Advancements in Agricultural Development
Volume 6, Issue 2, 2025
agdevresearch.org

Advocating for Agricultural Education: A Mixed Methods Examination on the Role of Opinion Leadership on Teachers' Advocacy Intentions

B. Komunjeru[1], W. L. Figland-Cook[2], J. Englin[3], R. Roberts[4]

Abstract

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to describe the role of opinion leadership on Louisiana teachers' intentions to advocate for agricultural education. As a result, we found that the quantitative and qualitative data strands were largely complementary. We concluded that the agricultural education teachers in Louisiana reported only a marginal level of opinion leadership. Regarding their intentions to advocate for agricultural education, most teachers indicated they would be likelier to engage in low-stakes advocacy, such as joining their professional organization, meeting with decision-makers, or attending FFA Day at the Capital rather than participating in advocacy considered more professionally risky. The teachers also recognized that they exhibited a deficiency in advocacy knowledge and skills. Going forward, we recommend that future research examine the approaches that teachers use to champion various issues and causes that may affect their programs. We also call for greater emphasis on helping teachers learn how to tell agricultural education's story in ways that motivate decision-makers to become allies for the profession. Finally, we call for greater professional development experiences designed to help teachers advocate for agricultural education.

Article History

Received: January 21, 2025
Accepted: April 7, 2025
Published: April 8, 2025

Keywords

mixed methods research;
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities;
teacher leadership

1. Benita Komunjeru, Doctoral Student, Louisiana State University, 225A J.C. Miller Hall, 110 LSU Union Square, Baton Rouge, LA, 70803; bkomun2@lsu.edu, https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4799-8675
2. Whitney L. Figland-Cook, Assistant Professor, East Texas A&M University, P.O. Box 3011, Commerce, TX, 75429, whitney.figland@tamuc.edu, https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8669-2692
3. Jacob Englin, Doctoral Candidate, Louisiana State University, 225A J.C. Miller Hall, 110 LSU Union Square, Baton Rouge, LA, 70803, jengl13@lsu.edu, https://orcid.org/0009-0008-8816-534X
4. Richie Roberts, Professor and Department Head, New Mexico State University, MSC 3501, P.O. Box 30003, Las Cruces, New Mexico, 88003-8003; roberts3@nmsu.edu, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2993-4945

Introduction and Problem Statement

Teacher advocacy has emerged as a popular buzzword in education (Bradley-Levine, 2018; Velasco et al., 2023). Velasco et al. (2023) defined the term as an action taken by a teacher to influence the process by which decisions are made in education. As such, teacher advocacy often involves issues that have cultural, economic, and social implications that influences lives. For example, teachers can advocate for change regarding issues that negatively influence students and school systems, such as inadequate resources, misinformation, and poverty (Bradley-Levine, 2018). Despite this, teachers often find themselves grappling with balancing local community and cultural expectations as well as overcoming negative assumptions and stereotypes about advocacy (Velasco et al., 2023).

In agricultural education, Hock and Myers (2018) explained that teacher advocacy has taken on various forms. For instance, teachers can address problems such as the shortage of qualified individuals to fill jobs in industry, lack of support for agriscience programs, misinformation about scientific practices that lead to new agricultural products and practices, and other relevant issues. To achieve such, teachers need to mobilize others – alumni, parents, and influential community members – willing to contribute their influence to ensure that a cause receives the attention needed (Doerfert & Lawson, 2018). On this point, Blackburn et al. (2017) noted that a critical component of effective advocacy was ensuring that others found value and supported a teacher's vision. Often, this can be achieved by telling the story of agricultural education in ways that resonate and create a sense of urgency for those who hold decision-making power (Casten, 2018).

