

Utilizing Framing Theory to Construct a Typology of Farm to School in Georgia

Jade Davidson, PhD¹
Jason Peake, PhD²

Abstract

Farm to School is one experiential learning approach for educating children about agriculture, food, nutrition, and the environment. On a national level, Farm to School loosely began with the Department of Defense (DoD). On a state level, Georgia Organics is usually credited with formalizing Farm to School in Georgia, but tension exists because other organizations have long used Farm to School concepts. This begs the question whether a difference exists between formal Farm to School programs and farm to school in practice. Framing theory was used to explore key messages about Georgia's Farm to School program in the past and present, as well as future directions. Respondent-driven sampling was used to recruit participants. The "seeds" or initial wave of participants were the past and present directors of Farm to School at Georgia Organics, which is listed by the National Farm to School Network as the key contact for the state. Twelve individuals were interviewed in total. Narrative inquiry and analysis were the main data collection and analysis methods used. Six issues frames emerged: background experiences; the problem of child nutrition; the rise of the Georgia Farm to School Alliance; ownership and language; COVID-19's impact; and reimagining Farm to School. Future research should evaluate the breadth of Farm to School and explore how the tension between educators could impact the future of Farm to School. Practitioners should evaluate whether these messages align with their missions. Researchers and practitioners alike should consider how to redefine Farm to School to better suit how it is practiced.

Introduction

Farm to School is an experiential learning approach to educating children about agriculture, food, nutrition, and the environment (National Farm to School Network, 2021a). On a national level, Farm to School loosely began with the Department of Defense (DoD). In the late 1990s, the DoD partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the main supplier of school and school districts' lunch programs, so that school nutrition directors could use entitlement funds to purchase fresh produce to serve in their cafeteria (Burt, 2016; Kalb & Shore, 2005; Williams & Tucker-Gruchala, 2017). The result of this partnership was the DoD's Farm to School Program (Kalb & Shore, 2005). The 2002 Farm Bill further promoted this partnership, encouraging school food service directors to buy local food when possible (Kalb & Shore, 2005). Today, Farm to School is usually instituted by procuring local foods for the cafeteria and using gardens and related curricula to inspire classroom learning, where the overarching aims are to (1) address and improve childhood health and (2) support local and regional farmers (Feenstra & Ohmart, 2012).

Literature Review

¹ Jade Davidson is the Executive Director of Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, 200 Strand Agriculture Hall, Corvallis, OR 97331. 0000-0001-9165-7830

² Jason Peake is a Professor of Agricultural Education in the Department of Agricultural Education, Leadership and Communication at the University of Georgia, Four Towers Building, 405 College Station Road, Athens, GA 30602. 0000-0002-1431-5447

Research supporting Farm to School as an educational program reveals that its benefits are far-reaching. Teaching children about food and agriculture, for example, permeates learning across numerous subjects, most notably, science, environmental, and nutrition education (National Farm to School Network, 2021a). Studies have shown that repeated exposure to fruits and vegetables through elective classroom curriculum, lunchroom taste tests, and garden work time, among other activities, can lead to an increase in the consumption of and preference toward fruits and vegetables (Hazzard et al., 2011; Joshi et al., 2008; Tonti, 2017). Less obvious but related benefits are the learning children experience when teachers utilize agriculture as a context to teach across core subjects, especially when the school garden is integrated as a central pivot point. For example, during a writing session, children could be asked to describe the garden using the five senses; additionally, when tending to the garden, children could be asked to harvest one-third of the bell peppers on each plant.

Operating a Farm to School program is not without challenges. School gardens rely upon effective academic integration, which requires extensive time and effort, funding, and administrative support (Blair, 2009; Ozer, 2007). Teachers must also either incorporate garden upkeep into their classes or daily schedule or request parent or other outside volunteer support. Other challenges include securing stable funding for the program in general, ideating long-term solutions for the garden's sustainability (Burt et al., 2017; Ozer, 2007), and ensuring farmers are willing and able to sell their products (Izumi et al., 2010). These challenges present adjacently to arguments of Farm to School's perpetuation of neoliberalism, a doctrine favoring free-market capitalism, individualism, and privatization of programming (Allen & Guthman, 2006).

Allen and Guthman (2006) argue that Farm to School has experienced a shift in mission. At its inception, Farm to School existed within the National School Lunch Program, a federal, public entitlement program, and served to be a healthy cafeteria initiative. Now, Farm to School can also exist as an extension of the educator's interpretation, i.e., an educational initiative. Farm to School, when conceptualized in two different ways (i.e., cafeteria or educational initiative), may not be viewed similarly (Vallianatos et al., 2004). Different understandings of how Farm to School is to operate can create tension, misunderstanding, and a sense of ownership.

Research Purpose and Questions

State-level adoption of Farm to School has varied over time. For example, efforts in California began with the work of Robert Gottlieb and Rodney Taylor, two individuals who started the first salad bar program at a school in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) in California in 1996 (Feenstra & Ohmart, 2012). This salad bar program operated first as a pilot program, offering fruits and vegetables as an alternative to the standard hot school lunch meal (Vallianatos et al., 2004). In other states, such as Georgia, the rise of Farm to School is largely attributed to Georgia Organics, a nonprofit that became increasingly familiar within the state in the early 2000s. Though Georgia Organics often self-reports formalizing Farm to School in 2008, several other organizations, such as the Wylde Center or formal Agriculture Education programs, were already teaching Farm to School concepts. An unspoken but acknowledged tension exists between those who quantify Farm to School and those who practice and teach with *farm to school* concepts to enhance student learning. This is not a tension spoken

about in existing literature but rather was a constructed theme in the following study, which sought to explore the history of Farm to School in Georgia. Previous work (e.g., Davidson & Peake, 2023) identified key players in Georgia's Farm to School history. This second article examines how key players in Farm to School in Georgia communicate the scope and themes of the program. The relevant questions were:

1. What issue frames do key players use to describe the scope of Farm to School in Georgia?
 - a. In what ways do the issues frames indicate challenges or barriers in Farm to School in Georgia?
2. What do the constructed issues frames communicate about the past, present, and future directions for Farm to School?
 - a. What are innovative avenues for future Farm to School programming in Georgia?

