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CURATORS OF PLACE: FARMERS' NARRATIVES OF SENSE OF PLACE AND
LEARNING

by

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Bachelor of Science, University of North Dakota, 2008

Master of Science, University of North Dakota, 2011

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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2019

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This dissertation, submitted by Matthew Berosik in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.



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Department Educational Foundations and Research

Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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Matthew Berosik
December 2, 2019

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation brings forth the idea that our attachment to place and the meanings behind those attachments could be well suited for implementation within formal agricultural education. The focus of this dissertation brings to light multi-generational family farmer's attachment to the places they grew up and work on, as well as prepare their children and grandchildren to take on the role of 'curator of place'. Throughout this dissertation, I lay the groundwork for inclusion of sense of place within formalized agricultural education by highlight just what sense of place is and the missing areas within current agricultural education. For this project, I interviewed four multi-generational family farmers in North Dakota. My goal was to understand their particular views on their own connections to the places that are/were important to them (their sense of place) and understand how sense of place could be implemented within formal and informal agricultural education. The findings of this research showed that each of these individuals had a strong sense of place and that sense of place could be construed as important to the family farmer as a means to keep them "going" and would be a worthy inclusion within agricultural education. Finally, some recommendations of how sense of place could be brought into agricultural education were made. These recommendations include bringing personalized education into the classroom by having students focus on *their* places as well as potentially bringing in others to tell the stories of their places.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

What does the word ‘place’ mean? What does ‘sense of place’ mean? The idea of place and our connection to it is something that does not live in the forefront of most people’s daily thoughts, but it is something that influences us on a foundational level. With the explosion of technology in the past two decades, we have become more global people, at the cost of our sense of local place. The questions become, “Is this a problem?” Or, “Do we need to have a connection to local place or have a sense of place?” I believe the answers to both questions is an emphatic “YES”! Sacrificing our connection to our places to become more globalized moves us further away from what makes us, us (as a cultural group). To be connected to a ‘place’, to have a sense of place, connects a person to what makes them whole. Everything that has happened to everyone has happened in a *place* and being connected to that place helps us to be connected to ourselves. As ethnographer Keith Basso stated in his book *Wisdom Sits in Places* “...for what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves... (1996, pg. 7).” How we perceive and hold onto our ‘places’ is a vital component to what makes us, who we all are.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to provide a qualitative analysis regarding the idea of sense of place through the experiences of multi-generational family farmers in North Dakota and the potential application of sense of place within agricultural education. A narrative approach was utilized to enable these people to tell their stories and frame their sense of place. These farmers, who have a direct relationship to the land were interviewed to gain an understanding of how sense of place is (or is not) utilized as an educational foundation through the telling of stories related to places and agriculture. The idea of using sense of place as an educational foundation focuses on the idea that agriculture is performed in a *place*, and in this research a specific place, and understanding your connection to that place influences how you learn (and teach) agriculture. As farms are becoming larger, with fewer people needed to tend them, it becomes easy to lose your connection to these places that have held importance for generations. This study highlighted people's experiences with physical place, and the historical, social, and cultural aspects that come with that experience. The results of this study will tell the story of how place, and the sense of place that people have, can impact, knowingly or unknowingly, the ways in which they educate others (and even themselves.) The results from this study may provoke changes in the way we view place, in the way we use it to teach, and even in the way we treat it. By bringing the idea of sense of place to the forefront in agricultural education, it may change the way educators think about their roles in formal and informal education, ensuring they emphasize building that connection to place in their students. For students, this may appear to be something that doesn't even need examination. Of course, they have a sense of place

they may say, but as it will be explored in this research, people don't always understand what influences their connection to these places. From a personal standpoint, I chose this project because I come from an agricultural heritage, though I was never "bit by the bug" of farming, I still have an interest in aspects of the culture, particularly how 'place' plays a role. To understand the connection between place and these family farmers will allow me to connect with my own history and culture, and to help me preserve and pass on this culture to my children.

Problem Statement

The current research on the role of sense of place in agricultural education is lacking depth. Some of the more recent research on sense of place and farming, focuses primarily on agricultural practices, but do not focus on the educative possibilities of introducing sense of place into agricultural education (Lincoln, 2016). Physical place is not examined on the philosophical, cultural, or historical level needed to understand the idea of sense of place in agricultural education but focuses on production methods (Lincoln, 2016). One important result from this research did show that sense of place was tied directly to supporting environmental values and sustainable farming practices (pg. 397). This indicates that farmers who have a stronger sense of place take better care of the land and would be more likely to pass along the sense of place to the next generation. This highlights the importance of understanding how sense of place could be used in formal and informal educational settings.

The use of computer modeling and simulation has taken the place of standing in a field and has changed the way that people perceive their physical place (Murphrey 2014). As Sobel (1997) discussed many years ago, as people lose their sense of place,

they become disconnected from their culture and history, which affects how they look at and care for their local ‘places’. This can be particularly true with family farms, as the hard work and low earning drive many would-be farmers off the land and away from the places that are important to them. According to the USDA Farm Demographics (nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2014/Farm_Demographics/index.php) farmers are older than in the previous study, and new farms are being established at a much lower level. All these items are pointing to fewer younger people farming and are leading to the older generation having to farm longer to keep the family farm going. This study helps to shed light on the role of sense of place and how it can be utilized as an educational foundation to reinforce people’s connection to their places, their roles, and their history and potentially serve as a tool that can be used to entice more of the younger generations to take up the mantle of ‘family farmer’. This is accomplished by using individual narratives on the experience of place and agriculture within the classroom and beyond. The use of narrative brings individual experiences as an insight into culture, with differing narratives giving differing viewpoints leading to a more composite understanding of the centrality of place. As pioneer of narrative inquiry Jean Clandinin (2006) stated, regarding to the use of stories and the importance of narrative inquiry, “These lived and told stories and talk about those stories are ways we create meaning in our lives as well as ways we enlist each other’s help in building our lives and communities (pg. 44).” My goal is to use narrative inquiry in this setting to help create meaning in the connections that these family farmers have to their ‘places’.

The importance of informal education is also present in agriculture. While new gadgets make farming easier (GPS, auto-steering...) the informal education lessons that a

child learns from their parents or grandparents show the real importance. You can download smartphone apps to read reports to understand soil and weather conditions but stand out in a field in August with your grandfather and you can truly understand the physical place in which your family lives. Often the act of standing in a field will be accompanied with a story about that field, a connection will be made between people and place and that field will become more than just a piece of land, it will become a *place*, and with that a connection to that place will be developed. One of the primary goals of informal education, particularly storytelling, is to build upon that sense of place. With this research, I will expand on the idea of sense of place in agricultural education in both the formal and informal educational setting, as a teaching tool but also as a method of cultural cultivation.

Conceptual Framework

This research focuses on the role that sense of place can play within both informal and formal agricultural education. This research examined the multiple experiences regarding education that are found on the family farm and from the family farmer. Contained within this research is an examination of informal education, which is different than “formal education”. Here, formal education is defined as education that takes place within school or within a school setting, “...a systematic, organized education model, structured and administered according to a given set of laws and norms... (Dib 1987, pg. 1),” whereas, informal education which takes place in a less-structured place, as Dib explained, “Educative processes endowed with flexible curricula and methodology, capable of adapting to the needs and interests of students... (pg. 2)” which is more conducive to sense of place (though not exclusive), as it appears different to each person

and requires a level of flexibility. The informal aspect of agricultural education involves looking into family farms, as these are settings in which there is flexibility in what is being “taught” and who the students are often the children and grandchildren of the teachers. The formal aspect of agricultural education can refer to actual educational programs (K-12/Higher Ed) that delve into various aspects of agriculture, within a structured environment. These environments can be a classroom where students attend a lecture, have a discussion, or view demonstrations (Talbert 2014; pp. 225-228). This formalized level of agricultural education can benefit from the inclusion of sense of place as it provides a subjective lens in which to view the student’s potential future careers. “Sense of place” is used to define an attachment to a physical place, and the meaning ascribed to it (Kudryavtsev 2012). This study will make use of Edward Relph’s (1976) understanding of place and space as a framework to build upon. Relph was one of the pioneers of understanding the relationship between people’s lived experiences and place. Relph discusses various ‘levels’ of space that can be experienced when understanding sense of place. These ‘levels’ view space through a number of lens that range from the primordial view, to the cultural, geographic, and even cognitive view. Each of these descriptions refer to the same space but use a different lens to examine our connection to it. One such example in relation to this research would be the farmhouse. This is a building that falls under multiple levels of Relph’s framework as it can be a physical place, but also have multiple meanings ranging from the gathering place of the family (for cultural events), to its geographical placement on the farm, to the emotional connection you feel towards your “home”. In each case, this particular place occupies a difference space, depending on the temporal need and connection to it.

Previous research into sense of place focuses on the experiences of individuals and how these experiences fit within an overall cultural being, as well as the intersection of place and personal attachment. Anthropologist Keith Basso's (1996) work with the Western Apache highlighted the importance of place-names in their cultural and social history. By connecting stories to the land, they are able to perpetuate cultural norms, ensuring the younger generations keep the traditions alive. Sense of place has been utilized in both formal and informal education. Semken and Freeman (2008) examined sense of place in the formal setting by researching place-based teaching that resulted in gains in student's attachment to place and place meaning. Keith Basso (1996) and Sobel (1997) are among many examples of using sense of place in informal educational settings. Educating students on the importance of environmental education by linking it to physical place (Kudryavtsev 2012), linked to how kids learn about their home areas (Nespor 2008) show the correlation between place and education.

Sense of place may have a potential role in formal and informal agricultural education as well, since the physical place is of central importance in agricultural work. While no research exists that connects the ideas of sense of place to agricultural education, Joranger (2008) highlights the connection between farmers and the land and how important the land can be to the family. In the case of the "German" farmers, the farm is more than just a means to an end, but a physical way to perpetuate their families' culture and history. Unlike their "Yankee" counterparts, their goal is to build the farm up and pass it off to their children. Research into agricultural education, has turned its focus towards technological advances and how to best build the farm for the future. The influx of computer simulation in agricultural education has left the physical place(s) off the

table in terms of teaching students (Leggette 2012) and advancements made in agricultural technology have altered the way family farms are operated today. To date, there has been no directed research examining how sense of place, or place in general, may play a role in agricultural education, formally or informally. As Joranger (2008) claims that only through an historical account, can the importance of place be brought out, this study aims to bridge the gap between sense of place and agricultural education, with the hope of connecting the education to the land. This will be achieved by exploring the relationship that family farmers have with their ‘places’ and will utilize the telling of stories to establish that relationship. This form of narrative inquiry serves to make sense of the ‘places’ that are important to the research participants and as Clandinin (2007) explained, narrative inquiry has three important “commonplaces”, which are temporality, sociality, and most important to this research, place (pg. 23). As highlighted in Connelly and Clandinin (2006), “...all events take place some place (pg. 481).” One term that will appear throughout the following chapters is ‘curator of place’. This is a novel (within this research) term that is referring to the participants and their position as the primary storytellers for their family farms. Like the elders that Basso interviews throughout *Wisdom Sits in Places*, their knowledge and stories of these places are the necessary tool in which sense of place is passed on to others. Part of these narratives (and the following discussion) will focus on this idea of curator of place and how it fits within agricultural education.

Research Questions and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This study examines the following research questions:

- How do family farmers personally experience place?
- How do these farmers incorporate their lived experiences and stories into their understanding of sense of place in agricultural education?
- What are the stories that they tell in regard to this?

Chapter Two contains a literature review of previous research on the topic, as well as an outline detailing the framework for the study. Chapter Three will contain descriptions of the methodologies used in the study, including what type of data collection and analysis will be used. Chapters Four through Seven will contain the narratives of participants, separated into distinct chapters. Chapter Eight will provide a discussion of the implications of the study, the limitations, and recommendations for formal and informal agricultural education.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review literature pertinent to sense of place, sense of place and educational settings, the use of stories in teaching, agricultural education, and the family farm. I document foundational research on ‘place’ and ‘sense of place’ as well as summarize the historical and current research into agricultural education, which may show the possibility of incorporating sense of place as an educational foundation. This review also shows previous research into place and agriculture. This serves to highlight the previous research on this topic and to draw specific connection to the problems addressed in this research.

What is ‘place’ and what is ‘space’? How are they different?

To understand *sense of place*, you must first be able to understand what is meant by ‘place’ and how the term ‘space’ fits within the discussion. One of the pivotal explanatory works on place is by noted geographer Edward Relph’s (1976) book, *Place and Placelessness*, exploring how place is experienced, where he defines ‘place’ as a physical area, having both internal (how it relates to itself) and external characteristics (how it differs from others) as well as meaning bestowed upon it (pg. 3). Relph, working off previous work by Lukermann (1964), begins understanding ‘sense of place’ by starting with Lukermann’s explanation:

Thus, Lukermann understands places as complex integrations of nature and culture that have developed and are developing in particular locations, and which are linked by flows of people and goods to other places. A place is not just the ‘where’ of something; it is the location plus everything that occupies that location as seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomenon.

(pg. 3)

This highlights the idea that place is more than just a physical entity, but it is in the intersection of physical and cultural experience. This explanation of ‘place’ is important in agriculture, as the places in agriculture are more than just a physical location but are a very extension of farmers themselves. In essence, everything happens in a ‘place’, so it becomes more than just the location, but the *what* that happens as well. The next question is, how does ‘space’ exist and how does it work with the framework of place? The idea of ‘space’ can be tricky, but a good definition of it is, “...space provides the context for places, but derives its meaning from particular places” (Relph 1976, pg. 8). What this means is that space provides the framing of place, setting up the perception of that place in a certain context, but without the experienced ‘place’, the space has no meaning. Relph (1976) expanded on the idea of space, breaking it into multiple levels, each with a differing function. Each idea of space is listed below, along with a description of how they build upon each other and how each connects to place specifically within agriculture. Exploring the various depictions of space is applicable to this study as it frames the experience of place within multiple levels:

Pragmatic or primitive space: “Primitive space is the space of instinctive behavior and unselfconscious action in which we always act and move without reflection” (pg. 8).

This space exists at the foundation of every place, it is the primal space, but it has no real form itself. As it relates to place, it is that un-knowable connection to a place, the thing that connects you to a place, that you cannot explain why. For example, this could be related to a place that a farmer feels connected to, even if they are not able to understand why, for example, standing in a dilapidated farm house and feeling a connection to it, even though your family never lived in it.

Perceptual space: “Perceptual space is also the realm of direct emotional encounters with the spaces of the earth, sea, and sky or with built and created spaces” (pg. 10). This space is directly connected to physical ‘place’. The connection to emotions brings it one step closer to conscious understanding by allowing the person experiencing the place to know why they are experiencing it. Within agriculture, this can be the emotional connection that farmers feel towards buildings, or places that have existed in their family for generations and their willingness to preserve those places.

Existential space: “Existential or lived-space is the inner structure of space as it appears to us in our concrete experiences of the world as members of a cultural group” (pg. 12). This space (i.e. our family home or our hometown) is the first ‘space’ to begin stepping outside of ourselves in connecting to place. This is where cultural and social aspects begin to show up, places that are important to not only us, but potentially important to others as well. In existential space, there are two sub-spaces, Sacred and Geographical. *Sacred* space is just that, a space that is built on religious or spiritual meaning. As Relph explains sacred space, “For the religious person the experience of such space is primordial, equivalent perhaps to an experience of the founding of the world” (pg. 15). There is a primal connection, but to an external, established ‘thing’. *Geographical* space

is similar, but not as primordial, as it is a collective connection to a space, whether that is a town, a state, a country, or the plains, deserts, or jungles. This space is defined more from a physical level than the sacred space and is delineated as such. In agriculture, this is the beginning of *our farm* versus *their farm*, with both geographical delineations and potentially ‘sacred’ separations of spaces (a lake, a tree, a building...) that is seen as special for the people who live/work on that farm.

Architectural and planning space: “...architectural space, although founded on and contributing to unselfconscious spatial experiences, involves a deliberate attempt to create spaces” (pg. 22). This space is probably the easiest to understand, it is essentially the creation of a space, whether it be a house, a park, or designing a city, there is a purposeful action of creating a space. As Relph says, it can be linked to primordial space (the unselfconscious space) it is a conscious effort to make a space out of a perceived nothing. For the farmer, this is the buildings, the barn, the house, and the shop... all of the places that are created to *make* the farm.

Cognitive space: “Cognitive space consists of the abstract construct of space derived from the identification of space as an object for reflection and the attempt to develop theories about it” (pg. 24). This space is essentially the ‘thinking about’ space. If you imagine two farms next to each other, what defines each farm’s space? Geographically speaking, there is nothing different between the spaces in which each farm exists, but they are still considered two separate ‘places’. This is because there are labels placed on these spaces, one is *my space* and the other is *your space* and there are abstract thoughts that delineate what that means. The histories of these two places, while somewhat similar, may have different paths to the present and that influences how each ‘space’ is

viewed. This ‘thinking about space’ can be reflected in the stories that are told about each place and how they fit within the events that occurred there.

Abstract space: “Abstract space is the space of logical relations that allows us to describe space without necessarily founding those descriptions in empirical observations” (pg. 26). This ‘space’ is essentially a fluid existence, something that does not take into account physical barriers (terrain for instance) but allows for all space to be accessible, it is not a space that exists physically, but only exists in thoughts. This can be thought of within the focus of this research when a farmer is traveling down the road and pulls into their farm. All of a sudden they are in *their* place and their thoughts and feelings change from when they were on the road (or on someone else’s place).

With these different examples of the various levels of space explained, how does sense of place fit? In regard to this research, how does sense of place fit within farming and agricultural education? Relph’s explanation of place and space influence how the stories these participants tell are analyzed. Do we find these various levels of ‘space’ in the stories? Do the participants in this study understand that they might view their *places* in these various levels? These spaces combine to create a full understanding of place, by allowing us multiple avenues for understanding why a place might have meaning. Within the scope of this research, individual connections to place can be analyzed via these ‘levels’ to gain additional insight to how they experience place. Keep in mind, however, that a single place can fill several spaces. A church for example, can be viewed as an architectural space, an existential space, a perceptual space, and even a primitive space depending on how that particular person experiences that particular place. In this project, the participants are people who have lived and worked on farms (places) that have been

in their family for generations and one goal was to examine whether they have acquired the different definitions of space. With understanding how the various levels of ‘space’ may influence sense of place, one important question is why does it matter how people perceive space?

Does sense of place matter?

One important question relating to understanding sense of place is, why? Why should we care about sense of place, and why should we care how place is experienced?? Why do we need to bother with place when, as Sanger (1997) says our lives are, “no longer lived in and of the land” (pg. 4)? As we are becoming more globalized, we are also becoming more disconnected from the land. Students in school are being taught about faraway lands and how their preservation is important but are being taught very little of their own place. The reading requirements of students are no better, “Textbooks place value on general, national, abstract examples and facts, through both content and the nature of the printed medium. This process marginalizes what students derive from their own experiences of place, family, and community (Sanger 1997).” As to whether sense of place is important to understand, Ryden (1993) highlights the important connection between people and place stating, “...people may begin to define themselves in terms of their relationship with and residence in that place, to the extent that they cannot really express who they are without taking into account the setting which surrounds them as well” (pg. 76). This highlights the fact that we are bound to these places, as they are extensions of ourselves and cannot be cast aside. This is particularly important with the project participants, as they are farmers who not only run a business but are working lands that have been in their family for generations. Each of the

participants in this study oversee farms that have been in operation for over 100 years and they, as the head of the farm, identify directly with these places. This highlights the importance of understanding sense of place in these family farmers, and how sense of place can be utilized in an educational setting for the next generation of family farmers.

Does sense of place exist within education?

When discussing sense of place we are essentially discussing a local, physical location that a person, inhabits and interacts with, which is an individual experience that differs from person to person. The standardization of education has been going on for quite a while, though the 2002 *No Child Left Behind Act* created set standards that focus on leveling the learning curve for all students. In attempting to meet these standards, issues arise, "...including too much focus on basic versus higher-order skills, wide variation in state standards, narrowing of the curriculum, and other distortions in schools (Hanushek, 2009; pg.802)." In one particular qualitative example, Enriquez (2013) found that reading instruction programs were hindering student's interests by restricting the types of reading materials that were acceptable. They did not restrict them due to content, but due to standardization of school curricula and this prevented students from being fully engaged in reading because they were unable to read what interested them. Similarly, this idea of standardization could affect the school's ability to teach to the place, what works in the big city does not necessary work within the small town. The implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 worked to fix some of the issues at heart with NCLB, in particular, returning more control of standards to the states instead of being primarily federally mandated

<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/your-childs-rights/basics-about-childs->

[rights/the-difference-between-the-every-student-succeeds-act-and-no-child-left-behind](#)).

McKim (2015) examined the implementation of Common Core State Standards within agricultural education and found that, while some of the opportunities to teach higher level math and learning skills would be beneficial, there is not much detail into how sense of place could fit within these standards and how to prepare teachers to implement it. The implementation of ESSA allows the states to be more flexible in their goals and how they go about achieving them, leaving the door open to the possibility of including less-common methods of instruction.

The effect of standardization can also negatively affect teachers, as Allard (2013) indicates. In this study, early career teachers were having difficulty navigating the requirement of standards and their sense of identity, whether they saw themselves as teachers or as instruments to pass along standardized information to students. This continues to show how conforming to standards set forth by NCLB in schools could eliminate local, contextual knowledge by requiring all students to learn the same material, not allowing for the diversity of experience. Agricultural education was not immune from this either, as Stair (2016) showed that educational standards are applied to agricultural education classes as well. In this study, one participant "...perceived the curriculum was pushed on the teachers (Stair 2016, pg. 98)." While some participants in that study were optimistic of the standards, I found one point in particular worrisome, "...kids are continually held to the same expectations across the board. (pg. 99)." This idea of holding students to the same expectations could be counter-intuitive to understanding individual experiences with place. While there are benefits to the standards, we cannot forget that each student is an individual and experiences of that

individual student matter. This relation to individual experiences is important to remember as standardized education can lead to replacing the individual learning experience with a pre-planned lesson if the teacher is not adequately prepared, which may impact not only the student's experience, but also the teacher's. The implementation of the ESSA and other standards such as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) have worked to reverse the trend of "one size fits all" and introduced personalized learning approaches to education (<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childs-school/instructional-strategies/personalized-learning-what-you-need-to-know>). This allows alternative methods of instruction (using personal histories, cultural knowledge, and even sense of place education) to be available for teachers and students, providing another way forward for schools to meet standards.

The currently established standards related to agricultural education as developed by the National Council for Agricultural Education (<https://thecouncil.ffa.org/afnr/>) focuses almost entirely on preparing a career-ready student, with the standards focusing on many facets of agriculture but lacks an in-depth connection to place. While they do discuss the role of the farmer there is no direct connection of people to the very places in which they work and live and the informal learning that occurs in those places. This research provides the opportunity to develop and implement sense of place education within defined agricultural education standards. Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) have begun to understand the important role that other instruction methods and informal learning, along with the connection to culture can play and have started to implement new avenues of learning within their standards. Appendix D of the NGSS (<https://www.nextgenscience.org/sites/default/files/Appendix%20D%20Diversity%20and>

%20Equity%206-14-13.pdf) have identified a key component of bridging the gap between formal schooling and informal learning opportunities as they state, “There are tensions as parents and families want their children to maintain the cultural and linguistic practices of their heritage while also wanting their children to participate fully in the dominant school culture. A challenge facing schools is the perceived disconnect between school science practices and home and community practices of non-dominant student groups (pg. 8).” This tension between family/culture and schooling is not readily explored within agricultural education and this research provides a starting point to understanding the role that individual connection to place may play in shaping a person’s viewpoint towards certain academic procedures. An understanding and establishment of similar standards within agricultural education could provide another bridge to helping students better understand how their own beliefs and experiences are essential for their own learning.

Focusing on creating a career-ready student in agriculture is important, but understanding why a student may want to pursue agriculture also requires an in-depth examination of their personal connections to the field. The changes in standards allows for a flexibility in what gets taught as well as how it gets taught and this is a wonderful opportunity to bring sense of place into agricultural education. By teaching and learning using their actual experiences, stories, and histories, these students and teachers will be able to link valuable knowledge in this field directly to themselves. In this case, utilizing sense of place as an educational foundation may allow students (and teachers) to be better connected to the material being taught by building off their connections to the places that are important to them by individualizing aspects of their education, but still falling under established standards. It is important for this project, as well as education in general, to

understand what role local place may play in education as evidenced by the NGSS's change to incorporate other learning environments, such as place-based learning and informal learning opportunities, into their science-based standards. Thus, we must understand how 'place' has been used within education to date.

Previous literature has described sense of place as a person having an attachment and giving meaning to a specific place (Kudryavtsev 2012). The author examined the role of sense of place in environmental education, finding that the usage of sense of place is not common, though the underlying ideas are. Their findings also indicate that, "sense of place fosters pro-environmental behavior, and related emotions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions, which is an important goal of environmental education (Kudryavtsev 2012, pg. 233)." This idea that sense of place can elicit "pro-environmental behavior and related emotions" shows that a real connection to place can be made in sense of place education. Building off this research, the case can be made for other areas of education, in particular agricultural education, which relies on the successful use and understanding of physical space.

Sense of place has a direct impact on education. How children learn, and what they learn about, can be directly related to the environment in which they experience life, and their connection to it. The idea of using sense of place in an educational setting is not new, but the question surrounding it is, how is sense of place incorporated into the educational setting? With the pushing of constructivism, the focus has moved from the material to the student, and in this study, I examine how that movement of focus affects how the land is perceived and used in agricultural education. The particular focus of this research is on informal education, and how people experience the places they grew up in.

Ethnobiologist, Gary Nabhan, has an exceptionally good example that ties together sense of place and learning in young children. In Nabhan's (1994) book, *The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places*, Nabhan goes into details about the benefits of stories, with their settings in a physical place help to create a connection to the land. This specific case started with children picking up sticks.

Where can we get enough wood? one girl visiting from a city in Baja California asks her country cousins. There are hardly any sticks nearby the house anymore. (pg. 80)

That's because Grandma gets her wood nearby the house during the times when we're not around to help her. We have to go farther away to get what we need today, maybe over there where Grandpa built their first adobe house. (pg. 80)

It then moves to a connection between the land and their family:

As the boys stack the wood in piles, they ask their grandfather when he built the different houses on the ranch, and why he located them where he did... (pg. 80)

These questions build and the stories that accompany the land come to life, resulting in

The stories for the night have been set in place: we hear about the grandmother growing up in southern Sonora, moving to the new ranch as a young bride, and helping her husband build a house to begin their new life. The children listen wide-eyed, as the stories touch down in the places they romped through just that afternoon. Abandoned houses become homes

again, as the family remembers its origins. And as the elders share their memories lodged in the surrounding country, the family renews its membership in the land. (pg. 82)

For these children, the stories heard around the bonfire, told by their relatives, can connect them to a history, a culture that they might not be able to read in a textbook. In this case, the use of place is not just another tool to be used to instruct the students, it is used in these stories to ensure that the children remember where their ancestors came from, and to create a real connection to the land, to the history, and to the culture of this group.

Sanger (1997) has discussed the reason behind using sense of place in education, but also some of the resistance when attempting to teach to a local place. Even while instruction methods such as Place-based Education (PBE; incorporates physical place into instruction; experiential learning), Sanger mentions that the use of place is still not accepted completely, “In nearly every facet of education, even under the rubric of environmental education, educators teach students that their relationship with their place is marginal, uninteresting, and unimportant (Sanger 1997, pg. 4). Stefaniak et al (2017) looked at the role place attachment and civic engagement play and found a, “...confirmed positive influence of teaching local history on increased interest in local history and place attachment and in turn on local civic engagement... (pg. 222).” This highlights an important role in teaching to the local place, an increase in interest and engagement with that place. This work highlights the importance of teaching students about their places, increasing their engagement with those places in both formal and informal education.

Sense of place can be found in both formal and informal educational settings. In the formal settings, sense of place is used as a technique to reach students in a different way and is one of many ways in which students are taught from a constructivist viewpoint. The idea behind this viewpoint centers on the interactions of people and places and how experience is key in constructing meaning. Within the frame of constructivism, meaning is created during experience and, as Crotty (2006) stated focuses “...on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind (pg. 59).” This lends itself well to sense of place, as the meanings of these places are built through the experiences of the individuals. This diverges from the idea of constructionism, which is less focused on the individual experience, and more on how that experience is transmitted and displayed in the social sense. Crotty (2015) highlighted that the difference between constructivism and constructionism is, “...to reserve the term constructivism for epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on the ‘meaning-making activity of the individual mind’ and to use constructionism where the focus includes ‘the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning.’ (pg. 58). These two terms (constructivism and constructionism) both look at the world from the experiential viewpoint, where constructivism focuses on how we, individually, experience the world, and constructionism focuses on how we interpret those experiences in the broader, social realm. Informal educational settings begin to use sense of place through inclusion in place-based education/learning (PBE/PBL), though more in an anthropological and philosophical, more holistic way. In these cases, sense of place is an all-encompassing method that teaches the whole student, utilizing many different subjects, utilizing culture

and history, and incorporating them into one event (Deringer 2017, Kafi 2015). Below, I describe how both formal and informal educational settings utilize sense of place.

Sense of place and formal education.

Sense of place has existed somewhat, though not widely known, in formal education settings for quite a while in K-12 as “place-based education (PBE)”. Educational philosopher David Sobel, whose work focuses on early childhood experiences (1997) examined a great use of sense of place and place-based education with elementary-aged students. He highlighted a worrying trend that has appeared as our society is becoming more technologically driven and globalized. He showed that, while children are learning more and more about the world, they are learning less and less about their own physical place, “Children are becoming disconnected from their immediate environments and connected to imperiled animals and ecosystems around the world (Sobel 1997, pg. 33).” This is not to state that understanding our worldview is not important, but that we should be, first and foremost, looking at where our own two feet land. According to Sobel (1997), children between the ages of six and 12 have the opportunity to become connected with the land in a way that will promote stewardship in their adult years. In order for these children to protect the land, they must be connected to it. Sobel goes on to discuss a number of projects that students complete that familiarize them with their own “places”. These projects were born out of the idea that young children tend to create their own “places” within their environment, “Kids make what are called board houses on an island in the Caribbean called Carriacou (Sobel 1997, pg. 36).” This need of children to create their own place led one teacher to formalize this idea of sense of place:

A teacher in Harvard, Massachusetts designed a project in which she required kids, if they didn't have a special place, to go find one and then to create a map of it with very specific guidelines. The kids had to go and sit in their place and do a sketch map of it. Eventually they had to do a map to scale. They had to include poetry and make a border of the natural objects. Lots of interesting products came out of this very structured activity, such as maps, panoramic views, little poems, and legends. ...it was quantitatively assessed but built on this fascination that kids have for building a bond or connectedness to a special place near their house (Sobel 1997, pg. 36).

Sobel (1997) continues to explain how sense of place assignments can be used in “developmentally appropriate ways (pg. 36).” This allows multiple grades, with children at different developmental stages, to work on a similar project revolving around their sense of place. The younger children were responsible for drawing their city center while the older children were drawing scale maps of the same area.

Sobel (1997) finishes by discussing the goal of place-based projects as, “... to allow children to develop a sense of purpose and identity, to provide the right scope and scale for them to start to work on the complicated social and ecological issues that will later confront them (Sobel 1997, pg. 39).” Sobel highlights the idea that sense of place is not strictly designed for memorization of objective facts, but for people (in this case children) to be able to understand their surroundings and contribute to social and cultural matters. This also highlights the importance of connecting students to the land. Fostering that connection via sense of place education creates a strong bond that leads not

only to a better understanding of their world but builds within the students a stewardship of the land and is useful in agricultural education.

Kudryavtsev (2012) lays out the role that sense of place plays in environmental education, however, as in agricultural education, the direct meanings and use of sense of place is something that has not been used explicitly. In this review, the authors find that using sense of place within the scope of environmental education results in a stronger pro-environmental behavior. This indicates that as people become increasingly connected to the land, they become more aware of issues that could cause problems from an environmental standpoint and are more likely to practice pro-environmental behavior (pg. 238).

The use of sense of place in educational settings is not limited to informal storytelling from an elder, but can play a role in organized, education as well. Crump (2014) studied the role sense of place can have on high school seniors and their interest in pursuing rural health-related careers and their future placement. Their study had initially shown that less than 10% of medical students had an interest in rural health, even if they come from a rural area, when the need of medical doctors in rural areas is at the utmost importance, since roughly 20% of the U.S. population lives in rural areas (Crump 2014, pg. 713). By presenting rural areas in a positive light, they were able to increase student affinity to rural areas, where most students (~75%) would like to remain in their home counties and pursue a health-related career. Students also saw an increase in their ACT scores when enrolled in a program that accentuated their home areas by integrating their cultural and historical backgrounds. These programs used community ran study groups, arranged job shadowing, and even provided stipends to allow students to take time for

these programs. By connecting these students to healthcare professionals in their home counties, they were able to solidify these students' sense of place. One area that this research was lacking in was defining sense of place. In studies such as this one, the idea of "sense of place" is meant as an affinity for a place. Crump (2014) does not go into detail as to what "sense of place" these students have and/or what "sense of place" the authors might have. This could be a limitation within their research, as most researchers focus on place attachment and place meaning as the core aspects of sense of place (Kudryavtsev 2012, Ardoin 2012). Within the scope of this research, attachment and meaning regarding place are also the definitions.

An earlier article by Crump (2004) had the same issue of using the phrase "sense of place" in their research article title but made very little mention as to what their definition is of sense of place. In this article, Crump makes one reference to a previous article that discusses some of the actual aspects related to sense of place. Cutchin (1997) examined the link between physician retention in rural communities and the experience of place. In this article, Cutchin builds upon Relph's (1976) idea of place as more than just an objective "thing", but as a phenomenological experience between a person and a place. Cutchin's research highlights that physicians who do not have a sense of place with their location, who are not integrated into their place, have a difficult time remaining in that location, even if they were from a rural place originally (Cutchin 1997, pg. 27). As sense of place can be seen as a strictly environmental ideal, this research indicates that a cultural connection can influence just as well.

A common area in which place-based education thrives within the schooling dynamic is the use of school gardens. In these gardens, students of various grades (or

sometimes a single grade) plant and maintain a garden. These gardens may consist of flowers, native grasses, or even vegetables. In order to fully understand how best to set up their garden, the students must have an idea of what they can plant, thus needing a sense of place. A number of states have implemented classroom gardens across the United States, not just in warmer climates where a garden may thrive (Blair 2009, pp. 15-16). The goal of student gardens, as stated by Blair (2009) is to give the students more experiential learning, by having them work directly with the land at a time when students are spending more time in classrooms and using technology than outside experiencing the world (Blair 2009, pg. 17). As Blair explains, the understanding and upkeep of a garden presents the students with multiple science-related tasks, requiring students to have a deep knowledge of how different topics connect, “Gardens ground children in growth and decay, predator-prey relations, pollination, carbon cycles, soil morphology, and microbial life: the simple and complex simultaneously (pg. 17).” One project contains a number of topics that would be talked about in any ecology or landscape biology textbook and is being done, hands-on, by those students.

Blair (2009) further highlights previous research that indicates students who are exposed to nature at a younger age are more likely to be environmental advocates later in life (pg. 18). The author also explained the importance of gardens building on student’s sense of place. Qualitative studies showed that students who worked on classroom gardens showed improved school attitude, strong community-building and a stronger interaction with the people of their community (Blair 2009, pg. 19). This interaction between community-building and ecology is found numerous times as place contains both an ecological ‘place’ and a community ‘place’ (Basso 1996, Dockery 2014). This is

an important idea to recognize in agriculture as it is a direct intersection of people and ecology, farmers are doing a job, growing a family, and are responsible for the stewardship of the places they farm.

These highlighted studies indicate that sense of place has been used as an educational foundation in schools through place-based education programs such as community/classroom gardens that highlight the physical place in which the students live. These projects link the students to the land and to their society, and the history and culture of that society, and are able to get students involved in the community and bring others from their culture together. However, one aspect of sense of place education that does not appear as prominently in formal education, is the use of culture and history as a central aspect of place and the inclusion of individual's experiences with *their* place, not the neutral, constructed place such as a school garden. As schools (and states) move towards standardizing education, the influence and importance of local knowledge becomes less prevalent, costing students the connection to place their parents and other had growing up. While some studies attempt to bring community into their formal classes (Blair 2009; Crump 2004, 2014) the definition of community is not well-defined. Within informal educational use of sense of place, the culture and history of the "place" is engrained within the stories through examples such as Basso (1996), Dockery (2014) and others, it is used as a method of teaching social norms of the Western Apache in the case of Basso (1996) and teaching about the history of the Appalachian people in Dockery (2014).

Sense of place and informal education.