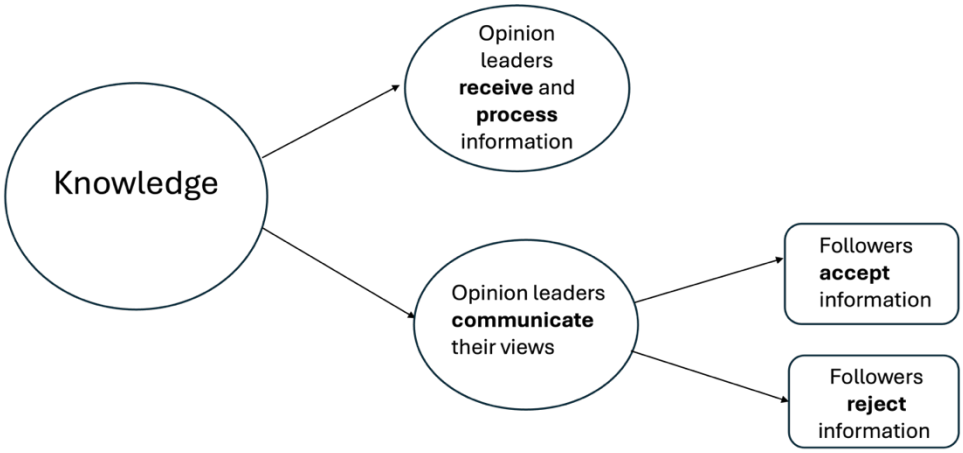
On this point, Lamm et al. (2015) explained that individuals viewed as knowledgeable, well-established, and trustworthy in a social system should be "considered opinion leaders within their networks of influence" (p. 147). Therefore, opinion leaders in agricultural education would be considered vital in influencing advocacy efforts for agricultural education. By taking responsibility for enacting positive change at the individual and system levels, teachers can serve as a source of good for students, schools, and communities (Catapano, 2006). As such, understanding how opinion leaders understand advocacy, insight could be gained into the factors influencing their decision-making regarding their intentions to advocate for the discipline. With this knowledge, we could identify ways to motivate opinion leaders to champion issues important to agricultural education (LeJeune & Roberts, 2020). Despite this, little empirical data has been advanced that could be used to guide such efforts.

Conceptual Framework

For this investigation, Lazarsfeld et al. (1948) notion of opinion leadership served as the lens we used to analyze the phenomenon. Through this lens, knowledge is viewed as being disseminated through a two-phase process: (a) opinion leaders receive and process information, and (b) the opinion leaders communicate their views, i.e., complexity, relative

advantage, and utility, of such information to their followers, which leads to either the acceptance or rejection (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948; see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Lazarsfeld et al. (1948) The Role of Opinion Leadership



Lazarsfeld et al. (1948) noted that opinion leaders could become influential in a social system through a variety of ways, including (a) appointment, (b) nomination, (c) recruitment, and (d) self-selection. Despite the ambiguous path to opinion leadership, Valente and Davis (1999) maintained that in every social system, individuals emerge who serve as role models to others: "[t]hese role models act as opinion leaders within their communities and can be important determinants of rapid and sustained behavior change" (p. 57). As such, followers often view opinion leaders as more competent than themselves because they can effectively communicate why an issue, or cause, should be considered important in their context (Valente & Davis, 1999). Further, Rogers (2003) noted that opinion leaders were often considered more innovative, optimistic, and of higher status in a given social system. Therefore, although opinion leaders are often different, i.e., heterophily, they remain similar enough to their followers to gain buy-in and support, i.e., homophily (Rogers, 2003).

In education, teachers hold unique and influential power over the dynamics of teaching and learning within their schools. Spillane et al. (2003) reported that teachers primarily relied on their fellow educators rather than school administrators for advice about teaching. Therefore, teachers' inclination to seek support from their peers often positions other teachers as opinion leaders in educational contexts (Hatch et al., 2005). Consequently, teachers who can advocate for the best interest of their students and communities have been shown to successfully influence their colleagues to adopt various instructional practices (Marshall & Anderson, 2009). In the current study, we sought to understand better the role of opinion leadership in influencing agricultural education teachers' intentions to advocate for agricultural education. Although opinion leadership has traditionally focused on the how the acceptance or rejection of information from opinion leaders such was not the focus on this study. Instead, we positioned

this investigation to understand the level of opinion leadership exhibited by teachers and how such influenced their intentions to advocate for agricultural education.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to describe the role of opinion leadership on Louisiana teachers' intentions to advocate for agricultural education. Four objectives guided the investigation:

1. Describe the level of opinion leadership possessed by Louisiana agricultural education teachers.
2. Describe the intentions of Louisiana teachers to advocate for agricultural education.
3. Describe relationships among Louisiana agricultural teachers' level of opinion leadership and intentions to advocate for agricultural education.
4. Narrate Louisiana teachers' perspectives on advocating for agricultural education.

Methodology

We used a convergent mixed methods design to integrate quantitative and qualitative data to enhance the quality of the results in the investigation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Researchers frequently utilize convergent designs to bolster findings when quantitative or qualitative data alone may lack sufficient strength (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). We assigned equal priority, i.e., QUAN + QUAL, to each strand of data (Morse, 1991). To achieve the purpose of this study, we facilitated a census (N = 219) of Louisiana agricultural education teachers. This was achieved using the Louisiana Agriculture Teachers' Association (LATA) membership directory as the investigation's participant frame. We also used Dillman et al.'s (2014) tailored design approach to facilitate the collection of data using a web-based instrument created through Qualtrics online software.

To begin data collection, we sent a pre-notice message followed by timed reminders to all individuals who met the inclusion criteria, informing them about the study (Dillman et al., 2014). In total, 219 invitations were sent to SBAE teachers in Louisiana beginning in July 2022. After multiple reminders, 141 responses (64.3% total response rate) were recorded. However, after reviewing the data, we noted that 33 (23.4%) responses were incomplete; therefore, they were excluded from our analysis. As a result, we determined that 108 (49.3%) responses were usable. To address non-response bias in this investigation, we compared early and late respondents (Lindner et al., 2001). Previous research has demonstrated that late respondents often share similarities with non-respondents (Lindner et al., 2001). In this study, individuals who completed the questionnaire within one week were considered early responders; meanwhile, we deemed all other individuals as late respondents. In a t-test comparison between the early and late respondent groups, we found no statistically significant differences ($p > .05$). Therefore, we did not consider non-response bias as a major factor influencing the results in the quantitative strand of data.

The instrument used to collect data in this investigation included four sections with a combination of previously established and research-developed measures. To establish face and content validity, a panel of experts that consisted of three agricultural education faculty members at Louisiana State University, the Louisiana FFA Executive Secretary, and one practicing agricultural education teacher who was not included in the population under investigation. We also pilot-tested the instrument with 28 agricultural education teachers from Louisiana who were not included in the study. As a result of the pilot test, reliability for each section of the quantitative instrument had a Cronbach's alpha of .80 or greater, which was considered acceptable (Nunnely, 1978).

The first section of the instrument used Childers' (1986) opinion leadership scale to measure the agricultural education teachers' perceived level of opinion leadership. On this measure, the participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on six items regarding their perceived influence on issues affecting agricultural education. Although we slightly adapted the instrument to fit the context of this study, its structure was indistinguishable from Childers (1986). Therefore, each item used a five-point bipolar response structure. For example, we presented each item using pairs of dissimilar statements in which a 1 (one) designated a negative sentiment, whereas a 5 (five) reflected a positive sentiment (Childers, 1986). After collecting data, we averaged the six items to create the participants' overall opinion leadership score. In the second section of the instrument, we used a researcher-developed scale to measure participants' intentions to advocate for agricultural education. The scale asked participants to indicate their willingness to advocate for agricultural education on 13 items using bi-polar responses, i.e., 1 = *Yes*; 2 = *No*. Then, we averaged the 13 items to calculate an overall intention score. We used the third section of the instrument to collect narrative responses from the participants using the following prompt: "Describe some of your most memorable experiences as well as challenges advocating for agricultural education." We created a 400-word minimum forced response in Qualtrics for all participants in the qualitative portion. The final section of the instrument asked the participants to provide their personal and professional characteristics. After completing data collection, we compiled our quantitative items into an SPSS file and cleaned the data while removing any personal identification of the participants. To address research question one, we analyzed data using measures of central tendency, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These measures were utilized to describe the population's opinion leadership and advocacy intentions. After describing these factors, we performed a correlational analysis to examine the relationships between the selected variables.

