"We work whenever we are needed": Exploring social identity and intergroup communication among agricultural producers

by

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Abstract

The world relies on agriculture and its producers for food, fuel, and fiber. These agricultural producers make up approximately two percent of the United States population, and they attempt to feed the world even as a minority group (American Farm Bureau, 2017). A growing world population and depleted natural resources challenge the global food system, agricultural producers, and everyone who eats. However, the two percent, who are the most directly involved and knowledgeable, are not talking about the problems or processes of agriculture with others (Higgins, 1991). Feeding the world's population increasingly will demand personal and collective decision-making that would be aided by a fully engaged and informed public. But only if those in agriculture talk about their livelihoods can we close the communication gap between producers and non-producers and thereby work together to solve the shared problems in and of agriculture.

Through qualitative interviews with agricultural producers, this study used Social Identity Theory (SIT) and intergroup communication to explore how producers understood their social identity, as well as how their social identity impacted communication with non-producers. This study is unique in that it uses SIT as the guiding theory, focusing on how agricultural producers identify as compared with the relevant out-group, non-producers.

This study finds two major themes in producer self-understandings. First, this study shows that agricultural producers view themselves as high in social status while they presume that others do not afford them the same respect. Second, agricultural producers orient themselves to non-producers in two different ways, including the Determined and the Resigned, with each holding a different sense of their ability to bridge the communication gap.

This thesis makes several contributions to communication scholarship and practice. First, the findings suggest that social competition and social creativity—two strategies for gaining and maintaining group status—might have different communication and group-relation outcomes when enacted via direct contact with the out-group. Future research is therefore needed to potentially extend SIT theory in regard to these status strategies. Second, the findings suggest that group members who could speak to the tensions within their social identity engaged with out-group members, also prompting the need for more research to clarify this phenomenon relative to SIT. Third, a striking cleavage between those who seek to engage with the out-group as compared to those who do not merits further study, and this study offers several possible avenues for explaining this difference. Fourth, and more practically, the study suggests that producers ought to be introduced to the concepts of social identity and competition to reduce tensions and to encourage interaction between producers and non-producers.

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Preface

One of the eight characteristics of quality qualitative research is sincerity (Tracy, 2010). As part of sincerity, "self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases and inclinations of the researcher" and "transparency about the methods and challenges" play a part (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). As one who wishes to be sincere in my research, I here reflect on my motivations for this research and my background as an agricultural advocate.

Before interviewing, I reflected on my motivation and positionality within the research. During the summer and fall of 2017, I participated in an internship program through the Kansas Department of Agriculture. Through my experience there, I often heard about the water issues in Kansas. I spoke at the first-ever Kansas Youth Water Advocates Conference, teaching high-school students how to deliver 30-second speeches about water and water conservation in the state. Consequently, I often found myself in the middle of conversations about water problems. It was not until I asked a co-worker at the Kansas Department of Agriculture, who happens to be from Topeka, that I realized this water problem is not known by the citizens who are not affected by it. If someone who grew up in the state's capital does not know that Kansas faces an impending water crisis, then who does? This encounter was an epiphany for me, opening my eyes to the problems of agriculture and the lack of awareness among those who do not produce food.

As for my position, I am neither an agricultural producer nor completely naive about farming. Through my part-time job in marketing for a state agricultural agency and my experiences in the FFA, I am connected to the agricultural industry in ways that the general public is not. On the other hand, I do not nor have ever thought of myself as an agricultural producer. While my connections to agriculture may be limited, what experiences I do have are

valuable because I can stand in that communication gap as someone who can appreciate the

agricultural perspective but who also is a member of the non-agricultural world. I sincerely wish

to advocate for agriculture but am also willing and able to critique agricultural producers. My

unique position between both worlds makes me capable of doing so.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

To the decidedly urban tunes of "Watch Me" by Silento, "Hit the Quan" by iLoveMemphis, and "Uptown Funk" by Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars, the Peterson Farm Brothers from central Kansas sing about the everyday duties of farming and how they feed the world (Peterson Farm Bros, 2015). Using their own feedlots, wheat fields, and barns as backdrop, the trio has produced dozens of video parodies of popular songs to teach YouTube viewers about farming and the agricultural life. Significantly, the Peterson Farm Brothers seek audiences far-removed from the agricultural world.

In other words, the Petersons wish to communicate with almost everyone. Agricultural producers[1] make up about two percent of the total United States' population (American Farm Bureau, 2017). As for the other 98%, the connection to agriculture is simply through their connection to food or industry. Without experience or knowledge, it is difficult for the general population to understand how agriculture works, its value, the challenges agricultural producers face, or how it affects the world. In fact, media and advertisements often idealize life on the farm, feeding the misconceptions of agricultural life (Rhoades & Irani, 2008; Rumble & Buck, 2013). There are efforts to teach about the realities of agricultural life, but research demonstrates

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[1] For the purposes of this thesis, agricultural producers can be defined as those who derive at least part of their income from growing food crops for human consumption (e.g., fruits or vegetables), crops that can be processed into food (e.g., corn, soybeans, grains), or animals (e.g., cattle feeder, fish farmer). The term *agricultural producer* is chosen because it is more specific than *agriculturalists*, which might refer to an expert in agriculture, but not necessarily one who works the land, and is more inclusive than simply *farmer* or *rancher* (Sulemana & James, 2014). For a more detailed discussion of why I chose to call my participants *agricultural producers,* see "Naming the Agricultural Producer," Chapter 2. For a more detailed discussion of my participant and what qualified them for inclusion in this study, see "Participants," Chapter 3.

that there are still many people, some of whom are doing the educating, who are agriculturally illiterate (Kovar & Ball, 2013).

Agricultural education programs cannot reach everyone. But unfortunately, the next best way to bridge the gap—mass media—is not successfully informing non-producers, either. Idealization of life on the farm has the potential to devalue the work of agricultural producers around the globe by misrepresenting agricultural life and feeding into the stereotypes of the ideal agricultural producer, such as a rural work ethic and a male dominated field (Rhoades & Irani, 2008). Even magazines that would appear to represent and target farmers, such as *Modern Farmer*, romanticize agriculture, mixing articles on farming with things seemingly unrelated such as fashion spreads (Crawford, 2013). Additionally, serious coverage of food-related issues is often overlooked or not given space in popular sources (Cunningham, 2012). The lack of agricultural knowledge and the misrepresentation in the media can lead to serious problems for both producers and non-producers.

Gary Conklin and his dairy cows are one example of the potentially detrimental financial and reputational effects of producers not educating non-producers. In 2012, Conklin, owner of Conklin Dairy Cattle Sales, LLC, was accused of animal abuse by an undercover Mercy for Animals member (MFA; Lancaster & Boyd, 2015). This MFA member caught Conklin on video kicking a cow that was lying down (Lancaster & Boyd, 2015). MFA then posted the video on YouTube, accusing Conklin of animal abuse (Lancaster & Boyd, 2015). Conklin invited experts in agriculture to tour his facilities and ensure that the animals were in a safe and healthy environment (Lancaster & Boyd, 2015). Additionally, large animal veterinarians determined that Conklin had to kick the cow to make it stand up, otherwise the animal would have died (Lancaster & Boyd, 2015). In the end, Conklin cleared his name, but it cost him upwards of

$10,000 to do so (Lancaster & Boyd, 2015). Not only was this a challenge for Conklin and his business, but it also demonstrates the problems with an uninformed non-agricultural public: No one would defend Conklin needlessly kicking his animals, but without agricultural knowledge and experience, it was easy for audiences to misinterpret Conklin's intent and actions.

According to scholars, such conflicts are common: Agricultural producers and non-producers regularly find themselves at odds due to lack of communication (Higgins, 1991; Lancaster & Boyd, 2015; Prokopy, Morton, Arbuckle, Mase, & Wilke, 2015). Agricultural producers have the knowledge and power to talk about their industry to the world but often do not take these opportunities (Higgins, 1991; Pilger, 2015). Instead of explaining and responding to criticisms and misinformation, agricultural producers too often "blow up," blaming others for their lack of knowledge (Pilger, 2015, para. 6). To be more effective communicators, agricultural producers should explain the science behind their practices and respond to the criticisms in a way that would educate others (Pilger, 2015).

With 98% of the population not directly involved in producing food, the producer could communicate about agriculture with a large group of people. However, to be effective, producers need to target their communication. It is no secret that there has been an uptake in interest when it comes to food (Cunningham, 2012). Weatherell, Tregear, and Allinson (2003) identified a significant subset of the public, "concerned consumers," who cared about where their food comes from and wanted to know more. The increased interest in food production could provide an opportunity for producers to educate others. In other words, an identifiable segment of non-producers are interested in knowing what they are eating, where their food comes from, and how it is produced. Therefore, agricultural producers have an opportunity to address these questions and further agricultural knowledge. It is possible that the relatively uninformed yet

interested non-producers are activists, such as in the Conklin incident, while others are not politically engaged in agricultural issues. But what unifies these uninformed and interested non-producers is precisely their interest in food and from where it comes.

If agricultural producers could communicate with those who are not as tied to the field, maybe the communication gap between the groups would shrink. Conversely, in a world that expects transparency and truthfulness, how can people trust an institution whose members will not speak for themselves? Agricultural producers know their work best but keep their livelihoods and practices to themselves, which could be interpreted as deceptive. If agricultural producers are not their own advocates, it is difficult for agencies and associations to advocate for them and the agricultural institution. Moreover, lack of trust in institutions and government puts these associations and agencies at a disadvantage (Mathews, 2014). Now more than ever before, agricultural producers need to speak out.

This thesis examines the communication gap between agricultural producers and non-producers from the agricultural producer perspective. The study uses the concept of intergroup communication to explore the gap, seeking to better understand the unwillingness of agricultural producers to speak with concerned consumers and highlight some potential solutions. More specifically, this thesis will investigate this long-standing problem of the communication gap, using Social Identity Theory (SIT). Through qualitative interviews with agricultural producers, I attempt to understand the nature of intergroup communication and agricultural producer perceptions of it.

Higgins (1991) called for more communication scholars and practitioners to research this communication gap, and little has been done since that time. This research answers that call and addresses issues with agricultural producers and non-producers that have previously been

glossed over in communication and agricultural contexts. The findings in this research not only point to potential reasons behind the communication gap, but also provide evidence of the unique social identity of agricultural producers, leading to better understanding of the group dynamic and the current state of intergroup relations.

The communication gap leads to a lack of information for both agricultural producers and non-producers, which then leads to problems not only with interpersonal communication, but communication to the masses (Lamm, Lamm & Carter, 2015). To be clear, this problem is not unique to agricultural producers. Other occupations experience similar communication gaps, resulting in problems for those groups as well. The negative effects of this lack of information for both agricultural producers and other occupations can become especially evident when it comes to voting, as citizens may hold an opinion without accurate information supporting it (Maciag, 2016). Agricultural producers and non-producers hold very different views of farming, with non-producers often romanticizing and idealizing rural ways (Higgins, 1991). With distorted or uninformed views of agricultural practices, it is highly unlikely that agricultural producers and non-producers can work together to address common problem of food production and distribution.

In addition, the challenge of feeding a growing population while preserving the planet is one that affects us all. By the year 2050, the world's population is projected to be approximately 9 billion people (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009). With more people on the planet, agricultural producers are going to need to produce 70% more than the current amount of food produced (American Farm Bureau, 2017; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009). While this may seem reasonable with more people on the Earth to work the land, agricultural producers are currently dealing with diminishing and

even a lack of resources, including water and land (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009).

This lack of resources will not only affect our food supply, but the United States economy as well. Approximately $135.5 billion of American products were exported in 2016 to other countries in the world (American Farm Bureau, 2017). In fact, the United States exports more food and products than it imports, which has a positive impact on the U.S. economy (American Farm Bureau, 2017). Globally, the world depends on agriculture for food supply and economic purposes.

Closer to Kansas, the impending water crisis illustrates this communication gap and the threat it poses to all people. Kansas's water problems are not well known by people who are not directly affected (D. Ladner, personal communication, September 7, 2017). Nevertheless, water concerns in the state loom large. Within the next 50 years, the state could see a 70% reduction in The Ogallala Aquifer (Office of the Governor, 2015). The aquifer provides essentially all water for agriculture and industry in the western half of Kansas (Office of the Governor, 2015). When western Kansas runs out of water, the entire state loses major contributors to the agricultural sector, which makes up approximately 43 percent of the state's economy (Kansas Department of Agriculture, 2017). Along with the problems in western Kansas, within those same 50 years eastern reservoirs will be 40 percent full of sediment (Office of the Governor, 2015). This is a problem for the citizens who rely on these reservoirs for their water supply. In both instances, agricultural and non-agricultural residents of Kansas will be severely affected through lost economic activity and tax revenue, more costly water and potential restrictions, and degraded natural environments. Therefore, all Kansans ought to consider how to address this issue.

Through communication, agricultural producers and the general population can work together to solve these problems, but the gap is in the way.

