

## **Agrarianism: An Ideology of the National FFA Organization**

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*The traditions of the National FFA Organization (FFA) are grounded in agrarianism. This ideology focuses on the ability of farming and nature to develop citizens and integrity within people. Agrarianism has been an important thread of American rhetoric since the founding of country. The ideology has morphed over the last two centuries as the country developed from a nation of farmers to an industrial world power. The agrarian ideology that resonated in rural America during the formation of the FFA was southern agrarianism. Southern agrarian ideology argued for self-reliance and adherence to past traditions. These concepts appear in the FFA traditions of the creed, opening ceremony, motto, and awards. The historical growth and success of the FFA within rural communities demonstrates the ability of the southern agrarian ideology to connect with contemporary rural values. However, the southern agrarian ideology may not connect with the culture of diverse, urban, or suburban students. Advisers of diverse, urban, or suburban FFA chapters may need to reconceptualize the FFA traditions to accommodate their students.*

Keywords: National FFA Organization; philosophy; ideology; agrarianism

The theme *Beyond Diversity to Cultural Proficiency* resonated at the 2011 American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) conference. Fittingly, AAAE invited James Banks, founder of multicultural education, to give the keynote speech. A question emerged from the audience during the workshop on diversity about the lack of minority representation in the National FFA Organization (FFA). Banks did not have an immediate answer; instead he called on the discipline of agricultural education to act. Banks urged AAAE members to explore FFA philosophy and work to develop a more inclusive organization. The statistics of the FFA would indicate a possible cultural disconnect for diverse students. For instance, Caucasians represent a majority of the organization's membership (National FFA Organization [FFA], 2011c) and a majority of FFA chapters reside in rural communities (Team Ag Ed, 2006). Conversely, students of color from suburban and urban communities are seemingly underrepresented in the FFA (FFA, 2011c; Team Ag Ed, 2009). The FFA may have more cultural appeal to rural and white students as opposed to diverse, urban or suburban students. Research would substantiate this claim as well (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991;

LaVergne, Larke, Elbert, & Jones, 2011). One study highlighted how some non-FFA members viewed FFA members as *hicks* (Phelps, Henry, & Bird, 2012). These studies indicate that some students are culturally disconnected from the FFA. The researchers posit new lenses are needed in which to view the FFA, which is not to say the lens which serves the current base of FFA membership should be discarded. Hence, FFA leaders and advisors will have to find the appropriate balance between diverse ideas for America's evolving student population and the celebrated traditions of FFA.

Researchers have investigated the philosophical roots of agricultural education and career and technical education, yet ideological investigations are few. Researchers situated career and technical education within the philosophical continuum of realism and pragmatism (Lynch, 2000; Martinez, 2007; Miller, 1985, 1996), a claim researchers in agricultural education generally concur with (Barrick, 1989; Croom, 2008; Love, 1978; Moore, 1988; Wardlow & Osborne, 2010). While a philosophical perspective can explain curriculum development, it does not adequately explain the culture of the FFA. For instance, an educational philosophy could not

easily explain the cultural meaning represented in the FFA creed. A discussion about ideologies would appropriately facilitate a cultural investigation (Gutek, 2004). Research conducted by Lakes (1997) provided a culturally aware conceptualization of the perspective in question. Lakes critically examined vocational education through the ideological lens of Marxism and Paulo Freire's social justice. This research extends Lakes' position by a contextual ideological lens to examine the cultural nuances of FFA.

Identifying the ideology that represents the specific contexts of FFA required an examination of agricultural education history. A clue emerged from the history of the FFA name. The charter of the first state FFA association, Virginia, took its original name from an agrarian tradition. The Future Farmers of Virginia originated from the acronym FFV, which stood for the First Families of Virginia (Hillison, 1993). The First Families of Virginia included influential and historical figures of Virginia such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Henry Groseclose mentioned Washington and Jefferson as significant American farmers when naming the F.F.V. (Tenney, 1977). These founding fathers were also important figures in the formation of the American agrarian ideology. Agrarianism emphasized rural culture and the value of agricultural work in America.

