the city and university buildings showed in the background, through the fence of the pen he was working his heifer in, as shown in Figure 5.2. As a result of not only being in the same major, but also showing at Regional Stock Show together, these three participants formed relationships while also connecting to their agrarian roots.

Interconnectivity & Relationships

Relationships also aided participants in feeling connected to the farm while living in University City. Audrey spoke of knowing other students in the College of Agriculture before arriving at Land Grant University, including "several of my friends I'd met through FFA" and noted the importance of such relationships because,

being from a very small town, it was nice having those familiar faces I could see kind of on a daily or weekly basis and it really, it made Land Grant University not seem as big as it really is, so it was very helpful. (Audrey)

Jared also brought friendships to Land Grant University, after serving as a state FFA officer in a state neighboring that where Land Grant University was located. He called this group of friends the “Past State Officer” (PSO) group, and said “after my state officer year, I had joined that family of PSOs . . . and so when I came out here, I quickly was able to connect with them and, um, wasn’t really worried about not having the similarities” (Jared). In fact, Jared ended up living with a fellow past state officer. In fact, Jared and Paul, both participants in this study, grew up only seventeen miles from each other and reconnected when Paul joined Jared in attending Land Grant University. Scott also knew approximately ten of his fraternity brothers prior to moving in with them at Land Grant University, largely thanks to his FFA connections, which helped him decide to pledge the fraternity.

Coming together into Pattern 1A: Merging Worlds

Even more than offering the comfort of familiar faces in a strange new place, relationships with other agrarian students kept participants grounded in their agrarian background. In this way, relationships participants formed at Land Grant University also aided in connecting their university experiences to their farm homes, truly allowing their worlds to merge.

Sheldon found relationships with other agrarian students, including those he met through FFA while still in high school, very useful because “it’s easy to forget that like there’s still people back home taking care of everything and it’s like ‘Hey, there’s still that, too, that they’re doing.’ Like, it’s almost a reminder” (Sheldon). Therefore, Sheldon’s university relationships, many formed in University City, prompted connection with his agricultural home.

Scott summed up participants’ intentional connections to agriculture, made possible in part by relationships formed in Land Grant University’s location and agricultural programs, by saying, “I like Land Grant University because it allows me to really stay involved with agriculture everywhere” (Scott). What more could an agrarian student ask for?

Pattern 1B: Differences & Tensions

Certainly, students moving from home to college, no matter their backgrounds, would expect to see some differences between their homes and chosen universities. For the agrarian students in this study, the difference between their agrarian homes and the comparatively urban setting of Land Grant University was striking. Their view of the Land Grant University setting was also influenced by the access to urban comforts, determined by their home location; perceived differences between farm and city locations and people; and the increase in population or congestion faced by participants upon moving to University City, which included previous exposure to urban areas.

Access

Differences in access between rural and urban areas may seem like common sense. After all, few rural communities have a Wal-Mart or Applebee's just down the street. However, this difference in access may have more impact on agrarian students endeavoring to make the transition from farm to university than seen at first glance. Even Rural Consolidated High School students already felt the differences and could anticipate the impact such a shift in access would have when they moved to attend college.

Lisa contended that the necessary transition from rural to urban environment was beneficial, because "rural people tend to be understanding of both worlds because they have to go to urban areas for things. Urban people don't have to leave their bubble" (Lisa). Similarly, Kelli, a Rural Consolidated High School junior, anticipated that the shift to the city would be easier for her than a shift to the rural would be for city-dwellers, since rural life still required trips to the city for some supplies. Jared echoed this assertion because, as a farmer, "you know what it is not to have something or to not have something readily available to you, whereas when you go urban to rural, you have to get used to a whole new different life" (Jared). In particular, participants noted the need to plan ahead for trips to the store or other travel, since town was anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour away from the farm (Jared). Still, Bob asserted, country life was better because "you got more freedom in the country than you do in the city" (Bob).

Jared's perspective of the shift in access between his rural home and urban university setting was unique. After his father passed away, Jared and his mother and sisters moved into a small, rural town near where their farm used to be. Although University City was certainly more

urban than the small, agriculturally based town to which his family moved, Jared may have been more prepared for the shift to Land Grant University than some other participants. He also had the opportunity to travel, and thus encounter more urban areas, while serving as an FFA state officer. Still, he found “the opportunity to go out and do so many different things was a little distracting,” and even detrimental to his bank account (Jared). Speaking of his sisters, both of whom attended universities and lived in urban areas at the time of the study, Jared noted that “I didn’t like having everything at my fingertips, but they embraced it” (Jared).

Lisa also grew up much closer to urban areas, and therefore with more access to urban resources, than many other participants. She recognized this experience as setting her apart from other participants, and described her access as “it’s not like that stuff was never, like I’d been to a shopping mall before, whereas somebody from Western University State doesn’t have that opportunity nearly as often as we did” (Lisa). She went on to describe her student teaching location as one with less access, which was somewhat of an adjustment, since she had gone from her home, with a fair amount of access, to Land Grant University, with even greater access, to her student teaching placement, with very little access.

Farm vs. City

Differences and tensions between agrarian and non-agrarian people and settings began long before participants transitioned to Land Grant University. John even traced his realization of differences between agrarian and non-agrarian peers to second grade, when a non-agrarian student moved into the district. However, his new peer was willing to learn, and John defined that as key to classifying agrarian and non-agrarian people. According to John, to be agrarian, one must simply “know what you’re doing,” (John) a knowledge which could be obtained at any point in life, though John admitted that those raised in the agrarian lifestyle would have an easier time learning.

Unlike John, when asked to explain the differences between farm and non-farm students, as well as when they first noticed those differences, the majority of participants named high school peers as their first encounters with people different than themselves. Audrey, for instance, described her high school experience by saying “I was the only farm kid in my class. I, well, there was one other kid, but they lived in town and they definitely got a lot more of their income from other than just production agriculture” (Audrey). In fact, Paul did not grow up on a farm,

I grew up in town, but everything that I did as I grew up was in the agricultural field, so I consider myself a farm kid. I worked on a farm with 1,500 head of cattle; we farmed over 10,000 acres of land; I can operate any piece of farm equipment. I would call myself a farm kid because that's what I love and all I know. I would not fit into any other category. (Paul)

Bob, Danielle, Kelli, and Max also defined agrarian students as either living or working on farms, rather than only if a student both lived and worked on a farm. Audrey also believed that agrarian people were friendlier, though they need not live on an actual farm, "but they may have had connections, like maybe their best friend or somebody in their family had a farm. Or they're from a small enough community that they kind of got that same kind of morals and values system" (Audrey). Jared's definition of farm kids was even more open, including "those who understand the values and the lessons that are taught on the farm and also understand the everyday practices of agriculture or agrarian life," (Jared), though such understanding is clearly easier to come by if one has farm work experience.

Paul did not notice the differences between agrarian and non-agrarian students until after his arrival at Land Grant University. He told a story of giving blood at a campus blood drive when a nurse said to him,

"You must be in the Ag Department." And I said, "Yeah, how'd you know?" And it was kind of her that opened my eyes. She said ag kids tend to be more courteous and "Yes, ma'am, yes, sir," are a lot more polite and have an understanding of what's going on. (Paul)

He also noted that, upon moving to University City, he realized that his home community was selfless, while those he met in University City were more self-centered. He defined "farm kids" in a slightly different fashion than other participants, as "passion plus past experience" (Paul). In other words, to fit into the agrarian group, a person needed to have a passion for agriculture as well as significant experience living or working on a farm. Similarly, Sheldon added a qualitative element to the "farm kid" definition, "you have to be proud that you've done it, and not just have lived on the farm or worked" (Sheldon).

Stephanie also found college to be the eye-opening point at which she realized that her own life was different from that of non-agrarians. She

found myself being really, maybe naïve is the word, that there are people that don't. Like, in my community, everyone knows where the food comes from, and that was a really big eye-opener for me to know that people really do think meat just comes from the grocery store. (Stephanie)

In some cases, the differences between agrarian and non-agrarian students turned to tensions, which erupted into confrontation. Jared described an incident in his high school biology class when, due to his family's valuation of education and hard work,

I can remember answering a question once without, like, hesitation. And one of the kids who grew up in town, he goes "You must have no life." And he goes, "If you can answer those questions like, without even thinking about it, all you must do is sit down and read a book."

And I just kinda turned around and I said "You wanna come do my job one day? Wake up at five o'clock in the morning and feed cattle and hogs and at the same time get on the bus to go to school and get home at five o'clock, do homework, do the same thing, do all the chores, and then go to bed?"

And he goes, "At least I can go out to the movies." And I just wanted to start a fight right there, and then I thought no, I'm in class, I can't do that. (Jared)

Lisa's experience living in a sorority house at Land Grant University nearly caused conflict, as she described,

When I lived in the sorority house, I was showing a heifer in the Regional Stock Show.

When I came into the house with cow crap on my boots, some of the girls thought it was disgusting and couldn't grasp or understand the concept. (Lisa)

though Lisa was quickly able to defuse the situation, typically by educating her peers on agrarian life. Scott was somewhat shocked by the conflict when a peer who was vegan "popped off at me one day and told me what she was and started yelling at me" (Scott). He never really spoke to her again, and seemed befuddled by the encounter.

Due to the differences participants noted between themselves and those who did not grow up living or working on farms, they often chose to befriend primarily agrarian peers. Scott, for example, said simply, "I don't really have a lot of city buddies" (Scott). Danielle explained this preference by saying, "don't get me wrong, there are nice city people. I mean, they're normal, ish, but, I mean, they're not my top pick" (Danielle). Though Danielle meant no offense in her

classification of “city people” as “normal, ish,” she was drawing attention to the stark distinction between agrarian and non-agrarian people, with special attention to the tendency to view one’s own identity as “normal” (Cicognani et al., 2011; Proshansky et al., 1983).

Performance of agrarian identity came up a few times as key to understanding a person. Audrey stated that

you can tell a lot about somebody from like their shoes. So that’s something that I always notice about people. I think that some of the more hard-working students or those who maybe are more focused on going back to the rural area like they’re, like they maybe have their boots and there’s some scuffs and stuff and it just kinda tells their story.

(Audrey)

Kelli confirmed Audrey’s emphasis on clothing, though she admitted that she didn’t “know if I show it that much” (Kelli). When asked what would constitute “showing” agrarian heritage and lifestyle, Kellie answered “apparel, I guess. I wear boots sometimes, but not a lot, and I mix it up. I don’t have to wear flannels and a belt buckle every day.” Scott, though, was careful to note that, just because “you see somebody wearin’ boots, it doesn’t necessarily mean they’re an ag kid,” especially since “most of the sorority girls have figured out how to wear boots with those yoga pants,” so it was important to look at the rest of the outfit as well (Scott). Stephanie’s view of attire was more in line with Scott’s, as she found the concept of a certain attire for farm kids “stereotypical,” and believed the willingness to “do the dirty work” a more accurate predictor of agrarian background (Stephanie).

Increased Population or Congestion

Like the change in access, an increase in population or congestion upon moving to a more urban area seems like common sense. However, the impact of that increase on agrarian students was a bit surprising, and warranted discussion, both because of the severity of the impact and the ability of participants to see the good in the increase, which was often related to access.

At times, according to Audrey, “University City gets to be too much concrete, too much noise, and so I do like getting out of University City and just being back in the rural settings” (Audrey). Danielle echoed Audrey’s expression of the differences, saying that “there’s more people in the city. There’s more everything” (Danielle). In particular, Danielle noted the increased ease of access to restaurants and shopping, stating that, in University City, “it’s just five minutes and you go, so if I need anything, I just go. But back home you gotta think ahead”

(Danielle). However, the most extreme reaction to the differences between the farm and University City was John's. In looking ahead to his transition to college, John expressed a desire to find country living at the university since, if he had to live in the city, he said,

I'd rip my hair out. I'd say to heck with it and go out somewhere and build myself a house in somebody's crick. I don't think I'd be able to stand it, ya know, drivin' in all the traffic and everything. It's just not something I'm used to. (John)

Although John's reaction was certainly the most extreme, his over the top example emphasizes the impact that an increase in population or congestion can have on students unaccustomed to such an environment.