In addition to avoiding the potentially devastating impacts of the communication gap between agricultural producers and non-producers, this research has theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research argues for an extension of SIT to include study of potential differences between social-status strategies enacted with out-group member versus no interaction with an out-group member. This is demonstrated by showing how agricultural producers do and do not currently engage with the current strategies of the theory. Practically, this research highlights why agricultural producers do not talk to non-producers, while also providing some insights into how agricultural producers and non-producers can bridge the communication gap. Most fundamentally, this thesis contributes to communication scholarship by suggesting changes to current SIT, pointing to a relationship between social identity and self-efficacy and deepening the understanding of the identity of agricultural producers as compared to non-producers.

Additionally, this research is applicable to fields beyond agriculture. In fact, there are many situations in which differences in experience, knowledge, and identity can impede communication. Take, for example, scholars and practitioners. Especially when it comes to public debate, it seems that there is disagreement between and a perception of irrelevance between academic researchers and those heading those public debates (Singleton-Green, 2010). Another communication gap that occurs is between real estate developers and the general public. For example, Pressgrove and Besley (2014) found that real estate developers who engaged in communication with the general population in areas they wished to develop had a higher success rate when it came to solving problems and building relationships; however, not all real estate developers did this, resulting in some communication gaps across the field. In a third field,

hydrofracking, there seems to be knowledge gaps "that have led to international controversy" (Buttny & Feldpausch-Parker, 2016, p. 290). These three areas, of course, are not the only areas in which communication gaps occur. By understanding the communication gap between agricultural producers and non-producers, there is potential to deepen the understanding of communication gaps in other fields as well.

In the next chapter, I will share relevant literature, explaining how and why Social Identity Theory can help explain the communication gap. Next, in Chapter Three, I review and defend methods used to answer the research questions addressing social identity and intergroup communication. Then, in Chapter Four, I will present my findings, explaining a shared social identity but a divided approach to non-producer interaction. Finally, in Chapter Five, I will discuss the implications of this study, pointing to the practical and theoretical implications of this thesis and providing future directions for research. First, I will enter the conversation by reviewing Social Identity Theory and agricultural producers' relationship with the world.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Understanding the communication gap between agricultural producers and non-producers has the potential to help us understand other communication gaps. Scholars therefore need to understand why the gap exists and how it can be closed. Intergroup conflict, unfortunately, is nothing new. Specifically, Social Identity Theory (SIT) has been a productive framework for understanding racial and ethnic conflicts. Using SIT and intergroup communication as a guide, in this thesis I seek to understand the reasons for the communication gap and producer's unwillingness to talk with non-producers. In this chapter, I consider the conceptual framework of Social Identity Theory as it relates to intergroup communication, its application to a few domains relevant to agriculture, and agricultural producers' status as a distinct group.

Social Identity Theory and Intergroup Communication

Social Identity Theory holds that self-concept, well-being, and human interactions are largely shaped by group memberships (Frisch et al., 2014; Guan & So, 2016; Jetten et al., 2017; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). A group can be described as a social cluster of people who have a relationship with one another and possess a set of norms and practices that dictate behavior and attitude (Sherif, 1966). Overall, SIT assumes that individuals want a positive social identity and seek to improve their self-concept through their interactions with others in the group and between groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Groups are not only formed based on ethnicity, race, or language. Groups can also be formed based on other characteristics that people share (Sherif, 1966). Essentially, people form groups when they are working towards a "common objective, or as they share success or failure, glory or humiliation" (Sherif, 1966, p. 2). In other words, groups can form simply because they have similar interests or goals. These similarities provide context for conversation and reason to

work or be together. Therefore, agricultural producers working toward a common goal of producing food can be called a group. While groups are formed based on similarities, intergroup relations are built on differentiations that can lead to change in a group's status (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The simple act of identifying with a group can be interpreted as differentiation from another. In other words, by identifying with one group, one is inherently not identifying with the relevant out-group. Identifying with a group typically involves accepting the group's norms, and those norms then guide how one communicates with any relevant out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Importantly, Social Identity Theory has been expanded to include more than just group membership and individual identity (Hogg, Abrams & Brewer, 2017). In fact, people often have more than one social identity and those social identities can contradict and compete with one another, which makes social identity complex, and difficult to determined which to rely on (Hogg et al., 2017). More recent scholarship also includes intragroup relationships and the "internalization of group properties" (Hogg et al., 2017, p. 571), demonstrating how central groups are to one's sense of self.

In fact, social identity has been shown to be so important that it can even affect personal health (Jetten et al., 2017). Social identity groups can provide support, meaning, and agency to group members, which improves the personal health of the members and, therefore, the group as a whole (Jetten et al., 2017). Jetten et al. (2017) explain that the well-known saying "it takes a village to raise a child" not only shows "that people live in social groups…but also that social groups are essential determinants of important outcomes in people's lives—in particular those that relate to individual health and well-being" (p. 1). It follows then that if a group's social identity is threatened or stigmatized, the opposite occurs, and the health of members is compromised (Jetten et al., 2017).

In addition to physical health, social identity is also linked to psychological factors such as self-efficacy that can improve one's ability to function in a variety of social circumstances. Recently, researchers have integrated Social Identity Theory into concerns of self-efficacy and social support (Frisch et al., 2014; Guan & So, 2016). Social support has commonly been known to be useful in reducing stress (Frisch et al., 2014). More recently, however, social support has only proven helpful if the one receiving support and the one giving support share a social identity (Frisch et al., 2014). Connecting social support to self-efficacy, Guan and So (2016) found that individuals who strongly identify with their social identity perceive greater social support from said social identity group, and, therefore, are found to have a higher self-efficacy when it comes to behavior intention. In other words, these two studies exhibit that social identity impacts one's perceived social support. Social support in turn influences a person's stress and self-efficacy and, potentially, a willingness to engage outsiders.

More generally, SIT focuses on one's individual as well as a group's social status (Hogg, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Group identification can lead to differentiation and then, potentially, a change in status (Hogg, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). It is important to note that a group's social status comes from how the group members perceive the group. Depending on the relative perceived status, group members will engage in intergroup behavior that allows "higher status groups [to] fight to protect their evaluative superiority; [while] lower status groups struggle to shrug off their social stigma and promote their positivity" (Hogg, 2016, p. 7).

Constant Comparison: Gaining and Maintaining Status

Because of its emphasis on the role of groups in self-concept and well-being, scholars frequently turn to SIT to explain intergroup conflict and communication. According to SIT, status is unavoidable in group relations. In other words, maintaining or improving status is

important to the group's identity as well as an individual's (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Because of

this, groups employ several strategies to meet their status goals (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The

strategies include individual mobility, social creativity, and social competition. Group members

employ one or more of these strategies depending on the relative difficulty of moving from one

group to another and the social ties within the group. In the next sections, I will describe how

this relative difficulty of mobility and social ties play a role in each strategy.

Individual Mobility. Individual mobility occurs when an individual decides to leave the

group and claim membership in another with a perceived higher status (Tajfel & turner, 1986).

To use a collegiate example, a student athlete might run cross country for a Division II school

but decide that she does not like the negative connotations that come with attending anything less

than a Division I institution. This person might seek to transfer and to instead run for a Division

I university. Such a move ensues when one's identity has been threatened by group membership.

When a group member wishes to gain social status, they will consider how difficult it is

to disassociate with one group and associate with a higher-status group. This level of difficulty

can be defined by how practical it is for an individual to change groups (Jetten et al., 2017).

Individual mobility is used when group members believe that it is possible, albeit difficult, to

disassociate with their current group and associate with the higher-status group (Jetten et al.,

2017). Interestingly, recent literature shows that when members of disadvantageous groups

interact with members of what they perceive to be advantageous groups, they are more motivated

to engage in individual, upward mobility (Tausch, Saguy & Bryson, 2015). This research shows

that groups who are disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment and income believe that

individual upward mobility is possible when they have positive interactions with a member from

the more advantaged group (i.e. mobility is possible; Tausch et al., 2017). This concept of

individual mobility is clearly exhibited in cases where people perceive it is possible to move to a different group which they perceive to have a higher social status than their current group.

Social Creativity. Social creativity is used to gain or maintain status by reframing one's group to gain positive differentiation from other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This strategy can be executed in several ways, including comparing the in-group and out-group in a different way, reframing negative characteristics of the group into positive ones, or comparing the in-group to a different out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). To continue with the previous example, a Division II athlete might compare her school with a Division I school in terms of corruption and the influence of money, determining her school to be the better of the two, despite its smaller size and less athletic excellence.

While use of individual mobility is based on one criteria, the difficulty of mobility between groups, social creativity is used based on two conditions: the difficulty of mobility and relationship ties with other group members (Jetten et al., 2017). Recent studies provide examples of how people use social creativity to reimagine themselves and their groups (Branscombe, Fernandez, Gomez & Cronin, 2012). For example, people who suffer from asthma might choose not to carry their inhaler so that they are not defined by their asthma or perceived to be inhibited by their asthma (Branscombe et al., 2012). To provide another example, older people who associate with the older-person social identity acknowledge their hearing loss and ask for help more than do older people who do not associate with the older person social identity (Branscombe et al., 2012). In both examples, individuals reframe their existence to show others that their social identity is more than their impairments. Because their identity is tied to a physical attribute, these individuals cannot practically move from their

current social identity group to another. But they can reframe their identity into something more positive and bigger than a disability or limitation.

Social Competition. Third and finally, social competition involves gaining status by competing with the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Through competition, groups compare themselves to one another to gain positive differentiation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Competition can be sought between individuals but also between groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Through social competition, groups can establish their credibility and knowledge on the subject at hand, boosting their social status (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, a Division II athlete might push herself to run against athletes from Division I schools. Beating out the competition from a Division I school could help her differentiate and prove herself to be the better athlete and, therefore, attending the better school.

Social competition occurs when one's group is perceived to be impossible to disassociate with and one's relationships within the group are not strong (Jetten et al., 2017). Based on past research, Garcia, Tor and Schiff (2013) created a model for how and when competition is induced. The model explains that individual and situational factors influence to what extent and how often one compares themselves to others, and that comparison is what influences the competitive behavior (Garcia et al., 2013). According to SIT, the situation and individual factors as described in this model would include perceived immobility and weak-ties, thereby promoting the need for social comparison and competition.

These status-gaining or maintaining strategies are uniquely chosen to fit the needs of the group member based on difficulty of mobility and relationship ties. Importantly, this has the potential to cause problems with intergroup communication, as there is a constant comparison and differentiation between group members and, therefore, groups. Not only do these status

strategies have the potential to cause problems with intergroup relations, but the nature of intergroup communication can prove difficult.

Intergroup Communication

Intergroup communication can be difficult to navigate, causing damage to intergroup relations. In-group bias is one barrier that makes intergroup communication difficult (Guirdham, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). With in-group bias, the in-group is presumed to be favorable and the out-group deemed unfavorable (Guirdham, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In this situation, the group members believe that they are better than the comparison out-group. This can lead to in-group members viewing the out-group with prejudice and discriminating against them (Abrams, O'Connor, & Giles, 2002). Interestingly, in-group bias occurs even among groups that are formed arbitrarily (Guirdham, 2005). Even more interesting and troubling, researchers have found that participants care more about maximizing difference between groups than they do maximizing profit for their own group (MIP; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In other words, groups would rather compete and magnify the differences between the two groups than to gain a profit for themselves.

Group identity also makes intergroup relations difficult because in-group identification can affect behavior towards the out-group. Surprisingly, groups with perceived high status do not necessarily engage in discriminatory actions, despite holding discriminating thoughts towards the out-group. Rather, the group tends to engage in altruistic behaviors toward the out-group, furthering their sense of superiority and placing the out-group in a position of need with only the in-group to help them (Abrams, et al., 2002; Guirdham, 2005). For example, instead of mistreating members of the out-group, the in-group might help them with little expectation of a

returned favor. The perceived low status of a group pushes the members to attempt to change society and seek positive differentiation from the relevant out-groups (Guirdham, 2005).

On top of these two major barriers, there are many other challenges when engaging in intergroup communication, not the least of which is that group membership is often inferred, which can lead to stereotyping (Guirdham, 2005). And yet, productive intergroup relations are still possible. For many scholars who study intergroup and intercultural communication, specifically regarding managing anxiety and uncertainty in those situations, productive communication occurs when people in conversation "attach similar meanings to the messages transmitted" (Guirdham, 2005, p. 251). For intergroup relations to be considered productive, it is important for the interpersonal connection and similarities to be established (Gudykunst, 2004). While in intergroup communication, it is easy to see someone as a representative of the group and not see the person's characteristics as an individual (Guirdham, 2005). Establishing the humanity of the individual and capitalizing on individual characteristics can make intergroup dialogue more productive. More important characteristics of positive intergroup communication involve managing anxiety or uncertainty in the situation and self-disclosure (Gudykunst, 2004). These strategies for productive intergroup communication allow participants in conversation to see each other as another human being experiencing something similar. Potentially, embracing the strategies could help overcome some of these barriers. Additionally, recognizing the barriers and trying to overcome them can assist in moving past the oftentimes uncomfortable encounters of intergroup relations (Guirdham, 2005).

