PERSPECTIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SCHOOL-BASED AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARD THEIR MEANING OF WORK: A Q METHODOLOGY STUDY

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Abstract: The most prominent group of leaders in the African American community historically have been educators, including public school teachers of agriculture. The importance of African American educators became apparent when the representation of African American teachers declined precipitously during the 1960s era of school integration. This trend of limited African American teachers in School-Based Agricultural Education (SBAE) continues today. This Q methodology study explores the voices of African American SBAE teachers.

The following research question guided this study: "What are the perspectives of African American SBAE teachers toward the meaning of their work?" The concourse for this study was developed using a combination of naturalistic and theoretical methods resulting in a hybrid approach representing a multitude of attitudes, values, or opinions of African American SBAE teachers. The Q set included 45 statements, and 23 African American SBAE teachers made up the final P set. The condition of instruction was, "What does being an African American agriculture education teacher mean to you?" The Q methodology data analysis software program, PQ Method was used to analyze the data for this study. Three perspectives were interpreted for this study: *Anchored in Service*, *Anchored in Resilience* and *Anchored in Assurance.*

Anchored in Service teachers are student focused, rely on deep community connections and faith for support, and are diligent in their efforts to show an affirmative attitude toward working hard to overcome challenges. *Anchored in Resilience* teachers expressed the pride associated with the history of African Americans in agriculture and strongly conveyed the value of having African Americans in the role of an SBAE teacher despite the challenges encountered. *Anchored in Assurance* conveyed the feeling African American SBAE teachers have to support their African American students, colleagues and their commitment to using their skillset to cater to the needs of their students.

African American SBAE educators demonstrate a strength in resiliency not often discussed in the discipline. The challenge of retention and recruitment of African American SBAE teachers is on-going. Investigating the experiences and opinions of these teachers may aid in recruitment and retention strategies to better support African American SBAE teachers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Enhancing racial and ethnic relationships across cultures is important as the United States (U.S.) becomes a more culturally interdependent nation. Although the population of U.S. teachers has gradually become more diverse over time, the elementary and secondary teacher workforce does not reflect the racial diversity of public-school students or the nation's general population (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The U.S education system must ensure its environment is a space that welcomes culturally inclusive interactions among students and educators, especially those from marginalized populations (Howard, 2007). However, the history of education in the United States indicates African American teachers were historically and are currently underrepresented (King, 1993; Madkins, 2011). Indeed, the limited number of African American educators is a longstanding area of concern for the education profession as well as many African American communities (King, 1993). The absence of minority, particularly African American, educators is likely rooted in several structural shifts and cultural norms including desegregation, systemic poverty, higher education elitism, and racism (Gordon, 1994).

During the 2012 school year, Black teachers accounted for 7% percent of public-school teachers while 16% of the students were Black (U.S. Department of Education,

2016). Furthermore, it was found that 51% of elementary and secondary students were taught by an 82% White teaching corps (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The self-identity of teachers often plays a significant role in how they interact and work with others from backgrounds different than their own (Clauss-Ehlers, 2006). Research indicates individuals potentially possess embedded biases that could be expressed in a blatant or subtle way when they have preconceived ideas about specific groups or cultures (Bowen, 1993). These potential preconceived ideas are cause for concern as teachers work to develop the ability to interact with students who represent multiple cultures and backgrounds (LaVergne et al., 2011). Moreover, for teachers to be successful in the classroom it is important for them to respect and pay attention to the differences of their students (Clauss-Ehlers, 2006).

With African Americans accounting for 13.4% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2019), their disproportionate size of representation in the teaching workforce attracts interest considering the significant role education plays in the lives of all students and their communities (King, 1993). Current research validates a declining trend of African American educators and stretches across most subject areas (Collier, 2002). More specifically, School-Based Agricultural Education (SBAE), grades 6 to 12, is experiencing a noticeably reduced number of African Americans joining its teaching ranks (Doerfert, 2011). It is estimated less than 5% of students enrolled in SBAE are African American, and only about 1.5% of the teaching corps is African American (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2020).

More distinctively, according to National Supply and Demand Study Comparison Report, data representing the number of SBAE African American teachers in the United States is at a diminutive number of 176 (National Association of Agricultural Educators,

2020). This is an estimation of the current population size because all African Americans may not be members of National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) or involved in FFA, which could affect the capability of recording an accurate number. Recent advances and increases in recognizing culturally inclusive and diversity priorities in SBAE (Vincent & Hains, 2015) have galvanized the needed exploration to understand the perspectives and motivators of minority educators (Roberts et al., 2016), particularly African Americans who pursued a rarely chosen career path to become teachers of agricultural education in U.S. public schools.

Background to the Problem

Despite interest toward increasing representation of African Americans in agricultural education (Roberts et al., 2016), the experiences and attitudes of current African American SBAE teachers remains unclear. The academic literature available about African Americans and agriculture in contemporary times is scant at best (Tyler & Moore, 2013), including the experiences of African American agricultural educators. A push to increase the cultural awareness of all youth, White and of color (King, 1993; Knight-Manuel & Marciano, 2018), supports the need to address this dearth in literature. Furthermore, to prepare youth to develop and succeed in a culturally diverse society, it is critical to increase opportunities for students to experience minority educators (King, 1993), including areas of study in agricultural education at the secondary school level. It is imperative to recognize the value of minority teachers as a critical source of knowledge and as a representative role model as educators not only for the growing number of minority youth in the classrooms but for children of all backgrounds (Gordon, 1994).

The trend of limited African American teachers in agricultural education continues to present a challenge. Agricultural educators acknowledge the limited number of minority figures in agricultural education (LaVergne et al., 2011). The need exists for all students to develop a greater and more appreciative understanding of multiculturalism. Students should also be introduced to more opportunities for diverse cultural experiences in SBAE, and, if unmet, the imbalance between minority teachers and their students will likely continue to grow (Vincent & Hains, 2015). Few scholars have addressed the specific problem of a paucity of African American agricultural educators in the nation's secondary schools, and the severely low number of ethnic minorities represented in agricultural education supports the necessity to develop and improve strategies to recruit and encourage minority teachers to join the profession (Lawver et al, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

There is minimal research evaluating the differences between the subordinate and dominant populations within the scope of agricultural education (Lavergne et al, 2012). Limited research in this area has created a dilemma in truly knowing who African American SBAE teachers are and how they feel about their careers in the agricultural education sector. Therefore, this study addresses a critical knowledge gap by providing a significant opportunity to understand and interpret this phenomenon of the limited amount of African American SBAE teachers versus the much larger number of White SBAE teachers, more specifically as it pertains to their fulfillment in their work. Allowing for richer consideration toward employees' perception of meaningful work provides insight in how they experience and exist in their work environments (Rosso et al., 2010).

Gaining deeper insight from African American agricultural educators' perspective of work provides direction in recruiting, understanding the lived experiences of, and retaining future African American SBAE teachers. This study could also illuminate the unique needs of African American SBAE teachers, which may provide the awareness required to influence the career decisions of potential minority agricultural educators. Moreover, improvement in this area could presumably attract an increased exhibition of African American youth enrollment in agricultural programs and ultimately yield a more diverse and nationally representative pool of talent for the U.S. agriculture sector.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of African American agricultural teachers regarding their work experiences teaching SBAE-related courses in the United States. An examination of the viewpoints of this minority population increases in-depth understanding of the experiences and challenges they may encounter associated with SBAE. Q methodology allows researchers to use participants' uniquely personal and subjective perspectives to better understand the diversity of viewpoints that exist within context or situational settings (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Obtaining a better understanding of this population of public school teachers may lead to developing fresh and novel scholarship, as well as improved recruitment, development, and retention strategies to further diversify SBAE programs nationwide. Improvements may support SBAE students to more effectively prepare to work in what is an increasingly diverse agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources (AFFNR) system. For a nation with a population projected to shift in composition from non-Hispanic Whites as its majority to a majority-minority society by mid-

century (Pew Research, 2020), a clear-eyed understanding of diversity is a national imperative, including what that portends for one of its most important industries.

Research Question

The aim of this research is to broaden current knowledge of how African American SBAE teachers experience the field of agricultural education. More specifically, allowing for the experiences of African American SBAE teachers to be expressed through their view and feelings toward their work. Taking this into account, the following research question guides this study: "What are the perspectives of African American SBAE teachers toward the meaning of their work?" Q methodology allows for a greater breadth and depth in revealing the attitudes, values, and beliefs African American SBAE teachers bring to their chosen field of teaching.

Significance of the Study

When evaluating present day efforts to diversify the AFFNR industries, literature suggests several benefits in addressing the need for a more diverse teaching workforce and how this could potentially progress efforts to encourage African American youth to study in and prepare for related careers. For example, Jones and Bowen (1998) concluded that to increase the number of African American students enrolled in SBAE programs, schools must recognize the significant role of teachers as influencers when engaging the interest of youth toward choosing agriculture as a program of study. Consequently, the current ethnic make-up of America's teaching workforce, has encouraged research seeking to evaluate the readiness of White teachers as they encounter increasingly diverse classrooms. Findings from a study of secondary agricultural teachers in Texas revealed White teachers, although willing, may not have the skillsets needed to adequately serve racially diverse audiences (LaVergne et al.,

2011). In addition, Vincent and Hains (2015) mentioned that "student ethnic minorities did not enroll in agricultural education due to cultural misunderstandings" (p. 38). Comparatively, Jones and Bowen (1998) determined teachers who have strong enthusiasm about their programs and their ability to relate to their students have higher enrollment of African American students.

The notion of increasing minority representation would provide an additional benefit to students and is often encouraged in the community of SBAE among teachers and other stakeholders (Roberts et al., 2016). Bearing in mind the low numbers of minority teachers compared to the U.S. public school student population, research studies support the need to increase the representation of minority educators (Gordon, 1994), including that of African Americans. The presence of minority educators help combat stereotypes and provide opportunities for students and faculty to gain exposure to various cultures (King, 1993; Knight-Manuel & Marciano, 2018). King (1993) suggested efforts to increase African American educators should be encouraged because students need this cultural exposure in the classroom:

> African American teachers are of critical importance not just because children need to see that teachers of color exist or that people of color can assume leadership positions. They are needed because of their many other roles, perspectives, and practices. (p. 120).

Important benefits for White students accrue when they experience cross-cultural exposure and interactions through education due to having teachers and mentors of color (King, 1993). These experiences also help White students develop more diverse and tolerant

perspectives of different social and racial attitudes regarding cultures and races different from their own (King, 1993).

Giving consideration to the valuable influences of having African American teachers in the classroom, coupled with the limited numbers of African American SBAE teachers (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2020) few researchers have addressed the problem of the limited existence of African Americans in this discipline. Furthermore, the culmination of these approaches in exploring the challenge of students' limited exposure to multicultural interactions with African American teachers provides additional support regarding the need to uncover the variety of perspectives held within this population toward their work as teachers. The benefit of having more African American SBAE teachers drives the significance of this research study and will broaden current knowledge of African American SBAE teacher viewpoints and possibly begin to advance awareness toward the experiences they have that may affect their small representation.

Conceptual Framework

Historically, the idea of work was greatly influenced by an individual's fundamental desire to fulfill basic survival needs but this perspective has changed over time (Friedmann & Havighurst, 1954). Work has grown to provide more support for people than simply earning a living. Often time work helps deepen the connection people feel to society and their purpose in life (Morse & Weiss, 1955). Preliminary work in this field focused primarily on the general description of meaningful work but Rosso et al. (2010) took previous literature a step further by developing a theoretical integration of mechanisms effecting the perceived or acquired meaning of work. Through the evolvement of this theoretical integration, categories were constructed around several questions of how work becomes

meaningful, the meaning of work, and how that meaning differs between individuals (Rosso et al., 2010). These emergent categories were utilized in this study as a conceptual framework.

Rosso et al. (2010) aspired to distinguish how much of a person's behaviors, feelings or thoughts are influenced by the meaning they find in their work. Morse and Weiss (1955), found that people often had a sense of accomplishment and level of self-expression through their work. Application of this conceptual lens through Q methodological exploration of African American SBAE teachers allows for a practical and realistic entry to understanding the current existence, opinions, and thoughts of such a small population in the agricultural education sector. The use of theoretical or conceptual constructs in Q methodology allows for additional support in developing a vast list of statements, known as a concourse, that is representative of the opinions and thoughts held within a specific group and used within the study for sorting.

Overview of Methods

This study applies Q methodology, which blends the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research traditions as well as bridges the two methods (Brown, 1996), to generate a much more profound understanding of the lived experiences of African American SBAE teachers. Q methodology is designed to uncover distinctive subjectivities without confounding their individual nature with operational measures (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). The goal of Q methodology is not to display only one specific perspective of a group of individuals but instead is designed to reveal diverse and distinctive viewpoints (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Using this methodology to examine the various perspectives of African American SBAE teachers toward their work provides a valuable opportunity to explore their

acuities of experiences in agriculture “from the vantage point of self-reference” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 1).

The task of elevating the voices and perspectives of African American SBAE teachers through their lived experiences is an appropriate fit for Q methodology. Herrington and Coogan (2011) further confirm the distinct focus of Q methodology by stating, “the key to this approach is to consider data in terms of the individual’s whole pattern of responses, a self-reference rather than looking for patterns among people” (p. 24). This means the participant can express their opinions through a true and self-referent lens, rather than research seeking to generalize an individual’s personal feelings. This study is designed not only to engage an underrepresented group of teachers in SBAE, but to understand the specific viewpoints of the participants through a holistic dimension of their personal feelings and opinions toward their work as an African American SBAE teacher, which leads to the revelation of a qualitative detail on a deeper level (Brown, 1980).

The limited literature related to African American SBAE teachers, is ideal for Q methodology as it allows researchers to give participants the freedom to be autonomous without the predetermined structure occasionally present in other methodologies (Hutson et al., 2010). This study is rooted in exploring the depth of viewpoints held by African American SBAE teachers toward the meaning of their work. The research question ultimately led to the methodology best equipped to meet the researcher’s aim of highlighting underrepresented voices within agricultural education: Q methodology.

Assumptions

This study included the following assumptions:

1. Participants currently teach agricultural related course(s) at the secondary level of education in the United States.
2. Participants identified as African American.
3. Each participant portrayed their thoughts and opinions as an African American SBAE teacher in a truthful and authentic manor.

Limitations

Only the perspectives and views of the participants in this study are represented. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to all African American SBAE teachers.

Definition of Terms

Concourse: The collective list of statements developed to reveal the attitudes, thoughts, values, and opinions related to a specific topic being studied (Brown, 1993).

Condition of Instruction: The research question used to guide participants in the study through the sorting of statements (Brown, 1980; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

National FFA Organization: An organization for students interested in leadership and agriculture. FFA is also one portion of agricultural education's three component model (National FFA Organization, 2022).

New Farmers of America: A national organization established for African American farm boys in public schools studying vocational agriculture. NFA was active from 1927 to 1965, reaching over 58,000 members in the southern and eastern region of the United States before merging with FFA in 1965 (Alston et al., 2022).

P set: The group of individuals who participate in the study (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

Q methodology: Uncovers subjective perspectives about a specific topic further identifying the common views among participants by using statistical factor analysis (Brown, 1980; McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Stephenson, 1953).

Q set: The final list of items used in the sorting exercise of the participants (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

Q sort: The data obtained from the sorting exercise used for statistical factor analysis (Brown, 1980).

Record sheet: Data from the Q sorts are completed and recorded on this sheet of paper or document (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

School-Based Agricultural Education (SBAE): School-Based Agricultural Education programs are focused on the following three areas: (1) National FFA Organization membership engagement and leadership development, (2) Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) program experiential learning and (3) instruction in the classrooms and laboratories (Talbert et al., 2014).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The African American educational experience the United States has been a dynamic journey. For generations, whether shackled or free to venture the country African Americans have consistently pursued opportunities to learn and achieve more (Hornsby, 2005). The experiences and perspectives of African Americans in the United States are not monolithic in nature (Dagbovie, 2006) and the depth of those nuances contribute to the richness of their journey. The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives of African American SBAE teachers toward the meaning of their work and experiences teaching agricultural education in the United States. This chapter allows a glimpse into research documenting the complex and significant experiences of African Americans in education, including education pursuits during and past slavery, landmark Supreme Court decisions, African American educational leadership, and modern efforts to create a more representative teaching corps in education and agricultural education.

The Beginning Pursuit of Education for African Americans

The battle to obtain an education for African Americans has been a long and strenuous journey. Africans who arrived in the New World in 1600s quickly transitioned into a role of servitude with Massachusetts becoming the first English Colony to recognize the enslavement of Africans as an official legal institution in 1640 (Johnson

& Smith, 1999). This new establishment would grow throughout the colonies over time (Johnson & Smith, 1999). With slavery came the formalized start of harsh laws and conditions to subjugate the racial group now known as African American or Black American (Johnson & Smith, 1999). The brutal and oppressive nature of slavery in the United States was not only felt in the areas of physical labor and tangible freedoms but also in the realm of intellectual growth (Span & Anderson, 2005). Proslavery ideologies drove much of the menial opinion of African Americans and supported the belief of their inability to learn and genetically inferior nature as a race (Span & Anderson, 2005). Although a multitude of customs and laws in slave states prohibited "enslaved people from learning to read and write, a small percentage managed, through ingenuity and will, to acquire a degree of literacy in the antebellum period" (Williams, 2009, p. 7).

The sense of freedom that came with literacy and education has been consistent for generations (King, 1993) and was seen as equal in value to slaveholders as well (Span & Anderson, 2005). The level of access to books and information exposed a world outside of bondage. This exposure allowed African Americans to think and behave freely, and the opportunity to read and learn ultimately became a cultural value (Span & Anderson, 2005; Williams, 2009). Frederick Douglas maintained this stance in expressing how allowing the slave to acquire knowledge leads to the discontentment with slavery itself which completely contradicts the slaveholder's vigilant effort to maintain control of his slave (Span & Anderson, 2005). Slave owners felt it to be of great risk for enslaved Africans to develop the skills to read and write; and they worked tirelessly to control not only the thoughts and imaginations of slaves but also their heart and minds (Williams, 2009). Williams (2009) expressed the clear expectation of the boundaries

placed on African Americans ability to learn and the secret pursuit to break those barriers directly from the voices of former slaves Louisa Gause and Charity Bowery:

> No child, White people never teach colored people nothing, but to be good to dey Master and Mistress. What learning dey would get in dem days, dey been get it at night. Taught demselves. . . . I have seen the Negroes up in the country going away under large oaks, and in secret places, sitting in the woods with spelling books (p.7).

The threat of severe reprimand likely deterred many African Americans from learning, and although much debate is held on the percentage of slave literacy rates, W.E.B. Dubois estimated prior to emancipation, approximately 5 percent of enslaved African Americans in the South were literate (Span & Anderson, 2005). Enslaved African Americans saw an immense benefit with obtaining the ability to read and write. This opportunity combined with the will it took to pursue learning, were underscored by the horrific consequences lying in wait if the pursuit of learning was revealed (Span & Anderson, 2005). If found reading or writing, punishment could include cutting off a finger, disfigurement, severe beatings or whippings (Deutsch, 2011; Span & Anderson, 2005).

The results of learning to read would bring African Americans privacy, mobility, and leisure time. In some cases, developing the ability to read and write allowed some enslaved Africans to write their own passes to freedom (Span & Anderson, 2005). Even while living a life of slavery, if able to read and write, slaves could experience a feeling of community empowerment and strengthened self-worth (Span & Anderson, 2005). Accompanied by the potential of wealth attainments, this feeling would continue to lead

enslaved African Americans' pursuit of education well after the bondage of slavery (Williams, 2009).

