

Urban and Rural Latino Students' Experiences in Agricultural Education: Toward Defining Rural Privilege

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Agricultural Education programs continue to become more diverse and dynamic. However, diversity does not necessarily ensure equity or inclusion. As such, many programs strive to increase inclusive programming and ensure all students fully actualize the three-circle model of school based agricultural education. In some programs, students from rural and non-rural backgrounds coexist in a single setting. As part of a larger parallel mixed methods multiple case study investigating the experiences of Latino students in Agricultural Education, the data from this sub-study found certain inequalities between the rural and non-rural students in three of the four cases. Three sub-themes emerged from the data: 1) Students from non-rural backgrounds may not possess the same understanding of agriculture and agricultural education as their urban counterparts; 2) Lack of privileged information may present a barrier to access, enrollment, and involvement in secondary agricultural education programs; and, 3) Students from non-rural backgrounds tend to report fewer opportunities and more barriers to fully actualizing the three-circle model. Thick, rich descriptions are provided of the participants' perceptions of these inequalities. Furthermore, researchers offer a working definition of Rural Privilege along with suggestions for practice and further research.

Keywords: diversity; equity; Latino students; Latinx; privilege; rural; rural privilege; urban; agricultural education

Introduction and Review of Literature

Just as the United States continues to become more diverse (U.S. Census, 2011) so does Agricultural Education (National FFA Organization, 2015). One of the fastest growing demographic groups in the U.S. continues to be Hispanics. Nationwide, Hispanics accounted for 16% of the U.S. population in 2010, growing by 43% since the 2000 census. This growth accounted for more than half of the total U.S. population growth between 2000 and 2010 (U.S. Census, 2011). Since 1970, the Hispanic population has grown six-fold. Though the U.S. Census uses the term Hispanics, traditionally, Latino is considered more accurate, as most of the Hispanic population in the U.S. actually originated in Latin America (Oboler, 1995). Consequently, many who are classified as Hispanic may identify themselves as Chicana/Chicano, Latina/Latino, Mexican American, or other various classifications. More recently, the term Latinx has become more prevalent as a way to include all gender identities (de Onís, 2017). We choose to use the term Latino/a though we carefully assert the most appropriate terminology is self-selected by the individual.

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When addressing inequities in public education in the United States, Latinos continue to be a demographic group that require our immediate attention if we are to ensure a sound education for all of our nation's students. Not only are Latinos the fastest growing demographic group in our country, Sólorzano, Villalpando, and Oseguera (2005) found Latinos were the group least likely to succeed in high school. Their study indicated only 10 in 100 Latino students would graduate from college, with just over 50% graduating from high school. Moreover, the gap between Latino and White students' standardized test scores continues to be of concern as accountability in schools remains a hot topic in the national discourse (Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003). We also know that some teachers have lower expectations of their Latino students than they do of other student groups (Núñez, 2014).

Beyond the structural inequities in our nation's schools, the Latino community faces many barriers outside of public education; the general impression of the public about Latinos helps put this issue in perspective. According to Chavez (2008), 30% of non-Latinos believe the majority of Latinos in the United States are illegal, while in actuality, 64% of Latinos are legal/U.S. born citizens. This inaccurate perception of Latinos by such a large portion of the non-Latino population, what Chavez terms the *Latino Threat Narrative*, helps perpetuate existing structural discrimination practices and mistrust as many associate the portrayal of illegal immigrants in the media with *all* Latinos. A related study by Rodriguez and Lamm (2016) found agriculture undergraduates' colorblindness was a predictor of their attitudes toward undocumented immigrants. With so much negativity in the media, political climate and education, many Latino students begin to internalize and believe these stereotypes. Moreover, these students may also begin to adopt the beliefs of the dominant culture, accepting the view that all have an equal shot at being successful and success is in no way based on systematic and structural systems that lead to inequality (Núñez, 2014).

California remains an interesting case when examining the Latino experience. As of the 2010 census, California had the largest minority Latino population with over 22 million residents, followed by Texas with just over 13 million (U.S. Census, 2011). In 2012, Latinos became the largest demographic sub group in California (U.S. Census, 2012) and the Pew Research Center found the ten counties with the largest Hispanic populations accounted for 22% of the national Hispanic population growth – five of these counties are located in California (Brown, 2014). While these data show the dramatic shifts taking place, we still have much to learn about the growing Latino population in our K-12 system, specifically, their experiences in Agricultural Education.