Agrarian ideals form part of the historical national consciousness. Agrarianism had faded since the start of the 20th century; yet, the ideology experienced a renaissance in the 1920s and '30s with the rise of southern agrarianism (Hofstadter, 1955; Murphy, 2001). Southern agrarianism was a reaction against the social, political, and economical transformations occurring in rural America. This new form of agrarianism borrowed from older agrarian arguments and created some new ideals. These reformed agrarian principles seeped into the social fabric of rural America and helped form the traditions of FFA which are still practiced today. This is important as traditions can personify an organization's beliefs and values. For FFA in particular, traditions represent a gateway and stepping stones for members. These same traditions

could also form a cultural barrier to some FFA members. If agrarianism still resonates in FFA traditions, exploring how the ideology manifests in FFA structures might help researchers and practitioners understand the organization's cultural image. The agrarian ideology may appeal to traditional FFA students, but it can form a barrier for diverse, urban, or suburban students.

### **Purpose**

This philosophical study articulates FFA traditions through the ideological lens of agrarianism. This research aligns with the American Association for Agricultural Education's 5th priority (efficient and effective agricultural education programs) (Doerfert, 2011) by exploring how effective educational programs will meet the academic, career, and developmental needs of diverse learners in all settings and at all levels.

### **Ideological Framework of Agrarianism**

The culture of agrarianism influenced American history and literature (Marx, 2000); however, the specific arguments of agrarianism shifted over time. The ideology followed America's historical development from the classic agrarianism of Jefferson to the neo-agrarian arguments of environmentalism and sustainability. Famous agrarian authors throughout history include Michel-Guillaume Crèvecoeur (1782/1998), Henry David Thoreau (1855/1995), and Wendell Berry (1977). Agrarian ideals guided Americans along rural and agricultural norms for the past two centuries, often countering the economic and social developments of the era. While the message of agrarians varied over time, their general purpose has remained the same – to remind people of their agricultural roots, argue for people to live a more meaningful way of life, and be cognizant of the land and nature. Table 1 presents different types of agrarian thought in American history within their appropriate time frame with their distinguishing ideals and their proponents or representatives.

Table 1

*Agrarian ideology in American history*

Type	Time Frame	Distinguishing Ideals	Representatives
Classical Agrarianism	Late 18 <sup>th</sup> to early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century	Farming produces the ideal citizen	Thomas Jefferson & Crèvecoeur
Romantic Agrarianism	Middle to late 19th Century	Health and therapeutic qualities of farming and nature	Henry David Thoreau & Ralph Waldo Emerson
Southern Agrarianism	Early 20th Century	Continuity of society through classical ideals	Allen Tate & Donald Davidson
Neo-Agrarianism	Late 20 <sup>th</sup> Century to today	Sustainability and environmentalism	Wendell Berry & Paul Thompson

The FFA did not emerge in a cultural vacuum. School-based agriculture grew out of rural communities (Kliebard, 1999) and the formative years of the FFA (1920-30s) were challenging years for rural America. The southern agrarian ideology popularized the sentiment of American citizenry during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and represented a movement against industrialization and urbanization of America during that era (Danbom, 1991). The progressive mindset of President Theodore Roosevelt culminated with the Country Life Commission and Movement of the 1910s. The Movement aimed to improve the living conditions of rural America by focusing on important issues of rural communities (i.e. lack of transportation, utilities, health services); however, the spotlight on their shortcomings alienated rural citizens (Montmarquet, 2000). By the 1920s, the attitudes of rural citizens shifted away from the deficiencies of rural communities to focus on the virtues of rural life. The cultural shift received much publicity during the Scopes Monkey trial. Southern intellectuals were angered over how the Northern media portrayed Southern culture as backwards (Stewart, 1965). While southern agrarianism began with the motivation to defend Southern culture, the ideology shifted to more agrarian interests soon after. The subsequent Great Depression exacerbated the shift. Southern agrarianism had strong ties to classical arguments, often drawing direct links to classical agrarian traditions and figures such as Jefferson. Agrarianism of the 1920-30s supported the no-

tion that societal norms should contain linkages to the agricultural and rural traditions of America. Murphy (2001) described the agrarian ideology as ideals that preserved a past culture by stating: "A culture is inherited. It is communicated as history, which is a master narrative of society's development but also a set of cultural myths, assumptions, and values that intercut in complex ways with one's own personal development" (p. 8).

