

Advising an Urban FFA Chapter: A Narrative of Two Urban FFA Advisors

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Advising an urban FFA chapter can be a challenge for urban agriculture teachers. The contextual differences between the rural-oriented FFA and urban FFA members can make bridging the gap difficult. This narrative study sought to explore how the urban context shapes the work of an FFA chapter from the perspectives of two FFA advisors at the same school. Both advisors had the same viewpoint about what experiences their FFA members should have, which included competitions and events beyond the local chapter level. Yet, they struggled to meet this goal. Their FFA members who attended the National FFA Convention discussed the need to feed local, food insecure people as an opportunity for their FFA chapter. This revelation did not make the advisors feel more confident; rather, they were still frustrated that their members could not find success beyond the chapter level in FFA activities such as career development events (CDEs) and supervised agricultural experience programs (SAEs). This meant that the definition of success for the FFA Chapter fell to the FFA advisors and not their members. Implications from this research include the role of advisors' past experiences in shaping how they conceptualize their FFA chapter activities and success.

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The National FFA Organization (FFA) recognizes a need to serve urban and diverse FFA chapters (FFA, 2014). Researchers have also acknowledged this need (Bowen & Rumberger, 2002; Cano & Moore, 2010; Smith & Baggett, 2012; Talbert & Edwin, 2008). The FFA has a strong history and roots in rural communities (Martin & Kitchel, 2013); yet, the FFA and agricultural education is still growing in urban and diverse areas (Anderson, 2013; Anderson & Kim, 2009; Estes & Bowen, 2004, 2005; Henry, Talbert, & Morris, 2014; Shumacher, Fuhrman, & Duncan, 2012). The inclusion of more diverse members in FFA can help the FFA change from within and meet their own goals. According to research, an increase in the diversity of an organization can increase the organization members' appreciation of diverse ideas (Lobel, 1999). The leaders of the FFA share this value as they develop initiatives to recruit more urban and diverse FFA members (FFA, 2014).

The inclusion of more diverse and urban youth in FFA chapters requires local FFA advisors to find opportunities for their students to be active FFA members. FFA offers a multitude of career, scholastic, and leadership opportunities for members with both nationwide and even international opportunities (Phipps, Osborne, Dyer, & Ball, 2008; Talbert, Vaughn, & Croom, 2005). For instance, the FFA awards over \$1.9 million in scholarships annually and the criteria of the scholarships include members' involvement in the FFA events beyond the chapter level (FFA, 2014). FFA members who have not participated in FFA activities outside their own FFA chapter are at disadvantage when compared to those members who have participated in regional, state, and national FFA activities. Other prestigious FFA awards also require members to be active beyond the chapter level. Research has shown that FFA advisors from urban and diverse communities can encounter some unique obstacles as they attempt to get their agriculture

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students and FFA members interested in FFA activities (LaVergne, Larke, Elbert, & Jones, 2011; Roberts, Hall, Gill, Shinn, Larke, & Jaure, 2009; Warren & Alston, 2007).

Not every urban FFA chapter struggles to find success. Yet, research indicates that some urban FFA chapters may struggle to find success. School-based agriculture teachers report that advising an FFA chapter can be difficult (Myers, Dyer, & Washburn, 2005; Sorenson, Tarpley, & Warnick, 2010), and these problems can be exacerbated when the chapter is an urban community (Warner & Washburn, 2009). The context of urban areas provides FFA advisors with unique challenges. Urban and diverse students may lack diverse role models in agriculture and the FFA (LaVergne et al., 2011; Roberts et al., 2009). These students may also lack access or have limited ability to connect with agriculture curriculum and careers (Jones & Bowen, 1998; Talbert & Larke, 1995). Urban teachers have had success in managing urban agriculture programs (Bird, Tummons, Martin, & Henry, 2013; Brown & Kelsey, 2013; Soloninka, 2003; Vincent & Torres, 2011); however, the aforementioned challenges indicate a need for exploring the experiences of urban FFA advisors.