This study aimed to investigate Latino students' experiences in California Agricultural Education. As such, the initial review of literature did not include an extensive investigation into the concept of privilege. We offer the following paragraph, *post hoc*, in hopes it will better situate the reader and provide a context for our findings. We further contextualize our findings in the conclusion of this manuscript.

The concept of privilege is based on an argument that counters a common American belief that we all have an equal shot at success. This belief often leads to structures that actually benefit those in the majority or who hold the most power. Institutional racism, or the current climate that privileges some over others in terms of race, tends to continue in perpetuity unless acted upon (Feagin, Feagin, & Feagin, 1986). Unfortunately, those oppressed by the current systems and structures often begin to believe they are lesser class citizens, at times failing to advocate for the changes necessary to break down the institutional racism that oppresses them. Concurrently, some believe we have reached equality in a modern colorblind society. Critical Race researchers seek to dispel this myth through scholarly work, stories, and social justice (Pyke, 2010), some of them taking a stand to shed light on the concept of privilege while actively seeking to dismantle it.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers of the transformative paradigm “explicitly position themselves side by side with the less powerful in a joint effort to bring about social transformation” (Mertens, 2010, p. 21). Moreover, these researchers take on the issues of groups that have been traditionally marginalized through oppression and structural inequity. Transformative researchers posit, while there are multiple ways of knowing, some ways are privileged over others. With this in mind, transformative researchers avoid the claim they can objectively examine certain phenomenon, rather, they explicitly acknowledge their social justice cause and seek research that will help address the plight of the oppressed. We are very careful to assert we approach this work without a deficit mindset; rather, we acknowledge our myriad privileges, particularly the privilege our race affords and the agency our academic degrees bestow upon us. In this study, we take a transformative stance with regard to the motivation and framework for this study.

We approached this study through the lens of Latino Critical Theory, also known as LatCrit, as it is a useful lens for examining the Latino experience in Agricultural Education. According to Villalpando (2004), LatCrit has an overarching goal of achieving and working toward social justice. Moreover, Solorzano and Bernal (2001) state, “LatCrit is concerned with a progressive sense of a coalitional Latina/Latino pan-ethnicity and addresses issues often ignored by critical race theorists” (p. 311). In this study, LatCrit will help frame the stories of the participants with an emphasis on intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to the interaction of several factors in critical and feminist theory, including race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and others (Hancock, 2007). All aspects of students’ lives will impact their experience in Agricultural Education. From a critical perspective, LatCrit will help inform the stories and experiences of this study’s participants to help us gain an understanding from their own perspectives.

Purpose and Objectives

The original purpose the parallel mixed methods research that led to this manuscript was to explore Latino students’ experiences in California Agricultural Education. One of the major themes that emerged from the study was a perceived inequity between rural and non-rural students in three of the four original cases. This study aligned with Priority Area Four of the American Association for Agricultural Education National Research Agenda (Roberts, Harder, Brashears, 2016). The purpose of the study specific to this manuscript was to explore the concept of privilege as reported by the participants—specifically, what inequities do students perceive in their respective agricultural education programs between rural and non-rural students?

Methods and Procedures

This study was part of a larger, multi-objective, parallel mixed methods multiple case study (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Mertens, 2010). In order to conduct the multiple case study (Yin, 2014), an initial analysis was conducted of the California statewide data in order to find agriculture programs with Latino populations that were representative of each school’s Latino population. Also referred to as a multisite study (Creswell, 2013) or collective case study, this method allows for the examination of several cases in order to allow a deeper understanding of a certain phenomenon (Berg & Lune, 2008). The larger study (see Elliott, 2014) sought to investigate Latino students’ experiences in California Agricultural Education. The quantitative portion of the study included an investigation of student demographics, motivation, and career goals in four agricultural education

programs. For the qualitative phase of the study, a small focus group comprised of a group of five to seven students of Latino ethnicity was conducted at each of the four programs. The focus groups were approximately one hour in length. Questions were open-ended and were designed to elicit the participants' experiences in their respective programs. Questions and potential follow up questions were approved in advance with each school site as part of the overall IRB approval, which also included student assent and parental informed consent. Additionally, recruitment documents and parental information forms were provided in both Spanish and English, though the students who participated in the study all spoke proficient English.