Informal education has a stigma of not being “as good” as formal education, purely because it is not taught in a school. Nabhan (1994) highlighted this point when doing research on environmental education of children versus the “informal” education of their parents/grandparents. Regarding that, Nabhan stated, “Still, I was most struck by the idea that all the detailed knowledge of the plants and animals held by Indian elders was not considered valuable exactly because it was *not* book learning (pg. 93)!” This belief highlights the disparity between formal and informal education, which may result in informal educational practices being viewed as invalid. One purpose of this research is to demonstrate that understanding sense of place within both the formal and informal education settings will allow for the integration of informal practices within formal settings and help to validate informal education. This is already occurring with the state of North Dakota through the *Teaching of Our Elders* (<https://teachingsofourelders.org/>) program that was established in 2015 and aims to bring in the stories, history, and culture of the Native Americans to help students learn while still adhering to established education standards. This is accomplished through the telling of stories, bringing their history and culture to life through the telling of narratives and creating a sense of place for students. This research project proposes a similar vein, focusing on the family farmers and the stories they can bring to help connect students to their home places.

In Sobel’s (1997) research into sense of place and elementary children, he touches on a number of intersections of sense of place and formal education. Sobel is also able to discuss an instance of intersection between sense of place and informal education. While discussing a lesson that had children examining how their town came to be by using a

journal of a life-long resident. During this class, the children would take field trips to visit various aspects of town; in one instance, they came across a person working in a park:

During one of their field trips they met a community volunteer doing plantings in the park. The man talked to the kids about what he was doing and why, and how he cared about Springfield. The kids then helped him do the plantings. It was one of those wonderful, becoming-part-of-the-community experiences that happens because you are out there (Sobel 1997, pg. 38).

The integration of journals in the student's learning gave them considerable insight into the usage of narrative works and stories to help educate. At the intersection of sense of place and informal education, storytelling comes naturally and can function as an integral part of teaching, as well as a way to blend cultural and ecological awareness and histories. As Basso (1996) stated, "...what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society and inhabitants of the earth (pg. 7)." People who have lived in one area for a long time and have developed a deep sense of place, usually have stories to pass along their knowledge of that place to the next generation. These stories pull in both the socio-culture and the history of those people that have come together to create the sense of place. Two works come to mind highlighting the importance of storytelling in generating sense of place.

When educator Chris Dockery (2014) looked at heirloom seeds and their importance to the southern Appalachia people, the authors were looking not just from an agricultural viewpoint, but also a cultural viewpoint. One goal of this research was to

document the oral histories that accompanied the heirloom seeds, as these histories tell of the experiences of these people through artistic displays. These histories highlighted the sense of place, not only to a physical place, but the cultural and historical place that was created. The goal of their project was the preservation of heirloom seeds, along with the stories those people tasked with their care, recited. This project existed within both formal and informal educational settings, bringing students out of their classes and into a social world, viewing their history and their philosophy.

Another important piece of work in relation to establishment of sense of place is Keith Basso's seminal book "Wisdom Sits in Places" (1996). In this book, Basso discusses his task of working to document the place-names that are important to the Western Apache Native Americans. He is tasked with visiting sites and recording the stories that are related to them, creating a "map" of the area, not one of roads and towns, but of places that have a significant value to the Western Apache. Throughout these stories, as you visit the places with Basso, you begin to how deep a person can experience sense of place, how that attachment and meaning can create a deep connection to the land. These stories serve multiple purposes, they are to serve as a map to landscapes, to remind the people of their history and culture, and to be used as a tool in the education and perpetuation of their way of life in the younger generations.

One such story from this collection that strikes a particularly valuable chord, is the story of *Trail Goes Down Between Two Hills*, which corresponds to a place with a large cottonwood tree with two knolls on either side (pg. 115). This story (Basso 1996, pg. 111), related by three men within the Western Apache, was used as an informal educational moment to help out a wayward member of their group. The man in question,

named Talbert, had not handled a break-up in a respectable manner and was being gossiped about and ostracized within the community and has not joined this group in work for the past few days. Talbert approached his group, which included the author, who were resting under a tree and sat down without saying a word. After a short while, the men began speaking, each of the three saying, what appeared to the author, distinct lines. As each man spoke, the mood, which was somber, became jovial as all of the men laughed. The men then departed, back to work, and informed Talbert that he was welcome back into the group tomorrow.

Basso then spoke with the leader of the group, Dudley, a few days later regarding this incident. While Basso understood the words (they were speaking in Apache) he did not fully understand the meaning as to why each man spoke a line, and why the mood changed. Dudley explained that the story, *Trail Goes Down Between Two Hills*, involved an old man who was foolish when it came to women. The story speaks of a man, Old Man Owl, who was blinded by infatuation and kept making mistakes and did not understand what he was doing as he was blinded by his desire for women.

Trail Goes Down Between Two Hills explained to Talbert that he was acting like Old Man Owl, blinded by his actions due to his break-up. Where Old Man Owl is seen as foolish, Talbert was able to recognize his own mistakes and work to correct them. The usage of storytelling, in this situation, was beneficial to all parties, as they were able to talk about what Talbert did without criticizing him directly. Apache tradition dictates that only close relations are allowed to directly criticize someone, and if the men were to do it (none were close relations) it would be in poor taste (pg. 118). In this case, they were able to relate the story, and solidify the place in Talbert's mind, which serves as

message in which the men recognize that Talbert was not acting proper and needed to change his ways otherwise he would end up like Old Man Owl. This story and place served an educational lesson to Talbert and allows him to save face in front of his group. Had the group criticized him directly, it would have been seen as shameful for everyone.

As Basso explains, an informal use of sense of place taught a valuable life lesson for Talbert, and every time he sees *Trail Goes Down Between Two Hills*, he will be reminded of the story associated with it, and hopefully never lose his way in that fashion again. This story also highlights the difference between formal and informal use of sense of place in education. Informally, the educational events often do more than just pass knowledge, they are historical and cultural in meaning and serve to teach on many levels. One potential aspect of informal education, specifically dealing with sense of place, is framing it within Relph's levels of 'space'. Here these places take on many different meanings depending on the situation and the personal experience, and informal education allows for the individual to better understand their own connection to these places.

The lessons that Basso wrote about in relation to the Western Apache have a similarity within this research study and the multi-generational family farmers of North Dakota. While from different cultures, these individuals inhabit the same roles, they are responsible for passing down the history and culture of *their* people to the next generation. They are responsible for telling the stories of the places that are important to them and using these stories and places to teach important lessons. In each case, these participants serve as "curators of place" and see it as their responsibility to ensure the stories of their respective places are passed down. For example, an older farmer may tell the story of a long-ago farmer's missteps as a means to educate the younger generation,

preventing them from going down the same path. In this case, he may bring the younger farmer to the remnants of that farmer's home or farm to point to a place and say "This is where that happened." Because of this similarity of roles, I make reference to Basso's work throughout my own work as the foundational aspects of the storyteller can transcend culture and apply in this case.

How Does Narrative Research and Sense of Place Intersect with Schooling and Education?

In the educational setting, regardless of what class or year the student is in, and whether learning takes place in a formal or informal setting, the physical place and social reality play an integral role in shaping how education and/or schooling are perceived. Both sense of place and narrative research style work under the premise that meaning, and knowledge are constructed based on experience and shaped by cultural/social/historical norms.

As Ferguson (2009) stated, "Teachers work exceptionally hard to be culturally sensitive, to develop and provide supplements to accommodate those who may be culturally isolated from the mainstream culture (pg. 28)." This cultural sensitivity requires a teacher to be understanding and accepting of how reality is socially constructed within a given culture. As we move into an increasingly global society, we must also be able, as teachers, to introduce students to new cultures, new ways of thinking, and help these students integrate these new ideas into their existing scaffold of their home culture. In the example given by Ferguson, he introduced Western literature to students in Thailand, which requires not only an understanding of language, but of the marriage of cultures between the West and Thailand. Ferguson discusses the role of place in formalized education as a two-way street in his narrative. Being a Westerner teaching

Western literature to Thai students in Thailand brings about the intersection of two separate place issues. “I was living in a culture that I was in the middle of learning myself (Ferguson 2009, pg. 35). In this situation there was a geographical/physical/cultural place, and an existential place. Both Ferguson and the students were experiencing changes to their places. Thai students, used to Thai culture were being introduced to Western literature, which provides challenges to accepted beliefs related to their place. Ferguson, in this example, was bringing with him parts of his “place”, the readings, but having to fit it within the physical and intellectual place of Thailand. In both cases, it involved an alteration of place, but a willingness to accept it.

The role of using narratives to intersect sense of place and schooling can be a difficult path. In formal schooling, the push for standards and creating a level playing field (i.e. the removal of any cultural differences) could contradict the goals of narrative and sense of place. The fact that sense of place involves a person (in this case a student) connecting to a physical place would indicate that there is an individual connection, not necessarily a standard, but has been made more possible due to the changes in how educational standards are established. In the case of community-building and maintenance, place attachment is key. Stedman (2002) highlighted the importance of place attachment and increased positive behavior. This would indicate that people who are more attached to their places are more likely to strive to take care of them. The idea of introducing sense of place into educational settings could become less of a “global vs local” fight and instead be a tool that is used to help preserve the local across global contexts. Again, Stefaniak (2017) showed that when local history and culture are taught,

civic engagement increases, people are more connected to their places and more willing to take care of them.

Santelmann (2011) examined the introduction of place-based education, within a structured and formal setting. This involved connecting landowners of a watershed with a middle school that brought the students out to physically experience the place they were learning about. Here, the students interviewed the landowners and managers about environmental concerns and land management techniques and understand what goes in to land stewardship. The students then participated in "...hands-on restoration and monitoring of restoration activities (pg. 94)." These activities put the students in direct experience with the places that surround them, building on what Stefaniak (2017) and others highlight as keys to place attachment. In the end of Santelmann's study, they found that the students were more engaged in their local places due to this project. However, to stress again, this involved introducing students to a neutral place and developing a sense of place around it, rather than taking the student's individual place and building a sense for *that* place.

Semken (2008) introduced a place-based geology course that "...was adapted from an 'Indigenous geology' course developed in the mid 1990's... (pg. 1045)" and framed their class within a focus on the specific geology of their local places. This class (which was based in Arizona) brought in place-specific objects and stories, along with field trips to locally important geological areas. This included bringing in the authors of many narrative-based books and papers, including Keith Basso. The study aimed to assess place attachment and place meaning based on the teaching of this course and quantitatively assessed student's response in regard to these two metrics. They found that

student's attachment to place and place meaning were both increased when exposed to a place-based teaching of geology (pg. 1053). This result indicates that the inclusion of local place in education, even in the formal setting, could be beneficial for students.

Narrative is also suited to play a role in bridging sense of place and informal education, though as described above, informal education does not have a monopoly on sense of place. This style of education, being less restricted than formal education, allows for a better integration of the stories found in narratives. As narrative research involves understanding a particular person (or people's) point-of-view of a particular experience, epistemologically speaking, interpretivism is the best method of examining knowledge. Crotty (2015) defines interpretivism in that it, "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpresentations of the social life-world" (pg. 67). These stories tend to bring a person's sense of place to light, as they are usually stories between family members or members of the same cultural background.

Basso's (1996) book is full of these styles of narratives, stories about places presented in a number of ways that paint the history of Western Apache culture, but the ultimate goal is the education of the people within social situations. Within the scope of this project, the goal is to show that agricultural education, both formal and informal, could benefit from this type of treatment. By bringing in stories and personal experiences, we can attempt to strengthen the awareness of and connection to place among students. This research shows that place is important to family farmers, and that developing and maintaining sense of place is a key component to maintaining the family farm. As the family farm is something that can transcend generations, we need to think back to Relph's levels of 'space' and understand that for family farmers who are working

the lands that their parents and grandparents (even great-grandparents) worked, they see these places are more than just how they make their money, more than a physical geography, they see it as the place where they've made *themselves*. This education is accomplished by connecting these farmers, and those they look to take over the farm, to a larger social group through the use of narratives to illicit an emotional connection to these places of importance. Again, these stories work on all three levels of Glesne's (2011) examples of narrative presentation. They are works of art that preserve culture, they are used to bridge the gap (interpret) between the older generations and the younger generation, and are used to illustrate the struggles that their people have experienced over the years, while still keeping a connection to the land. The goal of these stories is to get people invested in their culture and their history, to get them to care about how things are done and how their people are seen by themselves as well as outsiders. These stories also work, through both interpretation and transformation, to affect the education of students, both formally and informally. The stories serve to preserve the culture of the Western Apache, but also serve as examples of how people interact with place. These are also examples of the use of the narrative, in analysis and presentation, of how influential stories can be to educate. I will be exploring narrative inquiry and how it pertains to this subject in the next chapter, but the use of narrative inquiry in sense of place research is well-suited, as the focus is on people's personal experiences and the stories they tell about it. The following is a brief introduction to agricultural education, with the primary source being Talbert's *Foundations of Agricultural Education* textbook, which is meant to be an all-encompassing 'foundational' textbook to give agricultural educators the broadest view into their expected careers. Throughout this large volume (480+ pages)

there was plenty of information about the history of agricultural education (and agriculture itself) along with ‘tips and tricks’ for the new teacher to bring into the classroom and how to help lead the next generation of future farmers. One thing that was missing was discussing the ‘place’ that future farmers would be working (the farm) and how important it is to maintain that connection. The goal was to explore agricultural education from the formal vantage-point of what educators and students will be experiencing.

A Brief History of Agricultural Education

Agriculture has been present in North American for thousands of years. Within the early, pre-Columbian agriculture, the methods of agricultural education mirror the other methods of education in the Native tribes, the passing down of methods from one generation to another, something that translated to colonial farmers as well (Talbert 2014).

The methods by which American Indians and Alaskan Natives transferred knowledge about agricultural practices from one generation to the next was a form of agricultural education. Tribal elders taught youth how to cultivate plants, and this knowledge was handed down as oral tradition over hundreds of years (pg. 66).

Knowledge about agriculture was transmitted orally through the generations. In the colonial period, farmers began to rely on farmer’s almanacs for knowledge about agricultural practices (pg. 66).

Prior to the introduction of formal schooling, agricultural education was performed on a strictly informal sense. The methods and stories were passed down from generation to generation to ensure the best possible practices. The evolution of agricultural education was brought about by the creation of agricultural societies, which were bridging between formal and informal methods of passing along agricultural education, generally in white society as most indigenous agricultural education still follows the traditional methods. By the middle of the 1800's the first agricultural colleges were being established in Michigan, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania (Talbert 2014, pg. 68).

After the civil war, the establishment of agricultural schools exploded with the passing of the Morrill Acts and the creation of land-grant colleges (Talbert 2014, pg. 69). The goal of the Morrill Acts was to create schools to help educate citizens who were not able to attend the more prestigious universities. The land-grant process would establish colleges paid for by the sale or lease of public lands in each state, where the primary subjects of agriculture and mechanical arts were to be taught (pg. 71). In 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act was passed, which established funding for vocational education in high schools by training teachers in agricultural education, as well as home economics, and establishing state and federal boards to carry out the administrative tasks. These programs exist into today, with minor changes to account for new practices and new technologies, but the ultimate goal remains the same, to education youth in the best possible practices of agriculture. However, some of the most recent legislation related to education may carry with it dire straits for agricultural education. The passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 changed educational funding in significant ways.

The act was to supplement local and state educational funding for the purpose of improving student achievement. To receive continued funding, schools must meet selected goals. Schools that fail to meet rigorous standards levied against them. There is a concern that the act will harm career and technical education because of the focus on high-stakes testing and accountability. Will schools find it necessary to cut vocational programs in order to focus resources on helping students meet annual academic goals? (pg. 83).”

The passage of this act may ultimately change the role of agricultural education within the formal schooling system. By focusing on certain subjects, and cutting vocational programs, the formal opportunities to teach agriculture may become sparse. This could lead to an increase in informal educational opportunities, perhaps allowing sense of place education to become prominent. This highlights the importance of this research as a means to further embolden the usage of agricultural education and build upon both formal and informal educational methods as states look to re-capture these students in the wake of changes to educational standards.

Agricultural Education in the Formal and Informal Settings

Formal education practices in the school branches into group teaching and individual teaching (Talbert 2014, pp. 221-222). In many respects, agricultural education in schools is no different than teaching in other classes. Teachers are advised to use Bloom’s Taxonomy (pg. 223) and establish a learning objective for each class period, regardless of what is being taught and to use instruction methods that have been developed over time (pg. 225). These methods can include the use of lectures,

discussion, and demonstration for groups (pp. 225-229) and experiments, supervised study, and guided practice for individuals (pp. 230-233). One thing these methods have in common is they do not mention the actual place in which agriculture takes place. Twenter and Edwards (2017) researched the history of agricultural education facilities in formal settings and discussed the importance of the classroom, laboratories, and greenhouses, and even taking students out into the fields. Throughout their research, they documented the need for newer types of facilities, ones that bring into play STEM, but also talked about the importance of ‘food gardens’ (pg. 287). Throughout their article however, they never mentioned the importance of connecting place to education, they spoke of the different facilities, including the use of food gardens, but never touched on the idea of the importance, culturally and socially, that they may play in education.

O’Donaghue and Heanue (2018) examined the importance of knowledge transfer in Irish farmers and how education plays a role in building up their farms. Throughout this article, the authors examined educational background, technology adaptation and management practices and how it impacted farm income. Their goal was to understand what works best to help farms survive. Like in Twenter and Edwards (2017), I found that they never approached or mentioned the connection that people have towards their places. These articles look at what farmers can do to teach the next generation and help the farms survive, but they fail to address the connections that people feel towards their places. This research sheds light on that connection, showing that including sense of place into both formal and informal educational settings is another way, in addition to the research above, to help farms survive.

Throughout Talbert's (2014) *Foundations of Agricultural Education* textbook (a book for aspiring agricultural educators) the importance of place, of where agriculture is being done, is not mentioned. A farmer's or rancher's connection to their local place is not examined and the deep historical, cultural, and social connections that they make over time are not addressed at all. If agricultural educators are not being taught how to work with people's sense of place, how will aspiring farmers do the same? The reasoning behind why place is left out of this book is puzzling but may correspond to the standardized nature of a textbook. Throughout the textbook, the authors write of the various locations in which learning occurs. Whether students are learning in the classroom, the laboratory, or the field station, it does not replace the connection and learning that occurs on the farm, in those places that are important. Twenter and Edwards (2017) discussed these changes in agricultural education facilities over the years and how they are generally moving out of the classroom and into the lab/field stations, there is still this lack of connection or focus on the places that many of these students are coming from, their farms.

Informal agricultural education has existed, essentially since agriculture as a whole was developed, as people needed a way to ensure that the techniques to cultivate crops were passed down from generation to generation. "Supervised agricultural experience in America likely began as youth apprenticeship in the colonial period or earlier. The concept of learning agricultural subjects under the direction of a mentor or skilled practitioner is an old one indeed (Talbert 2014, pg. 77)." The Hatch Act of 1887 (Talbert 2014, pg. 72) established agricultural experiments stations and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 (pg. 74) created the cooperative extension service, both were resources to

teach the public about new and better agricultural methods. This allowed agricultural teaching to get out of the school and to the people themselves, not just the younger students. This also allows for the inclusion of informal methods of teaching, allowing for the implementation of sense of place education.

While agricultural education has evolved to meet the changes in technology and overall culture, there is still a missing piece that is being answered by this research, the lack of understanding a person's attachment to the places in which they work and the importance of that connection to place. This research fills that gap by beginning to understand how farmers experience place, how they story these experiences, and how that influences their teaching/learning in informal situations and how that might apply to formal education. Current research on farming and sense of place is sorely lacking, with few studies done to examine the connections between the two.

Family Farms and the Preservation of Place

One goal of this research was to understand sense of place on the family farm as a site of informal agricultural education. As the target area is comprised almost entirely of multi-generational family farms, it is important to understand what it is that connects people to these places and keeps family's working on the farm over the generations.

Looking more closely at the target area of this study, the people who inhabit these lands view their relationship with these places in a particular way. In Joranger (2008), the author brings up the writing of Joseph Schafer, who wrote about the new wave of farmers in the early 1900's. Split into two categories were the "Germans", an all-encompassing term that referred to anyone immigrating directly from northern Europe

and the “Yankees”, a term referring to people who have been generationally established in the United States and are moving west to find new opportunities. About this, Joranger discussed Schafer’s thoughts:

...he discussed the varying attitudes of the two groups towards the land and their attitudes as farmers. The German, he asserted, looked at his patrimony as a basis for livelihood, valued the land as his home, and usually purchased a piece of land in order to “establish a family estate.” In most cases a very limited acreage sufficed to achieve this goal through intensive labour and persistence. The Yankee, on the other hand, was “more speculative to the last, more imaginative and space-free, drawn by the [...] lure of wealth quickly and easily acquired.” Thus, the Yankee did “regard the land lightly;” to him land was a money-making business, “a desirable commodity,” and by no means “a sacred trust.” This resulted in the Yankee’s ambition to acquire larger tracts of land than his German counterparts that he could eventually sell to go elsewhere, “confident of a success on a new frontier” if the farm did not meet his expectations.

In this case, when examining our target population, we would not expect to find many Yankees after 100 years of farming, but instead find that most of the farmers in our target area would be considered Germans, since they are multi-generational farmers. Most of the people who would have fallen into the Yankee category would have sold off their land long ago, especially since Schafer wrote about this in 1922, before the “Dirty 30’s” when a large number of farms went under. During the depression, the Yankee farmer would want to sell and get out as soon as possible, whereas the German farmer would

hunker down to attempt to see the farm through those years. This would mean that the majority of farmers in the area don't see the land as a "money-making business" but instead see it as a way to maintain their family's history and culture, leading to a deep connection to place over the generations.

A study conducted by Cassidy (2017) examined the possibility of using the farm as an educative tool to develop place attachments in Irish farm youth. Similar to this project, the goal was to understand the sense of place that young people had and what role the farm may have played educationally. In this article, the author interviewed 30 Irish young adults who were raised on the farm. What they found was that the farm serves as an educational tool to pass on, not only technical knowledge, but also the cultural and historical knowledge of the family and what it means to be a farmer. The results of this research showed that participants had a deep connection and attachment to their home 'places' and this upbringing developed a strong sense of place in them. This highlights the importance of understanding sense of place, especially in the family farmer and the role that place can play in both formal and informal agricultural education.

Another article, by Creighton et al (2016) examined this idea within family-owned forests in Washington state and if "successful generational transfer" was linked to personal connection to these places, as well as the pressures that are faced by these family farms to sell their land to developers. The article found that a strong sense of place, a strong connection to the land, was one of the best deciding factors to facilitate this land transfer from generation to generation. What they also found was that this sense of place was not simply a business decision or a livelihood decision, but also that successful land transfer was "...allied with experiences and the symbolic meanings of a place that

facilitate shared value (pg. 1).” Here, as we will see in the coming chapters, the connection to place isn’t always about money or the business of farming, but a deep cultural and familial attachment to these places that have been important to these families for generations.

The connection between education and sense of place has been examined, within both formal and informal settings, but it has not been researched well within agricultural education, a setting that, despite technological advances, requires an intimate relationship with the land. Examining one of the top journals related to agricultural education, the *Journal of Agricultural Education*, I found no research presented that mentioned ‘sense of place’ throughout their entire 60 volume collection. This highlights an important need for a look into how family farmers experience place and how that sense of place could be implemented within formal and informal agricultural education programs. The literature above are two of the primary examples of the connection between farmers and place, but not much research exists on the topic of what place means to these agriculturally minded people and how attachment to place plays a role in their informal education and what role it could play in formal education. This research hopes to shed light on the connection between people and the land, in regard to their understanding of sense of place. While some farmers see the farm as simply a means to make money, farmers within the target area see the farm, and the land, as a means to provide for their family, not just financially, but as a place they can call home, a place for them to live and pass on their family’s history and culture. This connection to these places makes for an interesting and exciting opportunity to investigate how farmers experience place. By understanding these farmer’s sense of place, we can begin to understand how sense of place may play a role in

formal and informal agricultural education. Reaching back to the beginning with Relph (1976), we can begin to examine his levels of 'space' and how the experiences that these family farmers have with these places fit within that conceptualization. The following chapter explains the methods used to examine sense of place in the agricultural setting, the rationale for these methods, as well as participant selection, data analysis and presentation, along with data validation methods.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The present study seeks to understand how the concept of sense place is understood from the point of multi-generational family farmers and how that may connect to agricultural education in both formal and informal settings. While sense of place has been examined in environmental education research (Ardoin 2012; Kudryavtsev 2012, Lewicka 2011), the intersection of sense of place and best farming practices (Lincoln 2016), and place-based education research (Nespor 2008), understanding how place plays a role in agricultural education specifically has not been elucidated. One aspect of this project is to examine the potential role of including sense of place as an educational foundation in agricultural education. The aim of this chapter is to show how a narrative methodology is applicable for this study. This chapter lays out what a narrative methodology entails, focusing on narrative inquiry and thematic analysis and a dual approach to analysis and presentation. In order to understand this role, a firm understanding of narrative research must be examined. This includes examining the theoretical and epistemological foundations of narrative research, along with the goals, methods, and analysis/presentation of narrative research. After establishing the role that narrative research plays in socially constructed reality, an examination of its role in connecting the idea of sense of place to education/schooling was be discussed. The project is a narrative examination of lived experiences in relation to agriculture and the

ways in which family farmers story their experiences. The research design, research questions, participants, and methods are explained within this section. I conclude with an explanation of maintaining validity and researcher reflexivity within this chapter to ensure that this project is completed with trustworthiness and reliability.

Narrative Research

For this project, I examined sense of place through the use of narrative inquiry and thematic analysis, as the relationship with place is interpreted differently among people and thus, the ways they story their experiences. The use of thematic analysis is to understand some of the underlying themes present in family farmer's sense of place and the potential for inclusion of sense of place in formal and informal agricultural education. The specific questions this research hoped to uncover are:

- How do family farmers personally experience place?
- How do these farmers incorporate their lived experiences and stories into their understanding of sense of place in agricultural education?
- What are the stories that they tell in regard to this?

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) offer a detailed definition of narrative inquiry, stating that:

Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally

meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (pg. 477)

In this case, narrative inquiry is essentially examining experience through stories, which is the primary goal of this study. In order for narrative inquiry to be performed, there are three “commonplaces” that need to be incorporated (Clandinin 2007, pp. 22-23). As Clandinin highlighted, these three commonplaces are: temporality, sociality, and place. In each of these interviews, I am working together with an individual who, as Clandinin highlights, have a “past, present, and future (pg. 23)” of working on the land. The second commonplace, sociality, highlights not only the way in which the participant views themselves and their local environment, but also the relationship between the participant and the interviewer. In these interviews, the participants are telling personal stories about themselves and their family and bring me into “the fold” through their stories, and that creates a relationship between the two of us that needs to be understood and respected. The last commonplace, which is a central focus for this research project, is place. All of these stories happened in ‘places’ and how that place is viewed, and the effect that each place has on the participant, is of the utmost importance to this project.

How people view place is an inherently personal process and the narratives (stories) they tell are the best way to understand sense of place. As Keith Basso (1996) states, “senses of place also partake of cultures, of shared bodies of ‘local knowledge’

(the phrase is Clifford Geertz's) with which persons and whole communities render their places meaningful and endow them with social importance (pg. xiv).” To examine a person (or people's) sense of place, you are essentially examining the intersection of that culture with a physical phenomenon (the place). This method of research requires the examination of these individual and collective impressions on place, which can only really be understood through the use of narrative, of the telling of a story. With this research, my goal was to connect sense of place to education, and the primary method of doing that is through the use of narrative research.

Sense of Place

Sense of place, again, can be defined as a person (or people's) attachment to a place and the meaning ascribed to that attachment. Sense of place exists well within the construct of narrative research, as the narrative is a prime method of presenting a sense of place. Since sense of place involves looking at a particular experience of a place (and its particular meaning), the best way to present the information is by telling the story of the person experiencing it. Sense of place can fit well within Glesne's (2011) various presentation constructs. The weaving of a story in relation to sense of place can take an artist's touch, telling the story of a place as if it were a living, breathing entity. A sense of place itself can also work well as an interpreter and a transformer, helping to bring a particular group's experience with place to the minds of other people through the subjective telling of stories. Basso (1996) accomplished all three aspects, 1.) painting a beautiful story about place-names, 2.) physical places, and 3.) their connection to the Western Apache people. He was also able to interpret culturally significant locations, bringing an understanding of the Western Apache peoples' connection with physical

place. People tend to forget about the history of Native peoples and their ancestral homelands. While currently confined, border-wise, to reservations, they once spanned large swaths of land. These lands had special significance for Native peoples and the stories of their origin, and the names given to these places. Basso (1996) describes the story told to him by an old horseman, Charles Henry, about the original naming of the lands in the area, this in particular, is in reference to *Water Lies With Mud In An Open Container*. He writes:

They came to this country long ago, our ancestors did. They hadn't seen it before, they knew nothing about it. Everything was unfamiliar to them.... None of these places had names then, none of them did, and as the people went about they thought about this. "How shall we speak about this land? They said. "How shall we speak about where we have been and where we want to go? (pp. 11-12)."

So, they began to link the physical places with stories:

They made a picture of it with words. Now they could speak about it and remember it clearly and well. Now they had a picture they could carry in their minds. You can see for yourself. It looks like its name. When Charles has finished speaking, he reaches down and takes from the marshy ground a heaping handful of mud. He squeezes it firmly, causing little jets of water to spurt from between his fingers, "There", he says with evident satisfaction. "Water and mud together, just as they were when our ancestors came here (pg. 12)."

This place-name, and the hundreds that accompanied it, are cultural markers put down by their ancestors, to link them eternally to the land, and to educate their descendants on their cultural history. This method of preservation is also a continual construction of the culture of the Western Apache people, to ensure that those who live long after the first ancestors, remember who they are. It is this style of methodology that I am applying to agricultural education. While these are two different cultures (Native Americans vs White farmers) the process of making places is important and applicable to both. Basso outlines the reasons behind why it is important for us to maintain the stories of places and the places themselves. This methodology is what is presented within this research, the use of stories as methods of teaching. As farms are often passed down through generations, it is important to keep those social and cultural norms present and developing sense of place through storytelling is one integral way to achieve that. Another important aspect of developing sense of place is the passing down of emplaced knowledge, which helps the next generation navigate the land and other forces (economic, climate...) by utilizing past experiences and knowledge of those that came before.

In psychologist's Chris Ferguson's (2009) work, he recalled the words of Susan Edgerton from her book *Translating the Curriculum: Multi-culturalism into Cultural Studies* (1996) in relation to sense of place and the role that place plays in cultural construction (pg. 29):

The concept of the other is a crucial one for understanding the construction of a sense of place. Creation of a notion of what constitutes them and us, the meaning derived from difference, of who, therefore, is other and the

subsequent exclusion of the other (even within one's self) are often critical elements to the sense of place... Uncovering place in this way involves the process known to anthropologists as "making the familiar strange."
(Edgerton 1996, pg. 134)

What this means is that in order to have a sense of place, there must be a cultural foundation to impose meaning on that place. As culture is socially constructed, the meaning applied to place is also influenced by the social realities of the culture. The dissemination of these stories in relation to place also serve as a propagation and preservation of culture. As Basso (1996) states, "...senses of place also partake of cultures, of shared bodies of "local knowledge" with which personas and whole communities render their places meaningful and endow them with social importance (pg. xiv)." From an agricultural standpoint, connecting to the places in and around the farm are a way of building "local knowledge" and preserving the culture by passing down the stories and histories of these places. In many cultures, education and cultural/social history are entwined, indicating that a sense of place can play a large part in cultural education. Narratives and their analyses will then work together to preserve localized, emplaced agricultural knowledge and values, as well as educating people. Within agricultural education, connecting students to their places, within formal and informal educational settings, is important to have them retain that connection to place. As stated in Chapter 2, agriculture exists at the intersection of people and place and ensuring that farmers understand their role in that intersection is important.

Intersection of Sense of Place and Narrative Research

One of the aspects of narrative research is the constructionist foundation in which it exists. Crotty (2015) defined constructionism as the following:

In the constructionist view, as the word suggests, meaning is not discovered but constructed. Meaning does not inhere in the object, merely waiting for someone to come upon it. As writers like Merleau-Ponty have pointed out very tellingly, the world and objects in the world are indeterminate. They may be pregnant with potential meaning, but actual meaning emerges only when consciousness engages with them. How, such thinkers ask, can there be meaning without a mind? (pp. 42-44)

Viewing sense of place within agriculture through the constructionist viewpoint makes sense. While buildings may exist from farm to farm and while the role of the farmer may be similar, the meaning behind *those* buildings and *that* field are constructed by the farmers who live and work there. A dilapidated house on a farmstead may look like an eyesore to an outsider, but the farmer who is keeping his family history alive by retaining his family's original home, has constructed a very different meaning. This plays well into the idea of sense of place; Crotty (2015) highlighted an important connection between the two in relation to construction of meaning in relation to an object, or place, "The object may be meaningless in itself but it has a vital part to play in the generation of meaning (p. 48)." This is why dilapidated homesteads are still found throughout North Dakota, even though many people see these buildings as eyesores, they still have a vital role in generating that meaning for the people who are connected to those places. When discussing the role that physical place plays in culture, education, or meaning within an

individual, place can be seen as “meaningless” to some people, and yet mean the world to the person in question. This is a tenet of phenomenology, as “the object, in other words, cannot be adequately described apart from the subject... (pg. 79),” and indicates that while ‘places’ can be described in many different ways, the intersection of a person and that particular place can only exist within that subjective frame. Derrien (2014) also highlighted a link between narrative research and sense of place, stating, “...studies about place meanings are often qualitative and interpretive, relying on interview methods and thematic analyses to draw out people’s place meanings (pg. 108).” This helps to solidify the idea that in order to understand sense of place, we must understand a person’s (or people’s collective) experience with place, and the collected and constructed meaning of elements of place. Within the context of my research the goal was to understand these farmers’ particular meanings behind their connections to their places. Through the use of interviews, I was able to understand their experiences with place and what themes span those experiences.

Sense of place, which is essentially a person (or people’s) attachment to a place and the meaning ascribed to the place, is socially constructed; it is built off of a person’s personal attachment to a physical place embedded in socially constructed meaning field. The fact that sense of place is a socially constructed, yet personal connection to a place, makes the use of narrative, specifically storytelling, an appropriate tool to use. Both sense of place and narratives work under the constructionist epistemology, understanding that knowledge is relative, contextual and socially constructed.

Narrative research is a qualitative research methodology whose main premise is to tell a story and, “...make sense of actions, narratives, and the ways in which they

intersect (Glesne 2011, pg. 1).” Creswell also highlights the fact that narratives can exist as both the “thing” (what the research is collecting – in this case, stories of experiences) as well as the method of the study (understanding what role the stories play). (pg. 54). Narratives are the polar opposite of quantitative research, whose goal is to understand generalizable themes that can occur in various situations, which is usually performed using large numbers of anonymous responses to uncover any trends in thinking. Creswell (2006; pg. 54) cites both Chase (2005) and Polkinghorne (1995) in describing the narrative, “Narrative might be the term assigned to any text or discourse, or, it might be text used within the context of a mode of inquiry in qualitative research, with a specific focus on the stories told by individuals.” The goal of the narrative is to understand a single experience (and/or a collection of experiences) of a person or persons and “understand how they construct meaning within a broader social context (Ison 2014).” Creswell (2006) explains narrative research as collecting stories and experiences through a process of selecting, “one or more individuals who have stories or life experiences to tell and spend considerable time with them gathering their stories through multiple types of information (pg. 55).” By collecting these stories and experiences of individuals, we are able to understand how they construct meaning, which can give us insight into social construction of meaning.

As reviewed in Derrien (2014), the narrative is, “...a particular style of ritualized, imaginative, creative behavior enacted in language through which shared social meaning is produced (Derrien 2014, pg. 109).” This illustrates the point that narrative research is performed, not to attain objective meaning, but to understand how meaning is constructed in a social environment. This is the goal of this research, to understand how the meaning

of these places is constructed within the realm of the family farm and is accomplished through the use of interviews and the building of individual narratives. This very idea can be understood as the basis of *Interpretivism*, which seeks to ‘interpret’ a person’s environment in relation to their internal understandings. Crotty (2015) highlights the primary difference between interpretivism and the positivist approach to research. He states:

A positivist approach would follow the methods of the natural sciences and, by way of allegedly value-free, detached observation, seek to identify universal features of humanhood, society and history that offer explanation and hence control and predictability. The interpretivist approach, to the contrary, looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world (pg. 67).

This highlights the difference in the research goals between positivism and interpretivism; one method (positivism) focuses on the idea of generalizing results (i.e. “How can we use this information to predict future events”), as Crotty (2015) explains, “...science is looking for consistencies, regularities, the ‘law’... (pg. 67).”