Conceptual Framework

Framing theory, specifically issue framing, was the primary conceptual underpinning used to explore the messaging of Farm to School's rise in Georgia. Epistemological and methodological elements of social constructionism (Vygotsky, 1978) and appreciative inquiry were used to supplement the tenets of framing theory.

Framing Theory

Entman (1993) briefly states framing to be a matter of "selection and salience" (p. 52), yet the definition can be expanded to a more general idea that framing is a matter of considering how ideas are synthesized, organized, and presented (Eko, 1999; Entman, 1993; Maher, 2001). Hallahan (1999) hypothesized that seven different types of framing exist: situations, attributes, choices, actions, issues, responsibility, and news. Issues framing was chosen because it focuses on how individuals interpret and convey social reality. Three types of issue frames exist: diagnostic (statement of a problem), prognostic (solution to problem and outline of action steps), and motivational (call to action). Said another way, diagnostic frames call attention to "here is the problem", prognostic to "here is a solution", and motivational to "here is a call to action."

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism suggests that individuals conceptualize the world based on external observations and inter- and intrapersonal interactions (Bhattacharya, 2017). Knowledge is therefore considered co-constructed and is the product of relationships. Several 'truths' exist because of this co-construction process. This process is evident in framing theory because though the communicator or the framer of the message may say one thing, the recipient may interpret it differently because of their own experiences with the content matter. Yet, understanding and knowledge can be jointly created throughout the conversation. Within a lens of social constructionism, then, one must be prepared to grapple with how many different knowledge and truths shape understanding of a phenomenon.

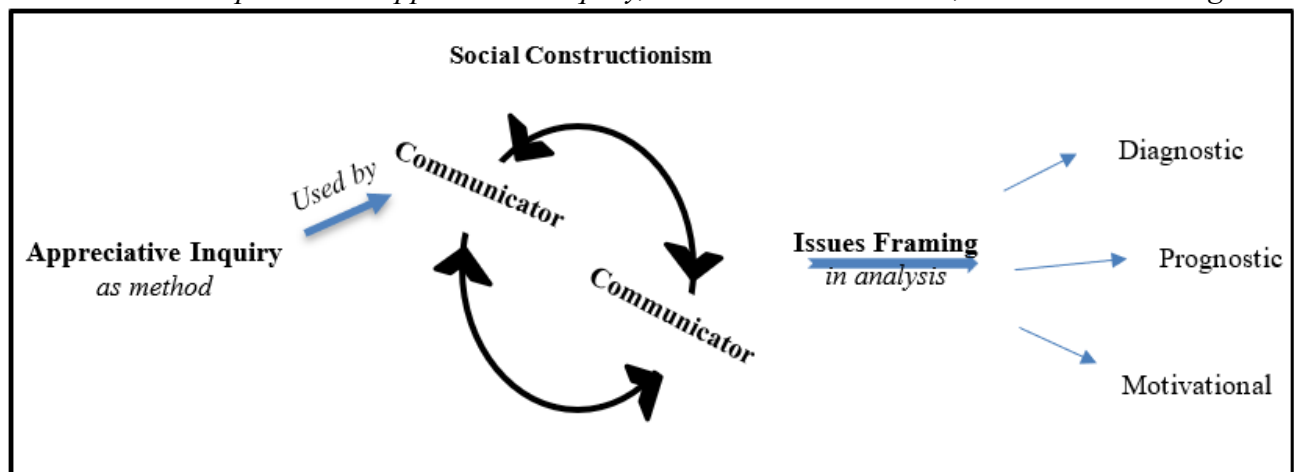
Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry (AI) "inquires into, identifies, and further develops the best of 'what is' in organizations to create a better future" (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, p. 1). Appreciative

inquiry roots itself in the social constructionist epistemology by acknowledging that reality is a notion created based on interactions with others. In conversation, individuals work to determine how their organization best succeeds. This method of inquiry was used to discern how Georgai Organics has (or has not) been successful in perpetuating Farm to School over time, and because its call to reimagine the future overlaps with motivational issues framing. For example, to synthesize ideas of how key players conceptualize Farm to School in Georgia, participants were asked to describe stories of collaboration among organizations in the Georgia Farm to School Alliance or to imagine the future of Farm to School programming. Figure 1 illustrates the relevant conceptual model for this study.

Figure 1

Visual Relationship Between Appreciative Inquiry, Social Constructionism, and Issues Framing



Research Methods

Data Collection and Sampling Procedures

This was a qualitative study where the interview guide was grounded in narrative and appreciative inquiry. Narrative inquiry seeks to understand the knowledge of individuals who experience a phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019), in this case, Farm to School in Georgia. The goal then is to ask individuals to tell stories surrounding a particular phenomenon; in combination with appreciative inquiry, individuals should also be asked to consider the best aspects or attributes in their story (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). Narrative inquiry also considers how the teller places themselves in this narrative. Correspondingly, I asked participants to describe in detail their account and understanding of Farm to School in Georgia. The interview guide was reviewed by two experts: Dr. Eric Rubenstein, the qualitative research contact in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication at UGA, and Dr. Alexa Lamm, an evaluation expert in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication at UGA. Dr. Eric Rubenstein is an Assistant Professor and has been a member of the department for ten years; Dr. Alexa Lamm is a Professor in the department and has served over ten years as an evaluation expert across two major universities.

