

Public Abstract

First Name:Matthew

Middle Name:Stewart

Last Name:Elliott

Adviser's First Name:Harvey

Adviser's Last Name:James, Jr.

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term:SS 2009

Department:Agricultural Economics

Degree:MS

Title:ARE STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR CAUSING THE INSTABILITY OF PAROCHIAL AG-PRODUCERS?

Parochial (Amish and Mennonites) agriculture producers have been known for their stability (historically large numbers) (Kollmorgen, 1943). Though, more recently, the percentage of parochial members who are ag-producers has been steadily declining. Game theory modeling suggests that parochial networks can be evolutionary stable, because of improved cooperation that promotes trust, despite constraints to scale efficiencies that may hinder economic performance (Bowles and Gintis, 2004). This study examines if the Parochial ag-producer declines are a result of structural changes (production contracts and new generation cooperatives) that have improved cooperation, and promoted trust, in large-scale anonymous agri-food trading relative to direct trading using parochialism. Findings suggest that structural changes to the agri-food sector may be a source of parochial ag-producer instability.