Interpretivism focuses on the idea of interpretation (i.e. how does this particular event fall within our understanding of social, cultural, and/or historical interactions?). In regard to agricultural education and experience of place, the focus of this research is not on specific ways of doing agricultural to increase yield, proper planting techniques, or tractor repair, but on the individual experiences that people have with the actual place in which they are interacting and interpreting those meanings as they relate to agricultural culture and education.

Narrative research methodology is used to tell a story of a person's experience with a particular "thing". In this particular case, one arm of interpretivism that is used to understand experience is phenomenology. This project utilized phenomenology as an informal philosophical foundation to highlight the narrative aspects of this research, rather than a research methodology. Throughout this research study, I went into the interviews understanding that I would be asking family farmers about their experiences with the phenomenon of specific places, and I would be getting their explanations of these experiences. Using phenomenology as a philosophical foundation requires experiencing the "phenomenon" or "thing/object" itself and that, as Crotty (2015) explains, "The object, in other words, cannot be adequately described apart from the subject, nor can the subject be adequately described apart from the object" (pg. 79). This means that a specific object or event can really only be framed based on the experience a subject has of it. This requires an understanding of the connection between the subject and object, usually in the form of a narrative. With regards to this project, the "thing" is the physical place that is the subject of the participant's stories. These 'places' could be their family farms, the land surrounding it, or other places that they view is important to developing their connection to their family farm. The narrative is meant to be emotionally connecting for the teller, writer and the reader. Writer David James Duncan (2001) uses his own history, his own constructed reality, to explain his connection to the land. His goal (as well as the goal of the narrative) is to get you hooked into this world and to get you to care about it. In this story, Duncan is explaining the reverie for the Brown Trout, and in 12 pages manages to get readers to see, not only the trout in a different light, but our connection to physical place and the role that we, and other

organisms play. To someone who has not experienced the Brown Trout, or the Montana wilderness firsthand, the stories written by Duncan transport you to that very spot in which he was talking about, and the person reading the account has been changed. As Duncan writes when he decides not to eat the Brown Trout he caught, he writes:

I realized that, in consuming this fish, I'd be consuming part of everything that made him. I realized that everything that made him was precisely what, or who, he was making love to. I realized that this same everything is who we, too, are made of; who we, too, are submerged in; who we, too, daily eat; who we, too, seek to love and honor. The trout in my hands let me feel this. He was, through no intentions of his own, a spiritual touchstone. And one takes such stones not to stomach, but to heart (pg. 282).

As Duncan explains, the Brown Trout is no longer just a "fish", but it is something more, it is an experience. One may ask what the goal of using the narrative as a research methodology is, and the answer lies in the ontological foundation of socially constructed reality. To understand this, we must examine the theoretical and epistemological foundations that underlie narrative research. Again, using storytelling (and analysis of those stories) as the framework of how this research was conducted, we are able to tell stories and educate through the use of those stories.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of Narrative Research.

To understand the role that narratives can play regarding sense of place and schooling/education, we must first look at the ontology and epistemology surrounding narrative research. The role that truth and knowledge play in narrative research is not a

black and white situation, but is based on the experience of the person (or persons) who are telling the story. Narrative research falls under Interpretivism, whose goal is to understand (interpret) an experience, analyzing how it fits within a socially constructed reality (Glesne 2011, pg. 7). Interpretivism can be built out of the constructionist viewpoint, as our experiences are based on the meanings we construct in relation to them, how we interpret them. In the case of this research study, we have subjects (family farmers) and objects (the places they are connected to) and this research aimed to understand how the subjects experience the objects. This goes along with interpretivism and phenomenology, which are both frameworks of constructionism (Crotty 2015, pg. 5) and focus on this interaction between subjects and objects, in this case an interaction between the farmers and their places. One example of this could be a simple barn, which appears as an ordinary building to a passing motorist, but when interpreting the experience of the farmer who has spent their entire life working in that barn, their experience changes the very nature of that barn to them.

This way of thinking links subject and object explicitly, meaning that how people (or cultures) view objects is dependent on who is experiencing it. This also means that objects can hold different meanings for different people. For a long period of time, the prevailing ontological and epistemological foundations gravitated towards a positivist viewpoint, which is still prominent in science-based research. Positivism views reality and knowledge as something that can (and does) exist independently of someone experiencing it. In this case, there are “positive truths” or universals, which exist in the same state regardless of the situation in which they are experienced (or independent of experience). In relation to knowledge, the positivist viewpoint of knowledge is that it is

discovered, or unearthed, which dictates that research can lead to a right answer on any question. The goal of positivism is prediction, the ability to perform experiments and make concrete statements about reality (Glesne 2011, pg. 7).

The idea of interpretivism began to arise, however, from the idea that within the perspective of our own thoughts, we cannot separate our experiences from our consciousness, which means that whatever we experience is shaped by our previous experiences, along with our intuition and cultural beliefs. We are unable to objectively “know something” as knowledge is based on our experiences and the particular ways we interpret these experiences. This train of thought falls under the idea of phenomenology, which is the study of phenomena. Edmund Husserl (1931) is credited with founding phenomenology and explains it briefly as a way to, “set aside all previous habits of thought, see through and break down the mental barriers which these habits have set along the horizons of our thinking (pg. 43).” As Crotty (2015) explains, “Phenomenology suggests that, if we lay aside, as best we can, the prevailing understanding of those phenomena and revisit our immediate experience with them, possibilities for new meaning emerge for us or we witness at least an authentication and enhancement of former meaning (pg. 78).” Meaning that in order for us to understand our experience with an object (in this case place), we need to go back to the experience of it, remove external viewpoints, and understand what we are experiencing. Spiegelberg (1982) echoed this idea that we are to remain faithful to the object and to experience it in an almost unconscious way. For this study, I wanted to first get an understanding of how these participants experienced these places on a deeper level (back to Relph’s levels of

‘space’) before understanding how their experiences were shaped by their role as a farmer, or their family, or other outside influences.

As French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) says, phenomenology is a foundational act that should occur in all of us, understanding why we feel the way we do when we experience something. For this research, the goal is to understand how multi-generational family farmers experience place in the primordial sense, and to translate that to education by melding the narrative (the object) and phenomenology (the foundational understanding of the object).

The idea that we are also social beings creates an issue with a universal truth as we are unable to separate our individual experiences from our socially constructed reality. Sense of place is an important factor in this awareness, as different people can have different experiences with place. In agriculture, the difference between a wildlife refuge and good farmland, two socially constructed truths, can call into question what exactly is true. My research will broaden people’s understanding of place, making issues, such as I have described, less contentious by allowing multiple viewpoints to come into play. Constructionism, as an epistemological foundation, dictates that while “things” may exist outside of our reality (positive truths), once we experience them, the experience is not only molded by the current experience, we impose upon this experience our own social/cultural ideals, essentially fitting the experience within our known ideas of reality. We are essentially “interpreting” this experience based on our own background. This also indicates, that since we are not able to experience anything outside of our consciousness, we are never able to *truly* discover truths and must only rely on our constructed reality.

From an epistemological standpoint, the knowledge gained through narratives is not uncovered or discovered but is constructed under a social reality that dictates what is important and meaningful. The narrative fits well within the epistemology of interpretivism, as the primary knowledge base is socially constructed through stories and/or social/cultural interactions. As stated above, narratives are used to understand a person's experience of an event or events. Both the person's experience and the relevance of the event are constructed based on the established social/cultural norms that exist within the person. One challenge that may present itself in this research is the perception of place, and whether it fits within the mold of *sense of place*. Throughout this research, my goal has been to understand how these farmers experience their places and how they (and I) interpret those experiences. From a positivist viewpoint, a dilapidated farmhouse is something that needs to be torn down, but from a constructionist viewpoint, the existence of that house, and people's experiences with that house, serve as a cultural and social indicator of that families' existence and commitment to that place.

Narrative Research Methods

I analyzed these narratives using Clandinin's idea of three-dimensional narrative inquiry, along with thematic analysis. Within narrative inquiry, we are looking at each person's interaction (first dimension) to place (second dimension) and time (third dimension). Sense of place is built out of these three dimensions coming together in a meaningful way (otherwise they wouldn't have the stories to go with them.)

Several research methods exist to perform narrative research, however, as stated in Ison (2014), "Narrative inquiry is one qualitative approach which, like others, has no prescribed method (pg. 22)." This provides a great deal of flexibility in conducting

qualitative research using narratives. Unlike quantitative research, large sample sizes are not used, nor needed within qualitative research, as the overall goal of qualitative research is to understand specific experiences, "... to see the world in terms of people, situations, events, and the processes that connect these..." (Maxwell 2013, pg. 29). This aspect of qualitative research allows for quite a range in available and appropriate methods. Within qualitative research, an interview with a single person can say enough to understand an experience, as well as shine light upon how the meaningful reality associated with that experience is constructed. The methods of narrative research all focus on a single aspect, the story of the experience. As the epistemological framework of the narrative focuses around the idea that knowledge is constructed it allows a number of methods to be used in order to collect the various aspects of those experiences.

Narrative Research Analysis

Glesne (2011) echoes the statements of other qualitative researchers regarding narrative analysis, which can be likened to the role of narrative research methods, "Researchers across the social sciences disciplines use narrative analysis but often for different purposes (pg. 185)." As explained by Chase (2003) regarding the principles of narrative analysis, "...narration is a major way in which people make sense of experience, construct the self, and create and communicate meaning. The second is that personal narratives, no matter how unique and individual, are inevitably social in character (pg. 79)." This is the focus of my research study, which is based on personal experiences and how those experiences influence family farmers' sense of place, which is inherently socially constructed across generations.

Riessman (2008) begins examining narrative analysis by referring to the analysis as, "...a family of approaches to diverse kinds of texts, which have in common a storied form... What makes such diverse texts 'narrative' is sequence and consequence (pg. 1)." What the author is pointing out is that narrative analysis involves organizing information about a person's experience and determining the meaning associated with it.

According to Riessman (2008), there are four models of narrative analysis: thematic, structural, interactional, and performative (pp. 3-5). For this project, the analysis of the narratives was optimized primarily for thematic analysis, as my goal was to understand some of the underlying themes that transcended participants. As Braun and Clark (2006) state, "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (pg. 79)." One particular point to note with thematic analysis is that, as Braun and Clark (2006) point out there is an exercise in understanding between what is being said by the participants and what is being written by the author. The themes that are present do not necessarily "emerge" as if they were ingrained within the data but are understood and elucidated through the analysis by the author (pg. 80). The authors go on to define themes as "...something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (pg. 82)." As one goal of this study was to understand how sense of place could be developed and utilized in formal and informal educational settings, it is important to gain an understanding of the foundational aspects of these participant's particular sense of place. Through the identification of common themes, I began to understand how sense of place might fit within agricultural education. As this project relied on the specific experiences and stories of the participants, the analytic

methods used were determined for each individual participant. Glesne (2011) also identifies four primary aspects of narrative analysis. This means that a single interview observation can be analyzed in different way, depending on what the researcher is looking to understand. With thematic analysis, according to Riesmann (2008), the primary focus is on the “theme” or on what is being told. In this specific case, the experience is the primary focus and language is the direct route to understanding the meaning imbued on the experience. In this case, similar to grounded theory, the goal is to look at numerous explanations for experiences or events, and then create an idea that can consolidate these explanations into an overarching thought. The goal of this study again was not to create a formula, but to understand the themes that influenced how each participant thought about their connections to place (how they construct their connections) and thematic analysis was one of the primary means of analysis along with understanding each participant’s experience through narrative inquiry.

Another method of narrative analysis is examining these stories and experiences using narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry, a method that was championed by noted educational researcher Jean Clandinin over many years (and research papers), focuses on the stories that people create about themselves and how they are situated within a time and place, “People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories (Clandinin 2006, pg. 479).” This is less a focus on underlying themes, and more about telling the stories and how they relate to one another. Clandinin (2006) highlighted the thought behind narrative inquiry when she said,

It is a commonplace to note that human beings both live and tell stories about their living. These lived and told stories and table about those stories are ways we create meaning in our lives as well as ways we enlist each other's help in building our lives and communities (pg. 44).”

The goal with narrative analysis is to understand the experiences and how they can be used to build our understanding of the world and of our lives. These experiences, when built with other experiences can help shape our communities. The goal within this research regarding narrative inquiry is to understand the stories that these participants told and how they fit within their individual sense of place, as well as how they fit within the overall understanding of sense of place.

Narrative inquiry has its birth in none other than foundational educational research John Dewey and his views on experience. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) built their views of narrative inquiry off of Dewey's criteria for experience, stating that “people are individuals and need to be understood as such... (pg. 2),” as well as Dewey's second criteria that focuses on the idea that experience grows out of experience (pg.2). Within my research, it is important to understand that farmers identify themselves with their places and with their experiences and framing this research within that idea that they have individual experiences is important to understanding their sense of place.

Narrative inquiry used Dewey's ideas on experience when it came to propose a method of *doing* narrative inquiry and that involves framing narrative inquiry within a three-dimensional space (Clandinin 2006, pp 46-47). This idea of three dimensions within narrative inquiry focus on, “...personal and social interaction along one dimension; past, present, and future (continuity) along a second dimension; place

(situation) along a third dimension (pg. 47).” This idea fits well within sense of place within agriculture as these farmers all frame their stories within these three dimensions, they (or *someone*) was/were involved in the story, it was in a particular *place* and it happened at a particular *time*.

The combination of thematic analysis and narrative inquiry was used with this project. As I am trying to understand this overarching theme (place) we are talking with multiple participants who may all experience their own places a little differently depending on how they got to where they are today. Their experiences are also couched within the three-dimensional aspect that Clandinin (2006) discussed, as there are people, places, and times involved in each story and interview. While I did not settle in either realm of narrative analysis, I chose, instead, to focus on both, examining the experiences that each participant talked about, while also trying to understand the underlying themes that appeared. The goal was not to arrive at a specific formula to understand sense of place in family farmers, nor was the goal to simply tell the stories, the goal was to understand sense of place from their viewpoint, with the hope of understanding how to develop and maintain it within others creating guidelines that could be used within formal and informal educational settings. In each participant’s narratives, the goal was to understand their experiences through the use of narrative inquiry, to essentially let them tell their own stories, while overlapping thematic analysis in order to extract common themes that could be applied to agricultural educational settings.

Narrative Research Presentation

In most cases, narrative research is best presented in story format, much in the same way the information was collected. Tomai (2007) highlighted the importance of

narratives and why presentation is important, “In spite of the subjectivity of interpretation, it is clear that narrative presentation is an effective and reliable, even preferred, way of conveying information (pg. 2). The story can be presented in a number of ways with different aspects highlighted with a constructionist viewpoint, “...there is no shortage of different interpretations over observable events (Tomai 2007, pg. 2).”

Glesne (2011) describes a similar style of presenting your narratives but phrased differently. Instead of describing various ways to write up a story, the focus is placed on the role of the researcher in presenting the data. Narrative research involves re-creating a story about a particular experience; the goal of the researcher is to present that story in the best, most-effective way possible. That requires the writer to take on a particular role, one best suited to present the story. Glesne (2011) described a few roles that can be used. One role of the writer is as an artist, “To make meaning of data, writers employ technical procedures that are to some extent routine and mechanical, but writers of good qualitative studies are also artists who create (pg. 219).” This requires the writer to take the story and bring their own personality into to, with the hopes of creating something that will reach a large audience and do “full justice to what they have endeavored to understand (pg. 219).”

Another method of presentation is writer as translator/interpreter. This involves having the writer take the stories of a culture and present them in a way that other cultures are able to understand and relate. “The researcher works to understand the others’ world and then to translate the text of lived actions into a meaningful account (Glesne 2011, pg. 219).” As we become a more globalized society, the ability to have people understanding various cultures is increasingly important. The last style that

Glesne (2011) describes is the role of the transformer. “As others read your story, you want them to identify with or be a witness to the problems, oppression, worries, joys and dreams that are the collective human lot (Glesne 2011, pg. 220).” This form of action research is done in order to bring experiences to the sight of as many people as possible.

For this particular project, the interpreter/translator method of narrative presentation worked best to accurately present the story and make it applicable to the majority of audiences. With one participant however, the transformer style of narrative presentation is also important, as this participant speaks often of the fear of losing his sense of place with the changing sustainability of smaller family farms. In this case, my hope is that this research does bring awareness to that struggle, and hopefully provide an avenue of discussion. Currently, agricultural research (education and in general) employs quantitative as well as narrative approaches with research (Santelmann 2011, Ngo 2014). This indicates that this study will fit well within current analysis and presentation methods of agricultural education research.

Flexibility is important with this study, as well as with the use of narrative inquiry, as there are many voices to reflect upon. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) highlighted, there are many “I’s” or voices in narrative inquiry and each is important, the voice of the researcher, the voice of the participant, and the voice of the audience must all be treated equally when analyzing and presenting this information. “Our concern is to have a place for the voice of each participant (pg. 10)” is what they wrote about the importance of voice in narrative inquiry. This research study strived to ensure that each participant’s voice was well represented, along with my own.

Research Design

This study has been designed in a way to examine what role sense of place might play, either implicitly or explicitly, in agricultural education, by examining how family farmers experience places that are important to them. As agricultural education revolves around a physical place, the role of sense of place may play an extraordinary part in connecting the student to the thing they are studying. In order to understand how sense of place may play a role in agricultural education, it is vital that we understand how farmers experience place. Agriculture has never been considered a lucrative employment field, so the reasons for farming must extend beyond monetary, and this research will hopefully understand these reasons through the stories and lived experiences of the participants. This research is focused on the role that narratives play in establishing sense of place and the intersection between the person and the phenomenon (the place). As evidenced in Kudryavtsev (2012), integrating sense of place into environmental education resulted in students with a greater affinity for the environment, a result that could also be successful in agricultural education. In brief, this research was conducted by interviewing those who are connected to agriculture, to understand their experience with the land through the telling of their stories. This was accomplished by interviewing participants on the very lands they are talking about, to gain additional insight into their experiences. The goal of this study is not to create a generalized idea of the experiences that people have with their places, but to compare and contrast the different views from the different participants, with the goal of gaining a better understanding of experience of place as a whole as well as to validate the individual stories and voices of each participant. This study will not result in a formula that can be applied to any situation to

understand sense of place, but rather help create the tools (guidelines) that educators will be able to use to help students (formal and informal) understand how they interpret their own experiences.

The questions this research project hopes to understand are as follows:

- How do family farmers personally experience place?
- How do these farmers incorporate their lived experiences and stories into their understanding of sense of place in agricultural education?
- What are the stories that they tell in regard to this?

Sampling and Recruitment

This project explored the stories and lived experiences of four multi-generational family farmers around North Dakota. The recruitment targeted multi-generational family farmers and I aimed for four to six participants, as it would allow me to spend more time with each participant. These farmers have long-established connections with their lands and are a trove of information regarding their connection to place and what role sense of place may play in agricultural education. I worked with personal contacts to gain participants and introduced the study to these contacts, who were asked if they would like to participate, and/or suggest others who might be willing. This method of recruitment is referred to as *snowball sampling* (Cohen 2011) and is a method that relies on participants to suggest further participants who may be interested in sharing their stories, with the goal of continuing a downstream effect to increase sample size. One issue that arose during participant selection was the lack of available and willing participants. Recruitment was an issue as many overtures went unanswered, but the individuals who

participated were a trove of useful information, providing enough insight into their own experiences to complete this project. The goal was to reach a point of saturation with the participants individually and as a whole. As the interviews were conducted, I noted when the participants began to repeat themselves or began to diverge from the topic of my research. After each interview, I transcribed and analyzed the data to ensure that the most salient pieces of information were collected that allowed me to accurately tell the story of each of these participants.

Recruitment and data collection commenced in the fall of 2018, after IRB approval was obtained. Interviews were scheduled around the participant's availability to interview in, and around, places that are important to the participant. The goal was to ground the interview within the very place that the participants would be talking about. As data collection was performed, a number of themes appeared, and my goal was to ensure that each participant had the opportunity to speak about each theme. As each interview was concluded, I examined the transcript to ensure that my questions were answered, and no additional information was required. I examined the interviews to identify the primary themes of this research, and once I determined that each participant sufficiently covered each theme, I deemed the data collection complete. I also examined each transcript from a narrative inquiry standpoint. If I had let them, these participants would have told stories until they were hoarse, so my goal was to allow ensure that they felt they were able to tell their stories without going far off-topic. One goal was to avoid oversaturation, getting to a point in which new information did not add anything substantial to the overall project. If additional information was needed, another interview was arranged. All recruitment and data collection was completed by June 2019.

A total of four participants were selected, based on availability and interest in the project. Each participant was located in a different part of the North Dakota and I met with each two to three times. The goal was to recruit participants who have long-standing experience with the land and are in the position of both informal learner and informal teacher as each participant was a multi-generational family farmer, they both learned from their elders and were responsible for teaching their children. By choosing to spend more time with fewer people, I was able to get a deeper understanding of each participant's thoughts and stories related to place. Multiple meetings allowed the participants and myself to be more comfortable and familiar with each other. It also allowed for both the participant and I to reflect on our previous meeting(s), giving the opportunity to re-visit areas of discussion that need clarification or expansion. Harkening back to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), spending more time with fewer participants allowed each participant (and myself) the opportunity to allow their voices as much room as needed. This resulted in a deeper understanding of each participant's experience with their places and would not have been possible with a larger sample size.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Presentation

In-person interviews were used to collect the data. Each individual was interviewed multiple times, with two to three meetings each. These meetings took place in multiple venues as-needed due to availability and weather conditions but included places that may be useful for understanding the role that place plays in their experiences. For example, I was able to get a better understanding of a participant's connection to their places when we actually walked the land around the house his grandfather had built. This house was slated for demolition and I found it important to be able to experience that

place with him as he told the stories about it. Allowing multiple venues for the interviews can help to better connect the participant to the ‘place’ they are speaking about. Evans (2011) examined the idea of the ‘walking interview’, which involves walking with the participant to gain additional information, and to elicit responses by connecting the participant to the place (pg. 849). The interview itself was semi-structured (McIntosh 2015), using open-ended questions, with the goal of having the participant do much of the talking, going in the direction they see fit, with the interviewer asking questions to continue the interaction. My job in this interaction was to “coral” the conversation, keeping it from veering too far from my original objective of understanding their connections to place. The initial set of questions were used to gather broad information about their places and the stories about them. After transcribing the initial interviews, the secondary questions were developed to further dig into their experiences and how they shaped their particular sense of place. Examples of the primary and secondary questions asked were:

Primary Questions

- (In reference to particular places) What is this place? What kind of description or metaphor could you use to describe this place?
- How long have you had this land (or place) in your life? Was it your families before? Does that effect how you think about it?
- Why is this place important to you? How would you define your relationship with the land?
- Can you tell me a story about this place?

Secondary Questions

- What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “curator of place?”
- Have you used these places and their stories/histories to teach your family?
- How do you feel about the changes that occur on your farms in regard to these places?
- Did your family emphasize the importance of these places when you were younger?

Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, a specific time limit was not imposed, and each interview lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. By allowing the participant to drive the interview, it allowed for a greater understanding of their stories and lived experiences. No compensation was offered for participation in this study. I was responsible for recording and transcribing all interviews for this study.

The combination of thematic analysis and narrative inquiry were used in this project. As we are trying to understand this overarching theme (place) we are talking with multiple participants who may all experience their own places a little differently depending on how they got to where they are today. Their stories, the ones they deem important enough to tell, can be examined using this idea of sense of place and framed under unifying themes. For this research, themes were identified using a basic level of coding of the transcripts to identify common response patterns in each participant. Each identified theme was analyzed within the larger context of the research questions and presented in a way to ensure that the connection between the theme and the research questions were maintained. Throughout my interviews, it became apparent that multiple

themes were occurring with each participant. These themes were not developed prior to the interviews but were uncovered throughout the interviews themselves. Narrative inquiry was utilized to allow each participant to talk about their own experiences and how they felt these experiences fit within their sense of place. In this case, the goal was not to develop underlying themes, but to understand where each participant was coming from with their stories. While narrative inquiry and thematic analysis are not normally sewn together in this fashion, I found that implementing both methods allows for a more holistic view of each participant's sense of place, and potential pathway to developing sense of place within agricultural education.

One specific example of presentation of these participant's narratives is the interpreter/translator method of presentation (Riesmann 2008). This method was chosen due to the fact that my role with the participants was to listen to their stories and to faithfully reproduce their experiences in relation to sense of place, in essence to translate their story. The goal of my interpretation of their stories is to fit them within the framework of sense of place and the role that sense of place may play in agricultural education. The participants may not explicitly view their connection to place as an important aspect in what they do, but hopefully my interpretation of their stories will help connect them more to their 'place' and their role moving forward.

For this project, a number of presentation options were used. As I interviewed participants who have spent many years in the fields, working in conditions that may not be the best, some stories about overcoming odds may be at play (i.e. Reismann's monomyth or the mountain presentation) in which they told stories about how they (or their family) overcame the depression or low crop prices, or flooding, or other disasters.

Each participant chapter was crafted to best reflect the topics discussed to ensure the best telling of their stories. One thing to consider is throughout this project was that there were two voices in the writing, one of the participants (each individual) and one of the interviewer (myself). For the role of the interviewer, the translator/interpreter method of presentation was used as it is the role of the researcher to take what the participants are saying and present it in a way that can answer the questions put forth by the researcher. For each participant, their voice was presented in the best way possible to ensure their story is told authentically. The role of the translator/interpreter is not to make any judgements or assessments of the information that the participants were telling, but to accurately reproduce their words.

Data Validation and Researcher Reflexivity

Properly validating data is of the utmost importance in research, whether quantitative or qualitative. All interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the participants' words are faithfully represented. I also took notes of important topics and physical landscapes, as well as my own thoughts on what the participants are saying to help frame their stories. My notes also served as a guide through the analysis and presentation, ensure that a complete, coherent document is the result.

Issues of validity. As Maxwell (2013) discusses, there are two main threats to valid research, researcher bias and reactivity. For this work, the goal was to recognize bias when/if it appeared and understand how the subjectivity of the researcher and the participants influence (or do not influence) the work. "...the goal in a qualitative study is not to eliminate the influence of the researcher, but to understand it and use it productively (Maxwell 2013, pg. 125)." This project required input from me as I am

driving the topic, my goal was to use my own understanding of sense of place to help participants frame their answers to best develop and understanding of their connection to place. This required not only the interpretation of their answers and the correct framing within the study, but to take care to understand that the participants were discussing a topic that is very deeply rooted in their family, as well as how they make a living. Throughout my interviews, I kept notes related to my questions and their answers to ensure that I was faithfully representing their voice properly. Research reactivity was not an issue with this project as my goal was to take their stories and piece them together within the themes they fell under, not to make any judgements or impose my views over the top of them.

Member checking. As the information collected was in the form of interviews, the primary method of data validation was performed using member-checking. Member-checking is accomplished by allowing the interviewee to review the interpretation of their story and validate that the written narrative matches what the individual feels they have said. In this case, after the interview, transcription, and narrative write-up, the work was returned to the individual interviewed for their approval. Any changes requested by the individual were discussed and made accordingly, which requires reflexivity in the researcher to adapt to changes in the participant's story and how that affects analysis and presentation. In this study, interview materials were returned to each participant for their review and comment to ensure reliability and accuracy in what was presented. This method of data validation also links back to the basis of constructionism as the participant is involved in constructing this narrative as much as I am. This also speaks back to Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) ideas of the multiple "I's" within narrative inquiry, as

the results of this study were co-constructed between each participant and myself. As Crotty (2015) highlighted when he spoke of constructionism and phenomenology, “The image evoked is that of humans engaging with their human world. It is in and out of this interplay that meaning is born (pg. 45).” This interplay that is happening with participant and place, as well as with myself (interviewer) and participant all come together to help construct the meaning of these farmer’s interactions with their places. Because of this, member-checking becomes more than just a means to validate the research, but another source of constructing meaning.

Use of rich data, field notes, and an audit trail. Another method of data validity is to use “rich data”, which is the collection of detailed data such as memos, notes, and physical descriptions of the interview locations (Maxwell 2013, pg. 126), which has been done where possible. My own reflections were included in the results as an attempt to ‘take a picture’ of the place in which we are in to gain a better understanding of the story that is being told from my own perspective. Throughout my interviews and traveling with each participant, I kept field notes that highlighted aspects of their interviews. This allowed me to better analyze their words by including any actions that were performed during the interviews and/or any other details that were not included within the interview itself. Most field notes were used during transcription and write-up to ensure that any additional information not recorded was included. Detailing the rough road conditions that existed in order to reach the farm of one of the participants is one example, as it gave me a sense of understanding of the necessity of a strong connection to place. Another example was seeing the wildlife around the farms and understanding the participant’s connections to the natural world. Finally, an audit trail is present to document the

findings from initial contact, to completed works to ensure that a faithful representation of the data has been accomplished, as primary communication is through email, all communications between interviewer and participant is archived. As Koch (2006) showed, the use of an audit trail helps to solidify the credibility and dependability of the research by providing a clear path from research information to completed document (pg. 92). The term ‘accomplished’ is a nuanced term that is used to dictate a completed work that follows the guidelines put forth through this work. My own understanding of this project will be completed when I feel that I have successfully interpreted the ideas of place and experience in multi-generational family farmers.

Researcher reflexivity. Researcher reflexivity is important in this sense as the goal is not to impose my own ideas of what the relationship between participant and place is, but to faithfully tell their story. Nevertheless, my own perspective played a role in this research, but hopefully only to accentuate the perspective of the participants. My own expertise in sense of place was helpful in steering conversations, as many of the participants had commented that they had not thought of their connections to place in this way before. The role of multiple voices is essential for this study as I am responsible for helping to tell their story along with them. Agriculture has always been an important aspect in my family and my personal connection to this issue will help to bring forth the stories of others. I come from a multi-generational family farm that is no longer around and understand the loss of sense of place due to that. My goal with this research is also to help these participants (and any who read this) to help maintain their own connections, so they do not lose their sense of place and connection to their family history the way I have. Understanding how our connections to places are made and why they are important to us

is a goal of this study and to me personally. I was motivated to complete this study as a way of helping people stay connected to their places in a way that I was never able to. My goal with this study is to provide the framework that can be used to develop and maintain sense of place in the next generations of farmers, to help bring their histories and cultures into their thinking going forward. Numerous validity methods were used to ensure that what is being written matches what the participants are saying. This project is essentially a “re-storying”, which involves taking stories of others and consolidating them into a single account (Creswell 2006, pg. 56).

Conclusion

The following chapters contain the narratives of four individuals who are all multi-generational family farmers. Each narrative is constructed in a way to examine four key areas related to their sense of place and their roles within farming and within their family. For each participant, I structured the chapters to focus on these four key areas related to their experiences with place: 1.) participants’ individual experience with place, 2.) their experience with place as a family farmer, 3.) their experience with place and their family, and 4.) their experience with place and their role as an informal educator. Each of the next four chapters follow this similar path as we discuss stories related to important places to understand their individual sense of place. These chapters, while containing similar elements, are still individual participant’s narratives and therefore often go in different directions. The locations of farms, the age of the participants, their views on the past and the future all shaped their own stories through their own voices and my job was to ensure they had the opportunity to talk about these experiences. While my goal was to highlight common themes that all participants shared,

the narrative inquiry methodology was also utilized to ensure that each individual told their stories. The final chapter, the conclusion and discussion, brought together all of the commonalities and differences in each individual's experience with place. All of the narratives were utilized to create a singular understanding of sense of place and the family farmer and what role sense of place may play in in the struggle to maintain the balance between preservation of place and financial viability of the farm. Lastly, recommendations are made as to the inclusion of sense of place in agricultural education. Currently, understanding a person's individual and personal connection to the place(s) in which they work are not readily examined within agricultural education and this research hopes to show that it is a viable and needed area of inclusion in education.

CHAPTER IV

MARVIN

For this narrative, I will be introducing Marvin. This section will contain a number of stories related to the following: How does Marvin experience place? What do these places mean to him? How does he see place within his role as a multi-generational farmer and his families' connection to place? How does he use these places to educate? Finally, how did he learn in these places and how does he teach using them? My goal with this narrative is to understand Marvin's sense of place and how it influences (or does not influence) his role as a farmer. In addition, I aim to explore how Marvin acts as a potential curator of place, as well as how he views his role as an informal educator with his family. By highlighting Marvin's narratives, the purpose is to examine the stories told about the places that feel important to Marvin as a means to understand his connection to them and get a greater understanding of multi-generational family farmers from North Dakota. The interesting aspect of examining sense of place in North Dakota farmers is that the focus of people's sense of place is not only on the natural landscape, but also on the constructed, physical and cultural landscape, the buildings, farmsteads, fields and shelterbelts that make up the farms and the meanings that are applied to these places. The overall guiding theme for this chapter is highlighting Marvin's sense of place, not only of the man-made and natural places, but also his sense of place regarding his family, and his goal to preserve it all. Throughout this chapter, I will focus on several

themes that point to this, such as the connections that Marvin has to these places, his role as a farmer and as a curator of place, his connections to his family and their connections to place, and finally, how Marvin might use these places to teach. All of this is accomplished through the telling of stories, which allows Marvin (and the other participants) to preserve their sense of place and to serve his family and others as a curator of place.

Marvin is a cattle farmer in his mid 60's, who lives and works on his family's farm, which he is now the owner of, in south-central North Dakota. Marvin was the first participant in this project, and I had never met him previously. Marvin and I were introduced through a mutual acquaintance, and our first interview took place during a school field trip that I attended in the fall of 2018. Marvin and I met at a third-party location for both our first and second interview as scheduling and weather conditions required it. However, for our third and final visit, I was able to make my way out to Marvin's farm, which was a challenge, even for a four-wheel drive pickup! The rutted and muddy gravel roads were not easily maneuverable, and I worried that I might get stuck at any moment. As I was driving into his farm, I was amazed that he chose to travel this way every day, with the difficulty of getting onto and out of his farm. The difficulty of living and working in these conditions says a lot about Marvin's commitment to maintaining this place for his children and grandchildren. The theme, related to the hardships faced in the family farm, is recurring throughout each of my participants, indicating that it is worth going through the hard work in order to preserve *their* places.

Marvin's story is unique, as he is currently living/farming on the family farm that was established in the early 20th century, and the farm he grew up on. However, unlike other multi-generational family farmers, Marvin has not spent his entire life farming, but returned to farming full-time after many years away. This makes Marvin unique in a way, as it is often difficult to return to a farm full-time when you have been away that long. When he was 19, an opportunity presented itself for Marvin to go and work for a railroad company, but it never changed his plans of returning to the farm:

[M] I had worked for the railroad but it was right out of high school, it was just something to do and I'd come back to farm, but I had kept a connection with some of the folks I had worked with [at the railroad] and they had told me if I was looking for summer employment they would love to have me and I went back to work and... ended up getting married, and, economically, I just had to make a hard choice, but I knew I was going to come back some day [to the farm].

Marvin knew that, even while he was working for the railroad, that he would eventually end up back on the farm. Economically, it was not the best time for farming in the early 1980's, but Marvin did keep his foot in the door throughout that time by working with his father, sister, and brother-in-law on the farm. Marvin would purchase cattle, as well as return periodically to help with fencing and other jobs on the farm. When I asked Marvin about why he continued with farming even though he was not able to do it full-time, he said:

[M] ...once a farmer, always a farmer, and I mean I did, when I left I still had cattle, I still had equipment here and stuff and so when my dad did

finally retire, my brother-in-law and my sister farmed the ground and my dad would buy cattle in the spring of the year, I mean so I've always come back to help with fencing stuff like that but I had a family by then and it just... financially I couldn't come back here, but I wasn't gonna just not come back here either I mean, and I know some people do, I've seen it, once they leave the farm, it's just a distant memory for them.

Even though he was not able to be there full-time, Marvin still maintained his connection to the farm and the farming way of life. He still found himself returning to the farm to help out. However, Marvin recognized a common theme that occurs in many family farms, that when someone leaves the farm, it can be very difficult for them to return, a path that Marvin did not want to follow.

When I asked Marvin about stories related to places that were important to him, he was quick to share a number of them that related directly to his experiences with the land and his connection, not only to it, but to his family as well, which is very important to him to this day. One of the first stories he told me involved his role in the farm:

[M] ...we had a really nice childhood growing up and, I mean, I'm 62 years old but those days growing up there was chickens, there was hogs, there was milk cows, there was... we butchered... can't see it, but there's a brick smokehouse, I mean we smoked out... big gardens, fruit trees, canning and stuff like that. So, in the fall of the year, they would go to town and buy their flour, some sugar, you know, some staples and that was your last trip to town, I mean, everyday my folks, myself, and my siblings would milk cows before I went to school, by hand, but I love it, I did not... get to come

back to the farm... I left... with no intentions of not coming back, but circumstance dictated [economic conditions, going to work on the railroad] but I still kept my foot in the door with helping and you know, having some interest, and getting some return because I had some investment there. After my dad passed away, I bought the whole farmstead and retired from the job that I had and now I got my son out there and we run a couple hundred head of cow and... I'm not getting rich or anything, but I mean I'm doing what I've always wanted to do and I've got to come back and do it.