Selection of Cases

Each of the four original cases were selected based on demographic and geographic similarities. All four sites had a large percentage of Latino students and were all located in the Central Valley of California. Moreover, each of the programs is known in the state as being successful, though we do recognize this is a very subjective definition. For this study, one of the schools was not included in the analysis as the school's students are primarily non-rural, and as such, students did not share examples of inequity or privilege related to being rural or non-rural.

Participant Selection

We chose our participants at each school site purposively to ensure a more heterogeneous group (Berg & Lune, 2008). We asked the agriculture teachers at each site to assist with selecting students who were of Latino descent, varied in terms of their participation level in the program, and who were upperclassmen. Table 1 shows the demographics of the participants, though it should be noted only the participants whose comments were used in this manuscript are included in the table. The original research included eighteen participants in the three cases selected for this study. Berg and Lune (2008) argue the importance of focus groups as a tool for answering a research question. Moreover, focus groups, generally consisting of less than seven participants, allow for the social aspect of data collection, where participants can build upon others' comments. All of the students communicated proficiently in English, though some indicated they were bilingual.

Data Analysis

As the data collection in this study was situated in a much larger investigation, the specific analysis of the data related to this study become important for transferability. Each of the focus groups was transcribed word for word and was analyzed using an open coding process (Creswell, 2012). Pseudonyms were inserted to protect the individual identity of the participants, schools, and teachers. Initially, each case was analyzed independently for emergent themes. Analytic notes were used to capture the researchers' thoughts and feelings throughout the data analysis. Next, cases were combined and a cross case analysis was conducted to provide the overall Latino experience across cases. Each case was analyzed for themes, then the themes of each case were examined to determine any themes that transcended all of the cases (Yin, 2014). One of the emergent themes that transcended three of the four cases was the perceived privilege that rural students tended to have over non-rural students. The data from this major theme was further analyzed for this sub-study, and upon reviewing the initial transcripts, three sub themes surfaced, supported by thick, rich descriptions.

Table 1

Participants by Case

Student	Demographics		
	School	Grade	Sex
Adrian	Georgia HS	11 th	Male
Andrea	Central HS	12 th	Female
David	Ocean HS	12 th	Male
Diego	Georgia HS	11 th	Male
Emma	Ocean HS	12 th	Female
Ethan	Ocean HS	12 th	Male
Ian	Central HS	11 th	Male
Javier	Georgia HS	11 th	Male
Lucas	Georgia HS	11 th	Male
Ricky	Georgia HS	12 th	Male
Rosa	Georgia HS	12 th	Female
Sofia	Ocean HS	12 th	Female

Confirmability and dependability were established through the use of peer debriefing, field and analytic notes, and maintaining a clear data trail. All recordings, transcripts, and field notes have been blinded and securely saved in order to ensure they are traceable. Triangulation was ensured through the use of multiple cases, two researchers, and use of field notes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is up to the consumer of case study research to decide the extent the data can be generalized and transferred (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Merriam (2009) adds “the more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (p. 49). We have attempted to provide future researchers the context they need in order to determine the applicability of this study’s findings to other cases.

Limitations

Several factors limit our ability to generalize the findings of this study. Conducting four small focus groups, while providing us with profound insight, may have missed important details that would emerge in a more comprehensive study. Moreover, this study was originally designed to investigate the Latino experience in Agricultural Education, and therefore, may be missing important details that would emerge in a study designed to *specifically* address the issue of privilege. It should also be reemphasized that the study was limited to Latino students, so our findings can only apply to a particular ethnic group. While the findings are useful to our field, more investigation must be done to determine if our findings are independent of race or ethnicity. Though this study began to answer questions we did not originally aim to ask, we have made every attempt to account for these limitations in our analysis, findings, and conclusions.

Findings

Three of the four cases in the multiple case study presented findings indicating a rural and urban divide among students in each of the four agriculture programs. The three programs, Central High School, Georgia High School, and Ocean High School, were all made up of students from both urban and rural settings. Washington High School's students were primarily comprised of students who resided in the city, and as such, no findings are reported which would support a difference in privilege between urban and rural students. While the overall study produced several themes, this manuscript explores the major theme of rural privilege, which is dissected into three sub-themes: 1) Students from non-rural backgrounds may not possess the same understanding of agriculture and agricultural education as their urban counterparts; 2) Lack of privileged information may present a barrier to access, enrollment, and involvement in secondary agricultural education programs; and, 3) Students from non-rural backgrounds tend to report fewer opportunities and more barriers to fully actualizing the three-circle model.