School-based agriculture teachers require a unique set of skills when advising FFA chapters (Newcomb, McCracken, Warmbord, & Whittington, 2004; Talbert, Vaughn, & Croom, 2005). Phipps et al. (2008) describe being a FFA advisor as one of the greatest challenges of an agriculture teacher. They must be able to recruit and encourage students to become active members their chapter. Thus, FFA advisors must be aware of members' needs and desires when they are working with members and potential members. If members do not see the value of an activity then they may not participate (Croom & Flowers, 2001; Larson, 1994). This context requires the urban FFA advisor to approach students with creativity, enthusiasm, attentiveness to student needs and a willingness to meet those needs within an FFA context.

FFA advisors must also work within the context of the National FFA Organization and their local communities. First, the National FFA Organization has a set list of activities and events which guide state associations and local chapters. These activities and events include meeting rituals, career development events, proficiency awards, degrees, national chapter programs, and much more (FFA, 2015). Local FFA advisors and members can choose to participate in as many activities as they choose; however, research has indicated that urban agriculture students and FFA members may notice some of the rural-oriented themes of the FFA (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991; Martin & Kitchel, 2013; Phelps, Henry, & Bird, 2012; Warren & Alston, 2007). Thus, an urban FFA advisor must find ways to actively engage diverse members in the FFA by finding connections between the FFA and their members' diverse contexts. This research seeks to explore how the urban context shapes the work of an FFA chapter from the perspective of urban FFA advisors.

Literature on Urban Youth Organizations

Urban FFA advisors must find connections to the FFA urban members can relate to for a number of reasons. Researchers have linked involvement in youth organizations to a multitude of positive academic, social, and emotional developmental outcomes. For instance, a meta-analysis of 35 quasi-experimental and experimental studies found that after-school programs for at-risk students had positive effects on students' reading and math achievement (Lauer, Akiba, Wilkerson, Apthorp, Snow, & Martin-Glenn, 2006). Another meta-analysis of over 70 after-school programs which promoted personal and social skill development found an increase in student self-confidence and self-esteem (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Research on the positive attributes of FFA participation has also highlighted the benefits of urban students' involvement in FFA (e.g., Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005; Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005; Wood, Larson, & Brown, 2009).

One of the keys to urban students participating in youth organizations is the ability of students to culturally identify with the organization (Larson, 1994). The role of culture in youth organizations has been researched through a variety of perspectives. Students' perception of the cultural fit with an activity influences their decision to participate (Borden, Perkins, Villarruel, & Stone, 2005; Harvard Family Research Project, 2004). For instance, a study of the Boys and Girls Clubs of New York City and Boston revealed that students gravitated toward leaders who had the same background and ethnicity as themselves (Herrera & Arbreton, 2003). Strong (2009) tracked the cultural adaptations within the historical development of Camp Fire (formerly Camp Fire USA and originally Camp Fire Girls of America) as the first American multicultural organization for girls. Camp Fire has adapted the traditions and rituals of the group, founded in 1911 to reflect the cultural realities of youth today. The members of the Asian and Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership of Sacramento utilized shared cultural values to help keep youth out of prison and combat the public perception of youth as criminals (Kwon, 2006). These examples highlight the importance of culturally connecting urban students with the messages and values of the youth organization. Considering the rural roots of FFA (Martin & Kitchel, 2013), studying how advisors of urban and diverse FFA chapters manage their chapter can provide guidance on how the FFA can better serve those members.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore the experiences of two co-advisors of an urban FFA chapter as they worked to build a more active FFA chapter. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What did the advisors identify as challenges in advising an urban FFA chapter?
2. What did the advisors articulate as opportunities for overcoming the identified challenges in advising an urban FFA chapter?

This research aligns to Priority 5 (efficient and effective agricultural education programs) of the National Research Agenda by analyzing how urban FFA advisors can meet the needs of their diverse audiences (Doerfert, 2011).

Narrative Methods

Narrative methods allow researchers to explore the lives and experiences of individuals with great detail (Riessman, 2008). The advantages of narrative research include the freedom that participants have to explain their world with their own voice. The task of the researchers is to maintain the voice of the participants while connecting their voice to the central phenomenon of the study (Czarniawska, 2004; Elliot, 2005). The central phenomenon under investigation (i.e., advising urban FFA chapters) was framed from the perspectives of two advisors. We developed the narrative by eliciting their thoughts and experiences. Our task was to find organized meaning within the interviews (Chase, 2005).