Plessy v. Ferguson

Education played a substantial and historic role for African Americans as they pursued opportunities to increase wealth or create social change (King, 1993). "Looking at African Americans' creative and superstitious efforts to become literate while enslaved provided a rich context for their eagerness to attend schools in the aftermath of the Civil War" (Williams, 2009, p. 1). This journey of education was not without continuous trials, figurative and literally. The Plessy v. Ferguson case would significantly impact the development of educational institutions in the United States. This case challenged the laws preventing African Americans from being treated fairly under the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendment (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896). In general terms, the institution of slavery of Black persons was abolished through the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 (VanderVelde, 1989). The decision that no person without the due process of the law shall be deprived of property, life or liberty as well as granting enslaved African Americans an opportunity for citizenship and equal legal and civil rights was declared through the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 (Du Bois, 1949).

The presence of contention between the Democrats and Republicans was very strong following the Civil War and this trickled into the development of laws (Hoffer, 2012). The Democrats would attempt to find strategic ways around adhering to the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments, and Civil Rights Acts by developing a contradicting and more streamlined focus on discrimination within specific categories and state-mandated rejections of the right to vote (Hoffer, 2012). There was still an

apparent goal to keep the voices of African Americans suppressed and their rights minimal (Hornsby, 2005).

The *Comité des Citoyens*, translated as the Committee of Citizens, consisted of eighteen Louisianan men with various experiences and backgrounds including writers, ex-Union soldiers, civil libertarians, Republicans and more (Golub, 2005; Medley, 2003). These men came together in September in a multitude of attempts to contest the 1890 Louisiana legislature, Act 111, which enforced the segregation of trains. This law grew to become known as the Separate Car Act (Medley, 2003). As the businessmen developed a multitude of efforts to combat the separatist laws, they garnered a growing amount of community support nationwide through newspaper communication and hosting rallies in fraternal halls and churches (Medley, 2003). After testing the law by developing cases on the state level, the committee set their sights on something grander, the U.S. Supreme Court (Medley, 2003). Their continuous fight against Jim Crow-driven policies revealed the constant battle of how African Americans were viewed as less than in society.

Homer Plessy would be on the forefront of the lawsuit of Plessy v. Ferguson; he was a young shoemaker who was of mixed race and seen as White passing (Medley, 2003). In June 1892, Plessy bought a first-class ticket and sat in a Whites-only car after arriving at the East Louisiana Railway (Golub, 2005; Kelly, 2004; Medley, 2003). The choice to challenge Jim Crow laws of the time in an act of civil disobedience by violating the Louisiana Separate Car Act led to Plessy's arrest (Golub, 2005). The committee's "objective was to obtain a U.S. Supreme court ruling preventing states from abolishing the suffrage and equal-access gains of the Reconstruction period" (Medley, 2003, p.14). The case reached the Supreme Court in 1895.

The final decision was discrimination must not be present in racial segregation and if facilities are separate then they must be deemed equal (Bishop, 1977; Groves, 1951; *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896). The U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling on May 18, 1896, and set the stage for the value, or lack thereof, of African Americans as U.S. citizens. The indication of "separate but equal" became a stance of strength for the continuation of keeping African Americans within the constraint of oppression. Reflection on the reach and substantial impact of the law of separation by race and its impact on African Americans is critical in understanding their plight post slavery. This ruling would reach much further than the various modes of transportation within America, seeping into the foundation of the nation's education systems which will be discussed in the following sections within this chapter.

Booker T. Washington

In spite of being born into slavery Booker T. Washington became an incredibly influential leader in agriculture creating a multitude of opportunities for African Americans (Gardner, 1975). Washington had a very specific lens of education heavily influenced by attending the Hampton Institute (Washington & Loran, 1971). He believed African Americans should seek to uplift others and not only seek personal gain, but also suggested people are happiest when they are helping others (Washington & Loram, 1971). Washington also saw education as a connection of the human experience in mind, body and soul. This belief drove his strong position on how African Americans could utilize education to improve their status in society (Jenkins, 1991; Young, 1976).

Washington was born in a small cabin as a slave on a plantation in Virginia. He lived with his mother and brother and like many slaves knew very little about his

ancestry. He never knew much about his father besides the fact that he was a White man who lived on a plantation nearby (Norrell & Norrell, 2011; Washington & Loram, 1971). When evaluating much of his early life, Washington realized many people were mere victims of the institution of slavery America created. He felt the system caused people to behave in unorthodox ways (Washington & Loram, 1971). Washington did not receive any education as a slave but he had to carry the books of one of his young mistresses when walking her to the schoolhouse. He explained the impact of seeing the pictures of the young school children studying by stating, "I had the feeling that to get into a schoolhouse and study in this way would be about the same as getting into paradise" (Washington & Loram, 1971, p. 14).

After becoming free following the Civil War, Washington's family traveled several weeks to West Virginia where his step-father secured a job at a local salt-furnace as well as a small cabin for them to live. Washington often worked at the salt-furnace where he gained book knowledge for the first time (Washington, 1901). He explained his commitment to learning as a child by stating the following, "I determined, when quite a small child, that, if I accomplished nothing else in life, I would in some way get enough education to enable me to read common books and newspapers" (Washington & Loram, 1971, p. 26). Although his mother was ignorant of book knowledge, she worked very hard to master every situation that came her way and had the highest of ambitions for her children (Washington, 1901). Washington, felt he inherited this disposition from his mother (Washington & Loram, 1971). His autobiography (Washington & Loram, 1971) details the occasion of creating a "school" for African Americans in his community when he was a child.

A soldier from Ohio moved to his community and was committed to teaching the families in the area; the teacher would "board 'round", which means he would spend a day with each family in efforts to teach everyone. Washington was extremely excited for his opportunity to get his chance to obtain an education (Washington & Loram, 1971). Washington described this experience by saying, "it was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too young, and none too old, to make an attempt to learn." (Washington & Loram, 197, p. 27). Years later, while working at a coal mine, Washington learned about a school built to educate African Americans called Hampton Institute (Washington, 1901). He soon took the little money he had and embarked on the long and hard journey to get to Hampton, which was 500 miles away (Norrell & Norrell, 2011).

During Washington's time at Hampton there was a clear theme for the educators and students around him: prepare yourself to lift up those around you and no one would only think of themselves (Jenkins, 1991; Washington & Loram, 1971). His interactions with an affluent staff member influenced his views on the teaching of labor in schools. She had an education and came from a family of stature, but took pride in cleaning the rooms and facilities before the students arrived. After seeing her passionate commitment to service Washington stated, "ever since then I have had no patience with any school for my race in the South which did not teach its students the dignity of labour" (Washington & Loram, 1971, p. 52). Washington graduated with values instilled in him that would help lay the foundations of his future endeavors.

The man Washington long admired during his time at Hampton, General Armstrong designed the Hampton School model to not only equip African Americans

with vocational skills but to also refine their moral character (Croom & Alston, 2009). Armstrong's goal was to develop future African American teachers and leaders through scholarship. Students were also expected to learn an industrial or manual trade and become positive role models for other African Americans (Croom & Alston, 2009). Armstrong would later recommend Washington when the state of Alabama was in the process of developing a new school for African American youth. This opportunity prompted Washington to establish a school focused on industrial education (Gardner, 1975). Washington would ultimately plant significant roots of impact in his career during the time period between the Civil War and World War I (Gardner, 1975). Jones (1975) explained the status of the south following the Civil War and the poignant vision of Washington in establishing the Tuskegee Institute:

> While the economically depressed White farmers of the South sought to their problems in the 1880's and 1890's through the Grange, the Agricultural Wheel, and the Farmers' Alliance, numerous industrial schools and institutes were established throughout the South in an effort to help the landless, uneducated and deprived mass of Black farmers. Founded on July 4, 1881, in the heart of Black Belt Alabama by an act of legislature, Tuskegee Institute emerged rapidly under the leadership of Booker T. Washington and his formula of self-help into a center for educating and uplifting more than 1,000,000 Black farmers in the South" (p. 252)

Together Armstrong & Washington's leadership in their respective institutions would shape one of the most prominent views by providing a framework for how African Americans obtained education in the areas of agricultural and technical concepts (Croom

& Alston, 2009). During this era, Booker T. Washington and Samuel Chapman Armstrong work supported African American educational and moral needs through their established industrial and agricultural education model for African Americans (Croom & Alston, 2009).

The emphasis of agriculture at Tuskegee Institute was present from the start (Jones, 1975). Washington continued to provide agricultural education for African American youth and farmers, then held the first Tuskegee Negro Conference in 1892, where over 400 men and women, predominantly farmers, attended (Jones, 1975). The conferences became an annual event designed to serve and disseminate information to Black farmers all over the south to help them manage and grow their operations (Jones, 1975). In 1896, Washington convinced George Washington Carver to become the head of the Agricultural Department at the Tuskegee Institute (Hines, 1979). Carver was another African American trailblazer in agriculture and obtained his master's degree in agriculture from Iowa State College. Washington "believed all Black southerners needed to know how to work on a farm. He idealized the skills of subsistence farming and urged people to use them to escape poverty" (Ownby, 2003, p. 34). Those beliefs helped Washington develop fundamental values of Tuskegee University as a historically Black university with strong agricultural roots (Ownby, 2003).

Julius Rosenwald

For missions to be fulfilled, key players must cross paths and unite efforts. Several years after Washington's birth, a man who would be a critical member in working towards solving the dilemma of educating African Americans was born. Julius Rosenwald was born in 1862 into a working-class family of German Jewish immigrants

along with his siblings and cousins. He was born in a small town in Illinois and lived a block away from Abraham Lincoln's home (Ascoli, 2006; Deutsch, 2011). Rosenwald demonstrated a sense of entrepreneurial, business savvy from a young age. Following Lincoln's assassination, Rosenwald gathered pamphlets and lithographs surrounding his memorial and sold them to others (Ascoli, 2006). Rosenwald's story was not the typical rags to riches story. Years prior to Julius' birth, his father Samuel, built a business after marrying his employer's sister (Ascoli, 2006). He was tasked with managing their business, the Baltimore Clothing Store, which shifted and grew over time. Historians suggested a contributing factor of the business' growth was due to the massive production of early Civil War battle uniforms for the Union (Ascoli, 2006). The business flourished for Rosenwald's father, thrusting Rosenwald into a middle-class upbringing (Ascoli, 2006).

When Rosenwald was presented with an opportunity at the age of 16 to go to New York to learn from his uncles who were manufacturing clothing he eagerly accepted (Deutsch, 2011). Several years later after learning the business of manufacturing, buying, and selling clothes, he traveled to Chicago to continue his business pursuits (Deutsch, 2011). As he sustained his success as a business man in the world of clothing he remained closely tied to his Jewish roots, and he and his wife, Gussie would regularly listen to sermons preached by Emil Hirsch. Hirsch placed much focus on the need for a social readjustment as a method of reaching personal enlightenment (Deutsch, 2011). "The special obligations of those who had great wealth was a favorite topic. For Julius and his family this was stimulating food for thought, but it also had straightforward application for them" (Deutsch, 2011, p. 41). Although, at the time Rosenwald was not

considerably wealthy he would donate the resources he could. He communicated his dream of distributing wealth through philanthropic efforts with those around him and his vision would become a reality in the following years (Deutsch, 2011).

Much of Rosenwald's success came though his involvement with Richard Sears, the founder of a rapidly growing mail order business (Ascoli, 2006). This relationship with Sears began through the connection of his brother in law, Aaron Nusbaum. When Nusbaum learned of a business opportunity to invest in the new clothing entity he worked to find others who would be interested in such an endeavor (Deutsch, 2011). Rosenwald was the only contact who showed enthusiasm and ultimately worked out a deal with Nusbaum and Sears to invest $37,500 and create a new partnership (Ascoli, 2006). As time went on the partnership drastically shifted as relations between Nusbaum and Sears became strained when Rosenwald made the choice between standing by his brother in law or buying him out of the company (Hoffschwelle, 2006). His decision to focus on the business led him to grow through various positions within Sears. Rosenwald would move from vice-president, to company management and finally to president after Sears resignation in 1908 (Hoffschwelle, 2006).

Building Relationships and Schoolhouses

The success of Rosenwald's business enterprise catapulted him into a new world of opportunity. Rosenwald grew to be one of the influential and well-known business leaders of his time and after obtaining substantial wealth he continued his personal commitment to social responsibility. He became an important contributor and supporter of Jewish charities and eventually broadened his philanthropic scope to the needs of

African Americans (Deutsch, 2011; Hoffschwelle, 2006). His first effort began when he provided support to build YMCA buildings for African Americans (Hoffschwelle, 2006).

Much of Rosenwald's interest in Black issues was due to exposure to William H. Baldwin Jr., a philanthropist and Tuskegee Institute board trustee member (Hoffschwelle, 2006; Deutsch, 2011). Baldwin pushed the African American need of support in their country life and suggested it could be done through the establishment of rural schools for Whites and Blacks in the south. These schools would serve as social centers as well as a place where they could develop vocational training (Hoffschwelle, 2006). Rosenwald had a great amount of respect and admiration for Booker T. Washington and hosted a lunch for him in 1911 when he visited Chicago; a visit to Tuskegee Institute with friends and Rabbi Hirsch would ultimately follow their lunch meeting in Chicago (Hoffschwelle, 2006). The board of trustees later welcomed Rosenwald in 1912 and he persisted in promoting Tuskegee Institute to potential donors (Hoffschwelle, 2006). This growing relationship between two men from racially parallel worlds radically changed the trajectory of educational pursuits for African Americans forever.

Rosenwald's friendship with Washington assisted in expanding his reach in the Black communities and provided a route for donations to support other private Black institutions as they were established (Ascoli, 2006). Rosenwald supported a budding organization that would become the well-known organization, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (Ascoli, 2006). The next endeavor was the construction of small rural schools. Many people worked tirelessly to develop schools to educate African American children, and Rosenwald's funding provided additional support (Deutsch, 2011). Numerous Black Americans saw the potential that came with

obtaining an education from one of these community schools and eagerly worked to gather donations to match the backing Rosenwald would provide (Deutsch, 2011). Deutsch (2011) provided clarity on the fiscal vision and plan Washington had to educate the masses of Black youth:

> Washington had released the one-page "Plan for Erection of Rural Schoolhouses," a statement that carefully defined the program and Rosenwald's commitment to it. The amount the public raised had to be as much as or more than the $350 maximum Julius promised to donate for each new school. Rosenwald's money was to be used in a way to encourage public school officers and the people in the community in erecting schoolhouses in rural and village districts by supplementing what the public school officers or the people themselves may do (p. 126).

The momentum increased when the untimely death of Washington shook the nation in 1915 (Deutsch, 2011). The shared vision between Rosenwald and Washington to build schoolhouses across the rural south fell upon the shoulders of Rosenwald. He supplied matching grants for the creation of nearly 5,000 schoolhouses for African American children in the rural south (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2011). "Rosenwald school construction accelerated in the 1920s, growing by 18 percent per year" (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2011, p. 828) and his programs were responsible for nearly 30 percent of the considerable educational strides of African Americans during the early 1900s (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2011). Education for African Americans became an accessible reality due to much of the foresight and work of Washington and Rosenwald.

1890 Land-Grant Institutions

Following the end of slavery African Americans were in serious need of development in the areas of three R's: '*Reading, Riting, and Rithmetic'* (Jenkins, 1991). A coalition of groups including Black and White private churches, freedmen and federal and state governments pushed initiatives during the Reconstruction era to meet the growing desires. Many of the early Black colleges were established through religious denominations and philanthropic work (Jenkins, 1991). Due to the low numbers of highly educated Blacks following slavery, these institutions began with providing elementary and secondary education to a large number of the students enrolled and persisted to reach the status of a normal school (Humphries,1991). Producing future educators was a primary focus of these institutions and the establishment of 1890 colleges would not stray from that emphasis (Jenkins, 1991).

The 1862 Morrill Act was proposed to grant one college per state federal support to learn mechanical arts and agriculture, which promoted and supported practical education for Whites (Herren & Hillison, 1996). Early leaders saw the value of training agricultural educators at land-grant institutions where they could remain closer to their agricultural subject matter (Herren & Hillison, 1996). This opportunity expanded to African Americans located in the segregated southern region through the passing of the second Morrill Act in 1890 (Jenkins, 1991). The mission of 1890 land grant universities was to uplift African Americans through providing education in home economics, agriculture and engineering (Jenkins, 1991; Westbrook & Alston, 2007). The expansion of Morrill Act legislation for land-grant colleges in 1890 also provided a foundation for institutions where African Americans could emphasize curriculum based on practical

education, more specifically agriculture (Jenkins, 1991). Jenkins (1991) stressed the depth of intellectual experience educators at 1890 intuitions planned to instill in their students by stating, “college leaders certainly were not opposed to providing education in agriculture and the mechanical arts, but they refused to allow their institutions to be straitjacketed into an area of education that did not emphasize development of the intellect” (p. 64).

The label of inferiority continued to be placed on African Americans and created constant educational challenges (Jenkins, 1991). Although the establishment of 1890 land grant institutions created a specified opportunity of educational pursuits for African Americans, the challenges of “separate but equal” still lingered. Jenkins (1991) stressed the problems of funding for 1890 institution and the frequent violation of expectations by the federal governing bodies of the Morrill funds. Considering the environment and negative societal perceptions of African Americans these financial barriers made it more difficult to recruit adequate teachers to join their staff. Although opposed, through perseverance and persistence, accreditation was received by regional accrediting entities in the 1930s for those colleges (Humphries, 1991).

The struggle of acquiring sufficient resources for 1890 institutions has continued into the 21st century through the inability to consistently receive state matching dollars for federal funds (Humphries, 1991). This obstacle has not prevented personnel at 1890 land grants from developing creative strategies to continue to meet the unique needs of their target demographic (Humphries, 1991). What is more, Westbrook and Alston (2007) assert the instrumental role 1890 institutions play in strengthening and improving the recruitment and retention strategies in attracting African Americans to pursue agricultural

related studies and careers. These universities provide more exposure to African American representation and mentors which is a needed support and sense of community, subsequently increasing the likelihood of Black students choosing to stay in the agricultural field (Westbrook & Alston, 2007).

Resources remain limited but that does not dim the light of 1890 land grants. Humphries (1991) highlights their aptitude to thrive in the midst of strenuous conditions by stating, "their ability to garner research dollars is ever-increasing. They are poised to significantly impact one of the greatest challenges facing this nation–educating a greater number of Black students" (p. 11). Scholars are hopeful the importance of the 1890 institutions will be appreciated throughout the field of higher education as well as the spaces of state and federal legislature. Without growth of support in these areas, inequitable access and uncertainty will remain a constant strain on 1890 land grant institutions (Humphries, 1991).

Agricultural Education in the United States

School-Based Agricultural Education has a century old presence in the United States and has evolved in considerable ways (Phipps et al., 2007). The growing popularity and interest of students enrolled in agricultural education during the 1900s prompted a push to consider the training needs for preparing agricultural education teachers (Herren & Hillison, 1996). Initially, many agricultural educators did not receive formal training at universities but did have educational degrees (Foor & Connors, 2010). Agricultural education in the United States has deep ties with the land-grant universities but there were early discussions and action to prepare agricultural education at normal schools instead of land-grant institutions (Herren & Hillison, 1996). Due to the growing

need for teacher preparation, many normal schools adjusted their curriculum to meet the needs and dominant interest of agriculture held in rural communities (Jarvis, 1921). The shift to include more opportunities for hands on learning would shortly follow (Hillison, 1998).