1. Students from non-rural backgrounds may not possess the same understanding of agriculture and agricultural education as their urban counterparts.

The students who participated in the study shared how their exposure to agriculture was limited due to their urban upbringing. Andrea shared her experience moving from a large city to a small community in an agricultural region.

For me honestly, I came from a big city. You don't see a lot of it unless you go well into the freeway...so honestly I had no clue what it was until I moved here. I moved here my freshman year, so I was curious as to what it was (CHS, Andrea, 127-131).

Ethan had a similar story.

One of the challenging things was I grew up in the city. I'm a city kid and I thought ag was just a country program and I didn't think I was going to have this much opportunities as people who already enrolled in ag, it was really hard (OHS, Ethan, 144-145).

Like Andrea, Diego also moved from a big city.

When I moved here, I didn't know corn grew... I didn't know that walnuts came from trees, and I met all these people and a lot of my friends are farmers. I have been able to learn about how things work with farming and how important it is to our country. It is basically the backbone of the United States because everybody needs food. Agriculture is not just about food either. There is a horticulture thing and I think the cool thing about ag here in this program, that we... it is not just about one thing. There is a little bit for everybody (GHS, Diego, 25-31).

Ian expanded on Andrea's comments, explaining the divide between those who grew up in rural environments versus the majority of youth who now grow up in the city.

It's almost as if you were to look at most teens today, we're a lot more distant from agriculturally based things. And so, when we come, and we see these classes, then they have more appeal because they're almost novel to us, just as our generation as a whole. It's just looks more, like I said, exposure to it because we've grown distant

from it. That's probably the biggest contributor to why it seems like fun (CHS, Ian, 243-248).

Andrea continued, sharing her parents' disconnect from agriculture.

I'm actually the first one in my family; I would say my immediate family at least to be a part of ag, like an ag, any type of ag profession. So they're really actually proud of it, and they kind of boast about it in a way. Like, 'look at all the success that she's achieving in ag.' It's like something that honorable to them because none of my parents work in dairies. (CHS, Andrea, 426-431).

2. Lack of privileged information may present a barrier to access, enrollment, and involvement in secondary agricultural education programs.

Throughout each focus group, students shared how the disconnect between agriculture and city students may be a barrier to enrolling in a secondary agriculture program. Moreover, city students may not participate at the same level as rural students.

I think really that's mainly the problem. I feel like people who are like, maybe like grew up or family in ag, or they come from an ag background, and kids like me who come from the city and have no idea what ag was. I feel like that's where the barrier is, or people maybe don't want to join because kids like me, they don't see me as a person who would run for officer team, or they don't see me as the one thriving in FFA. Like I feel like they see that, and they look down on you if you don't have any type of agricultural experience, or if part of your family is in agriculture because I feel like people who are, who have people like 'my parents own a dairy,' blah, blah, blah, those people. They're kind of held up on a pedestal (CHS, Andrea, 528-537).

Adrian had similar thoughts.

In eighth grade, I hung out with what you might call the popular kids, so when this program called Future Farmers of America came they were like, 'you want to be a farmer? That is stupid.' I'm like 'yeah, I'm too cool for that...' but once I started high school and my friend was like 'oh yeah, we're building this and that,' I was like 'how come they didn't tell me about that.' I would have chosen it if I would have known what they were doing to begin with. Now that I'm a junior and I'm going to turn into senior year, a lot of my friends are like 'dang, I wish I would have got involved in the FFA program earlier if I would have known that you guys get to build stuff and you get to work with your hands' (GHS, Adrian, 1064-1072).

To address some the lack of knowledge, the students expressed the need for more education and awareness—for potential students and parents alike. "Not many people know what it's about. They hear about it, but don't really know, like hey, this is what it's about. So, it's gaining popularity, but I feel like it should have way more than what it does now" (CHS, Andrea, 917-920). Ian agreed. "It definitely is exposure, but I would like do something like, oh, just have the ag kids go in and present to other students" (CHS, Ian, 922-924). Additionally, Ian indicated the parents needed to be better informed as well, particularly about what the program is and how it works. "Parents as well are also greatly misinformed. That probably goes back to past stigmas against farm workers or things like that. Just a lot of things can contribute and stack against it" (CHS, Ian, 942-944).