This review of SIT indicates that social status is important to a group and its members. Status can be gained, maintained, or lost through comparison with other groups. In the next section, I provide specific examples of how recent scholarship has applied SIT in several

contexts potentially relevant to agricultural producers and their communication with non-producers.

Social Identity and Intergroup Communication Applied

Social Identity Theory has been applied in multiple situations, though rarely to agricultural settings (Fielding, Terry, Masser & Hogg, 2008). Two of the more common areas for SIT research are intercultural and intergenerational communication, respectively (Guirdham, 2005; Tam, Hewstone, Harwood, Voci, & Kenworthy, 2006; Zhang, 2016). In both intercultural and intergenerational interactions, the more time spent with people of the out-group, the more people felt positively about them (Tam et al., 2006; Zhang, 2016). For example, Zhang (2016) found that the more people interacted with Asian Americans, the fewer stereotypes, discriminatory behaviors, and perceived threats those people felt and acted on towards the group.

Within intergenerational research, we see that the quantity and quality of interactions can affect how positively or negatively a person views another from a different group. Typically, intergenerational research looks at ageism (Tam et al., 2006). In Tam et al.'s (2006) study of grandparent-grandchild relationships, they found that when younger people spent more time and had quality interactions with older non-relatives, they were more likely to have positive associations with and attitudes toward the group. Additionally, both quality and quantity of time spent with older adults led to more self-disclosure with the participants' own grandparent (Tam et al., 2016). In sum, these studies support quality and quantity as important for improving intergroup communication and relations (Tam et al., 2016; Zhang, 2016).

Beyond interpersonal contact, mass-media messages also have a major impact on how people view races not their own (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz & Kopacz, 2008; McKinley, Mastro & Warber, 2014; Roozen & Shulman, 2014). For example, in the case of the Rwandan genocide,

broadcasters on the radio station *Radio Television des Mille Collins* framed the Hutus as victims of the violence and Tutsis were dehumanized and blamed for the violence. This coverage escalated the violence in Rwanda by differentiating the two groups and assigning specific characteristics to them (Roozen & Shulman, 2014). Additionally, images on television and in print advertisements influence how people of certain races view people of races not their own (Mastro et al., 2008; McKinley et al., 2014). These studies demonstrate the importance of even mediated exposure to other groups in changing views of the out-group for the better or worse.

Beyond race and generations, Scott (2007) draws connections between organizational identity and SIT, which is particularly helpful since agriculture is a social as well as organizational identity. As with the use of race in print ads to convince consumers to buy products (McKinley et al., 2014), organizational communication and SIT can work together to help a company build brand loyalty and satisfy current stakeholders as well as gain new stakeholders (Scott, 2007). Maintaining organizational status is similar to maintaining group status, particularly when "group" and "organization" can be used interchangeably. SIT can also be used to explain and relate to impression management strategies (Scott, 2007). Impression management strategies are important because it is more difficult to repair an image or impression than it is to maintain one, particularly in a crisis (Coombs, 2015). Image, in this case, is similar to one's social identity.

In addition to organizational identity playing a role in impression and then crisis management, organization identification can affect the effectiveness of employer health initiates and adoption of certain practices. Stephens, Pastorek, Crook, Mackert, Donovan, and Shalev (2015) found that employees with strong organizational identification were more likely to partake in health initiatives offered by employees. Furthermore, those same employees were

more likely to talk about those health initiatives with their coworkers (Stephens et al., 2015). Along similar lines, agricultural producers were found to be more likely to adopt a practice if they identify strongly with the group (Fielding et al., 2008).

These studies demonstrate the broad applicability of intergroup communication and how it applies to groups based on similarities other than ethnicity. In all three contexts—race and ethnicity, generations, and organizations—SIT plays a role in how in-groups view out-groups and to what extent they engage. Overall, reviewed research indicates that quality and quantity of interactions with out-group members can change how one views the out-group. Further, strength of group identification can affect brand loyalty, impression management, and willingness to talk. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that quantity and quality of interactions with non-producers would shape agricultural producers' sense of self and as well as the out-group. In addition, we might expect media messages to influence how producers see themselves and others. Next, I will discuss what an agricultural producer's sense of self, and identity, might look like.

Agricultural Producer Identity

Agricultural producers have an interesting and somewhat unusual relationship with the world around them. This group is in a unique position in which their livelihood and the world's food supply are dependent on the rapidly changing economy, the weather, and a multitude of complex decisions (Browne, n.d.). Agricultural producers are often said to shoulder the burden of "feeding the world" (Charles, 2013, para. 1). In fact, agricultural producers have the responsibility to feed people, but the public also wants to know that agricultural producers are caring for the environment and feeding the poor (Charles, 2013). Due to agricultural producers' relationship to the land and the environment, the group has a great responsibility.

On top of these responsibilities that the public has ascribed to agricultural producers, several states' economies are dependent on the business of agriculture. In Kansas, agriculture makes up 43% of the total state economy (Kansas Department of Agriculture, 2017). Nationally, farms produce one percent of the gross domestic product, but agriculture's related sectors account for 11% of employment and food manufacturing makes up approximately 14% of all manufacturing employment opportunities (USDA, 2017).[2] The reliance on agriculture for economic purposes puts producers in a demanding position to meet the needs of citizens, state government, and even the world, all while trying to make enough money to provide for their families.

The responsibilities of agricultural producers are large, but it is not only their responsibilities that make them a unique group. In fact, agricultural producers are their own socio-cultural group with their own unique practices and ways of life (Vanclay, 2004). This way of life shapes their identity (Kuehne, 2013; Vanclay, 2004). For many agricultural producers, the lifestyle of a producer has a direct connection to their values and beliefs, making it difficult should they ever have to leave the industry (Kuehne, 2013). For one agricultural producer turned researcher, leaving his family farm, "changed who I associated with, my sense of importance, my place in the community and my relationship with that particular piece of land" (Kuehne, 2013, p. 16). For Kuehne (2013), the connection between his ownership of the family farm and his sense of self is significant. In many cases, working on the farm translates to ownership of the farm (Kuehne, 2013). This is one thing that makes agricultural producers unique in their lives and occupations. Additionally, the life of an agricultural producer is one of deeply held tradition,

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[2] These numbers are different than the two percent of producers mentioned earlier, and represent people working in factories, restaurants and office buildings in positions tangentially related to agriculture.

belief, and pride that are tied to occupation (Kuehne, 2013; Vanclay, 2004). In fact, "farming becomes a way of life, a way of making a living, that acquires a meaning far deeper that almost any other occupational identity" (Vanclay, 2004, p. 213). The *occupation* of an agricultural producer is the *life* of an agricultural producer. Most farms are passed from generation to generation creating an even stronger sense of family and tradition that is often not found in other occupational circles (Kuehne, 2013; Vanclay, 2004). Ultimately, agricultural producers have a unique responsibility and relationship to the land, the farm, and the family that creates a sense of belonging and devotion.

Furthermore, agricultural producers strive for the *good farmer* identity (McGuire, Morton & Cast, 2013; Naylor, Hamilton-Webb, Little & Maye, 2018). The *good farmer* is a multi-faceted ideal to which farmers hold themselves, thought they often struggle to describe and explain it (Naylor et al., 2018). In the abstract, a *good farmer* is one who cares for the land and the good for society (McGuire et al., 2013; Naylor et al., 2018).

The *good farmer* identity consists of three possible sub-identities: the good stockman, the good neighboring farmer, and the good public-facing farmer (Naylor et al., 2018). Through these three faces, a producer wants to be seen as someone who takes care of livestock, shares concerns with other farmers, and has a positive public reputation, respectively (Naylor et al., 2018). The *good farmer* identity is one that producers want to portray both inside and outside the industry (Naylor et al., 2018). The *good farmer* identity has been explained further in terms of conservation and production (Mcguire et al., 2013). In this sense, the *good farmer* is a producer who is both able to produce a significant amount and conserve the land (McGuire et al., 2013).

As the *good farmer* identity indicates, agricultural producers can be pulled between the need to produce and the need to conserve (Burton & Wilson, 2006; McGuire et al., 2013; Sulemana & James, 2014). According to the Sulemana and James (2014), a productivist identity focuses on production and money. The productivist identity is one in which the agricultural producer's main goal is to produce as much food as possible to maximize income (Sulemana & James, 2014). In the conservationist identity, the agricultural producer focuses more on sustaining and conserving the world around them (Sulemana & James, 2014). As evidenced in McGuire et al (2013), agricultural producers who identified more with the conservationist identity and are confronted about not meeting its standards were quick to respond with a plan to solve their issues and meet the standards. However, the agricultural producers who identified more with the productivist identity justified what they were doing to conserve the water and adjusted the standards of what it means to be conservationist (McGuire et al., 2013). By doing this, more productivist farmers could maintain their identity as successful producers and conservationists.

Much research on producer identity is focused on the inherent contradictions between production versus conservation (Burton & Wilson, 2006; McGuire et al., 2013). Interestingly, this dichotomy has led researchers to propose different eras that agricultural producers and agriculture as an industry have undergone: productivist, post-productivist, and multifunctional agricultural regime (Burton & Wilson, 2006). The first, productivist, is what was described previously: a focus on production and economics (Burton & Wilson, 2006). The second, post-productivist, aligns with conservationist ideals. In post-productivist society, agricultural producers are focused more on conserving the land and water and less on production (Burton & Wilson, 2006). Finally, in the third era, multifunctional agricultural regime, agricultural

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producers are doing both (Burton & Wilson, 2006). Researchers argue that production

agriculture has experienced the productivist phase and is now experiencing both the post-

productivist phase and the multifunctional agricultural regime phase (Burton & Wilson, 2006).

However, Burton and Wilson (2006) argue that until producers see themselves in these phases,

society cannot presume to be in those phases. While agricultural producers seemingly express

that the latter phases are underway, it does not seem to outwardly show (Burton & Wilson,

2006). Ultimately, the disconnect between the era in agriculture as perceived by consumers and

the era as perceived by agricultural producers is yet another example of how agricultural

producers see themselves as one identity but are ascribed another by the out-group.

In addition to being a *good farmer* who produces and conserves, agricultural producers

also value their autonomy (Peterson & Horton, 1995; Stock & Forney, 2014). For agricultural

producers "autonomy is a part of being and (continuously) becoming a farmer" (Stock & Forney,

2014, p. 160). Agricultural producers foster a sense of autonomy in many ways, including being

one's own boss and freedom to plan their own day (Stock & Forney, 2014). An agricultural

producer's autonomy can be threatened in a number of ways. Regulations, government,

industries, and financial institutions are a few objects that can imped on a producer's identity as

an autonomous being (Peterson & Horton, 1995; Stock & Forney, 2014). Agricultural producers

enjoy their autonomy and use finances to maintain it (Stock & Forney, 2014).

These finances allow for the producer to stay on the farm and maintain their autonomy.

Therefore, another identity tension found in the agricultural producers is the producer-farmer

versus the entrepreneur-farmer identity (Stenholm & Hytti, 2014). The producer-farmer

produces for survival, and business growth is simply a side-effect of that survival (Stenholm&

Hytti, 2014). The producer-farmer values how others view them (Stenholm & Hytti, 2014).

Because of this need for a positive outward reputation, the producer-farmer will follow the current trends in agriculture, exemplifying the want to be a *good farmer* and the mutual influence of the perception of the out-group and the in-group (Stenholm & Hytti, 2014). In contrast, the entrepreneur-farmer is focused on growing the business (Stenholm & Hytti, 2014). Entrepreneur-farmers do not follow trends and are willing to innovate for the sake of business growth (Stenholm & Hytti, 2014). In both identities, the agricultural producer focuses on finances—but in the first to survive and in the second to thrive. In sum, the agricultural producer identity is complex. Some may favor one identity over the other, making it difficult to find one common name.

While producer identity is multifaceted, potentially even more complex are non-producer evaluations of producers. There is conflicting evidence about how society views farmers. The Pew Research Center found that, in general, the U.S. public had a positive view of farmers (2017; see also Weatherell et al., 2003). However, Berry, an agricultural producer and writer, explains that the public perception of farming is often negative or even idyllic, both of which are problematic for farmers because they distract from the real and practical problems in agriculture (2002). Clearly, there are challenges in agriculture, including soil degradation, aquifer depletion, and air pollution. These issues affect non-producers and lead to public criticism of farming. In fact, Robbins, Weary, & von Keyserlingk (2015) experimentally demonstrated that people lose trust in the agricultural industry when learning about policies that shield producers from public scrutiny, commonly called ag-gag laws, as the non-producer perceives these policies to limit transparency. In sum, while some empirical evidence indicates an overall positive impression of farmers in the public mind, there is good reason to believe that attitudes toward farming are more

nuanced and even negative. In the next section, I will discuss why I chose to use *agricultural producer* instead of any other potential name for producers.

Naming the Agricultural Producer

While agricultural producers share a distinct social identity, this review demonstrates the unique and often contradictory responsibilities that they face. Members of this group, therefore, have enacted complex strategies to maintain a sense of self in the face of social pressures, yet still they face questions about who they are. Are they producers or conservationists? Business people or caretakers? Do they best represent a way of making of money or a way of life? Previous research suggests none of these are exclusively true.