In this story, Marvin talks about his role on the farm growing up and how these places connected so much to him that, even though he was not able to work full-time on the farm when he was younger, he always found ways to stay connected to the land. This further illustrates his connection to these places when his father died and he bought the farmstead, retired from his railroad job and became a full-time farmer. The fact that he mentions (multiple times over the interview) that he is not out to get rich further solidifies the importance of these places in his mind, as well as mine and that his focus is on maintaining his sense of place.

Continuing with the idea of growing up on the farm, and his connections to place and their importance, Marvin further discusses his, and his families' role within the farm:

[M] So growing up, my grandmother and that uncle and aunt lived there [a house on the farmstead], and this uncle and aunt [nearby farmstead] and this aunt and uncle [another nearby farmstead] and my dad farmed together, so when they needed a combine there wasn't one guy there were three guys, so everything was done as, I'm mean it wasn't... I didn't have one dad I had

numerous dads, but it was a really, when I look back on... we didn't get to do much socially, but we had such... there was so many kids and neighbors that, I mean this place, Sunday afternoons, there would be sometimes up to 50-60 people taking airplane rides [on his father's airplane] and there was always food, I mean it was just a... when I think back about it, I had no idea I had everything I needed, but I was always jealous of the kids who got to do more social things if that makes sense.

This highlights again, the importance of family to maintaining the farm. Here, Marvin establishes the importance of family, and the benefit of proximity to each other. The fact that, even though there were three separate farms (his father and his two aunt/uncle pairs) they still worked together in these places to ensure that everyone had what they needed. This also shows the importance to family that Marvin experienced, not having one dad, but three. Also established here is the fact that the farmstead became the 'place' that everyone gathered at, generating the sense of place in many people, not just the immediate family. With Marvin living on, and maintaining the original farmstead that he grew up on, the stories and experiences he has are incredibly important to the family to maintain a sense of place. In this way, Marvin has become the "curator of place", tasked with the responsibility of telling and passing on stories to anyone who will listen. These stories, even little ones from his youth can have a long-lasting connection for others.

One such story that Marvin tells relates directly to his connection to place and the power that those connections can have for both natural and man-made places on the farm. This story from his youth not only preserves his personal emplaced memories but can serve as stories to connect others to these physical places as well. Marvin related

[M] I can remember plowing right here in this field, coming home from school, getting off the bus, changing clothes and running out and my dad stopped and he says, “I got something for you” and he opens up the back of the drill and there's this little rabbit that had been in the field. He had it in the drill box, so we took it home and put it in a box, obviously it did not make it, but that was something that I remember, I mean the black dirt, the seagulls, and plowing, I mean I can still smell and I remember having that little rabbit in my hand and running home and getting a box and stuff like that, just trying to think some other things that... cutting silage that smell, the corn, the type of corn we raised in those days was nothing like what's being raised now a days, but that was something we always enjoyed.

Another thing, I wish we had taken pictures, but this was a milking barn, and we would put hay up that every fall and the big door would open up, you would let this big door down and there was a trolley, a metal trolley that went to the back and the rope went down and came out here and we would hook up tractors, but you'd have a hay rack and you'd put hay in it and then you'd pull the hay up and put it in the barn... that was... I've gone on YouTube to see if I could find something that replicate that, but I've never been able to find [a video].

In this story, Marvin recounts the places that were important to the farm, the fields where they had sown their crops, the barn that they hay was stored in, but also the smells and the sights, all of which connect Marvin deeply to these places. I asked Marvin about how, or if, his feelings towards these places have changed over time, from his youth to

today, and his answer struck me as quite interesting. The fact that he had not been able to farm his entire life may have actually improved his sense of place, as he said:

[M] I'm glad it worked out the way it did because I've got buddies that grew up back here and farming and they're just, they're pessimistic farmers and it's because they had to work hard and struggle to raise a family, they really did, they struggled, they lived very, very meagerly, but like we said, we wouldn't want to do it any different now, but I know it was a struggle for them...

For Marvin, the fact that he didn't have to rely solely on farming meant that his family was able to avoid certain struggles (though obviously not all of them) but he was able to enjoy coming back to farming. In the end, Marvin didn't become a "pessimistic farmer" because he had other means to provide for his family to help temper the immense struggles that smaller, family farmers face regularly. This highlights Marvin's sense of place, that after a life of hard work on the railroad, he chose to come back to his family farm and continue to work, rather than retire. There is a duality here between his desire to maintain his sense of place, and his understanding of the struggle of keeping a family farm alive.

Another story related to Marvin's experiences with these places is another story from his youth, and quite the entertaining one:

[M] One thing that happened one time and I got a nice licking out of that... my folks and grandmother had to go somewhere to a funeral, they were going to be gone overnight so my mom's folks, my grandparents from my mom's side came over, and we were old enough [for chores] and we were

doing the milking, they were there to help, they'd been born and raised on a farm, but retired. Long story, but that evening, our job was to go over and collect eggs in the morning and night, and me and my brother were walking over, because the eggs were stored in the barn, and for whatever reason, [our] grandmother... I mean the cracked eggs were used normally in the house and the good ones were marketed, but she would once and a while let us... it was a game kids throwing [the eggs], so we'd try and see who could make the highest mark on the roof of the barn. So me and my brother, excited you know, we're walking back and we maybe had one or two and we'd do it... nobody's going to know, so we throw a few more eggs, good eggs, up against the barn, well when it's all said and done, the barn roof is yellow and there's no more eggs left! And it wasn't a big deal... my grandparents, they, you know, scolded us, but when my folks came home the next day and they saw the yellow [on the barn roof] there were some questions asked and I'm gonna tell you what I would say about a story like that, I can't make stuff like that up!

This humorous story of “boys being boys” shows a direct connection to understanding sense of place. All of the places in this story (chicken coop, barn, and house) all play a part in establishing this action of throwing the eggs up on the barn. To Marvin, this story is poignant because it links these places with his family. His brother, who passed away when they were younger, remains in his memory every time he comes upon this barn. The role that farming played in their lives, the fact that the good eggs were sold meant that this was part of how they made their living, but that they were allowed to do this

meant that they shouldn't always take life too seriously. This also highlights the role that grandparents can play in our youth. Here, Marvin's grandmother would allow them, probably to their parent's chagrin, to play a game to see who could throw an egg the highest. This part of the story is something that most of us can relate to when we think back to our own grandparents and shapes the way Marvin interacts with his own grandkids.

As Marvin and I walked through his farm, we came upon the barn from this story. The roof had recently been tinned (a tin roof was installed) and I asked Marvin whether or not this building would be preserved. I asked him this as other buildings we had walked around are being slated for removal, and finally, I asked whether this was the infamous "egg" barn:

[M] ...this barn here will get tinned, we tinned the roof and we're gonna tin the sides of it... this building will stay, the rest of them will, at some point, will go...

[I] Now is this the barn from the egg story?

[M] Yeah, the chicken coop was actually right here [pointing to an area nearby] there's a cement slab, that was where... but yeah, the chicken coop was here and we stored eggs here [pointing at the barn] and we just stood right here and that's where we threw them up... and that was the deal, me and my brother to see who could put the farthest mark up, and in those days they were, I think they were green shingles, cause that yellow just stuck out! I mean it was just yellow, we were actually pretty smart kids, but once you got, we got so involved in it, I mean there was hundreds of eggs up against

there!

One area that Marvin and I discussed was the passing of stories onto his children and grandchildren, I asked in particular, about whether or not he was going to pass on this story to his grandkids as Marvin and I were discussing the possibility of rebuilding the chicken coop and getting chickens again:

[I] Now you had talked last time about getting chickens again, are you going to pass that story on to your grandkids about what not to do, or [laughing] are you going to expect them to do the same thing?

[M] I don't know, but I would like nothing better than to bring my grandkids over and we'd wail away at that roof! We would, we would wail away!

[laughter]

It was nice to see Marvin's face light up with laughter as we talked about whether he would want to bring this story up to his grandkids in the event that they had chickens on the farm again. I believe that this story, and the event if it were to happen, would create a deep link to the past in those kids, connecting them to their family's history, including the people that they never got to meet.

Marvin and I talked more about the buildings on the farm, most of which have been around for over 100 years. These are the buildings that he grew up seeing, working and living around, and now coming back to the farm, they are buildings that connect him to this place. The original house still sits on the farm, while the family moved into a larger house on the farm around 1920, this house has still served a purpose on the farm:

[M] In the summer they would bake and do their canning and, prepare meals and I mean it was a house, I mean they actually cooked, lived and everything

in it, so when they had this house [the larger house], that was still used, it still had a stove in it and so... like in the fall we would butcher three or four beef and maybe six to eight hogs I mean this was a big deal... that would all be processed in there...

Even though the family had moved into the larger house (Marvin's grandparents had 10 children, two who died in infancy, far too many for the smaller house) they still kept the house (the place), choosing to use it in ways that kept it important to the family as a functional part of the farm, but also kept it physically there. The smaller house served a purpose however, working as a "summer kitchen" a place to cook the meals during the day so as to not heat up the main house during the warm months, which Marvin's family used up until the 1980's, as Marvin said, "...they just cooked here and there was picnic tables out here and we ate our meals here all the time, but this was the original house..." As the family moved into the larger house on the farm around 1917, the original house was still used up until the 1980's, which allowed the younger generations to establish a connection to a building that not even Marvin's father lived in. Even recently, Marvin states that they still used the house for canning and butchering, instilling the sense of place on his children and others. As connected as they are to this house, it is not in great shape anymore (for being 115 years old), Marvin said:

[M] ...the only reason this place is still standing is a couple of my sister's and they know, I gotta take it down, and they just go... boy I mean, they just don't want to see it go away, because in the winter months, when they did move up [to the bigger house], there's still a meat saw, I mean in the fall

this is where the sausage got made and the chops and everything you know, and stuff, so yeah....

This highlights again Marvin's dual connection to these places, that he wants to retain them as a connection to his, and his family's past, but also the fact that a farm needs to be kept up and old buildings, once they no longer serve a purpose, should be removed. This fact however, doesn't make the idea of doing it any easier for Marvin and his family.

While some of the buildings remain, time moves forward and others have been repaired/changed or removed entirely. In our first interview, Marvin had brought photographs with him to show me what the farm looks like. Two photographs, one taken in roughly 1920 and the other taken in the early 1980's. Asking him about some of the structures that are still there and some that are gone, he said:

[M] This building here [pointing to a barn in one of the photos] can't see it in the picture, but it's got kind of a neat little roof. This barn has since been replaced, this one here, but that barn there is there, but the cubicle... some of the stuff, I mean, it's just not feasible to maintain and it, at some point some of these buildings, the chicken coops are gone, it just... these barns are updated since then, but this one will have to... all the barns are tinned on the roof, this barn we... we calve there, me and my son calve very early, so the barn is heated, we'll use that, but this barn at some point, we're gonna replace with something more functional if that makes sense, it's starting to lean and stuff, very neat barn, it's got a round, it's rounded, so it's got beams like a church and it's pretty neat, but it's starting... the foundation, its sagged and stuff like that, we still use, it's our loafing area, but it's got like three

compartments, and it's not real user-friendly for what we are trying to do with it and stuff so, at some point some of those decisions... the outhouse, I just had to... the wind tipped it over just recently this summer we had some severe weather and smashed it up and so, that went away...

This highlights the changes to the structural 'places' that are occurring on the farm.

Some of the buildings are able to be used as they were originally built, but others are not and that necessitates a change, whether to repair and refurbish or to tear down completely and start over. Regardless of the choice, the sense of place that Marvin and others will have towards this place will change.

When asking about the changes to the farm, Marvin said that the decisions to remove buildings wasn't emotional, but I feel as though there is a sadness in the idea of changing the landscape that he has come to know:

[M] I won't say it's an emotional, it just... it's got to happen, I mean just like that original house, I mean, last summer the outhouse, I had to get rid of it and there's several structures there that have been there forever and they have to go... the one barn, we're renovating the inside and the outside is just the matter of putting up some nice tin and we're going to do that, but the rest of them, you know and all my family's good with it, but boy when [they get removed], I mean... it will change the look of that place, but... (laughing) but it's coming, I mean, I wish I was financially- where I could tell somebody to come out and put it back, but it's all wood, I mean you'd pretty much have to, take a picture and rebuild it and this is what I'd like it to look like, but financially it just isn't there, and feasibly it isn't there, I mean, it

would be fun to do, but no... it's coming.

Hearing Marvin talk about the coming changes to the farm he has known all his life, it's hard not to imagine it would be an emotional experience. The duality of keeping your sense of place while also keeping the farm running efficiently is a problem that all farms face eventually. In this case, Marvin mentions the changing of the landscape, I feel that it will not only change the physical landscape, but the cultural and historical one at that. I asked Marvin about how he looks at his dual role of wanting to preserve the farm and maintaining a viable business, Marvin stated:

[M] I'll just be honest with you, this past year, with what's happened with the crop prices and the cattle prices right now, I'm sitting on 50 head of cattle that I do have some payments that I've got due the end of the month and normally I sell in April, but it was so muddy and the weather conditions were so tough I just go, you know what, I'm not gonna worry about it [the market's prices have dropped] I'm just sick about it, my profit margin just is gone right now and it's not the end of the world, but when you talk about sense of wanting to keep going with what you've got and what's viable and what's cost effective, right now... I'm just glad this is more of a hobby that I'm financially secure you know, because I'm not making any money right now and I know, I've talked with my kids about this and the only way my son is going to take this place over, and I'm good with that, is me more or less giving this place to him...

This highlights an all-to-common theme in family farming; is the operation viable enough to make it to the next generation? Marvin benefited from not having been on the farm his

entire life allowing him to be financially stable enough to weather an economic downturn. His son, however, who would be taking over the farm, is not in the same position. Another issue that farmers face, as Marvin explained, is that there is not always an option to sell the farm, and the best way that Marvin sees his son continuing to run the farm is to essentially give the farm to him.

Regardless of how the farm transitions, Marvin already has his eyes on making many changes to the farm, and hearing Marvin's rationale for making changes to the physical and cultural landscape makes sense when he talks about how he feels about these places:

[M] I can't wait until we do tear some of these barns down and put up something new and there will be three pictures, there will be the original farmstead, and the aerial one with the barns, everything, the chicken coops are there, and here is the next generation/version of it and stuff like that... and I'm good with that because, when I look at some of these buildings, it's almost like watching cancer, you need to take it away because it's just, either you maintain it or you take it down because once it starts sagging and falling down... these other farmsteads, like my uncle Randall's place, I mean the barn... I wanted to burn it down, but my cousin didn't want to do it, and I understand, she says, "I just can't do it.

Hearing Marvin talk about his 'places' like that gives me an insight into his thinking about the removal of some of these buildings on his farm that have been there since the beginning. It's clear that he does not want to see his 'places' go through the same deterioration that the buildings on his cousin's farm are going through right now. In this

case, Marvin would rather retain the image and connection to his places as they are right now, instead of thinking about them deteriorating and falling down. It also gives good insight into how Marvin feels the farm should be viewed, talking about the two previous photos and wanting to create a third one that would mean his farm (and his cousin's places) would be continuing on to the next generation.

In the last piece related to Marvin's connection to, and experience with place, he talks a bit about his connection to place, how deep that can be, along with his attempts to help his cousin clean up her families' farm:

[M] That's interesting aspect of it, because I've tried not to struggle with my cousin because of the house and the barn at this place [her parent's farm], the house I don't care too much, but the barn... the shingles, they're wooden shingles, I mean it's just making a mess and... I'd like to clean it up, but she just says that "I can't let it go"... and I get it, you know, I told her, I said, the best example I can give that is when I was... my mother passed away from cancer at a young age and every time I came over the hill [to the farm], five-six times a year it was heartbreaking and then I left... my dad passed away when I was working for the railroad, but now I had moved back to North Dakota and I was calling the farm home, so I was driving in that yard every day and it was a lot easier to make closure that way, but boy when you... when you're only seeing it a couple of times, but that's how you remember it, it's hard to make closure with that, I mean, after my dad passed away, I thought, wow, here's some place I grew up with my grandparents and now my parents and now they're gone... but my cousin Mark, who would be my

uncle Harris' boy, he moved to California, we're the only two boys from this third generation, him and me, and my son is the only boy with our last name, but now he has three kids, two of which are boys... like I told Mark, cause he just... he just cries when he leaves and I said, I get it, when you only come in a couple times a year, you never make closure with nothing, cause it's changed, you know, for me now that I've driven in that yard hundreds of times.

This is a particularly powerful part, as it really puts the idea of sense of place front and center. The connection that we have to particular physical places can change our perception and our thinking. In this case, Marvin's cousin does not want to tear down an old house and falling down barn because of her connections to it. Likewise, his cousin, Mark, who only sees the farm where his father grew up and he spent much of his youth, breaks down when he has to leave highlights the power that a connection to place can have over any of us. In this case there are different perspectives about how these places are viewed. Marvin's cousin is unable to allow him to tear down a barn because she, "...can't let it go." Her connection to that place is directly tied to the physical building and removing the building removes a part of her sense of place. I believe that Marvin sees the dilapidated building different, as it is more damaging to his sense of place (and the functionality of the farm) to keep the building in its current form than to remove it and be left with the memories. Similar with his cousin Mark, who only sees the farm a few times a year and is left with his memories of older days, leaving the farm becomes quite difficult for him as he does not have the constant connection that Marvin has.

Sense of place and the natural world. As a farmer, sense of place isn't relegated simply to the man-made, physical places, but also to the physical landscapes that a farmer needs to tend to and maintain. Just as Marvin discusses the need to take care of the dilapidated and non-functional buildings on the farm, it is important to take care of the natural world as well. Marvin talks about how he views the land and how he would rather preserve the natural land than turn it into cropland:

[M] We have got some pasture hay ground that would be prime farm ground, but we are not going to do that, it's just... it's part of the farm, it lies around the farm. The monarch butterflies that showed up in our shelter belts, the grasshoppers, I mean you've got to have that, and we've [Marvin and his son] talked about it... we just put in over 2000 new trees and we just put in... we'll have another 1500 trees we're putting in you know, and, because our farm has probably two miles of shelterbelts, not that their two miles long, but they're probably 1000 feet long, but there's eight to nine rows, they've been planted for years and now we're putting in new ones. I mean, for Father's Day, they [his children] bring out apple trees or red maples, that's their Father's Day gift to me, planting some trees out there and stuff like that.

This piece shows that taking care of the physical, natural land is just as important as maintaining the man-made buildings, and Marvin's sense of place to the natural world is as strong as his connection to his families'-built world. Preserving good farmland for butterflies and grasshoppers seems counterintuitive for most people, but remembering your place as a steward of the land is extremely important in maintaining your sense of

place. In Marvin's case, increasing the "natural" aspect of the farm is important, not only for nature, but also for the everyday use of the farm.

The planting of trees is important in farming, even though this area is not naturally known for trees, it can help reduce soil erosion, cut down on wind on the farm, and serve as a habitat for wildlife. I asked Marvin more about the tree rows they were putting in while we walked around and whether this was done solely to mitigate the natural conditions of the area:

[M] ...growing up, my grandmother... we would cultivate these [trees] and that's what we did, and that was established in 1979-80, my dad and me put those trees in and then in 82, planting a shelter belt south so we've got some protection with these east winds, but... yeah that tree there, that's one I just got last year for father's day, there's a couple trees back here, I'll show you have been here for... for a while, so but... around the corner here, by the time we're done, last year we planted 8000 feet of trees and we're doing another 8000 feet back here... because the minute you get around the corner, if there's any type of wind, you're gonna know it!

[I] Yeah, you can even start to hear it now!

[M] ...and it was something that I've always enjoyed doing and I wanted to do it 10-12 years ago, but I just didn't have the time with the railroad, I told my son the other day, I should have just taken the time and done it cause we'd have those trees established already, now we're just, just wanted to show you what we did last year, and my son's very excited about it, and

they've got some nice programs with that, so when you were talking about traditions, I mean the hunting and just the working the cattle, we don't do much farming but... the trees are something my son's already very excited about and if I can pass anything on to my grandkids, we're gonna be... when they get old enough to appreciate them, my granddaughter at five is getting to that point, but I want to plant trees with my grandkids, so they 30-40 years can say, just like I said about my grandmother, I remember helping my grandmother with this... so kind of excited, it's something I always wanted to do, so, you know that ties into, like I said, with that question you asked about traditions...

Thus, part of the push to put in all of these trees is to help out the farm, to help it stay usable by cutting down the wind and the erosion, but there is also a familial connection that is being made by putting in these trees. As Marvin plants trees with his son, he is following the same footsteps that his own father took with him in planting trees, and hopefully take the same steps his grandmother took with him and plant trees with his grandchildren. This connection to the natural world is also a connection to his cultural world and Marvin's goal is to not only plant trees, but to plant seeds of "place" with his grandchildren.

Place and Family. In establishing Marvin's connection to, and experience with his 'places', a common theme appears, the deep connection to place and family. Having grown up on the farm that his grandparents built, filled with aunts and uncles who shared the farm and lived nearby, Marvin had a constant familial link to these places. That link has persisted today and serves as one of the primary reasons he works so hard to maintain

these places, as a way to keep his children and grandchildren connected and to build on their sense of place. Talking about keeping the farm going for his children, Marvin said:

[M] I've read an article about it a while back where the fourth generation of farm, of farming is... is pretty tough, I mean, my grandfather, my father, me... three generations of pretty vibrant, but that fourth generation is, and I see it with my neighbors all around and stuff like that.

Marvin explained to me that he had read an article that said the fourth generation of family farmers have the toughest time succeeding, whether it is economical or personal, I do not know, but the fact that his son is taking over a large part of the farm has instilled this belief in Marvin that one of the most important things he can do for his son is to help set him up to be successful. One of the things we discussed was how Marvin builds sense of place in his son, who was not raised on this farm.

One way that Marvin built, and continues to build on sense of place, was involving his children (son and daughter) in the farm as much as possible, so that they, and their children would be connected to the farm. In linking back to his own thoughts about returning to the farm someday, Marvin said:

[M] ...but I knew I was going to come back some day... and the beauty is, my son feels the same way, we're not looking to be... that we have to have thousands or tens of thousands of acres, we just want to make a living and enjoy it and my grandkids, who are like 5, 3, and 1 and another one on the way, I mean that's all they live for, coming to the farm and for my kids, my son, I have a son and a daughter, the farm is very important to them, because I brought them back enough and they would sometimes spend a

month in the summer helping my family, so they... they know how to run equipment...

Marvin's goal in linking both his son and daughter to the farm was to keep the family linked to the farm. Since Marvin is the primary owner of the families' farmstead, it becomes his responsibility to maintain that sense of place and ensure that it gets passed down to the next generation. I asked Marvin whether or not he felt as though he has succeeded in linking his children and grandchildren to these places, Marvin talked about the fact that his oldest grandchild will be coming out to spend her summer on the farm:

[I] So, do you feel like you have succeeded in connecting your kids and starting to connect your grandkids to these places?

[M] Absolutely! Yep, in fact next week, cause my granddaughter who will be out of school on Friday, we're gonna try that, we feel she's old enough to come out here and we'll see how it works out you know, but, I'm excited to give her that opportunity, cause once she becomes older and a teenager and all of a sudden you try and transition her to this lifestyle, it won't work so... I'm excited and she's excited about that, I know that...

The fact that Marvin has the opportunity now to bring one of his grandchildren out to the farm for the summer gives him the opportunity to tell more stories about these places, and he highlighted an important piece for getting kids connected to the farm, it needs to start early. As he said, once kids become teenagers, they may not be as interested in this "lifestyle", but as Marvin said, they are both excited to try it out. Harkening back to what was previously discussed as a family-oriented farm, Marvin goes on to talk about how

that connection to family that occurred in these places played a role in connecting his children to the farm and to these places:

[M] You know, I grew up in a very family oriented atmosphere and so my parents and my kids developed... you will see that is, your kids are very important, but once you get grandkids, I'm seeing that now with grandkids, but my parents and... my in-laws, their grandparents for my kids and they had neighboring farms... yeah, bringing them back there and we would leave them with the farms, so that was how it got started, I mean naturally they loved being back there, just because it was a different situation and, and then they got to start operating equipment at a very young age, or sit in on grandpa or dad's lap driving a pickup at seven or eight years of age, you know, just farm things, it's just different things, and at the time I didn't think nothing of it, it was just something... as I grew up, my uncles did that, cause I grew up with uncles and aunts that farmed with my dad and stuff, so my kids just accidentally got to see that and that carried into their teenage years where they would go back during the summer months, to help with harvesting and now that's carrying into their adult life where they don't come out to the farm just... they know I need help and they want to be part of it and they like doing that, it's not work. I guess that's probably the biggest takeaway when people ask me why now that you're retired, or people go why would you want to keep working... if you grew up in that environment, it was never work, it was just wasn't a job, it was... I don't even, it was just, we made a living *laughter*!

Here Marvin talks about his own connections to this place and how his family shaped those connections, as well as how he worked to shape the connections that his children have to the farm as well. Growing up in a “family-oriented atmosphere” as he said helped develop his own intentions on bringing as much family together as often as possible. He began this process with his own kids, by bringing them out to the farm as often as possible, so that they could experience family. Here the idea that farming isn’t work, it was just what you did, worked to instill a connection to these places in Marvin, one that he worked to instill in his children.

Connecting to place is not only important for his children, but his grandchildren as well. Talking about sharing stories and experiences and the idea of one day, maybe having his grandkids take over the farm. But Marvin is not just thinking that his grandkids will take over the farm, his goal is to ensure that the farm will always be there for them. Here, Marvin talks about how he is getting his grandchildren interested in the farm, while they are younger, and that it’s not about getting them to work, but getting them excited to come out and spend time on the farm and instilling that idea that the farm will hopefully always be there for them:

[M] They're bringing their kids, my grandkids out to the farm looking for that same experience. [On telling stories] I'm trying to, the oldest is 5 years old, so I'm very excited to build on that, because right now, when they come out all they want to see is cows, or you know, ride on the ranger, or you know... I mean so, yeah, the stories will come [Marvin wants his grandchildren to be a little older; to really understand the stories] and I'll really, I mean, the 5-year old's got her own heifer that we'll calf this year,

it's got pink ear tags in it, that's what she wanted was pink.

[M] I'm not worried about passing on to my kids, my kids are already there, but my grandkids are ready, they've got their own calves and we had to put, you know, pink tags in for my granddaughter and now my... my grandson wants purple tags for his.

[M] I never thought about the fifth [generation], I was just hoping to get my kids! [Involved in the farm].

[M] What's very rewarding for me is, they, my kids and it's, and then this isn't so much about making a living on the farm, it's just the idea that the farm is there, they can come out to it.

Here Marvin is talking about introducing his grandchildren to the farm and building on their sense of place. The idea that he is already planning on sharing the stories with them shows the sense of place that he has and how important it is that his grandchildren are exposed to these places and the stories behind them. While his grandchildren are still young, with the oldest being five, Marvin is already planning on telling the stories of the people and the places that built this farm to help connect his grandchildren to these places. The goal for Marvin is to allow the opportunity for his children and grandchildren to have the same experiences as he had growing up. He is not necessarily trying to shoehorn them into farming, but his goal is to ensure that the farm, and the places that are important to his family, remain intact whether through stories or through the maintaining of the farm itself.

Currently, Marvin is in the process of transitioning the farm to his son, with a goal of continuing the family legacy, not necessarily financial gain:

[M] So... me and my son are just working on transitioning it to him, I want him to be able to make a living doing this and not looking at any financial gain... my dad always says I hope you can come back and take this place over and I says I want to and I will! Lord, God willing you know, and my son has got that same passion, it isn't about... he needs to make a living, but it is not about getting rich.

In this case, again, the goal of the farm is not necessarily making money, but about keeping a legacy going, about keeping these places and the meanings behind them going on to the next generation, so the stories can be shared with future generations.

This role that Marvin has found himself in, as a curator of place, goes beyond just his own kids and grandkids. This role extends to his extended family as well, to his siblings and their children and grandchildren. As the owner of the original farmstead, Marvin needs to keep the 'place' alive for them, and does so with the help of his siblings, as Marvin and his siblings are in the process of transitioning the farms to their children, it is important to pass along the sense of place as well:

[M] I guess when I talk about my family, I talk about my sister's, I got four sister's and they're all involved in farming and they have kids and grandkids and we talk about how... and they hear the stories, their kids, my kids, and now our grandkids are starting to hear the stories and what's fun is my kids and my sister's kids are talking about the stories that they heard, or of that their grandpa talked about growing up, and what's nice we'll talk about how we're trying to transition this, cause financially, we're working out... I mean myself and one of my sisters are working to transition those family farms...

I've got the family farm, but two of my sisters are involved with their... be my brother-in-law's and transitioning those farms over and, the beauty is, we're not talking about the financial side of it, we just want to get it so it's transitioned and when you have numerous children, sometimes hard to transition that, but we've learned that talking with people is that you talk about it, so everybody knows why you're doing this and that, it isn't the financial side, it's about transitioning this farm and keeping that legacy going, very important...

This highlights an important issue facing family farms... who gets it? One goal of transitioning the family farm to the next generation is to keep those places alive for everyone, but that can, at times, cause strife within the family. Here, Marvin and his sisters are making a point of communicating the reasons they are transitioning the farms the way they are, it's about keeping "that legacy going" and keeping that connection to place alive.

As far as connecting the family together with place, albeit more difficult these days, Marvin's sisters help to push that, getting the family together to tell stories, often at Marvin's:

[M] My sisters have always pushed that, to keep... let's get together and the minute you do that, there's a story, you know, and I guess I've just always taken it for granted, and nine times out of ten it's at my place, they go, can we come out there and I go absolutely! It's gotten a little tougher, because at one point it was just me and my sister's and their kids, and now all of a sudden there's grandkids you know, and I'm talking about the nieces and

nephews, you know, I guess I never thought about it being what it is, but it's happened naturally I guess, and like I said, when I hear it from other people, especially neighbors or friends, and whenever we have a get together, we've got bachelor's, we've got widowed people you know, and we have three or four neighbors that every time we have a get together, they come, we invite them over because they have nothing for family anymore and stuff, and it just happens and what's neat is my kids and nieces/nephews, those... these neighbors, they're like family to them because they come over and their always happy to come over and be part of it, because it's just... uh... we're very gregarious, very outgoing family.

This again, highlights Marvin and his families' reach to include as many people as they can into their 'family' and share the stories and the places with them. "Nine times out of ten it's at my place" highlights the importance of that place to the family. Even though Marvin is not the one instigating the get-together, everyone wants to meet at that place to keep their connection to place going. The fact that these get-togethers often occur at his house also highlights the importance of this "place" to his family. This being the original farmstead, the center of the family history, it is the best place for extended family members who do not reside on this farm to connect historically to their family. This becomes important for Marvin, as the curator of place, and as the person who physically lives on the farm to preserve the stories and the places (as much as he can) for not only his children and grandchildren, but nieces, nephews, and their children as well.

Marvin works to maintain these stories, telling them to as many family members as possible, again the point with him is not just to keep his children and grandchildren

connected to these places, but to keep the family connected to these places:

[M] One of the nephew's was over this week, we ultra-sounded our fall herd, it was -14 F outside, when we're done we'd go in the house, we have our lunch, we had a beer we talked about stories and stuff like that and that nephew is working with, which would be my sister, would be his mom and his dad, transitioning into the farm and my son would help them in high school, that's where he would come back with harvesting and stuff, they don't run cattle anymore, but they farm over 7,000 acres, they have already talked amongst themselves cause they just go, well someday we [the parents] won't be there and for that.. those operations, they're going to work together, it's going to happen and they'll have their Easter's and Thanksgiving's and Labor Day parties and they're already talking about stuff that'll transpire as they were growing up, that heritage... we've always been a close family and we get together, I mean, the holidays are always... it's getting a little tougher when you have, you know, me and then you have the kids, and now you've got their wives, so there's others, so the get-togethers are a little tougher.

This passage highlights the importance of passing along stories to maintaining sense of place in these next generation farmers. Connecting them to each other (the kids) and connecting them to their past and family history is essential to maintaining sense of place. As both Marvin and his sister work to transition their farms to their respective kids, the use of these stories and places have a tremendous effect on creating and developing that sense of place needed to be good farmers. To Marvin and his family, the heritage of their

family is the *family* itself. It is the connection to each other that was built in these places over time. The fact that Marvin's dad and brothers all worked together growing up and that Marvin continues to work with his sister and her children. Even though getting together is becoming more difficult as the families expand, they are still attempting to build that heritage of family and place.

Place and Learning. Another important aspect of the farm is the role of education. Growing up on a farm means growing up learning agriculture, it also means that you end up teaching the next generation in the very same place as you first learned yourself. As you teach, informally, you teach not only of techniques, but you teach about the land, you teach about place, you impart sense of place on those who are learning from you. This attachment to place that they learn is the same attachment that you are learning growing up. In Marvin's case, he learned from his uncles and his dad, and then passed on some of that connection to these places and the people who lived there:

[M] I've got the original farmstead, but there are two other farmsteads that my dad and his two brother have and we're leasing those farmsteads and so, we're not only trying to incorporate this farm, but the other two farmsteads and there's buildings and corrals there, and I still call them Randall's place or Harris' place, but those, I mean there's grandkids now, but I still call them that, but what's neat is the other family member's like that, because I'm still talking about the original guys and we named the bulls after the uncles and stuff like that, we've got Harris, Randall, and David and it's just our fun way, you know, and those kids are coming out [to the farm] and what's really neat is their kids, who didn't have anything to do with the farm, but got to come

out as young kids, and they're bringing their kids out to the farm and because we're calving twice a year in the fall and spring, they come out and watch calves and now that we got cameras in our barns when we're calving, I'll text them and go, turn... we've given them the links, so they can watch the cows calve and those are kids that, that will be there only exposure ever to the farm is when they get to come out on weekends or get to look at the computer and watch it out there and go, that's grandpa or you knows... place.

These are teaching moments that Marvin is taking part in with his family members that are not associated with the farm but are deeply associated with the places. By naming bulls or keeping the names of the farms associated with those people, he is building a sense of place in their children, something they can connect to and develop. This is, again, an attempt to keep the family connected to these places, even the family members who are not able to physically be there, they are able to watch through the internet, instilling in them a sense of place.

Another example of using place as a way to connect teaching and learning to family, Marvin talks about his experiences working with his uncles and how those stories and places come up when he is working (and teaching) in those fields today:

[M] ...with springtime fencing, which could be some years is very significant depending on the type of repairs because of the winter you had and I owned some ground, but I leased some ground, my uncles had that farmed with my dad, and now I rent it from my cousins and they always... you know, and today's technology, you can take videos so I share with them what we're doing out there and they always go, "boy I don't know

how you do it, ticks, mosquitos, heat...” whatever, and I say, if I'm working out... if I'm fencing around uncle Harris’ place, I have my Harris moments... I can remember, it was always a joke, you'd fence then all of a sudden you get to the next location, where's the pliers at?!? And I remember my uncle Harris going... because we'd lose pliers and the next year we'd come walking along and here we'd find a pliers and he'd always go, “if they grew like trees we'd have plier trees everywhere!” So, when I'm fencing, I'll send some videos out and when they reply back, I says, you're the ones that are missing out, I get to relive my childhood cause your dad and my dad, we would go around these fences, so I said I get to do that... and it isn't work I said, it's my Randall moment or my David moment or my Harris moment, and then this one barn that will come down is... we pulled all of our calves in there, that's where I... first time I reached inside of a cow and my dad just got winded and you know, being an older man, just, you know, I'm 14 years old and he says it's time for you to go in and push and get that leg twisted up and stuff like that, so... and what's neat is my son is doing the same thing now, and I've never called it my place, I mean it's my dad's place or Harris’ place or who...s place it just is.

Here again we have these ‘places’ playing a big role in Marvin’s life. He doesn’t see farming as work, just a part of living that he gets to do and relive his childhood and good memories with his father and uncles. These are the places he learned at and the stories he was told as a child. These are also then the places in which he is teaching his son, or other family members, during calving, keeping these places and stories alive and keeping

his family connected to these places. Both the connections to the man-made places and the connections to the natural places help to strengthen their sense of place. This allows them to preserve and maintain their culture, but also be good stewards to the land, and to take care of the natural world as they take care of their cultural world.