By far the most commonly noted difference between home and Land Grant University was traffic or driving. This was due almost primarily to the increase in population, and thus the increase in traffic, upon moving to University City. Jared mentioned a period of adjustment during which he had to grow accustomed to higher traffic volumes, since he moved from a place "where the only headlights you saw at night were your dad coming home from work to about, oh, three to five hundred people driving past your house at night" (Jared). When they looked ahead to transitioning to college, all Rural Consolidated High School participants expressed concern that they had done very little driving in cities, including MaryKate, who said University City was the biggest she had driven in, and that she had not driven there much, and John, who tried driving in University City once, but quickly pulled over and asked his mom to drive. Among Land Grant University participants, Scott noted that learning to drive in the city to run errands for his dad was helpful to his later adjustment to living in the city while attending college.

Summing up Pattern 1B: Differences & Tensions

Differences and tensions are to be expected in any time of change, and the transition to college is no exception. Participants in this study, particularly those attending Land Grant University, saw a sharp contrast between their homes and University City, which they attributed to the rural nature of their homes, compared to the relative urbanity of University City.

Although the increase in access; people, especially those unlike them; buildings; traffic; and population was intimidating, participants also noted benefits to moving to an urban area. Audrey even stated that, upon returning to a rural agrarian area, "it will be sad that Wal-Mart's not like ten minutes away" (Audrey). Paul echoed this appreciation for access, saying that,

coming from the farm, “you’re used to dealing with what you have. And yeah, there’s gonna be culture shock when you come here and there’s so many options,” but, Paul said, it was still easier to come to University City from a farm than from a bigger city, because “when you live on a farm, you’re not used to having it, and you come here and it’s more of a luxury instead of like something taken away from you, so it’s easier” (Paul). Scott also found the ease of access of fast food and shopping a bit of a difference, but not a bad one. In fact, Scott already found that he missed the access to shopping and fast food when home on breaks.

It is important to note at this point that, in spite of the many differences, tensions, and changes participants mentioned, all felt successful. They were able to make the necessary adjustments and learn to function successfully in their new, urban environment. This ability to adapt, at last temporarily, though, does not offset the importance of noting the differences and tensions faced by participants in order to later establish methods of aiding agrarian students in facing these differences and tensions.

Overarching Research Question (RQ1) Discussion

It is clear that the transition from a rural farm home to the much more urban Land Grant University environment influenced the identity of agrarian Land Grant University students majoring in agricultural education. These participants moved from being in constant contact with agriculture to choosing to find and create intentional connections with agriculture while attending Land Grant University, including utilizing their networks to find relationships with other agrarian students. Participants also found themselves facing the differences between their rural agrarian homes and more urban university environment, including changes in access to resources, more obvious differences between the farm and urban communities, and an increase in population and congestion. This required a shift in perception and coping strategies, both of which constitute a shift in identity (Cicognani et al., 2011; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011).

First Subsidiary Research Question (RQ2)

The second research question focused on participants’ agrarian backgrounds and whether or not that background influenced their identity. Because this question did not focus on the university, more data from Rural Consolidated High School students was utilized here not only as separate data, but also to validate the memories of Land Grant University participants with

regards to the agrarian impact on their identities. Codes, along with definitions and sample data points, may be seen in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 RQ#2 Code Chart

2A. "It's in my blood"		
Codes	Definitions	Data Point Samples
Financial Need for Work	Must teach to support farming goals OR Work outside farming to survive	"with my dad and my uncle and my grandpa a being, that's, that's their job, that's their income. If I go straight back to the farm, it would be cutting their income if they were to give me some and it wouldn't be enough probably for them to be able to live off of. So that's another reason I'm interested in being a teacher is cuz I'll still be able to participate in the farm on weekends" (Scott, Interview #2)
Generational	Participants mention numerous generations of their family associated with agriculture and/or agricultural education, particularly when noted as a reason for wanting to return to agriculture or attend Land Grant University.	"I'm a fifth generation farmer, and my uncle and my dad are the fourth and my grandpa is the third, obviously. . . . I guess I'd just hate to see it die is kind of the thing." (Scott, Interview #2)
Place Attachment	Affinity for and/or desire to return to a particular region or even specific plot of land. Familiarity with the area and the work it involves (farming) may be referenced.	"I'd just hate to see it die is kind of the thing. And just, I mean, it's the only thing I've ever really known. And I like being able to drive past a pasture that's our land. If it came to the fact that it wasn't our land, it would be kind of weird." (Scott, Interview #2)
Returning to the Rural	Participants notes that knowing they can/will return to a rural area/farming makes it easier to cope now	"I want to live in the small area. I don't want to live in the city. And I do, I, the way I'm living right now is the way I would live back home. I don't go shopping, I stay in my dorm, do the work I need to do, I try working out on the farm. Now that I work on the pig farm, it's easier to do that." (Paul, Interview #2)

"Who's gonna do it while I'm gone?"	Feeling responsible for the continuation of the farm or agricultural education	"It would be hard, because, the way I look at it, who's gonna do all that farming while I'm gone? I'm the only one that does it, and ya know, my grandma has a job, my mom has a job, and my mom doesn't want anything to do with the farm." (John, Interview #1)
Work Ethic	Participant identifies self with a good, hard work ethic. Particularly in contrast to a perceived lack of work ethic in non-farm residents	"I have ag ed club, working all these jobs, stay on top of school, and I can only name three kids on my dorm floor who have jobs out of 109. So it just, there's no desire to work and there's no work ethic. They go to class, they complain that it's too long, and so they go back to their dorms and fall asleep. And they wonder why they can't get above a C in a class." (Paul, Interview #1)
2B. Continuing educational legacy or impact		
Codes	Definitions	Data Point Samples
Enlightening City Folk	Participant identifies the purpose of educating those not from agrarian backgrounds as influencing their life and decisions.	"Well, I, I feel like everyone should know about agriculture but that's definitely not happening. So I just want to, stuff I learned as a child, I want to be able to teach kids about it" (Danielle, Interview #1)
FFA	Participant mentions identifying with FFA and past experiences in FFA, including ag/FFA teachers, as useful to adapting to Land Grant University, reason for choosing Land Grant University or reason for returning to farm	"I just definitely did not realize all that FFA did for me until later on. And I think that's what is another major impact that made me go to it. Because I want kids to realize what it can do for you." (Danielle, Interview #2)
Teacher Influence	Mentions teacher influence as a reason for choosing Ag Ed OR going back to the farm	"the main reason why I majored in ag ed was inspiration. My teacher helped give me a lot of skills and inspired me to do my best, never stop. I wanted, he wanted to see me succeed, so that's kind of what I wanna do for my students is show 'em that anything's possible as long as they put forth the effort." (Paul, Interview #1)

Participants were clearly influenced by their agrarian backgrounds, particularly in terms of decisions about their futures. Plan-making, as a function of identity (Breakwell, 1986; Cicognani et al., 2011; Steele et al., 2002), helps to show the impact of agrarian backgrounds not only on participants' plans, but also on their identities. Findings of research question two, focused on agrarian background, are discussed below, ordered by patterns and codes.

Pattern 2A: "It's in my blood"

In analyzing the influence of their agrarian backgrounds on participants attending both Rural Consolidated High School and Land Grant University, there was no denying the power of inheritance. This is not surprising, as much of identity is learned from family or friends (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011).

Financial Need for Work

One element influencing identity is socioeconomic status (McGlone & Aronson, 2006; Sherman et al., 2013). This is also the only influence that participants could not ignore, choose, or step away from easily. In fact, five of the eight Land Grant University participants and one Rural Consolidated High School participant named financial feasibility as a reason to attend college and, thus, obtain the opportunity for an alternate career. Three of the five Rural Consolidated High School participants acknowledged that financial concerns played some part in their decision not to return to the farm in a career capacity. Therefore, although all participants identified as agrarian, financial concerns were one element helping participants to determine whether or not agriculture would remain part of their future identities.

Stephanie exemplified the views of many of the Land Grant University participants when she said, "Even though I plan on returning to the farm, I don't intend for that to be my only source of income. That's why I decided to come to college." Some participants, such as Scott and Audrey, spoke more explicitly of their concerns with farm finances: "I want a backup plan in case the family farm would run into hard times and be unable to operate at all or just not at full capacity" (Scott), or even that, at its best, "From a financial standpoint our farm cannot support two families' income which is what will drive me to have a full time job off the farm" (Audrey).

Still, in spite of the farm's inability to provide for a family, Land Grant University participants wanted to return in some way, and so they had to find a way to make it financially feasible to return to the farm in some capacity. Jared explained,

my main income will be being a teacher. And my secondary or supplementary income is gonna be raising cattle. And so, I wouldn't need to rely on running the cattle business to support my family or myself wherever I end up, um, that it's, it's not gonna make me be 100% a cattle producer, but, um, it's just something that I wanna go back and do for the fun of it and because I love it. (Jared)

Jared's point of view was not unique. Scott also realized that the farm did not offer the "opportunity to make an exorbitant amount of money," and so had decided "what I need to do is work somewhere for a while and, ya know, get myself, get my feet under me" (Scott). Like other participants, Scott hoped to "find an extension agent or teaching job close to the farm" (Scott) in order to stay involved on evenings, weekends, or other days off.

Two participants, John and Bob, both in high school at the time of the study, intended to farm as their primary occupations. Both also planned to attend college, though their reasons differed. John, who was completing his junior year, wanted to attend college and earn a degree in order to have a backup plan in case farming did not work out for some reason. Bob, on the other hand, was completing his sophomore year of high school, intended to major in "farm and ranch management, something like that," in order to come back and farm more successfully. In part, these participants' belief in their ability to farm as a career could be due to their family structures, in which they or their fathers farm and their mothers work off the farm to supplement income. It is, of course, possible that John and Bob are simply idealistic, given that they are young enough that they would not have to assume all responsibility in most families yet. However, this seems unlikely, since John is already solely responsible for all farming in his family, and Bob is heavily involved in the farming work.

Although most farmers face some level of economic difficulty (Schnepf, 2015; United States Department of Agriculture, 2004), the importance of the farm to all Land Grant University participants and two Rural Consolidated High School participants felt strongly enough about their agrarian background to want to make it part of their future identities. This is not to say that others were not interested in maintaining some aspect of their agrarian identities, only that they did not explicitly express an interest in pursuing an agriculturally related career or even, such as in the case of Max, an Rural Consolidated High School participant, stated an explicit dislike for farm life.

Generational

The “generational” code covered two different influences on participants: agricultural legacy and generational connections to Land Grant University and agricultural education. The first stemmed simply from a familial history in agriculture. The second referred to situations in which family having attended college, especially Land Grant University, or majored in agricultural education influenced participants to do the same. In both cases, the generational considerations influenced participants to choose agricultural education and/or to return to the farm.

Ag history – Some participants hoped to return to a job close to home in order to continue helping out on the family farm. Audrey, for instance, explained that she wanted to live close to home, and in fact tried to go home as much as possible at the time of the study, because “my dad’s a fifth generation farmer and I don’t want that to like stop. I think it would have been different had my dad had a son, but because he doesn’t, my sister and I try to do our best” (Audrey). She went on to explain that, if she’d had a brother, he likely would have been expected to go to college but return to full-time farming in order to “keep it within our family line,” (Audrey) just as her ancestors had done.