In the qualitative strand, we employed an interpretive qualitative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To achieve this, we required each participant in the study to provide a narrative response. To analyze the qualitative data, we used the qualitative analysis software NVivo. We also used Lincoln's and Guba's (1985) four criteria for qualitative quality – credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability – to guide our ethical decision-making in the study. The initial data analysis was executed using the constant comparative method, involving three types of coding: (a) open, (b) axial, and (c) selective (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Open coding entailed categorizing data units into distinct categories. To facilitate the first phase of analysis,

each member of the research team analyzed each source of qualitative data line-by-line, which resulted in 438 open codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The second qualitative analytic approach, axial coding, involved examining relationships among categories to develop evidentiary support (Saldaña, 2021). We facilitated this process by meeting as a research team after the open coding phase and negotiating ways to reduce the open codes into categories. This axial coding process resulted in development of 14 distinct categories. In our final phase of qualitative analysis, we employed selective coding to construct a narrative of the data, which facilitated the emergence of themes by incorporating multiple perspectives (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Through comparisons and contrasts, the qualitative findings were operationalized by weaving participants' perspectives into detailed descriptions.

Findings

Objective #1

The first objective sought to describe the agricultural education teachers' level of opinion leadership. When probed about the frequency of individuals they communicated with about issues affecting agricultural education in the past six months, most (*f* = 27; 25%) indicated they had told a number of people. Meanwhile, participants reported that they only marginally communicated with their colleagues about issues affecting agricultural education (*f* = 34; 35.2%). Regarding the likelihood of being asked about new information concerning agricultural education, most indicated they were not very likely to be asked (*f* = 30; 31.5%). Further, most participants indicated that their colleagues (*f* = 30; 27.8%) informed them about new developments in agricultural education rather than them informing their colleagues. For the item, "When you talk to your friends and neighbors about issues affecting agriculture education," the teachers suggested that they provided some new information (*f* = 45; 41.7%). Finally, most of the participants indicated that they were often not used as a source of advice (*f* = 51, 47.2%) in discussions with friends and colleagues about issues affecting agricultural education. It should also be noted that participants' overall opinion leadership score was a mean of 2.94 with a standard deviation of 1.01. Table 1 outlines the level of opinion leadership reported by the agricultural education teachers in Louisiana.

Table 1

Louisiana Agricultural Education Teachers' Level of Opinion Leadership

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
During the past six months, how many people have you told about issues affecting agriculture education[a]	12.1%	25.0%	19.4%	18.5%	25.0%
In general, how often do you talk about to your colleagues about issues affecting agricultural education[b]	8.3%	35.2%	16.7%	16.7%	23.1%
Compared to your circle of friends, how likely are you to be asked about new information concerning agricultural education[c]	23.1%	31.5%	18.5%	13.9%	13.0%
In a discussion of issues that affect agricultural education, which of the following happens most[d]	16.7%	27.8%	27.8%	18.5%	9.3%
When you talk to your friends and neighbors about issues affecting agricultural education do you[e]	9.3%	33.3%	2.8%	41.7%	13.0%
Overall, in all your discussions with friends and colleagues about issues affecting agricultural education you are[f]	9.3%	47.2%	4.6%	32.4%	6.5%

Note. [a]1 = *No one* to 5 = *A number of people;* [b]1= *Never* to 5 = *Often;* [c]1= *Not likely* to 5 = *Very likely;* [d]1 = *Your colleagues tell you about new developments* to 5= *You tell your colleagues about new developments most of the time;* [e]1= *Give little information* to 5 = *Give a great deal of information;* [f] 1= *Not used as a source as advice* to 5 = *Often used as a source of advice.*