I used respondent-driven sampling (RDS) to recruit participants. Respondent-driven sampling is a method informed by snowball, key informant, and target sampling, and is especially employed when relevant populations are difficult to determine (Gile & Handcock, 2010; Heckathorn, 1997). Given the uncertainty around how Farm to School has grown in Georgia, the literature indicated this would be the most appropriate data sampling procedure.

I began by asking the past and present directors of Farm to School at Georgia Organics to participate in this study; Georgia Organics is the main contact point for those interested in becoming involved in Farm to School in Georgia (National Farm to School Network, 2021b). I subsequently asked these individuals to list names of those who could provide relevant information about the history of Farm to School in Georgia. I interviewed twelve individuals in total. Each participant was interviewed over Zoom, with interviews lasting in length between 60 and 75 minutes. All sampling recruitment materials, scripts, and intended population were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Georgia (Project00004617). The participants consented to have this information shared, and this was done to increase the credibility of the accounts and backgrounds shared. Additionally, the researchers considered this information to be useful for others looking to start their own Farm to School programs (e.g., teachers). However, all requests regarding the confidentiality of information were met by the researchers. Table 1 provides the name, organization, and position or role of each participant.

Table 1

Early Champions of Farm to School in Georgia (n = 12)

Name	Current Organization	Position/Role
Kimberly Della Donna	Georgia Organics	Director (Farm to School)
Erin Croom	Small Bites Adventure Club	Co-Founder, CEO
Tasha Gomes	FoodCorps	Associate Director (Programs)
Jenna Mobley	Community Farmers Markets	Director (Education), Educator
Jennifer Owens	HealthMPowers	President, CEO
Donna DeCaille	NOSH Nutrition	Founder, CEO
Wande Okunoren-Meadows	Little Ones Learning Center	Executive Director
Holly Thaw	Georgia Department of Education	Specialist (Farm to School)
Nichole Lupo	Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School	Specialist (School Farms), Educator
Kyla Sankara	Fernbank Science Center	Specialist (Instruction)
Stephanie Van Parys	Wylde Center	Executive Director
Ashley Rouse	Captain Planet Foundation	Director (Garden Programs)

Data Analysis

Narrative analysis was employed adjacent to narrative inquiry because the former is a method one can use when examining data presented in storied forms (Riessman, 2008). Mishler (1995) proposed a typology for conducting narrative analysis: (1) reference and temporal order; (2) textual coherence and structure; and (3) narrative functions. The former, “reference and temporal order”, refers to the order of a story’s events, where the author must consider how to distinguish the telling (the narration of the story) from the told (the original account of the story). This specific study sought to construct a telling rooted in the told. Instead of a singular told, several perspectives were considered. To account for the varied lives of the participants, I used

structural and thematic analyses in combination. Structural analysis allows for the slowing down of an account to distinguish meaning (Riessman, 2008) and was used to consider the issues frames presented in the participants' stories. In the instance of repeated words, I used structural narrative analysis to determine if and how the word(s) contributed to a message frame. Thematic analysis was meanwhile used to consider the overarching intent, tone, and lessons learned that were conveyed in the messages. I used a modified thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyze the data, where attention was paid to how certain stories fit within the whole context of Georgia's Farm to School program (Riessman, 2008). As such, the participants' accounts were analyzed not to construct a theory but were analyzed at face value to create a wholistically-informed account. Any quotes presented in the results were cleaned for ease of reading because the importance of recounting the story was grounded in what was said, not how it was said. The intent of the quote remained as true to the original statement as possible.

Establishing Trustworthiness

My personal and professional interests are intertwined with agricultural experiences I have had in numerous regions of the United States, so I engaged in continual reflexivity of myself as a research tool and documented changes in my thoughts via reflective memoing (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). I am not from Georgia, so I used member checking, follow-up interviews, and retrieval of related data (e.g., government reports) to verify details in the participants' accounts. Regarding member checking, for example, I asked participants to review specific sections to ensure I interpreted our conversations correctly. Using appreciative inquiry was also a form of methodological triangulation (Ravitch & Carl, 2021): I often met the participants for the first time, so I aimed to build immediate positive relationships to allow for a sense of trust and companionship.

Results

The first question this study sought to address was: What issues frames do key players use to describe and detail the scope of Farm to School in Georgia? Recall that diagnostic frames call attention to a problem, prognostic frames to a solution, and motivational frames to a call to action (Hallahan, 1999). Six issues frames were constructed from the data and were based on how participants communicated their roles and responsibilities in their work. Briefly, these frames included (1) personal background, (2) the issue of child nutrition, (3A) the rise of the Georgia Farm to School Alliance, (3B) the issue of ownership and language, (4) COVID-19's impact on the food system, and (5) the reimagination of Farm to School. These themes are extrapolated next in greater depth, but first, it is important to note that the order of these themes represents how they are viewed to move the message of Farm to School through time, that is, the frames tell the story of Farm to School's development in Georgia. Specifically, frames 1-3A cover the early days of Farm to School's conception and growth, Frames 3B and 4 the present-day issues, and Frame 5 the thoughts for the future of Farm to School. The frames were ordered as such because the second question this research sought to address was: What do the constructed issues frames communicate about the past, present, and future directions for Farm to School? The findings from the six main frames follow.

Frame 1: Motivational

Almost any background experience – no matter the relevance to farming and gardening - can drive one to push the Farm to School movement forward

Overwhelmingly, the participants fell into two categories: leader (e.g., director, founder, or CEO) or specialist (e.g., school farms, educator) (see Table 1). In contrast, each participant had a seemingly different background. For example, Jennifer came into the Farm to School field from policy and advocacy work whereas Stephanie grew up knowing and being in the garden through her grandfather. Nichole, too, grew up knowing how to farm by helping her father as a young child, while both Jenna and Tasha seemingly stumbled into the Farm to School world through their early work as educators. This variety of background experiences coalesces around the first framing set, motivational, where the call to action is that no matter the expertise, *you* can be a leader in the Farm to School arena.