The expectation of children to return to and carry on the family legacy of farming was not unique to Audrey’s family. When Bob, then a high school sophomore, was asked why he wanted to return to farming his family farm, he offered that “I like it out here. And, I don’t know, it’s fun” but then added, “Dad is planning on it. Someone to take care of, to take it over when he’s older.” Although the farm had only been in the family for two generations prior to Bob, having started with his grandfather, the expectation of its continuation was already strong enough to influence Bob’s decisions about his future. Similarly, Stephanie was feeling the pressure. When asked if she intended to return to her farm home, she said, “I don’t know. I think Dad’s planning on it. He asked me a month ago if I wanted to live on Grandma and Grandpa’s place, and I was like, ‘What? I don’t know if I want to come back yet.’”

John also planned to return only to farming, and when asked if he planned to return to the family farm or buy his own, he said,

Oh, this is my farm. If I was, it’d be nice to have a bigger farm, but this is the farm. I’m the fifth generation to be on it. It’s been in the family for about 100-some years. I’d like to keep it that way. And hopefully, if I have kids, they think the same way.

He felt it was important to keep the family legacy, saying that his family had “been called ranchers all their lives,” and he would like to keep it that way.

Scott expressed a desire “to return to our family farm and keep it going. I am really the only one who can carry the name of our farm on, and I couldn’t be the one to see it die, sell out, and sell all the land.” As a fifth generation farmer, Scott said, farming was all he’d ever known and he intended it to continue. Paul also wanted to return to farming to carry on the family legacy. He learned about farming from his grandfather because, though his father remained connected to agriculture when possible, he chose a career in law enforcement. Still, Paul said, “my dad did teach me some aspects of agriculture. It was more my grandpa who got me interested when I was a little kid, feeding pigs and stuff” (Paul). His return to farming, though not tied to the specific farm, was Paul’s plan “to stay true to what I grew up with” and because “I don’t wanna be the teacher who just sits in the classroom and talks about everything. I wanna show the students that I can actually, I know what I’m talking about because I’ve got my own animals” (Paul).

Audrey explained that her father’s influence made a difference in her future decisions because

being in FFA, I had to have an SAE, or a supervised agricultural experience project, so basically I worked on our family farm and that counted as my SAE and he really spent a lot of time with me instilling the importance of agriculture, and so that's why I chose Ag Ed. (Audrey)

She also planned “to eventually take over my family’s farm when my parents decide to retire.”

Jared’s family legacy was markedly different from that of other participants. During his senior year of high school, Jared’s father passed away, and he and his family made the difficult decision to sell the farm, though they maintained the brand. As a result, Jared intended to find a teaching job somewhere near the land he grew up on, buy some land, and restart the farm. Although he did not have family land to return to, he said, “I plan to have my family’s brand wherever I go” (Jared).

Many participants were also focused on the legacy they would leave for future generations. Audrey, for example, spoke of an assignment she had completed that allowed her to “reflect on what agriculture means to me and the kind of future I want my nephew to have in agriculture and the opportunities I hope he will seek out in the industry” (Audrey). Similarly,

Stephanie wanted to “instill the values I learned from the farm to my future children.” Lisa also felt it was important to pass on her farming legacy, though she felt unable to continue farming unless she married a farmer. Then, she said, “if presented the opportunity to live on a farm the rest of my life I would in a heartbeat because it taught me so many things as a young person that I would want my children to understand” (Lisa). Whether or not he had his own children, Paul hoped “to go and spread my passion [for agriculture] to other generations while teaching in ag ed.”

The importance of agricultural legacy was summed up by Audrey, who stated that her ancestors, “when they came over here to America, it was just an opportunity. I mean, they wanted to make their lives better, their children’s lives better, their future generations’ lives better, and they just found it in agriculture, in farming” (Audrey).

Attending Land Grant University or majoring in ag ed – One unique version of a family’s legacy impact on a participant was Audrey’s perception of the importance of education. She explained that “getting my college education is gonna be a big thing because both of my parents didn’t get a college education and because of it, they felt sometimes like they were struggling to make ends meet” (Audrey).

Paul attended college largely due to his grandfather’s influence, “because since my grandpa, no one in my family has obtained a bachelor’s degree.” Paul shared a special bond with his grandfather, including the same birthday, and so decided that he might as well get the same degree.

For Scott, the desire to earn a college degree came from the fact that everyone in his family had a degree, including degrees from Land Grant University for both of his parents and both grandfathers. Additionally, agriculturally related degrees were common in Scott’s family, including his maternal grandfather, who was an agricultural education teacher. Max, a high school senior, was headed to Land Grant University due to the fact that his father and aunt both graduated from there, and so it was the only school he had ever really considered.

Although John, a high school junior at the time of his interview, was still debating between a few college options, Land Grant University was on his short list because his mother graduated from Land Grant University.

Place Attachment

Though not exhibited by all participants, place attachment, or an affinity for a physical location integral to identity (Cicognani et al., 2011), had a strong influence on the future plans, and thus identities, of some participants. Place attachment was exhibited in study participants primarily through attachment to rural agrarian spaces, though it was sometimes an attachment to a particular plot of land. In either case, participants viewed this attachment as inevitable due to their histories in those places.

For those participants focused on rural or agrarian spaces in general, with no clear tie to a specific piece of land, the place attachment was about things they could not find in non-agrarian spaces. Lisa, for example, stated that she “missed the open spaces of just the farm in general” (Lisa). Other participants, Danielle and Stephanie, even made career choices based on their desires to return to rural areas.

Danielle’s realization of her place attachment, namely to western University State rather than to a specific farm, actually changed her major and future plans. Her first semester, she told me, “I was in athletic training, and then I realized I wanted to go back to western University State and obviously there is no need for those,” meaning that the economy of that area would not support her as an athletic trainer. Therefore, she made the decision to change her major to education and, eventually, agricultural education. Although this was a big change, Danielle said, “I don’t know what exactly is going to happen in my life but that’s where I want to go back to,” in large part because “I love that lifestyle and how the culture is back there. Everything is slower and less people,” she explained.

In a similar fashion to Danielle, Stephanie also changed her major and future goals in order to suit her desire to return to her farm home. She majored in biology, but moved to agricultural education because she knew that she wanted to return to a rural area. Although she wanted to coach, Stephanie recognized that her opportunities to coach at the club level would really only exist in larger cities, and she had determined to “never live in the city or town or whatever. It drives me nuts. I would say I’m rural at heart and always will be” (Stephanie). Therefore, agricultural education offered her the best of both worlds, since high schools would also offer coaching opportunities in addition to a chance to live in a rural area and stay involved with agriculture.

Audrey was very proud of her small town, especially since most of the farm ground was “still within the family,” and she intended to return to her home area in order to be close enough to help out on the farm. In fact, she planned to take over the family farm once her parents retired.

Scott’s attachment to the specific farm land he grew up on was twofold: attachment to the land and to the animals the family owned on the land. During our first interview, Scott said it was hard not to be able to go home because it was the middle of calving season, “and I love seeing the baby calves. I mean, I guess I could go out to the purebred unit, but it’s not the same as being there and helping

‘em and seeing your own show heifers calve”

(Scott). The fact that the cattle at the school farm were not his prompted a desire to be home at his farm, where he could be in contact with his own cattle. However, there was also an attachment to the land itself. He intended to return to the family farm in part because he liked



Figure 5.3 Scott's Farm Home

“being able to drive past a pasture that’s our land. If it came to the fact that it wasn’t our land, it would be kind of weird” (Scott). Figure 5.3 helped to capture Scott’s love for his farm home. He submitted the photo, which he took, with the following caption: “I absolutely love the photo because it captures the pure beauty of the world. I feel this represents why I love the country so much.” This affinity for his farm and livestock explained why Scott felt that the biggest adjustment for him in moving to college was that he could not be on the farm as much as he would have liked.

Bob intended to actually return to the family farm, because “I like it out here” and “I was raised on it, it’s what I know how to do.” More than that, though, Bob pointed out that he had

“had a lot of experiences on the farm,” which indicated not just familiarity or ability ties, but also memory ties.

John’s place attachment was quite clearly passed down through generations. In fact, he planned to tell his future children “what my great grandpa’s dad told him and my great grandpa told my grandpa and my grandpa told me,” which was ““If you ever sell this farm, I’m gonna come back out of this grave and kick you upside the head!”” That threat was enough to make John grateful that he never planned to leave, and also demonstrated the importance of the particular plot of land to John and his family.

Unlike most participants, Jared did not have a family farm to debate returning to, as it had been sold after his father’s death. However, he did still have the family brand and intended, once he found a stable teaching job in western University State, to begin “planting some roots and starting my own operation there” (Jared). It is important to note that, even though Jared could have chosen to go anywhere to establish the family farm again, he chose the same general area where he grew up, demonstrating at least the possibility of place attachment. However, he was facing the possibility of taking longer than he had hoped to achieve that dream, since he had just received his student teaching placement in the exact opposite corner of the state from where he hoped to end up.

Returning to the Rural

Although participants’ preference for rural spaces have been well-documented and discussed, some participants went even further. For these participants, the transition to college was eased by the simple knowledge that they would, eventually, return to a rural agrarian area. Audrey, for instance, said that her transition to college was eased by simply knowing that it was a necessity, “but, like, I’m ready to go back when I have my degrees,” she said. Danielle echoed her sentiments when she explained that “there’s times where you’re like ‘Oh, I wish I was home today,’ and then there’s times I’m glad I’m here, but, I mean, it’s not permanent. So I just keep going.” Paul also eagerly anticipated his return to a rural area, and even chose to live at Land Grant University in the same manner in which he would live at his rural agrarian home. Scott even chose his major based on the fact that he knew he would need the motivation of returning home because “I knew I could still go back and farm with it.” Likewise, Stephanie said, “I knew that I would come back, but I also knew that I was gonna leave to get an education, too,” and so, even though she hated living in University City, she saw the end goal and thus tolerated city life.

Audrey summed up this point of view by saying that, “if you know that you can go back to that area, like a rural area, then I think you’re gonna be okay.”

It is easy to understand why participants might want to return to their home farm, but why was returning to a rural area in general helpful in the transition? Audrey offered her theory, “it just feels like in a smaller community you feel like you have more people who care about you and want you to do well and you don’t get lost in like such a sea of people.” Stephanie also mentioned the number of people, and was excited to move back to a place where she could walk outside and not see anyone. Regardless of their reasoning, it was clear that participants’ past experiences living on a farm in a rural area left an affinity for rural agrarian areas “in their blood,” so to speak, and therefore the concept of being able to return to a comfortable area helped to make city life more tolerable.

“Who’s gonna do it while I’m gone?”

All of these participants grew up with some sort of agriculturally related generational legacy. Therefore, it is no surprise that some participants were very concerned with how the farm and agricultural education would continue if they were not there or did not choose agriculture or agricultural education as a career.

Some participants were in the unique situation to wonder how the farm would continue while they attended college, as they farmed essentially alone. John, a high school junior, explained that, if he didn’t farm, he and his family would probably lose the farm. As we continued to talk about his future goals and plans, John seemed to realize that attending college would be more difficult than he might have originally thought. After all, he asked, “who’s gonna do all that farming while I’m gone? I’m the only one that does it,” he explained, “that’s just one thing I worry about is who’s gonna do it when I’m not here to? I mean, it’s, I don’t know, that’s why I’m kind of hesitant about going to college, because I don’t know who’s gonna do it while I’m gone.” John did explain that his grandmother still lived on the farm and enjoyed helping, but he worried that trying to keep the farm up in his absence would be more than she could handle.

Bob and Scott felt that they had to go back and farm because they were the only ones left to continue the family farm once their parents retired. If they did not return, they said, the farm would eventually fail or be sold when their parents retired. For Scott, the pressure to continue the farm paired well with his passion for agriculture, and so he decided that he “couldn’t be the one to see it die, sell out, and sell all the land.” As the last one capable of carrying on the name and

the farm, his statement made clear that he also felt that the farm's failure would rest on his shoulders if he decided not to return.