Objective #2

Thirteen items were used to measure the agricultural education teachers' intentions to advocate for agricultural education. Using a bi-polar scale (1= *Yes*; 2 = *No*), most indicated that they would advocate by joining their professional organization (*f* = 103; 95.4%), meeting with decision-makers at the district/area level (*f* = 98; 90.7%), and attending FFA Day at the Capital (*f* = 93; 86.1%). Meanwhile, the majority of teachers were unwilling to run for an elected position (*f* = 83; 76.9%), attend a rally or demonstration (*f* = 71; 65.7%), or create an informational flyer or video (*f* =55; 50.9%) to advocate for agricultural education. As a result, the overall intention score for participants in this investigation was a mean of 1.34 with a standard deviation of 0.24. Table 2 provides an overview of teachers' intentions to advocate for agricultural education.

Table 2

The Intentions of Louisiana Teachers to Advocate for Agricultural Education

Statement	Yes	No
Join my professional organization (LATA).	95.4%	4.6%
Meetings with decision makers at the district/area level.	90.7%	9.3%
Attend FFA Day at the Capital.	86.1%	13.9%
Informal meetings with decision makers.	86.1%	13.9%
Formal meetings with decision makers.	77.8%	22.2%
Make a telephone call or text to decision makers.	77.8%	22.2%
Writing a letter or email to decision makers.	73.1%	26.9%
Writing a post on social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, etc.).	61.1%	38.9%
Donate money to an issue or cause that affects agricultural education.	58.3%	41.7%
Write a newspaper article addressing a relevant issue.	55.6%	44.4%
Create an informational flyer or video.	49.1%	50.9%
Attend a rally or demonstration.	34.3%	65.7%
Run for an elected position.	23.1%	76.9%

Objective #3

For the third objective, we used correlational analysis to examine the relationship between the variables of interest. As a result, we found a statistically significant ($p < .01$) and moderate negative relationship ($r = -.480$) between the agricultural education teachers' level of opinion leadership and their intentions to advocate for agricultural education. This finding suggested that as the teachers' opinion leadership increased, their intentions to advocate for agricultural education decreased.

Objective #4

Using a qualitative approach, the final objective explored the experiences and challenges faced by Louisiana teachers in advocating for agricultural education. As a result, three themes emerged from our analysis: (a) low-stakes advocacy, (b) advocating to and through students, and (c) a deficiency in advocacy knowledge and skills. The themes tell the story of the actions, aspirations, and deterrents of teachers as they have strived to promote agricultural education.

Theme #1: Low Stakes Advocacy

In the first theme, low-stakes advocacy, we compared the narrative responses of individuals who self-identified as having greater opinion leadership in the quantitative strand with those who did not perceive they exhibited a high level of opinion leadership. An emergent finding from our analysis was that individuals who exhibited higher opinion leadership scores often described engaging in low-stakes advocacy rather than professionally risker advocacy behaviors. As such, low-stakes advocacy represented actions that those individuals perceived might have limited potential negative repercussions, i.e., behaviors the teachers viewed as *safe*.

Examples of low-stakes advocacy included joining my professional organization and attending FFA Day at the Capital.

The individuals who reported having higher opinion leadership scores also articulated other forms of low-stakes advocacy, such as building relationships, networking, and subtly influencing decision-makers largely within their local context (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). As Participant #40 explained: "When advocating, sometimes it's the quiet actions that speak the loudest." Similarly, Participant #61 explained: "Advocacy in agricultural education is not always about grand gestures and public demonstrations. Often, it's the little conversations you have that make the biggest impact." The individuals who did not report exhibiting a high level of opinion leadership in the quantitative strand, however, indicated that they largely "did not" engage in advocacy for agricultural education (Participant #1). Or they preferred more private advocacy efforts such as "voting for individuals who support agricultural education" (Participant #101) or "speaking with family and friends" about the importance of agricultural education (Participant #91). Therefore, these individuals reported being largely disengaged from advocacy for agricultural education.