Lastly, the legacy that Marvin has put forth is centered on being at this place and keeping his family connected, making money has not entered his mind at all. For him, the goal is preserving these places and these stories, when asked about his goal and his plan for after he's gone, Marvin said:

[M] I guess I haven't given it much thought, but I do know, as far as taking care of the farm... he's the main reason we're doing this with cross-fencing, managing the pastures, and I mean when we talked about this, crop plan or native grass that can be turned over, I mean, we're on the same page there, I mean it isn't so much about how do I put this, I mean making every dollar as quickly as you can, I bought the place, very fairly, and I'm hoping, I say hoping, that's my goal is being able to transition this place where, he's not... I don't... I just want him to take it over, the financial side of it doesn't mean nothing to me, it really doesn't, I told him, put the money back in the place as you can, and uh... so... as far as him being a curator, you know, I guess, I would have never given that much thought, just like I said, you put some things in the back of my mind, but uh... I know his daughter that's five years old and now they got, I've got a grandson that will be three here in May and another boy and then, uh... they will get to that point I guess for them and to tell you the truth, all I can hope for is that I live for another 20 years that

I... the grandfather side could be what my dad did for my kids because they still talk about their grandpa and their grandfather on the other side who were farmers that passed away in their 80s, were retired in their 60s, but were still on the farm, retired, rented out, and time to do things with their grandkids and I'm hoping that I get to be the curator for a while! That would be... we don't make the rules and that, but I do know that if something would happen, that farm would not go away, I mean it's not something that's going to get sold you know, like I say, if for some reason I wasn't able to stay out, or be a part of it for the next 10 or 15 years, my hope is that at some point, my son and my daughter-in-law can move out there, that's the goal, that's the goal...

Again, the goal with Marvin has never been about making millions of dollars as a farmer, or becoming titan of farming, it has been about preserving his families' place, about preserving the stories and the histories, so that whatever changes may come in the future, the stories, the history and the people who built this farm will never be forgotten.

Marvin's experience with place has shaped how he worked and lived, with the goal of always trying to get back to the farm and making sure that it (the places) are able to move onto the next generation. In this essence, he works as the "curator of place" his job is to take the memories and stories of those who came before him and pass them down to the next generation. He also works to ensure, that even though change is inevitable, people pass away, people move away, that the family always has a connection and opportunity to build and develop their sense of place on this farm.

Throughout my conversations with Marvin, and evident in this narrative is his goal to maintain the physical and cultural places of the farm for his family. As Marvin and I talked, it became apparent that to him, one of the most important things was family and preserving the bonds that keep them together. Marvin has a deep connection to his family's farm, and serving as the curator of place, it is his responsibility to ensure that not only does the physical farm get passed on to his son, but further, to ensure a sense of place is passed on to the whole family through the telling of stories. His sense of place influences his role as a cattle farmer, requiring him to make changes to the farm to ensure its viability, even at the cost of its physical history. This is foundational to most family farms, what is the balance between preserving your physical history and keeping the farm alive? The choices about which buildings to keep and which to remove are all impacted by a farmer's sense of place, it is up to them to decide which 'places' can be kept, and which can be removed. Whether it is tearing down old buildings, or planting new trees, Marvin's goal is the preservation of the farm and the preservation of his family history, both accomplished through connecting people with these places. As Marvin lives on and maintains the original farmstead, he views his responsibility as one to ensure that all family members have access to these places and the stories that go along with them.

CHAPTER V

JOEL

For this narrative, I will be introducing Joel. Similar to the previous (and next) sections, this section contains stories and interviews regarding how Joel personally experiences place as an element of his role as a multi-generational family farmer, and how he uses these places to informally educate. With Joel, a common theme appears, the continuation of the family and the preservation of the farm and of nature. Throughout these stories it is apparent that family, the farm, and the natural world are the most important things to Joel. His goal is to preserve the farm by developing a sense of place in his children and grandchildren so that the farm may live on after he is gone. His goal, like many family farmers, is to not only retain a viable business, but to retain the historical and cultural foundations of his family. In this narrative, we will examine how Joel's sense of place plays a role in maintaining both the farm and the natural world, as well as how he uses his connection to place to teach his family about where they came from and where they may be heading. This will be accomplished partly by looking at specific places that play an important role in Joel's family and history.

Joel is a semi-retired farmer in his mid-70's, who lives with his wife in a house across the road from his family's farm in northeast North Dakota. The family farm, which was founded in 1911 and has been continuously maintained by Joel's grandparents, his parents, and Joel and his wife, is now under the watchful eyes of two of their three

sons, who maintain the day-to-day operations of the farm. Joel has spent almost his entire life in and around this farm, growing up on it, and only leaving it to attend college. I had never met Joel until our interview began, again, we were introduced through an acquaintance, and I met Joel at his home, tucked away in the trees near the river, with the main farm just a stone's throw away across the road. For my two interviews, I met Joel at his home, as it was winter and early spring during those visits, we were not able to get out on to the farm to experience some of these places firsthand, I did get to see both the man-made places, and the natural beauty that Joel is so fond of preserving.

The first thing that I asked Joel was a little bit about how his family got him to this point, where did they come from, and why did they settle in this area. Joel recounted, albeit briefly, the history of his family, starting with his grandfather and how his family arrived in the area they have called home for the last 100+ years:

[J] [his grandfather]...didn't originally start farming right here, he was more down by... [a small town to the southeast], on the good land (laughing) but he liked the trees and so apparently that's why he elected to move up to this country because there were trees and that's what he grew, and saw when he was in Canada, and he came here maybe when he was sixteen or something like that, because his parents had passed away and he had lived with an uncle in the woods, he was a trapper and so forth I guess, and, but then, I don't know exactly what he, why he moved here, whether that gentleman died.. I don't know, but he came here and then lived, and then he started farming down there and then moved up closer, and more or less started a little farming there and then he moved to the main farm [across the road

from their current residence] here in about 1911. And so I'm basically the third generation and I have two sons that farm and they're fourth generation and this has been our land and really have strong ties to the land, very, very much so, and conservation-minded I guess you'd say we've been that way as long as I remember.

Right away, Joel has already started to mention his, and his families', affection for nature and conservation, which will appear within this narrative. The fact that his grandfather had moved from Canada and chose to be where there were more trees highlights a continuing trend throughout the family's history, a deep connection to place, in particular the natural place.

Talking more about the farm, Joel talks about his sons and how they continue the farming business, on the very land that Joel's grandfather established:

[J] Now my son lives over there, there's a newer house and maybe when you go back, I'll tell you to go that way cause it's a little bit shorter... and now that you got here (laughing) so, yeah, they built a new home here, oh... I don't know maybe nine years ago, but that's right on where I grew up, and then there's another house you'll see right off the road and that's where my grandparents lived and my father grew up there, I mean he was raised in that home, so... that's a little bit of immediate farm and of course it's changed, even since I've started farming, the farming methods have definitely changed, but it's still always remained the farm, it's extremely important to me and I had an uncle that...he grew up where this house is, we remodeled, quite a little, and it was desperately important to him, the

farm, and the farm being the land of course and when he was, well he was dying, he was in the nursing home in and one of the last things, he couldn't... he wasn't talking then, but I said "Uncle" and he was like a father to me, I asked him, "do you want me to take care of the farm as long as I live and if you do, you squeeze my hand and he did." So, it's just been really the place, as you're gonna call it, has been really, extremely important to the generations to our family.

The story here that Joel tells, about his uncle squeezing his hand when Joel asked him if he wanted him to take over the farm is an example of a common occurrence with family farms, that the older generations want the younger ones to take over the farm. The deep connection that multi-generational farmers have towards their places has been and will be shown throughout these narratives. This is important to note, as Joel's uncle grew up and lived his entire life on the very farm that Joel made his living, building this deep sense of place that transcends generations, that creates a common unifying sense of place for Joel and his family as they grow and live on this farm, in this area.

Talking with Joel about his connection to nature and his connection to the farm, he highlights an important intersection of the two, something that, again, highlights the family's connection to the natural places, but also brings forth a cultural and historical aspect related to his family:

[J] A little example is there are two lone oak trees in a couple of small fields, well most people in this day and age would never farm around them, but we do and that's the way it will continue... so that's what it

really means to us, I mean, my dad said he used to eat meals sitting under the tree over there, the one oak tree out in the field and lunches and stuff when he was still using horses.

When talking with Joel about these lone trees in the middle of the fields, it is clear they are important connectors to place and history for him. It would be easier, for farming purposes, to remove those trees, not because of the loss of revenue from the unplanted land, but because of the burden of having to go around them every time you are in that field, but Joel is adamant that those trees will never be cut down, as long as his family continues to own that land. Instead, these trees are a way for Joel, and his sons, to remember the past, remember their family, and keep a connection with these places that extends beyond monetary.

Focusing on the physical aspect of the farm, I inquired with Joel as to whether any of the buildings on the farm, other than the house his grandparents lived in, held any particular significance. One building stood out, it was an old granary that had been built a long time ago. While most of these types of buildings would have been demolished and replaced with grain bins long ago, Joel had taken a different approach with it:

[J] I can tell you, at our farm there is one building that is, well there is more than one cause they've been there a long time, but there's this one a few years ago. it was a granary, and it was good, my grandfather and my two uncles had constructed it I suppose sometime in the maybe late '30s but it was one of those that was in this day and age is rather impractical as it had four bins, and they were miserable bins, tough wooden bins, wooden granary, but it was structurally very sound, had a great foundation and so a

few years ago we decided to, I thought, hmm... this maybe would make a good lodge or whatever, because if you don't... I knew what would happen is you would start filling it up with junk, and then they'd figure the shingles would start to go and you'd go, "nah... not going to spend the money for that", and it would be shot so, we rehabbed it and there's two lofts in it with four beds, a bathroom...

He goes on to say about the reason behind rehabbing the granary:

[J] So that was something that we rehabbed, just so it wouldn't disappear, but it is, has worked... that building is important to the farm, to the integrity of the farm and so we just, I thought, hmm... there's a walkway from one loft to the other, but anyhow, that was a building that was the main granary on the farm at that time, and so, now it's different, but it's gonna be maintained and kept up and it will always be part of the farm.

In this case, Joel and his sons took a building that had meant a lot to the farm, an important place in which two previous generations had stored their harvest and turned it into something that will continue to be an important place for his family for years to come. When I asked Joel what he uses the granary for today, he said:

[J] I started having sleepovers over there, and so my grandchildren are always going to remember that, that building, and the good times that they had with grandpa, just grandpa, and... it will always stick out in their mind...

These stories are a far reach from what the granary used to mean to Joel. I asked him about what it was like before, when the granary was still being used. A story that came to

his mind from his youth working in that granary, a story that might be told from a lot of farmers who had to deal with these old wooden granaries:

[J] ...that granary was, and it was used, oh geez, I worked, it was awful to fill cause you had to be on your hands and knees, on your knees, not your hands, cause you were shoveling the grain to get it to the bins full and it was awful and it was dirty... you wore a mask, but it was horrible to fill, but by the same token, I can remember one of the first times... I was maybe older, I might have been in high school then, probably was... and I was up on top and... I went to the... crawling around on the grain, I wasn't necessarily shoveling, here were three groove mauls, or stone hammers sitting on the sill up in the northeast corner--- northwest corner of that granary, well wow! Well I ended up with them all, I was given them... they gave them to me, where they came from, never knew, never asked, never thought enough to ask probably, but yeah... so I guess I spent some time in that granary

While important to the farm initially, this place has now become an important 'place', again, to this family. When it was built and used, it was an important part of the farm, it stored the grain until it could be sold, providing the farm a way to ensure they stayed financially viable during the winter. As Joel saw this granary in use, I have no doubts that he sees the granary as one of the main reasons this farm is still operational today. No longer is it needed to store grain, instead it will store memories, memories that Joel and his grandchildren will keep the rest of their lives and will remember those memories every time they look at, or think of, that particular place.

It is clear that Joel has a deep connection to both natural and man-made places. These connections go beyond just the places he is directly connected to, as he also attempts to maintain, or at least not remove, other's connections to place. I had asked him about some of the farmland he has purchased over the years (the farm has grown quite a bit in the last 100 years) and whether or not he feels responsible to keep the 'places' that are on these now-purchased lands. We talked about the idea of place maintenance and whether Joel feels that it is his role to maintain these places, even if they are not directly tied to his family. Joel went on to tell me about one abandoned house that is still around, and another (with a story) that isn't:

[J] ...there's still an, even an abandoned house on the one farm that I own... and I just uh... am... hesitant, reticent to take it down, because of the memories of those that lived there... not me necessarily, it's maintaining it... not maintaining it, but not destroying it for those that had lived there before, so they can see, and it actually doesn't look too bad and we had another one on a farm that we had, and I said... no we're not gonna take that down, but somebody, that particular fall was industrious about lighting bales in the ditch and they lit this one up in the farmyard and it spread in the grass and burned the house down so... we didn't take it down, but it happened....

[Interviewer - I] ...like I said, that was kind of getting this idea of place maintenance happens in multiple different ways and some of it is physically maintaining a place, and others are maintaining the history of it, maintaining the stories of it and it's one of those, the story you just told me about, the

house that burned down I mean, that's no longer there, but the story still is, that means that that place is still there...

[J] And I should tell more stories about that, because we rented it for a long, long, long time and I remember very well the people that lived there, his name was Ted- Theodore and his wife would come out and yell for him, TEO-DORE! To call him in for lunch or whatever and that's the way she called him. We farmed for a long, long time and that brings back a memory, I was swathing one time there, right north of the buildings and it was hot like it usually is when you're swathing on an open swather and the grand--- would have been the grandson of this lady, a little duffer, he came out... well I think he had a quart sealer, or a sealer, walked out to the field... a fair way, with orange Kool-Aid, for me, Watkins... I don't know if you ever drank Watkins Kool-Aid, but it has a distinct taste, not the best but, I had never forgot that, that little boy walked out there to bring me that Kool-Aid, Watkins Kool-Aid, orange... some of those things, stick in your mind, a memory, you don't think, maybe think so much of it, well I did think of it at the time, but it was something I will never forget, his effort to do something kind for me... I won't ever forget that...

This story connects Joel to that particular piece of land, not because of his own family ties, but because of the family that lived there before him. As he says, “I won’t ever forget that...” this place, and the stories along with it, are deeply connected to him. He goes on to talk about that place, and the people who lived there:

[J] Yeah, and of the place and that's where the house burned down... and I ate some lunches in there and things like that too, and that's good memories and I remember cutting myself on my back when I was underneath the swather, fixing it... nothing big, but I went in there and... she bandaged me up, I kept on swathing of course, but I was bleeding and... so she took care of me, they were kind, old people, they were good kind-hearted people... they truly were, and they weren't, they didn't have any money, most of those old timers didn't and they worked hard... but... it didn't bother them the fact that they didn't have wealth, they had memories and family, and that's all that was important...

Again, this story about the family that lived at this place has left an indelible mark on Joel and how he experiences that place, and most places it seems. To Joel, the goal has never been the pursuit of money, his goal, much like his families before him, has been to take care of the places that are important to him and others. This is a common theme in older generation farms, as they were able to make a living with less, the goal was not necessarily the pursuit of money, but of happiness and family. To them, building the memories around these places with the people important to them was their main goal. The fact that Joel was not planning on removing that abandoned house shows that this idea of happiness and family is still alive and preserving that place was a way to preserve that idea. These days, with the lower crop prices and higher cost of doing business, it has become necessary for the multi-generational family farmer to have to balance keeping the farm financially viable, but still maintaining the 'essence' of these places.

In another story that Joel told of these farmyards, Joel goes back to something that his father had told him long ago about the connection between places, memories, happiness, and family:

[J] In the days gone by and the memories... some things that my father told me about those particular fields... and there used to be two farmsteads over here, the Henry place and my father told me... I think I mentioned the lone oak trees out in the field, which we would never, ever cut down, and he said, "I remember sitting over on the one across the time, the day one of the individuals got married, or was to get married, and I was sitting there having lunch or whatever under the tree in the shade and I watched them leave to go to the wedding" and the gentleman that he spoke of, well he died many years before my father, but he talked about that, so I think about that and I think about it when we're working those fields.

The story that Joel shared, from his father's perspective, highlights the link that he shares with his father with their connection to place. It also shows this connection to family and happy memories, while that person is no longer around, the memories of a happier time will always be linked to that place because of this story that Joel's father told him and that he repeated to me. Again, that oak tree is something that is foundational to this family, a place they can revere as an important site for their history. This is a place that they can bring family and friends to and show them and say, "this is place is important for our family." In this case, this natural place has taken on a cultural and historical meaning as well, it is a place that is linked through generations, dating back to the earliest

times of the farm, it is seen as an important part of the farm. This natural place has also become a teaching tool that Joel uses to help develop that sense of place.

Place and the Natural World. Joel's interest in preserving place extends beyond just the physical, man-made place and goes into the natural place as well. I had met with Joel in January, right after a snowstorm, which in North Dakota means a lot of snow and a lot of cold, something that can make most people tired of the weather, but Joel finds the silver lining in his connection with place and nature:

[J] ...the love of nature plays a big role, even at this time of year, when people think it blasé, but there's beauty and everyday there's beauty in the world we see, the snow on the trees that changes and of course the wildlife, they might be having a little bit of a struggle now... in fact, my son told me that last night there was a deer that was killed maybe two hundred feet from his house by the coyotes last night, but he said there was nothing left except the hide, I suppose they are getting a little pressed.

As we talked during that first interview, Joel had mentioned that there were many deer around their farmyard and no sooner after he said that, I looked out the window of their living room and saw three deer walking through the yard. To Joel, the sight of deer in the yard was a welcome one. As a young kid, Joel found himself connected with the natural world and the natural places around the farm. Even when the natural world wasn't too kind to Joel, he still found himself connected to these places, when talking about his youth in the woods around his farm:

[J] I loved to be outside and I loved to go to the woods and in the fall I couldn't wait for, of course I hunted ducks and geese and that was my

passion then, and I liked to trap, so I never played a... I've never played a game of basketball in my life, I never went out for basketball, when I got home from school, I had a little bit of lunch, changed my clothes and I went to the woods, when basketball was going on and I ran my trap line and that was my world, the outside, nature was my world.... had some harrowing experiences in that.... one time I remember I was trapping and I... and I walked, had to walk... and I caught three beaver that night and so I knew I wasn't going to get them all out of there, so the last one or two I hung up in a tree, must have had wire or whatever I had, so animals wouldn't eat them and the last one weighed 64 pounds, which is a huge beaver, when I held it here, it's tail was on the ground... well, it got to be after dark and it was, I supposed -10 F or -15 F, well about down at the far shelter belt, down on the end of it, I thought, man it's after dark, I gotta try and get a shortcut home here and so I crossed the river in a place I've never crossed before, well the water... ice... the water was running swiftly underneath it and I went through up to about here [pointing to his chest] but I was able to scramble out of there, I can still remember... I'll never forget it, scratching on the bottom trying to get my footing cause the current was fairly swift and I got out of there, and poured the water out of my mitts... and then I took off walking, well.... I was soaked, I guess, but it froze up on the outside and I was like I was in a suit of armor and you just clinked or clunked and I walked back, and I stopped at my grandmothers and she about had a heart attack when she saw me, cause I mean I was just a big ice cube! Then she

ran water in the tub... you know how grandmothers get to be, pretty excited and... I didn't, I was none the worse for wear, but it stuck with me all my life, that episode and one other one that stuck with me...

This story that Joel recounted highlights the potential peril that his natural places contain. He could have easily lost his footing or been swept under the ice and never seen again. In the other episode, Joel recounts how he and a friend went down the river on a small boat, which runs right past their farm, and capsized it at a beaver damn and almost drowned, again. These stories would caution most anyone to stay away from the river, but Joel's connection to these natural places have never deterred him! This shows that Joel understands that inherent dangers of nature, but also shows that his attachment to the natural places around his farm is worth the danger associated with them. These experiences also help Joel in an educational setting, serving to use these places to help teach his children and grandchildren about the beauty, and dangers, within these places.

Place and the Farm. When talking to Joel about his connection and experience with place in his role as a multi-generational family farmer, he had a number of stories to tell, like most farmers, he has seen some interesting things happening in these places that are part of his life-blood:

[J] Well, one was a number of years ago, we have a crop monitor that was back in the dry years, the 80's I suppose, and he said you're gonna have to spray this wheat field tomorrow for grasshoppers. Grasshoppers were really bad on this wheat field, and, so we were going to do that the next day, however, that night, a thunderstorm came up, a hailstorm, and obliterated that field, and well would be collecting the hail insurance, it was an alright

deal financially, we'll put it that way [laughter]. But, when I went out there then that next day and I was looking and I thought, what in the world was this, there were all kinds of brown wheat heads, couldn't figure that out and walked over to them and here were grasshoppers, clenched on the head of the wheat and I suppose either the temperature got too cold from the hail or whatever, I doubt they got beaned cause it should have knocked them off, but there were many, I always regret not collecting a bouquet of those, shellacked them though, cause there were these brown grasshoppers on the wheat, that was very, very unusual! Yeah, I thought, geez how cool would that have been to preserve that, because it was an anomaly.

This is an interesting story that he tells often and is a story that is linked with the place in which it happened. In this particular story, this field will always be associated with this story. Also interesting is the fact that Joel wishes he would have collected a bouquet and preserved them, which would have created another object to serve as a direct memory to what happened at this place. This builds off Clandinin's idea of a three-dimensional story, there is a past, present, and future to this experience. Another story that involves a particular place, Joel recounted, had to do with cattle and spring flooding:

[J] Well, there's been lots of episodes of livestock... we always wintered the cows down here [pointing to land southeast of his house] in this area they were down here, which is an area we always wintered them in, and one spring, well we came close to flooding, it'll fill up here, it's an oxbow that comes by here. Oh man it was... the water was coming up and up and up, so we moved the cattle, the cows and the calves, they were calving and moved

them out on a knoll on the middle of that flat out there cause it was high ground and it gravels and it's dry... moved them out there and kind of thought we had everything squared away, we had a bunch, we had oh... probably four in the barn that had problems, one of them had a broken leg in a cast and couple of them were on splints which we used to do... they kind of knuckle under when they're born, and so we'd put splints on them to straighten them out and we'd move them over at the main farm, there's a barn, a couple barns, and we took them over there. So, we're squared away for tonight, we worked all day in the rain and it was rain... got them squared away and then the next morning I went out and there were, there was one calf bedded down in the crotch of these willow trees out here on the other side of that shed they run along, up willow trees kind of spread out and there was one calf bedded down in the crotch of the willow tree, above the water and then there was another one, that was a cow and a calf down further and I saw that mother cow walk over to the water's edge and the water was flowing across the flat, the only time I ever saw that in my lifetime, but it was flowing and she talked to the baby, well, she talked to it in cow language there's no doubt about it, and I thought, oh no, I knew what she was saying "We're gonna swim across!" and they started to swim across, and the calf put his nose right on the mother's tail and they swam and then they got out a ways and the current got more swift and she slowed down and the calf speeded up or didn't necessarily speeded up, but by her slowing down the calf got along the side of the cow [smacking his hands together]

the current of water held the calf to the side of the cow, and then they swam the rest of the way, I thought that was really unique, I mean that was intelligence of what we consider sometimes dumb animals. That was something to behold, just how they did that and the water pressure, held the calf against the mother and they went the rest of the way. I thought that was one of the coolest events that I have ever witnessed or things that I have ever seen.

This story that Joel told, embedded in his memory and embedded on that place has stayed with him for a long time. He was surprised at how the cow knew exactly what to do and was able to safely lead her calf through the water and to dry land. What happened at that place, with that cow and calf has changed the way he thinks about cattle and his role as a farmer. This is a story that he shares with other farmers (and reminds his sons of) and serves as a teaching moment. To Joel, he originally didn't think much of the intelligence of cows, "...we consider sometimes dumb animals" but in this case he learned that these animals do have the ability to self-preserve. This story of this place, both about the cows and the dangers of spring flooding, can be used to teach others by bringing them there and talking about what happened. In this case, Joel can use this place as a teaching moment as not being prepared for potential disasters can bring financial ruin to a farm. This highlights the importance of being a 'curator of place', he maintains the stories and memories of these places to use for future teaching moments. This story in particular is useful to help farmers by preserving their livestock, which keeps the farm financially viable.

When talking about the farm, and staying viable, Joel talked about what it means to place and his experiences throughout the years. The farm has undergone a large expansion, with the need to stay financially viable, and that changes how these places are experienced, but Joel still has plenty of stories about working these places:

[J] So, yeah, things have changed, the land in itself, the basic, three quarters of land that went with the original farm and my grandfather had the foresight when he moved here, he bought one quarter of land, but he bought 10 acres out of the next quarter from the neighbor and built the farmstead on that, so if he lost the land, they'd still have their home, which was good thinking, smart thinking, so that little jog is out of the land, a good friend of mine owns [the neighbors] they were life-long neighbors, but, and of course, the land has expanded, I mean the operation, now the boys farm, somewhere between 4000-5000 acres, and they bought land, I bought land, some of the land is still obviously family land, but the farm has gone on... but of course it takes a bigger farm to stay viable in this day and age, that's what the original land that was purchased to, for the beginning farm is still in the farm and just added on to. So, it's just expansion, I mean, it's just like all farms, it's expanded to stay viable, keep up with the times and compete. Spread out your investment over more acres, machinery... and of course now the machinery is so far from what even I started with, you just sit in there and turn around and hit the button, auto steer and you're on track.

It is interesting to think that Joel's grandfather had the foresight to purchase land from another person's quarter to put their farmstead on, it showed an already building

attachment to place, so that even if they lost the farm, they would still be able to keep the farmstead. The need to expand the farm highlights an important issue at hand, and that is the connection people have to these places. Often, when purchasing land, you are buying it from families that have lived and worked those lands for generations themselves, and how you connect to these new places may depend on how you view the previous owner's connections. Joel has already shown that as mentioned previously, his connection to places that were not originally his own, shows a deep sense of place for this area, even as he has retired from farming himself.

One area that is important to Joel is for his farm not to go down the route of so many other farms, dissolution and selling of the land. His goal, much like all farmers, is for his children and their children, and so forth taking care of the land, and running the farm. Yet, Joel is worried that this might not be the case in the future:

[J] We might be at a crossroads, I don't know how this is going to work, we have one grandson, and he, when he was a little boy he was very much interested in the farm, but now, he's not, and will this be the last generation, my two son's that are actively farming, I don't know, it's not looking promising and I don't know if my son, who's the father, can really instill in him his [sense of place], he's a bright student and so forth, but he doesn't really have a core feeling for the farm, for the land, for after all it is the land, that's what it's all about the land, so I don't know if that's going to end, but I think it was a gradual thing.

Joel is worried that the farm might not survive after his sons decide to retire, as his only grandson does not seem to have the same connection to place as he, or his sons, have.

However, while Joel is still on this earth, his goal is to help his family stay connected to these places:

It's my son's and I want to see them succeed. That's what keeps me here, if there were... if I didn't have kids here, maybe one of the granddaughters might decide to farm, I don't know, but it is to see them succeed and I know it's not easy, but if I can help out in any way, and I mean... well... ever since I retired, I took social security at 66 and, but my dad did the same thing, I never took a dime, I mean they don't pay me a dime, and I buy machinery or have over the years too, just to help them out, it's just to see them be successful and maintain THE FARM... that's what I want, that's the most important thing for me in the world... well, family, but family's the most important thing, or God, your religion, but the farm, the farm itself ...

This again highlights the deep connection, or sense of place, that Joel has towards this farm. The fact that the farm is situated right up there with family and God means that this place holds a particularly strong attachment for Joel and his family. This is the place that he grew up on, that his father grew up on, that his grandfather built, and like the generations before him, he is working hard to make sure that those that come behind him have that same connection and opportunity to keep these places in the family, though there are struggles, Joel said:

[J] They/I know that they have a deep feeling for the land, not just the land here, but the land that they farm and own in other areas too. So, it's not a particularly good time right now because the prices are as such, it's tough, and, but they have a deep affiliation or attraction to the land, I know they

do, and I suppose my guidance, you don't really maybe think of it too much, but the way you personally feel about it, must have transcended to them in time, when they were young, I suppose that's how it just came to pass, you don't really think you're teaching them to do this farming thing, but they acquire a love for it. James, when he was a little boy, he wanted to be a farmer, that's our oldest son, he wanted to be a farmer from the time he was a little boy cause he didn't want to have to work, all he wanted to do he said was to ride in the tractor, didn't want to have to work! [laughter] was his concept of farming at that time.

This illustrates a common theme among family farmers, getting the next generation to the point in which they are self-sufficient. Joel has worked, and continues to work, on instilling sense of place in his children by telling the stories associated with these places. Also, by rehabilitating the granary and keeping it useful to the family, it instills a connection to place and family. Lastly, a way that Joel instills sense of place in his children is by being there, by not retiring to Arizona, by stopping by the farm each day, he is keeping his connection to place to show how important it is for his children (and grandchildren) to do the same. Hopefully, the goal is that their children (Joel's grandchildren) will also get that sense of place built up in them and will continue on the farm.

Continuing with that idea, I asked Joel what he thought his role was to the family, to maintaining the farm, even after he was gone, he said about maintaining sense of place in his grandchildren:

[J] My responsibility and obligation is to certainly instill in them the history of the family, their mother is interested, but of course that's the other side, her side of the family, but she's kind of interested in history and even for us... and so those things that I can tell them, or teach them... tell them... I don't know if I am going to be teaching them anything, but tell them about the history of the farm and its challenges, cause, there's been lots of times that have been difficult, financially to make it work... but you have to persevere, you just... if this is what you want to do, it's not going to be all roses, nobody ever promised you a rose garden right? So, but you just have to persevere and set your mind to it, but maybe telling some of those stories about bygone generations, they'll, well, if my grandpa did it, or my great-grandpa, my father, or my great-great grandpa, who they have no idea of and they made it work... maybe you're not going to live the high lifestyle that you would like, or perhaps, that you see other people enjoying... but there's more, there's a lot more to, as you well know, there's a lot more to life than money... than what it can provide... there's the contentment, and the satisfaction of seeing that you did your best and... and it worked.... maybe not, like I say, maybe not totally so you can live the lifestyle of the rich and famous, that's... just not... I guess that just never was that... profoundly important to me...

Despite Joel's worry that he is not necessarily teaching them anything, he is actually teaching them quite a bit about the role within these places and helping to develop their sense of place. Telling stories his grandchildren from his past, from his father's and

grandfather's past about the places and events that went on at the farm is the epitome of teaching about sense of place. Whether Joel realizes it or not, he is connecting these kids to their past and connecting them to these places.

In talking with Joel about the role that place, and those who inhabit it, play in educating, I believe that he, like most farmers, don't fully realize how much educating they actually do in these places that are important to the family. In one story Joel tells a humorous tale that leads to a learning event that he uses with his own children:

[J] I can't see anything with what my dad taught me about um... farming and cattle, and you've probably seen, and I've happened to think about it the little boy in the 50's-ish truck sitting in the grain field and the dad is running the combine and was probably '65 John Deere combine, open cab and that and it was a pull-type and I guess maybe I was sitting in the truck at the end of the field reading the comic book and the hopper [on the combine the dad is pulling] got full and he's waving, oh yea! Not good [laughter]! So that is, you see, people have made the drawings of that, but yep, those things happened, that was a little later on, I don't know how old, might have been 12 or 14, in that growing up stage, but, it did happen, but I had an uncle, my two uncles, one was a bachelor, he lived over on the main farm with my grandmother and I can remember when we were combining and if you got held up at the bin or whatever, couldn't get it unloaded fast enough, he came out to the field and he was running the combine and, if you weren't there, that grain went on the ground and you had to clean it up later [laughter] and he did it, he just... I never did understand the logic in that.

This tale of the inattentive child and busy adult, while seeming like something out of a Norman Rockwell style painting is something that Joel actually experienced in a specific place that he will always remember. I asked Joel if he has ever told that story to either of his sons, he said he told his oldest son the story not too long ago:

[J] But I told him what field it was on, and of course we still own that land and farm those fields and so, probably when we're out there, when they're there and I would be, maybe there in some capacity, sure I think about those times... I really do...and... lots of good memories, really good memories.

Here, Joel comes to understand a bit that even though he didn't think he was teaching his kids, he was linking important messages to these places, messages that will always be remembered when you are in this field, or at the grain bin and wanting to work slowly, or take some time for yourself. Here, remembering what used to happen when Joel was younger, he is able to teach his children about the importance of hard work.

One of the last questions I had asked Joel was to sum up why the farm, why this place, is important to him and what he works so hard, along with the rest of his family, to take care of it. Joel had to ponder the question for a little while, but eventually he came up with the following:

[J] Well, it's an historical thing, I mean, passed down from generations and the, the importance of family... family ties to the land and that has been true for a long... well ever since they started, the family, the importance of the land, you want to see it taken care of, you hopefully it will provide some living for yourself or your family to put a couple words... I'll have to think

on that, what exactly... caretaker... that's what we are is caretakers of the land... and... not to uh... exploit it... for your own personal short-term gains, no, that's not right... that's just not right... it's not the way things were intended to be, even though it happens all the time, everywhere, but that's not... that's not my belief.

This last piece really highlights Joel's, and many other family farmers' viewpoint's towards how they approach their farms and what their role is regarding its care. The fact is, there must be a strong sense of place in a farmer and their family in order to maintain and grow a farm over the generations. This is evident in Joel's family and his farm, as a distinct sense of place has existed since his grandfather founded the farm over 100 years ago and is something that Joel is working hard to continue to the next generation and beyond. The fact that Joel sees himself as a caretaker of the land indicates a deep sense of place. He does not separate out the farm from the natural world, it is all important and all needs to be taken care of in order for the farm to survive. This role of the 'caretaker' is synonymous with the term 'curator of place' that I have established throughout this study. Joel has a good understanding of what it means to be that curator and how important his connection to place is to maintain the farm.

In order to be a caretaker of the land, you need to be attached to it, to have stories that link you to it, and Joel has demonstrated that through the telling of these stories about the farm and of the natural world. The history that he possesses and passes on to his children and grandchildren (and now even me) serve to demonstrate his connection to these places and his goal, along with the other participants in this study, to maintain and

preserve the farm, the family, and the natural world for the future generations to experience.

CHAPTER VI

LANE

For this narrative, I will be introducing Lane. With Lane, he appeared to have a better understanding of sense of place than any other participant interviewed for this study. His understanding of his role in maintaining place was well thought out, and he provided many stories to go along with that. One recurring theme that appeared was the idea that Lane wasn't necessarily sure what he should do with this knowledge of place. Lane has children and grandchildren that live and work on and around the farmland that his family has farmed for over 100 years, but he was hesitant to push his ideas of sense of place on them, instead resorting to making his thoughts known and letting things fall where they may. Lane and I spoke on many topics, including his family's history and how it got him to where he is now, as well as what he does to maintain his sense of place, and present these places and stories to his children and young grandchildren.

The experiences and stories of place. Lane is a family farmer in his 60's who farms an impressive 10,000+ acres in northwest North Dakota. A third-generation farmer whose family originated from Norway, who works alongside his son and son-in-law, along with a number of helpers, which is needed to manage a farm of this size. Lane lives with his wife, on a tract of land down the road from the farmstead he was raised on and down the road the other way from the homestead that his grandfather founded back in the early 1900's. I was given Lane's contact

information from a family member and I have known Lane, albeit not that well. For this interview, Lane took me around to various places around their expansive farmland to give me a better understanding of this ‘place’ that means so much to him. We visited the original house that his grandfather homesteaded, we drove around the lands that his uncles farmed, that all became part of the collective family farm. We visited the now-closed church that Lane was born into and where his family is buried in the cemetery, and visited some of the lands that were homesteaded by his grandmother and her side of the family, all of which is now consolidated into one family farm. Lane is still running the farm, and my first question to him (as to my other participants) is to briefly “How did your family get you to this point?” Who established the family in the area, where did they live and how did Lane eventually take over as the primary caretaker of the land? Many farms went by the wayside during those early days and it required not only hard work, but a bit of luck to make it:

[L] ...this quarter right here, the section line is right on this side of those trees there, this quarter here is the one that grandpa homesteaded, and he came... he came probably a little bit of the tail end, and he got this quarter that was all slough and it's almost 100 acres out of the 160 is almost all slough... it's funny because that turned out to be his blessing, because when the 30's come rolling along, this slough dried out and he was able to raise a hay crop at the bottom of that slough, and he actually come out of the 30s not having lost, lost his property, he had a contract, or he sold hay to the coal mine and this... this big meadow was.. is... kind of his saving grace, which is odd, another, well, I'll tell you about the tractor, but grandpa bought

a tractor in 1929, just before the crash came and of course nobody knew that the crash was coming, and he had a certain amount of money in the bank, he paid for the tractor, he got the tractor and just a week or two after he got the tractor, the banks, everything crashed, well, he had this tractor in his possession, he didn't lose the money that he had... he paid, we've got the bill of sale for it, he paid like \$2,500 for the tractor and anyway, it was a pretty good chunk of change, the road used to be right out, it used to come in right by the tree, and because of the advent of all the farmers draining wetlands in the surrounding areas, the slough has gotten a lot bigger...