The continuation of agricultural education in Midwestern high schools was of some concern at the time of research. Audrey summed up the issue quite well when she explained that, in many programs, agricultural education "teachers are approaching retirement age, and, like, who's going to fill those spots?" especially, she said, since "there's a lot more vacancies than there are young people to take them." As of August 23, 2015, University State still had five high school agricultural education teaching openings, and three schools had decided not to try to fill openings at their schools, bringing the true total to eight unfilled agricultural education positions, at a time when most schools hoped to already have hiring completed for the fast approaching school year (J. Menefee, personal communication, August 23, 2015).

Work Ethic

One of the most common differences participants noted between farm and city dwellers, work ethic was also something participants felt they had learned from their parents and communities, and viewed it as an almost inherited trait. For Bob, this inheritance had to do with the location in which people learned to work. He even admitted that city kids "probably have jobs, but not as physically demanding jobs as a farm."

Danielle saw the difference in work ethic as related to how she was raised, especially by her mom. She said that having chores to do at home made her "more independent at home, so that helped me be more independent here," as compared to her non-farm roommates.

Jared was unsure whether the difference was environmental or parental, but either way, he knew that farm kids had a different work ethic than non-farm kids. In fact, when he and two of his other roommates, both also farm kids, lived with one non-farm peer, they conducted experiments. They would stop doing a chore, such as washing dishes, and wait to see how long it would take their more urban roommate to do anything about it. According to Jared, the non-farm roommate rarely did anything about the needed chores, and he and his farm peers would begin doing chores again.

The combination of her parents making her work and the necessity of work in an agrarian environment was something Lisa grew to appreciate, as she said "it definitely gave me a work ethic." Once she moved to University City to attend Land Grant University, Lisa noticed a big differences between herself and her non-farm peers, especially that she "worked thirty hours a

week at school and a lot of them didn't have part time jobs," which she attributed to the fact that her parents made her work, both in the house and on the farm. Her roommates, however, "had maids and didn't know how to clean a toilet before coming to University City." This difference in work patterns, combined with the fact that Lisa's parents only helped her out financially in extreme situations, while her peers' parents would often pay their bar tabs, made Lisa realize that "their idea of reality is just different from mine. So, that made it hard to relate to a lot of those girls."

Pattern 2A Summary "It's in my blood"

Although not all data in this pattern were, strictly speaking, inherited or genetic, all related to the way participants had been brought up. Their values, which are an integral part of identity often learned from parents or early social groups (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011), included financial stability, continuation of family traditions, land or open space, returning to their roots, keeping agriculture alive, and working hard. Taken together, for most participants, these values constituted the agrarian way of life. As he reflected on his desire to carry on the family name on the same plot of land he grew up on, Scott summed up his desire to continue the agrarian way of life by saying, "It's all I've ever known and I want to continue to explore the world with it. I guess you could say it's engrained in my blood."

Pattern 2B: Continuing Educational Legacy or Impact

In addition to carrying on the agrarian way of life, often instilled by their parents, participants also expressed a desire to be part of educating others, thereby continuing the educational legacy they had experienced, often through FFA. A large part of the desire to educate others came from the simple realization that many people do not understand where their food comes from (Bob, Lisa, Jared, John, Kelli, MaryKate, Max, Paul, and Scott).

Enlightening City Folk

Participants seemed well aware that, due to growing up in agriculture, they possessed some unique knowledge not shared by their non-agrarian peers. In fact, for many participants, the realization of their unique knowledge began in their own families. Audrey spoke of cousins who, though they lived in rural areas, were not involved in farming. When her cousins asked what seemed to her like silly questions, Audrey found herself wondering if they paid attention to

their surroundings at all. She found anticipating and understanding their questions “somewhat difficult. To me, agriculture’s just second nature; this is what you do,” though she continued to answer their questions and help to educate her cousins. John also described cousins from an urban area who thought food was grown in the grocery store until they came to visit his farm. He did his best to educate them and felt that they gained an understanding of how farming works.

A few participants found ways to begin educating their non-agrarian peers during their K-12 education. In second grade, John made a new friend from a big city and, when he discovered that his new friend did not even know what a combine was, he invited him to the farm. From that point on, John said, “he was out at my house every day ‘cause he just thought the farm was the neatest thing ever,” and that time “had a big impact on him because now he . . . works for a farmer,” thanks to the knowledge gained on John’s farm.

College presented new opportunities for participants to encounter and educate non-agrarian peers both in living together and in classes. For Stephanie, these opportunities came first in shock, as she found herself learning that a friend of her roommate’s believed that meat came from the grocery store. Therefore, Stephanie began to have conversations with her non-agrarian peers,

just to let them know that there is someone out there working to feed them. It’s not just ‘poof’ it’s there in the grocery store . . . and by demolishing their land . . . to build a new hotel in turn is sometimes hurting you in the long run because you’re taking out that food source.

Lisa found herself living in a sorority house with all urban roommates. She remembered having to explain drought and other crop production issues one night when her roommates suggested that they lower food costs by simply paying farmers to produce more food (Lisa). Due to conversations such as this, Lisa felt “like my roommates learned a lot living with me,” thus achieving her goal of spreading agricultural education. Audrey and her roommates, all urban, would have what Audrey called “This is What Agriculture Is” sessions utilizing a dry erase board. For example, she said, one night “we drew out reproduction and all that stuff with agriculture because they just wanted to know like why we [artificially inseminate] cattle, pigs, whatever, and they wanted to know how that process was done,” and it was no surprise that such lessons “just kind of blew them away.”

In class opportunities to enlighten their urban peers also presented themselves to participants. Audrey discussed identifying part of a cow uterus as part of a scrapbook project for her education methods class, including photographs, and described her peers as “taken aback.” However, she viewed it as the perfect agricultural educational opportunity, because “people just don’t understand, and so I have to bridge that gap. And I wanna be approachable,” she said, because

I’d rather have them come to me with questions and I can help. If I can’t answer the question I’d rather refer them to a reputable source rather than people who are maybe, for instance, against animal agriculture like PETA and HSUS, where they give falsified information. (Audrey)

Concern not only with educating non-agrarian people about agriculture, but also with using reputable sources to do so was a common thread. Paul recalled a girl in one of his agriculture classes stating that she belonged to PETA, which sparked a class discussion in which the agrarian students in the class explained to her that approximately two percent of farmers gave the rest of the farmers a bad name. In fact, Paul said, one point brought up in the discussion was that “a lot of us farm kids treat our animals better than we treat ourselves.” Though not restricted to Paul, this class discussion represented a way in which he felt that he helped advocate for agriculture using reputable sources, combatting the disreputable sources non-agrarians had already been exposed to. Ultimately, Paul said, the discussion had a positive impact on the non-agrarians in the room, because “you could kind of tell that they were looking at things in a different way once we got done arguing. But they’re going to stick true to their beliefs, so, I mean, we didn’t change the situation, but you did make ‘em think about it.”

Social media presented another avenue for education. Audrey posted pictures and information to social media from her job working on a farm where visitors not only had fun participating in activities such as picking pumpkins, but also learned more about the agricultural production process. In this way, she said,

I feel like I’m a part of advocating for agriculture on a great operation, making sure that those consumers are educated about yes, we do care about our animals, yes, we do want them to succeed, and when we raise crops we do everything in our power to make them the best that they can be, and if that means that yes, we do have to apply pesticides and

herbicides and insecticides, we're going to do that because we want that product to yield well and then to help feed people. (Audrey)

Although Audrey's statements about pesticides are debated even among different types of farmers, her passion for making sure that consumers knew that she was doing everything for a reason, and that reason was to produce the best possible product, was clear.

Regardless of the methods of enlightening city folk about agriculture, Lisa pointed out that agricultural advocates needed "to effectively communicate the parts of the industry to others in a positive light" (Lisa). This became especially important when looking ahead to the transition to teaching and serving as an advisor in an FFA program. Agricultural advocacy also extended into participants' participation in and decision to have a future in the FFA organization. One of the key reasons participants named for returning to agricultural education was to ensure that their students all had a good grasp of where their food came from. Audrey outlined the importance of agricultural education as a need for people

to know about where their food, fuel, and fiber is coming from on a daily basis; without farmers and ranchers we will be naked and hungry. Many consumers are uneducated about that and I want to make sure that all the students that come through my door and leave their senior year of high school will know the importance of agriculture and how they can advocate to their peer groups daily. (Audrey)

On the other hand, Scott saw the claim to want to educate people about where their food came from to be false. "I think we'd all like to think that's the greatest reason that we are going back," he said, but pointed out that he and most of his agricultural education peers would be heading to rural areas, where most students already knew the basics of agricultural production. Instead, he felt that the purpose of agricultural education and the FFA organization should be to "make sure that everybody, no matter where we teach or who we teach, understands everything about it and can be prepared to, you know, have those awkward elevator conversations with somebody." In other words, Scott was returning to the FFA organization via agricultural education in order to help prepare the next generation of agricultural advocates.

Regardless of the reason for entering agricultural education, the ultimate mission was clear:

with the Chipotle ad coming out and everything, I'm trying to, I want to try to start to advocate because, honestly, their words are being heard and it seems like we're not saying anything. And I think we need to push back. (Paul)

Farmers, participants were saying, needed to be heard. Paul hoped to do so not only through his work as an agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor, but also through inviting people to his own farm to show that his animals were well-treated. At the time of the study, though, participants were utilizing the opportunities offered by their college transition to be in contact with and educate non-agrarian peers.

FFA

The strong positive impact the FFA organization had on participants not only helped to ease the transition to college, but also motivated them to attend college and major in agricultural education in order to continue this legacy of positive impacts.

Making friends from other high schools through the FFA organization offered some participants familiar faces upon arriving at Land Grant University, and even “made Land Grant



Figure 5.4 Audrey's FFA Jacket & Degrees

University not seem as big as it really is, so it was very helpful” (Audrey). In fact, Audrey’s original housing plans fell through just two short months prior to moving to University City. Through her FFA connections, though, she was able to get a spot in an apartment with two girls who, though she did not know them well, were acquaintances with whom she felt sure she would share some similarities, thanks to FFA. The impact of these FFA ties was strong enough to cause Audrey to submit the photograph in Figure 5.4 as representative of how her farm and university lives meshed. She explained this decision by writing, “I began my journey while in high school and I capped off my FFA experience this past fall [while attending Land Grant University] by receiving my American

Degree which is the highest degree an active member can receive during membership.”

Sheldon also enjoyed being able to run into people he knew at Land Grant University, thanks to his FFA experiences. State FFA office, which can only be obtained during a member’s first two years of college, also helped to bring friends together at Land Grant University. Jared’s

state FFA officer experience meant that he already knew other past state officers, or even other FFA members who had unsuccessfully run for state office, with whom he was able to quickly and easily connect and “wasn’t worried about not having the similarities” needed to live together. Lisa was also a state FFA officer and, since University State FFA meetings were held at Land Grant University, getting a state office, for Lisa, “solidified that I would be going to Land Grant University fo’ sho’.” Scott also attended Land Grant University in part due to his efforts to run for state office, though he did not win.