Context and Participant Description

This research focused on the experiences of two urban FFA advisors at the same school, Grover High School. Grover is in the metropolitan area of Jackson. Jackson is a Midwestern city of over 250,000 residents with a surrounding area population of over two million. According to the 2010 census, Jackson was nearly 50% African-American and 40% Caucasian with the other 10% comprised of a multitude races and ethnicities. Grover represents a magnet school serving students from all over Jackson. Over 1,000 students attended the school at the time of this study. The student body was racially and ethnically diverse, which closely reflected the demographics of Jackson. All participants in this were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Grover had two agriculture teachers who also served as co-advisors in the Grover FFA Chapter. Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers were both white and female. Ms. Houston had taught at Grover for five years, while the other teacher, Ms. Rogers, was entering her second year at Grover. The two teachers had separate curriculum tracks: Ms. Houston taught small animal science and Ms. Rogers taught horticulture. Their students would not share a class since each program had its own self-contained curriculum within the same school. The students of the programs were as diverse as the student body. Importantly, the students entered either program during their junior year of high school. This was the normal practice of all advanced courses at Grover, including agriculture. The Grover FFA chapter was fairly active at the local level with regular monthly meetings and a few community-based events. Only a minority of Grover FFA members participated in FFA activities beyond the chapter level, which included a regional leadership workshop, regional and state level Career Development Events (CDEs), and the annual National FFA Convention.

In addition to coursework, the two-year program required students to spend part of their senior year in all-day internships at local businesses related to their program area. The students of these two curriculum pathways never took the same classes, although they did have joint FFA activities. Thus, Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers generally only collaborated together on FFA activities. Neither had experience in urban communities before coming to Grover. They both viewed themselves unprepared for the challenges of teaching urban students; yet, they were eager to meet the challenge. When asked about their high school experience, both teachers stated that they had enrolled in agricultural education and were FFA members in their rural high school. They both described their FFA experience as being very traditional and rural. We were also considered FFA insiders. The lead interviewer was a former FFA member from a rural area who had experience as a school-based agriculture teacher and FFA advisor in another large, diverse school.

Narrative Data Collection

Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers were interviewed three times each over a span of three months. The interviews happened before and after the advisors took their FFA members to the National FFA Convention. The interviews averaged about 30 minutes in length. The questions asked by the interviewer were followed up by probing questions based on Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers' answers. The first interviews with these FFA advisors happened two weeks before the trip. The questions included:

1. How does the FFA relate to your members?
2. How does your members relate to the FFA?
3. How do you get your members engaged in the FFA?
4. Do you think the FFA relates to your context?

The second set of advisor interviews were conducted one month after the convention. The National FFA Convention provided an interesting catalyst for the Grover FFA chapter. The members, who did very few activities beyond the local chapter, were exposed to the broader opportunities in FFA. They were motivated to become more active FFA members. How the Grover FFA advisors perceived their members involvement in FFA after the convention was important. The post-convention questions focused on their experiences and member reactions during the convention. The questions included:

1. How was the members experience at the National FFA Convention?
2. What did your members learn at the convention?
3. What was something you might change about the FFA and/or the convention?

The final interviews occurred three months after the convention. Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers were asked questions about how their FFA program had grown since the convention. These questions included:

1. How has members' motivation for the FFA been cultivated since convention?
2. What types of FFA activities have been planned since convention?
3. What changes would you make to the FFA or FFA chapter in-lieu to your experiences since the convention?

The advisors discussions of these answers formed the data of this study.