Theme #2: Advocating to and through Students

In the second theme, advocating to and through students, 72 participants reported that at the heart of their advocacy was empowering youth through agricultural education. Therefore, the teachers viewed their primary responsibility as educating the next generation about agriculture and inspiring them to become advocates themselves (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). On this point, Participant #9 pondered: "…so what's our most potent advocacy tool? Obviously, it's our students." Echoing this sentiment, Participant #100 shared: "When students become passionate advocates for agriculture, it's like a ripple effect – their voices spread far and wide." As a result of such work, the agricultural education teachers reported that their students often took action. Case in point, Participant #26 explained that after his agricultural education program consistently lost resources after an administration change, his students took note and "created a petition" to bring about change. "The petition worked; within a few days, my new superintendent asked to meet with me personally, and he apologized. We did not have any problems after that," explained Participant #26. Meanwhile, Participant #60 recalled how her students "were inspiring as they canvased the community during a bond issue to get a new agricultural education building." She continued: "The students and parents came together and were passing out educational materials and talking to people at all different kinds of community events; I didn't even really have to do much, and the bond passed!"

Theme #3: A Deficiency in Advocacy Knowledge and Skills

In the final theme, a deficit in advocacy knowledge and skills, over 60 participants reported that they perceived they lacked the necessary tools to be effective advocates for agricultural education. Perhaps this finding provides insight into why individuals who had a higher opinion leadership score identified in this investigation only reported engaging in low-stakes advocacy behaviors (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). As such, the teachers expressed a desire for professional development and other educational opportunities that would equip them with the necessary skills. As an illustration, Participant #81 revealed: "I want to advocate for agricultural education

better, but I need the tools to do it effectively. With some more training, I think I could be a better voice for the agricultural industry and the teaching profession."

In particular, the agricultural education teachers suggested they needed help navigating the complexities of "policy and using various forms of media," according to Participant #27. Another suggestion offered by Participant #5 was for state leaders to create "monthly information and fact sheets" that teachers could use as talking points when advocating for agricultural education. She continued: "We do not know what's going on most of the time. By having up-to-date talking points, we can sell our programs better." On the other hand, Participant #98 revealed: "As a younger ag teacher, I do not really know how to even begin forming relationships with our legislature. Just having some tips on how to begin building those relationships would make a big difference." Finally, 37 teachers reported needing more knowledge and skills regarding communicating agricultural education's story better. Specifically, they desired new professional development opportunities that focused on the use of social media, writing for newspapers and print media, photography, and film editing. Consequently, the agricultural education teachers in this investigation desired to continue to nurture their advocacy abilities by pursuing additional support and resources. By helping teachers learn to amplify their voices and providing the public with insights into their experiences through additional training, perhaps a brighter future for agricultural education could be cultivated.

Conclusions, Discussion, and Recommendations

This investigation aimed to describe the role of opinion leadership on Louisiana teachers' intentions to advocate for agricultural education. As a result of this investigation, we concluded that the quantitative and qualitative data strands were largely complementary. We also conclude that the agricultural education teachers in Louisiana reported only a marginal level of opinion leadership. Perhaps this was because Childers' (1986) opinion leadership scale required the teachers to self-report their perceived level of opinion leadership. As such, we recommend exploring alternative ways to measure this phenomenon that allow researchers to consider whether others in an agricultural education teachers' social system view them as opinion leaders (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). Perhaps such data could deepen our understanding of the role of opinion leaders in shaping the advocacy behaviors of agricultural education teachers.