3. Students from non-rural backgrounds tend to report fewer opportunities and more barriers to fully actualizing the three-circle model.

As a 100% membership state, all students in California Agricultural Education are paid FFA members, but students in the study reported barriers to being involved beyond the classroom. When the issue of race and ethnicity surfaced in the discussion, Adrian described city students as the average Joes in his agriculture program.

It is more of an average Joe and country person type of deal. For example, you could be any color, but if you are not used to doing agriculture or being on a farm or raising an animal, you are not motivated. You are not engaged in the agriculture program just because the average Joe is not necessarily targeted. It is more of the country folk, or the people that are involved (GHS, Adrian, 834-838).

Lucas felt the differences in opportunities were based on popularity, noting many of the popular students at his school were from the country.

... involvement goes with social class at school, because if you are popular, you are not going to be made fun of. But if you're down there, you would be made fun of. People are going to think it is dumb, but you know how being popular, when one person does it, everyone else does it. That is my feel (GHS, Lucas, 848-851).

Responding to Lucas, Javier credited most of the popularity some students enjoy to the fact they have known each other for so long.

I think the FFA program, it is like you're coming into a family that you're not used to and you feel that you wouldn't fit into, so then a lot of the country people in this town, they've known each other their whole life. They have been raised... they grew up together... they grew up on farms and stuff like that. So then, you feel like you are walking into family that you do not think you will fit into (GHS, Javier, 870-874).

Diego said the rural students had more opportunities due to the resources of their families.

I think the opportunity things... I think the people whose parents' are farmers, generally do have more opportunities because they have the money to back up certain SAE projects, the time, and the space because most of them live out in the country. I am not saying that it is not fair, because you are supposed to deal with the cards you are dealt with (GHS, Diego, 121-123).

Adrian felt the advantage rural students enjoyed was real, but recognized some students may be internalizing their disadvantage.

It's like sometimes you just get... it's an advantage to them because they grew up their whole life being a part of agriculture, and then all of a sudden you just come in and... It is not necessarily a big factor, but sometimes it does... you feel like it does exclude you from certain things, or from getting certain opportunities. But I think it's just something that... it's in the back of our heads and maybe it's not necessarily what we think it is (GHS, Adrian, 108-114).

Ricky felt those on farms, the owners, had more money which could help support some students in the program, and shared he didn't have those same opportunities.

Those who live on a farm are the ones who do have farms, but if you are working for another company, you are really not making as much money as like those who own a farm; because my grandpa does not make a lot of money. We do not live out on the farm with a big piece of land. We live here in the city with a small house (GHS, Ricky, 128-131).

Diego indicated the perception that country kids had an advantage made him want to work harder.

I think students do have a big part because you have these kids from the country and they think they are better than you and so you have to prove yourself. That is how I deal with it, I just prove myself. I prove that I can do this job better than you (GHS, Diego, 361-363).

Rosa agreed, and shared how one of her country friends approaches it.

I can see where they're coming from, where they say they want to do better, because I have friends who are in ag and they grew up on farms, and I hang out with this girl in my fifth period, and she'll be like 'yeah, these kids, they don't know what they're doing.' And she grew up on a farm all her life, so of course she's going to say that. So, I see where they're saying they want to go above it, but I'm just like, calm down. She is like making it sound like she is better, and I'm like 'well, you've had your whole life. These kids could probably be as good as you and you're just like no, I grew up on a farm, I know what I'm doing' (GHS, Rosa, 385-391).

Ricky felt the country versus city divide was bigger in certain courses in his agriculture program.

I feel like the classes that we have, like the ornamental horticulture, those are... I feel like it's beginning ag type of stuff, and then ag mech is like that hard-core type of ag where all these country kids are in there so, I feel like that's why you guys say you see it more, because that's like the higher up ag (GHS, Ricky, 652-655).

Diego agreed.

Yeah, and they are straight from... they grew up doing that stuff, so I feel like that is... they have the mental image or whatever you guys are seeing. I feel like you are going to get that more in that class, because those kids grew up doing it. And then our class is just like 'oh yeah, let's go plant flowers, we're beginning ag...' don't get me wrong, I like the class, I'm just saying they have a class that has more kids who have done it for a long time (GHS, Diego, 659-633).