The foundation of federal support for agricultural education within the area of public schools can be traced back to the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 (Phipps et al., 2007). Charles Prosser was in the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education and held the role of Executive Secretary. As a champion of the philosophy of social efficiency, Prosser would significantly influence and lead the development of the Smith-Hughes Act (Wirth, 1972). The passing of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 led to vocational agriculture programs, designed to target production agriculture and farmers, receiving federal funding and support (Phipps et al., 2007).

Many public schools were teaching the subject of agriculture as a general area of study before the passing of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, but the emphasis of vocational agriculture would come into focus during the following seven decades (Phipps et al., 2007). The Smith-Hughes Act grew the support for agricultural education educators but did not specify where they needed to be trained (Herren & Hillison, 1996). During the expansion of agricultural education there would be great debate on how teachers would be trained and many individuals felt land-grant universities should be the ultimate preparation home for agricultural education teachers (Herren & Hillison, 1996). Most of the training departments for agricultural education teachers have been and are currently housed in land-grant universities (Herren & Hillison, 1996).

The standard in which agriculture operates in the classroom today began to take form in the 1980s (Hillison, 1998). Agricultural education cultivates a systemic approach of instruction in the areas of agricultural and natural resources for elementary, middle school, secondary, postsecondary, or adult learning (Phipps et al., 2007). The following three areas drive agricultural education programs: "(1) preparing people for entry or advancement in agricultural occupations and professions, (2) job creation and entrepreneurship, and (3) agricultural literacy learning" (Phipps et al., 2007, p. 3). Agricultural education programs also have three primary concepts to support the model for instruction, supervised agricultural experience (SAE), classroom and laboratory instruction and agricultural youth organization participation (Croom, 2008). School-based agricultural education programs with a comprehensive curriculum will include agricultural literacy and career and technical education (Phipps et al., 2007).

Brown v. Board of Education

The Brown v. Board of Education (1954) case combatted the idea of the 'separate but equal' doctrine established through the Plessy v. Ferguson case (1896) (Lau et al., 2004). Plessy v. Ferguson had a significant impact on the U.S education system from its ruling fifty-eight years prior (Lau et al., 2004). During the 1950s the NAACP continued efforts to combat public school racial segregation among other discriminatory acts against African Americans (Kluger, 2004; Russo et al., 1994). Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, also known as *Brown I*, consisted of four class-action lawsuits filed to contest laws mandating racial segregation on the behalf of African American students attempting to attend an all-white school (Russo et al., 1994). Several families with African American children were denied the right to attend specific public

schools due to the law enforcing segregation. They ultimately filed lawsuits to combat the act of injustice (United States Courts, 2022). The cases eventually consolidated under the name Brown v. Board when brought to the Supreme Court in 1952 and was led by the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund and Thurgood Marshall (United States Courts, 2022).

Preceding the *Brown I* cases, previous cases proclaimed the error of Plessy v. Ferguson and argued for overturning the Plessy ruling (Kluger, 2004). "Brown was viewed as a 'crucial federal sanctioning of racial justice'" (Lau et al., 2004, p. 10), and would further test the concept all men were created equal (United States Courts, 2022). The plaintiffs of *Brown I* challenged schools within the system of segregation were not and could not be made equal (Brown, 1954). In 1952, the initial oral arguments for *Brown I* began with the court being unable to arrive at a decision because of division on the principle of separate but equal and its constitutionality (Russo et al., 1994). A redirection of arguments would follow, pressing the adoption of the 14th Amendment, and in 1954 the Supreme Court's unanimous ruling eradicated the existence of "separate but equal" in public education (Lau et al., 2004; Russo et al., 1994).

The intention of desegregating schools seemed to be what would break open the door to true equality but the decision was met with much resistance from Whites, and federal legislation was needed to assist with integration in the southern schools following the ruling (Tushnet, 2004). Many African Americans echoed Thurgood Marshall's sentiment that the Brown v. Board decision was one of the greatest victories for African Americans since the Emancipation Proclamation (Patterson & Freehling, 2001). Although, celebration followed this monumental decision, today many scholars question

the effectiveness of this ruling toward realized Black equity (López & Burciaga, 2014). These questions would continue when evaluating the impact of integration on agricultural education.

New Farmers of America

Overtime, African Americans made considerable contributions to the U.S. agriculture sector (Balvanz et al., 2011; Moon, 2007), but Whites are more likely than ethnic minorities, including African Americans, to pursue careers in AFFNR (Talbert & Larke, 1995), excluding the manual labor occupations. During the 1930s, an organization was created to support the pursuit of agricultural careers by African American youth and to also develop their leadership capacity (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000). This organization was the New Farmers of American (NFA) and is considered to be the strongest organization to have ever promoted agriculture within the African American community. NFA was a national organization and their membership consisted of Black farm boys in 18 states studying vocational agriculture in public schools throughout the eastern and southern United States (Alston et al., 2022). “Its purpose was the development of its members in vocational, social, and recreational life through established chapters” (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000, p. 421).

NFA was established in Virginia during 1935 and reached a peak membership of more than 58,000 members in over 1,000 chapters by 1965 (Alston et al., 2022). As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum in the 1960s, the federal mandate to desegregate U.S. public schools forced the merger of NFA with the Future Farmers of America (FFA), the equivalent and predominantly White student organization (Jones & Bowen, 1998). Both NFA and FFA were skeptical towards the idea of merging but

because of the federal directive to integrate the organizations it left them little room to resist the inevitable transition (Alston et al., 2022; Wakefield & Talbert, 2000). “African Americans were apprehensive about the merger because throughout history they had never been represented by employment in professional positions in Agricultural Education” (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000, p. 429).

When integration was introduced, the idea to create equal opportunity and end racial discrimination seemed to be the primary goal, but unfortunately some adverse outcomes emerged quickly after the merger of NFA and FFA. The merger quickly damaged the infrastructure that encouraged large numbers of Blacks to engage in agriculture, which resulted in a drastic decline of representation in the industry (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000). Wakefield and Talbert (2000) further explained the impact:

> In terms of measurable progress, FFA has had the least success with ethnic (African American) diversity. Whereas prior to the 1960s African American agriculture teachers served as strong community leaders, once these teachers vanished their leadership roles were not sustained by the agriculture teachers who replaced them. (p. 421)

The merger also caused a loss of identity for NFA members; they were required to relinquish their constitution, name, money, and ultimately their 52,000 members to FFA (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000). A month following the merger many questions were raised about the validity of roles for former NFA members as well as Black administrators and teachers in the new FFA system. Many Black students involved in vocational agriculture were not integrated into the program (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000), creating more opportunity for discontinuation among potential future Black agriculturalists.

Unfortunately, their concerns proved to be valid. Today, African American representation in The National FFA Organization is not even half of what membership was during the peak of NFA's operation in the 1960s, with approximately 25,000 (slightly more than 3%) of active members identifying as African American (National FFA Organization, 2022). The damage to the human capital infrastructure created by the loss of NFA advisors, who were the schools' agricultural teachers, during the merger continues to have longstanding consequences. It also has been suggested, the decline of African American students participating in SBAE programs was because too few students were interested in or were accepted into such programs along with the decline in hiring minority teachers (Lawrence et al., 2013; Wakefield & Talbert, 2000).

However, Gilman (2013) maintained that "educators seek ways to promote agricultural education and increase FFA membership among African-American students to encourage greater participation and to build diversity within the individual FFA chapters and the organization as a whole" (p. 2). That being said, The National FFA Organization continues to struggle to grow African American participation, which likely contributes to the limited representation of African Americans in the agriculture industry today (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000). Few studies have surfaced after 2000 that refute this assertion.

African American Education & Community Impacts

The commitment to education was very apparent following the Reconstruction Era because of the steady increase of Black teachers (Hunter-Boykin, 1992). Education and its connection to the advancement of social and economic progress in the United States has long been a fundamental value for many African Americans (King, 1993). The

commitment and dedication African Americans showed toward developing community leaders through the promotion of education was profoundly apparent throughout history.

Moreover, many African Americans adults viewed the education of African American youth as a personal responsibility (King,1993). They saw the responsibility of providing African American students with strong educational opportunities as a positive contributor to not only support and nurture the African American community's human capital but to also improve the larger society in which all Americans live (King,1993). Many African American teachers have acted as significant role models, parental, figures and advocates for African American children and adolescents (Foster, 1993; King,1993). "Black teachers have not only forged productive relationships with their pupils but that they have been accomplished teachers who, despite overwhelming odds, have challenged the status quo by encouraging Black students to achieve beyond what society expected of them" (Foster, 1993, p. 371).

The most prominent group of leaders in the African American community historically have been educators (King, 1993), and this included public school teachers of agriculture (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000). The importance of educators in the African American community became critically apparent regarding agricultural education when the representation of African American teachers declined precipitously during the era of school integration in the 1960s, including many teachers who were significant community leaders (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000). School-based agricultural education programs never recouped the loss of African American teachers, subsequently failing to attract a sizeable number of African American students (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000). The loss of African American teachers was felt across all disciplines during this time. Black

public schools ceased to exist due to racial integration, and many teachers were removed from their positions, with little regard for their experience, and placed in positions for which they lacked training or professional preparedness (Hunter-Boykin, 1992).

Increased Demand for Diversity in School-Based Agricultural Education

There has been a growing push to evaluate the challenges faced in attracting African Americans and other minorities to the field of agriculture. This section discusses several of the concern and interest areas of focus to improve diversity in SBAE programs.

Diversity in Teaching Ranks

The demographics makeup of vocational agriculture has historically consisted of White males from rural communities and while the number of females enrolling is growing, the size of minority representation is still noticeably low (National Research Council, 1988). Agricultural education has taken notice of the minimal representation of minorities among its ranks and the cultural influences that may encourage those low numbers (Doerfert, 2011). With this problem, they have made it a priority to create a more culturally inclusive environment to increase diversity (Doerfert, 2011). Leaders of the National FFA Organization also recognize its membership is not representative of the U.S. population (Martin & Kitchel, 2015). However, to encourage more African Americans to consider AFFNR sectors as viable career options, barriers and limitations to their recruitment and retention must be addressed (Gilman, 2013).

According to Lawver et al. (2018), current SBAE teachers as well as students preparing to and becoming educators are not particularly diverse. Therefore, the challenge to improve the teaching corps' diversity is significant:

> Approximately 90% of program completers from 2013-2016 were White, 1% African American, 5% Hispanic, and 3% other. Agricultural education continues to see a small number of program completers who identify as African American and Hispanic and even fewer Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander descent. . . . Approximately 69% of all school-based agricultural education teachers are disproportionately White, non-Hispanic with almost 47% being White male and 21% being White female. Additionally, these numbers may be much higher with 2,349 or 28% of the teachers reported as an unknown or other race/ethnicity. . . . If teachers included as unknown ethnicity are included, 31% of the agricultural teaching community at the middle and high school levels is non-Caucasians. If teachers identified as unknown or other are removed, there is only 4% that is non-Caucasian. This is problematic. (p. 42)

These numbers are indicative of an unfortunate and longstanding trend. The number of ethnically diverse teachers pursuing SBAE teaching opportunities has decreased 50% over several decades, which is of great concern for the future of the profession (Kantrovich, 2007, 2010; Vincent & Hains, 2015). This concern is also apparent in the enrollment of minority youth in agricultural education classrooms. Based on current circumstances, it is worth noting the reduced interested in agricultural education within minority youth could be an indication that strategies within the secondary and post-secondary level towards recruitment, cultural understanding and teacher training may not be effective (Vincent & Hains, 2015).

Multicultural Curriculum

Educational systems and the curriculum that is developed and implemented are significantly influenced by the values and beliefs of the dominant culture present within that space (Weisman & Garza 2002). This plays a role in the interest or ability of teachers to cultivate culturally responsive teaching. Lavergne et al. (2012), suggests this translates into the agricultural education space, which is a predominantly White environment. These teachers can often fall into their personal viewpoints of what they feel agricultural education should resemble and could potentially oppose change (Lavergne et al., 2012). Vincent et al. (2014) stresses the importance of the creation of multicultural curriculum and the need for teachers to pursue opportunities to expand their multiculturalism knowledge base before doing so. Unfortunately, it is rare for these majority White teachers to incorporate culturally responsive teachings in their classrooms which hinders their ability to (a) understand why there are perceived barriers for students of color and students with disabilities not enrolling in agricultural education classes and (b) how can they, as teachers, implement strategies for the recruitment and retention of these students (Lavergne et al., 2012).

Barriers to Minority Representation

Although, research illuminates the positive impacts of diversity on students there are a multitude of barriers for ethnic minorities when considering their ability to participate in agricultural education programs (Warren & Alston, 2007). A few of those barriers include limited role models or mentors, stereotypes, and how agriculture is perceived (LaVergne et al., 2011; Talbert & Larke, 1995; Warren & Alston, 2007). Additionally, interpersonal reasons including family issues, school factors and

socioeconomic status can also influence decisions to enroll in agricultural classes for high school students (Lam, 1987; Talbert & Larke Jr., 1995).

Historically, many of the rural areas where agricultural education programs are present are predominantly White while Black youth living in urban communities do not have many opportunities for introduction to agricultural programs (Bird et al., 2013; National Research Council, 1988). Not knowing much about agriculture, the perception of low salaries, harsh working conditions, and slavery having a deep connection with agriculture also causes African American students to evade agricultural education programs (National Research Council, 1988; Jones & Bowen, 1998). Considering the National FFA Organization's deep roots in rural America and traditional agricultural practices leads to a cultural gap between the experiences of urban America (Martin & Kitchel, 2014; Martin & Kitchel, 2015). This creates potential barriers for urban FFA members as they pursue opportunities to become more active on the National level (Martin & Kitchel, 2015). Jones and Bowen (1998), concluded the support received from minority agriculturalists also helps students navigate and overcome stereotypes within the agricultural space and lends support to the need to encourage more diversity within the teaching ranks of agricultural education.

African American Teachers

There are declining numbers of African American students enrolling in teacher education programs which is directly impacting the lesser numbers of African American teachers in the classroom (Irvine, 1988). Consequently, there is often a disproportionate representation of African American teachers when compared to the number of African American students in schools (Madkins, 2011). This trend along with the need for more

exposure of African American teachers to non-Black students (King, 1993) has called for more attention to be focused on improving recruitment and retainment strategies for African American educators in public schools (Irvine, 1988).

Naman (2009), indicates the role African American teachers play in the lives of African Americans students is significant because of the challenged state of communities of ethnic minorities. These African American teachers often serve as advocates, disciplinarians, role models and counselors (Naman, 2009). It is to the benefit to all students to have African American teachers as role models, but it is particularly important for African American students (King, 1993; Madkins, 2011). There is also a likely similarity in linguistic backgrounds and cultural experiences between African American teachers and students which allows them to have familiar relationships and interactions (Madkins, 2011). There is still considerable ambiguity with regard to the effect of a teachers race on the academic performance of their students without much distinctive clarity (Irvine, 1988). However, studies have found African American teachers work overtime in supporting the learning of African American students, dating back to segregation (Milner, 2006).

Milner (2006) claims a sense of authenticity when exploring the experiences of African American teachers and how they saw themselves. It was found that they saw their job to lead beyond the classroom and placed emphasis on teaching their Black students because they recognized that if they did not learn, there were risks of destruction awaiting them within a society who does not expect nor want them to succeed (Milner, 2006). Many African American teachers shared the considerable ease they had in connecting with their African American students and that initial connection would

encourage those students to feel safe in their presence (Griffin & Tackie, 2017). Many African American teachers work to culturally affirm their African American students, address social justice and would often incorporate Afrocentric curriculum to better connect contemporary issues of racism in America (Duncan, 2020).

There is a substantial amount of evidence detailing how teacher's perceptions of students of different races are effected by their racial identity (Naman, 2009). Studies have shown that African American students are often rated as lower classroom citizens when compared to their White counterparts in the eyes of their White teachers, and African American teachers often rate African American students higher (Naman, 2009). Students are very aware of the perceptions their teachers have toward them, what is more African American students are more sensitive to negative teacher perceptions and it greatly affects their performance more so than their non-Black peers (Naman, 2009).

On the contrary, Gay (2000) acknowledged the undeniable need for more minority and African American teachers but warned individuals to be careful of making the assumption that the academic success of minority students is exclusively contingent on the presence of minority teachers. This presumption alludes that belonging to particular ethnic group is an adequate requirement for teachers to facilitate culturally competent pedagogy (Gay, 2000). In combatting this presumption, Gay (2000) emphasized how farcical of an assumption that is by comparing it to the idea that all native English speakers should inherently have the skillset to teach English to others effectively. With consideration to this it would be a precarious belief that all African American teachers have the skillset, ability and knowledge to teach African American students effectively (Milner, 2006). The act of concluding African American teachers

connect with all African American students would be the same as applying those same expectations to White teachers and students (Griffin & Tackie, 2017).

Although overall numbers are low, there are still African Americans choosing to enter the classroom despite the weight or better described by King (2016) as the *invisible* tax they carry as the only or one of few non-White educators in those spaces (Sandles, 2018). Madkin (2011) asserted many are choosing to teach because of their desire to give back to their communities and work with the youth. Griffin and Tackie (2017) found African American teachers felt being in the classroom was their calling and many of them stayed in their profession because of their love for their work and students as well as their ability to help them become successful.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study uses Q methodology to highlight diverse perspectives of a population of African American SBAE educators which is rarely explored in agricultural education. The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of African American agricultural educators regarding their experiences teaching SBAE in the United States. This chapter includes an overview of Q methodology, the differences between R methodology and Q methodology, rationale of the use of this methodology, the conceptual framework and procedures followed to conduct this study.

Overview of Q Methodology

William Stephenson debuted Q methodology in a 1935 letter to the journal *Nature* (Stephenson, 1935). Q methodology, the study of subjectivity, allows researchers to uncover a variety of perspectives held within a specific group (Brown, 1980). The methodology provides an innovative way to explore diverse viewpoints related to a given topic. Essentially, a Q methodology study discerns perspectives from the vantage point of the individual through processes of technique, method, and methodology (Brown, 1980; McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Stephenson, 1953).

Technique is the process of participants sorting items identified by the researcher (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Method is the statistical procedure used to determine the relationship among the sorts, which is a form of factor analysis; whereas, methodology is

the interpretation of the findings (Brown, 1980). Q methodology has a unique ability to bring qualitative research into a quantitative sphere (McKeown & Thomas, 2013) while supporting the individual's viewpoint.

Rationale for Research Approach

Limited research regarding African American SBAE teachers leaves little known about their perspectives toward their work. Q methodology is uniquely fitting for this research as it incorporates the self-referent viewpoints of the African American SBAE teachers themselves. Instead of being measured by structures predetermined by others, Q study participants represent their own frame of reference (Hutson et al., 2010). The holistic nature of this methodology offers a platform to elevate marginalized voices (Brown, 1980). Brown (2006) describes the marginalized community as individuals who are not considered or ignored which effects their ability to reach their potential within the individual or society at large. There are various ways outside of the balance of power in which individuals can be excluded, including education and friendship which also contributes to individuals feeling marginalized (Brown, 2006). Bashatah, (2016) emphasized an additional advantage Q methodology gives the researcher to raise diverse voices in respects of the particpants' viewpoints which is ideal when exploring sensitive topic areas. In addition to the holistic and subjective nature of Q methodology (Watts & Stenner, 2013), Brown (2006) affirmed its strength in illuminating commonly disregarded perspectives:

> A preference for specific interests and the devaluing of others is subjective in character, and the methodological task consists in devising procedures that serve to amplify and clarify preferences that have been unintentionally marginalized, as

> well as reveal those marginalized individuals who hold them, so that the effects of marginalization can be examined and intentionally added to the social discussion (p. 361).