Narrative Data Analysis

We conducted a thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008; Williams, 1997) which included a four-step process for analyzing the data. The first step was to read through the transcripts and code the data based on the two research questions. We highlighted any passage which centered on the research questions. The second step was to code the highlighted sections by what the advisors were articulating. For example, Ms. Rogers talked about the challenge of members having after-school jobs and responsibilities after school such as babysitting siblings. This passage was coded as members being unable to participate in the FFA because of work or taking care of siblings after school. Over 50 codes were identified between Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers. The third step in the data analysis was to categorize the codes into themes. The themes were organized by advisor and time period. Analyzing each advisor individually became important because each advisor had different views of FFA. We combined the views of both advisors when their ideas merged. The themes were explained in the findings; but, the findings section was not split into different sections based on the findings. Keeping the findings section relatively whole allowed the narrative to flow. The findings section was split into two sections: 1) Grover FFA advisors want Grover FFA members to have certain FFA experiences; and 2) Grover FFA advisors want something different than the Grover FFA members. The first section was developed from interviews before the convention and the second section was framed from interviews after the convention. The last step was to articulate the significance of the findings by combining the findings from both advisors to unveil the substantial conclusions of the study.

Narrative Research Trustworthiness

The question of validity (i.e., credibility according to Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002) is central to the narrative research (Riessman, 2008). The truth in narrative work is situated in the context of the interviews and in the lives of the interviewees and interviewer. The context and experiences of the two participants are revealed in the methods and findings. The lead interviewer, Michael Martin, had similar experiences as Ms. Rogers and Houston. He had taught agriculture and advised a FFA chapter in a large diverse high school. His program had around 50% non-white students and FFA members; however, his high school was not as large or as diverse as Grover. He used his own experiences in a similar context to ask probing and following questions of the teachers without being confrontational. The co-author, Tracy Kitchel, had experience as an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor in a rural school setting which provided a different perspective during the data analysis phases.

We followed a variety of strategies to ensure other factors of trustworthiness of qualitative research, including transferability, dependability, and confirmability. First, transferability in qualitative research depends on the ability of the reader to find a connection from the narrative to their own experiences or context. We worked to develop transferability by providing context to the narrative and larger quotation blocks to let the advisors' stories emerge. Dependability of the findings was enhanced through a detailed audit trail of the data analysis

within a process which lasted over three months. We kept detailed records of interviews, researcher meetings, and data analysis. Finally, confirmability was developed through researcher meetings to discuss the emergent findings (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002).

Narrative Findings

An important fact must be understood in light of the findings. Ms. Rogers and Ms. Houston both expressed their desire to have the Grover FFA Chapter be more active beyond the local level. They were not satisfied with being active and successful just at local level.

Grover FFA Advisors Want Grover FFA Members to Have Certain FFA Experiences

Ms. Rogers came from an active FFA chapter, and she was very proud of her personal FFA experience while in high school. She believed that her members could benefit from many of the same experiences she had. However, Ms. Rogers quickly realized that her members' context limited their ability to connect with the FFA like she did. First, the FFA was relatively new and small at Grover. Because students enroll into the agriculture program only after their junior year members were not exposed to the FFA in a freshman orientation class. Also, the Grover FFA Chapter did not have distinct traditions of its own. Ms. Rogers was aware of this quandary:

So we don't really start out with that [the FFA] because no one's really ever heard of it, so we do kind of our basic intro[duction] unit to plant science and get those basics down before we, before I start talking about the FFA. I always talk about it especially in the syllabus, and I talk about my experiences in the FFA, which are completely different than how it is here [Grover], based on the background that I had. I think it's kind of hard for them to grasp the type of program the FFA is, because they've never seen any of it.

The members' lack of FFA exposure was not the only issue faced by Ms. Rogers. Ms. Rogers's members also had no relationship with or personal history that could connect them to the themes which were featured in many of the traditions and activities of FFA. She discovered this while trying to run FFA meetings utilizing FFA opening and closing ceremonies as well as parliamentary procedure. She discussed the following:

So we have our monthly meetings... We do opening ceremonies, which is something that my students, because we haven't talked about it yet, [Grover FFA officers], were really confused about it. They were like, "What is going on?" So they get some of that [traditional FFA meetings], but we don't run parliamentary procedure because really the kids don't understand it, and it's not something that they have an interest in.

She provided an interesting clue to her situation. She admits that the members would probably not be interested in parliamentary procedure, which seemed to be something she valued. Ms. Rogers admits that her urban members had different interests and needs than she did when she was in high school.