Regarding their intentions to advocate for agricultural education, most teachers indicated they would be likelier to engage in low-stakes advocacy (Velasco et al., 2023), such as joining their professional organization, meeting with decision-makers, or attending FFA Day at the Capital rather than participating in advocacy efforts considered more professionally risky. This notion was corroborated through quantitative and qualitative data. Of note, the finding also appeared to support the work of Lamm et al. (2014), who found that opinion leaders in ANR were largely unwilling to take risks. Moving forward, we recommend that future research explore ways to encourage agricultural education teachers to engage in advocacy efforts that require more active engagement and buy-in from their followers to better champion issues affecting

agricultural education. We also recommend that teacher educators consider including curricular content on practical approaches to advocate for agricultural education in their preservice coursework. These opportunities could help future agricultural education teachers gain confidence in communicating agricultural education's story in powerful, far-reaching ways.

Because of the statistically significant and moderate negative relationship discovered between Louisiana agricultural education teachers' level of opinion leadership and their intentions, we concluded that agricultural education teachers in this investigation did not appear to overly engage in advocacy efforts for agricultural education. Future research should seek to understand *why* teachers do not appear inclined to engage in advocacy. With this knowledge, perhaps changes can be made to ensure that opinion leaders in agricultural education become better prepared to influence change regarding institutional policy and practice, public attitudes and behaviors, political processes, and power imbalances for marginalized groups.

A key finding that emerged in the qualitative strand was how the agricultural education teachers advocated to and through their students. As such, we conclude that although many of the advocacy behaviors reported by agricultural education teachers were low-stakes in nature, they inspired more high-stakes advocacy behavior from their students. Such a finding does not appear to have been previously addressed in the literature on agricultural education. Therefore, we recommend follow-up studies to investigate the varied and complex ways that agricultural education teachers can inspire their students to take action and champion issues in agricultural education and the agricultural industry more broadly. We also conclude that the agricultural education teachers in this investigation recognized they exhibited a deficiency in advocacy knowledge and skills. As such, the teachers desired more insight into how to effectively advocate for agriculture education better through professional development. This finding was surprising, considering the vast number of needs assessments conducted in agricultural education across various states that have not reported such a need (Roberts et al., 2020). We recommend that researchers and practitioners who conduct needs assessments in the future consider adding items related to advocating for agricultural education.

Although Lazarsfeld's (1948) notion of opinion leadership served as a productive lens, perhaps the findings of this investigation could serve as a foundation to create a new model that examines the role of opinion leadership on teachers' advocacy behaviors for agricultural education. With such knowledge, perhaps researchers could better elucidate how opinion leaders can successfully champion issues affecting agricultural education across local, state, national levels. Finally, we recommend that state agricultural education leaders and teacher educators create professional development opportunities focused on improving agricultural education teachers' ability to advocate for their profession (Solomonson & Roberts, 2022).

Acknowledgments

This manuscript is based on data published in poster and paper proceedings of the 2024 and 2022 American Association of Agricultural Education conferences.

Komunjeru, B., Figland Cook, W. L., Roberts, R., Stair, K. S. (2024). Advocating for agricultural education: A mixed methods examination on the role of opinion leadership on teachers' advocacy intentions. *Proceedings of the American Association for Agricultural Education* (AAAE) 2024 Conference, Manhatten, Kansas, USA.

Komunjeru, B., Figland Cook, W. L., Roberts, R., & Stair, K. S. (2022, February 3-5). The opinion leadership paradox: Examining the role of opinion leadership on teachers' intentions to advocate for agricultural education [Poster Abstract]. *Proceedings of the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) 2022 Southern Region Conference*, Oklahoma City, OK, USA.

Author Contributions: B. Komunjeru – conceptualization, data collection, formal analysis, writing; **W. L. Figland-Cook** – conceptualization, data collection, data analysis, writing; **J. Englin** – formal analysis and editing; **R. Roberts –** supervision, conceptualization, review and edits, writing.

References

Blackburn, R., Blackburn, B. R., & Williamson, R. (2017). *Advocacy from A to Z*. Routledge.