FFA also offered exposure to opportunities, such as travel, that aided in the transition. Although Danielle was initially hesitant to major in agricultural education, she eventually made the decision after she realized “how much FFA actually did for me when I was growing up. I didn’t realize how much it actually, how many opportunities it gave me,” including practice interviewing and writing resumes and cover letters. Realizing how much advantage FFA had given her over her peers, Danielle decided to go into agricultural education in hopes of giving future students that same advantage. Audrey also saw major opportunities, and described a peer who never had the chance to travel with her family, but, after joining FFA, “had the opportunity to travel to like national convention, state convention, and all these experiences that otherwise she wouldn’t have had.” These travels, and the resulting exposure to various people in more urban settings, meant that participants found themselves a little less shocked by their new University City surroundings than might have been anticipated. For Sheldon, the simple chance to leave his home town and meet people helped to get him out of his shell. Jared’s experience as a state FFA officer was further proof of the impact of FFA’s opportunities on the transition to college. When asked how he dealt with being around and in class with so many more people than he was accustomed to, Jared simply laughed and said, “after being able to stand up in front of 1,500 high school kids, I’m not afraid of a large crowd.” He also credited 4-H and FFA record books for his ability to create and stick to a budget, which he said helped to make the transition to college a little easier.

It quickly became clear, upon analyzing interview data, that FFA was integral to participants’ identities and college transitions. It was so important to Jared that, as a high school freshman, he requested to transfer high schools so that he could attend a school with an FFA program. FFA is “pretty much a part of me,” Danielle said, “because I grew up with it and I plan on going back with it.”

Teacher Influence

When participants discussed the impact of educators on their lives, they spoke almost exclusively of their agricultural education teachers, who were also their FFA advisors. High school agriculture teachers helped in forming such integral parts of identity as confidence and self-esteem. Audrey explained that her first attempt at public speaking during her freshman year of high school resulted in her finishing in last place. She thought she would never do it again, but, the next year, her agriculture teacher

really spent a lot of time with me working on my speech and listening to my speech, giving me pointers, and then when I took second place at district then I felt pretty proud of myself and it really showed me that, um, I was, it was nice that I had somebody believing in me that much and I wanted to be that kind of person for somebody because, I mean, sometimes they don't always have that kind of role model in their life. (Audrey)

Audrey's agricultural education teacher helped her to gain speaking skills and confidence, as well as inspired Audrey's eventual career choice.

Not only did agriculture teachers offer opportunities which helped with the social transition, but, according to Lisa, they also helped her academically. Her agriculture classes really helped, she said, because they "took a lot of things in my from my biology classes and chemistry classes and put them into real life terms," and could even go beyond just science courses to "relate it to all four core areas."

Finally, the influence of the FFA organization and agricultural education teachers helped participants decide to major in agricultural education, as seen above in Audrey's account of her growing confidence. Jared also chose agricultural education due in part to his mentor, the FFA advisor at a rival high school, telling Jared that he would make a great agricultural education teacher. This suggestion was confirmed for Jared when he served as a state FFA officer. His experiences "in front of anywhere from 5-20 different students at a time to lead workshops or to teach 'em a new skill of some sort" confirmed his desire to teach. Paul chose agricultural education primarily because of his agricultural education teacher, who "helped give me a lot of skills and inspired me to do my best," because "he wanted to see me succeed, so that's kind of what I want to do for my students is show 'em anything's possible as long as they put forth the effort." Sheldon would also "love to be able to impact kids' lives the way" his high school agricultural education teacher did.

Pattern 2B Summary Continuing Educational Legacy or Impact

Whether in school, at work, or even at home, participants were focused on educating those around them, which helped to give purpose to a potentially difficult transition to college and to city living. This educational focus included enlightening city folks in daily conversation as well as continuing to utilize the skills and opportunities provided by the FFA organization to help educate others. Participants also looked forward to having their own classrooms where they would get the chance to make a difference on future generations, perhaps helping to ease their college transitions as well.

First Subsidiary Research Question (RQ2) Discussion

It seems clear that participants' agrarian backgrounds heavily influenced their identities and their transitions to college. Although attachment to a plot of land far from Land Grant University and the pressure to continue the family farming tradition could easily have prevented participants from making the transition to college, these factors, along with others, instead pushed participants to attend college in order to best continue their agrarian legacies. The impulse to educate non-agrarian people and the impact of the FFA organization played no small part in the decision to transition to college, and in easing that transition by giving it purpose and equipping students with the necessary skills to be successful.

Second Subsidiary Research Question (RQ3)

Participants' agrarian backgrounds may have heavily influenced their decisions to attend Land Grant University, and even their ability to be successful after relocating, but what impact did university experiences have on participant identities? Research question three takes just such a focus. Data analysis with research question three at the fore resulted in two patterns, made up of a total of seven codes, as may be seen in Table 5.3.

The two emerging patterns, pattern 3A, Finding Self-Identity and pattern 3B, Can I go Home?, represent two distinct areas of impact of university experiences: coming to college and anticipating the transition away from college. In both cases, the influence of university experiences on a participant's identity was clearly visible, as explained below.

Table 5.3 RQ#3 Code Chart

3A. Finding Self-Identity		
Codes	Definitions	Data Point Samples
Confirmation	College confirming and/or clarifying things they already know about agriculture	"the more I learn here at Land Grant University, I'd have to say the agriculture part of it's more important, just cuz I know the importance of it now. Like I knew it before, but now I understand it." (Paul, Interview #1)
Free Time (Not discussed here)	Adjusting to having free time - Not seeking out a break from work	"I guess part of the reason I came to college was to be able to interact with lots of people, but to be able to have that little bit of lax time every now and then" (Scott, Interview #2)
Identity Freedom (Not discussed here)	Ability to explore identity, try new things without feeling hampered by what others expect.	"I don't feel like you really have to find yourself until you really are on your own and you have to figure out what you want to do." (Danielle, Interview #2)
My People	Participant identifies people at Land Grant University in a way that indicates that they are close and an integral part of their network, in much the same way as family	"coming here, just look at all the different diversity that there is here. I could get along with people just fine. And I could probably tolerate them for a long time. But none of them make me feel at home unless if they have a connection to agriculture." (Paul, Interview #1)
Taking a Break	Coming to college as a break from the daily work of the farm	"I really came to college to meet people, have fun, get away from the every day farm life for a while" (Scott, Questionnaire)
3B. Can I go Home?		
Codes	Definitions	Data Point Samples
Can't Go Home	Students reference difficulties in returning home due to college experiences	"But when you go, as far as going to a huge school where I only talk to a couple students here and there and then I go back home to a smaller community, I don't think that'll help me as much and could potentially hurt me a little bit, could become one of the city folk, if that makes sense." (Paul, Interview #1)
New Faces & Ideas	Participant notes that, in returning to agriculture and/or ag ed, they will be bringing a younger generation and newer ideas to the field	"newer face, like a new generation, different ideas, different things to the classroom. Cuz I mean, there's a lot of older ag teachers out there and they've been doing the same thing for all these years, so just bring something different" (Danielle, Interview #1)

Pattern 3A: Finding Self-Identity

The concept of college as a time and place in which to “find yourself” is not new. Living away from home, often with an entirely new peer group and the freedom to determine their own

priorities, schedules, and recreation allows college students to form their identities independent of the expectations of family or home community. This pattern explored how participants in this study went about exploring and forming their identities once in college, with particular attention to the impacts of courses, peers, and university lifestyle.

Confirmation

Participants came to Land Grant University with the pre-existing idea that agriculture was an important component of their identity. This facet of their identity was reinforced, and the college transition eased, any time a course confirmed their knowledge of agriculture or their perception of the importance of agriculture.

Course content, particularly where it added to or confirmed participants' prior knowledge, was instrumental in confirming their agrarian identities, as well. Jared arrived at Land Grant University with an extensive knowledge of livestock, but was less confident in crops or horticulture. After taking classes in those areas and being "educated on a larger spectrum of agriculture, my appreciation and passion for it is that much stronger," and even reinforced his desire to become an agricultural education teacher. Scott's Principles of Feeding course was helping to make explicit some things that he "had some ideas about, but then instead of having to ask dad or look it up, why I might just know." Paul found that "the more I learn here at Land Grant University, I'd have to say the agriculture part of it's more important, just 'cause I know the importance of it now. Like I knew it before, but now I understand it." The basics of agricultural economics was, for Sheldon, "all stuff that I know, and it makes sense when I learn it. It's just giving it names and making it clearer." In all cases, the fact that courses were clarifying or confirming existing knowledge aided in the college transition, since participants were not learning the concepts for the first time.

Meeting other farm kids was also instrumental in confirming the identities and easing the transitions of study participants. Stephanie found it "eye-opening to see how different and how vast people range. Like, some come from the Wild Wild West still, and others it's more like urbanized farm kids," which she found beneficial, since these different kinds of farmers and ranchers could, and did, exchange ideas and learn from one another. Lisa stated that there were not that many agrarian students in her high school, and prior to coming to Land Grant University, she "didn't realize how many other kids there were like us in the world that were interested, that came from a farming background or had strong interests in agriculture." Being around people

like her, she said, helped her to “have an appreciation for agriculture in a whole new way,” which in turn supported her desire to return to that way of life via agricultural education.

My People

No matter where people go, they are always searching for their “people,” those with whom they can strike up conversation, or sit in comfortable silence, thanks to an innate understanding of one another. Participants in this study were no different. However, given the college transition, finding their “people” also constituted an act of identity formation (Cicognani et al., 2011; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011), and an effort to ease the transition to college by finding or creating a comfortable group in which to make the adjustment.

Although most participants found their people in more specific areas of the university, some did find a home in the university or University City as a whole. Jared, for example, said that, “when choosing my college, the sense of family that I got here at Midwest University is what drew me in personally,” because other colleges he toured did not have that same feeling. Audrey’s sense of belonging was even wider, as, by the time of the study, she said, “University City kind of feels like home.” Scott also formed friendships in the university at large, and found it “really interesting to see the amount of farm kids as you go throughout campus that aren’t just in College of Ag.” Lisa also found the university as a whole welcoming, though she pointed out that she intentionally got involved in various areas, including a sorority, because “the best thing is to get involved with people, because if you don’t get involved with anything, are you really branching out?” For Lisa’s experience, finding her people required experimenting with many different groups and types of people, but it should be noted that this was not the case for all participants. Even though she intentionally branched out, Lisa’s preferred group quickly became clear, because she loved her “friends from my sorority, but I preferred to hang out with my college of ag friends just because we came from similar backgrounds and were headed in similar directions.” These similarities allowed Lisa, and other participants, to easily start conversations with and relate to other College of Agriculture students.

The majority of the participants majored in agricultural education from the start, and therefore found their people very quickly in the College of Agriculture. “We always talk about how Land Grant University is such a family,” Scott said, but “if you get more into the College of Ag, I think we all unite and really, you know, kind of help to understand each other.” Even when majors changed, Audrey said, she remained friends with former agricultural education majors

because “we also have, I guess, the same things that hold us together.” Jared also found similarities with other College of Agriculture students, and even stated that his friends were “all ag ed kids,” most with “similar personalities to mine, very kind of outgoing, not afraid to try new things,” and other traits very similar to Jared’s. Scott acknowledged that “most of the people I know are pretty well farm kids or have some sort of agricultural connection,” as most came from the College of Agriculture. However, he did admit to bonding more closely with those who grew up as cattle producers, since they shared more in common (Scott). Perhaps most compelling, though, Audrey said, “I’m from a small town, but when I came here the college of agriculture really made it feel like home because I had people, students and faculty, here on campus.” Even though her small town background left her anxious about meeting lots of people, Audrey, like many other participants, found her community, her people, in the College of Agriculture. Lisa echoed Audrey’s sentiments, saying that Land Grant University, and in particular the College of Agriculture, made transitioning from a small town to University City easier by simply breaking it down and offering “a family atmosphere.” This experience of transitioning into the College of Agriculture was so positive that Audrey felt that, “no matter what your background is, in the College of Agriculture there’s a way and a place for you to fit in.”

Audrey also found that the College of Agriculture’s faculty and staff were supportive. She worked in one of the College of Agriculture’s offices, and considered her coworkers family. When her boss noticed that Audrey had posted about having a bad day on Facebook, she offered a hug, which Audrey appreciated because “she cared enough to notice that, like, I was having problems.” Audrey also made a point to note that such caring also extended to the College of Agriculture’s academic advising department, as evidenced by the fact that any advisor would be willing to help, even if not specifically assigned to the student in need.