Researchers note the importance of utilizing a diversity of methodologies within an area of study. Leggette and Redwine (2016) expressed the importance of implementing Q methodology when exploring agricultural communications studies and its ability to go beyond the surface and reveal value and diversity through this means of exploration. This thought could be applied to research in areas of agricultural education as well. Based on findings of a study exploring California agricultural education teachers' perceptions of work, Delnero and Montgomery (2001) affirmed the utility of Q methodology in exploring experiences within agricultural education.

The shrinking voice of minority groups within the nation's public education space charged with educating youth about the AFFNR sectors, including career opportunities and post-secondary programs of study, may be raised in a Q methodology study without many of the usual filters or diluters of authenticity or the presence of other hegemonic forces. The results of this study will contribute to an area of literature that is extremely limited with implications for future practice by teachers, school leaders, and policy makers, as well as other researchers and scholars interested in investigating this and related sociocultural phenomena.

Comparison of R Methodology and Q Methodology

In order to understand Q methodology better it is important to have an understanding of R methodology, which is what Stephenson would name the generalization of the statistical analysis developed by Pearson and Spearman in regard to

factor analysis (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). As the connections between R methodology and Q methodology should be considered, the difference between the two research approaches should be understood as well (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q methodology is designed to study subjectivity and the goal of Q methodology is to uncover perspectives held within a particular group (Brown, 1980). Luhrmann (2006) and Holland and Leander (2004) define subjectivity as the inner feelings, responses and experiences of a person as well as their personal views of self and its relation to the world. R methodology is the study of trait relationships and is designed to correlate variables (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). While subjectivity is a key part of Q methodology when investigating people, the results of R methodology are expected to be independent of the participant's will (Brown, 1980). Additionally, the goal of R methodology is to explore the comparison of individuals in relation to traits or characteristics (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

The approach to sampling and participant size are very different within the two methodologies. In Q Methodology, the Q sample is the sampled items from the concourse. Participants within a Q study are called a P set and are small in nature which is a characteristic of this methodology (Brown, 1980; McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Q study participants are selected very purposively and tend to be broad in nature. It is critical to have diversity within the demographic being studied to ensure there is ample opportunity for a variety of perspectives to be revealed (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Studies utilizing R methodology tend to have very large sample sizes and the rationale behind these large numbers is to control for measurement error (Brown, 1980). The

sample is also very reflective of the population being studied to ensure generalizability (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

When it comes to instrument development and utility there are some substantial differences. In Q methodology, the final statements derived from the concourse are used in the sorting process. These finalized statements are called the Q set and they are interconnected because they are each a different opinion and sorted in relation to one another (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). R methodology differs because there are a variety of means to collect data from participants including surveys or questionnaires given (Brown, 1980). These questions on surveys or questionnaires are often developed to reflect reliability in a scale and they are rated independently by the research participant (Brown, 1980; Lowhorn, 2007).

Data analysis regarding the statistics of factor analysis is where Q and R method are the most similar but the variable being correlated is where the difference lies (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Q methodology correlates persons while R methodology correlates item traits (Brown, 1980). The findings within Q are not to be generalized to a population of people, but the findings reveal several perspectives and provide a deep understanding of the original concourse (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). The findings of R methodology are often generalizable in nature because of the requirements for sampling the population of persons participating in the study.

In R methodology, validity allows researchers to trust the construct will measure accurately, and the reliability confirms the study can be replicated and garner the same results (Lowhorn, 2007). Q methodology does not incorporate the idea of validity in the same way because the participant is sorting from an operant frame of reference and is

self-referent (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Brown (1980) asserts how one person's point of view does not have an outside criterion for validation. Viewpoints are of critical importance (Brown, 1980) and within those perspectives only the individual can measure their authenticity (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Reliability does not allude to the sorts being done the same way by a participant each time, rather the resorting of Q sets reveals deeper insight of a perspective instead (Bashatah 2016; Watts & Stenner, 2012). The connections between Q and R methodology are expansive enough to allow for strength in each when used to explore specific research questions.

Conceptual Framework

Applying the conceptual structure of the meaning of work paradigm and the naturalistic element toward the develop of this study's concourse allowed for a hybrid approach in categorizing the statements within the concourse. The utility of conceptual and theoretical frameworks in Q methodology support the development of the concourse which includes a multitude of statements reflecting the thoughts and opinions held within a specific population toward a phenomenon (Stephenson, 1986). When developing, and organizing the list of statements the observer is doing so from a personal viewpoint and the theoretical lens provides an opportunity to illuminate a different aspect to those statements (Brown, 1980). Furthermore, the concourse is a tool for the *flow of communicability* during the study for participants and provides sorters the opportunity to model their subjectivity through the resulting Q sorts (Wolf, 2004).

Wolf expressed the life of the concourse within a Q methodology study by stating, ". . . the concourse flows on, however imperceptibly. Neither the bones removed from the concourse, nor bones appearing in it, last longer than the time taken in the act of

measurement" (p. 149). Concluding that the researchers apply consideration to the theoretical relevance when cultivating the statements within the concourse and the final Q sets, but during analysis of the Q sorts the data remains independent of the assigned theoretical value researchers initially placed on the selected statements (Brown, 1980; Wolf, 2004). Therefore, Brown (1980) asserted the interest is not, "in the logical properties of the Q sample, but in learning how the subject, not the observer, understands and reacts to the items" (p. 191). Additionally, applying the construct of a theoretical or conceptual framework further as a source of validity for the researcher during analysis is not appropriate when seeking to understand the viewpoints of the participants (Brown, 1980).

In this methodology, sorters determine the ultimate significance and meaning of the items leading the researcher to gain broader recognition toward a particular idea based on the expressed interpretations from the study participants' frame of reference (Brown, 1980). Subsequently, Q methodology provides a unique opportunity to utilize a meaning of work conceptual framework when understanding perspectives and ideals held within the African American SBAE teaching community.

The connection between work and meaning is longstanding and fuse various elements of personal experience in a particular work environment and the position of work in society (Schnell, et al., 2013). When examining the experience of African American teachers within various disciplines it is apparent their experiences are full of many challenges and triumphs. Frankl (1959) highlights the emphasis of where people place their focus in stating, "man's main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain but rather to see a meaning in his life" (p. 115). This thought is exemplary of the African

American pursuit of education as well as teaching. Philosophers like Booker T. Washington expressed the obligation and responsibility African American had to pour back into their community, no matter the hardships faced (Washington & Loram, 1971). This perspective of servitude to one's race through education demonstrates an element of the meaning of work conceptual framework. This commonality provides an inimitable advantage to employ this theory in a Q methodology study.

Scholars have long deliberated the definition of meaning. Rosso et al. (2010) describe meaning as something that is constructed on an individual level. Personal perceptions constructed from shared views, cultural and social norms or both can impact how meaning is conceptualized for each individual. "The literature on the meaning of work within the field of organizational behavior has primarily employed a psychological perspective, presuming that perceptions of meaning are rooted in individuals' subjective interpretations of work experiences and interactions" (Rosso et al., 2010, p. 94). The sense making that an individual conceptualizes when it comes to the meaning of work influences the connection they feel to the work they do (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). The fundamental meaning people associate with their work is constantly evolving (Friedmann & Havighurst, 1954). Moreover, when examining the meaning of work not only is the individual's acknowledgement of the role their job has played in their life considered but also the affective response they have associated with it (Friedmann & Havighurst, 1954).

Many existing studies in the broader literature have examined the meaning of work but previous exploration can only be considered a first step towards a more profound understanding of "overarching structures that would facilitate greater integration, consistency, and understanding of this body of research" (Rosso et al., 2010,

p. 91). Rosso et al. (2010) began a comprehensive review of literature on the meaning of work to develop a new conceptual lens to identify a core set of social and psychological mechanisms to help distinguish the path to the construct of meaningful work. Meaning can often be described as negative, positive or neutral in nature but Rosso et al. (2010) applied the positive perception of meaningful work in their study. A broad description of meaningful work or meaning in work is an all-encompassing state of existence (Chalofsky, 2003). The levels of societal, organizational and personal views can be examined through meaning of work research (Schnell et al., 2013).

This study used the following seven identified categories to explain the depth of the meaning of work for African American SBAE teachers: self-esteem, cultural and interpersonal sense making, authenticity, purpose, self-efficacy, transcendence, and belongingness (Rosso et al., 2010). The categories generated illuminate the distinguishing social and/or psychological processes experienced based on existing research that is theoretical in nature as well as research that has not gone through significant empirical testing (Rosso et al., 2010). Self-esteem is a self-prescribed evaluation of an individual's self-worth impacted by the multitude of personal and/or collective accolades and experiences (Rosso et al., 2010). The focus of comprehending how the various modes of work meaning are developed including the sociocultural forces impacting the meaning people assign to the many facets of their work is cultural and interpersonal sense making (Rosso et al., 2010). The alignment between an individual's personal views of self and their behavior is authenticity (Rosso et al., 2010).

Purpose is the sense of drive in life and a personal quest to find one's purpose gives their life meaning (Rosso et al., 2010). When people have a belief of their ability to

make a difference or generate an intended result is ones perceived self-efficacy (Rosso et al., 2010). The term belongingness is defined by Rosso et al. (2010) as the desire to develop and preserve interpersonal relationships that are positive and enduring as well as how the level of connection to social groups at work support experiences of meaningfulness. The connection an individual has beyond the physical earthly realm to a power greater than self is transcendence (Rosso et al., 2010). This feeling supports meaningful work when an individual can submit to entities beyond self (Rosso et al., 2010). The experience of developing and maintaining long lasting quality relationships within an environment is belongingness (Rosso et al., 2010). Each of the seven categories within the conceptual framework were used to organize the statements developed for the concourse.

Instrument Development

Study materials presented to sorters in Q methodology include the Q set, record sheet, and demographics questionnaire. This section details the development of those instruments.

Concourse and Q Set

Q methodology begins with the development of a concourse. The concourse begins as a large list of items that represent a multitude of attitudes, values, or opinions a group holds toward a specific phenomenon (Stephenson, 1986). This collection can be generated in a naturalistic way using interviews, videos, social media, news articles. A concourse can also be developed by using specific theories and concepts in the relevant literature. A combination of naturalistic and theoretical methods result in a hybrid approach (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). The concourse for this study was developed

using a hybrid approach to represent the range of potential perspectives (McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Sneegas, 2020). For this study, the concourse statements were based on literature related to agricultural education and general educational experiences of African American educators. Videos, news, television programing, social media groups, and documentaries about this experience and target area were reviewed. Opportunities to previously engage in general conversations and panels with key stakeholders, scholars, former and current African American teachers allowed the researcher to gain more insight on personal and shared experiences within this population.

After in-depth immersion in relevant literature and materials related to this topic over several months, the concourse totaled nearly 200 statements. Each statement was then categorized using Rosso's (2010) meaning of work conceptual model. The following seven categories identified by Rosso (2010) were used to organize the statements: authenticity, self-efficacy, self-esteem, purpose, belongingness, transcendence, cultural and interpersonal sense making. For example, the statement "I am confident that when it comes to motivating students it's not about color, it's about relationships." was categorized in the cultural and interpersonal sense making category. The statement "Experiences of racism are the silent killer of recruitment and retention of African American agriculture teachers" was placed in the belongingness category. The statement "My level of competence is always questioned" was placed in the self-efficacy category

Additionally, "Without the supportive community I have around me, I would not have had the mental drive to stay in the classroom" was a statement developed through reading literature about African American teachers and exemplified the belongingness category by expressing the need and desire to experience belongingness in their career

field. The statement “My faith allows me to see that the impact I make as an agriculture teacher is bigger than myself” stemmed from conversations the researcher had with African American educators and was placed in the transcendence category presenting the connection teachers had between their occupations and something bigger than themselves.

After the entire list of statements within the concourse were categorized according to Rosso’s (2010) theory, through the process of homogeneity as recommended by Brown (1980), each category was then reviewed for heterogeneity, or ensuring the statements were not similar in nature (Brown, 1980). These procedures are important to gain a representation of all possible opinions about the topic (Brown, 1980). After these two procedures (homogeneity and heterogeneity) are completed, the remaining statements resulted in the Q set for this study.

Once a concourse is sampled, in this study through use of naturalistic, theoretical, or hybrid means, and the final process of heterogeneity and homogeneity the resulting statements are known as a Q set (Brown, 1980). The final Q set was comprised of 45 diverse statements, which can be found in Appendix B.

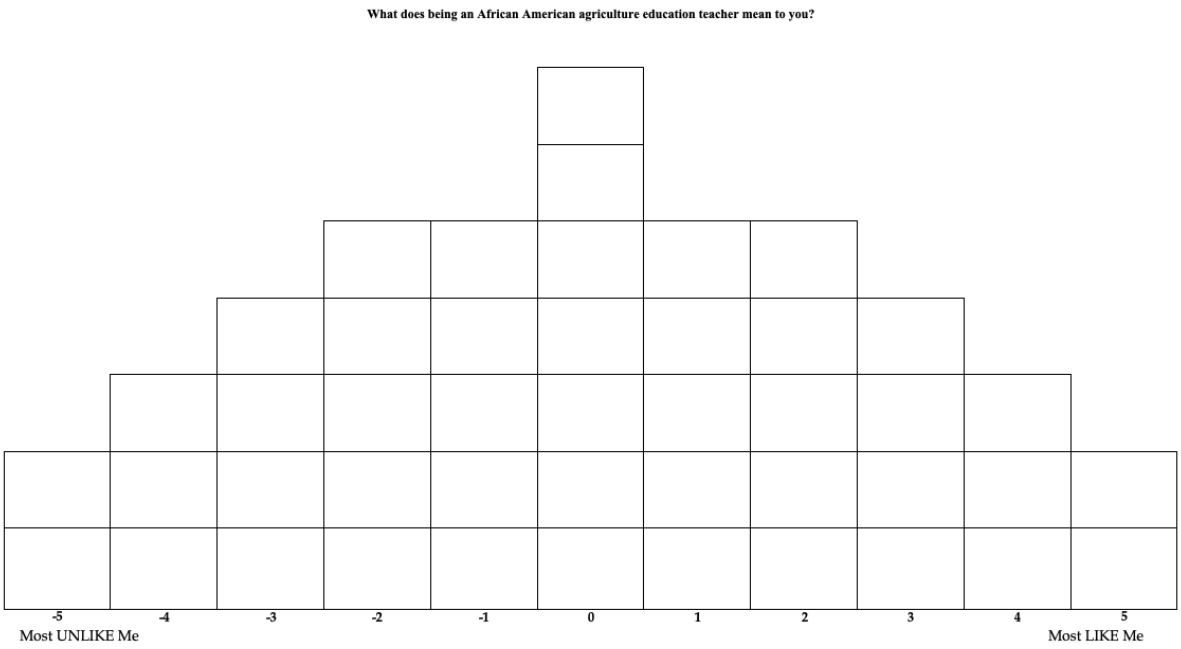
Participants in Q studies are asked to sort the statements according to those that are most like to most unlike their own views (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). A condition of instruction, which reflects the study’s research question, guides the sorting exercise (Watts & Stenner, 2013). Each of the final 45 statements were printed onto small squares of paper. After printing, each set of statements was organized together with a paper clip and Ziplock bag.

Record Sheet

A record sheet was created with 45 squares organized into 11 columns. The columns contained 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 7, 5, 5, 4, 3, and 2 statements per column. The 11 columns followed a pyramid shape. Each column was labeled -5 to +5, with the -5 column labeled "Most Unlike Me," and the +5 column labeled "Most Like Me." The condition of instruction, "What does being an African American agriculture education teacher mean to you?" was printed at the top of the record sheet. The record sheet used for this study is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Record Sheet for the Study



A demographic questionnaire, found in Appendix C, was printed on the back of the record sheet. An example of one the questions asked how many years they have been a SBAE teacher. Another question helped the researcher learn if the teacher had a family

background in agriculture. Each of the questions on the demographic questionnaire provided clearer understanding into the individuals included in the P set. This sheet also allowed for space to retrieve consent and contact information for the researcher to conduct follow-up interviews.

Participant Recruitment

The P set, which in Q methodology refers to the study participants, were African American SBAE teachers throughout the United States. Although all participants must be African American, diversity within these teachers is very important in revealing diverse perspectives (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). The participant size, when investigating distinct perspectives within the scope of subjectivity as done in Q method, is typically smaller in size (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

University IRB approval was obtained for this study in December 2021 (Appendix A). After receiving IRB approval, participant recruitment began immediately through the described outreach efforts in this section. Recruitment materials were distributed via email on listservs, social media platforms, and personal communication. When individuals learned of the study and expressed interest, they contacted the researcher who collected contact information to begin distribution of the study materials. Participants were selected in a purposive sampling manner among members of a target population to meet practical criteria for the study. The key areas of purposiveness in selecting the participants were their willingness to participate as they met the criteria of identifying as African American and being a current SBAE teacher. Snowball sampling quickly followed initial outreach, helping to encourage additional teachers to participate.

Everyone in the P set received an incentive in the form of a digital gift card of $10 via email for choosing to participate in this study.

Data Collection and Procedures

Zoom sessions with participants for the sorting interview were held individually or as a group session with other participants. Each participant received a package in the mail containing the following documents: a Ziploc bag containing all the numbered statements, the record sheet with demographic questionnaire on the back, and a Participant Information Form. The availability of each participant was shared prior to receiving their package in the mail and the researcher coordinated meetings with each of the participants to collect the data.

During their scheduled zoom the researcher would confirm receipt of materials and allow time for participants to read the Participant Information Form. Participants began the sorting procedure by sorting the statements into three piles. One pile would represent the statements they felt were most like them, another pile would represent the statements they felt were most unlike them and another pile of statements they did not have strong feelings about. After creating three piles of statements they were asked to sort the statements in relation to those “most like” their viewpoints and the statements they felt were “most unlike” their viewpoints on to their record sheet in reference to the condition of instruction. After the sorts were completed, the participants were asked to record their final sort by writing the numbers of the statements in the appropriate square they placed it on. Next, they completed the demographic sheet. After completion of the sorting and the demographic sheet each participant took a picture of their sort and demographic sheet and emailed or texted it to the researcher. After analysis of factor data,

exemplar sorters, or those who most closely represent a factor due to the correlation of the sort to the factor were contacted for follow-up interviews to delve deeper into the factor arrays revealed.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of African American agricultural educators regarding their experiences teaching SBAE in the United States. Q methodology provides a unique opportunity to explore experiences from a depth of distinction in identifying the diversity of perspectives held within this population. This chapter details participants, data analysis, and interpretation of perspectives.

Participants

Twenty-three African American SBAE teachers made up the final P set for this study. Ten of the sorters identified as male and 13 were female. The P set represented 10 states throughout the country, from the southwest, southeast, and northeast regions. Each participant taught agricultural courses spanning a variety of disciplines, including horticulture, agriscience, animal science, agricultural education, and plant science. Their reported years of experience teaching agriculture ranged from one to 18 years. When describing the community of the school in which they taught, five reported they taught in an urban community, 10 taught in in a rural community, and eight taught in a suburban community.