As we drove up the new road alongside the slough, the term used to define a small body of water, to arrive at the original farmstead. While useful for wildlife, sloughs are not the most-welcome sight on the farm as they cover large swaths of potentially farmable land. As we approached the farmstead a common sight appeared, the old and the new, sitting not too far from the original home that Lane's grandfather had built was a new house that was put there by Lane's son and daughter-in-law:

[L] We had to build this road up to get into [his son's] place... about five years ago, we used to have to go all the way around this big area here, my uncle, my dad grew up here, but then, as my and then my uncle James was single, and this was his headquarters, this was the house that... grandpa built, probably in about 1920 and there was, he raised Adam was the oldest boy and Judy, there used to be a big, you see that windmill that you can just barely see through... James owned that quarter of land and I don't know if you can see that windmill, there used to be a big, stately two story house on

that yard there, and someone bought that house from James and they moved it, they moved it across the ice in the wintertime... We'll walk over to that house... it's kind of neat to walk over to. So [son and daughter-in-law] put this house [pointing at a new house] down and...

In this case, as is common among family farmers, the younger generation is building their home and their life in the shadows of the first generations. Lane's son has decided that the original farmstead would be the best place to live, though the original house may not be there too much longer, a recurring theme in this narrative, as with others, is the struggle to maintain a connection to physical places with the need to physically maintain the farms and keep the business running smoothly.

Maintaining the past for the future through stories. The plan is to burn down the house as it has fallen into a state where not only is it not recoverable, it is becoming a safety issue. I asked Lane how he felt about the idea of burning down and removing that place, his answer gave great insight into how he feels about places that are important to him and his family:

[L] It's bittersweet... I don't want to burn it down, but it's inevitable, because it's gonna be, number one it's their yard and they're gonna want to... and I think my son would like to see it stay too, for one reason, but then the other reason, yeah, it's not... pretty, so yeah it's bittersweet to see that, but it's getting almost to the point that you can't go in it, so... it's bittersweet...

[Interviewer – I] Are you going to do anything to preserve the memory of that place?

[L] We'll probably take pictures... I guess I haven't thought a lot about it most everything that's of any value has been taken out of it... so yeah... we'll maybe take some pictures...

[I] Do you find yourself continuing to want to tell the stories about that place especially, you know, as your grandkids get a little bit older as they're not going to remember it...

[L] I don't care who it is... if they're interested, I'll tell the stories, sure...

[I] And why do you want to do that?

[L] I... it's just a... why do I want to? It's just... part of... it's part of me I guess, and I think it's interesting... I hope after I start telling the story, if I get the vibes that they're not listening, but if somebodies interested, I'll keep talking!

This illustrates the connection to this particular place that Lane feels, and his willingness to tell stories about it to develop a sense of place for this house. Lane's grandchildren are too young to fully experience what this place means to the family but capturing photographs and telling stories will be one way to keep the memory of that 'place' alive. Lane recognizes that these stories are important to maintain, if for no other reason than to ensure the hard work that it took for his family to get to the point at which they are appreciated and remembered.

Lane and I next spoke about the names of the places around, and contained within, the land that they now own. The connection to place-names is a valuable tool to connect the present with the past and important in establishing a sense of place. Often-

times, farmers will purchase land from their neighbors, people they know and may have known for generations. Because of this connection, the places will often retain their original (or known to them) names instead of adopting new names, and the importance for maintaining sense of place is to understand that connection between names and places:

[L] I'll run into a neighbor, or somebody that's hunted up in this slough... I'll use an example, somebody from Minot that hunts up here a lot, and they'll refer to some slough and we'll finally figure out what they're talking about, or a farmyard, and they'll call it something... the place with the red car, or you know, the place with the wounded deer, and I'll go, no that's... that's not what it's called, it's the Benson place, you've got it all wrong...

Another case involving the changing of place-names:

[L] I see that with neighbors that have bought land and suddenly they call it, maybe [a local farmer] bought some land, and they call it *his* land, but it was *Johnson's* land, and I go... I think... it bothers me a little when, when somebody will say, well this is his land... *He* is only 25 years old, this was not *his* land, but what's interesting lately... I just had to do some... because we're going to have to do these windfarms, we had to revise some abstracts and my gosh, you start looking at the abstracts, and some of this land that I've grown up on... we're not calling it the person that homesteaded it... never heard of that name, a lady homesteaded that quarter... I've never heard that, what the hell? This lady homesteaded it? Her name was Williams... I'd like to know something about this lady, did she have, did she live here

for five years? Ten years? or did she live there for 2 weeks? I'm never going to know... I would love to know...

[I] And for you, wanting to know those backstories, why do you feel that it's important?

[L] [laughing] ...it ain't important! It's not, but to me it is... you know, to, there's a chosen few that it's important to, and a big majority that could give a shit less... but to me it is important...

In this case, Lane takes the stance that a lot of people who are rooted in their places do, just because someone new owns the land, does not necessarily make that *their* land, it can still retain the name and essence of the people who inhabited, or worked on, that place before. One area that we do not dwell on too much is the Indigenous people's that inhabited this land before the homesteaders. I did not bring up these ideas with Lane, but it would be interesting to know what those people may have thought about how we utilize the land and how we claim it for certain people, but not others. Lane does bring up an interesting thought though, when do the names change? As in the case with the land that he owns, he never knew about this person or the fact that they owned the land originally, so who gives the authority to create these place-names? Another big idea that is brought up, is it worth knowing? Does knowing the history of these places actually mean anything to anyone?

For Lane, keeping a sense of place in this area where he, and his family, have lived and worked for over 100 years is extremely important. Even the places that were not original to the farm, or lost to history, deserve to be remembered as it is important to

recognize all of the hard work that went into developing this area agriculturally. When first homesteading, there were farms on every quarter (160 square acres), now there are fewer and fewer people in each area. When talking about another place that his family farms, Lane said:

[L] There's some land, where [his son] has a quarter over here, and it's got a house and it's just fall- well it's like the one over at grandpas, just falling down... they... the last time anybody lived in that house was in the 30s, well it was probably built in the 20s, ten year old house, they didn't build that house thinking that this is only going to be lived in for 10 years... and for the next 75 or 100 years, it's gonna be totally abandoned, that's not why they built the house, and it didn't go according to plan...

[I] So for you, it's important to again, with these names of these places, is it important for you to continue to identify with these places for your kids, for your grandkids to keep these places...

[L] More and more all the time

[I] ...and why do you think that?

[L] ...probably on one hand, I think that these people who worked and put their blood and sweat into it, deserve that as a memory, you know, that's their contribution to mankind and... you know, my responsibility because I know there is no... maybe nobody else that could... keep that alive and it... it, you know the buck stops with me, if I don't do it, I know nobody will.

Here again, Lane explains that he sees it as his responsibility to keep the stories and histories of these places and people alive. This drives home the idea of a strong sense of place in him, "...the buck stops with me, if I don't do it, I know nobody will" is a strong statement about the lack of people in the area that remember these stories and the need for people to keep these place-names, and stories, alive. Lane sees it as his personal responsibility to maintain the stories and the histories of these places, the best he can, whether or not anyone wants to hear about them. This shows his connection to these places, the fact that we would work to maintain this sense of place when no one else would, or even care connects with the thoughts of the other participants in this study; none of these people are getting anything out of maintaining these stories but a deep connection to the land and to their own histories, which is proving itself to be enough in these cases.

The connection that Lane, and a most farmers feel towards these places is rooted in a deep connection to the past. Serving as the next generation of farmers, taking over from their parents, who took over for their parents, puts a lot of pressure on these people to keep the farm going and that doesn't always happen. Lane recounted when he spoke with two different people about farm auctions they were having and how it impacted their agricultural connection to place:

[L] Well there was just an auction sale, it was a farm similar to ours, you know, been around forever and they sold out and I talked to the young man that had it... was middle 40s and I talked to him during the sale, and he said, you know Lane, this is the worst day of my life... and when another family had their sale just a couple years ago, talked to the woman who was selling,

and she just said, this is awful... this is awful... and I know that it would be, and it wasn't because they are hungry and they're gonna starve to death tomorrow because they're fine... he's fine.. it was the sense of place just got jerked out from under them and it will never come back....

[I] So I'm assuming you would have that same... you know it's, like you said, it's not the financial aspect, it's the physical connection to it...

[L] [talking with the first farmer], I said you gonna go to work for a farmer?

[He replied] I want nothing to do with agriculture...

In each of these two cases, Lane was speaking with family farmers who are losing, not only their farm and livelihood, but also their sense of place. By selling this land (places; and the stories that go with them) and all of the equipment, they are losing that connection to place, they are losing their identity in this world. In these cases, the farmers are identifying directly with these places, and when they lose their place, they lose a big part of themselves. As is the case with these participants, most family farmers are working the lands they grew up on and around, often living on the farms that they were raised on when they were young. One aspect of that is they carry the weight of their family and their history on their shoulders in terms of maintaining the farms and the places that are important to them, and when the farm does go under and they are forced to sell, not only are they selling their identity, they are selling their family history and culture as well, which can make it very difficult to remain anywhere near the farm or farming in general.

As we drove up to the farm that Lane was raised on, I asked him to talk a little bit about the land from an agricultural aspect. Lane recounted a bit about how his grandfather, father, and uncles were able to expand out their farm:

[L] My dad was the third boy that came along, and he bought over where I'm at and because grandpa had, when the 40's came along, if you know anything about farming history, two times in the last 100 years there's been very good, exceedingly good prices... [In the year] 1948 was an extremely high priced year, often a lot of 1948 trucks were bought, there was an incredible amount of '48 trucks in the farming community and then in the 1972-73 era, that's the year I started and I was able to start and really hit the ground running, financially, because the prices were so exceedingly high, so anyway, my uncles kind of started in those... [Lane's father and uncles] kind of hit the ground in the '40s and my... coming out of the '30's, my grandpa had some... a little bit of change in his hand because of this stupid slough and he was able to... they were able to buy up some land, so the three boys actually were land owners...

The choices that were made, the hard work, and the little bit of luck is what changed a few hundred acres into over 10,000:

[L] So now our farm, we farm all the way to the Canadian border, it's 40 miles from here, and then we've got a bunch land north and south, so from our footprint, when I say we, it's [son, son-in-law, and brother], and [brother] isn't with us now [his brother passed away in December 2018], but so it was us four, but and now [son-in-law] rented a big chunk of land last

year so we have like 13,000 acres and my dad owned about 700 acres and an uncle owned 440 acres, my mom's side was 440, my dad was 700 and then I rented James' land and that was like 500, Adam's land was like 500, and that's what we started... that's what I started with was renting Adam's at 500 acres and then when my uncle quit farming, I started farming that, but we've just grown from my dad had his 700 acres and he was considered probably a bigger farmer, probably through the 50's and 60's with 700 acres, four and half quarters- five quarters, but anyway, now we have 13,000...

To go from around 1,000 acres to over 13,000 requires a tremendous amount of work, not only to maintain the fields, but also to maintain the farm, and the places that are important to the family. Growing a farm business like this, as well as time, requires changes in the way you own and store machinery, the little machine shops that used to work for Lane's father and uncles will not work anymore, referring to one of the buildings that still exist on the farm:

[L] When I was young, we called that the blacksmith's shop, cause that's what my dad grew up as where they did all their work was in the blacksmith's shop, well that's a little bit more of a revised building, he could actually drive his tractor into that building, he had a pot-bellied stove in there and it was always, he worked in there and uh... he got one of the first welders in the area and he was a noted welder, my gosh, welding, that is really something... it came in 1948, that is when they got power and dad could weld, um... and he worked in that shop until we built that green shop

in '72 and that was just a huge, big shop, and it was heated by coal... we had a coal furnace in that and heated that shop, now we've transitioned to, we can't get anything in that green shop, it's too small.

[L] Dad had these three bins... that wooden 10-sided building was grain bin, that was one of his first grain bins, then he put up these huge steel bins. My dad was... scared of heights, he could not go up a ladder and open the lid on that lower part of the bin and he certainly couldn't go up on the roof and open the top bin lid, so he'd have to call Adam or James to come open the lid for him and honest to God, if I was up on the bin, my dad couldn't even look at me... he was so scared of heights, he would not even look at me. About four years, five, six years ago, we put this building up [a huge metal shop], this is huge... we could put every piece of equipment we owned practically inside this building, so we've transitioned from those little cracker boxes over there to this...

Today, the farm is home to an even larger building that holds almost all their equipment under one roof. These other buildings remain but are getting repurposed or even slated for removal. Even the blacksmith shop still stands, and though it has existed on the farm for as long as Lane can remember (before he was born) it, like grandpa's house, is starting to show its age as well as their inability to keep up with farming practices.

[I] So, when we kind of think about, buildings on the farm, especially ones that are not as useful anymore, and you told a story about the blacksmith's shop, the other shops that, you know, are a little too small for the equipment

these days, do you have, kind of like you said with your grandparents house, do you have any plans on tearing them down at any time?

[L] Yeah... it just becomes... well number one, the boys, my son in particular, just looks at me and goes why do you want that piece of shit in our yard you know? It's just a rat hole...

[I] Do you feel that same kind of bitter sweetness behind it?

[L] Yeah... yeah.

[I] These are buildings that have existed for basically your entire life.

[L] ...and they look at me like I'm from freaking outer space because... I'd even entertained keeping them...

These are important places within the farm and the issue is how to best preserve some of them so that the future generations of this family can experience them, but also ensure that the farm (and lands) remain safe and useful. There also appears to be a disconnect between Lane and his children regarding the connection to place, "...they look at me like I'm from freaking outer space..." in regard to keeping some of these older buildings indicates that they may not have the same connection to these places as Lane does. This could create an issue down the road, as the younger generation assumes more responsibility for the farming operation, will those places that were important to the farm remain?

The dual issue of safety/usage and preservation is not lost on Lane. As we continue to talk about his connections to place and his families' connection to place, we

are brought back to discussing his grandparent's house, that will eventually be razed. One goal that Lane has had with this house was to tell the stories to his family, especially to his young grandchildren. We discussed the potential of using this house, and its history, to teach the grandkids about where they came from, before the house is taken down:

[L] I'm just reflecting on my grandkids, to take them in that house, a picture is worth a thousand words... for them... for me to take them in and say, this is where my grandpa built this, this is the house they lived in, this is where, you're great grandpa lived, this is where your great-great grandpa built, and it's a tangible, it's a thing that maybe they'll remember, even if they have a photo and 20 years from now, that'll bring that memory back, and I should do that, certainly, it's a good point to bring those kids in... take them in and have a little, this is what we're going to focus on for an hour... you guys are going to listen to me... so that's a very good point!

In this case, Lane is understanding the connection to place and how it is important to continue to pass on these stories about where we've come from. Even after the house is removed, "even if they have a photo and 20 years from now..." they will still be able to connect to this place and its meaning, even after Lane is gone, it may continue to be a place in which the family gathers to remember their history, if that is how they choose to do so.

That is a connection that is shared with his sister, as we were pulling into the farm, he pointed out a camper trailer that was parked behind the house that Lane and his siblings grew up in:

[L] My sister, she's got such connections with this farm and this yard. She was an RN in a big hospital in Florida, she's never spent one vacation, never gone anywhere that wasn't, isn't here at the farm. They [her and her husband] bought that doublewide trailer there, it's a 40-foot park model, and they spend the summers here and she's my ace combine driver and she just, this is her life is to be right here.

This highlights the strong sense of place that is present in that generation of this family, the fact that Lane's sister would rather come to northwest North Dakota and drive a combine than go anywhere else for a vacation says a lot about the hold these places have on her. This connection is something that Lane tries to share as often as he can. When I went to meet him for our second interview, I went out to his farm and met an individual I did not know. It turned out this individual was the significant other of Lane's niece (his sister's daughter) and Lane wanted to bring him out to experience farm life as he was from the east coast:

[L] I'll pay his way up, and economically it doesn't make sense for me to do it, cause I paid his plane flight and I'm paying him to work here, and I'm basically teaching him how to do some of these things, because he's not grown up on a farm, but as you see, what he's doing right now when you were over there... anybody could do that, and there's a lot of that... but it's also, I'm telling [his sister], I'll overlook that thing, I just want him to come up and experience this... this is an adventure for him, I want him to see what this is all about... and he is gonna get a really good taste of it the next three weeks and he's gonna go back.

To further continue this story, I asked on a subsequent visit how things went with him, Lane explained and whether he used this time to help create a sense of place for someone who had no real connection to this land:

[L] he worked for us and he didn't know anything about any of this, he was here for three weeks right in the middle of spring's work, and I had him doing all of this stuff, but when I would take a break and we would do walking around and stuff, I did get that sense of, well the easiest way is to take him to [a local museum] and it isn't open right now, cause so much of this stuff I'd like to show him, I don't have... and it isn't a complete story, it isn't a complete museum, but I showed him what we did have... and so yeah

[I] Do you feel that worked for him?

[L] Oh absolutely! Every little morsel I showed him, he appreciated. Cause he was just that type of person that was interested, and he's, he is family, married into ours... he did take a very active interest, yep...

In any case, this would be going above and beyond just to give someone experience.

There are people in the area that Lane could have had come out and help, but he chose to have this particular person, who he paid to fly him out, just to give him the experience of these places. This was done as an attempt to build a sense of place in someone who is not necessarily blood-related but is family and Lane's ability to spread that connection outward to branches of his family is one way that he can work to maintain the farm.

As we continued our drive, we attempted, successfully, to make our way up to a closed church that is a very important place to Lane and others. Before we reached the church, however, we passed by some more land that was owned by Lane and his family,

land that shows how difficult it can be to survive in those early, homesteading years. As we drove down a rough gravel road, Lane pointed out the land that his grandmother and aunt homesteaded:

[L] My grandma and aunt homesteaded on that little hill right up from that brush, that's the section line and the section line comes down, you can see it right where the fence is right here and it goes that way and they put the house right on the section line, so both houses were on their respective quarters and grandma homesteaded that quarter that way. Grandma's quarter is a shit quarter, it's... as you will see when we get up here on the hill, all it is, is sloughs, hilltops, and a little bit in between. Grandma was the first teacher in Portal, and I don't understand, she lived out here, I mean she homesteaded out here, but she taught in Portal, and I don't quite understand how that all played out, but this quarter right here as you can see, is a ferociously hilly land, and then all cut up with sloughs and stuff, and she didn't get anything, any prize that's for sure.

As most people didn't have the opportunity to choose their land, some were blessed with useful and clear land, and others were not. In this case, Lane's grandmother was not blessed with a great quarter as it was, "...sloughs, hilltops, and a little bit in between..." it would not have made a very good piece of land to start your farming career. Perhaps it was luck then that his grandmother received this quarter of land as she was a school teacher and wasn't as concerned with making a living solely off of the land as the case of so many others.

As we pulled up to the church, it looked as so many rural churches look, a white building, longer than it was wide, with a beautiful steeple on the top and a small cemetery in the back. When we went in, the beauty of these small, country churches really shone through. Walking into the main part of the church, you were greeted by pews lined up on both sides, a large open area with pulpits at the front, and a tall, pitched roof, the standard setup for what seems like every country church. If it weren't for the stale air, you would think that service had just finished. However, there was one more commonality that this church shared with a growing number of rural churches... it was closed:

[L] My brother was born in '57, he was baptized here on the last regularly held service and then it closed, so 1957 and just wasn't enough people to keep it going. But the... that steeple is not shingled... it's pretty steep, but you know, lumber is pretty good till it gets wet!

I asked him about how he feels the future of this church will be:

[L] ...you know, a hundred years from now, obviously this is not going to be here, it's not going to make it, uh... so far, we've, we've scared up money to paint it and... but, nobody's ever shingled the steeple and one of these days that's going to just fall off.

I continued to ask him about the church, about why they (and numerous other people at numerous other churches) continue to put money into preserving these buildings, this one in particular has been closed for 62 years:

[L] They closed, but my mom and dad are buried there, and my brother and my grandma and grandpa. My grandma and grandpa on the other side are

buried down at the other church. A big controversy, now, now in this community is um... there gonna put a... put wind towers from our place east... this land right here, we signed up for the wind towers and I was trying to get to the people, the wind tower company to put a tower on this quarter here and they got a set back of a half a mile from all dwellings, and they had a half mile setback from this church and I said, come on... you don't need to honor that set back because if you guys put a wind tower there, I'll donate half of the money, the annual wind farm payment to the maintenance of the church. And I said, I don't think the wind tower's gonna bother anybody in the cemetery, but they considered it an historical structure and they, they wouldn't consider it.

A church that has been closed for over half a century and will never reopen and Lane is still willing to put money, time, and effort into keeping this place alive, which again, says a lot about his sense of place. This place has a deep connection to Lane, as it was the church he was born into, but also the church where many of his family members are interred. I believe that Lane assumes a responsibility to maintain this church, both out of a respect for what it was, but also as he mentioned previously, if he didn't do it, who would? During a meeting with local residents earlier on, they were discussing what to do with the church and an interaction with a fellow resident shocked Lane, but also demonstrated his deep sense of place:

I remember distinctly, a neighbor who lived nearby the church, he lived just two miles straight east... remembered that church as long [as anyone] ... he's dead and gone now... but as a group when we were doing one of the things...

fixing it up or whatever, he just had a moment and he said, “let’s not put another penny in this place, let's not... I'm not interested in... let's walk away from it”, and I was just floored, I just thought... I lost a lot of respect for him... he was a war veteran and a, just a good guy, and I had a lot of respect, nothing but respect for him, and I just thought... why would you do that? Why wouldn't you keep an effort to keep it up, and that's not an option for me, but you know... and it is a struggle, why is it important, damned if I know why it is important...

This highlights an important event that happens with people who have a deep sense of place, they aren't even sure why they have it, they just do. In this case, the idea of preserving this church, which again will never re-open, is something that Lane has to do, he's not sure why, but he has to do it. Again, if he wouldn't be the one to keep this place alive, who would? Lane feels a certain responsibility to maintain the places that were important to people long gone, even though he understands that it will probably be a losing battle in this sense.

The next topic that Lane and I discussed regarding this church was how his children felt about the church, about maintaining it, and about their sense of place. They never attended a service at this church, except for Lane's son getting married there, but other than that, they do not have the connection to this place that Lane and the older generations do:

[I] How do you feel about you know, working to kind of develop that sense of place, one of the things that I think about is you know, how do your kids, or how do younger people in the area think about that church? Do you see...

the younger generation working as hard to maintain this building as you have?

[L] Not even a little bit...

[I] So you think, it would be important to work to develop their sense of place, and not necessarily forcing anything in terms of forcing them to take care of the church or forcing them to do this, but helping them to kind of understand their own connections to these places and what makes them important?

[L] The understanding part of it is... at least making them aware that my connection is there, yeah... and I'm not gonna say that they should, they'll have to make their own decision as to whether or not they have that sense of place, you know...

This is an important part of understanding sense of place, how it translates to the next generation, what our role is in transferring sense of place to those that come after us, and whether or not it is important to do. One way that we do transfer sense of place is through teaching those next generations using places that are/were important.

Place and Teaching. Lane is aware of the use of place in teaching, especially when it comes to agriculturally related work. As kids generally learn from their parents on the farm, oftentimes educational stories become commonplace. Telling your children and grandchildren about things that happened in the places that they happened is a great way to embed that knowledge on them. In one case, Lane has used stories about the old blacksmith shop to teach valuable lessons:

[L] Well, the blacksmith shop, I always have this... dad was one of the first, he had a welder, and he was welding in there one time and he went in the house and he happened to come back out and the shop was on fire, and he was able to get it out, but it was charred up the wall and so on, and after that, every time he'd weld, he'd tell one of us kids, go out in the shop and sniff, just go out and sniff, and we're going what are we sniffing for? Just go out and sniff! It was just like oh shit, I gotta go out and sniff... well it always smelled like he'd been welding in there... but I understand he didn't want to lose that shop, it was important for him, this was... that possibility was there that he could... that the shop could burn down and that would have been a major setback for him, and he had learned a valuable lesson... Well, when we're welding in the shop and it's such a mess in there, I tell them, you know, there's sparks flying all over here, and that spark can lay over underneath that coat and about the time you go home, it's when it starts burning and...

This is a classic example of using a story to teach. In this case, the story about his dad and the blacksmith shop almost burning down serves as a cautionary tale that Lane still uses to this day when he and whoever is out there are working in the shop. The idea that a simple spark can cause so much damage should be easy to understand, but tying it to a specific place, specific people and a specific event makes it that much more tangible.

Another amazing example of using place to teach involves the lesson of over-extending yourself and always planning for the unexpected. These stories are inextricably linked to the places in which they've taken place and can be used as teaching

tools, bringing people to these places and telling them the stories about what happened and how these fates can be avoided:

[L] Grandpa and Adam did... they acquired a quarter of land, it's called the Wilson quarter... two stories about the Wilson quarter... one is what happened to Mr. Wilson, well he bought a threshing machine in about 1926, and he was gonna thresh on the side, you know, he had his quarter of land, but he was going to thresh on the side and he lost his farm because he couldn't afford to... he'd dived into another enterprise and his threshing machine busted him... it's what grandpa, err dad said, another story then, that quarter, the Wilson quarter sat for a couple of years not farmed and the weeds were tall and grandpa and Adam lit it on fire to burn it off, the wind changed and it nearly burned them up... I guess the story is the fire, I mean they just got away from the fire by the skin of their teeth, I don't know if they did or not, but that's what the story is how close did it come? Maybe it was an exaggeration maybe not... but oh my gosh, we've done a lot of burning since and sloughs and this or that... the wind can get freaking crazy on you and what seems to be a very, fire is... I've learned from my experiences and I reflect back on what they said, oh shit... you be careful.

[L] ...or an example of the jumping into another adventure, it can be good or it can be bad, if you never try anything, you know you're never gonna... but history repeats itself, and I can use examples of other neighbors around here... you dived into something you knew nothing about and it ended badly... whether the Erickson's over here jumping into the oilfield... just as

an example, they drilled a well on his land and it was always this... “there's oil there”, they know there's oil there... but they capped it anyway, because we don't know... they're gonna save it for later, well Erickson said, “there's oil there, I'm gonna buy that hole from them and I'm gonna make it produce...” there wasn't oil there... and it... he dumped a lot of money in it just to find out exactly what they said, learn... I mean, you better... if you're good at one thing, doesn't make you good at something else.

These stories are amazing example of using place to teach, whether it's his children, grandchildren, or as Lane says, anyone that will listen, these places can be used to teach very important life lessons. As Lane and I continue to talk, it is apparent that he has a good understanding of his own sense of place, and how place can be used as a teaching tool, especially with his younger family or complete strangers. In this case, there are physical places that Lane can take his children to, to teach them about what happened in this place. One such story that he told me about another place that he already has done this, taking his kids to a particular spot:

[L] ...there was a boat accident years ago, just in a slough a mile over there, the guy was 22 years old and he was messing around with a little boat, just out of fun and he ended up drowning... it was in the spring of the year, cold water... and the two guys that owned the boat were on the shore and this young man died and he'd just gotten married six months before and those two dived into alcoholism as they got older, because they were so ridden with guilt and I can take, I've taken my kids over and said this is the pond that this guy drowned, I've used... I've said this is... he acted foolish on a

boat, he was doing something that he was over his head on and he paid the consequences and not only did he pay it, but the other two people that were involved ended up having these skeletons in their closets for the rest of their lives and just tragedy all started from that silly boat ride.

Here Lane uses a story about a thing that happened at a place to impart life lessons on his children. By taking them to the place where this happened and telling them the story, he was able to teach them in a way that may not be achievable just through the story alone. Lane understood the power that place can play in these stories and I have no doubt that he will continue to use these stories to teach for years to come.

Another story of Lane using place to teach he told involved people he did not know, but as showed previously, Lane is more than willing to help educate anyone who will listen about the places that they are in, whether permanently or temporary:

We have a quarter of land up north and it's got an old house on it, a two-story house, and I was just loading a semi, a truck there, a Canadian driver and in the truck was his wife, and she had a little one year old with, 25-year-old young lady. Well, we're loading the truck and I said, if you want to walk over to that house, it's in the yard right there, go in and look at it, you got an hour to spend, go look at, I gave here some history of the house, and I said that's a Sears Roebuck house, and that house was ordered out of a catalog, it came on the train, all... every piece cut, all the directions, bought from a catalog... well, my sense of place is I wanted to teach her... I don't know her, I don't know if she was interested in it, she went and looked at the house, she walked through it, when she come out, I said, what'd you

think of that, she goes, “well that was pretty neat”. I don't know if she learned anything by it, but she was fascinated that you could order a house by the catalog... and... was that... I wouldn't have had to, I could have let her sit in the truck, but I just felt she had an opportunity to learn something... take advantage of it.

Again, this is another situation where Lane is more than happy to teach people about the places they are inhabiting, whether they find it monumentally life-changing or find it “whatever” Lane is working to embed a small sense of place in any way he can. This is indicative of a person who has a strong sense of place, as he said, “...I could have let her sit in the truck...” but he decided to try and connect this person to this particular place.

This deep sense of place, and his connection to his agricultural roots is quite evident in one of the last things we talked about. I had asked him if he would ever consider selling out the farm and doing something else, and his answer was quite telling about his connection to these places:

[L] I've got a millionaire cousin that, if I liquidated my farm tomorrow, took all the cash that I had and gave it to him and said, make me some money, I know he would make me money like... no comparison to what I'm making here... business, a business decision would be a no-brainer... I should do it tomorrow, but I am not interested in doing that... not even close. [Talking about his cousin] I can show you a picture of his jet that he flies, I'll call him up today and he might be in Dubai, or in Sweden or whatever... he might be working, he loves to work, so he's probably working... didn't even graduate from high school, did not graduate from high school, but he's got all these

honorary degrees from these different colleges, didn't graduate from high school. So, I mean could take, give him... here's my money I've made, I'd liquidated everything in a matter of a couple of years, he'd quadruple it or whatever... so what... what's my point? What was your question...

[I] So... just this idea of continuing to develop and maintain these connections to physical places...

[L] Ok... apparently I'm... it's more important that I stay here and stay with my sense of place, it isn't a business decision, it isn't a financial decision that I'm here, it's more of a connection with place... you know, I mean you could argue that the weather is better in [not North Dakota], you could argue about a lot of different things, certainly a lot less work, a lot less hours...and more money and... I mean I could trade this life for that life and... so, but apparently, it's rather important [his connection to place], my guess is the answer to that...

This again highlights how deep and important Lane's connection to place is, the fact that he could get even more financial security with less work and he still wouldn't do it? That shows a sense of place that is more important than money.

Lane works hard to maintain a sense of place, especially in areas where no one else will, whether it's abandoned houses, or land that has been bought and sold, or a church that has been empty for over 60 years, Lane sees it as his responsibility to maintain these places, either physically or through the telling of stories. While working to maintain these places, Lane is not pushing the same drive to understand sense of place

on his children, instead relying on being a resource, a caretaker of stories that can be used to enhance the experiences of anyone who wants to listen.

CHAPTER VII

TONY

For this narrative, I will be introducing Tony. The theme that appears throughout this narrative is one of lamentation and perseverance in the face of long odds and an understanding of the importance of maintaining place. Throughout this narrative, you will read stories about the changes in rural North Dakota, both in the communities as well as on the farm, and Tony highlights the loss of what used to be and whether or not it can ever come back. As in previous narratives, we will focus on how Tony experiences place, both in growing up in the area and as a farmer looking to the future. We will also look at how Tony sees his role with the land and with his family and how he might be able to teach others using his connection to these places. These stories, and the meanings behind them, will show the precarious position that many small-town farmers in rural North Dakota find themselves facing and how they plan to move forward.

Tony is a farmer who makes his home, along with his wife and kids, in western North Dakota. Tony is the youngest participant in this study and is the only participant who is not at the ‘grandfather’ stage in his life, as his children are still quite young. Tony and I had never met prior to our first interview, but both of us hailing from western North Dakota, we shared a number of concerns about the future of the region, concerns that Tony shared throughout this narrative. For my first and second meeting, I met Tony at his house, a half-mile down the road from his family’s farmstead and 12 miles away from

the town he grew up in. For our third meeting, Tony and I took a drive around his lands and through the town to get a better understanding of these places that are so important for him to preserve. Tony's family originated in Germany, but settled in western North Dakota, establishing the farmstead in 1912, which is still in Tony's possession today and the land he farms is the land that his family has farmed since then. Talking about his family and the farm, Tony goes on to describe:

[T] ...my great grandfather, eventually came out here in 1912 and you drove by the farmstead that's originally, that was originally the farmstead, we built this house out here a few years ago, but, my great grandfather settled this in 1912 and then his son passed away at a fairly young age but my father had been born already, and eventually my father ended up farming with his uncle, who would have been my great-uncle and my dad did that until he died, and then he died actually before my great-uncle who was older than he was by quite a few years and then my great uncle lived out on that particular farmstead right down the half mile down the road till he was 95, so 2003 was when I moved back, but I'm 4th generation out here.

[T] There are a couple of main buildings over there, one of them was over there my entire life and then one was built during my lifetime and the house, I think that's the second, I know it's the second one on that farmstead, but it's the only one I ever remembered, so, those two buildings exist, the house exists, I actually have an older guy that helps me out and lives in the house and I appreciate that because, if it wasn't for him, that house would be abandoned and I don't want to see that, I grew up running in and out of,

there's an old grain bin that I don't use anymore, it's just a teeny tiny little thing, but I haven't torn it down because it's been there my entire life and it's something that I look at and remember, I've seen pictures of it, there's pine trees over there that are 50 feet tall and I've seen pictures with that grain bin in that yard where you know, there are no trees, so that thing's been there throughout the whole history of the farm. The farmyard itself, I mean it just, we grew up walking through those trees and playing in the shelter belt and all of that still means something to me. I can't imagine it not being part of... being there, you know.

Right away in our conversations, Tony jumps into how connected he is to these physical places. The fact that he is happy to have someone live in the farmstead's house [Tony and his wife built a new house a ½ mile down the road] otherwise, "that house would be abandoned, and I don't want to see that", says a lot about his connection to his family and his past. I had asked Tony what the farmhouse meant to him, as it was an important building on the farm and he is thankful that someone is living in the house, Tony explained his connection to that house, and why he does not want to see it uninhabited:

[T] Well, it's engrained in me once again, my earliest memories is it's been there, so if you see something like that become unoccupied and dilapidated it's like a little piece of you dies, your history dies and that what we're, and in a broader aspect, that's what I'm out here fighting for is to keep those parts of rural America, rural North Dakota alive because, once again it just feels like a little bit of death, it feels like you're not important anymore in

some way shape or form. Your way of life isn't, or it didn't ever mean anything maybe when it's totally abandoned...

The connection that Tony has towards that farmhouse is an extension of the connection he has to farming and his home in general. Seeing that farmhouse fall to ruin or be demolished would be, "...like a piece of you dies..." hits on the general theme of this narrative, that Tony is attempting to preserve a way of life that is couched in this area, the way of life of the small-town farmer, and every time something has to be demolished, or removed, it is like a small piece of that ideal is dying, to the point that it won't even be remembered in the future.

Tony's story is somewhat similar to our first participant, Marvin, and his story, as he was not always living on the farm. Tony grew up in town (a few miles away) but spent his youth working on the farm, but did not take over farming immediately, nor did he stay in the area. Tony explained how he got back to farming:

[T] So [in] 2003 my father passed away and I came home and I didn't really expect to farm, I had been working as an electrician in Fargo, but once again, it was a passion that I had grown up with and always wanted to be able to, but even with the opportunity I had, the equipment was here and owned already and there was some land for me to farm, but it wasn't a lot, and I didn't think that I was probably going to continue to farm, but as I, as I kind of got into it to help straighten out the family affairs after my father passed away I just, I remembered how much I liked it and I learned to appreciate the value and being self-employed and being a farmer and I sit here today.

Similar to the first participant, when Tony's father passed away, he came home to settle things and decided that the opportunity was now available to take over farming. While the equipment was already there, and the land already owned, it was the love of the land and the love of farming that brought Tony back, as he stated, "...I remembered how much I liked it..." This brings to mind the idea that a love of farming first and foremost is what's important, and not seeing farming solely as a business, which may be one of the reasons why Tony continues to farm today.

I had asked Tony that since he grew up in town, and even though the farm was only a few miles away, what drew him to this place. What created his sense of place and what was it focused around? Tony explained:

[T] When I was a kid, I didn't know any different and we loved, we loved coming out to the farm spending time at the physical site itself, for us it was... we would have spent all our time there if we could, it was better than being in town, you know we had friends in town and we enjoyed that too, but actually being out here, being part of the farming operation, experiencing that, just experiencing the opportunity to hunt as we grew up, those were things that made this place very attractive to us. Today I would tell you that if there was the opportunity for my two brothers to farm, I think they would still do it and then, like I've said, the small towns all of them around here, whether it's fairly close where I grew up in all these little small towns means something to me, I have friends from them, I have connections to the businesses that barely hang on or don't exist anymore and that more than anything where I'm at affects my life having known that these things

as one time existed, they were thriving communities and they don't necessarily anymore, it's a burden on my really, honestly.