The College of Agriculture family was important to many participants. For Audrey, a key benefit came the simple fact that “we all understand what everybody else is going through, and so I think the support-system is better.” Jared’s very first friendships came from “the College of Ag because that’s the family that kind of introduced me here to Land Grant University.” Paul struggled initially to make friends, as he had somehow been placed on the engineering floor of his dorm, and so it was “kind of hard for me to try to make connections because a lot of them are engineers and they have no agriculture background.” However, he quickly found friends with an agriculture background through the College of Agriculture and was making plans to move in

“with people a little bit more my style” for the coming year, after forming friendships with “people who have more of an ag background.”

Based in the College of Agriculture, the university’s Agricultural Education Club offered another place for participants to find their people. Audrey explained that she felt she connected with other Agricultural Education Club members because they shared a “similar background, similar reasons of why they want to be an ag teacher.” This club, through its focus on a specific major and career choice, helped to ensure that participants would find similar people there. With career such an important facet of identity (Cicognani et al., 2011), it was no surprise that participants named this club as an important part of their college transition and network.

The Agriculture Ambassadors, a competitively selective group, seemed a natural place for agricultural education majors to fit. However, Audrey, herself an agricultural ambassador, called it a second tier group for her, because “there’s not a lot of ag teachers, or ag ed majors in Ag Ambassadors,” and so she did not feel it was truly made up of her people. Lisa, however, appreciated the fact that her role as an Agricultural Ambassador allowed her to network with people across campus.

Jared and some of his friends formed a unique offshoot of the College of Agriculture family, which he called “a farm boy youth group.” This group of four to five young men met regularly to study and discuss their shared faith, and also offered general life and school support. Due to the fact that he shared agrarian background and values as well as spiritual values with these other young men, Jared called them his number one friend group, because he “would probably do anything for” them. This narrowing of his preferred social group demonstrates a refining of Jared’s identity (Cicognani et al., 2011; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011) not demonstrated by all participants, and could be attributed to the fact that he was a sixth year senior and, therefore, older than many other participants.

Paul also found a unique way to connect with a more specific group of people through swing dancing. He used it as “just a fun way to relieve stress,” and found that “the only people who know how to swing dance are people who have the same background as me.” Therefore, though he did not consider the group essential to his identity, Paul had found a way to connect with his people and relieve stress, effectively easing his farm to college transition.

Regardless of how they located their people, one thing was clear. All participants found their people in agriculture. Paul commented on the diversity he found at Land Grant University

by asserting that he “could get along with people just fine, and I could probably tolerate them for a long time, but none of them make me feel at home unless if they have a connection to agriculture.” In fact, Paul noted that, in moving from his farm home to Land Grant University, “my social life has expanded from livestock to actual people,” demonstrated in his submission of Figure 5.5 as representative of his university experience. The College of Agriculture made Scott “feel like I’m where I’m supposed to be.” This sense of belonging is key to identity, particularly when linked to a place (Cicognani et al., 2011; Proshansky et al., 1983), and it seemed that most participants had found a strong peer group. Audrey summed up her own discovery by saying, “I guess ag is just my people.”



Figure 5.5 Paul and His College Best Friends

Taking a Break

Although participants had a strong, clear affinity for farming, they also revealed a desire to take a break, which they achieved by attending Land Grant University. This break from the manual labor of farm life allowed participants the space to explore their options and, in most cases, to come to appreciate farm life, including the hard work.

Most participants did not list a break from farm life as a reason for attending college, but those who did were careful to be sure that their desire for a break was not misunderstood. Scott explained that he “came to college to meet people, have fun, get away from the every day farm life for a while.” In part, his decision to come to Land Grant University to take a break from the farm came from the fact that his dad did not do as much on the farm when he was in high school as Scott did “because they had a lot of hired men, and I guess I just wanted to, not that I don’t enjoy being on the farm or anything,” he was careful to explain, but he wanted to “get away from the getting up and doing chores and then doing chores before you go to bed for a little while.”

For the majority of participants who acknowledged college as a break from farm life, it was simply a nice perk alongside a necessary education. Lisa asserted that “it’s good to get away,” because she had farmed through high school, and “it wasn’t always a joy to work on” the

farm. Sheldon also enjoyed the break at times, especially when it was cold, but, at the time of his interview, he said he “wouldn’t mind being back home because it’s nice out.” Stephanie agreed that weather was a factor, but, although “at first you enjoy not having to do all the chores,” she explained, “you find yourself actually missing them after a while.” For her, this shift occurred approximately three weeks into her first semester at Land Grant University (Stephanie).

Unless a participant took a job on a farm while attending Land Grant University, which only one participant revealed over the course of the study, every single participant was forced to take a break from farm work simply by virtue of attending Land Grant University. While this could have constituted an identity threat, since farm work was a large part of participants’ identities (Cicognani et al., 2011; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011; Proshansky, 1978), participants chose instead to frame it as a temporary break. In this way, a key portion of participants’ identities were not changed or erased by transitioning to college, but only temporarily suspended, mitigating the threat to identity and allowing participants to keep the agrarian identity from which they were taking a brief break.

Pattern 3A Summary Finding Self-Identity

At the same time as participants were exploring and “trying different things and getting involved with different things to see what you like,” college also “provided me with a sense of ‘This is what I know I want to do,’ so I think it allows that, but it also can narrow it down and you can find your niche” (Stephanie). Participants in this study found their niche in agricultural education, as a result of finding confirmation and their “people” at Land Grant University, even if they did need a break for a little bit. After all, Lisa said, “You don’t know how great it is until you move away,” further solidifying the agrarian identity.

Pattern 3B: Can I go Home?

After making a successful transition to college, participants then began to look ahead to the coming transition into the workforce and, for many, back to their home areas. In some cases, this coming transition caused great trepidation, while others looked forward to it. In either case, participants acknowledged potential barriers to going home, and the fact that they would be bringing new faces and ideas to the field of agriculture.

Can't Go Home

Even though participants retained their agrarian identities while attending Land Grant University, there was no doubt that college had also changed them. Paul worried that having been in an urban environment and become more sociable, his home community might perceive him as having “become one of the city folk,” therefore creating a barrier to his successful transition back into the community. However, he still felt confident that he could transition back, even if it would take a little more work. Stephanie felt a similar pressure, though more explicitly related to identity. She felt as though her home community expected her “to keep my high school image,” which was in sharp contrast to her life at Land Grant University, where Stephanie had “established who I was without anybody looking over and caring like small towns do. No one cares here, you are who you really are.” Still, Stephanie hoped that her community’s expectations would fade over time and that, by the time she was ready to move back, she would feel free to be herself.

Although both participants who spoke explicitly of the difficulty in going back home as the people they had become still intended to try, it is important to note that this fear of clashing identities is severe, and could cause identity crisis in some (Boyd et al., 2003; Cicognani et al., 2011; Sherman et al., 2013; Steele et al., 2002). Therefore, although the impact was minimal in this study, the clash between high school identity and college graduate identity, particularly when returning to their hometown, should not be downplayed in college students.

New Faces & Ideas

One inescapable consequence of attending college and then returning to work in the agriculture industry was that of bringing a new generation with new ideas to the field. Although it is hard to argue against the positive impact of such changes, the transition can still be difficult, especially for the old guard, who must allow these newcomers to make changes.

Some participants noted the need to successfully transition a farming operation from one generation to the next. Audrey, for instance, was applying for a scholarship that would include education on just that topic. Scott foresaw difficulties with this transition, because “my dad does not like change.” In fact, some pieces of equipment, such as the swather and the combine, were run exclusively by his father, and Scott believed that his father would “do it until he physically cannot climb the ladder to the combine,” making the transition to Scott’s ownership difficult. Lisa also saw the importance of passing knowledge, skills, and passion on to the next generation.

For her “farm self” photo, Lisa opted to submit a photograph of herself teaching her two younger brothers how to show steers (Figure 5.6).

Most participants simply wanted to take their newfound knowledge home to help improve the family’s farming practices. Audrey’s classes had taught her more about how to best care for and breed cattle, which she hoped to put to good use “to increase our herd capabilities and



Figure 5.6 Lisa Instructs Her Brothers in Showmanship

really see that part of my parents’ operation succeed.” Stephanie was also excited to learn more about the cattle side of their operation through her Beef Science class, even calling home to ask her father if he had heard of some of the advancements she was learning about. Jared had already seen his cousins impact their farming operations for the better and hoped to do the same. He hoped that his agriculture courses at Land Grant University would work to “broaden our perspective on the agricultural industry,” leading to an expanding “operation while boosting productivity and profitability” (Jared). Although not yet in college, Bob had already determined to attend college in part to learn “better management practices,” especially to help improve his family’s crop yields. The same issue, farm management, was something Scott hoped to improve upon by attending college. For Scott, the focus was on areas where his “knowledge differs from dad’s,” because his father was an animal science major, and Scott felt that he could, therefore, bring new methods and ideas to the agronomy side of their operation. However, “the biggest asset for me is just gonna be being there to help my dad with the technological changes that’s coming about” (Scott). His father’s distaste for change made Scott’s familiarity with technology all the more important.

Another reason for pursuing and implementing new ideas was consumer trust. “Consumers want safe products,” Audrey explained, “and they want to trust the producers.”

Therefore, Audrey looked to her college education to help her “make a better product for the customer and gain their trust.”

Finally, participants wanted to bring their best to the agricultural education classroom. Danielle hoped to teach her students about new programs, technologies, and ideas, all while bringing a newer, younger face to the field, because there were “a lot of older ag teachers out there, and they’ve been doing the same thing for all these years,” so she wanted to bring something different.

Whether applying knowledge to their farms or classrooms or both, participants were both excited about the changes they would effect and well aware of the potential barriers to such changes. Therefore, participants were firm in their identity as the new generation of agriculture, and well equipped to effect the necessary changes.

Pattern 3B Summary Can I go Home?

Participants overall felt comfortable with the coming transition back to the farm. Certainly they faced obstacles, which they seemed well aware of, but they also saw themselves as equipped with knowledge that would aid in the transition. As is to be expected in any time of major change, participants were both excited and nervous about the upcoming transition back into agriculture. However, their ultimate answer was “Yes, we can go home,” in large part due to their newfound agricultural knowledge.

Second Subsidiary Research Question (RQ3) Discussion

Having already transitioned to college, participants were able to quickly identify that finding their people, and thus confirmation of their identities, was essential to their success. Participants also easily mitigated the potential issue of taking a break from farm work, and even made easy work of barriers they faced in transitioning back home. In large part, both their transition to college and back to the farm was made possible thanks to participants’ university experiences. The knowledge gained and relationships formed at Land Grant University not only eased transitions, but forever impacted participant identity (McGlone & Aronson, 2006; Steele et al., 2002).

Significance of Study

For those working in education, the significance of knowing the students in the classroom need not be explained. The better we, as educators, know our students, the better we can meet their individual needs. Why, though, does it matter if we understand agrarian students separately from rural students? Guiffrida (2008) has already suggested that agrarian students differ from their rural non-agrarian peers due to the fact that agrarian college student success is related to their ability to maintain connections with their home community. This research supported that idea, and went further by contradicting some study findings focused on rural, rather than agrarian, students. Although I acknowledge that the number of participants and regional specificity prevent generalization, differing results indicated a need for further research on agrarian students. For example, studies have shown that rural students hold lower educational aspirations (Antos, 1999), but participants in this study were attending a four year university, or planned to, and many had plans to attend graduate school. Williams and Luo (2010) suggested that rural students were more likely to remain in college after their first year if they were attending college close to home, which was called into question for agrarian students by Jared, an out of state student, and other participants whose homes were three or more hours from Land Grant University. Additionally, in a study by Irvin et al. (2012), some facets of personal identity in rural students were found to be perceived as barriers to education, while others were not. These mixed findings suggested a need for further, more detailed research, such as might be achieved by separating agrarian and non-agrarian students into separate study groups. Again, it is understood that this study is not generalizable and does not fully answer the need for research described here. However, this study does raise some questions about the reliability of utilizing the results of studies of rural students to predict the needs, challenges, or successes of agrarian students.