Among the leaders of Farm to School-oriented organizations and the practitioners of Farm to School values, it was clear the leaders usually oversaw the organization while the educators were working the programs. Stephanie, when asked about her daily duties, responded laughing, “Everybody thinks I'm weeding. I'm like, “No, I'm not. I'm just weeding emails. That's what I weed.” Erin and Jennifer, too, expressed that as leaders in their organization, they manage the organization's strategic direction. Educators like Kyla and Nichole work physically and figuratively on the ground, teaching classes, running horticulture clubs, and tending to plants. As the school's farm specialist, Nichole is also in charge of both internal and external communication about the farm, and stated,

I schedule weekly harvests with our farmers. I communicate with teachers to get their classes involved in the harvest. I communicate with our nutrition staff – and farmers – to determine how much of what needs to be harvested each week based on the menus.

No matter the background experience, one thing was apparent across all the interviews: An individual does not have to be an expert to lead Farm to School. Additionally, no one background experience necessarily sets anyone apart. Stephanie, a former boss of Nichole's, mused, “I mean, [Nichole's] path was interesting because she was a music major...but she ended up following another passion of hers and ended up in Farm to School.” Kimberly also commented, “My training is a classically trained chef. I went to culinary school, and I got my associate degree in culinary arts, and then my Bachelor of Science is in culinary nutrition. So, basically a chef with a nutrition background.” Donna, furthermore, who comes from the field of public health, discussed the idea that Farm to School can succeed on the idea and determination of one person:

I guess in retrospect, it's just funny- I was just that one person. It wasn't a whole department...I was this one person in a huge public health system that believed in it. And so, Farm to School wasn't my idea, but when it came to me, it was like, “Perfect!”...Within systems- It only takes one person who believes in what you're doing.

This ability to impact change – and take pride in accomplishments – was another commonality among participants, all of whom expressed joy in helping move the needle in someone's understanding of the influence of Farm to School programming. Kyla, for example, asked herself what she could do to make a difference in school gardens:

I was volunteering at a farm, the first summer of the pandemic, just went to a friend's farm to help pull some weeds. And she was complaining about not being able to get starts. And I was like, "Well, I can grow starts," and then this whole program has come out of that. Now, every season the greenhouse is full of veggie starts, and I love just being in there.

Several participants also shared their favorite "aha moments," those moments where they could quite literally see the recognition and awe in others' faces, be it teachers, other professionals, students, or school nutrition staff. Jennifer shared a particularly vivid account of some students who visited a strawberry farm:

I will tell you that maybe the single most important experience I've ever had, when I felt alive and just saw for the power of Farm to School, was during my Georgia Organics days when we took a group of kids from Atlanta Public Schools, many of whom had never been outside of 285, out to a farm where they were able to just run around and pick strawberries. And we had a chef on-site outside helping them make salads with fresh strawberries and their own salad dressing. And when that bus rolled away from the farm that day, kids were pressed up against the bus window with like these big sticky smiles. And you could tell that they just had this incredible experience that they had just never had before. And I will never, ever, forget that.

Indeed, Kimberly might tell you that Farm to School is a win-win-win:

The Farm to School program – or Farm to School initiatives – are just a win-win-win for everybody...nobody loses. There isn't any reason to not love Farm to School...when schools purchase from local growers, the economy improves. It serves to support local farmers and local economies. Kids get fresh, delicious food. The hands-on education programs that are part of Farm to School are fun and interesting...[F]or the most part, everybody loves learning in the garden or loves food preparation activities that are educational. So, it's just nice to know that there isn't anybody in the world going, "Oh my God, Farm to School is just stupid and a waste of time."

The nature of these messages makes it apparent that the common belief among participants is that anyone with a drive to propel a Farm to School program or initiative would surely experience success based on their determination alone. These motivations are precisely what pushed these individuals to consider how to harness the power of Farm to School to address the rising issue of childhood obesity.

Frame 2: Diagnostic

Farm to School rose based on the notion that something needed to be done for the health and education of the children

No matter the purveyor, innovator, leader, or educator, the individuals pursuing the Farm to School mission found themselves in this work because they saw a need for a new initiative. Ashley, for example, was inspired to do the work because of her daughter:

[M]y daughter entered pre-K and I saw a need for a garden and just for a connection to food...And so I was having breakfast with her pre-K class and just noticed a big disconnect. Went to the principal. He connected me with a teacher, a third-grade teacher. So I approached her one day after school. We ended up starting a garden and we were- I was connected to Farmer D, who had a garden center at the time and who was just

starting to get funding from Captain Planet to do school gardens. So he brought me in. I was just a stay-at-home mom and hadn't worked since college and so we ended up working together to put in school gardens.

Even more bolstering to this mission is the notion that there is no “right” or “one way” to do Farm to School, especially since the three components of school gardens, classroom education, and local procurement for school meals, when applied in tandem, all work to teach children about the food and the environment. Holly, the Farm to School Specialist for Georgia’s Department of Education, touched on these ideas:

One of the first things I did was help really get the messaging out that Farm to School is not one thing. I realized that we had many people that if you could ask them, like, “Are you in Farm to School?” that they were saying, “No,” and not because they weren't doing it but because they thought if they didn't have a school garden or if they weren't procuring a certain local item or if they weren't doing a certain thing, then they couldn't answer yes to that question.