Factor Solution

The Q methodology data analysis software program, PQ Method (Schmolck, 2014) was used to analyze the data for this study. The 23 Q sorts were correlated with

one another resulting in a correlation matrix. Using principal components analysis and varimax rotation, an initial two factor-solution was considered for the study (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). The significance level used to determine the minimum factor loading for defining sorts was 0.38, based on the formula $1/\sqrt{n}*2.58$, where n represents the number of statements in the Q sort (Brown, 1980). After further review, the significance level was increased to .50 and a three-factor solution was chosen due to the exploratory lens of pursuing a revelation of deeper or more distinct viewpoints of a seldom studied group of educators. Factor score correlations are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlation of Factor Scores

	Factor A	Factor B	Factor C
Factor A	1.000	0.2897	0.4197
Factor B	0.2897	1.000	0.6013
Factor C	0.4197	0.6013	1.000

Seventeen sorts achieved significance on one of the three resulting factors with the other six either significant on more than one factor (confounded) or nonsignificant. Three exemplar sorters were identified, one from each factor, and contacted for a follow-up interview. If an exemplar sorter for a factor was not available for an interview, the defining sorter with the next highest factor score was contacted for an interview. Table 2 below lists the factor matrix and defining sorters and their demographic information noted.

Table 2

Factor Matrix for Three-Factor Solution

Sort #	Descriptors: Sex and School Community	Factor A	Factor B	Factor C
11	Female, Suburban	**0.85***	0.00	0.06
19	Male, Suburban	**0.82***	0.15	0.07
9	Male, Rural	**0.76***	-0.15	0.29
6	Male, Rural	**0.63***	0.38	0.13
5	Male, Rural	**0.62***	-0.05	0.18
12	Female, Rural	**0.60***	0.16	0.42
13	Female, Urban	**0.59***	0.35	0.25
17	Female, Suburban	**0.59***	0.42	0.11
15	Female, Suburban	0.17	**0.73***	0.33
14	Male, Suburban	0.25	**0.70***	0.27
8	Male, Urban	-0.10	**0.68***	0.23
16	Female, Suburban	-0.15	**0.62***	0.18
1	Female, Urban	-0.13	0.11	**0.78***
18	Female, Rural	0.14	0.48	**0.65***
10	Male, Rural	0.28	0.31	**0.56***
7	Female, Rural	0.38	0.45	**0.55***
4	Female, Suburban	0.44	0.23	**0.54***
3	Female, Urban	0.26	0.00	0.44
21	Female, Suburban	0.46	0.32	0.31
23	Female, Urban	0.37	0.41	0.05
20	Male, Rural	0.41	0.43	-0.08
22	Male, Rural	0.50	0.53	0.17
2	Male, Rural	0.50	0.57	-0.16

Note. Defining sorts are starred and bold.

Statements within the three factors were arranged by *z*-score calculation, which resulted in a composite array. The composite array is representative of the statements' placement

within each factor, and along with field notes, demographic information, and post sort interviews was used to interpret the meaning of each perspective.

Interpretation of Perspectives

The three perspectives African Americans educators held toward the meaning of their work experiences identified in this study were interpreted. Of the 23 participants in this study, eight defined Factor 1; four defined Factor 2; and five defined Factor 3. The three perspectives identified in this study were interpreted as *Anchored in Service, Anchored in Resilience* and *Anchored in Assurance.*

Anchored in Service

The *Anchored in Service* perspective was defined by eight sorters. Of those sorters, four identified as male and four identified as female. Each sorter in this perspective taught in the southern region of the United States. All sorters who defined this perspective indicated a family background in agriculture. Sorters within the *Anchored in Service* perspective reported teaching in the following areas: rural (n=3) suburban (n=4), and urban (n=1).

The depth of the *Anchored in Service* array can be further explained by three conceptual themes: Student Focused, Faith and Community, and Diligent Effort. *Anchored in Service* teachers are student focused, especially through their demonstration of commitment and appreciation for their students. These teachers rely on their deep community connections and faith for support. Additionally, they are diligent in efforts to show an affirmative attitude toward working hard to overcome challenges. The most like and most unlike statements for *Anchored in Service* are listed in Table 3, with the distinguishing statements in bold.

Table 3

Anchored in Service Most Like and Most Unlike Statements

No.	Statement	Array Position	Z-Score
	Most Like Statements		
37	**The love I feel from my students when I walk into my classroom each day makes it all worth it.**	+5	**1.500**
45	My faith allows me to see that the impact I make as an agriculture teacher is bigger than myself.	+4	1.457
43	**Prayer gives me the strength to pursue my dreams as an agriculture teacher.**	**+3**	**1.466**
39	**I was called to improve the community through my service.**	**+3**	**1.318**
7	**Working hard is more important than the color of my skin when pursuing a career in agriculture.**	**+3**	**1.343**
	Most Unlike Statements		
12	Teaching in rural, predominantly white communities scares me.	-2	-1.044
33	How can I fit in when no one else is like me?	-4	-1.431
8	**My level of competence is always questioned.**	**-4**	**-1.209**
24	**The microaggressions I hear seriously make me question why I teach.**	**-4**	**-1.334**
2	The tokenization that I feel as an African American agriculture teacher is sickening.	-5	-1.462

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Student Focused

The element of service embodied by *Anchored in Service* teachers is emboldened by the love they receive from their students (statement 37, array position +5, *z*-score

1.500). Sorter 5 described in a post sort interview the fuel he gets from students saying, "They give you a reason to go to work every day, and seeing student success is my greatest reward." The *Anchored in Service* teachers value their relationships with students, and find motivation in their students' success (statement 45, array position +4, *z*-score 1.457). During a post sort interview, Sorter 4 said, "The job gets hard, and when I start to look for something else, a kid can recall a good experience, and I can see what I am doing is bigger than myself." These teachers also recognize the larger implications of their role as an African American SBAE teacher, as they see their work in helping to dismantle any negative preconceived ideas students and peers may have about African Americans (statement 13, array position -3, *z*-score -1.150; statement 41, array position +2, *z*-score 0.793). Sorter 6 stated during a post sort interview that he valued "showing you can be Black and can still do good things in agriculture and be successful in this career, and be able to tear down the preconceived notions of what White students may have about Black people in general."

Anchored in Service teachers actively seek to serve African American students through mentorship, including those students who are not enrolled in their agricultural education programs (statement 20, array position +1, *z*-score 0.414). During a post-sort interview Sorter 4 said, "I get away from some of the agriculture stuff to support the Black students." The apparent need for African American teachers to support African American students is not only pressed from within the community but outside as well. Field notes indicate one sorter shared the pressure placed on them to support African American students by other White teachers at their school by stating, "Teachers ask me to talk to other Black students just because I am Black." The notion that African American

students relate more to African American teachers is not only seen from the perspective of the African American teachers (statement 16, array position +4, *z*-score 1.410) but from their White colleagues as well.

While understanding the need to go outside of their classroom to support African American students, they also communicated their desire to encourage more African American students to join their program (statement 16, array position +4, *z*-score 1.410), as well as the challenges associated with successfully doing this. Sorter 4 shared during a post sort interview: "Sometimes I feel like I am doing a disservice because I don't have very many Black students involved in my program. I want to have more in my program." During the post sort interview Sorter 5 said, "I need to be more deliberate in getting more Black students in the agriculture classes." The challenge to get African American students involved in agriculture was also expressed during a post sort interview by Sorter 19 said, "They don't find agriculture interesting. A few students thought that it [the agriculture program] was the KKK of the school. Then they thought, 'Wow, it's a Black teacher,' and know FFA is not a just a White organization." The mention of African American students expressing perceived comparison of the KKK organization to their school's agricultural program illuminated an initial disconnect and barrier Sorter 19 encountered when working to recruit African American students. This also represents the apparent discomfort some African American students feel when considering entering into SBAE programs. The limited representation of African American students in SBAE programs adds to the challenge of influencing more diversity, as Sorter 5 explained: "Sometimes it's hard when they don't see other kids who look like them. How do you get

all kids to see that it's bigger than them and that race doesn't matter?" The statements supporting this theme are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Statements Supporting the Student Focus Theme

No.	Statement	Array Position
37	**The love I feel from my students when I walk into my classroom each day makes it all worth it.**	**+5**
44	**Life is about making a difference and I am happy I can do that as an agriculture teacher.**	**+5**
20	I am responsible for mentoring African American students.	+1
13	I am stressed with expectations that I represent the entire African American community.	-3
35	The tokenization that I feel as an African American agriculture teacher is sickening.	-5

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Faith & Community

The role of community in the lives of *Anchored in Service* teachers is monumental. *Anchored in Service* teachers have a strong desire to serve community and feel it is their calling (statement 39, array position -3, *z*-score 1.318). Sorter 5 illustrated the tie between agriculture and community work during a post sort interview saying, "I think teaching agriculture is a community thing. In a rural community agriculture is important." Serving the community is personal for *Anchored in Service* educators. Sorter 6 said in a post sort interview, "I am a community person; much of my family still lives in this community. I want to make sure I have an imprint on them in a positive way for the kids to have a positive outcome in life." The community of support these teachers have around them also plays a pivotal role in their ability to stay in agriculture (statement

36, array position +2, *z*-score 0.939). Sorter 6 said during a post sort interview: “I couldn’t do it by myself. Too many highs and lows to go through this without someone to back you up.” Similarly, Sorter 5 mentioned in a post sort interview, “When you’re in need and your community can help you out, it makes you feel like you can stay in the classroom.”

Anchored in Service teachers have a strong aspiration to serve even when faced with challenges, and their faith helps them to stay grounded (statement 45, array position +4, *z*-score 1.457; statement 39, array position +3, *z*-score 1.318). The adversity faced as an African American agricultural educator was shared, but their religious foundation helped them persevere. As Sorter 19 said during a post sort interview, “Sometimes I look at challenges, and I look at overcoming them through my faith. I have to put my faith and religion in my jobs to reach certain goals.” During a post sort interview, Sorter 5 supported the value of religion saying, “Sometimes there’s just tough times and you just got to pray.” The statements supporting this theme are found in Table 5.

Table 5

Statements Supporting the Community and Faith Theme

No.	Statement	Array Position
44	**Life is about making a difference and I am happy I can do that as an agriculture teacher.**	**+5**
45	My faith allows me to see that the impact I make as an agriculture teacher is bigger than myself.	+4
36	I have found comfort and connection through my family and friends as I journey through my career in agriculture education.	+2
39	**I was called to improve the community through my service.**	**-3**
12	Teaching in rural, predominantly white communities scares me.	-2
19	**I am expected to ignore my own culture to accommodate the needs of others.**	**-3**

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Diligent Effort

Anchored in Service teachers understand the challenges of being an African American SBAE teacher, but view hard work as a means to surpass any negative stereotype placed on them due to their race (statement 7, array position +3, *z*-score 1.343). Sorter 6 pointed out the negative stereotype associated with his race during a post sort interview, saying "a lot of White people have a negative image in their head that Black people are lazy, when we're the people who did the whole agriculture thing in the beginning." He said hard work can challenge that idea, adding "work hard enough to produce the results. They're going to go with that no matter the skin color because we live in a results-driven society." *Anchored in Service* teachers also value working overtime to ensure their students are successful. Sorter 19 described this during a post

sort interview by saying, “I’ve made a bunch of sacrifices to ensure they [students] know the material. Seeing how well I can train a group of kids that come from all different backgrounds to succeed is rewarding.”

The *Anchored in Service* teachers also managed to overcome the questioning of their competency through a focus on work ethic and experience (statement 8, array position -4, *z*-score -1.209). During a post sort interview, Sorter 5 expressed how his experience in agriculture helped him avoid checks of his competency saying, “I’m an Ag buff, so no one ever questions what I do or don’t know about at school.” Sorter 6 shared during the post sort interview his family legacy in the community and how it helps combat the potential of others questioning his ability. He stated, “My family has a good footing in the community and that respect factor. …A lot of the parents of who I teach know my family, and I don’t have many kids question me.”

The *Anchored in Service* teachers also do not associate the idea of tokenism with the role they play as an SBAE teacher. As Sorter 5 said during a post sort interview, “I don’t feel like that’s ever part of the reason why I’m there. I’m not just here because of what I look like. It’s because of all of the other things I bring to the table.” Similarly, Sorter 6 said during his post sort interview, “Regardless of if I’m Black or White, I got the job because I want kids to be successful.” They flip the weight of what may be deemed as pressure to rise above stereotypes (statement 3, array position -2, *z*-score -0.211) as an opportunity to illuminate the pride they have as an African American by demonstrating excellence. Sorter 6 stated during his post sort interview, “I am proud to be Black. As a Black person, my standards are really high.” He also pointed out the impression he wants to leave on White community members due to his work ethic and

performance, “I don’t think they [White teachers] see a lot of us so I want to make sure when they see Black agriculture teachers, they know they can do as good of a job, if not better, than they can.” The statements supporting this theme are listed in Table 6.

Table 6

Statements Supporting the Diligent Effort Focus Theme

No.	Statement	Array Position
7	**Working hard is more important than the color of my skin when pursuing a career in agriculture.**	**+3**
27	I am proud to be one of the few African American agriculture teachers.	+4
5	I am confident that when it comes to motivating students it's not about color, it's about relationships.	+2
8	**My level of competence is always questioned.**	**-4**
2	Society’s assumption that I am a victim as an African American, affects the way I view myself at work.	-5
35	The tokenization that I feel as an African American agriculture teacher is sickening.	-5

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Anchored in Resilience

The *Anchored in Resilience* perspective was defined by four sorts. Two sorters identified as male and two identified as female. The sorters in this perspective teach in the southeastern and southwestern region of the United States. Three sorters in this perspective indicated a family background in agriculture. The *Anchored in Resilience* perspective included teachers in the following communities: rural (n=2), suburban (n=1), and urban (n=1).

This factor array revealed four conceptual themes to provide depth of the *Anchored in Resilience* perspective. The four themes are Pride and Legacy, Weight of Race, Racial Focus and Needed Presence. Pride and Legacy expresses the pride associated with the history of African Americans in agriculture and the need to share. Weight of Race explains the burden associated with being African American in the SBAE space. Racial Focus expresses the varied focus of African Americans in their role as an SBAE teacher when it comes to cultural values and interaction with African American students. Needed Presence conveys the value of having African Americans in the role of an SBAE teacher. The most like and most unlike statements for *Anchored in Resilience* are listed in Table 7, with the distinguishing statements bolded.

Table 7

Anchored in Resilience Most Like and Most Unlike Statements

No.	Statement	Array Position	Z-Score
	Most Like Statements		
27	I am proud to be one of the few African American agriculture teachers.	+5	1.688
41	**I stay in this position because students need to see more people who look like me in teacher roles.**	**+4**	**1.523**
35	**The tokenization that I feel as an African American agriculture teacher is sickening.**	**+4**	**1.207**
16	African American students can relate easier to African American teachers.	+4	1.422
15	FFA hasn't acknowledged NFA's footprint for decades, neglecting the role of race in its history.	+3	0.818
	Most Unlike Statements		
29	If we expect agriculture to become more diverse, we cannot spend all day talking about race.	-4	-1.449
6	**My needs and wants are the same as white teachers in agricultural education.**	**-4**	**-1.787**
17	**My cultural values are pretty much the same as the values of the greater agriculture education sector.**	**-4**	**-2.025**
22	The best way to move forward is to forget and forgive the past.	-5	-2.207
13	**I'm not comfortable talking about race, my primary focus is to prepare my students for their future careers.**	**-5**	**-2.104**

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Pride and Legacy

The *Anchored in Resilience* educators have a deep connection and pride in their history and existence as an African American in agriculture (statement 27, array position +5, *z*-score 1.688). They feel it is important and take it upon themselves to share many of the untold stories of African American agriculture. In a post sort interview, Sorter 14 shared his effort to do this in saying, "Like with slavery, people are tired of hearing about it and students are tired, but you need to know what actually happened. It would be better to know the growth if you know the past." During a post sort interview, Sorter 15 mentioned going the extra mile during Black History Month to highlight different leaders: "Black history month, instead of the regular Black icons list, like MLK, I talk about George Washington Carver and other prominent Black people in agriculture who have done prominent things. Black or White kids don't even know that." These teachers see the importance of telling a broader story within the agricultural space.

Anchored in Resilience teachers value the acknowledgment of NFA in agricultural education (statement 15, array position +3, *z*-score 0.818). Sorter 14 reaffirmed the disappointment in the lack of discussion of NFA by stating, "We don't know much about NFA, it's like they're sweeping it under the rug. It's like what Caucasians do, they sweep things under the rug and deal with what they want to deal with." Sorter 15 noted all of her students appear to enjoy learning about NFA. She said, "Talking about NFA, is one of the parts of FFA history they like the most." The difference between the FFA and NFA creed was even highlighted as a point of division in the historic views between African Americans and Whites. Sorter 15 stated, "[The] FFA creed says, 'Don't beg people for nothing, stand on your own, no handouts here,' . . . the kids like the NFA creed better. It

talks about true brotherhood and giving back to community because it was written for us [African Americans]." *Anchored in Resilience* educators are bothered that parts of their history are not shared at large with the discipline, which leads them to take the initiative teach it on their own. The statements supporting this theme are found in Table 8.

Table 8

Statements Supporting the Pride and Legacy Theme

No.	Statement	Array Position
27	I am proud to be one of the few African American agriculture teachers.	**+5**
15	FFA hasn't acknowledged NFA's footprint for decades, neglecting the role of race in its history.	+3
29	If we expect agriculture to become more diverse, we cannot spend all day talking about race.	-4
13	**I'm not comfortable talking about race, my primary focus is to prepare my students for their future careers.**	**-5**
22	The best way to move forward is to forget and forgive the past.	-5

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Weight of Race

Anchored in Resilience teachers acknowledge the difficulties related to combating negative stereotypes possibly held against their race (statement 3, array position +2, *z*-score 0.497). During a post sort interview, Sorter 14 shared some of the experiences he had with teachers stressing the need for him to connect with other African American students by making assumptions on what his life experiences may have been like: "They tell me that I have to connect with my students, and now, analyzing it, do they think if this child came from a broken home, just because I'm Black I may have come from a broken home, too?" He expanded on his frustration with the assumptions made due to his

race by stating, “You don’t even know me to know that’s my experience, just because I’m Black, telling me to share my struggles. I’m not saying just because you’re White you need to share that you grew up in a trailer park.”

Anchored in Resilience teachers also recognize the pressure to prove themselves as an African American agriculture teacher (statement 9, array position +3, *z*-score 0.795), while prompting others to see the diversity within their race. Sorter 14 during a post sort interview said:

> It’s a challenge when they look at you and see color and probably have an assumption of you not doing it right, not reaching the kids . . . why do I have to prove myself to you? Let our work speak for us.

Sorter 14 added, during his post sort interview, the challenges of preconceived notions associated with his race, while also declaring the need to see differences between African Americans. He said, “You don’t link every Black person and think they’re all alike. You wouldn’t link all White people like they’re all alike.”

The *Anchored in Resilience* educators illuminated the experience of tokenism as an African American SBAE teacher (statement 35, array position +4, *z*-score 1.207). Sorter 15 shared, during her post sort interview, her divisive feelings toward being put on display as an African American SBAE teacher, saying, “Some days I just feel like I don’t know if I can play this game much longer. They couldn’t wait to introduce me or want to take pictures of me and put me big on posters.” On the contrary, she saw a value of serving as representation if it could possibly encourage more African Americans to pursue agriculture. “Sometimes I play along,” Sorter 15 stated. “Although there aren’t a lot of Black students in the Ag program, if it’s me they see that encourages them to

pursue [agriculture], I guess I am fine with that. Let's put on the game face," Sorter 15 continued. Sorter 14 also expressed during a post sort interview the misperception caused by the surprise use of his image on agricultural marketing materials:

> I didn't know, but someone else told me. They had a photo of me from an event. I did feel some type of way . . . that's not what the agriculture education industry looks like. . .the teachers are not that diverse . . . tokenism, I do feel that way sometimes.