The arguments of southern agrarianism stemmed from classical agrarianism and conservatism (Murphy, 2001). The southern agrarian authors originated primarily from the South although their message had broad appeal (Hofstadter, 1955). The agrarian thinkers of that era had an awareness of the social, scientific, and economic factors which were altering the fabric of rural life. The writer, D. Davidson, outlined how rural citizens should handle the changes forced upon them:

We must recover the past, or at least in some way realize it, in order that we may bring the most genuine and essential parts of our tradition forward in contact with the inevitable new tradition now in process of formation. Only thus can we achieve vital continuity in the national life (as cited in Murphy, 2001, p. 48).

Some important themes emerged from the writings of the southern agrarians including recognition of the need for people to be self-

dependent, the importance of remaining loyal to American traditions, advantages of rural life over urbanization, and reconciling the changes of modernity with lessons from America's agrarian past (Murphy, 2001). Even though the southern agrarian ideology had faded away by the 1940s (Karanikas, 1969), its legacy still resonate today within the traditions of FFA.

### Procedures

This study utilizes a philosophical research methodology (Elliott, 2006; Ruitenbergh, 2009). Burbules and Warnick (2006) described philosophical research as follows: "The things that philosophers do are things that many of us do in thinking about problems of our daily life... philosophers generally do them more rigorously, and with greater awareness of a history of previous investigations on these matters" (p. 490). The researchers utilized basic qualitative methods. The philosophical research presented herein thoroughly analyzed the traditions of the FFA through the lens of the agrarianism. Southern agrarianism was chosen as the lens because of the historical context of the FFA; however the researchers acknowledged that other agrarian ideologies exist and could warrant further study.

A variety of FFA traditions have withstood the test of time. These traditions identify and reinforce FFA beliefs and values. The researchers utilized FFA traditions to analyze the ideology of the FFA. The traditions of the FFA were analyzed as they appeared in current FFA documents such as handbooks and manuals. The use of current documents allowed the researchers to explore the ramifications of the exposed ideology for current FFA members. The FFA traditions analyzed include the creed, opening ceremony, motto, proficiency awards, star awards, jacket, degree system, and curriculum. These FFA traditions are universal for all FFA chapters. For example, separate FFA creeds do not exist for rural and urban FFA chapters. While the individual activities of each FFA chapter may differ, the traditions have only changed slightly since the 1930s. Traditions have significance for the FFA. Activities like memorizing the FFA creed and conducting the FFA opening ceremony represent statements of organizational values. While this analysis of philosophical re-

search on FFA history and traditions cannot ascertain if FFA members actually believe the values they recite and memorize, the ideological roots of those values can be analyzed.

The qualitative research methodology presented here utilized the southern agrarianism ideology as a lens to study FFA traditions. A broad spectrum of agrarianism was initially studied (1782-2000s); however, the study focused on the tenets of southern agrarianism ideology from the 1920-30s. This time frame corresponded to the formation of FFA and FFA traditions. The researchers searched for important concepts within southern agrarianism that could serve as themes to code the traditions of the FFA. The sources of agrarian ideological information included contemporary books and reports as well as research articles detailing the ideology of the era. Four themes emerged from the literature: 1) dependence on self; 2) loyalty to tradition, 3) advantages of rural living; and 4) utilizing history as a guide. The researchers then scrutinized the traditions of the FFA to find evidence of these two themes. Two southern agrarian themes identified in the traditions of the FFA became evident, dependence on self and loyalty to tradition. The researcher team then aligned each FFA tradition with the appropriate southern agrarian tenet. The researchers arranged the findings section by unpacking the themes within the southern agrarian literature and then analyzing FFA traditions utilizing that theme as a lens.

Between the researchers, there are relevant experiences that lend to this philosophical study including publishing historical, philosophical, and theoretical studies, teaching a history and philosophy graduate course, and formal education in history and historical research. This experience helped the researchers maintain standards of the trustworthiness during this study. The researchers scrutinized scores of manuscripts, documents, book, and chapters to build the credibility of the southern agrarian ideology. The researchers scoured a multitude of southern agrarian publications to develop a consensus around the identified themes. The utilization of the current FFA traditions allowed for transferability of the findings to all FFA chapters and members that follow those traditions. The researchers utilized peer-debriefing, audit trails, and reflexivity to build the dependability and confirmability of their findings (Ary, Jacobs, &

Razavieh, 2002). The researchers tried to remain objective by highlighting how the southern agrarian ideology has been both a positive and possibly negative influence on the FFA. Philosophical work cannot truly be objective, thus the researchers tried to reduce bias by forming arguments around the literature.