[T] Us kids just loved being out here and being part of the operation, it wasn't a job to us, it was just what we knew, it was a lifestyle, I can recall being in high school and getting out of class and coming out to help harvest and that was, I really enjoyed that, I looked forward to that, it was just, once again, it wasn't anything that I didn't want to do, it was something that I did want to do it and it was never looked at as a burden, it was just being part of the operation and enjoying the outdoors and enjoying farming in general.

This highlights a recurring theme throughout my talks with Tony, this deep connection to these physical places, mixed with a lamentation about the state of western North Dakota and its rural communities. The combination of his (and his brother's) love for being out on the farm, helping with harvest, experiencing these places, contrasted by the worry in what he said about the local communities, which are needed for smaller farms to persevere. These small communities used to be very vibrant, full of people and businesses and local farmers, but as time as moved on, the farms have become sparser, and the communities have changed. As Tony said while we drove through the small town he grew up in, where he used to know all of the people:

[T] But it's weird, driving around this town, there are very few houses that I can even tell you who lives there anymore that's weird isn't it? Because it's just been completely changed with oil and the loss of farmers...

As we drove through the town, Tony would point out to me, who *used* to live in these houses, now he does not know their identities, even though he only lives a few miles away, he has served the city, and his mother still lives in town. The fact that this small town has undergone that sort of transformation can really affect a person's attachment and connection to the places he grew up around.

Place and the Natural World. Tony's connection to place is not just limited to the farming aspect, like most people in western North Dakota, Tony is also a hunter and sees these places as important to preserve not just the personal connections, but the natural connections as well:

[T] I've always been one whose been interested in hunting and fishing and I appreciate the wildlife that live in this area, for example a lot of farmers have eliminated tree row after tree row because it's hard to farm around, I've actually planted some, and it's not, it doesn't make it easier to farm, but it leaves something to preserve the opportunity for wildlife to thrive in this area, you know, and I want to teach my kids the same. I want them to recognize that wildlife is important and you know, it's not... people literally used to survive by that opportunity that the wildlife presented them, you know that was there sustenance, we don't do that much anymore, but hunting and fishing is still a part of western North Dakota and is something I appreciate the tradition, and like I said, I hope my kids will recognize that as well, when I'm done teaching them.

[T] I grew up looking at pictures and watching my great uncle and my father hunt together, go deer hunting and that type of thing, um... you know my

dad used to be a trapper, when that was more in vogue you know, and literally he would help pay some bills by selling the furs that he would get. Recently, there's a new phenomenon in this area... moose have moved in and that's something you never would have seen 15 years ago and now they're all over the place, and despite the fact that they're really hard on my trees, I still appreciate them, it's kind of an odd thing, first of all, that they were forced to migrate here, but at the same time, they're a part of nature and its... I enjoy watching that, I don't think that humans necessarily always have to destroy everything to further our causes you know, so watching things, watching wildlife in general around me, I appreciate it, I know that there been times when antelope herds have run through the yard and I make sure to grab my little boy and he likes to look at that or pheasant or whatever it may be.

A common issue with farmers is this duality of farming versus nature, how much can they afford to give to nature while still being able to survive, especially smaller farms that need every acre just to make it from one year to the next? Tony shows that giving land back to nature by installing more tree rows is just as important as farming the land. The goal is also to show his children the importance of remaining in concert with nature, and not exploiting the land for everything you can get out of it. This shows that Tony responsibility to these places, not just as a farmer, but as an inhabitant of these places.

Tony and I continued to talk about his role as a steward of the land and his role in maintaining that land. We talked about how, over time, he has come to appreciate the natural land for its beauty and how he could help preserve it:

[Interviewer - I] How important is it for you to maintain essentially the natural world in some of these places? We talked a little bit about your connection to nature, the hunting and fishing that you've done, is it important for you to continue to maintain that, important for you, for your kids to do the same thing, kind of see yourselves as stewards of nature?

[T] Yeah, I think so, you know, the once again with time comes a little bit of wisdom and as I sit in the tractor some days I think of how we've altered the landscape out here, it's you know, this was all grassland before farmers came out here, you know that's obviously changed, but I want to be a good steward of the land, to keep it as clean as possible, to keep it as much the same as it was when I found it or better, I've planted trees, which that kind of goes against what I just said, because trees aren't natural to this area or this habitat, but it's still in my mind, I'm giving something back to the land and helping maintain, as long as it's going to be farmed, trees are good to help maintain, keep soil erosion from going away, it's something I think about a lot, I wish there was, there was a little more natural prairie out here, I wish there was an incentive to have left some of it natural, so yeah, I feel like, once again I feel like a steward of this place, I recognize the impact that we, as human beings have on what mother nature was or is, and I try to minimize as much as possible.

I: If there was an incentive, would you be interested in turning some of your land if you had the opportunity back into natural grassland?

[T] 100%! I was just talked to a friend of mine the other day, I think a lot

about Agriculture policy and what it's going to take for farmers to continue to, to make a living, one of the biggest problems we have right now, which is kind of a weird thing to say too cause there are people all over the world that are hungry, but one of the biggest problems we have is overproduction and, you know, in my mind, what could have happened, or could still happen once again with the seismic shift in economic policy...

Tony discusses here how his thinking regarding the maintenance of the land has changed over time, “a little bit of wisdom” and how it is important to maintain the land, not just so that he can benefit from it financially, but so that it will remain “clean” for as long as possible and, one day hopefully regain a natural feeling. Even the idea of returning the land to natural grassland interested Tony, but of course, there would have to be an incentive to get farmers, especially farmers that do not have a lot of land to begin with, to turn over viable farmland to grass.

Place and Community. Another issue that Tony and I discussed was the future of farming and place, in particular the places that are important to him. Growing up in town and working out on the farm as a kid gave Tony a dual perspective, seeing both the changes in farming and the changes in the small towns around where he lives and how that affects community and personal sense of place. In one particular case, the school in the town he grew up in, and graduated from, closed down a little while ago and I asked him about how the changes in the community affect a farmer’s sense of place:

[T] Our school was always the center and the pillar of our community, it wasn't just about the school, it was literally the place the community came for, we'd have little shows like, there would be a magician every once in a

while, or whatever, that was so important to that community, it no longer exists. The grain elevators, there's another thing that just, growing up in these little towns, they were a major business and it was more than just business once again, it was a place where you would go and meet with neighbors and meet with friends and have some type of connection. Today, when you pull into grain elevators, it's all about efficiency, get in get out, there isn't that same interaction or sense of comradery that there used to be.

I asked Tony about the effects of the loss of these places and their experiences on the communities and the people around them. I asked Tony how he felt about these changes and how he views his connection to these places, currently and in the past:

[T] I think if we forget history, we're worse off, I mean like I said, we're all only here for a short time and today it seems to me that everyone is more obsessed with just me, me, me and there isn't that type that sense of community, so for me to remember more of that when everyone worked together, I think that's a valuable thing to pass on to people and maybe someday there will be a shift and we can say hey this is how we used to do it in the old days, and people seemed to be happier, I know we had less money when I was a kid, and yet, there were still, I miss that time because of that comradery that people seemed to share more of, so remembering what North Dakota was I think helps preserve these rural areas longer and you know, maybe we can see a shift back towards it someday, they talk about the bonanza farms in the 30's and how they all went down and maybe we'll see that happen again someday [regarding large-scale farming] and

having people recognize that maybe bigger isn't always better because of the memories they have is probably a good thing.

[T] I remember [his hometown] of old when there was a lumber yard, there was an ice cream parlor, and there was a cafe, and two businesses, and all those types of things and what they meant to me at that time, I was hoping that maybe there would be some opportunity to make them valid again or important again and those were behind that thought in my head probably kept me here more than anything is we can do something to have it like it was in the old. I was maybe naive and young and didn't recognize all the aspects that could make it go the other way, yeah just once again, the people that I used to know, those are the things that you envision when you come out here as a young kid and you think, hey I can make this work, because you are remembering when it used to work and you're remembering that, how that lifestyle was attractive to you. I think, like I said, you do recognize after a few years, you get a little wiser that maybe things never will be like they were days of old, but still, those are the connections, those are the memories, those are the things that drive you to try, try and have the same experience.

Here Tony discusses the loss of sense of place, both in losing the school and the experiences at the elevators, and how this affects his, and probably others', sense of place within these communities and their roles as farmers. The loss of the school, the loss of the other businesses in town creates a hole in people's sense of place and all they can do at this point is remember how things were, in a bid to keep their sense of place alive. As

Tony goes on to explain, the loss of these places also causes a loss of community in the people, they are less likely to gather together for events, they are less likely to talk and foster a sense of community, in essence, they are becoming more fractured and losing their sense of place, something that Tony recognizes.

An interesting exchange happened with Tony when we were discussing this, I asked him about how he felt in regard to the changing community and whether he saw himself as a fighter against this loss of sense of place in the community and farmers:

[T] Definitely! Definitely, I can't be the only farmer standing out here and have that sense of place, and sense of community and sense of, you know, fellowship or whatever you want to call it. It's nice to be able to have somebody to lean on and talk about your troubles and also nice to have people around that can celebrate your triumphs, you know... so, yeah, it's, I think that's what we're fighting for is the essence of western North Dakota and those relationships, it isn't necessarily about the economic model, it's those things that are important... the connections once again between family and friends.

[Interviewer – I] Do you feel that you are kind of being defiant or standing back against the loss of sense of place, by staking out your spot, by continuing to reinforce and develop those sense of place and work those sense of places, that you're being defiant against that kind of steamroller of...

[T] Definitely! I definitely think that's what I've been is defiant, I think I was more defiant younger, I started to realize that, you know, it's gonna take a lot of strong will as I age just to stay here, cause it would be very easy tomorrow, besides the, you know, the emotional aspect, it would be easy to call up an auction company and say come out, I'm done, I give up, and to rent out your lands, so yes, it takes defiance, it takes a strong-willed, stubborn person, and like I said, I was more... I was more that way when I was younger, especially when it was just me, but now with the kids and whatever, it's harder to stay defiant...

Tony views his role as a curator of place to stay defiant and continue to push the ideas of sense of place and people's connection to these places. Just by existing and staying and farming he is pushing back against this dissolution of place that has been experienced by the people and communities in the area. Tony understands that this may not be the easiest way to make a living, especially when you have a family to provide for, but for the time being he is working to maintain his, and his family's, sense of place. Tony also understands that duality of preserving place, but also running a viable financial business and understandings that the choices he makes in the future will impact both.

So, to defiantly push back against the loss of sense of place for himself and the community, Tony maintains the family farm, which is quite a bit smaller than some of the farms in the area, clocking in at around 600 acres. Even then, Tony still doesn't view the land as *his* as much as he views his role is maintaining that land:

[T] When I sit out here, I don't feel like I own this land necessarily, I know that sounds silly, and I do, I mean, technically I own 600 acres or whatever,

which someday, hopefully, will be good for my children, they will have something to... some type of financial help to help them through college, whatever it may be, but ultimately when I look at it, I'm here for a short time, I'm a steward of what was built before me and I hope that uh, that my kids will recognize that as well, you know, I take pride, honestly, in knowing that the fruits of my labor helped feed the world, it's not just about a job, it's part of it and you have to have money to raise a family, whatever, but it's more than that and I want to leave this place and I'm sure a lot of farmers say this, but it's true, I want to leave it better off than when I found it.

[T] As far as the natural standpoint, like I said earlier, I consider myself a steward of the land and there are constant evolutions in agriculture to, to make our footprint a little less, whether it's less chemical use, or better practices to preserve soil, I certainly appreciate all of those things, they've added value to my farm and at the same time, like I said, I feel like I'm leaving the land in better shape...

Here Tony talks about his role as a steward of the land. It is his job, not only to farm the land and make money and feed the world, but it is also his job to take care of the land, to ensure that it will be useful for, not only his lifetime, but generations after him. While he owns the land he farms, he still doesn't view the land (these places) as a thing he can do whatever he wants with, he sees the importance of treating the land properly, so that not only can he feed his family (literally and figuratively) he also preserves the land for future use, and future financial benefit.

Place and a Return to Farming. It is interesting to hear Tony speak of the land this way. While he has a deep connection to these places, as evidenced above during his childhood, he never expected to come back to farming after he left. It was only after his father passed away and someone needed to take the reins that he decided to return, reigniting a spark inside of him. I ask Tony about how he feels in relation to taking over the farm, and what the next generation might look like:

[I] So after your father passed away, you said that you weren't really expecting to farm...

[T] No I wasn't... it's just the economics are too tight for small farms, you know, we didn't own a lot of family land, so I just kind of... the main reason I did at the time was my great-uncle was still out here and he wanted to see it farmed and it was something I thought I could do for three or four years until I figured out the next path in my life, but... you know, I just kept doing it and then eventually I grew my farm a little bit and we had some good years and here we are today [laughing] so... it's still tough to be a little bit smaller farmer I would say and the returns, the margins are smaller... are small and then so the more acres you farm, the better off you are financially...

[I] Did you have any thoughts about what you were going to potentially do with the land, if you decided not to farm?

[T] Yeah... I hate to think about that, but I have, I mean all of us, if you look at the price of commodities today... cash spring wheat around here is like

\$4.30 and every farmer I've talked to right now has the same sense of urgency or sense of despair, they're not shouting it out to the public, but farmers, when they get in a circle, they're all wondering whether or not they're going to be able to farm next year, I mean it's that critical, so yes... I have had to think about it, I don't ever... I don't want to sell it, it's not something that... I live here and I couldn't bear to watch somebody going by with a tractor left and right here, so... most likely when I'm too old to farm it, hopefully I get to that stage, hopefully I'm 70 or whatever before I quit farming... at that point I still intend to keep the land, hopefully I'll find a farmer that I can respect and that I know does things right and has the same type of ideology that I do and I guess that's what I'll do is I'll rent it and hopefully retire and that'll be our retirement, some of our retirement...

A common sentiment that appears among all of the participants of this study is not wanting to see is someone else farming their land, their 'places' and Tony is no different. It would be a different story if he had retired and rented the land out (still being his place), but the anguish of seeing someone else taking control of the places that means so much to you would be hard to bear. I asked Tony to elaborate on what it would mean to see someone else farming his land, I asked what would it feel like to look out his window and see someone who is not family, taking a tractor back and forth across the fields that his family has tended for over a century:

[T] What would that feeling be? Um... [laughing], it would be like not wanting to get divorced and then watching another man walk your wife... your former wife down the aisle, I can't imagine sitting where we are today,

looking out past my house, watching a tractor coming up and down the field and know that it wasn't a part of me... it just, it would feel like a divorce, and it'd be that type of pain I think, and not that I've ever been through a divorce, once again I can put myself in that mindset and yeah, I guess that's the best way I can describe it....

The pain that Tony would feel is a pain that I believe would be shared by a majority of family farmers (and has been detailed in previous chapters). This idea of watching someone else tend to your places equated to not only a divorce, but seeing your spouse remarry would be too hard for most people to watch. The question then becomes, what happens to the farm when Tony is ready to retire?

One aspect that did not appear in what Tony was saying, was whether or not his children would take over the farm when he was ready to retire. Tony's two children are quite young, and that would be a long way out, but I asked him about how he felt in regard to his children taking over the farm and whether that was a possibility:

[T] I wanna work hard to try and give them the same type of opportunity, who knows what farming will look like when I'm ready to retire, whether it will be manned at all anymore, or all the AI or what? I think about that stuff a lot. I would love to be able to think that, you know, my children would have the option to make a living off this land as I did and the generations before [but] the reality is, I'll build towards that, but I'm a realist as well and the way things have been going , the larger and larger type farms are gobbling us little ones up all the time, they put pressure on us all around us by raising land values or whatever and we end up with fewer and fewer

farms, which in the end, like I said, I'm not sure that my children will actually have the opportunity to spend the time out here, in the meantime, I want to at least instill in them those same values I learned, by learning to work hard and enjoying it and enjoying nature and preserving once again what our legacy is.

When I asked him about whether or not he wants his kids to farm and have the same experiences as he did when he was growing up, Tony had this to say:

[T] I'm going to do everything I can to have my children have the experiences.... special to me, I want to reinforce, or I want them to experience the same things that make this place special to me that I did and, you know, I'll fight hard to try and make that happen, but at the same time, I think there's also the recognition... I'm not going to encourage my children to farm, it's just... unless there's a seismic shift in agriculture again because it's just too much of a struggle as a small operator and I recognize even though I'm stubborn and I'd love to make that happen, they have to go out and find a different career path, and then if some opportunity affords them to be able to come back, that's fine, but they can't... they can't rely on the idea of agriculture to provide for their families...

It was sad to hear Tony talk about the possible future for his family's farm. The fact is that his family's farm as it is now, will probably end with him, as the reality of the small family farm is becoming more and more difficult to obtain. As Tony explained, with crop prices and profit margins being as tough as they are, it is increasingly difficult to make a living with a smaller farm and to hear him say that he will not encourage his kids

to farm was sad, but all too real, to hear. Maybe one (or both) of them will possess the same defiance their father had when he decided to make a go at it, but only time will tell in this situation.

Place and Family. While the ending of the farm weighed on his mind, I wanted to ask him a little more about how his family has played a role in the farm. An immeasurable source of information came from Tony's great-uncle, who lived into his 90's and saw a majority of the change around the farm and the communities. This man was a resource for Tony, not just as a child, but also as an adult when Tony took over the farm:

[T] My great uncle was, I enjoyed visiting with him at the end of his lifetime, I was older and I able to appreciate more of the history that he could teach me and you know, he would tell stories about when they were first out here, well there weren't the roads you saw and when winter came, they had to have everything ready so they could survive the winter, they would literally let the horses go and they would come back in the spring, you know, so they worked together, more closely the people out on the farms, there was a farm every half mile, so that, that has stuck in my head as a story that helped me get to where I am today, I recognize if they had... imagine how harsh it was back then, there were no trees, they burned coal for heat, my great uncle would talk about walking down to the coal mines just five or six miles south of here as he was growing up to make a little extra money and, that's how they heated their homes, there were no trees and there were nothing and when I think about that how difficult life was...

This is a story that Tony uses with his children (whether or not they understand yet...) but the importance of telling these stories highlights the struggle and hard work that went into creating a sustainable farm. I asked Tony if he was reminded of this story when he was out on the farm and whether or not he bridges the gap between his great-uncle and his own kids:

[I] Do you find yourself being kind of reminded of where your family came from when you're out in these places?

[T] Oh definitely! I think about it a lot and I talk about it a lot, when we're complaining about a cold snap or, you know, like the one we had this year that was a month and half long, I think about when they were first over there in their ramshackle houses that weren't insulated or heated the way ours are, they didn't have trees, and they didn't have the mode to get out of there... I think about it a lot, about how difficult that life, life was and how stubborn they had to be to tough it out... so yeah, I do think about it.

[I] Do you feel that it is important to develop a sense of place with your kids? In relation to the farm and relation to the town, your families' history, do you feel that it is something that is important for you to maintain and develop?

[T] Yeah... definitely, I want my kids to understand that hopefully this is, to them at some point, they'll reap some benefit from it, you know, financially, and I don't want it to be just that, I want them to recognize all the hard work and sweat... blood sweat, and tears it took to get to the point where, where

they... it's not--- it didn't come easy, I need them to understand those struggles that it took to get what we have today...

This is a common sentiment across my participants (and probably most farmers in general), the idea that they want to get across what it took to get the farm to where it is now. This seems important in maintaining this sense of place and Tony understands that and works to remind anyone who will listen about the struggle it took to get to today.

While Tony is the primary farmer of the family, he does have siblings who still feel connected to this place, and while they are not able to be out on the farm full-time, they still maintain their contact with these places, going back to when they were young. When talking about family and these places, Tony remarked:

[T] I have two brothers and one sister and specifically, one brother is a year younger than I am and then one is about 10 years younger, my sister is somewhere between there, but specifically my brother that is a year younger than I am and myself, we spent our whole childhood out here, soon as we were able to help on the farm we were out in this area helping. We had cattle at the time, so we would help make hay and the day-to-day workings of the grain farm that, that mainly was what we did back then, it wasn't very diverse, it was mainly wheat that we grew you know, durum and barley, and so from, from as long as I can remember I've spent my life out here, that farm right over there was my grandfather's and you know, it was just, it's always been a part of who I am.

[T] There's the remembrance of my brothers and I, especially the one a year younger than myself, walking around with our bb guns and we would roam, roam out here without any supervision, there was no concern, it was just, come back before dark! Or you know, we'd get on our snowmobiles and grandpa would always tell us, "don't go any further than you can walk back!" There was a little bit less adult supervision, but we also learned, maybe grew up a little quicker or learned to be self-sufficient a little quicker.

These stories show that Tony and his siblings have a deeper connection to the farm and the places that are important to their family. Even though they grew up in town, they spent as much time as they were able to out on the farm, helping out and learning the lifestyle. I had asked him, if it were possible, would his siblings want to come back and farm? Not just farm, but to work the land of their family:

[T] I think... they have the same connection to this place, if they were involved in an operation and there was some seismic shift in agriculture and it afforded them the possibility to come back, I think they'd want to participate in this land, and obviously we have to have more for three people, yeah, it's not just about agriculture to them either, my one brother, like I told you before, still comes back to help with harvest every year, and it's because of the memories he has of this place, of growing up out here, so yeah... ultimately it wouldn't, they would want to be connected to this farm...

This highlights the sense of place that Tony and his siblings (especially his one brother) feel towards this place, the fact that Tony believes he would want to come back and farm

if he was able to, highlights that this is a deep connection to the places related to his family, the places that are important to him.

However, staying out on the family farm is not all without its potential problems. One aspect that Tony has discussed already is the dwindling populations, both in the rural towns and in the countryside. The question becomes, how much longer until this becomes a problem, not just for him, but for his kids. Already, they are missing some aspects that other kids will get to enjoy as they grow older. When asked about how the loss of place and people affects his connection to place, Tony said:

[T] I didn't really think of that until after the children and recognizing there weren't the same type of things that made the place special to me when I was a kid, there's still some of it, don't get me wrong, but a lot of it has disappeared and now I'm like... sometimes I feel bad for my kids... am I doing the right thing for them, being so stubborn and staying here, are they going to miss out on some of those things... you and I talked about baseball and it's a big memory of mine. Hell, how long is there going to be baseball teams in this area anymore and will my son have that opportunity in life by staying here and I'm not sure... That's how it's affected me with the loss of people and how I feel about this place...

The idea that Tony keeping hold on his sense of place may deprive his children of experiences as they grow up must be a hard thing to hold. It's obvious that Tony struggles with this notion of whether it is the right thing to do to stay and farm and keep that familial sense of place going, or pull up stakes and move to a place that might afford his children more chances to succeed. This takes on a larger role when you think of rural

communities in general, are we depriving our children of experiences in order to hold on to something that we may never truly get back? Or is it worth holding on to these places in hopes that, one day, they may serve us again?

Despite the worries that the future may bring, Tony is still heavily invested in the farm and maintaining a sense of place, not only for him, but for his family. He does that by instilling a sense of place in his young son, using the stories he learned over time:

[T] Every time I'm out in the field, or on the farm with my young son, who can understand... I try to just instill into him... tell him a few little things that he can understand at this point, and I intend to do that for the rest of my life. When we're out now today, I try to tell him little historical facts about the place and as he understands more, definitely, that's important to me for him to once again understand the struggles to get this and appreciate that... we have a unique lifestyle, I mean, I don't think there's anybody, anywhere, who got to experience it for a few years, and it wasn't for the financial aspect of it wouldn't enjoy it, you know the wide open spaces, the physical labor is actually, it's fun to be your own boss, and kind of control your own destiny at times... that would be something that I'd always do with my children is make sure that they know where they came from...

Regardless of the future of the farm, Tony is still working to instill a strong sense of place in his son (and younger daughter) through the telling of stories and historical notes, anything to build a wonder in his son for the farm and the farm life. Whether or not they will be able to farm when they grow up or not, Tony's children will always have the memories and the stories to keep them connected to this place. Tony also highlights the

rewarding aspect of his lifestyle, how the hard work on the farm can yield great results and that you “...kind of control your own destiny...” as he displays a romanticized view of the farmer and farm life.

One aspect of the place-building that I asked Tony about was whether this (telling stories) as something that he experienced when he was younger being around his father and great-uncle. For that, Tony had two different responses that were shaped by the role each person had. When asked whether his father and great-uncle emphasized the importance of these places, Tony said:

[T] Did they emphasize the importance of place? I'd like to say yes, but I think that would be a lie. I think that my dad was probably too busy with life to really [laughing] talk about that type of thing, I'm not saying we don't work hard today, we do, but things are a little more automated right? So, you spent your day, well with hard labor... harder labor 25 years ago compared to today, so I think he was so probably consumed with, with just work and getting by in general, and we had some cattle too besides the land we farmed that, uh... it wasn't, it wasn't a topic he talked a lot about, you know, and then he died fairly young, and I think you get a little more introspective as you get older.

[T] Now my great uncle, I should... I should change my mind on that, as you know, that might be part of it too, when I came home and started farming, he was old... he was an old man, he was in his 90s like I told you before, but I was also older, so I understood more of the importance of probably place and the history of the farm and whatever, and we talked a

lot more at that stage about that type of thing... I liked to ask him a lot about the way things were with him growing up, like I said, they settled that farm in 1912, so... he did, probably talk about the importance of place and... like I said, my father, never really got around to that before he passed way.

This is interesting when you think of Tony's role today with his kids, he doesn't have a great-uncle to be the storyteller, but he recognizes the importance of having stories about these places and the influence they have on sense of place in people. In this case, Tony has to play both roles, making ends meet and making sure his children understand where they came from. I asked Tony about this, about whether or not he has embraced both roles with his children as they don't, and won't, have a great-uncle to pass along the stories about the family and the places that are important to them. When I asked Tony about whether he saw it as important to maintain both of those roles with his kids, he said:

[T] I probably haven't ever really contemplated it until now but yeah, I think those two roles, yes I will meld together and probably have already, I mean, once again, I'm kind of a little bit older father, for having started and just being a little bit older and realizing that, that life is precious and there isn't a lot of time really, I've kind of probably instilled those ideas into my kids earlier than like were instilled in me, just because, once again, having, having the benefit of time to become a little more aware of the world or whatever, affords me that opportunity to give the kids the knowledge and, you know, take the time to not only explain what it takes to make a farm

operate, but the broader ideology of what this place means to us and our family.

Tony has assumed both roles, one of the man trying to make the farm financially viable, as well as the role of the storyteller, as he puts it, "...to make our farm operate, but the broader ideology of what this place means to us and our family." highlights his understanding of the importance of having both of those roles present for his children, as well as what having both of those roles present with him helped Tony to see the farm for more than just making money.

I asked Tony about his thoughts on the future of the land and what he would want his children to do with these places if they were not able to, or interested in, farming. This becomes an important question about taking care of the land and what future generations, who might not be physically located on the land, do with and for these 'places. Tony talks about the options for him and his children regarding these places moving forward:

[T] You hear about trusts all the time that are set up to try and extend the length that the land stays in the family... so yeah, that would be great if I just have two children, so they could possibly make that work where it would be a revenue stream to rent it out and they'd still have the connection if they like to hunt they could come back and hunt or if they just want... like I said I envision that they're not gonna have the opportunity probably to live here, but if they want to come back and have the feel of what it was like growing up here, they could hopefully be afforded that opportunity, so yeah, I hope they keep it, or hope that they have the possibility, and I'm also a realist and realize that the one caveat to the whole conversation is I think

that part of what we have today with the degradation of this area is that exact thing. You have people that live out of state and they own this property, and I'm not sure they necessarily have that connection to the place, but they're keeping it, they're keeping the land and when they decide who they're gonna rent it to or sell it to, they're not connected to the place necessarily, so they're gonna take the highest dollar, and that is part of the reason that you've seen more and more farms disappear, so with that point, if my children were never going to come back here and they didn't have that kind of connection, I probably just assume they'd found another young farmer who did, and sell the land to him or whatever....

In this case, Tony shows that he understands the reality of the situation. Again, he says that he does not expect that his children will necessarily have the same opportunities to live and work on the farm, but what they do with the land has as much to do with their connections to it. Tony makes it seem like living away from these places and not having a connection to them is almost as bad as neglecting these places outright and if his children are not able to develop that sense of place, he would rather they rent the land off to someone, not just the highest bidder, but someone who will treat the land as he and his family have done for generations. Tony is already seeing that with land that is in his family, but not owned by him personally. As we drove around the countryside, I asked him about some of the land that was owned by his mother's family, land that he would like to purchase, but may not be able to when the time comes:

[T] ...it just dilutes through time and the people that own it now, even though they're relatives, they don't live out here, a lot of them don't even

live in state anymore, so it becomes easy for them just to unload it, they're not connected to it... so when that day comes, if I'm not able to purchase it, which, I don't know, it's looking fairly unlikely, looking at what prices of land go for around here and the fact that once again, you have these people that are disconnected from this land and all they care about is the dollars. And I don't even blame them really, it's sad and I don't think that the generations before succeeded out here with that same mentality, a lot of them, almost all of them got some type of break from someone and that doesn't exist anymore, it's top dollar, take it or leave it...

In this case, Tony explains that the land his family owns may not stay in the family too much longer and that the people who own the land now may be more willing to sell it to whomever would pay the most for it, rather than keep it in the family. As Tony says, he understands why, when people are no longer connected to this land the familial bonds that were created in those places are broken down, "...dilutes through time..." and giving breaks to smaller farmers just does not happen anymore.

Place and Education. A topic that Tony and I discussed was the ability to use these places to teach, not just teaching agriculture, but what it means to be a good person. Tony told me a few stories related to times and places that he learned, one place and event in particular involved the grain elevators:

[T] When I think of the grain elevator in the days old, everybody was hauling grain with a single axel truck and they were lot, the elevators themselves were a lot slower, so harvest time you'd end up with a line of trucks out to the road darn near and there were no roll tarps, if you know

what a roll tarp is... one person can take the tarp off the truck, back then you literally folded it up and you had a tarp strap you'd connect, people would help one another, the farmer in front would get out and help the guy behind him and vice versa and there was just more of, maybe a sense that everyone worked close, everyone worked together whether it was their farm or not, now today, it's more of an individual type thing, there isn't that same community of farmers...

[I] I'm assuming that you'll use that story as a teaching tool, a place that you learn, but also a teaching event to teach your kids or other people about what it means to be connected to these places and what it means to be a farmer...

[T] Definitely... I want my little boy to have the same experience... driving to the elevator, you know... it's life in general and I know we call it progress, but I'm not sure it is... when I was a kid, when you went to the elevator you went with your dad, you hopped out, you had a pop, it took a long time to dump the grain, you visited with people, today it's more of a machine... you drive in... half the places you don't even have to communicate with anyone, maybe one guy in the driveway, you lift the truck box all the way up all goes the grain, off you go, and there's not that same sense of community in those, in those environments... so yeah, it's gonna be hard to tell him about that experience, because it's going to go away, it's going to continue to move towards faster and faster, more automation, fewer people and that's another thing that I think is a detriment to what we are out here... not having those connections in places like that...

These are the realities that Tony is facing when it comes to developing a sense of place, which makes it harder to do when technology and progress change the personal dynamics and the connections to place that people have. When Tony was younger, it took longer to unload grain, which meant you usually had time to talk with the people at the elevator, whether they were workers or other farmers, but you had the opportunity to develop connections to each other, connections to that place, and connections to what it meant to be a farmer. As a kid myself, going to those elevators were usually where I was told the best jokes!

As we drove through the small town where Tony was raised, we talked about the loss of sense of place as the community underwent a change from being primarily agriculturally minded to something that even Tony wasn't able to explain:

[T] Small communities have suffered as well, that little community [his town], good, bad, or otherwise, what I remember it as, was a community of farmers, people that worked for farmers, and people that worked for the elevator... today I was driving around there, I may have told you this before, there isn't a single farmer that lives in town, so it's changed the makeup of the community, it's changed the type, the feel of comradery, you used to go into the local watering hole when it was raining and sit around at three in the afternoon and just, talk about how your farm was doing, where you were in progress, today for example it's raining, 20 years past that bar [as we drove by an old abandoned bar] would have been filled by three o'clock and guys would have been talking about how many acres they've have to go and what they've got in...

This highlights that lamentation and concern that Tony has, not only for the future of his own farm and small town, but rural North Dakota as a whole. The changing demographics or diminishing populations of these communities have wide-spread effects that can alter or end a town by starting a cascade of non-stop decline. Tony talked about the now-closed bar as an after-effect of the shifting population, without the farmers around, there were not enough people to keep the bar running, which caused the local café to close as well, an event that is common in rural North Dakota.

Our last topic continued on this idea of education and how Tony will work to make sure that his son, as he grows, learns as much as he can about farming, but also learns about what it means to be a farmer and what it meant to Tony to live and work in a community. The experiences that Tony grew up with are no longer there, at least not at the level when he was younger. Tony laments about not having the resources available today that were around years ago, but vows to continue to help his son (and eventually his daughter) learn:

[T] In agriculture, you kind of learn by doing, it was this field [pointing out his window], or it was fairly close to here was when I first learned how to plant, and it's just, you constantly learn a little... for me it was never all at once, it was you learned this, and you learned that... and there's something I am thinking about right now, that's another problem with farms disappearing, because when I first moved home, I had a good understanding of what it took to physically do the job, but I'd never decided fertilizer rates, seeding rates... any of those types of things, and I was 23 years old and whatever, and I learned most of what I learned through going

to town and talking to the guys at the garage or the elevator, you know farmers that I knew had farmed forever and were good farmers and I respected so... that was so, that's how you learned and that's why it's important to have those friends and neighbors... yeah as my son gets older, he'll learn the tricks of the trade as they are today and they're different... there was no GPS when I was a kid, you just had to drive straight, just so many things that are more comfortable and make life easier, yeah... I also want them to realize that it's... technology is good and bad, once again, if it wasn't so easy for one guy... I farm more than my dad did and he had two, almost always two full time guys and the two of us older boys and we worked hard... it took all of us to make this happen and today I do it myself and I have an older retired guy that helps me a little bit here and there, so I think the kids... it will be a good thing to let them know that it wasn't always like this and, it hasn't necessarily... it's been good and bad, and it hasn't necessarily been good for the area... if it took more hands to do this job or to farm this country, we'd have more small towns and more people living out here still...

The idea that you are able to farm more land with fewer people is seen as a good and a bad thing. The fewer people needed on the farm means fewer people in those small towns, and fewer resources to lean on when needed. As previously explained, the advancement in agricultural technology can also lead to a decline in the rural world as fewer people are needed to farm more land, that becomes fewer people at the bars and cafes and stores. However, these technological advances, as Tony says, allows him to

farm more than his father did with only a little bit of help, something that, if his children do decide to farm, would make that more of a possibility, but only if the resources are available to them.

Throughout this narrative, the stories that Tony has told have shown someone who understands that there is importance in maintaining place, not only for his own family's survival in the area, but for the area as a whole. His understanding of what it means to lose these places is important to highlight. Whether or not this is actually achievable remains to be seen, as Tony is not too optimistic about the future of small, family farming in rural North Dakota, but he has demonstrated that he will remain a defiant curator of place until the last possible minute. As Tony said, it would take a seismic shift in policy to change the current path and make agriculturally-based small towns viable again, but Tony knows that, whether or not these towns and farms survive, the stories and the connections to these places should be maintained and passed on to the following generations. I feel the need to bring this quote back as it sums up what Tony is thinking in terms of maintaining his sense of place and why he continues to fight:

[T] ... if you see something like that become unoccupied and dilapidated it's like a little piece of you dies, your history dies and that what we're, and in a broader aspect, that's what I'm out here fighting for is to keep those parts of rural America, rural North Dakota alive because, once again it just feels like a little bit of death, it feels like you're not important anymore in some way shape for form. Your way of life isn't, or it didn't ever mean anything maybe when it's totally abandoned...

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION

This chapter takes the four separate narrative accounts of these farmers and their experiences with place and constructs one single idea of what experiencing physical place means to them and how this understanding might fit within agricultural education. This involves analyzing both the similarities and the differences in their accounts to find that common thread that appears throughout each account. Another important aspect to consider is how Relph's definitions of space fit within these narratives. Throughout the individual stories, each of these places occupied different (and sometimes multiple) levels of space. The differences in their accounts are not discarded however, as it is important to understand that we all experience and interpret things differently. What I am trying to understand is what 'place' means to each of these people and how they view their role as a family farmer and an informal educator and how this could be applied to formal education. In this case, how each participant experiences 'place' influences their various roles; as a farmer, as a family member (the head of the family farm), and as a citizen of their home area. This is in essence the role of the 'curator of place' and this role is integral to the development and maintenance of the family farm. Each of these roles is dependent on connecting to the physical places around them and each role is important to maintain and ensure the next generation is ready to assume that role.

Project Goals

As stated previously, the overall goal of this research is to understand how multi-generational family farmers in North Dakota experience place, how they story these experiences, and how their sense of place may play a role in agricultural education.