Beyond feeling a need to clarify if and how Farm to School programs or various initiatives connect back to addressing childhood health and wellness was the overarching agreement among participants that food, and learning about good food, is a basic human right. Ashley, continuing on with her story, explained that “[M]y attraction to it is that I feel like everyone should be deeply connected to where their food comes from...food is a basic human right, and it's kind of silly that we have to grow food to sell food.” Tasha, too, agreed, “Our mission is to make sure that all kids...regardless of their place, race, or class, know what healthy food is. Eat healthy food. Know where it comes from and are equipped to make good decisions.” Wande, the Executive Director of Little Ones Learning Center, aptly summarized all these sentiments:

If we can work to embed the love of gardens and outdoor learning from an early age, then we have made huge milestones. I think a lot of times we are so stuck on teaching the rudimentary ABCs and 123s without incorporating outdoor ag education, and we're missing a huge part...When we're outdoors, you know, we're taking care of Mother Earth and the gardens...learning our friendship skills. There's a whole other world that we're missing that I don't feel that we're capturing right now, but if we can start that now...maybe they'll [the kids] want to grow up to be a restaurant owner or a farmer or just take part in that, that food world...it's wonderful to be a doctor and a lawyer, an astronaut, and all this other stuff, but, you know, just having that love of growing food, empowering people and not being so dependent on other people to grow your food and knowing what you're purchasing when you grow food.

Yes, learning about good food – and how to grow good food – teaches children about themselves from a young age. In cultivating this knowledge and autonomy, children can become empowered to create change for themselves and others. However, without the initial opportunity to play in the soil, these larger abstractions for the development of belongingness and self-expression may be missed among the younger generations. Stephanie mentioned that this opportunity to play in the soil, to learn where food comes from, was the impetus behind the founding of the Wylde Center:

We really wanted to create the next generation of environmental stewards and kids who weren't scared of worms or insects to care for nature and the environment and know how

to grow beautiful things and nutritious food to put into their bodies as an alternative. Not as an alternative, but as an 'in addition to' what they were already eating or doing or- Building confidence. It builds confidence to know how to do those kinds of things, to connect back to nature.

Tasha, too, spoke for the power of watching the children play in nature:

I went to a site visit a couple weeks ago, and [the service members] had harvested kale that they grew on campus and were doing a taste test with the kids. And I was sitting at the table with [the kids] and it's like, you know, looking at it all crazy, like, "OK, I'll try it." And then when he did, he's like, oh, he was so shocked. He's like, "Oh, that's good." And he was like, "No cap, no cap."

Oh, that was my favorite moment...just seeing kids get excited about food and get familiar with changing the way that they view unfamiliar foods is really, it's just exciting to me. And just seeing them touch the Earth and feeling empowered to be stewards.

Almost every participant had a similar story about watching children's faces transform with excitement about what they had just tasted. Their accounts solidified the notion that something should be done to incorporate food-based learning activities into young classrooms.

Frame 3A: Prognostic

The Farm to School Alliance positioned itself as a solution for addressing childhood obesity, and the lack of health and nutrition education

The rise of the Farm to School movement in Georgia is largely attributed to Erin Croom, who returned to Georgia in 2006 after obtaining a Master's in Community Development and Applied Economics from the University of Vermont. She may be hesitant to accept such a recognition, yet it was, by and large, an applauded accomplishment given to her by the participants. Her work in Vermont largely informed the development of Farm to School in Georgia, which she began on her own before being hired by Georgia Organics. Erin mentioned, "[W]e were a tiny nonprofit, I had no funding...and the concept with Farm to School was a little weird. There was very little support for this program, so I knew that we needed some structure and validation around it." To build up this support, Erin continued, laughing slightly, "I called the Georgia Department of Public Health, and I said, 'Hi. Would you like to join the Farm to School Alliance? It's a coalition of state and federal partners that help kids eat more fruits and vegetables.'" Donna was one of these individuals who answered the call. She also recalled that the initiative was small at first and added, "I remember us having debates about, 'Okay, how are we going to get other state agencies on board?'"

Funding, as well as eventual partnerships, came along, especially around 2010 when the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act established said validity around Farm to School programs. Donna recounted that organizations were eligible to apply for funding from the CDC:

So, the Let's Move initiative at this point is rolling out. CDC got a lump sum of money, and it came to the state and they said, "Hey, you can compete for this money if you would plan out a program that supports this, the Let's Move agenda." And of course, Farm to School was a part of that, or community gardens were a part of that. And I wrote out this whole proposal and it got funded. So now I ended up with all this money to support

community gardens in Georgia. It was crazy. So, then I created a competitive grant process. I think Georgia Organics got a good sum of money. And so that's where the money came from to really push it. A lot of people don't even know that, you know?

Despite these early challenges in securing partnerships and funding, the Alliance has stood the test of time. Jennifer, another initial player in the movement, said its biggest accomplishment is “[t]he fact that the Farm to School Alliance is still around and functioning...I mean, that's long-term infrastructure. It's agency, largely state agency based, which means...policy infrastructure.”

Georgia has certainly built a name and an infrastructure for the longevity of its Farm to School movement, but it is also widely recognized because of its efforts in collaboration and celebration. Several county school districts, such as Burke, Jackson, Effingham, and Baldwin were repeatedly mentioned as having amazing Farm to School programs. The Golden Radish awards, an award program that recognizes and celebrates the best practices of school nutrition districts across the state, too, were listed as a shining example of celebration and collaboration. But perhaps the most sticking story was that of the Little Ones' Farm Stand. Wande and the community at Little Ones Learning Center wanted to start a farm stand to impact knowledge and behavior change among their kids and parents. Tasha recounted the event: “The city shut it down because of some code violations. So Wande activated us as a network to support and petition to change the code in that city so that they could continue to run the farm stand.” The battle to change the code continued for a couple of years, but it was a primary example of how, in an alliance, it is important to “put the ego in the back pocket” and all work toward a greater good. Wande, in recounting the farm stand story, passionately shared:

And I have to say this, this is very important: This is not by Little Ones Learning Center's might alone. So when we talk about champions, I want you to know, and everyone out there to know, even though it may be presented in the story that, “oh, Little Ones did this,” there was a team of people underneath our wings that was floating us, pushing us, and elevating us to make sure this stuff happened.