**Southern Agrarianism in the Traditions of the FFA**

The southern agrarian ideology argued for a variety of ideals, two of which appeared in both the southern agrarian literature and FFA traditions: *dependence on self* and *loyalty to tradition*. The following section outlines themes with southern agrarian arguments that appear within the traditions of the FFA. Figure 1 graphically organizes the traditions of the FFA that contain the southern agrarian themes of dependence on self, loyalty to tradition, or both.

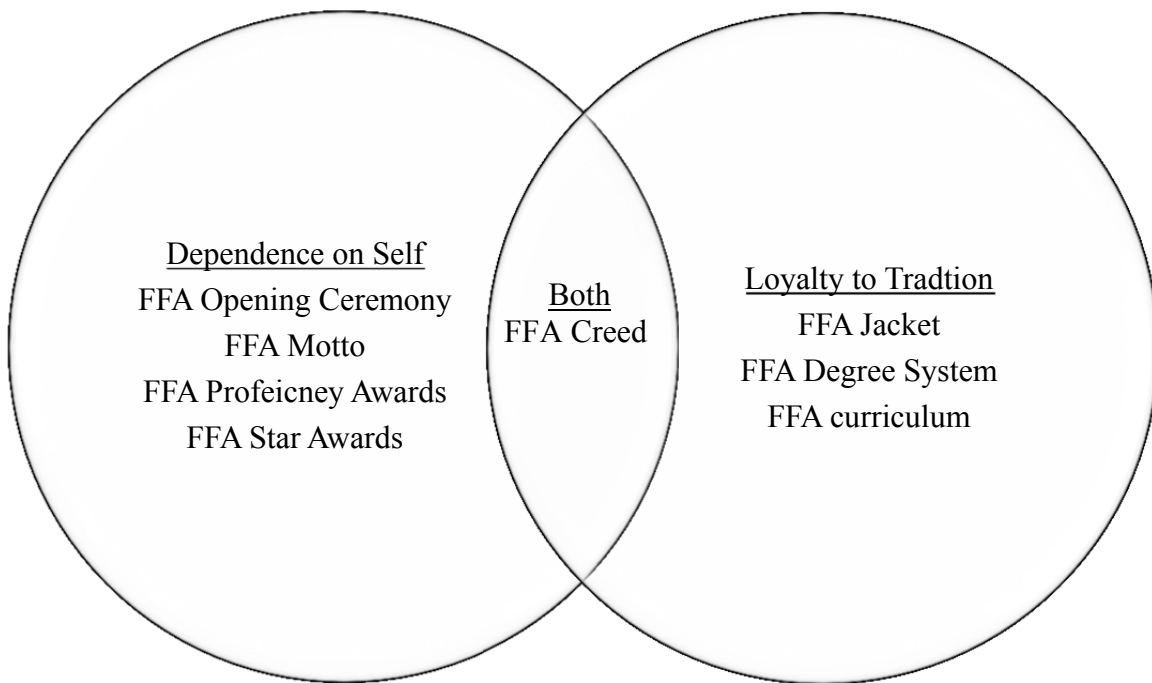


Figure 1. FFA traditions aligning to the themes of southern agrarianism.

**Dependence on Self – Southern Agrarians**

The argument for the self-dependent person formed a core value for the southern agrarians. While the ideal of independent people stretches back before the Revolution, the social issues of the era made this value significant for the southern agrarians (Hofstadter, 1955). The high levels of unemployment during the Great Depression forced many into poverty. The federal government under Franklin D. Roosevelt enacted a wide-range of social programs collectively titled the New Deal. The New Deal significantly in-

creased the involvement of the federal government in people’s daily interactions. The programs were intended to improve the welfare of people, yet the programs also created lasting changes in society. For instance, the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 reshaped agricultural practices by paying farmers subsidies to leave some fields fallow (Murphy, 2001). The southern agrarians opposed these federal programs. They argue such mandates shifted the control of society away from the people. However, the southern agrarians did not jump into the political battles of the era. They argued for their posi-

tions through essays, poems, books, and magazines.