Anchored in Resilience teachers challenged the impact of diversity training sessions on their experience as African American SBAE teachers (statement 14, array position +5, *z*-score 1.838). They questioned the true intention and follow-up action of the workshops held to increase diversity. Sorter 15 explained during a post sort interview, "Everything looks good on paper but when you dig into it, same ole same ole. Are they actively recruiting, in the higher ups?" She asked what efforts are being implemented to see diversity increase and added to her statement by stating:

> Are they putting Ag programs in places that they feel would be beneficial? Many of the Ag programs I know of are in rural areas. I don't know how many Black people who want to live that far out. I wouldn't take an Ag position in a predominantly rural White area.

During a post sort interview, Sorter 14 added to this overarching question of action about diversity: "People can say that they're open to having different kinds of people involved but they're really not." Table 9 lists the statements supporting this theme.

Table 9

Statements Supporting the Weight of Race Theme

No.	Statement	Array Position
14	It doesn't matter how many diversity trainings they create, my experience is still a struggle as an African American teacher in agriculture education.	+5
35	**The tokenization that I feel as an African American agriculture teacher is sickening.**	**+4**
3	I am constantly battling to rise above the stereotypes placed on me as an African American.	+2
17	**My cultural values are pretty much the same as the values of the greater agriculture education sector.**	**-4**
6	**My needs and wants are the same as White teachers in agricultural education.**	**-4**

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Racial Focus

Anchored in Resilience teachers recognize purposeful support they have to provide for their African American students as they enter predominantly White spaces of agriculture (statement 21, array position +2, *z*-score 0.694). During a post sort interview, Sorter 14 said:

> I don't talk about race to my students a lot but I do make them aware that they will face challenges because of their race . . . I link different racial problems to the lesson so they can understand some things they may face in the world or now.

Sorter 15 expressed during a post sort interview the encouragement she has to give her African American students when preparing to go to FFA competitions. She said, "I have to give my Black kids a pep talk . . . we're about to step into something that you may not have seen at your house or [not somewhere you] have been. It's a big culture shock."

Sorter 14 also explained during a post sort interview the up-and-down experience of getting African American students involved in agriculture and attending the National FFA Convention, "They see the environment and Black students could feel unsafe . . . I'm trying to encourage them to be in AG, and they actually get in and encounter that barrier and feel uncomfortable."

Teachers within this perspective also explained the difference between the needs and wants they have compared to their White colleagues. During a post sort interview, Sorter 15 shared that she does not fully understand what White teachers may want, but intuitively felt it was different than her own desires:

> I don't know what their [White SBAE teachers] end goal is. I look for the ones [students] who are least likely to be in Ag and show them where they [students] can use their talents and strengths. . . . Not saying they [White SBAE teachers] don't care about other kinds of kids. I don't know what their intentions are.

Sorter 14 also shared his concern for the unconscious bias White teachers may have when working with African American students: "I work with different White Ag teachers and I think they have good intentions of including all in AG, but I think in their subconscious they are labeling."

The variance between this perception's cultural views and agricultural education was clear (statement 17, array position -4, *z*-score -2.025). Sorter 14 expressed during a post sort interview that he is very aware of the cultural values of his students. He further commented on this difference when discussing how he approaches working with his students: "My cultural values are different from AGED. I'm trying to help students find

their place in AG. I'm not trying to help them find careers in AG." The list of statements to support this theme are in Table 10.

Table 10

Statements Supporting the Racial Focus Theme

No.	Statement	Array Position
27	**I am proud to be one of the few African American agriculture teachers.**	**+5**
16	African American students can relate easier to African American teachers.	+4
37	The love I feel from my students when I walk into my classroom each day makes it all worth it.	+3
21	Students need to know the path in agriculture may have challenges pertaining to race.	+2
6	**My needs and wants are the same as White teachers in agricultural education.**	**-4**
17	**My cultural values are pretty much the same as the values of the greater agriculture education sector.**	**-4**

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Needed Presence

Educators in the *Anchored in Resilience* perspective feel it is important for others to see African Americans as SBAE teachers (statement 41, array position +5, *z*-score 1.523). During a post sort interview, Sorter 14 shared how their White colleagues expressed the importance of others seeing him in that role: "The guidance counselor said to me, 'I am so happy that you're here; our Black students need to see more Black people in teacher roles.'" He continued with conveying the comparison of the subservient roles most African Americans hold in his school versus his role as a teacher and the

unfortunate lack of respect they receive. Sorter 14 said, “They don’t need to only see Black people in cafeteria, as custodians, bus drivers. Not to disapprove their roles, but they don’t get the respect I do from the students.” He continued, “We need to be seen. We need to show what we can do and impact our students no matter what race they are.” During a post sort interview, Sorter 15 shared the excitement displayed from the parents of her African American students during the virtual learning experience when meeting via Zoom: “My Black kids love the fact that I’m their teacher. . .popping into a Zoom with the kids, and the parents could see their teachers, you could see their parents like, ‘Yes!’ seeing that they have a Black teacher.”

Anchored in Resilience teachers also recognize a strong appreciation from their students (statement 37, array position +3, *z*-score 0.805). Sorter 15 discussed during a post sort interview the love she has for her students, “I just love them even when they make my hair turn gray. Even the ones you thought were not paying attention, they will stick with it and appreciate what you do.” Teachers also expressed the unique ability they have to connect to all students, no matter their race. During her post sort interview Sorter 15 stated, “White teachers struggle to connect with Black students. Black teachers have that gift of connecting to White and Black students all the same. We have to live in two worlds, so it’s easier to navigate between groups.” Sorter 14 echoed this sentiment during his post sort interview: “It was pleasing that I was able to connect with everyone and it makes me feel proud to be an African American teacher because you can relate to everyone.”

Anchored in Resilience teachers recognize the advantage they have when working with African American students (statement 16, array position +4, *z*-score 1.422). While

admitting that “not all Black teachers are for Black kids,” Sorter 15 described in a post sort interview how she has been able to push African American students toward success: “They perform different for us and can relate to us a little bit more and they feel more comfortable around African American teachers.” The advocate role these teachers play for their African American students also adds to the trust they have in their African American teachers. Sorter 15 continued, “I am not going to allow you to disrespect them. You’re not going to call them racist terms while I am present. I teach all children, but I *especially* teach them [African American students].”

During the post sort interview, Sorter 14 explained how relatability supports the connection they have with their African American students, “We talk more about things Black students can be impacted by.” He went on to explain how the lack of connection and ability to relate between African American students and White teachers creates barriers. Furthermore, those barriers increase if White teachers see African American students as a problem instead supporting them. Sorter 14 expressed this sentiment during his post sort interview: “I have my heart open to all students, especially Black students. Some White teachers are so dismissive. They see it’s a Black student and think it’s going to be a problem.” The statements supporting this theme are listed in Table 11.

Table 11

Statements Supporting the Needed Presence Theme

No.	Statement	Array Position
41	**I stay in this position because students need to see more people who look like me in teacher roles.**	**+5**
16	African American students can relate easier to African American teachers.	+4
37	The love I feel from my students when I walk into my classroom each day makes it all worth it.	+3
2	Students need to know the path in agriculture may have challenges pertaining to race.	+2
23	I am stressed with expectations that I represent the entire African American community.	-3
6	**My needs and wants are the same as White teachers in agricultural education.**	**-4**

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Anchored in Assurance

The *Anchored in Assurance* perspective was defined by five sorts. Of those sorters, one identified as male and four identified as female. The teachers within this perspective teach in the southwestern and southeastern region of the United States. Out of the five sorters *Anchored in Assurance,* three specified a family background in agriculture. The *Anchored in Assurance* perspective includes teachers in the following communities: rural (n=3), suburban (n=1), and urban (n=1).

Three themes were identified to delve into the *Anchored in Assurance* perspective. The three themes are Undervalued, The Responsibility is Mine and Victimized but Not a Victim. The Undervalued conceptual theme reveals the

unrecognized ability of African American teachers and their commitment to using their skillset to cater to the needs of their kids. The Responsibility is Mine conveys the feeling African American SBAE teachers have to support their African American students and colleagues. Victimized but Not a Victim expounded on the educators' strength as African American SBAE teachers, despite the challenges they face. Table 12 lists the most like and most unlike statements for *Anchored in Assurance* with the distinguishing statements bolded.

Table 12

Anchored in Assurance Most Like and Most Unlike Statements

No.	Statement	Array Position	Z-Score
	Most Like Statements		
8	My level of competence is always questioned.	+5	1.317
14	It doesn't matter how many diversity trainings they create, my experience is still a struggle as an African American teacher in agriculture education.	+4	1.550
20	**I am responsible for mentoring African American students.**	**+4**	**1.300**
16	African American students can relate easier to African American teachers.	+4	1.296
28	**I have a responsibility to reach out to new African American teachers to help them build their confidence as agriculture teachers.**	**+3**	**1.003**
	Most Unlike Statements		
32	**It is important for my colleagues to empathize with my experiences without feeling sorry for me.**	**-3**	**-1.002**
33	How can I fit in when no one else is like me?	-3	-1.366
29	If we expect agriculture to become more diverse, we cannot spend all day talking about race.	-4	-1.729
22	The best way to move forward is to forget and forgive the past.	-5	-2.331
2	Society's assumption that I am a victim as an African American, affects the way I view myself at work.	-5	-1.853

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Undervalued

The *Anchored in Assurance* teachers believe in an ideal world diversity trainings should help improve things, but are not sure where the value of diversity lies because improvement is not always the outcome due to the structure of SBAE programs (statement 14, array position +5, *z*-score 1.550). There is little faith in the effectiveness of these workshops because the assumed loyalty to founding groups who may not value diversity runs deep. During a post sort interview, Sorter 1 said, "I've sat on think tanks on what we have to do to increase diversity and nothing really changes. They are still going to cater to the groups that it was predominantly founded for." Sorter 4 added to this feeling by sharing the shift they have seen in representation but a reduced difference in the creation of a more inclusive environment during a post sort interview:

> I've seen great change as it pertains to an increase of African American students who participate in FFA, but the culture of the organization is based around country music . . . kids that come from the deep south with confederate flag belt buckles.

Teachers within this perspective also expressed how their competency is always in question (statement 8, array position +5, *z*-score 1.550). Sorter 18 shared during her post sort interview how her lengthy experience does not help gain more credibility in the eyes of others. She stated, "I always have to prove that I know what I am talking about, even if I have been there more than anybody else. I feel like my actions get questioned quite a bit." Within this perspective, Sorter 1 specifically communicated how her expertise in specific content area is not recognized. Sorter 1 has been involved in leading programs designed to support top tier SBAE teachers but instead of being called on to

lead workshops in her area of expertise, she said she is often asked to lead diversity workshops. She stated:

> I have been asked to put on these workshops about diversity, but never a workshop about [content specialty area]. It's like 'We know you're here and knowledgeable, but were not going to ask for your input unless we need some token information . . . We use you for what we want to use you for.'

In *Anchored in Assurance*, Sorter 4 also voiced the opposition faced toward her competency due to being in an urban SBAE program. She expressed this challenge during her post sort interview: "A lot of the time you hear about us having urban Ag programs; they don't consider us true Ag and look at us like, 'You just play with plants.'"

In the midst of experiences that combat their value as an African American SBAE teacher, *Anchored in Assurance* teachers acknowledged the disparities in treatment due to their race (statement 9, array position +2, *z*-score 0.774). Sorter 1 shared how African Americans can do the same thing as their White colleagues, but should not expect the same opportunities. Sorter 1 expressed this feeling during the post sort interview: "A White male could not have the certifications and could be offered an opportunity, while a Black person would not be hired just because they don't have the certification." This stance builds upon the question of hard work being more significant than skin color (statement 5, array position -2, *z*-score -0.719). The statements supporting the Undervalued theme are in Table 13.

Table 13

Statements Supporting the Undervalued Theme

No.	Statement	Array Position
8	My level of competence is always questioned.	+5
14	It doesn't matter how many diversity trainings they create, my experience is still a struggle as an African American teacher in agriculture education.	+5
9	I have to work ten times harder than everyone else just to get respect.	+2
5	**Working hard is more important than the color of my skin when pursuing a career in agriculture.**	**-2**
29	If we expect agriculture to become more diverse, we cannot spend all day talking about race.	-4

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

The Responsibility is Mine

Teachers in *Anchored in Assurance* feel an obligation to support other African American SBAE teachers (statement 20, array position +5, *z*-score 1.688). Sorter 4 expressed during a post sort interview the challenges she faces when attempting to get African American students involved in agriculture, compared to her time teaching at a predominantly White school, "When I was at a majority White school, the White kids were excited [about agriculture]. It's more work to get the Black kids excited about the Ag part." Sorter 4 continued by explaining her attempts to meet the African American students where they are by customizing her program: ". . . our programs are supposed to cater to our demographic." Within this conceptual theme, teachers expressed how when they are at a predominantly White school they see the importance of helping the few African American students they encounter. Sorter 18 shared during a post sort interview,

"We have four Black students, and that's a lot for our school. As the only African American teacher at our school, those Black students look to me for support . . . as a fellow Black person, they feel nurtured, cared about."

For the teachers in this perspective, it is equally important to support other African American SBAE teachers as well (statement 20, array position +4, *z*-score 1.300). Sorter 18 expressed during a post sort interview the importance of ensuring African American SBAE teachers feel valued: "I would be trying to connect with them [African American SBAE teachers] and make sure they felt comfortable . . . make sure they feel welcomed. I would want them to feel supported and that they mattered." The desire to serve their African American colleagues runs deep for *Anchored in Assurance*. During a post sort interview, Sorter 1 said, "I feel like it's my calling to help them [African American SBAE teachers]. If they need advice . . . I want them to be successful." These sorters also confess the adversity of racism and its effect on the retention rate of African American teachers (statement 31, array position +3, *z*-score 1.012) and hope they can help combat this problem by uplifting their peers. Sorter 1 builds on this struggle during the post sort interview by saying, "I want for them [African American SBAE teachers], that if they want to leave, I want them to leave because they have a better opportunity not because they were forced out or because they didn't have support." The statements supporting The Responsibility is Mine theme are listed in Table 14.

Table 14

Statements Supporting the Responsibility is Mine Theme

No.	Statement	Array Position
20	**I am responsible for mentoring African American students.**	**+5**
16	African American students can relate easier to African American teachers.	+4
28	**I have a responsibility to reach out to new African American teachers to help them build their confidence as agriculture teachers.**	**+3**
31	**Experiences of racism are the "silent" killer of recruitment and retention of African American agriculture teachers.**	+3
6	**My needs and wants are the same as White teachers in agricultural education.**	**-1**
35	The tokenization that I feel as an African American agriculture teacher is sickening.	-3

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Victimized but Not a Victim

Teachers in the *Anchored in Assurance* perspective, although they understand others see the multitude of hardships they may encounter as a large burden, they do not allow themselves to be labeled as victims (statement 2, array position -5, *z*-score -1.853). Sorter 1 explained this perspective during a post sort interview: "It is true, I have experienced discrimination during the hiring practice . . . I'm not the victim but I am victimized. I try not to take it personal." Sorter 18 commented in support of this view during her post sort interview, "I know that society's perception of Black people does influence the way they see me. I don't see myself as a victim, but it is my reality that people are going to see me differently." Teachers admit their race places them in the

position to face unjust treatment but do not allow it to alter the way they perceive themselves.

Anchored in Assurance teachers do not pursue the need to feel empathy from their colleagues when encountering a troubling situation (statement 32, array position -3, *z*-score -1.002). People in this conceptual theme gain assurance from the community they have built around them (statement 34, array position 3, *z*-score 1.162). Sorter 18 shared during her post sort interview her experience with the lack of understanding from her White colleagues by saying, "People weren't empathetic. In an ideal world, yes, they should be, but for me, personally, it is not going to stop me from doing my job or doing what I want to do." She went on to mention where her support really comes from:

> If you don't empathize with me at work as my colleagues, I can call my network and community, then I can get that. . . . I don't need that kind of gratification to know if I am going to sign a contract next year.

Sorter 1 reiterated the value of community when describing her teacher support community of other African American agriculturalists and how it helped her stay in teaching ranks longer. She said, "We're all in a group chat and we talk about the hiring practices and stress of the job. Definitely being with them helped me stay longer." Statements supporting the Victimized but Not a Victim conceptual theme are listed in Table 15.

Table 15

Statements Supporting the Victimized but Not a Victim Theme

No.	Statement	Array Position
36	I have found comfort and connection through my family and friends as I journey through my career in agriculture education.	+4
34	Without the supportive community I have around me, I would not have had the mental drive to stay in the classroom.	+3
26	I've had both positive and negative experiences as a teacher, and most of my negative experiences centered on issues related to race.	+2
32	**It is important for my colleagues to empathize with my experiences without feeling sorry for me.**	**-3**
33	How can I fit in when no one else is like me?	-4
2	Society's assumption that I am a victim as an African American, affects the way I view myself at work.	-5

Note. Distinguishing statements are bolded.

Consensus Statements

The three factors resulted in 12 consensus statements. Although consensus statements were sorted similarly, among the three factors, there are differences in reasoning and interpretation behind the placement of those statements (Brown, 1980). Table 16 contains the consensus statements and their array positions for each factor array.

Table 16

Consensus Statements

No.	Statement	*Anchored in Service AP*	*Anchored in Resilience AP*	*Anchored in Assurance AP*
16	African American students can relate easier to African American teachers.	+4	+4	+4
25	Others judge feelings or emotions I express.	-3	-2	-2
27	I am proud to be one of the few African American agriculture teachers.	+4	+5	+3

Note. AP represents array position.

While the perspectives allowed the researcher to see the diversity of opinions within the P set, the consensus statements were significant in expressing some commonalities between the teachers. Statement 16, "African American students can relate easier to African American teachers." was placed in highest on the 'Most Like Me' side in all three perspectives. *Anchored in Service, Anchored in Resilience,* and *Anchored in Assurance* educators agree African American students have an easier time relating to African American teachers. This provides insight into each perspective's perceived value of having African American educators present in the classroom to support African American students. They have an innate confidence in their ability to help African American students navigate and become successful in educational settings.

Anchored in Service teachers placed this statement high due to their commitment to seek opportunities supporting African American students. This support was also given to African American students even if they were not enrolled in their SBAE programs because the African American SBAE teachers often felt they could more effectively

provide those students with the support they needed. *Anchored in Resilience* educators explained their unique ability to provide comfort and guidance for their African American students in predominantly White spaces of agricultural education. *Anchored in Assurance* teachers will go the extra mile to encourage African American students to join the world of agriculture and realize students look to them for support and nurturing. Each perspective feels their presence is needed for African American students but see the role they play in their lives differently.

There was also considerably low priority placement for Statement 25, which described the limited impact of judgmental thoughts toward African American teachers as they choose to show their feelings or emotions. Each of the perspectives discussed the interactions they have with their White colleagues and the judgement or assumptions that come with those interactions; but, their judgements do not seem to greatly affect their decision to stay in the classroom. Overall, little emphasis was placed on the emotions they express in the work place during post sort interviews. *Anchored in Service, Anchored in Resilience* and *Anchored Assurance* educators acknowledge they encounter ignorance in how others interact with them, but choose not to give it much of their attention or energy. Rather, each perspective places their focus in supporting their students and ensuring they are doing their job to the best of their ability.