For these reasons, choosing to call this particular group of people by any single name proves difficult. For example, members of this social identity group often refer to themselves as a *farmer* or a *rancher*[3]. And yet *farmers* and *ranchers* is too narrow and but also imprecise, excluding those who feed animals for slaughter, for example, but failing to convey the fundamental connection of working with animals and/or land to grow food for others. Neither does *agriculturalists* fit, as it broadly refers to people who work with agriculture but may not produce food for others. In contrast, *producer* is a widely accepted term within the agricultural community for people who grow food (Sulemana & James, 2014). I have, therefore, adopted it for this study while acknowledging that agricultural *producers* are also *conservationists* to varying degrees. Because of the complexity of identity and responsibilities that agricultural producers hold, it is important to understand their social identity from their perspective and

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[3] According to Groth, Curtis, Mendham, and Toman (2014), agricultural producers who self-identify as such truly do produce food.

investigate how that social identity impacts willingness to communicate. In the next section, I will discuss the research questions.

Using SIT to Investigate Agricultural Identity

In the end, agricultural producers hold a distinct, complex, and sometime contradictory identity because of their responsibilities and relationships with the world around them. Social ties, occupation, geography, and membership all have an impact on an agricultural producer's identity (Frank, Eakin & Lopez-Carr, 2011). That identity is difficult to understand for those who are not agricultural producers. Because of the intense interconnectedness and complexity of farmer identity, it is sometimes difficult to explain, isolating the agricultural producer identity from those outside of agriculture. The reviewed literature explains the dilemmas of producer identity, though not with the context of intergroup communication. To effectively bridge the divide between producers and non-producers, scholars and practitioners need to understand producer identity *as constructed in relation to the out-group*.

Social Identity Theory therefore provides an effective framework for furthering needed knowledge on producer identity. Through group comparison, quality and quantity of exposure to the out-group, and organizational identity, SIT can help explain the unique perspective of agricultural producers' social identity and how it impacts intergroup communication. This research, therefore, builds on existing literature of producer social identity, asking how agricultural producers view themselves *in comparison with an out-group,* specifically non-producers. The following research questions are proposed to address these concerns:

RQ1: How do agricultural producers understand their social identity in reference to non-producers?

RQ2: How does social identity influence agricultural producers' willingness to communicate with those who do not farm?

In the next chapter, I explain the method used to address these questions.

Chapter 3 - Methods

Social Identity Theory and intergroup relations can help explain the way agricultural producers view their unique position within society and their communication with non-producers. Agricultural producers have a special relationship with the land and the world around them that influences their worldview. In the following section, I will explain the methods used to answer the research questions posed and begin to understand the reason for the communication gap between agricultural producers and non-producers.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

For this initial exploration of agricultural producers and their communication with non-agricultural producers, I employed qualitative methods. One reason qualitative data are advantageous, particularly to this research, is that they offer a unique entrance and insight into groups that the researcher does not have access to; in other words, qualitative study allows a scholar to investigate groups to which the researcher does not belong (Tracy, 2013). While quantitative research requires the researcher to assume some level of expertise or authority over the subject, qualitative study holds the researcher and researched to be on the same level (Tracy, 2013). Therefore, qualitative analysis allows me to learn about and begin to comprehend the world as understood by agricultural producers. Understanding this group on its own terms is especially important given the theoretical framework adopted. Of course, there are some limitations to qualitative research, not the least of which are the introduction of subjectivity from both the researcher and the participants, the time needed to collect and analyze data, and that findings are less generalizable to larger audiences because of the sample size (Rhaman, 2016; Tracy, 2013). However, the benefits of qualitative research far outweigh the limitations. As Tracy (2013) argues, qualitative research is useful in understanding and engaging in

interpersonal and group communication, as well as determining how people tell their stories or describe their lives. These are exactly the topics to be studied here.

Interviews were used to help reach this goal. Interviews provide a unique experience for the participants and the interviewer (Tracy, 2013). The interview process is not just about the researcher asking questions and the participant answering, but rather learning together (Tracy, 2013). For example, the researcher learns from the interviews, but the interviewee also learns through the process of the interview, coming to better understanding of self, others, and the topic at hand through the process of critically thinking about the answers to the questions (Tracy, 2013). Interviews can be structured in a variety of ways, but this study used semi-structured interviews. This is fitting for this thesis as participants had a little more freedom to discuss what they would like to discuss, giving me access to insights likely otherwise missed.

Interviewing is also a beneficial tool because of the data it produces. After interviewing, a thematic analysis was conducted. A thematic analysis of these data included the researcher identifying words or phrases from the interview transcripts, combing and combining these data snippets into categories that represent the themes in the research, and then interpreting these themes (Tracy, 2013). This method of analysis allows the researcher to find common themes within the data and draw connections between participants and draw larger implications from the data (Tracy, 2013). From whom and how I gathered participants for this study will be discussed next.

Participants

Network sampling was used to gather participants. In network sampling, also known as snowball sampling, the researcher starts with an initial list of people likely to fit the study criteria (Tracy, 2013). Then the researcher asks the initially identified if they can recommend anyone

else who might fit the requirements of the study (Tracy, 2013). To be included in this study, participants had to self-identify as someone who produces food, and more specifically, someone who grows food for others as part of their livelihood. The initial list of participants was gathered from personal contacts of my advisor, who has personal connections with many agricultural producers from living in Kansas for 25 years. I asked these interviewees if they could recommend anyone else to participate. In total, I interviewed 15 people in 13 different interviews. The participants in this study were all agricultural producers living and working in Kansas, either part- or full-time. They ranged in age from 30 to 77 ($M = 53$); 11 were female and four were male. Participants ranged in education from some college to a Ph.D., with a majority of participants either having some college education or a Bachelor's degree (see Appendix A for more details on demographics).

Data Collection

It is through qualitative interviewing that I gathered my data for this thesis. After participants acknowledged their informed consent, I began with a list of presumably relevant questions. But unlike structured interviewing (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), I did not necessarily follow the predetermined list. The same topic areas were covered in each interview, but I adjusted the line of questioning based on other interviews and the direction the participant wished to take the conversation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This type of interviewing allows for some structure in the topics discussed but also flexibility in how the topics are presented and how the conversation unfolds (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

In deference to my participants and their busy lives, interviews were conducted in a few different forms. When contacting my potential participants, I offered to conduct interviews in person, on the phone, or over email. I was aware that agricultural producers have little time to

spare to meet for an interview. While we might assume that in-person interviews are preferable for research purposes, this is not always the case. In fact, studies have shown face-to-face and phone interviews to produce similar results, and some phone discussions in fact provided better data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). Benefits of phone interviews include a reduction in reactions to the interviewer's appearance and an openness of responses due to a "strangers passing in the night" feeling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019, p. 241). Additionally, through email or even texting, the participant can more carefully consider the questions for a longer period of time, allowing for more reflexivity in answers provided (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). Additionally, email interviewing is less expensive and allows for more flexibility in scheduling (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). However, when interviewing via email, it is difficult to read facial and hand gestures as well as posture, and there are missed opportunities for follow ups (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). In total, two of the interviews I conducted were of married couples who asked for a joint interview for their convenience. Seven of the interviews occurred over the phone, five occurred in person, and one occurred over email.

While being flexible with participants is important, so is building rapport (Kuehne, 2016; Lindlof & Taylor, 2019; Tracy, 2013). However, with agricultural producers, this is sometimes difficult as agricultural producers often build rapport by strengthen relationships and developing trust with others, which is typically done over a longer period than an interview (Kuehne, 2016). Rapport is especially important when the researcher is seen as an outsider, which is determined by the agricultural producers (Kuehne, 2016). To build rapport with the interviewee, no matter the medium, I provided clear directions and focus for the interview and showed genuine interest and respect for the interviewee (Kuehne, 2016).

Topically, my interview questions covered group identity as well as intra- and intergroup communication. The interview questions are included in Appendix B. Two of the more difficult and potentially impactful decisions I made when drafting the interview protocol included first, what labels to use when referring to the participant's social group, and second, how to invoke participant thoughts about the outgroup. Below, I explain my decisions.

First, the interview protocol includes the term *agricultural producer,* but in actual interviews I adopted a term more in keeping with the participant's farming operation, using the interviewee's own terms for what they do for a living. I asked this question first so I could use the participant's chosen term throughout the interview while also building rapport through a shared language.

Second, my research questions required that I elicit participants' understandings of self in reference to those who do not farm. At the same time, my questions needed to be phrased without suggesting how participants would or should answer. As discussed in Chapter 2, SIT assumes competition between groups. However, there is mixed evidence about how non-producers view producers (Berry, 2002; Pew Research Center, 2017; Robbins et al., 2015; Weatherell et al., 2003). Therefore, it is also unclear how producers believe the out-group views them, though conflicts between the groups indicate at least some perceived hostility. Therefore, I phrased the questions so that participants would be asked to first reflect on what if anything differentiates them from non-producers, then followed in ways that allowed them to provide positive and negative differentiations. Intentionally, my first questions were the most open-ended (e.g., "Based on your experiences and observations, can you make any general statements about people who are not farmers?"). I only most directly suggested negative assessments of the out-group in the last question ("How often do you hear criticisms about agriculture from non-

agricultural producers?")[4]. After interviews were completed, I began the data analysis process, which is outlined in the next section.

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded in Spring of 2018, resulting in 204 pages of double spaced transcription. Interviews ranged in length from 26 minutes to 58 minutes ($M = 37.49$). After the interviews were complete and the recordings were transcribed, I followed Tracy (2013) and conducted two cycles of coding. Through this process, I coded first for what was in the data, and second, I interpreted what those codes meant for my research.

For the first cycle of coding, I read the transcripts to find words or phrases that captured what the data were saying. Engaging in first-cycle coding involved me reading through transcripts and finding words or phrases to help explain what was in the data. In this stage, I coded the transcripts for main ideas, rather than line-by-line. These main-idea codes indicated *what* was in the data.

For most of these codes in this cycle, I used in vivo coding, which is coding that uses the words or phrases that my participants used in the interview (Tracy, 2013). This type of coding allowed me to ensure that the highlighted data were accurate and without interpretation. For example, participants frequently said that non-producers are so far removed from the farm that they do not understand the processes. For this particular sentence, I pulled the code "far removed" to represent the main idea. In vivo coding is not only a way to ensure accurate information, but it also allows participants to give meaning to the data through their own words (Charmaz, 2006). Occasionally, I drew on the words used by participants but slightly changed

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[4] A few of my participants answered this by saying that they do not. However, most of my participants began by explaining the criticisms they have heard without prompting.

the phrasing so that the terms would make sense outside the context of the interview transcript. For example, one participant said, "if you take care of your animals, your animals take care of you." Other participants indicated this sentiment as well but not about animals. Therefore, this code became "You take care of _____, it will take care of you."

Throughout this first reading, I coded all information that could be relevant to the research questions. This resulted in hundreds of data snippets, each a fragment of participants words. These hundreds of codes I then reviewed several times, looking for similarities and differences between transcripts. As I continued to review these initial codes, I recognized overlapping themes, allowing me to collapse some categories. Ultimately, the 19 most commonly coded categories within the interviews were used for the next stage of the analysis (see Appendix C for a list). These 19 most common categories were formed based on what seemed to be expressed in most of the interviews and held potential answers to the research questions.

Next, I engaged in second-cycle coding, described by Tracy (2013) to move the first level codes to interpretation. This second-cycle of coding allowed for me to take those 19 most common code categories and begin to understand how they answered my research questions. In this cycle, I began to understand *why* things might be the way they are, which then allowed for identification of patterns.

For this process, I took the 19 first-level categories and sorted them based on how I perceived they would answer my research questions. This was easiest for me through free-writing and mind mapping (Using mind maps, 2005; Freewriting, n.d.). Once sorted, I began to write and map how I understood the categories to relate to my research questions. Through the

writing and mapping process, I worked on understanding *how* those categories answered my research questions, and not just that they did answer my research questions.

These two cycles allowed for me to find themes in the data, narrow the themes to those most relevant to this project, and then understand those relevant themes in relation to my research questions. Additionally, this coding process allowed me to spend structured time with my data to help with the interpretation process. Ultimately, this coding process lead me to my findings.

Chapter 4 - Findings

The interview process resulted in many codes that eventually fed into my findings. Through the process of transcribing and coding, I spent dedicated time with the data to pull the most interesting pieces of information relevant to this research. I took those codes initially identified in the data, combined them into categories, and then used freewriting and mind mapping to understand what those categories meant for my research, resulting in several themes that help me answer my research questions: 1) how do agricultural producers understand their social identity in reference to non-producers? and 2) how does social identity influence agricultural producers' willingness to communicate with those who do not farm?

In this chapter, I will outline how those themes help me answer my research questions. The first theme, which answers research question one, is that producers perceive they are distinguished but misunderstood by others. In other words, agricultural producer social identity is based on their perception of being set apart by their unique and valued features, their shared experiences, and their shared view of non-producers. In the following section, I explain how producers view themselves as having a high social status but do not believe that non-producers share the same view. Additionally, I will discuss how producers attempt to cope with those status disparities.