The southern agrarians called for adherence to agrarian ideals versus industrialization and urbanization (Twelve Southerners, 1930/1977) and regionalism over federalism (Davidson, 1938). Maintaining self-dependence formed the core argument in these debates. Agrarianism could not function if people relied on others to do things. The agricultural economist T. J. Cauley (1935/1969) discussed how farmers represented the model of self-dependency:

A farmer engaging in relatively self-sufficing farming on a farm which he owns outright can be about the most independent specimen to be discovered in this country. He can be independent in politics, in ethics, in his general behavior. (p. 8)

The southern agrarians did not rely on just their own arguments of self-dependence. They turned to America's agrarian tradition for support (Karanikas, 1969). Thomas Jefferson, the quintessential classical agrarian, became the flag bearer for self-dependence (Quinn, 1940). Jefferson's works and quotes often framed positions (Hofstadter, 1955; Tindall, 1974). J. C. Rawe (1936/1999) invoked Jefferson's notion of the independent farmer while arguing against government interference in the private economy. "There is but one solution for this nation and that is a new Declaration of Independence and a return to the Jefferson concept of the Constitution through wide-spread ownership..." (p. 71). In short, southern agrarians idealized farmers and rural citizens as the prototypical citizen because they lived off the land and required little dependence on others (Cauley, 1936/1999; Lytle, 1936/1999; Twelve Southerners, 1930/1977).

### **Dependence on Self – FFA**

Self-dependence also appeared as an important concept in the traditions of the FFA. FFA members are encouraged to develop self-sufficient skills for adulthood. The FFA offers a role model of self-dependence for FFA members to emulate. The emblem for the FFA office of treasurer is the iconic president and agrarian George Washington. Treasurers must recite the

following phrase during FFA opening ceremony exalting the virtue of Washington's self-dependent work ethic. "I [the treasurer] keep a record of receipts and disbursements just as Washington kept his farm accounts—carefully and accurately.... George Washington was better able to serve his country because he was financially independent" (FFA, 2009, p. 25). Washington's success as a self-sufficient farmer, which the opening ceremony describes as enabling his presidency, functions as a role model for students to follow.

Entrepreneurism, as a concept within the FFA, also aligns to the theme of self-dependence. Dependence on self through entrepreneurship focuses on individual success while conducting individual endeavors. For instance, the FFA award system recognizes students who practice entrepreneurship in production agriculture and related agricultural areas. FFA members can win proficiency awards in a variety of different agricultural career areas while engaging in entrepreneurial production experiences (FFA, 2006). FFA members can also win the Star Award in the areas of farming or agribusiness (FFA, 2009). These awards are the highest level of individual achievement in the FFA. One of the benchmarks of the awards is the students' growth within the scope of supervised agricultural education project. Judges evaluate students on their level of personal ownership and expansion of personal responsibilities. In general, bigger projects fare better in the award selections. FFA members winning these awards also serve as role models of self-dependence for other members and demonstrate the influence of the southern agrarian ideology on the FFA.

The concept of self-dependence does not necessarily indicate that the FFA advocates solely individualistic principles. The FFA and southern agrarian ideology honor community and the interrelationships between people, communities, and place. Southern agrarians argued for local and regional identities (Davidson, 1938), as well as small-town culture (Fisher, 1936/1999). The FFA creed (2011a) highlights the responsibility FFA members have to their communities. "I believe that American agriculture can and will hold true to the best traditions of our national life, and that I can exert an influ-

ence in my home and community” (para. 5). The National Chapter Award within the community development section also illustrates the value that FFA places on community (FFA, 2012b; Tenney, 1977).

FFA traditions also frame the importance of FFA members helping other individuals with the fruits of their labor. The members’ efforts should not stop at just building their own success. The FFA motto (FFA, 2009) outlines this progression: a student will learn, engage in labor, and then serve others. The model FFA member can finish their own personal responsibilities and still have enough time and energy left in the day to help others in need. The 4th paragraph of the FFA creed (2011a) articulates this type of self-reliance, “I believe in less dependence on begging and more power in bargaining; in the life abundant and enough honest wealth to help make it so--for others as well as myself...” (para. 4).