Statement 25, "I am proud to be one of the few African American agriculture teachers" was consistently placed more towards the 'Most Like Me' for each perspective. *Anchored in Service* used their pride as fuel to showcase their ability and strength as an SBAE teacher. The *Anchored in Resilience* teachers expressed the initiative they demonstrated by integrating African American history and cultural aspects into their

classroom discussions and curriculum. *Anchored Assurance* teachers found community within the cultural spaces they created with other African American SBAE teachers and worked to ensure they could exist in agricultural education on their own terms.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECCOMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of African American agricultural teachers regarding their work experiences teaching SBAE-related courses in the United States. This chapter with discuss the findings, discussion and conclusions of this study and implications for future research and practice.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study found three perspectives within African American SBAE teachers toward their meaning of work: *Anchored in Service, Anchored in Resilience* and *Anchored in Assurance*. The experience of African Americans is not monolithic in nature (Dagbovie, 2006) and the nuances of those differences were revealed within each of the three viewpoints. Collectively, African American SBAE teachers have a strong desire to stay in the classroom and find value in their work. The heartened expression of confidently remaining in the classroom despite adversity conveyed within the perspectives revealed supports of Griffin & Tackie's (2017) conclusion of the immense value African American educators have in their role as teachers. The distinction in value for these SBAE teachers lies in where they find their source of strength, motivation, and enjoyment. This section discusses several of the conclusions and discussion areas resulting from the revealed perspectives.

Low African American Student Representation in School-Based Agricultural Education

When considering the limited number of African American students within SBAE programs, combined with the placement of many SBAE programs in predominantly White school programs (National Research Council, 1988), some teachers feel disheartened with the lack of African American student representation. These teachers are loaded with the desire to grow African American student representation in SBAE. They have a strong aspiration of seeing more involvement from their African American students in their SBAE programs while fighting to get them interested. *Anchored in Service* teachers are often challenged with the preconceived idea African American students have about agriculture, such as ties to slavery or assumed presence of racist ideals (Jones & Bowen, 1998; Talbert & Larke, 1995; Warren & Alston, 2007). When teachers within *Anchored in Assurance* obtain African American students, they provide additional support for them to navigate a culture within FFA and agricultural education where they may feel ostracized or demeaned as an African American (Martin & Kitchel, 2015). *Anchored in Resilience* emphasized the need for added support through expressing the importance of providing words of encouragement for their African American students.

The Compelling Desire and Pressure to Support to All Black Students

Furthermore, not only do African American SBAE teachers carry the obligation to support African American students within their SBAE programs, but also feel compelled to provide support for African American students in general. African American SBAE teachers carry the unseen weight of being *visibly invisible* and the invisible service that

comes with their existence similarly described by King (2016). African American SBAE teachers within the three perspectives expressed the internal and/or external pressure felt to support Black students, and because of their limited presence as African American teachers, they feel the burden of carrying this responsibility. This heaviness may not be visible to others, which further illustrates King's (2016) idea of an *invisible tax*.

African American SBAE teachers are very aware of the limited representation of African American teachers not only in agricultural classrooms but throughout their schools as well; which is typical in many schools across the nation (Madkins, 2011). *Anchored in Service* educators have a commitment to serve all African American students whether they are agricultural students or not. They understand their role as one of a few African American teachers and pride themselves in their ability to encourage, empower, and guide Black students as they move through life. As one of the only African American teachers in some of their schools, they seek to fulfill the needs of those students that may go unmet by White teachers. African American SBAE teachers advocate for and understand the cultural challenges students may face as African American children and want to ensure they feel supported.

The *Anchored in Resilience* viewpoint shows the contrast of the expectations placed on them to interact and connect with African American students. While they expressed their interest and success in working with African American students, they did not appreciate the assumptions placed on them to reach every African American student or the application of negative stereotypes on them. For example, their White colleagues would often infer African American teachers have stronger connections with African American students or send African American students to them for guidance, no matter

their enrollment status in agriculture. In doing so, they would often make the suggestion that an African American teacher should connect with other African American students who have had an apparent struggle or troubled life, assuming African American teachers had a similar experience. Gay (2000) proclaimed the danger in making assumptions that African American teachers can automatically relate with African American students. These presumptions and expectations of White teachers to connect with all White students are not applied to them; therefore, it should not be placed on African American teachers (Gay, 2000). There is a fine line in allowing for cultural connections while being sensitive to application of particular areas of connections based on stereotypes.

Perceptive Value and Connection: Black Students and White Teachers

Anchored in Resilience educators take it upon themselves to create a space in their classrooms where they can discuss race and the impact of racial challenges. This perspective saw a misalignment with the values they held as an African American SBAE teacher versus that of a White SBAE teacher. Based on their observations, they perceive White teachers do not hold the same value for African American students as they do. *Anchored in Resilience* and *Anchored in Assurance* felt their ability to connect with and support African American students came from a place of care and reassurance rather than viewing those students as a challenge they would prefer to avoid. African American SBAE teachers also felt a responsibility to support African American students in their SBAE programs as they navigated the challenges associated with being one of the few African American students in this agricultural space. Jones and Bowen (1998) stressed the importance of minority agriculturalists' ability to assist students as they combat the stereotypes encountered in agriculture. Many of the African American SBAE teachers

confirmed the commitment and responsibility felt toward supporting their African American students.

The findings of this study signify many layers of the complex experience of the African American educators. African American SBAE teachers often serve as role models and advocates for their African American students. This finding supports Naman's (2009) assertion of the significance of the role African American educators in the lives of African Americans students. An *Anchored in Resilience* teacher put into perspective how as an African American teacher she would stand up for her students when she saw them being disrespected or mistreated. African American SBAE teachers confess personal experiences of African American students working harder and seeking to make them proud because the students felt valued by them. These educators mention their love for teaching all students, but specify the intentionality behind giving their African American students extra support. They recognize the challenges African American students may face and feel some White teachers may be dismissive toward them and their needs; so, they make an assertive effort to catch African American students before they fall through the cracks. This notion builds on Naman's (2009) inference that African American educators often place higher value on African American students when compared to their White colleagues.

Griffin & Tackie (2017) explained the strength African American teachers had in connecting with their African American students which is demonstrated through the actions of these teachers. African American SBAE educators within this study, like other African American educators, felt many of the White teachers may not always be equipped or have genuine interest in supporting the unique needs of African American

students (Naman, 2009). This is a concern, as they over extend themselves to serve those students to ensure they have a fair shot at success (Milner, 2006). While it should not be assumed all African American teachers can seamlessly connect with African American students (Gay, 2000), which *Anchored in Resilience* pointed out, there is also an undeniable parallel expressed as these educators felt they were better suited to meet the needs of their African American students.

Price of the Undervalued: Diversity Pedestal and Competency Challenge

It was expressed in this study that the competency of African Americans as SBAE teachers seemed to be undervalued or questioned, but their experience as an African American is adequate reason to have them lead diversity efforts. The findings of this study explain the strain African American SBAE teachers experience when proving their competency. It was expressed in the *Anchored in Assurance* perspective how after seeking opportunities for professional development and participating in programs designed for exceptional agricultural teachers, that instead of being asked to lead workshops based on their skillset, they were asked to lead workshops on diversity.

Although research suggests teachers should seek opportunities to pursue diversity training (Warren & Alston, 2007), the profession seems to have set additional expectations on some African American SBAE teachers. Some of these expectations encourage African American SBAE teachers to direct diversity efforts due to their existence as an African American rather than supporting their expertise in additional areas outside of diversity. Several of the African American SBAE teachers within this study have a strong interest and ability to facilitate diversity trainings and did not seem to mind supporting diversity efforts; however, the problem is they are not seen as an asset in

their other areas of competency, as well. *Anchored in Assurance* revealed an expressed lack of respect urban agricultural programs get when compared to programs with a more traditional structure of production agriculture. When explaining the challenge of competency, a few African American SBAE teachers within this study felt the agricultural programing in an urban setting was perceived as more of a hobby and less serious to their colleagues.

Facings Challenges Together: Serving Their Communities, Faith and Support Systems

Teachers within *Anchored in Service* illuminated the deep-rooted spirit of service in African American SBAE teachers. The support they received and gave produced a symbiotic element to their experience in SBAE programs. Their connection to community and its value to their livelihood provides the support they need to keep going. The relationship with their community prompts teachers to want to give back and serve. Several of the African Americans within this study saw their role as a teacher being synonymous with helping their communities. The aptitude to serve others is not far from the roots African Americans established during their pursuit of education. This act of service supports the historic quest of education within the Black community and how it reinforced community building (King,1993). In years past, African American SBAE educators were often significant leaders in their communities (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000). Educators today continue to build on that legacy.

African American SBAE teachers value relationships as they journey through their career. The relationships developed help affirm the need for their presence in agricultural education classrooms. A few sorters in the *Anchored in Assurance*

perspective stressed the importance of supporting other African American SBAE teachers when they enter the discipline. They want them to be successful and remain in the profession and feel if they choose to leave they want it to be on their own terms. This undertaking is exemplary of Washington and Loram's (1971) disclosure of Booker T. Washington's proposition for African Americans as they pursued opportunities for growth, conveying that the happiest of feelings come when you are of service to those around you.

African American SBAE teachers recognize their existence in the SBAE world is rare, but view their existence on this figurative island differently. They desire to serve their communities while relying on the support received from the ones they value most to remain in the classrooms. These teachers seek to connect with and support other African American teachers and want to avoid the experience of isolation and exclusion that can be felt in agriculture. African American SBAE teachers also rely heavily on their network and community to keep them uplifted. Each perspective spoke to the value of having others they could call or lean on when they were going through a challenging time.

African American SBAE teachers understand the culture in agricultural education and view their ability to survive and thrive in this industry through a variety of lenses. *Anchored in Assurance* educators shared how they do not have to receive support from their colleagues, yet if they have an outside network they can call when they need support they can make it. It is vital for them to have others, including family, friends or other African American SBAE teachers to connect with when faced with the challenges of being an SBAE teacher. This study provides additional evidence of African Americans' desire to create and demonstrate a community of support among one another.

Anchored in Service teachers found faith as a prominent source of strength when facing challenges in the work place. Prayer was something they could rely on when they encountered tribulations. African Americans have historically found support from the church in the world of education through the establishments of many early Black colleges (Jenkins, 1991). Many opportunities to pursue education derived from relationships with the church (Jenkins, 1991). Decades later, to still find present-day relations between African Americans in their careers as educators coupled with how their faith allows them to remain in the profession provides insight to an inherent cultural driver towards success.

Tokenism and Assumptions Won't Stop Me: Working Beyond the Stereotype

African American SBAE teachers know they are more than a stereotype and strive for excellence. Some reject the negative notion of tokenism and rely on their work ethic as an opportunity to shift the narrative; while others are frustrated with being tokenized, but see it as a means to an end towards the greater good in blazing a trail for future African American agriculturalists. African Americans SBAE teachers are well aware of negative stereotypes placed on them because of their race. The negative views of African Americans have firm, historical roots in this country (Johnson & Smith, 1999; Span & Anderson, 2005). Several sorters in *Anchored in Service* placed their focus on working hard to combat the false narratives placed on African Americans. These teachers trust the reputation they built to speak for them and hope to change the negative views held toward other African Americans.

This act of demonstrating strong work ethic to obtain success mirrors elements of Booker T. Washington's philosophy to diligently serve others and the overall importance of hard work (Washington & Loram, 1971). *Anchored in Assurance* teachers knows they

have to work harder than their White colleagues to obtain the same recognition and opportunities. African American SBAE teachers in the *Anchored in Service* also express how this pressure is transferred into setting incredibly high standards of performance for themselves.

Sorters in *Anchored in Service* do not accept the idea of tokenism as it relates to why they hold their position as SBAE teachers. These teachers are confident in the fact that they earned the right to be in the classroom and let their deep knowledge of agriculture speak for them. Several *Anchored in Assurance* teachers realize the perception of African Americans in the United States can be viewed through a lens of oppression. They admit they have been victimized as African Americans but refuse to subscribe to the opinion they are victims in their existence in the United States. African American SBAE teachers are empowered by their ability to push through adversity and persevere.

I am Qualified and Supposed to Be Here: Unwavering Pride in Self

African American SBAE teachers realize their presence is needed and the pride they have in their legacy as an African American in agriculture is incredibly respected and valued. *Anchored in Service, Anchored in Resilience,* and *Anchored in Assurance* each have a deep-rooted pride in being one of the few African American SBAE teachers in the United States. Confidence in self, as well as their ability within the world of agriculture, was expressed and appeared to be a familiar motivator for African American SBAE teachers toward staying in this industry. Teachers in each of the three perspectives also mentioned the deep pride they have in their ancestral lineage in the United States agricultural industry.

Many of the African American SBAE teachers challenged the reality that African American agriculturalists are not celebrated in an industry they helped build. Two sorters in the *Anchored in Resilience* perspective are frustrated African American history and African American contributors in agriculture are ignored by the discipline. These teachers feel it is of tremendous importance to educate their students on the historical layers of agriculture, including slavery and NFA. They take the initiative to incorporate those elements into their curriculum which is an important approach to integrate as diversity grows across classrooms. The efforts of these African American SBAE teachers emphasize Lavergne et al.'s (2012) call to encourage SBAE teachers to incorporate more layers of multiculturalism into their curriculum.

Anchored in Resilience and *Anchored in Service* teachers also know their presence is needed for all students and take ownership of the experience their students and colleagues have with them through the relationships they build. Several teachers mentioned the challenge of African Americans holding positions of servitude in their schools and the unfortunate lack of respect they receive from students because of it. It was disappointing for these teachers to see this truth and it made the need for them in their position more personal and important to them. King (1993) stressed the importance of African Americans being seen in positions of leadership in schools as well. African American SBAE teachers also expressed the love and appreciation they received from the parents of their African American students; it felt like win for their parents and students' learning experience because of their presence.

African American SBAE teachers also acknowledge the cultural needs of their students as they seek to find their place in agriculture. *Anchored in Resilience* expressed

their experience as an African American in the United States creates a dual existence and they must live in a multitude of worlds. Some of those spaces affirm who they are as African Americans; others do the opposite. Due to the duality of those experiences, they feel they can more easily navigate across the cultural differences of their students and have an innate ability to make connections with students from a variety of backgrounds. Furthermore, these teachers prioritize tending to the cultural needs of their students and see beyond their future career placement. They want to ensure their students feel valued and appreciated in SBAE, a place where these students could potentially struggle to find their fit.

These teachers also note the efforts they exert to introduce various cultural lenses to their curriculum. *Anchored in Resilience and Anchored in Assurance* teachers were very intentional in how they approached inclusion in their classrooms. They worked outside of typical parameters to include material where their African American students could see themselves and feel represented. For example, they would go outside of the standard areas of highlights such as Martin Luther King Jr. during Black History month to incorporate more African American agriculturalists and cover the depth of NFA's history in their curriculum. They sought opportunities to connect curriculum to the current realities of the potential racial challenges students may encounter, which allowed their students to see real world utility in what they were learning. This further confirms Duncan's (2020) expression of African American teachers' aim to seek chances to infuse cultural diversity in their classrooms through curriculum development. This effort often results in a sense of belongingness for their students in their classrooms even if they do not feel it in other agricultural spaces.

The Question of Motive and Intentionality in Diversity Efforts

African American SBAE teachers question the effectiveness of diversity efforts within the discipline. *Anchored in Resilience* teachers had many questions about the true intent FFA and agricultural education has to improve areas of diversity, equity and inclusion. Some African American SBAE teachers realize diversity trainings are happening, but see it more as a short-term "check in the box" toward demonstrating symbolic action to improve diversity strategies rather than a conscientious effort to make strides with real, long-term follow through. One sorter in *Anchored in Assurance* echoed this sentiment, but focused more on the attendees at most diversity workshops. It was suggested many of the professionals and teachers who need development in areas related to diversity are most often not the individuals who attend. Suggesting the lack of engagement from some teachers, along with a potential disingenuous interest in deepening awareness and knowledge, perpetuates the cycle of what has potentially contributed to the low numbers of ethnic diversity in agricultural education today.

An African American SBAE teacher within the *Anchored in Assurance* perspective also wondered if the administrators and executive leadership team were fully committed to the idea of recruiting diverse candidates. Having upper leadership genuinely support the idea of strengthening diversity efforts would encourage some of the teachers in *Anchored in Resilience* to see there was serious intent. Action behind the scenes is what matters most to them; they have lost interest in people talking about making a change when they rarely see action. *Anchored in Assurance* also mentioned they have seen an increase in ethnic minorities involved in FFA over the years, but view the culture as not welcoming to their African American students. Some teachers stress the

cultural difference between their African American students and what is experienced at FFA conventions, which has been mentioned by Martin & Kitchel (2015) in their study when discussing the challenges minority students may face when participating in the National FFA Convention.

It was also revealed that some African American SBAE teachers also understand there are parts of agricultural education that may not align with who they are and what they value. Several sorters also shared FFA was not their favorite part of teaching agriculture, but they would do what was expected in their role as a SBAE teacher. A sorter in *Anchored in Resilience* discussed the creed of FFA, suggesting the idea of not accepting handouts and pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. Historically, this saying could be used to suggest African Americans should *help themselves*, rather than asking for support in some contexts, often disregarding the historical and systemic constructs that created challenges for African Americans. According to this sorter, this could have cultural implications and leave a bad impression on some African Americans when they recite this. Some teachers expressed more of a connection to the NFA creed from their students because of its explicit connection to brotherhood and empowerment of one another. The NFA creed felt more in alignment with the personal values within African American culture.

The challenges associated with being an African American SBAE teacher could be illuminated further depending on the environment in which they live. Some teachers in *Anchored in Resilience* have no desire to live in predominantly White rural communities and see this as potential barrier for other African Americans who may consider teaching agriculture under different circumstances. Literature confirms agricultural programs are

often located in rural communities, where a small number of African Americans often reside (Bird et al., 2013; National Research Council, 1988). This fact, coupled with the hesitation African American teachers have to live in these areas, further perpetuates the challenge of attracting more diverse agricultural teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study is an introductory step toward understanding African American SBAE teachers and their experience of teaching. Although these findings are not generalizable to all SBAE African American teachers, they provide insight into a rarely explored group in SBAE. Several areas should be explored in future research projects.

1. Additional studies of Q methodology, quantitative and qualitative design should be conducted to understand current and past African American SBAE teachers. There is a dearth of literature examining the current realities of African American SBAE teachers. The struggle of SBAE programs in the United States having nearly 200 African American teachers, coupled with low enrollment numbers in teacher training programs, (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2020) bolsters the need for research to gain a deeper understanding of this population. The challenge of retention and recruitment of Black SBAE teachers has been on-going. Therefore, conducting additional studies investigating the thoughts, experiences, and opinions held within this population of African American SBAE as it relates to the impactful areas of recruitment and retention could provide more insight on how the profession could work towards creating a more attractive professional environment.