The second theme, answering research question two, is a discussion of two different orientations that agricultural producers hold when it comes to communicating and interacting with the out-group: the Determined and the Resigned. The Determined are willing to communicate with non-producers and the Resigned are not. I report on this theme in the latter half of this chapter. But first, I turn to the clear and common sense among my participants that they hold an elite status in society—a status that others fail to appreciate.

Distinguished, if Misunderstood

Agricultural producers express their social identity through pride in the work they do and discouragement when that work is called into question. Agricultural producers take pride in the long and unconventional hours they work, the sacrifices they make, and their resilience. Producers also speak of a shared norm of care in which they care for the land, animals, and their producer neighbors. Additionally, agricultural producers view themselves as having a high status but believe that the out-group perceives them as having low societal status. Ultimately, producers explain their distinguishing features, their perceived high social status, and the perceived opposite view of non-producers as the components of their social identity. Below, I detail these findings by showing how agricultural producers understand their social identity as set apart, containing shared experiences, and in relation to the out-group.

Set Apart: Hardworking, Sacrificial, Caring Minority

Agricultural producers understand themselves as hardworking, self-sacrificial, resilient minority that is distinguished by its capacity to show care. They say that they work long and odd hours, sometimes forfeiting other life experiences, all while being less than two percent of the population. Francine,[5] a 77-year-old woman who raises cattle and grows grain, demonstrates this stance:

> We work whenever we are needed. If the calf is born in the middle of the night and we
> need to be there. If it's born when it's snowing and 20 below, you are going to be there.
> Um. If the cows get out and you were planning to go to your son's wedding, you will be

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[5] All names used in the research are pseudonyms. At the end of each interview, I asked participants if there was a name they would like me to use when writing my findings. If they did not provide one, I made one up.

putting the cows back in, very likely, instead of going to the wedding. You have to take

care of those livestock. Regardless of what else is going on.

Other participants echo similar sentiments when talking about food production. Caleb, a 58-year-old man who grows row crops, expresses, "we're always racing against the clock, so you don't stop until the job's done and it's just… the hours really pile up." As Francine explains, sometimes, producers work when they would rather be doing other things. Using the example of a child's wedding seems far-fetched but is unexaggerated in the minds of these producers.

Only few hardy souls still accept this hard-work and sacrifice, say participants. Mary, a 65-year-old woman who raises cattle and is retired from growing crops, says, "just not very many of us left anymore." Similarly, George, who is 74 years old and married to Francine, expresses, "well it takes less and less people to provide—less percentage of the population to produce the food for the rest of the population. We're down to what? Less than 2 percent?" Both Mary and George mention representing a minority and that it takes fewer growers and larger and larger farms to continue to feed people. In fact, Annie, a 64-year-old woman who raises livestock, adds, "we have fewer and fewer ag producers and larger and larger populations and it's an imbalance it doesn't take a very complicated equation to figure that out." Annie implies that with very few producers left and the world population continuing to grow, it is unclear how there will be enough food in the future.

In addition to hardworking, self-sacrificial and a minority, producers understand themselves as being a caring group of people. In what I can be termed a norm of care, it is

widely understood that producers take care of their own[6]. Vicky, a 30-year-old woman who raises cattle and grows crops, says, "in very very very few circumstances would we ever question another person's, um, desire to like care for what they're responsible for, for the land or the animals." As Vicky expresses, producers understand that other producers take care of what they have. Not only is this norm of care expressed in terms of land and animals, but it is also evident that producers have a norm of care for their agricultural production community.

Regarding land and animals, most of these agricultural producers live by the following motto: "if you take care of the crops, they will take care of you." Of course, this applies to livestock as well. Producers express this sentiment in several different places throughout the interviews. For many producers, this motto especially comes into play when trying to understand the consumer view of agriculture. For example, Caleb says,

> now all the sudden they're looked at as evil people who are spraying chemicals and giving us cancer and killing our animals and mistreating and… you know they care, we care about animals and we care about the land more than most people do…because it pays you back.

When it comes to the agricultural production community, producers express a norm of care in at least two different ways. The first is through keeping tabs on each other. This is articulated by Lauren, a 56-year-old woman who grows crops, and her husband, Caleb, when talking about how often they talk to other producers:

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[6] Agricultural producers were asked about what norms they perceive producers to have, however, the norm of care only came out of this question a handful of times. In other instances, the norm of care became evident towards the end of the interview and when we began to talk about some criticisms of agriculture.

Caleb: Well you know since cell phones I have neighbors that call me every day, "What are you doing?"

Lauren: They'll be driving looking at their fields and just stop in just to see what we're doing, you know and um.

Caleb: Or they'll drive by and we're out there working. Then you get a phone call. "How come that's broke?"

Whether it's driving by or a simple phone call, producers indicate that they are interested in what other producers are doing.

Mary explains the same sentiment through a story about how her and her husband had their harvest vehicles lined up one day in the field and a regional newspaper took a picture of it. The photograph turned out just to be a silhouette of the vehicles with the sunset in the background, and a neighbor recognized that it was their property when he saw it published. Mary says that one of the vehicles was "parked and left there and wasn't running because of a tired damage to that combine which to me wasn't even remotely obvious in the picture." She explains that the neighbor "had recognized that right off and he was hooting and laughing about it." Most people would never recognize something like that, but the neighbor knew Mary's equipment as if it were his own. This instance illustrates that not only do producers care about the land and livestock under their care, but they care about their neighbors as well.

While producers clearly express the norm of care with other producers in their area, they also explain that some conversations are off limits. One topic that seems to be universally taboo is how much land a producer farms or how many head of cattle they run. To an outsider, this might seem like an innocent question, but to producers, this is similar to asking, as Mary says, "So how is that savings account going for you? How much money you've got in the bank?"

Some producers indicate that this is offensive, even from outsiders, while others give non-producers the benefit of the doubt, realizing they are just asking to learn more about the producer.

While potentially unique to fruit and vegetable (specialty crop) growers, specialty crop producers in this study mention another conversation that is off limits: "trade secrets." Alicia, a 38-year-old woman who raises livestock, grows row crops and specialty crops, and runs an agritourism business, describes this as follows:

> on like my fruits and vegetables, I often don't ask what variety certain people, like certain farmers are growing, um I don't like to share my varieties… a lot of it is I've taken many many years trying many many varieties to find the one that works really well for me… It's kind of a, I don't want to say trademark—I find what works well for me, I'm not going to give it to—my secrets to my neighbor next to me for him to grow the same thing and not use all those years of trials.

For Alicia, revealing the variety of fruits or vegetables she grows would be unfair to her because she put in the money and work to find and test them. By avoiding the topic, she protects herself and preserves the dignity of her fellow agricultural producers.

Schoe, a 64-year-old man who grows specialty crops, however, chooses not to share his varieties because he is worried about the consequences for others. In other words,

> When… I'm trying something new and I'm speculating about it, I don't like to discuss that with most other people that's in my—doing what I'm doing just because… I don't want to tell them [inaudible] and then they come back and "I tried that and [inaudible] that cost me a thousand dollars!" And so, that I don't—I don't like to share new ideas for that reason.

For Schoe, sharing varieties is risky because a hybrid might not work for others, costing them money.

While these off-limits conversations might seem to contradict the norm of care, they make sense within the agricultural producer's worldview. Avoiding some topics is a way to show respect toward other producers. Much like people may not feel comfortable talking about how much money they have in the bank, these producers avoid revealing certain practices to save face—theirs and their neighbor's. Therefore, off-limits topics are part of the producer's self-understanding, for they know themselves to care enough to avoid such threatening topics in conversations with other producers.

Finally, the norm of care is expressed through producers' involvement in their local, regional, and state communities. While these producers talk about community among themselves, they also mention being involved in other agricultural and community organizations. Many speak of serving on irrigation boards, soil conservation board, and the Kansas Farm Bureau Board. Overall, these producers express a sense of community in their local area, as well as involvement at a regional and state level. This sense of community bonds agricultural producers locally and beyond.

The hard-working, self-sacrificial, and minority nature of being an agricultural producer, as well as the norm of care, are dimensions of producers' accepted social identity. The norms expressed by participants mark agricultural producers as caring people who are involved in their communities and the larger agricultural community. The care and community that are a part of these producers' livelihoods further their implicit, and sometimes explicit, sense of high social status. Not only do they express their sense of status in terms of being set apart, but they also express their status in comparison to the out-group, who just does not get it.

Only Farmers Get It: Understanding as In-group Marker

"I think that the friends that do farm…they get it a lot more." -Vicky

Agricultural producers explain that their lives are different as compared to non-producers. As does Vicky, other participants also indicate a mutual understanding among producers in the sense that producers "just get it." As participants put it, they share experiences and interests that non-producers cannot appreciate, resulting in many of my participants explaining that a majority of their friends are producers as well. For example, when asked how often she talks to other farmers, Vicky responds, "Oh, um, like very often. I mean that's probably—those are our favorite people to hang out with. And most of our closest friends I would say are farmers." Because of this, agricultural producers say they have a hard time explaining themselves to non-producers, and often do not spend a lot of time with non-producers. To be clear, agricultural producers draw on their distinguishing features, described in the section above, to explain how they are only understood by producers and unknowable to non-producers.

For example, several participants speak to the experience of working long and varied hours. While someone in town might work 8 to 5, someone producing food would work more than that, and whenever the land or livestock called them, as Francine expresses in her example of missing her son's wedding to take care of the cattle. Many producers indicate this sense of never-ending work and long hours. In fact, Vicky, in the same breath as in the statement at the beginning of this section, says "if I tell my friends that don't farm that my husband works till 10 o'clock every night, they'll be like, 'oh you poor thing.' You know, and my farming friends would be like, 'yeah, so?'". Here, Vicky implies that the long hours are not surprising to other producers but sympathy-provoking to those outside agriculture.

In addition to odd and long hours, participants indicate being a producer means that one is self-employed, making the pay, hours, and even the taxes different than other occupations. For instance, Francine and George mention that they have to file their taxes earlier than April 15th when most other people are required to file. Francine explains:

> if you file as a farmer and don't—see if we didn't do that we would have to estimate our income every quarter and file quarterly payments. And the cost and the time involved in that is absolutely horrendous. And so most true farmers…choose to pay by the first of March and not file those quarterly statements.

Additionally, agricultural producers show interest in their food and from where it comes—an interest not generally shared by non-producers, participants claim. An example of this can be found in a story about Francine and George:

> We were going by this crop and we didn't know what it was so we pulled into the field well in no time flat, there was a guy there, which we couldn't blame him, he wondered what we were doing because we pulled off of the road and…onto his territory…onto his land. And we told him that we were farmers from Kansas and that we didn't know that crop. It was a very hot day, so we were still sitting in the truck trying to decide whether to get out. Well he proceeded to tell us it was a type of bean that they were raising, an edible bean. And we learned a whole lot about it, just by talking with him. But if we'd have just kept on driving by and "I don't care what it is," we wouldn't have learned anything about it.

This story indicates that producers are distinct because they care, and they take the time to learn if they do not know about their food, whereas, the non-producer, may not.

While agricultural producers "just get" each other, explaining themselves to non-producers is a different story. For example, participants indicate the idea that they would harm their land or animals, an idea held by non-producers that producers repeatedly mention, would be irrational. For many of these producers, the land and animals are their main source of income, and there are plans in place to give the land and animals to the next generation. Not only would harming the land and animals be foolish for the current producer but it would also harm the future generation of producers. Alicia explains, "You know, if you—if you don't feed your animals good, they're not going to bring good prices and they're not going to feed you good." According to these producers, taking care of their animals and land only makes sense. Along with being set apart and having shared experiences, producers express their social identity and status in relation to perceiving little respect from the out-group.

No Respect: Gap between Actual and Afforded Status

Finally, participants describe their social identity as not just different but better than non-producers. While no participants ever explicitly stated that they were better than non-producers, their self-comparisons indicate that in fact, they judge their identity to be socially and moral superior. But at the same time, participants also make clear that they believe non-producers hold them in low regard or at least fail to appreciate them properly. Below, I document this perceived gap, as well as the social-status strategies producers use to gain or maintain their status in light of it.

Establishing Status. First, producers maintain their status by highlighting the importance of their work. For Mary, "it's important to provide food" and food is more personal than something that is impersonally manufactured. More specifically, Annie explains that being an agricultural producer is important because "food, water, shelter and space, so those basic

needs…is what we produce." From the participants' perspective, their products are a matter of life and death for non-producers.

Agricultural producers also justify their high status through their love of the work despite the low pay. When asked if producing is a lifestyle or a business, a majority of my participants explain that it is both a business and a lifestyle. For agricultural producers, the self-employment, long hours, the hard work, and the satisfaction of feeding others are factors that keep them in farming. Even though the lifestyle is desirable, treating the farm or ranch as a business is necessary to stay profitable and maintain the lifestyle. Ultimately, producers love what they do, or they would not be doing it.

Finally, producers establish their high status through their distinguishing features, such as their employment status, their self-sacrifice, and the norm of care. Bill, a 66-year-old man who raises cattle and is married to Mary, describes his self-employment status this way: "I'm working for me…I'm building something of my own." For Bill, being self-employed allows him to be autonomous and do something for himself as opposed to working for someone else. This autonomy not only distinguishes these agricultural producers but is also a way to positively differentiate themselves from the out-group, thereby maintaining their high status.