Bradley-Levine, J. (2018). Advocacy as a practice of critical teacher leadership. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership*, *9*(1), 47–62. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1182705.pdf

Casten, J. (2018). The art of building skills for advocacy. *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, *91*(2), 5–6. https://www.naae.org/naae/document-server/?cfp=/naae/assets/file/public/magazine/volume91/2018%2009%20--%20sept%20oct.pdf

Catapano, S. (2006). Teaching in urban schools: Mentoring pre-service teachers to apply advocacy strategies. *Mentoring & Tutoring*, *14*(1), 81–96. https://doi.org/10.1080/13611260500432756

Childers, T. L. (1986). Assessment of the psychometric properties of an opinion leadership scale. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *23*(2), 184–188. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378602300211

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage (3rd ed.). Sage.

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014). *Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Doerfert, D., & Lawson, C. (2018). Building your advocacy army. *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, *91*(2), 9–11. https://www.naae.org/naae/document-server/?cfp=/naae/assets/file/public/magazine/volume91/2018%2009%20--%20sept%20oct.pdf

Hatch, T., White, M. E., & Faigenbaum, D. (2005). Expertise, credibility, and influence: How teachers can influence policy, advance research, and improve performance. *Teachers College Record*, *107*(5), 1004–1035. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9620.2005.00502.x

Hock, G., & Meyers, C. (2018). On the road to change: Moving from literacy to advocacy. *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, *91*(2), 4–5. https://www.naae.org/naae/document-server/?cfp=/naae/assets/file/public/magazine/volume91/2018%2009%20--%20sept%20oct.pdf

Lamm, K. W., Lamm, A. J., & Carter, J. S. (2014). Opinion leadership development: Context and audience characteristics count. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *55(*2), 91–105. https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2014.02091

Lamm, K. W., Lamm, A. J., & Carter, J. S. (2015). Bridging water issue knowledge gaps between the general public and opinion leaders. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *56*(3), 146–161. https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2015.03146

Lazarsfeld, P., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1948). *The people's choice* (2nd ed.). Columbia University Press.

LeJeune, C. A., & Roberts, R. (2020). Reflections on reform: A historical narrative of the relocation of the Louisiana FFA Office. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *61*(3), 276–293. https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2020.03276

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Lindner, J. R, Murphy, T. H, & Briers, G. E. (2001). Handling nonresponse in social science research. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *42*(4), 43-53. https://doi.org/10.5032/jae/2001.04043

Marshall, C., & Anderson, A. L. (2009). Is it possible to be an activist educator? In C. Marshall & A. L. Anderson (Eds.), *Activist educators: Breaking past limits* (pp. 1–30). Routledge.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Morse, J. M. (1991). *Principles of mixed methods*. Sage.

Nunnely, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory*. McGraw Hill Book Company.

Roberts, R., Wittie, B. M., Stair, K. S., Blackburn, J. J., & Smith, H. E. (2020). The dimensions of professional development needs for secondary agricultural education teachers across career stages: A multiple case study comparison. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *61*(3), 128-143. https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2020.03128

Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). Free Press.

Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage

Solomonson, J. K., & Roberts, R. (2022). Organizing and administering school-based agricultural education systems and the FFA. In A. C. Thoron & R. K Barrick (Eds.)., *Preparing agriculture and agriscience educators for the classroom* (pp. 17-34). IGI Global.

Spillane, J. P., Hallett, T., & Diamond, J. B. (2003). Forms of capital and the construction of leadership: Instructional leadership in urban elementary schools. *Sociology of Education*, *76*(1), 1–17. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3090258

Valente, T. W., & Davis, R. L. (1999). Accelerating the diffusion of innovations using opinion leaders. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *566*(1), 55–67. https://doi.org/10.1177/000271629956600105

Velasco, R. C. L., Hite, R. L., Milbourne, J. D., & Gottlieb, J. J. (2023). Stand out and speak up: Exploring empowerment perspectives among advocacy activities of STEM teachers in the US. *Teacher Development*, *27*(4), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2023.2207095