Additionally, this is an endangered population, both in terms of college attendance and existence as a whole. The United States Air Force considers rural students a minority, according to their recruitment pamphlet (U.S. Air Force Academy, n.d.), and since farmers are a subset of rural students, they are also certainly a minority population. Additionally, the average age of the American farmer has increased from 53.2 in 1992 to 58.3 in 2012 (U.S. Department of Agriculture). If farming is to continue, and our love of bacon dictates that it should, young people with an interest in farming must be allowed and encouraged to farm. Although the

financial hardship often faced by farmers is beyond the scope of educators, the influence of an educator's curriculum, perspective, and words should not be underestimated. After all, five of the eight Land Grant University participants noted teacher influence as a key reason for their decision to return to agriculture in the form of teaching agriculture at the high school level.

Implications for Practice

This research has shown that agrarian students differ from their peers in some key ways, making their adjustment to college life somewhat different. However, those who work with this population can help to mitigate the negative aspects of acculturation and make the transition a more positive one for all involved. This is particularly important, given that urban students were 106% more likely to earn their bachelor's degree than rural students (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012, p. 425).

It should go without saying that, no matter what his/her role, no professional involved in education should disparage any background or career goal. However, given that the impetus for this research came from a disparaging comment made by a classmate who was working as an education counselor at the time, I will reiterate. No one is "just a farmer," any more than someone is "just" a nurse, a doctor, a teacher, or any other chosen career.

K-12 Instructors

Before agrarian students even reach college, their K-12 teachers may have a dramatic impact on their future plans and perceptions of the university. In fact, many participants, including Audrey, Danielle, Jared, Paul, Scott, and Sheldon, stated that they chose to attend college or major in agricultural education due to the influence of one of their K-12 teachers, typically the agriculture teacher.

The influence of the high school agriculture teacher is also worth considering further. It is possible that agrarian students' connections with agriculture teachers is due to their similarities in terms of backgrounds, knowledge, and values, as students are likely to allow those with similar identities to influence our decision making (Cicognani et al., 2011; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011). Therefore, K-12 teachers who have the ability to connect with agrarian students could utilize this connection to help agrarian students explore their future options in a healthy manner. John is a great example of the importance of this connection. Upon first meeting John, I made a joke about his John Deere t-shirt, telling him that it really should be an Allis

Chalmers (another make of tractor). From that point on, John and I had no real issues, a fact that his paraeducator later told me was significant, as John did not get along with any female teachers without an obvious connection to agriculture.

Even educators with no agricultural connections can foster agricultural interests in their students. Participants often linked their assignments to agriculture, even in non-agricultural courses, and when asked to submit their most meaningful assignment completed in college so far, every single participant submitted an agriculturally related assignment. Therefore, it seems that one way to help affirm their identities, and potentially their future careers, may be to offer students choice in assignments, and include agriculturally-related topic choices. Math courses, for instance, could deal with farm-related units of measure, such as acres or yield percentages. History and English courses can utilize agricultural content to teach the same basic skills. Science courses could also utilize farm-related content to teach the same principles, such as growing corn or figuring the amount of force an Allis Chalmers WD-40 tractor can produce. These changes do not call for a total curriculum overhaul, but instead for including farm-related content every now and then to pique the interest of agrarian students.

University Instructors

Once agrarian students decide to attend a university, they are less likely than their urban peers to complete their degree (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012). It is, therefore, essential that university instructors keep their curriculum open to the views of agrarian students, at the very least. However, given the necessity of agriculture to the survival of society, it does not seem unreasonable to ask instructors to incorporate agricultural readings, research or writing assignments, or at the very least encourage students to choose assignment topics related to their backgrounds.

If instructors are truly interested in helping their students succeed, then it is essential that they notice when students are absent or begin to slip in their coursework. This can be difficult in large, introductory level courses, but is no less important. Certainly, this is true for all students, but for those groups more at risk for college dropout, including minority groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos (Sherman et al., 2013; Steele et al., 2002), as well as less well-recognized groups, such as rural or agrarian students (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012), attention to their attendance rates is even more important.

Faculty in agricultural areas have a further responsibility to ensure that agrarian students understand how their unique backgrounds and skills can be beneficial to them in agriculturally-related job markets. Agrarian students may not recognize the unique value of such qualities to employers, particularly those in agricultural fields.

High School Counselors

Although no participants specifically mentioned their high school counselor, it is certainly part of a counselor's job description to help students decide what they want to do when they leave high school. Based on participant data, it seems that, even if a student wants to farm full-time, some level of college may be useful in learning the newest farming innovations in order to help that student achieve the best possible results and, therefore, income.

High school counselors would also do well to keep in touch with former students during their first year at college. Although the counselor may be too remote to physically visit, supportive contact with a familiar person could help students to maintain contact with home, which participants noted as helpful in successfully transitioning to college.

University Academic Advisors and Counselors

One of the most useful things, according to participants, was finding themselves quickly in a relatively small, family-like departmental group. Those who did not meet their group right away, the College of Agriculture or Agricultural Education department, in this case, struggled a bit more to find and make friends and to feel comfortable at Land Grant University. Paul was a great example of this. His placement on an engineering dorm floor delayed his finding other agrarian peers in the College of Agriculture, and he described himself as less outgoing initially for that reason. Therefore, efforts to place students with others in their major could be helpful in easing the transition.

Additionally, advisors should bear in mind that such students often come from small towns and schools, so enrollment in relatively small classes to begin with would help to ease the transition. Agrarian students who desire to maintain a connection to their agricultural backgrounds should also be steered toward organizations, courses, and extracurricular activities that would allow them to do so. This is not to say that students should not explore outside of their comfort zones, but that provision of some level of familiarity may increase college persistence.

College Students

New college students would do well to heed Lisa's advice to branch out and meet new people. It may be difficult, but it truly is the only way to be certain that the group of people you've chosen to befriend truly is the best fit for you.

College "old-timers," who have survived at least the first year of college, can help ease the transition of new-comers from similar backgrounds by simply remembering what it was like and offering help.

All college students should feel as though they can incorporate their identities and topics relevant to their futures into college courses. Look for opportunities to incorporate your interests, background, and future goals. Composition courses often offer such flexibility.

High School Students

It is, admittedly, difficult to see past high school. However, a successful transition to college or work requires that you try. Participants in this study nearly all cited FFA as very useful in their transition from an agrarian home to a much more urban university. Even if you do not plan to continue in agriculture, being active in FFA creates opportunities to make friends from around the state, and even around the country. Then, when the time comes to transition to college, familiar faces are easier to find, since your network includes more than the students in your own home area.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study begins to add to the small collection of existing research on agrarian students (e.g.: Esterman & Hedlund, 1995; McGrath, Swisher, Elder, & Conger, 2001), but much more is needed. However, until post-secondary schools begin tracking rural or agrarian students, such research will be severely limited. It is currently difficult to identify agrarian students in large numbers or diverse fields. This study was limited to students majoring in agricultural education due to a professor's suggestion that the major contained a high concentration of agrarian students, but what of the experiences of agrarian students in the arts? Further research is needed into the transitions of agrarian students entering fields other than agricultural education. In particular, studies of agrarian students not planning to return to agriculture are needed, as these students, by shifting from their background, face greater threats to identity than those who return (Breakwell, 1986; Proshansky, 1978; Proshansky et al., 1983).

A longitudinal study, in which agrarian students at various high schools are identified during their senior year of high school and tracked throughout their transitions to college would allow me to address many further research needs. For instance, such a longitudinal study would include agrarian students entering multiple colleges or universities as well as multiple majors. Additionally, I would hope to identify both agrarian students intending to return to the farm as well as those seeking to distance themselves from it. Such a study would also allow for investigation of agrarian student employment patterns while attending college, retention rates, changes in majors and minors, and ultimate career placement. Participants of such a longitudinal study would complete qualitative interviews, submit photographs and assignments, and be observed, much as participants of the current study. However, the ability to collect participant artifacts and impressions as they progress increases reliability of findings.

Perhaps most importantly, a longitudinal study would allow me to build a deeper rapport with participants, making exploration of issues such as religion, family conflict, sexual orientation, and other sensitive topics more likely. Although difficult to discuss, the influence of such issues is an essential piece of the participant's life, making future longitudinal research necessary.

Agrarian students who identify with one or more other minority groups also warrant attention in future studies. Issues of gender, race, sexual orientation, and ethnicity are of clear importance to educational transitions. The identification of minority agrarian students will add to the richness and ability to generalize findings.

In order to establish a more firm foundation for any future studies, quantitative studies identifying the percentage of agrarian students who choose to attend college, persist in college, graduate from college, and major in certain fields are necessary. Such studies will not only help to establish the college attendance and success patterns of agrarian students, but will also provide a foundation for qualitative researchers to work from.

Closing Thoughts

I was not surprised by the findings of this study. Like the participants in this study, I also grew up on a farm, made the transition to college, and had similar experiences to those reported by participants. In particular, this study confirmed my own experience of the farm-to-college transition as overwhelming and initially isolating, until I found "my people." Similarly,

participants felt connected at Land Grant University due to pre-existing friendships developed through organizations such as FFA which helped to mitigate the difficulty of transitioning to a more urban area. Additionally, the strong tie these participants demonstrated to their family traditions of farming and to the land on which they were raised influenced their college experiences. Those who planned to return to the farm were therefore able to see their urban college experience as temporary and looked forward to returning to their rural homes. Although the findings were not surprising to me, due to my own similar background, the lack of research on agrarian students, or even Midwestern rural students, indicated a need for such a study.

It is my hope that this study, in its description of the experiences of agrarian students, demonstrated the importance of research on the agrarian population. Furthermore, I hope that high schools and universities will understand the importance of tracking rural agrarian students and implementing the strategies presented above to increase rural agrarian students' chances of persisting in post-secondary education and achieving their ultimate goals. In future research, I plan to focus on collecting longitudinal data on a cohort of agrarian university students, regardless of major, to determine whether or not major influences college persistence. I also plan to study methods of increasing agrarian student attendance at universities of higher education. The current study prompted me to reflect not only on the data provided by participants, but also on my own farm to university transition. As I embark on this further research, I anticipate that I will continue to learn much about my university experiences and myself.

A Mile in My Boots: A Reflection on Research

I am a writer, first and foremost. But when my own agrarian identity was threatened by the words of a classmate, "But don't we want our kids to be more than just farmers?" I began to realize that my writing needed to mean more. Somehow, I needed to help my peers to understand not only the importance of agriculture, but also the fact that there were agrarian students intending to return to agriculture, even in their college classrooms. Although autoethnography presented an intriguing option, it was also essential to my purposes that readers understand that, while agrarian students are in the minority, I am not the only one.

This research has been a roller coaster of memories for me, from the time I heard a peer suggest, in my introduction to teaching class back when I was 18, that we should go to year-round schooling because "nobody farms any more anyway," to the day I realized that I had to find a career in college, because the family farm could not support me if I returned. It was both

affirming and heart breaking to hear my participants describe similar experiences, both in high school and college. I expected my experiences with this research to stop there. However, my participants taught me things about the agrarian student experience, including my own experiences, that I never saw coming. I learned that:

- we all have “our people,” and finding them is key to feeling at home.
- it takes a little work, but there is no reason the farm cannot come into the city.
- agrarian student needs are, in some ways, not so different from the needs of other college students.
- agrarian student needs are, in some ways, more difficult to meet than the needs of other college students. (Especially when they involve open spaces or animals.)
- the pull of a generational farming legacy is hard to resist, and can impact college decisions.
- there is something about that plot of land an agrarian student grew up working that will always feel like home.