Tasha, too, emphasized this point, adding, “I'll always be just reminded of what's possible by collaborating and coming together as a community, to support one another in our efforts and the impact that that had on the entire county.”

Indeed, through teamwork and collaboration, the Alliance will succeed. Over time, it morphed from a solution to combatting childhood obesity to a “place to know.” Nichole said the Alliance is “an opportunity to collaborate, to share resources, to make connections, to sort of stay abreast of what other organizations are doing, what initiatives they had in place, or what they're having success in, or finding challenges with.” Erin, too, agreed, and stated, “[the Alliance] means a network of partners that share a common goal but bring different resources to the table.”

Frame 3B: Diagnostic

Though a “place to know”, the Farm to School Alliance inadvertently created an issue of “ownership” of Farm to School

The Alliance, in its early days was small: several state agencies, a few nonprofits, and some gung-ho teachers from here and there. As it has grown over the years, the work of those on the ground, especially those outside the Atlanta and Athens areas, has been lost due to a lack of

representation or ability to attend Alliance meetings. (The Alliance now boasts over 50 partner organizations and 100 members (Georgia Organics, 2022)). Of interest during the interviews was a sneakily growing count of the number of times participants mentioned the word “silos.”

Ashley, for example, elucidated this point when she commented,

Sometimes what I've found in this work, especially as it relates to the Alliance, is that we're still working in silos. We meet on a quarterly basis, but we're still not talking about and sharing our stories enough to know what each other's doing.

Donna, too, remarked on this point. In the initial phase of the Alliance’s growth, she mused that “there were little pockets of Farm to School, and I think one of the most novel things is that people went around and found those little pockets and were able to connect into a uniform purpose.” Over time, though, she does not think it is sustainable:

[I]t can't stay this little...Like, "Yeah, this is so great and wonderful!" But it's in a corner. It's in a pocket...If I bring my friends to the table and I start talking about Farm to School, they wouldn't have a clue. Like, “What?” I have to explain what it is, right? But what if it could be something that's called something else where everybody could sort of connect? Where it's not elitist and not only just available to people with money.

Beyond being “in a pocket,” Donna also frankly presented the idea that it is hard to convince some members of the Alliance that Farm to School can count in nontraditional school settings, a sentiment Wande mentioned, too:

There's a lot of black and brown schools that are doing this work and don't call it ‘Farm to School.’ And so, you're not going to get the true numbers because some people feel that it's co-opted, right? Like this, this is a term that was just made up - Farm to School - that was just made up. But there's been people that have been doing this work before the term ‘Farm to School’ came up...Where are your black and brown communities in the Farm to School conversations? You know? Because we're just so narrowly defining what Farm to School is.

When you get down to it, what is Farm to School, really? The participants – and research – purport it to be a legitimate and necessary part of children’s education, an encompassing, tangential, and actualizing education that enhances learning among core subjects. So, is it a question of a definable Farm to School program, more general Farm to School principles, or something else entirely?

Frame 4: Diagnostic

COVID-19 as an overarching "thing" revealed many gaps in the food system and exacerbated the lack of representation issues

At this point, no one is a stranger to the widespread effects of the pandemic, especially the participants running teacher training programs or instituting Farm to School programs for children. Jenna, for example, talked about the pressures related to a lack of resources for teachers in charge of these programs:

I think one of the biggest constraints right now is money – and money for people...it's hard to get grant funding for people. And I think there is certainly a limit on the amount of hands-on education that the teachers that are in the schools right now can provide

during this time, specifically during the time of COVID and all of those restrictions and how stretched thin teachers are.

Kyla, too, an educator, mentioned she used to run a certified Master Gardener program. The pandemic forced her to put it on hold, largely because the program took teachers out of school, and there were no resources to cover these professional development opportunities.

Other issues highlighted by the pandemic were mental health and racial equity. Donna commented that she thought the pandemic would force the general public to further consider the looming impacts the pandemic had on children's health, especially children attending alternative forms of school. Holly and Ashley commented, too, noting that the pandemic has forced many to reckon with overarching gaps in the food system. Ashley specifically pointed to Project Giving Gardens, which was established as a response to COVID-19. She described it, saying, "We leveraged our school garden partners to hire growers to plant gardens and maintain them to harvest food from – and start giving back to the communities that the schools are a part of or that they exist in." When asked if she thought the program would continue, she immediately responded:

Yes, because what we know is that food insecurity is something that people deal with on a regular basis and the pandemic just exacerbated that. I'm going to continue to operate the program during the summer breaks to harness that summer growing season so that we can continue to do our part in addressing food insecurity and access that is often fueled by systemic inequities.

Though perhaps an unwelcome surprise, COVID-19 as an international problem revealed the need for system-wide changes that could have better implications for all.

Frame 5: Prognostic

Farm to School is a three-pronged "thing" that requires three prongs of re-imagination

No organization, network, or *thing* will be without its issues, difficulties, and challenges. The Farm to School Alliance, as previously mentioned, initially positioned itself to be a solution for preventing childhood obesity. Over time, the Alliance grew, so much so that members unknowingly were repeating their efforts in programming. Issues of ownership and language, as well as the pandemic, exacerbated growing frustrations around this lack of communication. The result of these problems is a three-fold reimagination of the current Farm to School model. For example, what if every school had a garden for children to learn in and from? Kyla dreams of having a teaching farm or garden:

I would love to have like a huge site where we could put eight different kinds of— like five different ways to make a pathway in a garden and different kinds of fences. I mean, it would probably look just absolutely messy and disorganized, but when schools are trying to figure out what's going to work best for their particular school, there's so many choices and there's so many things you could do wrong...[A place] they can pick and choose what was going to work best and really see how their decisions would look if carried out. And what if, as Jennifer said, local procurement solutions focused on redefining food as a public good? She expanded upon her idea, stating,

I'd love to be a little bit more, just in general— And it's like the oldest quote in the book – agriculture is our number one industry – yet we have some of the largest food insecurity rates in the country...but we have a really strong [agriculture education] commitment,

really strong land grant university outreach programs, I just, we've got to figure out this procurement question. And for me, it stems back to needing to redefine food as a public good. Because you're not ever going to make the dollars work...the economics are never going to work for a cash-strapped school system that serves 70%+ free and reduced lunch students to buy local produce at the price that farmers need. That's never going to work. So something's got to change on like the economic model to make that happen.