Similarly, agricultural producers mention the norm of care as evidence of their high status. For producers, helping a neighbor or asking a neighbor for help is common, particularly when it comes to leaving town or vacationing. While producers explain that they do not often leave the farm or ranch, when they do, they must find someone to cover for them. Producers rely on their neighbors to check on things while they are gone. Lauren, talking about producers compared to non-producers, explains, "You know they might take care of each other's pets and yards and things like that but they don't do their jobs for them you know take over that way."

Ignored, Unappreciated, and Denied Expertise. Overall, farmers view themselves as having a high social status. But while these producers held themselves in high regard, they believe that non-producers perceive them to have a low social status. In fact, Bill expresses a feeling of being ignored by non-producers when he says the following:

> I don't think we're thought of at all. And a lot of that—when the people do think of us they think of us in a negative way. That we're hurting the environment somehow just this water issue you know, uh, of course sometimes farmers are hurting you know maybe they're, they're killing the goose that laid the golden egg here I don't know but I don't think they think about agriculture.

Even though these producers see these great things about themselves, such as providing food for the world through hard work, sacrifice and care, they believe others are blind to their contributions.

Because of the love for the job, producers experience discouragement when hearing complaints or criticisms from the consumers regarding how the food is produced. Mary explains this feeling well: "It is disheartening to have people constantly assuming that you, you know, are intentionally providing them with non-nutritious, unhelpful, and poorly raised food." Mary admits that there are faults in agriculture, but the constant negative assumptions are depressing and unwarranted. She compares the situation to a mother who makes a meal for her family, but when her family comes to the table, all they want to do is criticize the food that they have been given. Mary goes on to explain that

> while you are willing to put up with some of that…you're willing to accommodate certain things…there comes a point at which you decide, yeah, I'm pretty tired of fixing

food for you because… it's an expression of my love for you and I'm tired of you having

a bad attitude about my food.

Like Mary, other participants, too, express a sense of martyrdom in that they provide something of great value despite the negative reactions and the forfeiture of other life experiences.

Not only do these producers experience pride in their work and discouragement when that work is unappreciated, but they also express frustration with the lack of non-producer knowledge and implicit challenges to their expertise. As an example, Alicia says,

I'll have somebody ask for strawberries in November. And consumers are so used to

being able to go to the grocery store and get strawberries anytime they want. There's

very rarely a supply issue… But it's not like you go to grocery store you can't buy

strawberries for three months out of the year because there is none. We can get them

from anywhere in the world now, and there's always strawberries. So, consumers do not

realize…they want homegrown produce or locally grown produce, that there is a season

for it. They just automatically assume that strawberries grow 12 months out of the year,

where they're at.

Similarly, others describe situations in which they attempt to enlighten a non-producer, only to meet resistance. Cara, a 58-year-old woman who raises livestock and grows crops, shares such a story. She was trying to explain GMOs to a non-producer, but the non-producer refused to hear out her facts and arguments. Cara ended the conversation by saying that she wished the non-producer would do more research and listen to the science. In this instance, Cara's knowledge is ignored by a non-producer, even though she is the subject-matter expert in that conversation.

Other producers speak about public cluelessness and the problems it creates for the agricultural sector. Lola, a 42-year-old woman who raises cattle and grows crops, explains that "people just have heard something that may or may not even be true" and when it comes up in conversation, it is difficult for producers to explain why what was heard is not the whole story. Similarly, Mary explains that media contributes to this dissemination of knowledge that may or may not true: "people just say…the most ridiculous things that they… hear on social media, and they think that they're true." This partial, sometimes incorrect, knowledge makes it difficult for producers to defend themselves and gain a better image in the eye of the public.

In sum, producers indicate that their unique, shared identity gives them higher status than non-farmers, though non-producers think otherwise. The importance of their work and their passion for it, as well as their distinguishing characteristics, set producers not just apart but above. However, these factors seem not enough to convince non-producers. In fact, agricultural producers say they feel ignored, unappreciated, and denied their expert status in conversations with the out-group, making it more difficult to maintain or gain social status in the eyes of non-producers. Because of this disconnect between the social status of producers and the perceived low status that the out-group holds of them, agricultural producers engage in several of the strategies to gain social status as described by SIT.

Creativity and Competition without Individual Mobility. It is clear through these interviews that agricultural producers use both social creativity and social competition to gain or maintain status within society. For these producers, reframing the in-group is used. An example is evident when Bill speaks about a conversation he had with a lady from church about chemical use:

I said, "Well, would you rather then I put on the chemicals we used to put on: Atrazine,

uh, all these other chemicals that soaked into the soil and got down into the water.

Would you rather I do that?" "Well no," she doesn't want that. Well then Round-Up

doesn't—it doesn't soak into the soil it's a contact herbicide if it hits and it's gone it's

done you know we don't do anything like we used to.

In this conversation, Bill justifies the way food is produced by saying that its better than what we

used toapply. The reframing that takes place in this instance maintains the high status of

producers while also justifying the use of certain chemical herbicides.

Second, participants demonstrate the use of social competition as a way to gain or

maintain status. For these producers, having conversations such as the one between Bill and the

lady from church not only reframes the use of certain agricultural practices but imparts

information about the topic at hand. This shows the non-producer that the producer is wholly

understanding of, in this case, the use of chemicals, and the non-producer does not know what

she is talking about. This furthers the differentiation between the two groups of people, allowing

for the producer to maintain that high status. Another potential place for social competition to

occur is at farmers' markets. Alicia, who attends the farmers' markets in her area regularly,

explains how sometimes those farmers' market conversations can be a place for non-producers to

ask questions and for producers to prove their knowledge on varieties, the growing process, and

even recipes.

Notably, the interview transcripts include no clear uses of the third status strategy:

individual mobility. However, several participants share stories of family members who left

agriculture and, therefore, the in-group, potentially gaining social status. It is important to point

out that most agricultural producers inherit land from a family member, marry into the farm, or

grow up on a farm and buy land from family or friends later in life. None of my participants chose farming without first having some family connection. Cara describes farming as being "in your blood" when you grow up on a farm. For these reasons, and for these producers, leaving the in-group is impractical. In fact, several participants mention that they are the only one from their family of origin who is still producing, and many express that no one will be left to take over once they die. While it might seem simple to sell the land, move to town, and get another job, for these agricultural producers, it is not that simple. These producers express a sense of tradition and multigenerational land-owning. What outsiders might view as a practical solution to gaining status, agricultural producers experience as an obligation to stay and uphold a tradition. The family members of participants who did leave the farm or will leave the farm were oftentimes given the first opportunity to refuse to stay and work the land. In sum, while participants describe individual mobility, they speak of it only within the context of what *other* people do as their sense of obligation is far too high to imagine leaving the farm and joining a higher-status group.

Ironically, producers attribute to themselves high status in part because they are a resilient minority, staying on the land when their siblings and neighbors have all left. But at the same time, this connection to the family and the inherited land traps them, reduces their autonomy, and diminishes social mobility as an acceptable way to maintain a positive sense of self. Even though SIT posits three strategies to gain or maintain status, producers clearly only engage in two, and the extent of that engagement, in some senses, varies. In the next section, I will discuss two unique orientations that producers have in relation to communicating with the out-group.

Communication with the Out-group

With a clearer understanding of agricultural producers' unique social identity as they understand it relative to non-producers, we can now consider how this identity potentially impacts producer communication with non-producers. In interviews, participants articulate two orientations toward communicating with those outside of agriculture: the Determined versus the Resigned. Both orientations indicate discouragement when hearing criticisms from people outside of agriculture and a consumer lack of understanding of agricultural practices, the hard work that goes into the farm, and overall how food is produced. However, what each orientation chooses to do with those criticisms and misinformation is different. The Determined orientation is most clearly articulated by 10 participants, while four interviewees give voice to the Resigned[7]. Notably, the only demographical difference between the Determined and the Resigned is age. First, I will explain the Determined.

Determined

The Determined are those who believe that agriculture as an industry needs to be educating the public on food production. While not all the Determined actively participate in this on a regular basis, the producers in this category have taken at least partial responsibility for informing the public. These sentiments are expressed through failures in the past to educate and the need to educate in the future. Alicia expressed it thusly:

> I think the farming community has done a really bad job of trying to teach people what it is versus just telling them…and I think [the] fault's on the farming industry to make people feel like we are covering something up.

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[7] One participant did not fit in either the Determined or the Resigned, as that topic did not come up in our conversation.

For the Determined, the previous history of the lack of education and effective communication is problematic. The Determined express a need for improvement in this area. Cara says, "I guess that's one of the hurdles that we need to pass right now is better communication and better understanding and education about what we do for a living and how we provide everything."

The Determined may or may not succeed in this area, but they try to inform the public in a few ways. For example, a couple of the Determined mention inviting people to the farm to experience it. Caleb describes what that looks like for him and his wife, Lauren:

> We like to network, I call them my city friends, and I like them to come out on the farm and see what really happens. Most people are so many, two or three generations away from the farm. And they don't, and we get a bad rap once in a while because of that and and so we and, anybody that wants to be from the city wants to come out their invited on our farm anytime they want to come out. And see what we do and what were about and how we work.

While some of the Determined invite people to the farm occasionally to experience it, others make public education a part of their business. In agritourism cases, education can play a major role in not only financially supporting the farm but can also provide a way to educate people, especially children, on food production. Alicia describes a typically opening conversation that she has when kids come to visit her farm:

> Now during the week in our fall activities, I have school groups almost every day come visit the farm… But it kind of start with "what did you have for breakfast?" and depending on what their feedback is, "well did you know that came from a farm?" Or "Did you know that I grow those here?" Or "Did you know that we grow wheat that went

into your cereal or corn that went into your cornflakes?" and try to tie it back directly with what they had for breakfast that day.

The Determined believe that people should know about their food supply, but simply have not been given the correct information. Most Determined are willing to talk about agriculture with those within and outside of the agricultural industry. Sometimes, however, those educational conversations do not get very far. Some non-producers do not want to listen and are not willing to change their minds, say producers. Cara describes having a conversation with someone about GMOs:

the discussion could have went on for hours. You know, are you going to change his mind? So, I just said well I wish you'd do some more research and read more about it what scientific facts there are about, you know.

In general, the Determined are hopeful that the uninformed consumer can become knowledgeable should agricultural producers work towards effective communication and education. The Resigned, however, take a different approach.

Resigned

The Resigned include participants who indicate resentment toward or hopelessness in communicating with those not in agriculture. Instead of wanting to educate the uninformed, the Resigned have given up. Participants express a sense of futility that justifies shrugging off the criticisms and lack of knowledge. As Bill says of criticisms of agriculture from outsiders, "You just let it go you know, so. What am I going to do?" Mary, echoes the sentiment and adds,

I'm tired of looking at these ag sites that are constantly exhorting me that I should get a blog and I should be you know… and I should have pictures of baby calves, and I should, you know, your children should be scampering in the yard with them…I think...people

that are particularly vocal and the people that feel that way about their food, they want to

feel that way.

Mary and Bill express resentfulness and hopelessness when talking about consumer education. Mary, though, takes it a step further: she i tired of trying and of people asking her to try. Additionally, Mary believes that vocal consumers believe what they want, and there is no way to change that.

Potentially stemming from this resentment and hopelessness, the Resigned mention that the only way to change people's minds about food production is for a famine to occur. To these producers, lack of food would greatly affect the consumer's mind about food production. George says, "Until they get real hungry, they don't care," talking about consumers. Mary, on the other hand, expresses that people should go hungry because she is tired of the complaining: "I just think you should go hungry. I've had it…I just—I'm over it. I have had it with this constant, um, complaining when there are—so you should be grateful." Bill goes so far as to marshal other producers' support of his orientation:

> Of course, people in the coffee shop, they'll tell you, "Well all we need is a good, uh, you
>
> know disaster of some kind and you know, where people run out of food and then we
>
> won't worry so much about whether it's GMO or not." Or anything…not just GMO. All
>
> the other things that we get in trouble for.

The Resigned presume that they can do nothing to help the uninformed consumer see things differently. Only an act of God will change their ungrateful, thick-headed ways.

In sum, participants understand their common social identity as caring people who work hard, sacrifice, and stay on the farm so the uninformed consumer can have a safe food supply. The uninformed consumer can sometimes be difficult to communicate with about agricultural

practices, but the Determined are willing to try. The Resigned have given up on communication and are willing to leave the consumer to deal with the consequence. But if the Determined and the Resigned share the same sense of social identity in reference to the out-group, why have they adopted such different methods of relating to the out-group? Further consideration of relative social status and its maintenance offer clues.

Why the Division?