### Loyalty to Tradition – Southern Agrarians

Rural communities experienced constant flux during the first half of the 20th Century including rural youth migrating to urban centers, the agricultural crisis of the 1920s, and the Great Depression (Danbom, 1995). Rural citizens had to adapt to keep their communities alive. The pressures to adapt led many people to accept federal policies and new economic practices that endangered the old social order. The southern agrarians feared these changes would lead to the loss of local identity (Murphy, 2001; Shapiro, 1972). The preservation of rural identity became a focus of many southern agrarian authors. They wrote about how rural citizens could change, yet still remained loyal to agrarian ideals (Lanier, 1930/1977; Lytle, 1930/1977; Peeks, 1927/1969). Donald Davidson (1930/1977) urged artists to follow agrarian traditions to preserve local identities:

He must learn to understand and must try to restore and preserve a social economy that is in danger of being replaced altogether by an industrial economy hostile to his interests. (p. 51)

However, the quest for maintaining local identity proved challenging. The southern agrarians turned to America’s agrarian roots to main-

tain a local identity. They argued contemporary issues and struggles through classical agrarian arguments. For example, *Who Owns America? A New Declaration of Independence* forged a rural identity through classical agrarian ideas (Agar & Tate, 1936/1999). O’Donnell (1936/1999) called for a reemergence of the yeoman farmer to replace the evil practice of tenant cotton farming. The overarching theme that emerged through many of the southern agrarian texts was that identity and tradition should be intertwined. One only needed to examine the traditions of the past to find guidance for the future.

### Loyalty to Tradition – FFA

The FFA places the same high regard for tradition as the southern agrarians. In the introduction to *Blue Jackets, Gold Standards* (Miner, 2003) the author’s description of the FFA included, “Half a million kids in blue corduroy, toss a mix of dedicated advisors... blend in 75 years of tradition and more than four million involved in all that time...” (p. 1). This description highlights the integral role of traditions in the FFA. The traditions of FFA can be divided into two types: the agrarian tradition and traditions of the FFA itself.

The agrarian tradition appears throughout the organization, including the FFA creed. These messages form a linkage between America’s agrarian roots and the future of America. The first paragraph of the FFA creed (2011a) outlines the importance of past agricultural achievements:

I believe in the future of agriculture, with a faith born not of words but of deeds - achievements won by the present and past generations of agriculturists; in the promise of better days through better ways, even as the better things we now enjoy have come to us from the struggles of former years.

(para. 1)

The FFA also encourages members to think about past struggles and “the best traditions of national life...” (FFA, 2011a, para. 5) as they progress through the organization. The inclusion of the agrarian traditions is important to the organization. The FFA can promote a sense of

historical continuity between the FFA and America's agrarian traditions, appealing to people who favor an agrarian ideology.

The FFA also creates its own traditions for members to follow. Personal development and advancement within the FFA requires FFA members to understand their place in the history of the organization. Advancement in the FFA degree system requires members to engage in the traditions of the organization (FFA, 2011b). For example, members must be able to explain the FFA creed, motto, and mission statement in order to be eligible for the Greenhand Degree, the first degree a member can earn. Classroom curriculum about the FFA requires agriculture students, possibly even non-FFA members, to learn and participate in FFA traditions. For example, many agriculture students are required to memorize and recite the FFA creed as part of their class assignment (Connors & Velez, 2008). These activities reinforce the rhetorical traditions of the organization.

Some FFA traditions are also visual and not just rhetoric. The FFA jacket stands as the most recognizable FFA tradition. Wearing the jacket provides even the youngest member a chance to submerge themselves into the culture of the FFA. "It [the FFA jacket] provides identity and gives a distinctive and recognizable image to the organization and its members. Official Dress has been worn with pride by millions of FFA members since 1933" (FFA, 2009, p. 19). The FFA stresses the symbolic importance of the jacket. Wearing the jacket identifies the young adult as a leader. The pride of wearing the jacket is comparable to the pride of wearing a military uniform (Miner, 2003). The jacket demonstrates the ability of the FFA to develop its own traditions. The power of these traditions, both rhetorical and visual, should not be overlooked. These traditions have given the FFA a lasting identity.