And finally, what if every school had principles of food, garden, nutrition, and agriculture education interwoven with its standards? What if food education became such a part of the school system that it was no longer an afterthought or a retroactive solution? And furthermore, what if the system valued teachers to teach such concepts? For example, Nichole commented, stating, "I think that being really strategic and intentional about securing funding for experts in the field [would be important]. So, seeking out funding to start a scratch nutrition program and then hiring folks who have foodservice service backgrounds." Ashley, too, said she is prioritizing creating space for teachers to learn from one another and what they are doing in their classrooms. Stephanie lamented about the lack of time to share such good practices:

Another thing that I really loved to do was follow my educators around. I didn't get to do this very often, but I loved writing about what they were doing and sharing their good work and taking the photos and just, yeah, just being able to share the story...I just like when we celebrate our accomplishments. You know, is it a newsletter? Is it an article? Are they photos that we post?...We don't do enough of that. Because of time and knowledge or, or whatever. Basically, time, not having enough time to celebrate what we are accomplishing. And to celebrate the people that are doing it, the work.

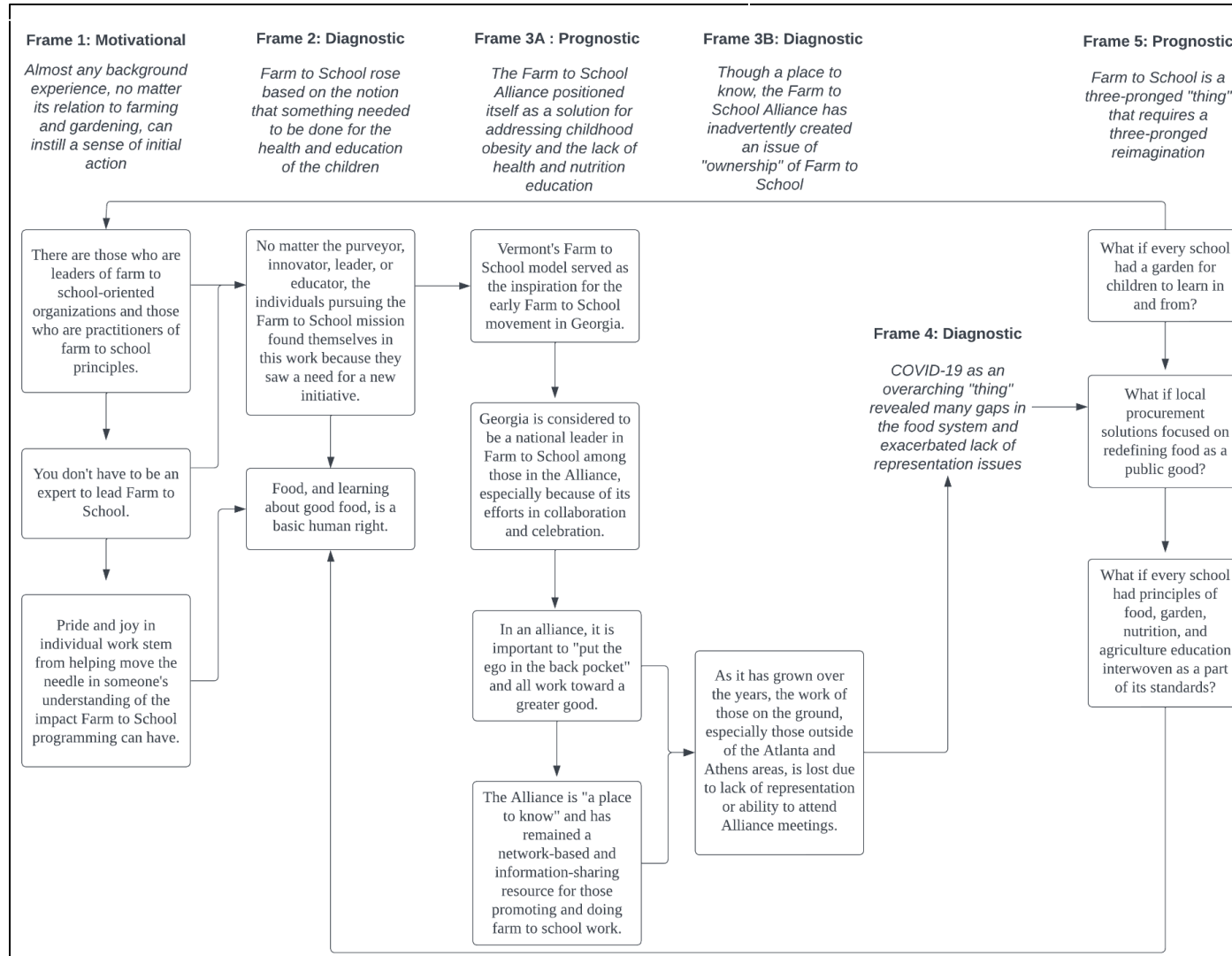
Many of the participants are clearly working on proposing and elevating these solutions to enact larger change. But, the conclusion seems to be that if we as a whole – as Stephanie said – do not make time for the smaller, reimagined solutions, what can we expect to change?