Adrian had two classes where he could see a difference based on the concentration of country kids.

Yeah, I have both classes. I have ag mech first and then I have ornamental horticulture second, so sometimes it is like a major shift from how you feel that

you are looked at. In ag mech, I might feel like I have to prove myself, while in ornamental horticulture, it is just whatever (GHS, Adrian, 665-668).

When asked why more Latino students don't run for chapter leadership positions, students indicated they felt they had a slim chance due to the "country kids" knowing each other prior to being the agriculture program. According to Rosa, "it is a family. You have to think about it that way. You won't get as much votes because they don't know who you are because you're coming into a system where they've all been raised... they all know each other" (GHS, Rosa, 915-917). Rosa continued.

I know there is like eight kids that I knew and they are all cousins, they are all related. It is weird because you come into the ag program and you might be the only one; and you are competing with these kids who have known each other their entire lives because they're related, or they grew up with each other because their parents all do the same thing. It is hard to be able to run because these kids are the more popular kids, so they are automatically going to want to vote for the more popular kid because they think they are capable of more and they create a better image for the FFA (GHS, Rosa, 924-930).

Others also shared the limitations experienced by non-rural students in their program.

Most of the kids who are officers, they had family, brothers and sisters who were officers so they're like 'oh I want to be that,' but kids like us who come in like, we're not really caring about that, we're really taking advantage of the other opportunities (OHS, Ethan, 1142-1145).

David agreed. "They kind of have a little more of head start than you do" (OHS, David, 1151).

Yeah. So it's like it's harder for you to—even if I try to run as an officer or anything like when you're running up against a person who was an officer last year and was White but you don't get your name out there because they were already there last year (OHS, David, 1166-1168).

Emma thought they had more popularity and experience. "I think it has to do with the fact that they have their name out there. I mean if you look at our officers most of them they've had their SAE projects since freshman year" (OHS, Emma, 1189-1190). Ethan agreed.

Despite some challenges, Sofia was happy the city versus country issues didn't necessarily limit what she could do in the program.

Emma agreed, indicating she thought the divide was improving in her program.

I think what really helped is that we start seeing how not only a lot of country people, but at the same city people can all do the same similar things. Like you don't have to live in the country to be able to be involved in programs that are as inspiring as FFA is. So, I think people just finally realized...why are we worried about discrimination when we could be doing something we actually really love. So, I just hope everyone else can see it that way too (OHS, Emma, 307-311).

Discussion

While the original multiple case study aimed to investigate the Latino experience in California Agricultural Education, the emergence of the major theme relating to rural students having privilege over non-rural students warranted further analysis—as such, we presented three sub-themes to further explore the phenomenon. As noted in the limitations, the study did not aim to investigate privilege; however, the wide-angle lens we examined the original data through presented a case for telling our participants' full stories. We purposefully approached the original study with ethnicity in mind, and while the participants' Latino backgrounds limited the generalizability of our findings, we would argue privilege, as experienced from any student demographic, should still be of concern in Agricultural Education if we seek to foster equity in our programs.

As the results of our study began to shed a light on the opportunities some rural students have over non-rural students, we returned to the literature, and found little mention or discussion of the concept of rural privilege, though Martin and Kitchel (2014) do examine urban students' barriers to participating in the National FFA Organization. The students in our study tended to share their experiences in the entire agricultural education program, and as such, we offer our own working definition of *Rural Privilege* to describe the inherent structural advantages students from rural areas tend to have over students in urban areas with regard to their ability to thrive in Agricultural Education in California. Given the context of this study, we only apply this definition in conditions where rural students intersect with city students in the same program, giving one group privilege over the other. This differs from other discussions of rural privilege, for example, as described by Kathleen Budge (2006) who conducted a case study of three rural communities in southwest Washington. Her study examined these small rural communities, but did not address the educational setting where urban and rural students coexisted as in our study. Moreover, Budge was focused on the overall lifestyle of the rural communities in her study.