2. Field notes indicate many sorters expressed appreciation and interest in research focused on the exploration of African American SBAE teachers. They communicated enthusiasm in supporting future studies. Their interest and willingness paired with the National Association of Agricultural Educator's (2022) national push to improve diverse efforts provides a momentous opportunity to bring light to a rarely studied population. Although interest to participate in and support research in this topic areas has been indicated by several African American SBAE teachers, sensitivity to their vulnerable existence as a ethnic minority in agricultural education must be noted and handled appropriately. For example, the researcher realized the snowball method of recruitment worked well, especially as participants who were initially reluctant to participate were encouraged by others who were opinion leaders or individuals of influence in their lives.
3. There is a need to explore why African Americans leave the SBAE teaching profession. Considering the reduced number of African American teachers nationwide, it is paramount for researchers to gain a greater understanding of their experiences as well. Due to the limited number of African Americans pursuing teaching careers in SBAE (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2020) it is important to gain perspective on the African Americans who were initially agricultural education majors and decided to change their major as well as the African Americans who have left the profession. Understanding the meaning behind their choices could help the discipline make more informed strategies to retaining African American SBAE teachers.

4. This study should be replicated to explore the perspectives held within African American students who chose to pursue agricultural education degrees. Some of these students spent time in the classroom as pre-service teachers; their initial experiences as they are being trained and working in schools could illuminate potential influential attributes to attract or deter other African American students from pursuing agricultural education teaching careers.
5. A study designed to perform a comparative analysis of the differences between African American SBAE teachers and their characteristics would be valuable to the agricultural education discipline. The following are several examples of areas of comparison: teaching environment of rural versus urban, co-teaching experiences with others within one school, co-teaching experiences with White colleagues versus experiences with African American co-teachers, years of experience, demographics of student within SBAE programs, and pre-service training experiences between Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) or Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).
6. Researching the experiences of African American SBAE teachers in NAAE would be significant due to the role of NAAE as a professional organization for SBAE teachers. It would also be interesting to locate African American SBAE teachers who choose not to join NAAE.

Recommendations for Future Practice

The findings in this study lead to several recommendations for agricultural education professionals and SBAE programs to consider implementing:

1. The location of SBAE programs are still primarily in rural, White communities (Martin & Kitchel, 2015; National Research Council, 1988), which can pose a challenge. If the desire is to attract more African American SBAE teachers, then the location of where new programs are established should be heavily considered.
2. Value has to be placed on African American SBAE teachers and their skills *outside of their ability* to provide a glimpse in to the experience of an ethnic minority. It is very important for the profession to elevate the voices of African American SBAE teachers but to solely utilize their voice when insight is needed to support diversity efforts instead of allowing them to contribute to the competency areas of a discipline is demoralizing. They are more than equipped to support training in diversity as well as areas of study within agricultural education and not providing more opportunities for this leadership is a slight to them as professionals. They have the ability to contribute to improving the profession through a multitude of ways and confining them to the box of diversity, equity, and inclusion discussions is a disservice to the growth of SBAE programs.
3. More opportunities for African American SBAE teachers to connect and support one another would be greatly beneficial. Doing so could provide and grow supportive networks many African American SBAE teachers need to progress through agricultural education. This would also satisfy the aim many African American SBAE teachers have to support other African American SBAE teachers as they enter and navigate the agricultural space.
4. Integrate more curriculum in classrooms that speak to the contributions and experiences of African American in agriculture. Much of the start of the United

States' agriculture industry is rooted in the oppression and institution of African American slavery. *Not discussing this when covering areas of the agricultural industry is negligent.* Furthermore, treating the history of NFA as an afterthought in FFA curriculum or omitting its significant role in agricultural education for African Americans is detrimental toward elevating the legacy of this organization. The expression of both histories must be told from the perspective of African Americans in its true and authentic nature.

5. An evaluation of equitable practices in the hiring and recruitment practice within agricultural education would be beneficial. Ensuring African Americans pursuing opportunities in agricultural education are treated fairly and justly through every stage is particularly important in attracting and retaining African Americans as SBAE teachers.

In conclusion, the environment in which African American SBAE teachers exist was created through a multitude of events and encountered throughout history. Although numbers are low, African American SBAE teachers have demonstrated a strength in resiliency not often discussed in the discipline. Resiliency is defined as "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness" (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Considering the brutal history of African Americans in the agricultural industry, their resiliency to stay in this field is an anomaly that should be recognized and valued.

Along these lines, the long and foundational contributions of African Americans as a whole should be not ignored nor avoided in the agricultural education space. Part of telling this story of resiliency is taking full account of the historical ramifications that have created this disparity in representation within the SBAE teaching workforce. Failing

to address the repercussions of issues potentially challenging African American SBAE educators such as this at the secondary level could yield consequences that may potentially have a negative impact on the growth trajectory of African American representation in the agricultural industry.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	12/15/2021
Application Number:	IRB-21-535
Proposal Title:	Exploring African American School-Based Agriculture Education Teacher Perspectives: A Q Methodology Study
Principal Investigator:	Courtney Brown
Co-Investigator(s):	
Faculty Adviser:	Angel Riggs
Project Coordinator:	
Research Assistant(s):	
Processed as:	Exempt
Exempt Category:	

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in 45CFR46.

This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma State University IRB

APPENDIX B

Q Set

1. Society's assumption that I am a victim as an African American, affects the way I view myself at work.
2. I am reluctant to conform to the parameters the agricultural industry has set for me.
3. I am confident that when it comes to motivating students it's not about color, it's about relationships.
4. Acting "too Black" is a barrier to my success as an agricultural educator.
5. I am constantly battling to rise above the stereotypes placed on me as an African American.
6. My needs and wants are the same as White teachers in agricultural education.
7. Working hard is more important than the color of my skin when pursuing a career in agriculture.
8. My level of competence is always questioned.
9. I have to work ten times harder than everyone else just to get respect.
10. I'm constantly code-switching among colleagues, students, parents, and the community.
11. The assumption that I must work at an urban school is a stereotype I am tired of hearing from my colleagues.
12. Teaching in rural, predominantly White communities scares me.
13. I'm not comfortable talking about race, my primary focus is to prepare my students for their future careers.

14. It doesn’t matter how many diversity trainings they create, my experience is still a struggle as an African American teacher in agriculture education.
15. I am expected to ignore my own culture to accommodate the needs of others.
16. African American hair is so misunderstood in my professional world as an ag teacher.
17. My cultural values are pretty much the same as the values of the greater agriculture education sector.
18. African American students can relate easier to African American teachers.
19. FFA hasn’t acknowledged NFA’s footprint for decades, neglecting the role of race in its history.
20. I’ve had both positive and negative experiences as a teacher, and most of my negative experiences centered on issues related to race.
21. Others judge feelings or emotions I express.
22. The microaggressions I hear seriously make me question why I teach.
23. I am stressed with expectations that I represent the entire African American community.
24. The best way to move forward is to forget and forgive the past.
25. Students need to know the path in agriculture may have challenges pertaining to race.
26. I am responsible for mentoring African American students.
27. I am proud to be one of the few African American agriculture teachers.
28. I have a responsibility to reach out to new African American teachers to help them build their confidence as agriculture teachers.

29. If we expect agriculture to become more diverse, we cannot spend all day talking about race.
30. The friends I have made as an agriculture teacher encourage me to remain true to myself
31. Experiences of racism are the “silent” killer of recruitment and retention of African American agriculture teachers.
32. I have found comfort and connection through my family and friends as I journey through my career in agriculture education.
33. The tokenization that I feel as an African American agriculture teacher is sickening.
34. Without the supportive community I have around me, I would not have had the mental drive to stay in the classroom.
35. How can I fit in when no one else is like me?
36. It is important for my colleagues to empathize with my experiences without feeling sorry for me.
37. The love I feel from my students when I walk into my classroom each day makes it all worth it.
38. As a teacher I pride myself in the ability to advocate for African American causes and challenges in my classroom.
39. I was called to improve the community through my service.
40. I have a deep sense of gratitude to those African Americans who came before me in agricultural education.

41. I stay in this position because students need to see more people who look like me in teacher roles.
42. Since my family raised me to be resilient and break down barriers, my career as an agriculture teacher is no different.
43. Prayer gives me the strength to pursue my dreams as an agriculture teacher.
44. Life is about making a difference and I am happy I can do that as an agriculture teacher.
45. My faith allows me to see that the impact I make as an agriculture teacher is bigger than myself.

APPENDIX C

Demographic Survey

1. What is your gender? _____
2. How old are you? _____ years
3. Please describe your ethnicity (Example: African American; African American & Jamaican American; African American & Caucasian, etc.): _____
4. What is the highest degree that you have completed (check one)?

   _____Bachelor's Degree _____Master's Degree
   _____Doctorate Degree _____Other, please specify: _____
5. Pathway to certification to teach SBAE:
   ___Traditional Pathway ___Alternative Pathway ___Emergency Pathway ___Other
6. How long have you been a teacher and in how many schools have you taught? _____
7. How long have you been a SBAE teacher? _____
8. Describe the community you teach in (Example: urban, rural, suburban, 5-A, 4-A, etc.)?
   _____
9. Do you have a family background connected to agriculture? _____
10. Describe the community you grew up in (Example: rural, suburban, urban, diverse, size, etc.)?
    _____
11. How would you describe your socioeconomic status growing up:
    ____ Low income ____ Middle income ____ High income
    ____ Low-middle income ____ Middle-high income
12. Do you have any SBAE teachers in your family? No ___ Yes___ If so, how many? _____
13. How would you describe the SBAE program at your school (enrollment size, community support)?
    _____
14. How would you describe the demographics (ethnicity) of your SBAE program at your school?
    _____
15. Is your SBAE program involved in FFA? _____
16. To which professional organizations do you belong, and do you hold any offices?
    _____
17. What else would you like to say about the ideas on the statements you sorted?
    _____

    _____

A follow-up phone interview may be conducted to clarify results. If you would be willing to participate in a phone interview please write your first name (or a code name that you will know) and a telephone number at which you can be reached.

(CODE) NAME _____ PHONE _____

APPENDIX D

Composite Sort - Factor 1: Anchored in Service

What does being an African American agriculture education teacher mean to you?

FACTOR 1

BOLD: Consensus Statements

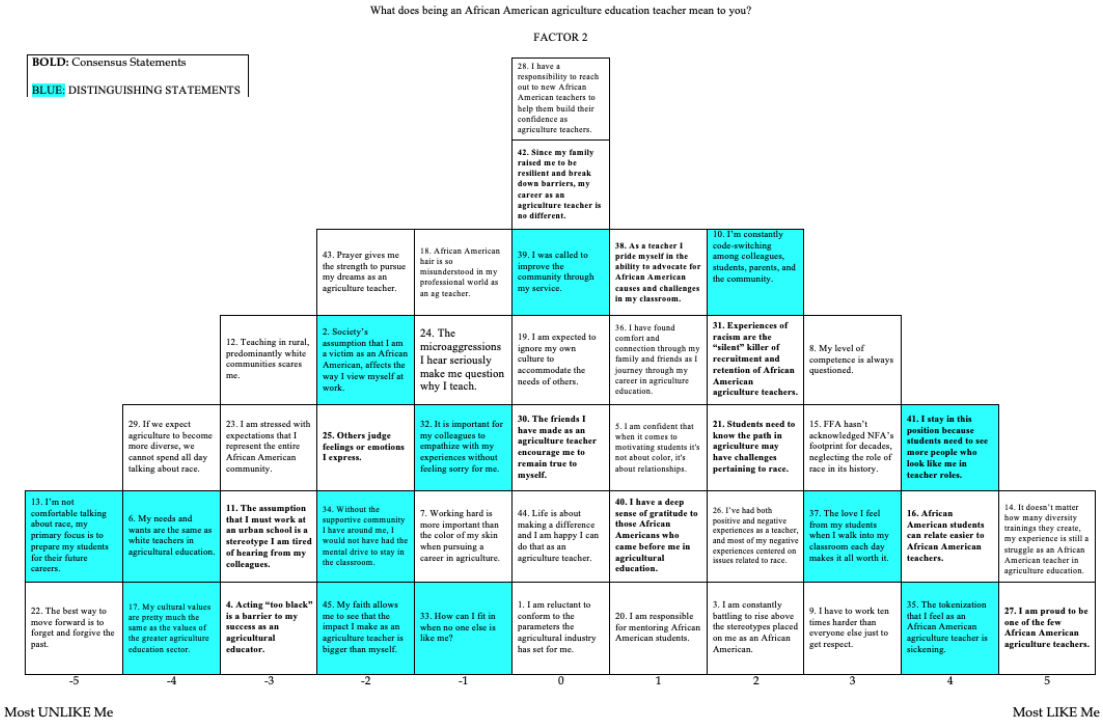
PINK: DISTINGUISHING STATEMENTS

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
					6. My needs and wants are the same as white teachers in agricultural education.					
					42. Since my family raised me to be resilient and break down barriers, my career as an agriculture teacher is no different.					
			9. I have to work ten times harder than everyone else just to get respect.	3. I am constantly battling to rise above the stereotypes placed on me as an African American.	28. I have a responsibility to reach out to new African American teachers to help them build their confidence as agriculture teachers.	**30. The friends I have made as an agriculture teacher encourage me to remain true to myself.**	36. I have found comfort and connection through my family and friends as I journey through my career in agriculture education.			
		25. Others judge feelings or emotions I express.	22. The best way to move forward is to forget and forgive the past.	1. I am reluctant to conform to the parameters the agricultural industry has set for me.	10. I'm constantly code-switching among colleagues, students, parents, and the community.	**21. Students need to know the path in agriculture may have challenges pertaining to race.**	34. Without the supportive community I have around me, I would not have had the mental drive to stay in the classroom.	7. Working hard is more important than the color of my skin when pursuing a career in agriculture.		
	8. My level of competence is always questioned.	19. I am expected to ignore my own culture to accommodate the needs of others.	**11. The assumption that I must work at an urban school is a stereotype I am tired of hearing from my colleagues.**	26. I've had both positive and negative experiences as a teacher, and most of my negative experiences centered on issues related to race.	29. If we expect agriculture to become more diverse, we cannot spend all day talking about race.	20. I am responsible for mentoring African American students.	**40. I have a deep sense of gratitude to those African Americans who came before me in agricultural education.**	39. I was called to improve the community through my service.	45. My faith allows me to see that the impact I make as an agriculture teacher is bigger than myself.	
35. The tokenization that I feel as an African American agriculture teacher is sickening.	24. The microaggressions I hear seriously make me question why I teach.	13. I'm not comfortable talking about race, my primary focus is to prepare my students for their future careers.	12. Teaching in rural, predominantly white communities scares me.	15. FFA hasn't acknowledged NFA's footprint for decades, neglecting the role of race in its history.	18. African American hair is so misunderstood in my professional world as an ag teacher.	**32. It is important for my colleagues to empathize with my experiences without feeling sorry for me.**	**41. I stay in this position because students need to see more people who look like me in teacher roles.**	**38. As a teacher I pride myself in the ability to advocate for African American causes and challenges in my classroom.**	**27. I am proud to be one of the few African American agriculture teachers.**	37. The love I feel from my students when I walk into my classroom each day makes it all worth it.
2. Society's assumption that I am a victim as an African American, affects the way I view myself at work.	33. How can I fit in when no one else is like me?	23. I am stressed with expectations that I represent the entire African American community.	**4. Acting "too black" is a barrier to my success as an agricultural educator.**	14. It doesn't matter how many diversity trainings they create, my experience is still a struggle as an African American teacher in agriculture education.	17. My cultural values are pretty much the same as the values of the greater agriculture education sector.	**31. Experiences of racism are the "silent" killer of recruitment and retention of African American agriculture teachers.**	5. I am confident that when it comes to motivating students it's not about color, it's about relationships.	43. Prayer gives me the strength to pursue my dreams as an agriculture teacher.	**16. African American students can relate easier to African American teachers.**	44. Life is about making a difference and I am happy I can do that as an agriculture teacher.

Most UNLIKE Me — Most LIKE Me

APPENDIX E

Composite Sort - Factor 2: Anchored in Resilience



APPENDIX F

Composite Sort - Factor 3: Anchored in Assurance

What does being an African American agriculture education teacher mean to you?

FACTOR 3

BOLD: Consensus Statements

GREEN: DISTINGUISHING STATEMENTS

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
					15. FFA hasn't acknowledged NFA's footprint for decades, neglecting the role of race in its history.					
					40. I have a deep sense of gratitude to those African Americans who came before me in agricultural education.					
			5. I am confident that when it comes to motivating students it's not about color, it's about relationships.	23. I am stressed with expectations that I represent the entire African American community.	44. Life is about making a difference and I am happy I can do that as an agriculture teacher.	**38. As a teacher I pride myself in the ability to advocate for African American causes and challenges in my classroom.**	45. My faith allows me to see that the impact I make as an agriculture teacher is bigger than myself.			
		18. African American hair is so misunderstood in my professional world as an ag teacher.	7. Working hard is more important than the color of my skin when pursuing a career in agriculture.	24. The microaggressions I hear seriously make me question why I teach.	17. My cultural values are pretty much the same as the values of the greater agriculture education sector.	1. I am reluctant to conform to the parameters the agricultural industry has set for me.	**41. I stay in this position because students need to see more people who look like me in teacher roles.**	**27. I am proud to be one of the few African American agriculture teachers.**		
	4. Acting "too black" is a barrier to my success as an agricultural educator.	32. It is important for my colleagues to empathize with my experiences without feeling sorry for me.	**25. Others judge feelings or emotions I express.**	12. Teaching in rural, predominantly white communities scares me.	43. Prayer gives me the strength to pursue my dreams as an agriculture teacher.	3. I am constantly battling to rise above the stereotypes placed on me as an African American.	**30. The friends I have made as an agriculture teacher encourage me to remain true to myself.**	34. Without the supportive community I have around me, I would not have had the mental drive to stay in the classroom.	36. I have found comfort and connection through my family and friends as I journey through my career in agriculture education.	
2. Society's assumption that I am a victim as an African American, affects the way I view myself at work.	33. How can I fit in when no one else is like me?	13. I'm not comfortable talking about race, my primary focus is to prepare my students for their future careers.	10. I'm constantly code-switching among colleagues, students, parents, and the community.	39. I was called to improve the community through my service.	37. The love I feel from my students when I walk into my classroom each day makes it all worth it.	**21. Students need to know the path in agriculture may have challenges pertaining to race.**	9. I have to work ten times harder than everyone else just to get respect.	**31. Experiences of racism are the "silent" killer of recruitment and retention of African American agriculture teachers.**	20. I am responsible for mentoring African American students.	14. It doesn't matter how many diversity trainings they create, my experience is still a struggle as an African American teacher in agriculture education.
22. The best way to move forward is to forget and forgive the past.	29. If we expect agriculture to become more diverse, we cannot spend all day talking about race.	35. The tokenization that I feel as an African American agriculture teacher is sickening.	**11. The assumption that I must work at an urban school is a stereotype I am tired of hearing from my colleagues.**	6. My needs and wants are the same as white teachers in agricultural education.	19. I am expected to ignore my own culture to accommodate the needs of others.	**42. Since my family raised me to be resilient and break down barriers, my career as an agriculture teacher is no different.**	26. I've had both positive and negative experiences as a teacher, and most of my negative experiences centered on issues related to race.	28. I have a responsibility to reach out to new African American teachers to help them build their confidence as agriculture teachers.	**16. African American students can relate easier to African American teachers.**	8. My level of competence is always questioned.

Most UNLIKE Me — Most LIKE Me

VITA

Courtney Patrice Brown

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: PERSPECTIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SCHOOL-BASED AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARD THEIR MEANING OF WORK: A Q METHODOLOGY STUDY

Major Field: Agricultural Education

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2022.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2014

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Science at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee in 2011.

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Graduate teaching associate in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership.

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