### Discussion

"Each member is charged with the responsibility of upholding the ideals and principles of the organization" (FFA, 2009, p. 20). The FFA maintains the southern agrarian ideas in the traditions of the organization, despite a name change in 1988 from the Future Farmers of

America to the National FFA Organization and a broadening of the organization's scope (National Research Council, 1988). The researchers do not want to understate the changes the FFA has enacted over the past decades. The FFA has worked to stay relevant to contemporary American society (Miner, 2003; FFA, 2012a). However, the researchers argue the traditions of the FFA have remained true to the organization's southern agrarian roots. For instance, the FFA has not shifted its traditions to be more aligned with or more accepting of neo-agrarian ideology, which includes concepts like environmentalism and/or sustainability (Berry, 1977; Major, 2011; Thompson, 2010; Wizba, 2003). The ramifications of these traditions warrant further discussion.

The historical growth and success of the FFA within rural communities demonstrates the ability of the southern agrarian ideals to resonate with rural students. Arguing that southern agrarian ideals appeal to all rural students can lead to overgeneralization. Yet the success of the FFA in rural areas cannot be understated. However, the question remains, how does the southern agrarian ideology resonate with the diverse, urban or suburban students? Despite modest growth in diverse urban and suburban schools, the FFA (and school-based agricultural education) remains primarily a rural and white student phenomenon (FFA, 2011c; Team Ag Ed, 2006). The southern agrarian ideals and their focus on rural life and production agriculture could be a cultural roadblock for diverse, urban, or suburban students. The researchers are not arguing for FFA traditions to shift completely away from southern agrarianism. The southern agrarian argument has served and still serves an existing population of agriculture students. The researchers do argue for FFA advisors to think critically about their program's activities and traditions, and the culture of their students. Certain FFA traditions that are culturally incompatible with students life styles may need to be foregone or altered at the local level to ensure students can identify with the chapter.

Programs have been implemented at the national level to broaden the appeal of FFA. The FFA award programs now recognize students in more diverse award areas. For example, students can now earn proficiency awards in non-



production areas like veterinary medicine, research, and agricultural education. The FFA has also worked to provide role models for diverse FFA members. For example, the national FFA leadership has also become more diversified over the last 20 years with the election of numerous national FFA officers of color. The changes in the award programs and student leadership have provided role models and opportunities for diverse urban or suburban students, yet the southern agrarian ideology still permeates the traditions of the organization. If these traditions are viewed as the doorway and stepping stones of the organization, then diverse urban or suburban students may not be motivated to join or participate in the FFA.

The heart of the FFA is the local chapter and the chapter should reflect the community's needs (Phipps, Osborne, Dyer, & Ball, 2008). Although FFA chapters in diverse urban or suburban communities may find difficulty separating the southern agrarian ideals of FFA traditions, the researchers recommend FFA chapters in diverse urban or suburban schools emphasize FFA activities reflecting the culture of their communities. These chapters might not require students to memorize and recite the FFA creed. Students could wear professional attire rather than FFA jackets. The FFA chapter activities could focus on activities that teach sustainability and environmentalism. A chapter could be selective about the number and type of Career De-

velopment Events (competitive educational events) in which they engage, if students do not culturally value competitive activities. For example, multiculturalists argue that Mexican-American students do not culturally identify with Caucasian students (Banks, 2010). The FFA emblems that do not match the culture of the students can be adapted or bypassed. For example, the owl is a symbol of death for some American Indians people (Tillar, 2011), so a chapter in an American Indian community may bypass or alter the opening ceremony. In short, the researchers suggest advisors of diverse urban or suburban chapters reconceptualize the activities of their FFA chapter to meet the cultural needs of these students. For example, neo-agrarian arguments may represent a blueprint for some FFA advisors in programs where sustainable agriculture, urban agriculture and local foods are prevalent. Thus, further research into the application of other ideologies such as neo-agrarian ideologies to the FFA will provide a clearer picture of how to envision the activities of the FFA along diverse urban or suburban perspectives. However, all of these individual changes are temporary local adaptations. The future of the FFA may someday require this sort of ideological shift at the national level to stay relevant in an American culture that is demographically and socially evolving.

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