We apply the term *Rural Privilege* to the experience some students face in Agricultural Education in a context including several or all of the following conditions: 1) rural students who have parents or family members who were in an agriculture program themselves, giving them additional knowledge and connections other students may not have; 2) rural students whose family has the financial means and space to engage in larger SAE projects and advanced agricultural mechanics courses, if applicable, where investment in large projects is costly; 3) students who are part of a rural community where other students and their families tend to know each other prior to their enrolling in the agriculture program; and 4) rural students' and their family's experiences and knowledge, particularly in production agriculture, that may give them an advantage over urban students. Though privilege has historically been tied to race, we do not explicitly make that connection here, as our data does not present us with enough evidence to make this claim; however, future research should explicitly account for race and ethnicity as a possible characteristic of *Rural Privilege*, particularly as we acknowledge that "Agricultural Education" has historically been a white endeavor. While student demographics continue to diversify, much of the way we do business still privileges students from the dominant culture over others. Once such example would be the analysis of the when the New Farmers of America (NFA) was combined with the Future Farmers of America (FFA). We often teach students that there was a merger of the two organizations in 1965; however, when closely examining the traditions, logos, and history we must acknowledge that the term "merge" is not the most accurate term to describe how the two organizations were combined. Consequently, it should be no surprise there has been a lack of Black leadership in the National FFA Organization since the merger (Wakefield & Talbert, 2003).

We are extremely careful not to assert *all* rural students are *Rurally Privileged*, rather, there are certainly conditions where very few of the defining characteristics may exist in certain rural settings. For example, as poverty is pervasive in certain rural areas, we would certainly not assert these students are privileged because of their being rural. Moreover, there are certainly city students who may have some of the advantages privileged rural students have, including having the financial means to participate in out of class activities and parents who are alumni of the agriculture program and who are well-connected in the community. More research should be conducted to explore this concept in other settings with students from other ethnicities and races. We would, however, propose *Rural Privilege* could envenom existing structural racism issues.

Recommendations

As we presented earlier, our bias is rooted in a philosophical belief that equity in our agriculture programs is a lofty yet necessary pursuit. While Agricultural Education is making strides in this endeavor, we call for our profession to pursue true equity in our programs, as we believe an *equal for all* approach disproportionately benefits those with institutional privilege. Agricultural Education is rapidly approaching Diversity in many schools, where the memberships and enrollments mirror the overall school's population. However, diversity does not ensure inclusivity or equity, so we must ensure as diversity increases, we are ensuring equity for students from historically marginalized groups. If we are to argue our programs are fair to all students, arguing "any student may apply for chapter FFA office," then we privilege those who may have the family background, resources, and institutional knowledge that would present an advantage over an otherwise equally talented student who does not. An equity lens takes these inherent privileges into account and may drive us to develop policies such as limiting FFA officer election campaign materials, thereby addressing the inequality that may exist in terms of students' financial resources.

While we cannot offer more than our findings and a call for our profession to continue to investigate these issues, we do believe our colleagues in the classroom will be an important part of the discourse. How is inequity and privilege addressed in diverse programs across the nation? How do we address the inequities that exist between programs? In terms of Supervised Agricultural Experience Programs, should we continue to assert that non-rural students can engage differently, pursuing an agriscience research project for example, or should our profession work to provide opportunities that rural students might enjoy such as raising livestock? Many programs address this inequity through school learning labs, but is this enough? How do we better prepare students and their parents who do not have a legacy of involvement in Agricultural Education or who may not come from an agriculture background? Are we content to accept that some students may thrive in our programs with an un-earned privilege over others? As researchers and philosophers, we must ask ourselves if these realities just are what they are, or are they examples of structural inequities, exacerbated by our deeply rooted traditions and business as usual approach—a mindset that continues to serve the dominant culture. Let us be clear, we simply ask these questions in hopes that our profession will continue the investigation and dialogue.

Teacher education programs should purposefully address the concept of *Rural Privilege* in their curriculum in order to prepare our future practitioners for a more diverse student population. Moreover, beyond asking these questions and designing studies to specifically address this phenomenon, future research should investigate the strategies Agricultural Educators are already implementing to address these concerns in their classrooms and programs. Furthermore, we should investigate the implications of privilege, or lack thereof, in terms of students' successes in Agricultural Education—and we must ask the obvious question, what role does race, gender, class, and ethnicity still play in terms of privilege and student achievement in our programs. We believe

continuing these investigations will yield a more robust and dynamic iteration of our proposed definition on *Rural Privilege* and move our profession closer to the pursuit of true equity for all of our students.

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