Nonetheless, Ms. Rogers still insisted that her members could benefit from the same FFA activities that she had participated in while in high school. For instance, she had a positive attachment to CDEs. Her members did not share her same enthusiasm for CDEs and she articulated this concern:

I really wish that the kids could sit in and watch the career development events or the public speaking or something like that... we [Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers] spring it on them. We were like, "Yeah, you can do these contests [CDEs]" but there is so much to it and so if they could see really the best of the best doing what they do, it may give them a little more incentive to participate.

Ms. Rogers also had a strong attachment to FFA proficiency awards, which she also realized her members could not participate in. The short amount of time members spend in the program limited their ability to develop quality Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAEs). She lamented the following:

So like our kids can't do proficiency awards; it's not something that is at all applicable to them because of the fact that they are only in here [in the agriculture program] for two years... Ms. Houston does teach record books [SAEs and FFA Degrees], and I don't in my class. They do take personal finance; I just haven't found a way that it fits well into my program.... We talk about things like that but none of them, those awards, the FFA awards, really none of them are applicable to them because of the amount of time that we have them and their circumstances that they're in.

Ms. Rogers framed her vision of her members' involvement in FFA by her own personal experiences, which seemed to conflict with the reality at Grover. Ms. Houston had similar frustrations; however, from a different perspective.

Ms. Houston had frustrations with the FFA as well. She argued that the organization lacked opportunities for her urban members. Ms. Houston offered a solution to the problem: start more urban agriculture programs. She reported:

I hope that as we [school-based agricultural education] expand, the more urban programs that we [the FFA] can offer... we'll create contests more for urban kids and activities and leadership opportunities more for urban kids, whereas right now, they are pretty heavily based toward kids with a rural background, as having the advantage.

Interestingly, she did not try to frame the issue according to her own experiences as a FFA member like Ms. Rogers did. This could be attributed to Ms. Houston's experience at Grover as she was in her fifth year. She recognized that her members did not need the same experiences she had in high school; rather, they needed something central to their context. She described the difference in context as:

I wish that there were more state and national [FFA] opportunities for them. Everything is so geared to record books [SAEs and FFA Degrees], which are wonderful and important, but if you don't start as a freshman, maybe a sophomore, you just really don't have a chance of really doing anything with it. For them to start as juniors and not have that project at home that a lot of our rural kids do, whether it's the animals or business or making their own little side business mowing lawns, they just don't have, really have those opportunities.

While Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers framed members' experiences in the FFA differently, these differences did not result in Ms. Houston's members being more engaged in the FFA beyond the local chapter.

Ms. Houston still struggled with the fundamental problem of getting her members more involved in FFA. Interestingly, the advisors did not seem to communicate a lot before convention. Ms. Houston said, "They're [Grover FFA members] always asking, can we do this, can we do that? It's hard. Ms. Rogers and I both feel a little bogged down this year, as far as all the new [teaching] expectations they have for us..." Similarly, Ms. Rogers said, "I don't really know, like I don't know if there's something that the FFA can do that is more geared to urban students." The task of getting Grover FFA members more engaged in the FFA was not an easy problem. The Grover FFA members' trip to the National FFA Convention provided an opportunity for Ms. Rogers and Ms. Houston to explore what would motivate urban members to be active in FFA.

Grover FFA Advisors want something Different Than the Grover FFA Members

The 16 Grover FFA members were motivated to be more active in FFA after attending the convention; Ms. Rogers and Ms. Houston seemed to take different paths to their members' involvement in the FFA; however, both reach the same general conclusion. Ms. Rogers tried to utilize the National FFA Convention as a catalyst for getting Grover FFA members active in the FFA. For instance, Ms. Rogers asked her members who attended the National FFA Conference to talk to her classes about the FFA. She related:

They're the ones that are directly coming from some of the backgrounds the students have had in my junior class and [are] able to talk about their experiences and the things they enjoyed and the things that they've gotten out of the [FFA] things they've participated in, I think that has helped a lot.