Perhaps most importantly, I learned that I am not alone and that my farm to college transition was not unique. There is a strange sort of comfort in learning that others have shared your experiences. While the ability to complete my doctorate by simply talking to “my people” and learning about their transitions felt a little self-indulgent, I was able to pursue my passion, stemming from my background in agriculture, and the words of the wise Dr. Todd Goodson rang true, “If you don’t write about yourself, you’ll never finish.” I hope you enjoyed walking a mile in my boots, because I certainly enjoyed putting them back on.

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Appendix A - Study Recruitment Flyer



Are you a current K-State student?
Were you raised on a farm/ranch/dairy/other agricultural operation?
If yes, then you qualify!

Answer a questionnaire online, on your own
schedule, at your own pace.



for a chance to win a
\$25 Gift Card
of your choice!



Email Morgan at mchesbro@ksu.edu to sign up

Agrarian Study
mchesbro@ksu.edu
Chance to win \$25 gift card

Agrarian Study
mchesbro@ksu.edu
Chance to win \$25 gift card

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Appendix B - Questionnaire 1: Demographics

- 1) Age:
- 2) Gender:
- 3) Academic Year (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate):
- 4) Number of Years at State University:
- 5) Did you grow up on a farm, ranch, dairy, or other agricultural operation?
 - a. If yes: Please describe the farm, ranch, dairy or other agricultural operation you grew up on:
 - b. If no: Do you consider yourself rural or a farm kid? Why or why not?

Appendix C - Questionnaire 2: Initial Questionnaire

1. How would you describe the community you grew up in?
2. How would you describe your university community now?
3. Do you plan to go back to a farm/dairy/ranch/other agriculturally based industry after college?
 - a. If yes –
 - i. Why do you plan to return?
 - ii. What made you decide to come to college, even though a degree is not necessarily required for your future career?
 - iii. Do you anticipate that your college experience will make it either easier or more difficult to move back into agriculture? Why/why not?
 - iv. How do you believe that your college experiences will impact your return – either positively and/or negatively?
 - b. If no –
 - i. Why not?
 - ii. What made you decide to come to college?
4. What were your first few days/weeks/months at college like?
5. What things were difficult for you when you moved from home to college?
 - a. How did you cope with those difficulties?
 - b. Do you feel you've been successful in coping with those difficulties, or are they still issues for you?
6. Who or what has made the transition from home to college easier for you?
 - a. How/why have they made it easier?
7. What differences do you see between agrarian/farm students (yourself) and urban or suburban students?
8. Do any of your instructors offer varied assignments, activities, teaching methods, or content for students based on their individual needs?
 - a. If yes –
 - i. Can you offer a(n) example(s)?
 - ii. Which types of individuals or groups benefit from these variations?
 - iii. Do you, as an agrarian student, benefit from these variations? Why or why not?
 - b. If no –
 - i. What is the primary style of instruction?
 - ii. Which types of individuals or groups benefit from this style?

Appendix D - Photograph Narrative Prompt

For each photograph you provide (at least one representing yourself in your home, agrarian environment and one representing you in your university environment), please provide a narrative, story-style caption explaining the picture and how/why it represents you within that community. The prompts below are meant to help you construct this narrative caption, but feel free to go beyond these questions as well.

Does this photograph represent your rural farm self or your urban university self?

Where was this photograph taken?

When was this photograph taken?

Who or what is in the photograph?

What event does this photograph capture? Tell about the event. (If relevant)

What is the story surrounding the photograph?

Why did you choose this photograph as representative of yourself?

Appendix E - University Participant Interview Protocol

1. How would you describe your childhood home?
2. What were your responsibilities growing up?
3. How would you describe your community growing up?
4. How did you make the choice between a community college and a four-year university?
5. What were your first few days/weeks/months at college like?
6. What things were difficult for you when you moved from home to college? How did you cope with those difficulties? Do you feel you've been successful in coping with those difficulties, or are they still issues for you?
7. Who or what has made the transition from home to college easier for you? How/why have they made it easier?
8. Do you plan to go back to the farm/dairy/ranch/other agriculturally based industry you were raised in after college? Why or why not?
 - a. If yes – What made you decide to come to college, even though a degree is not necessarily required for your future career? What kind of education is valuable for those in yours and other agricultural industries? How do you or will you apply your college education to your work?
 - b. If no - What kind of education is valuable for a farm/ranch/dairy owner/worker? Why is the level you describe valuable? How do farmers/ranchers/dairymen & dairywomen apply their college educations to their work?
9. How do you feel that your agrarian background has prepared you well for college?
10. How do you feel that your agrarian background has left you unprepared for college?
11. What classes are most difficult for you? Why?
12. What classes are easiest for you? Why?
13. What differences do you see between agrarian students (yourself) and urban or suburban students?
14. Do you feel that any instructors treat you differently in any way because of your agrarian background? If so, explain how. If so, what makes you think the reason they treat you differently is due to your background?
15. What things do you know that you don't think your urban and suburban classmates know?
16. Is there anything you know that has aided you at college that urban and suburban students don't know?
17. Is there anything you had to learn once you got to college in order to be successful? Did you feel like some students already knew this? What do you believe was the cause of your not knowing? If they did, why did some students already know this?
18. Describe your friendships here at college. What kinds of people do you choose to surround yourself with? Why?

Appendix F - Parental Information and Consent

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY INFORMED CONSENT TEMPLATE

PROJECT TITLE: Agrarian student acculturation to the university: The case of secondary agricultural education students

APPROVAL DATE: 12/21/14

EXPIRATION DATE: 12/31/15

INVESTIGATORS:

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PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: This is a qualitative research project that aims to explore and describe the experiences of rural farm students attending high school and university. There is very little research on this topic, and so the topic needs addressed. Specifically, the research hopes to focus on the acculturation strategies that rural farm students use in order to feel comfortable and successful in academic settings with attention to community and other socialization choices.

PROCEDURES/METHODS: Following the signing of consent, students will initially be observed in their day to day school setting (classroom, hallways, etc.). Next, students may be selected for audio-taped, in-person interviews. Students may also be asked to supply photographs relevant to their farm life, school life, and future (work or university) life. Finally, students may also be asked to supply a copy of the most meaningful assignment they have completed in high school thus far. I will simply expect students to answer honestly and be willing to share their stories.

The study data collection will last for approximately six months. There are no known risks associated with this study. This research should help high school, college, and university instructors to better understand their rural farm students. Parent/guardian and student – please initial below the portions of the study which you consent to.

_____ **Permission for observation in typical school setting**

_____ **Permission for audio-taped interviews**

_____ **Permission for submission of photographs, if requested**

_____ **Permission for submission of most meaningful assignment, if requested**

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: All names and significant identifying features will be altered on study documents and potential future publications. Audio recordings will be destroyed once transcribed.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent /Guardian Signature _____ **Date:** _____

Witness to Signature: (project staff) _____ **Date:** _____

Publication Permission

I hereby recognize that the data gathered in this study could be of interest to education and industry professionals. I therefore grant permission for the researcher, Morgan Menefee, to utilize data gathered from my questionnaires, observations, interviews, and any other study data, in potential future publications under the same terms and conditions as apply to the dissertation.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent /Guardian Signature _____ **Date:** _____

Witness to Signature: (project staff) _____ **Date:** _____

Invitation Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Morgan Menefee. I am a 7-12 English teacher at Centre High School, as well as a doctoral student in Curriculum & Instruction at Kansas State University. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree, and I would like to invite your student to participate.

I am studying how students from farm backgrounds function in academic environments, such as high school and college. If you decide to allow your child to participate, your child will be observed in their normal educational setting, as well as asked to meet with me for an interview about their educational and social experiences in high school, submit photographs that they feel best represents who they are, and submit the most important/relevant assignment they have completed thus far in high school.

In particular, we will discuss how your child relates to faculty, staff, and peers, as well as how they feel that their farm background impacts their socialization and education. The interview(s) will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about one hour. The interview will be audio taped so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. The tapes will only be reviewed by members of the research team who will transcribe and analyze them. They will then be destroyed.

Although you and your child probably won't benefit directly from participating in this study, we hope that others in the community/society in general will benefit by learning more about farm students and how their backgrounds impact their socialization and education.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but at no time will the identity of any participant be revealed.

Taking part in the study is your decision as well as your child's. Your child does not have to be in this study if you do not want them to or if they do not wish to participate. You or your child may also quit the study at any time or decide not to answer any question you or your child are not comfortable answering. Participation, non-participation or withdrawal will not affect your child's grades in any way.

We will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at 913-285-2371, mmenefee@usd397.com, or my faculty advisor, Lotta Larson, at lottalarson@ksu.edu if you have study related questions or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at (785) 532-3224.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please sign the attached forms and return to Morgan Menefee at Centre High School.

With kind regards,

Morgan Menefee
Centre High School
2374 W. 10th St.
Lost Springs, KS 66859
913-285-2371
mmenefee@usd397.com

Parental Permission Form

Study Title: Agrarian student acculturation to the university: The case of secondary agricultural education students (Working title – Subject to change)

Researcher: Morgan Menefee

I have read the information contained in the letter/memo about the above titled study, which describes what my child will be asked to do if (s)he wants to participate in the study; and,

Yes – I give permission for my child to participate in the study.

-OR-

No – I do not give permission for my child to participate in the study.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Child's Name

Age

Assent (for High School Aged Children)

I have read the information contained in the letter/memo about the above titled study, which describes what I will be asked to do if I decide to participate. My parent/guardian has given me permission to participate. I have been told that the decision is up to me, and that I do not have to participate, even if my parent/guardian says that it is okay. I have been told that I can stop participating at any time I choose, and no one will be mad at me.

Yes – I want to participate in the study.

-OR-

No – I do not want to participate in the study.

Child's Signature

Date

Age

Appendix G - High School Interview Protocol

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Academic year (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior)
4. Did you grow up on a farm, ranch, dairy, or other agricultural operation?
 1. If yes: Did your family's livelihood depend on the farm/ranch/dairy/agricultural operation?
 - a. Please describe the agricultural operation you grew up on.
 2. If no: Do you consider yourself a farm kid? Why or why not?
5. Do you plan to go back to the farm/dairy/ranch/other agriculturally based industry after high school or college?
 1. If yes:
 - a. Why do you plan to return?
 2. If no:
 - a. Why not?
6. Do you plan to attend college?
 1. Why or why not?
 2. If so, where?
7. Do you believe that there are differences between agrarian/farm students (like yourself) and urban or suburban students?
 1. If so, what differences do you see?
 - a. Tell me about when you first noticed the differences.
8. Describe your experiences with cities.
9. Do you anticipate that your college experience will make it either easier or more difficult to move back into agriculture? Why/why not?
10. Do you believe that your college experience will impact your return to agricultural? (Could be positive or negative.)
11. How would you describe the community you grew up in?

12. Do you believe that your agricultural background causes your peers or teachers to see or treat you differently?
13. What groups do you consider yourself to be a part of?
 1. Why are these groups important to you?
14. Describe your friendships here at Rural Consolidated School.
15. What differences do you foresee in going to college?
16. Is it easier to go from rural to urban or urban to rural? Why?
17. Do you believe gender has any influence on adapting to college?
Why/why not?
18. How would you define agrarian students (farm kids)?
 1. What does it take to be considered agrarian/farm?
19. Do you ever hope/intend to have your own farm? Why/why not?
20. If I asked you to explain your identity, who you are, what would you say?