

Do You See It?: Framing of Professionalism in School-Based Agricultural Education

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Introduction

Literature in school-based agricultural education (SBAE) indicated professionalism makes a good teacher (Coleman et al., 2021; Eck et al., 2019). However, defining what professionalism is presents a challenge. Gorter et al. (2024) found dress and modeling to be of importance in how SBAE teachers in California view their own professionalism, colluding with a study by Coleman et al. (2021) which used dress, grooming, and attitude as markers of professionals in agricultural education. Studies have attempted to define what professionalism is, with varying results (Dixon, 2003; Blezek, 1986). Thus, there is a need to continue to explore what professionalism looks like day to day to support the learning of pre-service and in-service SBAE teachers (Coleman et al., 2021; Eck, et al., 2019; Gorter et al., 2024). This study sought to describe how teachers elect to portray their own professionalism through photographs.

Theoretical Framework

The previous work of Gamson and Modigliani (1987) and Gitlin (1980) in sociological accounts of framing scaffolded this study. Framing is used to provide context to the underlying plot of an event (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). Images can be used to create frames, and individuals then use those frames to form opinions about what they are observing (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gitlin, 1980). Currently, there is no literature using media framing as a mechanism to explore how teachers of SBAE view their own professionalism via imaging.

Methodology

This deductive content analysis used photographs to describe professionalism. The results of this study should be analyzed cautiously. SBAE teachers in California may not be representative of all SBAE teachers. As this research is a part of a larger study looking at professionalism via photovoice, we recognize there is a limited number of teachers represented.

SBAE teachers ($n = 6$), identified by state agricultural education leadership as being professional, submitted photos ($n = 48$) they felt exemplified professionalism. As dress and modeling were deduced from the literature as items of importance, only photos which included persons were used in this content analysis ($n = 47$). *Active*, *passive*, *professional dress*, *business casual dress*, and *casual dress* were the visual frames used in the codebook. We defined active as photos where people were engaging in an activity or task, where passive was defined as photographs that were staged. Professional, business casual, and casual dress were delineated using the Connecticut Department of Labor (2023) policy for professional image. Descriptions of these types of dress along with sample photos will be included with the final poster.

Gwet's (2014) agreement coefficients were found to be above .90 for all visual frames across 4 independent reviewers coding 20% ($n = 10$) of photographs, resulting in acceptable intercoder reliability. Finding consensus, a single coder coded the remainder of the photographs. To analyze the data, we used descriptive statistics including percentages.

Results and Findings

Across the 47 photographs, where people were present, 63.8% of photos ($n = 30$) were framed actively while 36.2% ($n = 17$) were framed passively. When coding photos for the type of dress present, 21.3% ($n = 10$) portrayed professional dress, 23.4% ($n = 11$) portrayed business casual dress, and 59.6% ($n = 28$) portrayed casual dress.

Conclusions

Using these results to describe how SBAE teachers in California frame their own professionalism via photographs, they view their own professionalism as mostly active (63.8%) when compared to passive (36.2%). When viewing the photographs through the frame of dress, there is variation of how that dress is presented. Most photographs were framed via the lens of casual dress, followed by business casual dress, then professional dress. The findings indicated SBAE teachers view their professionalism as manifesting via their actions, rather than staged photographs. Additionally, the idea that professionalism can occur across variations of dress emerged from the submitted photographs.

Implications/Recommendations

These findings provide insight into the conscious and unconscious visual framing of SBAE teachers' own professionalism via photographs. It can be surmised that SBAE teachers in California view their professionalism as modeled, consistent with pre-existing literature (Gorter et al., 2024), and that modeling is actively occurring rather than being staged. Further, as the idea of professional dress is recurring within the literature surrounding professionalism in SBAE (Gorter et al., 2024; Coleman et al., 2021), the results of this study bring to attention the idea that teachers who have been identified as exemplifying professionalism chose to, often, submit photographs where professional dress was not included and casual dress prevailed. As media framing crafts a narrative for how people view information (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Gitlin 1980) this brings to question how teachers of SBAE in California view what professional dress, business casual dress, and casual dress are. Additionally, it asks for consideration as to how much the way teachers dress explicitly informs their views of their own professionalism, as well as how they are viewed by others as exemplifying that professionalism.

This study brings to light additional research opportunities in following up with those who submitted the photos, and those who identified the participants. Delving into personal definitions of what is professional versus what is appropriate for the situation, for each party, may aid in the development of clearer standards of dress specific to SBAE. From a practitioner standpoint, pre-service and in-service professional learning opportunities may want to focus on professionalism as action rather than the staging for public and outward appearance to capitalize on the findings of this study where professionalism was seen as an action. Continuing to have discussions about what professionalism looks like within SBAE may aid in the creation of a clearer definition and ways to objectively measure progress towards professionalism, informing professional learning opportunities for all SBAE teachers in California.

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