Ms. Rogers was wise to the reasons why some of her members might want to go to FFA events. For instance, the Grover FFA members may have been more interested in missing school. She described the members' possible motivation as:

I really think that the travel that we do, like going to national convention, going to leadership conferences, yes, the end goal is for them to learn something and to develop those qualities of leadership that we talk about in class, but I think that is the big incentive, to be able to miss school and to be able to represent the chapter, that's something that's much bigger than them. I think that's a big pull for a lot of kids.

While Ms. Rogers was not sure how to motivate her members before the National FFA Convention, their experiences after the convention gave her a strong indication of what could happen in the future.

Mr. Roger's members were motivated by a speaker during the Opening Session of the National FFA Convention. A Louisiana FFA member spoke about her experience of being food insecure. She provided the audience with a call of action to help their community members who are food insecure. This message meant a lot to the Grover FFA members in attendance. They took this idea back to Grover and urged Ms. Rogers to act. Ms. Rogers then sought out opportunities for her members to help. She found a National FFA program, *Invest 2 Fight Hunger* program, which worked to solve food insecurity issues local communities. She discussed the following:

They talked about the world hunger issue. Well, now we are part of a pilot program for the *Invest 2 Fight Hunger*. ... My students did a lot of the background research on it, finding the statistics of how the United States compares to our state, in general, and then how our state compares to Jackson, and what those numbers look, the number of people that are below poverty and the number of people that go hungry every day. I think it is a startling statistic for them, they don't think about that. They don't think about how not only is it happening here, but it is happening in all of our state, and it is happening in the entire United States. It is not just here. I think they got a lot out of doing a lot of the research. I have only got a couple of them that are actually helping participate and doing the actual presentations that we do, but I think it is something really cool. It is going to give us recognition nationally that we, our kids really don't have the option for any other aspect, really, of FFA.

This program had appeal for Ms. Rogers because it was a direct connection to the FFA and could be utilized in their National FFA Chapter Award program.

Ms. Rogers also recognized the lack of minority role models in school-based agricultural education and the FFA. She sought minority role models in agriculture for her students in the time after convention. She reported:

We just had a presentation from an African-American that works at Monsanto, and she talked all about agriculture and STEM and how much money people spend on agriculture and how many jobs are out there. I think it really made an impact on my junior class.

Ms. Rogers's work highlighted her efforts to develop FFA members by finding ways for them to fit into the organization. Ms. Houston had a slightly different stance on getting members more involved in FFA. She never lost sight on what really mattered to her students – her classroom curriculum.

Ms. Houston's had been a teacher at Grover four years longer than Ms. Rogers. She had more experience with urban students. Ms. Houston's program was also more developed and her students had more advanced expectations of the program. Ms. Houston expressed how her students loved the small animal science curriculum, internships during their senior year, and the community events of her program. "They are actually excited even though they are going to go work for five hours after they've been in school all day. They're excited because they're going to get dinner [at small veterinary fundraising event in the community] and they're going to get to hear this speaker [at that event]." Ms. Houston realized that their FFA chapter needed to do something more with the community even before the trip to the National FFA Convention. However, she did not want to build the FFA chapter at the expense of her animal science focused program.

Ms. Houston's FFA members had the same experience at the Opening Session as Ms. Rogers's members, which included the speech from the formerly food insecure Louisiana FFA member. Ms. Houston discussed what the members were talking about and doing after convention:

The hunger thing was such a huge one this year. I think that really was something that was good for them to hear because in reality, some of them may have been in that position before, but also for the kids who haven't been to understand that it happens in their own community. We're actually piloting the [*Invest 2 Fight Hunger*].

Ms. Houston shared Ms. Rogers's optimism about the *Invest 2 Fight Hunger* program. Nonetheless, Ms. Houston still understood the strength of her program. She understood that the content of her coursework had greater potential to motivate her members.

Ms. Houston understood that her members placed a priority on the classroom curriculum of small animal science. This was what kept her members motivated in her program. She provided a brief statement which summed up her belief in her classroom curriculum:

The content works here, getting them interested in something that's agriculture related sometimes without them even realizing its agriculture. My kids are in here because they love animals and they want to work with animals.