Discussion

This study sought to examine the current messages of Georgia's Farm to School program. Research question one specifically focused on the types of frames used by participants to describe the scope of Farm to School in Georgia. Issues frames can be diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational (Hallahan, 1999), and can work separately or in tandem, but essentially act to inform *others* about the state of *something*. In the case of Farm to School, six total frames were constructed, which can be seen represented in Figure 2. To define said constructed issues frames is one matter, but more important is the exploration of how said frames act, in other words, research question two, which sought to parse how the frames move the message of Farm to School through time. Foremost is the idea presented in Frame 1, which suggests that anyone can be a champion of Farm to School. Teachers, for example, may struggle to find time to implement a new project, yet the notion that no one background sets these key players of Farm to School in Georgia apart should hearten those looking to make a change. Coupled with the idea that Farm to School can generally be any activity that teaches children about food, nutrition, agriculture, and the environment (National Farm to School Network, 2021a), the idea that anyone can "do" Farm to School means anyone could enact farm to school principles.

Frames 2 and 3A complement each other; the former identifies the issue while the latter presents a solution. These key themes also move the message through time. Frame 2 highlights

Figure 2
Visual Typology of Farm to School in Georgia



the ingenuity of each participant: they saw a need and decided to act on behalf of children's health. Over time, the recognition of the problem and impetus for change became more rooted in the idea that today's children should be empowered by the knowledge of food. In Frame 3A, those of the Farm to School Alliance initially served to be advocates for raising children's health. Now, the population pool has grown, and the Alliance serves as more of a clearinghouse. The goal of the Alliance is still inherently the same, but there are fewer instances of innovation and more of program adaptation and collaboration. Together, these frames suggest that those of an alliance should be able to rally behind a clear set of shared goals and initiatives.

Frame 3B serves to highlight the issue of change over time, where the change is that the Alliance has potentially grown too big to care for and celebrate all its members. Something of note among the participants' words were mentions of Farm to School efforts solely in and around the Atlanta area, as well as the University of Georgia Extension's efforts, many of which operate out of the university, located in Athens, Georgia. A relevant question thus ponders: What about the efforts of those in the rest of the state? Though not all those outlying efforts may be specifically "Farm to School," what about the programs instituting small Farm to School-based activities? And, at what point do the initiatives become full-fledged Farm to School programs? These seemingly semantics-based arguments remind us of Allen and Guthman's (2006) argument, where privatization of Farm to School may result in difficult access. These arguments similarly manifested in many of the participant interviews, arguments which beg for a redefining of Farm to School. These arguments of definable *Farm to School* versus broader-reaching *farm to school*, as well as the overarching event of COVID-19, push the messages into the present day, especially as the lingering effects of the pandemic have forced many to consider the glaring gaps in today's food system. Hence, Frame 5 serves as a proposition for the future of Farm to School. This frame seeks to encourage new innovators, educators, purveyors, and leaders to consider the scope of Farm to School. Though set as a prognostic frame, the themes, phrased as questions, push us to consider "what if" (things were different)? In phrasing the themes as questions, this frame brings us back to the ideals of appreciative inquiry, which asks us to consider what is the best that could happen if we reimagine the present into a future (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Conclusions

Farm to School at its core remains to be a program designed to connect – and reconnect – children back to nature and the soil. This was clear throughout every interview, no matter if the participant represented a garden-, education-, or cafeteria-based initiative. Each facet of the program (i.e., school garden, cafeteria, and classroom) was and remains defined as important components of the Farm to School model. However, in taking on issues framing as a theoretical lens, it is important to note that the afore-presented typology is not necessarily conducive across every Farm to School program nor every state. Frames are constructed and interpreted by individuals; likewise, they are constructed and communicated to an individual by another individual(s). As such, this typology represents one interpretation of a newly examined problem of the Farm to School scene in Georgia. Despite an inherent researcher positionality and bias, which is prevalent in all forms of qualitative research, the typology conveys overarching messages and approaches for anyone looking to start applying general Farm to School-based practices. Namely, these messages are that anyone can "do" Farm to School; an alliance must be founded upon trust, collaboration, and teamwork; and it never hurts to reimagine or adapt how

current systems function to solve problems. Food is personal, and so is Farm to School. Upon accepting, or at least considering, all of the above messages, anyone can implement the essence of 'Farm to School,' especially if they believe in its ability to transform how children learn about agriculture and food and develop a sense of voice.

To that end, there are several recommendations for future research. One consideration is that of formal Farm to School versus farm to school practices. Does this difference in case matter or is the meaning in the eye of the beholder? Future research should endeavor to discourse the differences in appearance and thought of giving Farm to School a capitalized name versus upholding it as a credible, experiential learning practice. Examining the differences between how individuals name their "Farm to School" programs may also reveal why Frames 3B and 4 are diagnostic frames. Said another way, examining this tension may further reveal how and why food system issues are increasingly at the forefront of today's concerns. Another area of exploration for future research is uncovering the work of those whose efforts are often overlooked or missed entirely. Several participants highlighted that it was not them running the programs but their educators, yet when they were asked who else could shed light on the scope of Farm to School in Georgia, education programs were mentioned only generally, and the champion educators not at all. Future research should thus seek to discover who these enamoring educators are, why they are not listed at the forefront of innovative Farm to School practices, and what they are doing that makes them stand out. This research could further pave the way for other educators and states looking for a guide to implement pieces of Farm to School in their setting. Finally, it would behoove those current champions of Farm to School to examine and evaluate whether the messages of today's Farm to School are indeed what they intend to convey. For example, is COVID-19 a problem, a call to action, or both? If messages are not affecting change or inspiration in the way they were intended to, championing organizations should consider if and then how to combat this dissonance. The current ultimate goal of communicating about Farm to School seems to be that it is wonderfully transformative for its participants, so those gung-ho advocates should take care to be mindful that it comes across as such.

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