

## From the editor

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The formal review process for *Agriculture and Human Values* is double-blind. This means that the names of authors are removed from the paper so that reviewers are blind to the identity of authors and that the authors are not informed of who has reviewed the paper so that the authors are blind to the identity of reviewers. Other academic journals might have a blind review process, in which author names are retained on the manuscript sent out for review, while other journals disclose the identity of reviewers and authors to each other.

I am a believer in the importance of peer review of academic papers and of the need to ensure that the review process is done fairly and without bias, which is why I continue to support the mutual anonymity of a double-blind review. The rationale for a double-blind review process is that it minimizes the potential for bias in the evaluation of a scholar's work.

However, periodically I receive an email from a reviewer stating that they know or suspect they know the author(s) of a paper I ask them to review. For instance, the reviewer might have attended or participated in a conference in which the paper was presented, or the paper made available to the reviewer might have self-referencing or other indications of author identity. Sometimes the online submission and manuscript management system inadvertently sends to reviewer papers with attachments containing information intended only for the editor's eyes. When this happens, honest and competent reviewers will contact

me and ask if they should withdraw themselves from the review process, since the review is no longer blind. My response is usually something like the following. First, I express appreciation for the reviewer's willingness to contact me about this. Second, when it appears that the only issue is that the reviewer knows the identity of the author, I ask if the reviewer is able and still willing to provide a review if they can make a reasonably objective assessment of the paper. Most of the time the answer is affirmative and I allow the review to proceed.

While I promote the double-blind review process I am less concerned about reviewers learning the identity of author(s) than I am about there being a significant conflict of interest in addition to the disclosure of author or reviewer identity. It is often not difficult to identify the identity of authors through online searches, participation in relevant conferences and other means. (I have a colleague who said he always conducts a Google search of the paper title whenever he is asked to review—a practice I do not endorse.) A conflict of interest combined with breach of anonymity is potentially more serious, however. For example, a conflict of interest might arise if the author(s) strongly attack or strongly support the published research of the reviewer. When this happens, there is a chance the reviewer's comments might be made overly malicious (in the case of the former) or particularly uncritical (in the case of the latter). Neither type of review is helpful to me. In this case, if there is also a disclosure of author or reviewer identity, then there is a risk the academic debate will spill outside of acceptable debate arenas, such as conferences and peer-reviewed publications. Academic bullying, like playground bullying and cyberbullying, is a real problem. I don't want to create a situation that can lead to one scholar harassing another scholar.

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This issue of *Agriculture and Human Values* contains the following articles. Boone and Taylor examine the extent to which homegardens improve the food security of smallholder farmers in Nicaragua. Pourias, Aubry and Duchemin examine the motives of urban residents to develop homegardens. Meek seeks to develop a greater understanding of how cultural politics affects agricultural change through a study of an agrarian reform settlement in Brazil. Liu et al. interview elderly residents of a rural Chinese town in order to understand why farmers are reluctant to continue to farm. Hart et al. use case studies to examine how producer movements influence multifunctional farm and land management practices. Hyland et al. link farmer self-identity and perceptions of climate change to their ability and willingness to engage in appropriate environmental management practices. Opitz et al. consider the extent to which urban agriculture differs from peri-urban agriculture. Davidson, Jones and Parkins study how disruptive events like mad cow disease affects conventional and alternative beef producers. Nelson et al. use a

case study to show how participatory guarantee systems can substitute for third party certification in organic agriculture. Lincoln and Ardoin link environmental values and sense of place to sustainable farming practices in an empirical study from Hawaii. Meijboom and Stafleu discuss the prospects of farmers having professional moral autonomy for farming related ethical issues. Leitgeb, Schneider and Vogl show how government policies in Cuba promoted the evolution of sustainable urban agricultural practices. Reid and Rout explain the unique way the Māori of New Zealand communicate the provenance of their food to consumers. Appendini and Quijada examine how concerns about food quality relate to the production and consumption activities of rural households in Mexico. De Grenade, Nabhan and Cariño-Olvera study how the Jesuit mission oases of the Baja California peninsula in Mexico contribute to improved agrobiodiversity practices. Kuuire et al. study the relationship among migration, poverty and environmental pressures in Ghana.