Her belief in the strength of her classroom curriculum may have made her hesitate about building a stronger FFA chapter at Grover. Even after convention, when the members became interested in community development and they were enrolled in the *Invest 2 Fight Hunger* program, Ms. Houston had uncertainties about the direction of the Grover FFA chapter. She related the following:

I think it's just more ideas [for getting members involved in FFA] that float around now and then. Maybe she [Ms. Rogers] has something a little more concrete than I do. I have some specific goals I want to accomplish this summer, but they're still a little scattered, too (laughs).

Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers valued the *Invest 2 Fight Hunger* program; however, this program did not provide the opportunity for success beyond the local level they sought.

They were both upfront about the experiences they were seeking for their members. Ms. Houston said the following when asked what could be changed about the convention for her members:

Not so much [to change] about convention, I wish there was in, generally in FFA, more focus and more opportunities for the urban kids. Whereas things like contests [CDEs] and proficiency awards still really seem geared toward the traditional programs, because there's so many more of them. While we're building some [urban] programs, we haven't necessarily added things for them [urban FFA members] to be competitive in.

Ms. Rogers echoed the same sentiments after the convention when asked what the FFA could do to make FFA more appealing to her members:

Our students are only in here for two years. They have tons of directed lab experience because of the internship that do, but there is no way that they could ever win a proficiency award because they would not have enough hours or anything to compete with somebody who has been in ag[riculture] for four years. I don't know if there is something that they [the FFA] can do that is geared towards urban [members]. I don't know. I really don't know what they would do or what they could do. I just feel like there is not as many opportunities for programs like this to be recognized.

Both Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers shared a strong belief that success in FFA depended on FFA members winning awards and obtaining recognition beyond the local FFA chapter.

Significance of the Narrative

The drive and subsequent conundrums of getting the Grover FFA Chapter more active in the FFA beyond the local level originated from Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers. Despite both advisors having different perspectives about the valuable experiences of FFA, both struggled to get Grover FFA members involved with FFA beyond the local level. They had a hard time conceptualizing how the Grover FFA Chapter could become more active, even after the National FFA Convention when their FFA members' motivation was the highest. We cannot overlook the urban context of the members, rural nature of the FFA, and the limited amount of time the advisors had with the members in the program. We also want to stress that they were both excellent teachers. Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers did have a possible avenue for FFA success. Their FFA members who attended the National FFA Convention discussed the need to feed locally food insecure people in Jackson. The advisors realized that these types of activities could provide the Grover chapter success with the National Chapter Award Program. This revelation did not necessarily make Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers feel more confident; rather, they still had some reservations about how their members could be more involved in traditional FFA activities, such as CDEs or SAEs.

Discussion

The two urban FFA advisors of this study had difficulty engaging their FFA members beyond the chapter level. These findings echoed those of previous studies (LaVergne, Jones, Larke, & Elbert, 2012; LaVergne et. al., 2011; Roberts et. al., 2009; Warren and Alston, 2007). The advisors were aware of the rural nature of the FFA, which also was found in previous research (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991; Martin & Kitchel, 2013; Phelps, Henry, & Bird, 2012). This research also highlights the many challenges facing urban school-based agriculture teachers (Warren & Washburn, 2009). This research also provided an interesting follow-up finding to a study that found few barriers to urban FFA members' participation in FFA (Martin & Kitchel, 2014). Urban FFA members may experience fewer barriers in FFA as compared to urban FFA advisors. It is important to note that the advisor's barriers did not mean the members could not find success in FFA. The *Invest 2 Fight Hunger* program is a great example of a community-based program which members were motivated to conduct. Ms. Rogers and Ms. Houston wanted

their members to do more traditional FFA activities, like CDEs and SAEs, which would engage their members beyond the local level. It is difficult to gauge whether their ambition or hopes in this area trickled down to the members. The members may not have even known of Ms. Rogers and Houston's concern. Furthermore, it is beyond the scope of this study to say whether the Grover FFA members believed they were in what they perceived to be a successful FFA chapter.