To begin, although the Determined and the Resigned have a similar view of the out-group, they view communication with the out-group differently. When talking about educating the non-producers, the Determined emphasize *informing* the consumer. In fact, Alicia says when talking about educating people on GMOs, "you don't necessarily teach them that GMOs are good or bad, but you teach them to ask the questions about things." Alicia explains that she wants people to know how to learn about their food supply. This quotation seems to imply that through this questioning process, people will realize the global impact of agriculture and people will learn the importance of why producers do the things they do. This potential solution to the communication gap between agricultural producers and non-producers represents the Determined's stance in wanting to educate the public. This educational solution allows for both the producer and the non-producer to influence the educational process. This process shows that the Determined want the non-producer to be informed, but does not want to do the work to inform said non-producer.

In contrast, the Resigned leave the informing to someone else. In fact, Mary describes that she is tired of educating people, and she is tired of people trying to convince her to keep educating the public. For Mary and the other Resigneds, they wish that non-producers were better informed, but the Resigned are not willing to do the work to make sure the non-producer is

informed. In other words, the Resigned want the non-producer to be informed without doing the informing. The Resigned are more interested in maintaining their high status through social creativity and less concerned about informing the public. The key difference seems to be how much effort they are willing to put into changing the status quo.

If the goal is to close the communication gap between agricultural producers and non-producers, then the Determined are the ones to do it. They accept this task already and are willing to communicate with the out-group. Understanding the motivations behind this difference in the Determined and the Resigned could help agricultural producers and non-producers come together and have important and meaningful conversations, potentially even eliminating the two orientations in the future.

Agricultural producers share a common understanding of the uninformed non-producer, but the approach to the educational process is clearly different. The Determined and the Resigned value social status, but for the Determined, social status seems to be less important than informing the consumer. In the next chapter, I will discuss what these findings mean for the agricultural sector as well as the concerned consumer and provide areas for future research.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Agricultural producers provide food, fuel, and fiber to the world, impacting not only the United States economy but also the world's. Despite the importance of agriculture, there is a communication gap between agricultural producers and non-producers. This communication gap results in non-producer's lack of understanding of agricultural practices, which in turn, causes problems for the agricultural sector and agricultural producers. Using Social Identity Theory, intergroup communication, and qualitative interviewing, I attempt to understand agricultural producers' social identity in relationship to non-producers and how this understanding impacts their willingness to close the communication gap.

Participants in this study indicated that their hard work, self-sacrifice, minority membership, and norm of care help them understand their social identity. Moreover, agricultural producers expressed a similar view of the out-group. Overall, agricultural producers understand themselves as a distinct social group, but when it comes to conversing with the out-group, they are divided into the Determined and the Resigned. The difference in the resigned and the Determined appears to come from a difference in who should be educating the non-producer. In this chapter, I will discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this research and provide suggestions for future research and limitations of this study.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this research adds to the current research on social identity, intergroup communication, and agricultural identity in unique ways. As mentioned previously, much of the previous research on agricultural identity was performed in a vacuum, without reference to out-groups. In other words, current identity research is focused on specific characteristics of agricultural producers without considering how producers consider others when establishing a

sense of self. A discussion of social-status strategies and the two orientations for communicating with the out-group are discussed below.

Social-Status Strategies

My findings show that agricultural producers are not using individual mobility. It is unclear in these data whether producers are actually unable to leave the farm and their producer identity or if they simply perceive the move to be impossibly difficult. Participants do clearly state that producing food is more than a business; it is also a way of life. Additionally, approximately 40% of all farmland in 2014 is inherited (Bigelow & Hubbs, 2016). Significantly, all but three of my participants inherited the land on which they currently operate. My participants were at least the third generation owning and operating the land. This adds to a producer's sense of obligation to continue to maintain their social identity. For producers, "To give up the farm, or worse still the loss of a farm, are often perceived to be signs of personal failure" (Vanclay, 2004, p. 215). None of the participants in this study spoke about leaving the farm, despite other family members who had. In the end, whether my participants are actually stuck in their producer identity is immaterial because this feeling of obligation is very real for my participants.

Beyond social mobility, participants more clearly enacted social creativity and competition. In both cases, participants offered examples of their own intergroup communication with non-producers in response to questions and criticisms of the agricultural industry. While neither strategy requires communication with the out-group for its enactment, my findings indicate they potentially promote meaningful intergroup communication. SIT holds that social competition is a way for social groups to gain status by confronting members of the relevant out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This confrontation allows for each group to further

differentiate themselves from the other group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). While "confrontation" has a negative connotation, it can result in a positive outcome. At the very least, this confrontation can result in exposure to agricultural information. For example, many agricultural students choose to give their speeches on agriculturally related topics in the hope of educating the public and having meaningful conversations. In this sense, confrontation can be a positive way to engage people in conversations and learn from each other. In a more mediated sense, competition can occur without interaction with out-group members. For example, there are billboards all around Kansas that say, "1 Kansas farmer feeds 155 people + you!" This is a form of competition because it presents information to people who may not be exposed to agriculture in other scenarios. These two examples show how social competition can occur through either interaction with out-group members or without out-group interaction.

SIT might therefore be specified to include consideration of how status strategies are enacted to more fully appreciate the difference between interactions versus no interaction with the out-group. Based on previous SIT research, quality and quantity of time spent with members of another social identity group can have significant impacts on perception of another group (Tam et al., 2006; Zhang, 2016). Having an interpersonal interaction with someone from a different social identity group can allow for each group member to learn to appreciate each other, even if they may not agree with each other (Tam et al., 2006; Zhang, 2016).

Finally, participants in this study demonstrated that social creativity and competition serve as important means of meaning-making for group members who face inherent tensions in their group identities. For example, through the reframing process, as evidenced by Bill and his conversation with a lady from church, agricultural producers are indicating an inconsistency in their productivist identity and their conservationist identity. As discussion in chapter 2, the

productivist and conservationist ideals sometimes compete (Burton & Wilson, 2006; McGuire et al., 2013). Which side is more important to the producer's *good farmer* identity will determine how the producer handles the identity threat (McGuire, et al., 2013). In Bill's case, we see that his reframing of the chemical application is way for him to reaffirm his productivist and conservationist identity. Moreover, the same process is evident in the producers who indicate stewardship of their land and animals: these producers are adamant that they take care of the land and produce good quality food—again, reaffirming both identities in their eyes, but potentially not in the eyes of the non-producers. It seems that producers who are equipped to speak to all sides of their *good farmer* identity are the producers who are engaging in direct creativity and competition. Potentially, teaching producers, as well as others, to understand and speak to the contradictions that are inherent in all identities will encourage them to spend time with their relevant out-group. Therefore, future SIT research should consider whether in-group members are well-equipped to speak to such contradictions. Next, I will discuss some potential reasons for the Determined and the Resigned split.

Identity: The Same but Different

Just as the farmer identity holds both the conservationist and productivist values, the research indicates that agricultural producers share a common identity but differ in one important way: educating the consumer. One part of this shared identity is the consistent view of non-producers regarding their knowledge and understanding of agriculture. Participants consistently voiced the opinion that non-producers are naïve about what it takes to grow food, but their lack of knowledge can be attributed to their lack of experience. Interestingly, however, agricultural producers are divided in how they approach the out-group. In other words, when it comes to interacting with the out-group some producers engage in agricultural conversations and others do

not. For some reason or reasons, the Determined have decided to continue to talk to the out-group and the Resigned have given up.

The difference between them lies in how the Determined and the Resigned place the responsibility. The Determined take the obligation upon themselves to educate non-producers. However, the Resigned refuse the responsibility. Why? Communication theory gives us several ways to interpret this finding as well as future paths for additional research.

First, there is a clear correlation with the age of participants and the split orientations. The Resigned are all 65 years old and older, whereas everyone in the Determined orientation is 64 years old and younger. Age, as discussed in Chapter 2, can serve as a social identity group all its own (Tam et al., 2006). Because of this, it is possible that age and agricultural producer identity are competing and one is influencing the other. In other words, because social identity can be complex, and sometimes contradicting or competing (Hogg et al., 2017), it is possible that the reasons for the lack of communication from the Resigned is actually a result of being an *older producer* instead of just a *producer.* In other words, the age portion of the Resigned's social identity potentially affects how they experience their agricultural producer social identity, thereby impacting communication with the outgroup.

Second, it could be that the Resigned believe that the lack of communication maintains their high status. Choosing not to communicate with the out-group might strengthen the in-group's sense of exclusivity and superiority. Because the Resigned are choosing to avoid the conflict, they are maintaining their high status at the cost of a perpetually uninformed non-producer.

Alternately, it is also possible that self-efficacy and social support play a role in agricultural identity, and should be considered in future research. Self-efficacy, as defined by

Bandura (1977), is a person's belief in one's ability to perform a task of some kind. In this case, it could be that the Resigned do not believe they have the ability to talk about food production to make a difference. Additionally, Bandura (1977) says that when people perceive a situation to be a threat they will often avoid it. Potentially, the backlash the Resigned have received in the past has caused them to doubt their ability to communicate and produced a fear of a situation in which they might have to communicate. Perhaps those agricultural producers who are Determined to communicate do so in threatening situations and gain more self-efficacy along the way, while the Resigned maintain their low self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Alternately, and in light of current SIT research, the Determined might perceive themselves to have more social support from agricultural producers than the Resigned (Frisch et al., 2014; Guan & So, 2016). Future research therefore should examine how social identity affects social support and self-efficacy and study producers perceived communication skills.

Potentially, an agricultural producer's perceived identity and what the industry wants a producer's identity to be could result in an identity gap, impacting the producer's identification with the industry and therefore their behavioral intentions. Organizational research tells us that people are constantly comparing their perceived identity and what they perceive their organization to want their identity to be (Foreman & Whetten, 2002). Through this comparison, a person's commitment to the organization is impacted (Foreman & Whetten, 2002). It could be that gap between the agricultural producer identity and what they perceive agricultural organizations to want their identity to be is wider for some than for others. This gap then would impact the commitment the agricultural producer has to agriculture, potentially impacting their willingness to discuss agriculture with those outside of the industry.

On the other hand, this communication gap could stem from impression management, knowing that it is more difficult to rebuild an impression than it is to maintain one could potentially have a significant effect on the willingness of agricultural producers to communicate with non-producers. As mentioned earlier, crisis communication scholarship has repeatedly demonstrated that it is more difficult to repair an image than it is to maintain one (Coombs, 2015). Participants in this study admitted that agriculture is having to be reactive because the industry was not proactive in maintaining the image. It could very well be that the hard work of trying to rebuild the image of agriculture and agricultural producers has become too burdensome for the Resigned, while the Determined may not yet have reached their threshold. For these producers, farming is stressful enough. The pressure that goes into rebuilding the image of agriculture could be too much for the Resigned to take on when there are more practical (and enjoyable) things that must be done on the farm.

In the end, my interviews reveal a common story of how producers understand themselves and non-producers, but a stark cleavage in orientation toward the out-group. My interview data provide only hints as to why this difference exists. Future research therefore should examine the motivations that lead the Determined to communicate and the Resigned to give up. Beyond theoretical implications, this research also provides some practical implications.

Practical Implications

From an applied standpoint, this scholarship is useful to those who communicate about agriculture as well as communication scholars and practitioners more generally. This research shows that agricultural producers view themselves as a unique social group because of their dedication and care to the field of agriculture. These producers provide very specific reasons

why they believe as they do, and these reasons influence communication with those outside of agriculture. Perceived status and differentiation can lead to negative relations with the out-group, such as prejudice (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This thesis was initially proposed under the assumption that concerned consumers need intergroup communication with producers to better understand their food supply. However, through this research, it has become clear that more intergroup communication would benefit agricultural producers as well. Agricultural producers who better understand their social identity as producers and can better speak to that in intergroup contexts potentially have more self-efficacy and are better at understanding their social identity as it relates to others. Apparently, agricultural producers are as vulnerable to the effects of social differentiation as anyone else, and perhaps even more so given their strong sense of moral rectitude combined with the understanding of themselves as a maligned minority. The effects of perceived high status and lower perceived non-producer status potentially leads to conflict, misunderstanding, and further alienation.

How then do we overcome this difficulty in communication? The first step would be for agricultural producers and non-producers to recognize the nuances of social identity and how it affects communication. Social identity is clearly more than just understanding oneself as positive and doing good. As SIT posits, groups and group members are always looking for a way to positively differentiate themselves from others and to gain social status in the process (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Alerting agricultural producers to the effects of social identity, group prejudices, and intergroup conflict could be a first step in less stereotyped interactions (McGlone & Pfiester, 2015).

Second, it is clear from previous SIT research that quality and quantity of time spent with someone from another group is important in shaping one's view of the out-group (Tam et

al.,2006; Zhang, 2016). Bridging this communication gap between agricultural producers and non-producers needs to include exposure to the relevant out-group. Not only is exposure important, but the quality of the interaction needs to be high. For example, and as Alicia's explained, farmers' markets are a good place for non-producers to interact with producers and potentially engage in numerous, quality interactions.

Unfortunately, my participants speak to the problem: rarely do they have quality interactions with non-producers. While it makes sense that producers spend most of their time with other producers, this can create difficulty in conversations and intergroup relations. Without an interpersonal connection, it is more difficult to have the intergroup conversation (Guirdham, 2005). Potentially, being aware of the issues and the nuances of social identity can encourage producers and non-producers to reach across the gap and interact with one another in a meaningful way. For example, when one realizes that social identity can impact communication with the out-group, that awareness can make producers consider the group identity and interpersonal aspects while in conversation with someone from another social identity group. This could potentially lead to a more positive interaction in which social identity and group membership are learned to be appreciated, and interpersonal aspects are not ignored.