A compelling implication from this research was the power of FFA traditions in guiding the work of FFA advisors at the local level. We must reiterate that Ms. Rogers and Ms. Houston both set the expectations for success in the Grover FFA Chapter. They both wanted more involvement and success for their FFA members beyond the local chapter level. The Grover agriculture department was very successful. Yet, success in the FFA chapter was measured by Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers. This is an interesting finding when viewed from the perspective of the broader literature on youth engagement. The advisors did not share the cultural background as their members; however, this did not hinder members' motivation to be active in FFA. The issue which emerged from this study was the ability of the advisors to work beyond their prescribed conceptualization of the FFA to match their members' expectations. Thus, the cultural expectations of youth organizational advisors may be just as important as the members' cultural expectations (Borden, Perkins, Villarruel, & Stone, 2005; Harvard Family Research Project, 2004; Herrera & Arbretton, 2003; Larson, 1994).

Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers were not sure how to manipulate the activities of the FFA to match the needs and interests of their FFA members. For instance, they required members to recite the Opening Ceremony during FFA meetings, even though members were unfamiliar with the process. Even Ms. Rogers admitted that the Opening Ceremony did not match the expectations of the Grover FFA members. The Grover agriculture programs did not have the typical freshman agriculture courses which would have included FFA instruction. Nonetheless, it is impossible to speculate whether not having Grover FFA members participate in FFA opening ceremonies would have increased their desire or ability to participate in FFA activities beyond the local level.

While both advisors agreed that events like SAEs and CDEs were too rural in nature for their members, they did not share stories of their FFA members struggling with these types of FFA activities. We could use research evidence to support their perceptions (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991; Martin & Kitchel, 2013; Phelps, Henry, & Bird, 2012); however, this is just speculation without the members' voice. Further research on this topic with urban FFA members is warranted and considering that quantitative measures have revealed few barriers (Martin & Kitchel, 2014), qualitative measures may be more appropriate.

Ms. Houston and Ms. Rogers realized they should emphasize those activities which did align to the context of the urban FFA members, such as the *Invest 2 Fight Hunger* program. Yet, they were not satisfied with just working within the local chapter setting. They wanted to have members participate in FFA activities beyond the local chapter. The fact that these two advisors had difficulty making a shift in their mindset, even as their FFA members lobbied for them, highlighted the possible existence of a culture for FFA advisors which pressures them to conduct particular FFA activities. This is only a possible implication from this study. We are cautious in suggesting that other urban FFA advisors or possibly all FFA advisors have similar issues as these findings indicate since these findings are not generalizable. However, the experiences of these two advisors may be transferable to other urban FFA advisors in similar contexts.

Recommendations for further actions are difficult to enact programmatically or nationally. At the local level, urban FFA advisors need to be able to adapt FFA programming to match the needs of their members. This can be difficult for a couple of reasons. First, the changes and adaptations needed may vary for each urban FFA chapter. Second, FFA advisors may feel pressured to conform to their rural counterparts-either out of tradition, personal experience, or because of expectations from fellow FFA advisors as well as state and national FFA leadership. Finally, teacher preparation programs would need to teach future advisors (rural,

suburban, and urban) how to develop a FFA traditional chapter and non-traditional chapters (i.e., Roberts et al., 2009), which may cause stress among the pre-service teachers (Vincent, Kirby, Deeds, & Faulkner, 2014). The recommendations may be challenging; yet, the experiences of the Grover FFA advisors highlighted the possible need for such adaptations, which is also a mission shared by FFA (FFA, 2014).

The National FFA Organization and state FFA associations should also think about how urban FFA chapters fit into the larger picture of FFA and if the current FFA programs can meet the needs of urban FFA advisors and members. Urban FFA members need to be able to find the same general level of success from their FFA participation as their rural FFA member counterparts would have. Urban FFA advisors need to feel confident in their ability to manage their FFA chapters towards this success. Training programs need to be developed to address the aforementioned issues. Finally, researchers need to continually investigate how urban FFA chapters find success as well as how they struggle to find success. Researchers need to view these situations critically with the realization that the FFA has an amazing capacity to develop youth, which needs to be harnessed and made available to all youth—even those without a rural background.

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