On a larger scale, media can play a role in understanding the other side of the gap. As discussed in Chapter 2, media messages play an influential role in how groups view one another, particularly when intergroup contact is limited (Mastro et al., 2008; McKinley et al., 2014; Roozen & Shulman, 2014). In this analysis, many agricultural producers expressed in this study that mass and social media often misrepresent agricultural life. Importantly, scholarship also speaks to the misrepresentation of agricultural life (Cunningham, 2012; Rhoades & Irani, 2008). This misrepresentation likely leads to further misunderstanding and certainly contributes to the

sense of conflict between the producers and non-producers. If the mainstream media were to present the agricultural information in an unbiased and informed way, agriculture could make a turn-around.

For example, media sources should share more stories such as Justin Knopf's. Knopf is an agricultural producer from Kansas who was featured for his sustainable farming in a book as well as a documentary ("Kansas farmer to be featured," 2017). Additionally, movies such as *American Meat* carefully address the dilemmas of agriculture without sensationalizing or creating villains. But these examples are not enough to bridge the communication gap between agricultural producers and non-producers. Potentially, individuals inside and outside of agriculture could start conversations about agriculture on social media, leading to larger conversations in the mainstream media. While we might see some of this with trade organizations within the agricultural industry such as with American Farm Bureau, producers on the ground must also speak for themselves. While this research has many benefits, there are still limitations. I will cover these as well as areas of future study in the next section.

Limitations and Future Research

There are, of course, limitation to this research. First and foremost, my positionality within this research could be a limitation. Despite that I was and still am aware of and transparent about my position in this research, I still identify as an advocate for agriculture. This positive bias that I hold toward agricultural producers, while not intentionally, could have impacted the interpretation of results. While I do hold a bias toward agricultural producers, I still am willing to recognize the faults in and of agriculture to make our food supply safer and less misunderstood.

A second limitation of this research includes the demographic information. First, the location could serve as a limitation. This research involved agricultural producers from Kansas. The shared identity of agricultural producers in Kansas may not be the shared social identity of agricultural producers across the globe or even the nation. Second, a relatively high educational attainment could bias the results. All of my participants have at least some post-secondary education. It is possible that educational attainment impacts willingness to communicate and self-identification. Third, this study lacked diversity in the types of producers. This, in some sense connected to geography, could also potentially impact identity and willingness to communicate. Future research therefore ought to engage a more geographically diverse set of participants.

This research opens the door to more research and provokes more questions about social identity, agricultural social identity, and intergroup communication. Therefore, future research should engage these questions starting with SIT strategies. It is clear that agricultural producers engage in two of the three strategies, but individual mobility is often left out. As previous research describes, group members use SIT strategies based on their perceived difficulty of mobility and social ties (Jetten et al., 2017). However, it appears that there is more to it than this. As mentioned previously, it could be that individual mobility is ignored because of a potentially unexplored strategy of SIT. In other words, future research should engage in what it means for group members to reject a strategy, particularly individual mobility. Additionally, whatever the potential, good or bad for producers, social competition should be investigated further. Future research would benefit from interviewing people who are actively seeking competition, such as students in a public speaking class or producers who have the placed billboard on their land, to understand their motivations for actively engaging the out-group.

Second, future research should engage questions of motivations to communicate between the Determined and the Resigned. It appears to be an issue of willingness to do the work to inform, but it is very possible there is more too it. These orientations seem to be complex and difficult to interpret. Future research should consider social support, self-efficacy and impression management as possible reasons for this division.

Finally, a non-producer study is needed. While "non-producer" is not a social identity that exists outside of producer perceptions, it nevertheless is plays a very real role in shaping producer sense of self. To my point, when asking producers what they thought about non-producers, their quick, clear, and confident responses indicated that they had given serious thought to those outside of agriculture who rely on their products. In other words, producers clearly view non-producers as their relevant out-group, but non-producers do not view producers as their relevant out-group. Through the stories told in my interviews, it is also clear that producers seek competition and creativity with all members of what they perceive to be their relevant out-group. It seems they are seeking competition and creativity with anyone who is willing to at least start the conversation or even pretend to listen. Future studies should therefore consider the specificity of the people in the non-producer out-group for producers, and how that potentially might differ between producers.

This study looked at the willingness of producers to talk to non-producers, but a study looking at the exact opposite is needed. Agricultural producers feel that their knowledge and work goes unnoticed and unappreciated, often expressing that non-producers just do not listen. In order to close this communication gap, non-producers need to be given the space to talk about their willingness to listen or not to listen to producers, where they get their information, and what

makes them trust those sources. While a study based on SIT does not seem fitting for non-producers, they now need their space to share their stories and perspectives.

Conclusion

Agricultural producers and non-producers have a unique relationship that results in a communication gap. This research shows the importance of addressing this communication gap in agriculture, but it is also applicable to other areas as well. The agricultural producer/non-producer communication gap is not entirely unique. There are many other fields and occupations in which expertise is unknown to out-group members, resulting in a problematic communication gap. This research begins to understand ways in which communication gaps in general can be narrowed, and eventually closed, by promoting higher quantities and quality of interactions for the sake of mutual understanding.

Communication is, of course, a two-way street, and, therefore, non-producers must communicate as well. This study demonstrates that there are agricultural producers who want to talk with non-producers. However, both the Resigned and the Determined relayed failed attempts to reach them because the non-producer chose not to listen. Future research focusing on the consumer side of agriculture would provide insight into what motivates non-producers to ask questions, listen, learn, and potentially change their minds. While not necessarily a social identity study, such research could ask similar questions of consumers. Queries such as 'How often do you talk to farmers?" and "What do you talk about?" would reveal important insights in how to bridge the gap.

Ultimately, people coming together is an individual choice that each group member must actively make, as is the decision to be caring, open-minded, and willing to listen. It is precisely these characteristics that are needed to span the communication gap between the producer and

the non-producer. To learn to be open minded, however, it is important for agricultural producers to understand their social identity and their communication orientation within that social identity. And as Annie said when leaving our interview, it only takes one person to change the world.

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Appendix A - Demographics Table

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Highest Level of Education	Type of Producer
Alicia	38	Female	Master's	Farmer/ Rancher/ Agritourism (row crops, specialty crops, livestock)
Anna	33	Female	Master's	Rancher (cattle)
Annie	64	Female	Ph.D.	Rancher (did not explicitly say/ cattle and horses were mentioned)
Bill	66	Male	Some college	Rancher/ Retired Farmer
Caleb	58	Male	Associate's	Farmer
Lauren	56	Female	Some college	Farmer
Cara	58	Female	Bachelor's	Farmer/ Rancher (row crops and cattle)
Francine	77	Female	Master's	Farmer/ Rancher (grain and livestock)
George	74	Male	Bachelor's	Farmer/ Rancher (grain and livestock)
Lola	42	Female	Bachelor's	Farmer (row crops)
Mary	65	Female	Some college	Rancher/ Retired Farmer
Naomi	42	Female	Bachelor's	Farmer/ Rancher (row crops and cattle)
Schoe	64	Male	Some college	Specialty crop producer
Vicky	30	Female	Some college	Farmer/ Rancher (row crops and cattle)
Viktoria	33	Female	Bachelor's	Farmer/ Rancher

Appendix B - Interview Protocol

These interviews were semi-structured, which will allow for some divergence from these questions. Furthermore, the following is a list of possible lines of questioning, as there were more questions that came up in the interview and other topics that were explored. Before conducting interviews with my participants, I conducted two practice interviews.

1. What do you do for a living?

   a. Does being a farmer (or rancher—depending on how they initially answer) distinguish you from others in important ways? How so?

2. Based on your experiences and observations, can you make any general statements about people who are not farmers (or ranchers)?

   a. Why do you think that?

   b. How did they get that way?

3. How often do you talk to other farmers (or ranchers)?

   a. What do you talk about?

   b. How often do you talk to non-farmers (or non-ranchers)?

   c. What do you talk about?

   d. Why might those conversations look different?

4. A norm is something that is standard or typical for a certain group of people, for example, a certain practice or a system of doing things. What norms do you think farmers (or ranchers) have?

   a. Can you think of any unspoken rules or behaviors that farmers (or ranchers) share? Maybe something that you know to do or not do around other farmers (or ranchers)?

5. How often do you hear criticisms about agriculture from other agricultural producers?

a. How do you typically react?

b. How often do you hear criticisms about agriculture from non-agricultural

producers?

c. How do you typically react in those situations?

d. Why might these be different reactions?

Appendix C - Code Categories

Code	Example	Units
Autonomy (Long hours/ odd hours/ self-employed/ Hard work)	"Cows don't calve, they don't give milk, the grass doesn't grow only from 8-5." (Annie) "You're self-employed for one, which is, you know you have, like you don't have a supervisor to watch over you keeping you on task or anything" (Vicky)	27
Minority	"there are very few of them are agricultural producers there's just not very many of us left anymore." (Mary)	9
Discouragement at criticisms	"Well its discouraging to know that those national media…It makes me really disgusted that not only are we trying to raise and feel that we're raising a safe, economical product for these people, and yet, [inaudible] they turn around and bite the hand that feeds them." (Francine)	3
Importance of food	"food fuel and fiber is all part of what we're producing and they don't realize that." (Annie)	11
Production style (business or lifestyle)	"We had to look at it as a business. Because that's, we had to earn the income… and it was a lifestyle in the fact that we lived in the country. And our life revolved around the farm which was the business." (Francine)	35
Keeping tabs	"C: Well you know since cell phones I have neighbors that call me every day, "what are you doing?"	5

	L: They'll be driving looking at their fields and just stop in just to see what we're doing, you know and um. C: Or they'll drive by and we're out there working. Then you get a phone call. "How come that's broke?" (Caleb and Lauren)	
Norms: trade secrets	"I mean there's certain things that are considered trade secrets with farmers. You don't, you don't ask, you don't tell type things." (Alicia)	4
Norms: talking about wealth	"On the flip side though you know it's pretty common for like a non-farmer to say how much land do you farm and like to like that's a very innocent question where like farmer to farmer, you'd be like here open your checkbook and let me see, you know" (Lola)	16
Care for land and animals ("You take care of ___, it will take care of you")	"if you don't feed your animals good, they're not going to bring good prices and they're not going to feed you good" (Alicia)	16
Perception of out-group	"lack of knowledge and that is—I have seen that not just in agriculture. In everything. That they don't know what they're talking about and that's what that's what kills stuff and that's what starts big uproars and yeah. Its, um, people need to stop and think about what they're doing to get communication better." (Schoe)	120
Social media/ media influence	"I'm sitting there watching TV and PETA has an ad on there where, I don't know if you've probably seen it, it	34

	shows a forklift ramming a cow? Well that is so opposite of what we would, what most, 99 percent .9 percent of the farmers never do anything like that" (Caleb)	
Community (involvement and family and friendship ties)	"There's that sense of community that goes along with it too although that is largely gone now that there's hardly anybody left anymore but there was that sense of you wanted to bring along these young people and you were willing to to take less money for it because this person you know married and they were going to have these children and they were going to continue you know…this whole lifestyle and the community itself that you you wanted it to be." (Mary) "We are involved in our county ranch and range tour, and so we take the public out on private property and show them, um, different ways to manage pasture ground or cattle." (Anna)	49
Passion/ love for work/ dedication/ enjoyment	"and people don't understand the passion that we have for what we do." (Naomi)	7
Money (income/ cost of farming)	"I mean you have to be bigger and farm more to be able to make a living at it and I would say the percentage of farmers that one of the spouses works off the farm is, is tremendous to bring in and to help pay for health insurance and the cost of living and, you know it is just a changing of times it's just	25

	the changing of the population." (Cara)	
Benefits: general	"C: It's all life choices. The way you want to live your life or how hard you want to work or you know its L: mhm. C: the benefits are… its however hard you want to work. It's there if you want to work hard." (Caleb and Lauren)	3
Benefits: knowing where food comes from	"I have learned where our food, fiber and fuel come from here in America and in other countries, while some consumers only know of it coming from a grocery store" (Viktoria)	5
Influence on Young People	"Um, my kids get to see— they get to go to work with me a lot. They go to farmers' markets. Um and I say go to work with me, they actually go to work and work with me. Um, depending on their age. So, they can understand that side of—they learn those things at a very young age. A lot of children, you know mom and dad just leave in the morning and come back in the evening. They have no idea what they do." (Alicia)	13
Generational	"Uh, yes he, my my grandpa farmed. My dad had, my dad had three brothers and but they all went off to the war and they were all college graduates and they didn't want to come back to the farm Well I don't know if they didn't, but they didn't come back and my my dad ended up with a my, this is my granddad's, I mean. My	24

	granddad owned it my dad owned it and now I own it" (Bill)	
Education	"Um, and I think if consumers had education and understood it more, they would, they'd be more apt to realize, it's something we need." (Alicia)	84