Specifically, the research questions set out for this project were as follows:

- How do multi-generational family farmers personally experience place?
- How do these farmers incorporate their lived experiences and stories into their understanding of sense of place?
- What are the stories that they tell regarding this?

Finally, the conclusion of this research is how can we bring the idea of sense of place into agricultural education? Currently, there is no published research into the use or implementation of sense of place into agricultural education and this research hopes to provide that initial foray into the idea through answering the above stated research questions. My project goals were accomplished by interviewing various multi-generational family farmers around the state of North Dakota. With each participant, their perceptions of place, the histories and their connections to these places were examined through the telling of stories. Ultimately, what was accomplished within this research study were individual narratives for each participant, with all four narratives weaved into a single, succinct understanding of sense of place.

Within the context of research about place, the idea of sense of place is couched around attachment to physical places and the meanings behind those attachments (Kudryavtsev 2012) and this section involves my interpretation of these narratives. The preceding results chapters highlighted the voice of the participants, harkening back to

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and this chapter will highlight the voice of the researcher and through the recommendations section, the voice of the audience.

With this research project the first question is, did these participants exhibit a strong sense of place? Yes, they did! The way in which each of these participants spoke of *their* places highlighted the attachment and meaning they applied to the places around them. The two components that make up sense of place as identified by Kudryavtsev (2012) are place attachment and place meaning and I used these concepts to help frame my own understanding of the narratives. Thus, I developed an interpretive framework in which these fundamental components of place attachment and place meaning can be imagined as the foundation to a “farmhouse,” with agricultural "sense of place" as the roof. With these two elements of the “farmhouse” in mind, I examined the findings to determine the following question, how do we support the roof? There are four walls (themes) that have appeared organically throughout each individual narrative and each serve the purpose of connecting one of these ‘roles’ within sense of place to create a complete farmhouse. These four common ideas (walls) revolve around the participants experiences, framed within a certain lens (role as a farmer, family, education...) that are the basis of my analysis and serve to support the “roof” that is their specific sense of place and the farmhouse, an agricultural sense of place. Their experiences with places connect the "place attachment" part with the roof, as you cannot have a sense of place with places you have never experienced. The other walls (role as a farmer, family, and role as an educator) all correspond to "place meaning" as they are events that led directly to explaining the place attachment and serve to create the other three walls of the farmhouse. The focus of analysis of these narratives is on both through narrative inquiry

and thematic analysis to gain a full understanding of how each of these walls work to hold up this roof. The individual stories that were told are all part of each participant's narrative and need to be analyzed on their own, but the overarching themes that appeared throughout each interview help to drive the potential for implementation within structured agricultural education.

The subsequent sections in the discussion work towards building this farmhouse, and our understanding of sense of place and how it might be used within formal (and informal) education. The first wall highlights the shared experiences that each participant had, and each subsequent wall will help to highlight the meaning behind that experience and subsequent attachment. Within this study, I highlight that each wall is a pathway for the two components to achieve sense of place, they highlight the attachment and the meaning of these places to the individuals. This is done to give the two terms associated with sense of place (place attachment and place meaning) 'life'; to take open concepts such as "attachment" and "meaning" and fill them with significance grounded in concrete experiences, providing a picture of what sense of place means in regard to these individual experiences.

My plan here is not to create a strict formula or law that leads to sense of place, but to highlight (and guide) how sense of place is created through these two components, place attachment and place meaning which make up the foundation, and the four walls within the family farmer to prop up the 'roof'; the sense of place in each person. How does this relate to agricultural education? Is sense of place something that is worth incorporating within agricultural education? Farming is an occupation that requires sense of place in order to prosper, you cannot expect to spend the time and effort on the farm

with no attachment to these places (and people). Previous research into sense of place shows that increasing attachment to place increases an individual's *want* to preserve that place as illustrated in Kaltenborn (1998). Since family farms are usually multi-generational (all in this study are) preserving a person's attachment to place and their want to preserve that place could play an important role in maintaining the family farm.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the multiple interviews with each participant are formed around these four walls that have appeared across each participant. While I analyzed each narrative individually, I was also concerned with the larger narrative across the participants and identifying commonalities that existed within their stories. What I wanted to achieve was a picture of this farmhouse related to how these individuals experience sense of place, essentially building the "farmhouse" with these walls. Each of these walls focuses on those participants' connection with place in relation to their own experiences, their role as a farmer, their family, and their role as an informal agricultural educator. These four walls, taken together, serve as a way to understand common themes embedded in the individual stories of place, and allow us a starting point to understand how sense of place is perceived in the family farmer. With this research, I have attempted to piece together an idea of what sense of place looks like with these family farmers, both individually and in composite. In agriculture, *place* is everything, it is where you live and work and a strong attachment to these places is important in developing a farming family that will stand the test of time. By tying in Relph's levels of space, we can begin to understand why place is everything to farmers and agriculture, and it is not just because that is where they make their money. These places occupy different

meanings in different people and different situations, which is why it is hard to tear down old, dilapidated buildings or give up on long-closed down churches. What I want to show with this research is that 'place' plays a role in the cultural/social/historical aspects of agricultural and highlight how place can be valuable to agricultural education to incorporate sense of place into its curriculum. One theme that came up throughout these interviews was the fact that these participants had not thought of their own sense of place until we started talking, it was just foundational to what they did. This speaks back to Relph (1976) and his understanding of the various levels of 'space'. Two of those levels are the primordial and the perceptual 'space', both of which exist on a level that cannot always be outwardly explained, which is what I believe is happening here. Listening to Lane speak of the county church down the road from his own home highlights that unexplained connection. While I understood that their connections to place were not taken for granted, I felt as though each participant did not fully understand the implications of developing and maintaining their sense of place. It seemed at times that they were so busy trying to keep their farm running smoothly that they didn't have the luxury of thinking about their connections to place on a philosophical and cultural/historical level. Agricultural education, both formal and informal, is focused on the quantitative goal of increasing crop yields, fighting off crop and animal diseases and implementing new technologies, which could ultimately lead to forgetting about that deep connection that farmers have towards their places. Because of that, the goal beyond the stated objectives is to understand sense of place from this vantage point and find ways to incorporate sense of place into formal and informal agricultural education, an aspect that has not been examined thoroughly which can help accentuate their own goals in keeping

their farms running well into the future. The last section of this chapter will include recommendations on how sense of place might fit within agricultural education by relating it to other pedagogies that utilize sense of place.

The first of these ‘farmhouse-creating walls’ looks at how these farmers experience place, the common themes among them and what information about their sense of place we can draw from it. The second wall looks at how these participants view their ‘places’ and their role as farmers. One theme that emerged was the struggle of maintaining the family farm as the cost of farming increases and family sizes decrease. Keske et al (2017) highlighted that farming-dependent residents in the Intermountain West expressed a greater concern about threats to their way of live by population changes. The third wall builds off the second and examines the role that these participant’s families played in connecting them to their places. This looks at both the family that came before the participant and the family that came after. In each of these cases, it was multi-generational family farmers, people whose families have been living and working on the land, these same places, for generations. Three of the four participants in this research project also have grown children who are following in their footsteps and this research investigates how families play a role in developing sense of place. The final wall examines the informal education that occurs within these places and participants, both from a teaching and learning point of view. As these participants grew up on and around these farms, they were taught by their family in the same places that they have now taught the subsequent generations, and the goal is to understand how place played a role in that informal education.

Each of these walls are analyzed by looking at the common themes that occurred throughout their interviews, however, I also analyzed these four walls through narrative inquiry following the lead of Jean Clandinin et al., (2007). As stated previously, narrative inquiry focuses on three main components, temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin et al 2007), with place being present throughout each theme as the connector, and temporality and sociality as influencers. As the authors stated, “In narrative inquiry, it is important to always try to understand people, places, and events as in process, as always in transition (pg. 23)”, as the commonplaces are temporality, sociality, and place. This gives a three-dimensional view of each individual narrative, seating them within the past, the present, and the future in regard to their experiences with these places. This understanding is key when examining the first wall and these participant’s experience with their places over time as their ‘places’ are not static, they are experienced over many years and with the participants themselves in many roles (child, parent, grandparent...) This is similar to the second wall, where their experiences as farmers, their experiences with their man-made agricultural places as well as the natural places, can be framed within sociality commonplace that Clandinin et al (2007) speak of, “they draw attention to the existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise that form each individual’s context (pg. 23).”

The third wall in this case, focuses on each of the three ‘commonplaces’ as described by Clandinin et al (2007), which focuses on the past and how it influences the future. Each of these participants are hoping to pass on their family legacy to the next generation (some have started, and some might never get the chance), but each of these three commonplaces play a role in understanding that. It is important to look at how

these participants view their connections to place and how they have developed and maintained that connection for the future generations. The fourth wall, their views as an informal educator, focuses on all three commonplaces, as well as all three previous walls, as their education, both as a learner and as a teacher, were influenced by each of these commonplaces. They learned in the very places they are now teaching (or taught, or hope to teach) and are taking the temporal ‘lessons’ they have learned in their past experiences with these places and bringing them to the present so they will be available for the future. The social aspect of this is just as strong, as they were learning from their family, not just how to be a farmer, but what it means to be a *farmer in that place*, and that involves the social dynamic roles of being the head of the family, of being located in a place with neighbors and townspeople and elevator employees and farm insurance agents... They need to ensure that their children and grandchildren understand the importance of the social connections to these places as much as the importance of their agricultural skills.

Ultimately, this work pieces together an overall idea of these participant’s sense of place and relate it to current (and future) educational practices with the hopes of finding a home for sense of place in agricultural education. A recent review by McKim et al (2019) highlights the need, as well as the pathway, to molding agricultural education into a more, place-based style of learning. They expound on the importance of utilizing place in education, but do not go in-depth into how sense of place may play a role in establishing that connection to place. In the final section of this chapter, I will go into detail about how the findings from this research could be implemented and established within agricultural education. Within the framework of narrative inquiry, the goal of this

research was also to highlight the importance of constructing these narratives and the power they hold within the family structure and informal education. Each of these walls consist of themes that can be utilized within formal education, but also as a whole, within the construction of an individual's narrative.

The first wall: emplaced history. The stories that Marvin told in relation to his experiences with the places that were important to him painted a picture of someone who loved living the farm life. Walking around his farm with him you could tell that he was deeply connected to his 'places' so much that even though he worked off the farm for the majority of his life, his view of retirement was moving back to the farm and picking up where he left off 40 years ago. As he said Marvin had, "...no intentions of not coming back..." The story that he told about the barn and how they would put the hay up, these are experiences with places that are still with Marvin 40 years later and are important pieces that built his sense of place. I found it amazing that, after 100+ years, the original farmhouse is still standing on the farm, though not necessarily in the best shape, but his connection to that place and the history behind it, keeps it there... for now. I see this farmhouse as a metaphor for the model developed through this research, as creating a farmhouse of sense of place education can help center a student around their places by serving as that focal point.

With Joel, he never saw himself doing anything else, except being in these 'places' like the trees in the field. Most people wouldn't look twice at a pair of oak trees out in the middle of a field, but for Joel, those trees are as important as the farmland itself. For Joel and his family, their experiences with place also extended into the natural habitat, with a river running through his farm, they were able to enjoy the natural places

as much as the manmade and the stories that Joel told about their 'deer habitat' and his experiences with the river as a youth were very powerful in developing his sense of place. Experiences with manmade places, such as the story about the abandoned farmhouse that burned down, "...I ate some lunches in there and things like that too, and that's good memories..." helped to build that connection to place.

Tony felt that keeping a sense of place was keeping his (and presumably others) history alive, "Your way of life isn't or didn't ever mean anything when it's totally abandoned." His experience with his places had enough of an effect that, to him, preserving place was tantamount to preserving himself. In his case, Tony has a helper on his farm, but this person is a helper in another way too, as he lives in, and maintains, the farmhouse, "...I appreciate that because, if it wasn't for him, that house would be abandoned and I don't want to see that..." this again, highlights the importance of place and the experiences to these farmers. Tony's thoughts about what it means to lose these places is clear, regarding the farmhouse, "...if you see something like that become unoccupied and dilapidated it's like a little piece of you dies, your history dies..." This is a recurring thought throughout the narratives that these farmers are trying to maintain these places in order to maintain their own history and that of their family.

Lane felt it was his duty to preserve the memories of these places, even when no one else cared. In one case, he talked about a house that never belonged to his family until it was dilapidated, but still he wanted to keep the stories of these places, and his experiences alive, "I think that these people who worked and put their blood and sweat into it, deserve that as a memory, you know, that's their contribution to mankind and... you know, my responsibility because I know there is no... maybe nobody else that

could... keep that alive and it... it, you know the buck stops with me, if I don't do it, I know nobody will.” A term that I alluded to in their narratives that I want to highlight here again is ‘curator of place’. This term refers to people who see it as their role (formally or in this case, informally) to preserve sense of place for themselves and others by keeping and passing on stories. Their experience with these places plays a direct connection to their roles as a curator of place. A farmer needs to become the curator of these places, not just from the agricultural standpoint, but in charge of maintaining and preserving the history and culture that is directly imprinted on and derived from that place. That deep connection and experience with, and of, the land is vital for a farmer to maintain the life-long commitment needed to run a farm, not just for their life, but to ensure that it remains a viable business for generations to come. The emplaced knowledge that is gained from experience and the emplaced knowledge of those that came before them is essential in creating a sense of place as it connects these farmers with the history of *their* land and ultimately they become part of the narrative, part of the long-line of family farmers that are connected to that place. Each of these participants understood their ‘temporal’ connections to these places, they are not experienced once and never again, but experienced over many decades and through different roles.

The second wall: place and the practice of farming. The second wall focuses on the intersection of their sense of place and their role as farmers. As stated above, a connection to physical place is very important to a farmer and a part of this research was to understand how the farmer views place when framed around agriculture. This idea of being a ‘farmer’ is something that is ingrained in them, it’s not just a job, but a lifestyle, as Marvin stated, “...I’m not getting rich or anything, but I mean I’m doing what I’ve

always wanted to do and I've got to come back and do it." The key word there is *back*, Marvin got to come back to the places that were important for him to do what he loved. Marvin, like the other participants, has to walk this fine line between maintaining their sense of place by maintaining physical 'places' with running a viable farming business, sometimes that comes to a head when it means tearing down old buildings (old places) and building new ones in order to keep the farm running. This highlights an important role that the curator of place needs to fill, making the hard decisions, but also ensuring that the memories, and stories are still around.

Joel's story about the grasshoppers in the field plays a distinct role in cultivating his sense of place and his role as a farmer, that field will forever be linked with that event. The connection to place and story is important to the farmer, as Joel told the story of the flooding and the cattle, it is important to link the events that occurred to that specific place, as a farmer, whose role it is to care for the land and the animals on that land, his connection to place is built on farming experiences like that. An important role of the farmer is the caretaker of the land and that means, sometimes doing something counterintuitive, like making it harder to farm. As Joel said about the two lone oak trees, "...well most people in this day and age would never farm around them, but we do and that's the way it will continue..." In this specific case, the role of the farmer dictates the preservation of place over the financial benefit. Another important part of Joel's story is the granary. This links anyone who visits it to the role of the farmer and the importance of that building on the farm. The fact that, instead of replacing this building, they would refurbish it, to take a piece of the bygone farm, the heart of it, and turn it into something

that can live on and be shared by Joel and his family shows, again, how Joel (and others) are curating place by passing along these experiences to the next generation.

As Tony says, "...a lot of farmers have eliminated tree row after tree row because it's hard to farm around, I've actually planted some... it leaves something to preserve the opportunity for wildlife..." This is a sentiment held by the other participants in this study, that as *curators of place*, their job is not just to maintain a farm, but to maintain the places that the farm inhabits. This was important to Tony, who left work in Fargo to return to the farm to keep it going, for however long it will be possible, because he understood the importance of the farm, "...it was a passion that I had grown up with and always wanted to be able to do..." Another important point that appeared in multiple narratives was the idea that farming wasn't a job, "Us kids just loved being out here and being part of the operation..." This idea passes along an important point, that farmers do feel as though it is not necessarily a job, it could be enjoyable, or a calling, but it is something deep. This is an important trait that a farmer needs to have in order to be successful, but also to shoulder the down years as much as enjoying the up years.

The idea of being connected to their places as farmers is evident in the last bits of what Lane spoke about. When he talked about how if he liquidated his farm and sent the money to his cousin, he would be far richer than if he stayed a farmer, he spoke so dismissively of it, it felt as though to even mention it was offensive to him. Lane was an interesting storyteller, as his connections to farming and place were not always known, even to him, but existed on a very deep level, trying to preserve the history and culture of agriculture, even if no one cared to hear it. When it came to the old farmhouse and the story about the truck driver and his wife or the story about preserving the church, I asked

Lane why he thought it was important to tell these stories and he shrugged and said he didn't know why it was important. You could tell that he was struggling with an answer as to why remembering these places was important, but there was something deep inside him on an emotional and primordial level that felt it was important. The fact that he tells stories about agriculture and these places to complete strangers, again regardless of whether they want to hear it, is indicative of his role as a *curator of place*. His role as curator expands to maintaining the cultural and natural history of these places, along with preserving the physical land. Lane's interest in preserving history and culture by sharing the stories of these places, and the farmers who lived and worked the land (Lane included) is indicative of the sense of place he has. Each of these participants understood that their roles extended beyond just planting crops or raising cattle and making a profit, but that the very act of having their farms meant that they inhabited certain roles related to these places. The physical preservation of natural lands did not necessarily benefit them as farmers, but it served them in other ways. The preservation of old buildings, of houses that were abandoned long ago by people long forgotten or of churches that have not held a service in over 60 years are done because of the social aspect. These farmers are not on an island (though it may seem like it compared to 100 years ago) but they live within communities, and despite how sparse they may be these days, still entail that social aspect that is important to staying connected to your places.

The third wall: the family past, present, and future. Another important part of the family farmer is the role of the family and all four participants had strong family members who, whether they understood at the time, instilled sense of place into them. As none of these participants were the 'founders' of their farms, examining how their family

(both those that came before and those that come after) plays a role in their understanding and connection to place is incredibly important. It is also hard to be a multi-generational family farmer without multiple generations and a family, so understanding their role in passing down the farm to the next generation is important and developing the sense of place in that generation ensures the survival of their farm. Throughout my discussions with each of these participants, their connections to their family and their places was evident.

The effects that their families had on them and how that translated to sense of place was quite apparent, as Joel spoke about his uncle on his deathbed and his want for Joel to take care of the farm, "...squeeze my hand and he did. So, it's just been really *the place*, as you're gonna call it, has been really, extremely important to the generations to our family." Joel saw it as something he needed to do to stay connected to his family, and as a result, stay connected to the places that are important to his family. In Joel's case, you can see the opposite problem that occurs with a lack of sense of place in the worry that his children will be the last generation to farm. This highlights a key component of this research, to show that having a strong sense of place is necessary for farming. Joel talks of his grandson as a bright kid, but he does not have the "core feeling for the farm, for the land" and without that core feeling (attachment) it is hard to place a meaning.

For Lane, when talking about the house that his grandfather had built (and that Lane is planning on razing), he speaks of the bittersweet memories and how he plans to keep the place alive for his children and grandchildren, so that his family will stay connected to these places. It also speaks to the connection from generation to generation

that Lane's son and daughter-in-law built their home on the same site as Lane's grandfather continues that connection to place, in both Lane's son, but in Lane as well, as he now visits his grandchildren in the same *place* that he visited his grandparents. Events in the stories that Lane would tell highlighted his connection to places and the role family plays. The story about his father being afraid of heights and Lane having to open the bin, "...my dad couldn't even look at me..." is a story that seems trivial in terms of connecting people to places, but it's important to Lane and it's a neat little story that connects him to his father. Out of all the participants, I felt Lane had the best grasp of understanding sense of place, especially when it came to family. Talking about tearing down his grandparent's house, and the hopes that Lane has for ensuring that his kids and grandchildren experience these places, "...it's a thing that maybe they'll remember, even if they have a photo and 20 years from now, that'll bring that memory back...", he hopes (as all farmers do) that their children will stay connected with the past and push on to the future.

For Tony, his family/place connection is a little different as he is trying to preserve a connection to place that will probably not last much longer. The reality in which he works, with a smaller farm and even small profit margins, he may be focused more on preserving the stories and connections so that his children will have those memories, even if they do not have the farm anymore. Tony, when talking about having his children take up farming said, "...love to be able to think that, you know, my children would have the option to make a living off this land as I did and the generations before [but] the reality is, I'll build towards that, but I'm a realist as well..." understands that not

every farm can survive, so for Tony, part of his role with his family is to ensure that they have enough of a sense of place to be good curators for the future.

Finally, for Marvin, like Joel and Lane, is trying to move the farm onto the next generation, highlighting the importance of sense of place as they children and grandchildren will become the next generation(s) of place curators. Marvin has a step up on instilling sense of place in his children, "...but I knew I was going to come back some day... and the beauty is, my son feels the same way!" This makes things a little easier for Marvin, as his son already has a strong sense of place for the farm, and his grandchildren are not far behind. Marvin understands the importance of building that connection to place. He stated many times that he made sure to get his kids out on the farm as much as possible when they were young as he knew that the more they experienced these *places* the more connected to them they would get.

In each of these cases, experiences with the past shaped the future, the biggest takeaway is that ensuring the family farm survives requires connecting the next generation (or two) with these places, building a sense of place. In the case of this research, and with family farms in general, there are two distinct lines here in respect to the participants, the history that had led up to the current position each participant is in, and the future paths that the farms will go down when they are longer here (or at least in charge). Both of these lines go along with what Clandinin et al (2007) discussed in their commonplaces, that there is a temporality to these experiences, a social aspect to these experiences, and a place to these experiences. With this wall this research is aiming to understanding how the past influences the future, especially within sense of place on the family farm. In two of the cases it appears to have worked quite well, as both Lane and

Marvin have children who are taking on that role as the next generation of family farmer. In Joel's case, it may not be so easy, as his sons are currently working the farm, but the following generation might not be willing to do the same. This highlights the important role in developing sense of place in people who want to farm, the more they have a 'feel' for the places, the more they are willing to work for them. In Tony's case, the future is also unclear as it has become difficult for smaller farms to survive and his farm may go the way of so many others, being bought out by another. With both Joel and Tony, the idea of sociality, along with temporality, comes into play more prominently as both of these narratives (of their farms) may have a definite ending. This highlights the importance of these two commonplaces as the future may not be as clear as with Marvin and Lane, who despite the ongoing challenges to keeping a family farm running, at least have a viable path forward. Understanding the future and the social aspect of maintaining these places is important going forward for Joel and Tony and may serve to help keep their farms alive by ensuring that future generations have that connection to place that they have.

The fourth wall: sense of place in informal education: the 'curator of place'. Finally, whether they set out to it or not, each of these participants are educators. They are responsible for passing on the culture and history of their farms, their families, and important to this research, their places, to the next generations. Also, perhaps unbeknownst to them, they have become educators for me and whoever reads this work, as they are teaching us all what it means to possess sense of place as a multi-generational family farmer. This is where the heart of this research lies, and its potential use in the future within formal (and informal) education. It's understanding how each participant

has experienced education in relation to these places they are connected to. It's important to look not just at farming techniques that are passed down, but what is required of a person to become a curator of place. As with Clandinin's multiple studies (1990, 2006, 2007) the role of curator of place is to have a firm understanding of those three commonplaces. Understanding both the temporal and social components that are imbued within these places is key for the curator of place, as it becomes their responsibility to ensure that what makes these places, *places*, is remembered. It's the history of these places, the reasons they are important and why they should stay important that need to be taught, and they are just as valuable as any farming technique. As Marvin said, not only are his kids involved because of the way he taught them, "I'm not worried about passing on to my kids..." his grandkids also have that same sense of place "...but my grandkids are ready, they've got their own calves..." Another way that Marvin continues to connect his family through the land is through teaching them about their past and one way to do that is the keeping of place names. By keeping the names of his father and uncles within these places, he is teaching his children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews about what it means to be a part of this family, and the history and hard work that built it.

For Joel, the goal is to highlight role he plays to connect his children and grandchildren to their past through building their sense of place. He stated, quite emphatically, that he is "retired" (as if a farmer is ever really retired) and could go south and leave the cold North Dakota winters for balmy Florida or Arizona as he stated, "My responsibility and obligation to instill in them the history of the family...I don't know if I am going to be teaching them anything, but tell them about the history of the farm..."

One way that Joel instills a sense of place and teaches at the same time relates to the story he told about how his grandfather was savvy enough when he was homesteading to buy ten acres of the neighboring quarter to build the house on, that way if they lost the farm, they would still have the house. This is a teaching moment and is reinforced every time he tells the story, and every time they think about that place, which most of Joel's children and grandchildren still live on that same ten acres. One thing that Joel touches on, related to education, is how hard it can be to farm, "...but tell them about the history of the farm and, you know, it's challenges, cause, there's been lots of times that, you know, that's been difficult, financially to make it work..." Telling of the history of the farm is what reinforces that sense of place, what drives a person to work harder than they think they can, to ensure that these *places* remain in the family. This is a similar thought process shared with Lane, both men are not sure if their words and their histories are being appreciated by their children and grandchildren, but they both see it as their duty to serve as the curator of place, passing on the stories and history of these places to the next generations.

The stories that Lane told, about how his father used the story about the fire in the blacksmith shop to teach, to the stories that he passed on to his own children about safety, these stories were couched in *places* that he can take his children and grandchildren and talk of these places, much as Basso discussed the stories of the Western Apache. One story that could have been taken straight from *Wisdom Sits in the Places*, Lane's story about the farmer who attempted to take on more than he could handle and instead of striking it rich, he lost everything. Lane has stories about using place to teach, more so than any of the other participants, again, I had felt as though Lane was pulled out of

Basso's book! The stories of when Lane showed his children the slough where a man drowned to teach them about that place would have fit perfectly in Basso's book. Lane details the real dangers, as well as the perceived dangers of extending oneself too far when he told the story of the person who sank a large amount of money into an oil well that never produced.

When talking with Tony about how/if he will use these places to teach his children, even if he does not think they will take it over he stated, "...I want my little boy to have the same experience [going to the grain elevator] driving to the elevator..." He wants his children to have the same sense of place as he does, keeping them connected with the land. Taking them by the places in which he learned as a child and recounting the stories is a primary way to develop a sense of place in someone. While the experience has changed, Tony can impart some education on his children, telling them about their culture and history. For Tony, the education about place extends beyond the farm and to the small town that is struggling to survive, and I believe that is one of the reasons why Tony is fighting so hard to keep his sense of place, because he sees the 'place', his hometown, being lost along with the farm.

This informal education can be very important on the farm. As the lessons that each of these participants are passing down to their children and grandchildren were once passed down to them by their own informal teachers, they are passing down more than just techniques, they are passing down an emplaced knowledge. More than just the techniques, they are passing down the history of their family and the history of these places. This role of the informal educator is one of the necessary roles of the 'curator of place', as no one lives forever, and one goal of each curator is to help set in motion the

creation of the next. It is important that each of these participants pass down this knowledge so they know that sense of place will persist after they are gone.

Synthesis and Analysis

At this point, I want to summarize the preceding paragraphs in relation to the research questions, and to help tie together each wall” into a completed “farmhouse”, highlighting how these walls work together to take the blank, objective meaning of sense of place (place attachment and meaning) which serves as the foundation to this research and create an idea of what sense of place means to the family farmer, which becomes the roof that sits upon the walls. Each of these ‘walls’ are important to the family farmer, the experiences, the role of the farmer, the family, and the teaching/learning that is done on the land. They are all important to create a Farmer... someone who will work tirelessly to ensure that their places are kept, that the stories, the culture of these places are maintained. Each of the themes discussed represent a piece of place attachment and place meaning. Each theme builds that connection to place in a different, but equally important way, as the role of curator of place is to be the *present* located in between the *past* and the *future*, to be the person that holds the stories and passes them on when possible, that can talk about place as if it is a living and breathing thing. Within each of these farmers, their experiences with their places shaped who they are and how they incorporate these experiences and stories developed their sense of place.

The ability to show how we can compare this idea of sense of place in the family farmer to other situations, particularly Basso’s *Wisdom Sits in Places* highlights how these farmers fill a similar role as the storytellers of the Western Apache as well as tie in education. In both of these situations the participants of this study (and most family

farmers) and the elders of the Western Apache inhabit this role of curator of place. Their goals are not just to tell the stories, but to teach through the telling of them. In this particular case, it's not just about teaching farming techniques, but what it means to be a farmer, what it means to the land, to the history and culture, and to their families, not just the generations that come after, but to 'do right' to the generations that came before. Within the scope of narrative inquiry, each of these participants is, essentially the curator of place. They are tasked with keeping these commonplaces (Clandinin et al 2007) of temporality, sociality, and most important for this study, place, within the minds of their family, to keep the sense of place going.

Discussion

Throughout the analysis of this project, I felt as though the participants in this research were following a similar vein that was presented in Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places*. These farmers inherited the same roles that many of the storytellers in Basso's book possessed, they were responsible for passing on the history of the places, for keeping them 'alive' and ensuring that sense of place is kept throughout the generations. This ability and role is vital for the survival of the family farm. As we have become a more globalized people, the ability for someone who grew up on a farm to go off to college, be successful, and move half-way around the world is much easier than it was 50-100 years ago. With the ability to experience the world at our fingertips, we often lose sight of where our feet are planted, which hurts our sense of place and can be disastrous to the family farm. To ensure that the family farm is kept alive, a farmer needs to pass along more than just the techniques for farming, they need to pass along a sense of place, to develop a cultural and historical connection to the places that are important

for the farm, so that the next generation can understand the true weight of what it means to be a multi-generational family farmer. As Basso stated, "...human existence is irrevocably situated in time and space, and keenly aware that social life is everywhere accomplished through an exchange of symbolic forms... (pg. 105)" a line that is true for the Western Apache AND is key to the preservation of the family farmer. For the family farmer, the places and stories associated with them, are the 'symbolic forms' that perpetuates sense of place from one generation to the next. The stories about long abandoned farmhouses, of trees that stand in the middle of fields, and times spent in the country with family, are all symbols... tools that are used to connect to those places, to keep the past alive for the future and to create that *sense of place* that is important for all.

Recommendations

One goal of this project was to create a set of possible recommendations that could be implemented in formal and even informal agricultural education settings that relate to the inclusion of sense of place within instruction. As the introduction of sense of place into agricultural education is not widely utilized, my research serves as a beginning for that introduction. With the flexibility of state standards, there is an opportunity to bring sense of place into agricultural education as another instructional method to help reach and prepare students. As stated, many times throughout, I am not trying to create a formula that can be followed to generate sense of place in individuals, rather I am looking to show how we can develop these conceptual and experiential 'walls' to create the sense of place farmhouse in both formal and informal educational settings and provide guidelines that can be utilized by teachers. As Basso (1996) states, "...ethnographic inquiry into cultural constructions of geographic realities is at best weakly developed (pg.

105)” the ‘geographic realities’ that farmers construct, and the usage of those realities in education, have also been weakly developed in the formal sense. This provides a wonderful opportunity to bring this idea of the walls building the farmhouse of sense of place. Each of these common themes can be implemented within formal and informal agricultural education by having students (or whoever) bring their own experiences with *their* places into lessons. Utilizing emplaced knowledge, using the history of their family with their places, the past and future, as well as the opportunities for their own educating are all options that can be built into any lesson. One primary goal of all agricultural educators should be the facilitation of building this farmhouse in each of their students, and even building/rebuilding it within themselves. Only when all four walls are built and stable can the roof (agricultural sense of place) be placed upon the farmhouse with any hope of staying solid. Stefaniak et al (2017) highlighted the connection between place attachment and civic engagement and social trust. The authors found that people who were taught local history, “...displayed increased interest in that history, greater place attachment, civic engagement intentions, and generalized social trust (pg. 217).” What does this idea of sense of place, of increasing place attachment, have to do with agricultural education? Heinert and Roberts (2017) sum up the problem in one sentence, “Youth, the world over, have been leaving rural areas and have shown a general lack of interest in agriculture as a livelihood (pg. 192).” The lack of youth attachment to place and the smaller family sizes with family-run farms endangers the presence of smaller family farms across the world and is no different with the participants in this study. One participant feared that their own family farm would be gone within two generations and the effect that it has on the family and the surrounding community is not known.

This study is unique as it examines a less-commonly thought of idea (sense of place) and attempts to create a pathway that sense of place could play in agricultural education. Most research into helping family farms revolves around building up the financial aspect of the farm. Heinert and Roberts (2017) also highlight this in one sentence stating, “Entrepreneurship in agriculture may hold the key to engaging rural youth in agriculture and helping to stem the outflow of rural youth to urban areas (pg. 192).” Another research study done on understanding agricultural education focused on the purpose behind this education, with the goals of, “...career preparation, college preparation, practical life skills, agricultural literacy, and student individualization (Rice and Kitchel 2017).” With both of these newer studies, the focus on place attachment was lacking, instead both studies focused on external ideas that are more easily implemented across the board, neither of which take into account the individual’s experience with their places. Both of these studies focused on the technical and entrepreneurial aspects of running a farm, the newest techniques and projects that could be undertaken to keep the farms alive. The one thing that neither addressed was how to develop and maintain a person’s connection to the family farm, to the places that are important to these farms. The ability to tie a person (student) to their places is to tailor their education *to* their places, which can be done through the implementation of place-based education. Below, I briefly review place-based education as it pertains to this study and how sense of place can be implemented within agricultural education when framed within the idea of place-based education.

Place-based education/learning and sense of place education

Place-based education, which has been growing in popularity and use over the years gets the students learning in real-world places to help hammer home these ideas, but they do not fully address the personal connection that these people may or may not have towards their places, especially within agriculture. Jan Nesor (2008) has a review of some of the more influential pieces related to place-based education, and one key that appears is the use of stories, of getting students to write about their own places. One of many studies that examined this idea of using place-based education (PBE) found that students, "...expressed a sense of pride in their accomplishments... enjoying their experience in the class... (Santelmann 2011, pg. 102)." This 'accomplishment' is a common theme in place-based education, but still does not address developing a person's sense of place, which is what attaches a person to a place. Implementing stories and emplaced knowledge of the 'places' that students are directly connected to have the opportunity to bring this 'accomplishment' to a deeper level. This research shows that family farmers, who have a strong sense of place, have a deep want to preserve their places and showing that utilizing their want to preserve their places may be a good educative step. The use of stories (highlighted by Nesor) and the formal utilization of place-based education by Santelmann both provide a roadmap to linking sense of place to formal education.

Research specifically into implementing sense of place in formal and informal education is lacking, but there is good research in place-based education/learning (PBE/PBL) and a number of those learning techniques could be easily implemented and adapted into agricultural education, in the classroom, the lab, the field, or even in the

home. Deringer (2017) highlights a number of themes in place-based education that could make up the foundation of sense of place education within agricultural education. The first theme they highlight is “Critical Thinking and problem-posing education (pg. 336)”, and builds on the work of Azano (2011) when they said, “part of understanding place deeply involves the ability to think critically about one’s own situation (pg. 336).” This idea of incorporating critical thinking and problem-posing that links students to *their* place is an important first step to build place attachment. The second theme from Deringer is “Engagement through community connection (pg. 336).” This links directly with Clandinin’s idea of sociality as an important piece of creating a personal narrative. We do not live in a vacuum and are social by nature and by connecting with each student’s (or child’s) local community is another way to develop place attachment. Deringer’s third theme “Environmental justice (pg. 336)”, is a theme that has already appeared throughout the narratives that the participants and I have co-constructed. Caring about the local environment is important, not just for the maintenance of that environment, but for the connection and attachment to place. These local environments, whether they are important natural habitats, or the farmstead itself play a direct role in the ‘meaning’ aspect of sense of place. Without the meaning placed on these environments, it is hard to imagine that anyone would have a place attachment.

These three themes highlighted by Deringer (2017) can be brought into any formal agricultural education classroom, or the informal meetings that agricultural extension agents have with local farmers and community members and serve as a great introduction to implementing sense of place within agricultural education. Even harkening back to Nahban (1994) and Basso (1996) and the use of personal and

historical/social stories to teach about the places around them are important ways to incorporate sense of place within agricultural education. The stories told by these participants, of the history and hard work that got them where they are now, of the sacrifices and good fortunes, and all of the stumbles along the way are useful to help create that sense of place in students. Incorporating your own history in the classroom as a formal educator (and student) of agricultural education, whether it is writing assignments or laboratory exercises can increase a person's connection, their attachment, to these places in which they live and work. In this case, teachers are able to bring their own sense of place into the classroom and get students to write and work to develop their sense of place through assignments, laboratory exercises that directly connect students to their own experiences with place.

To summarize the above, the goal of utilizing sense of place within agricultural education is to develop and maintain those two key parts of sense of place: place attachment and place meaning. This is done through the implementation in formal agricultural education, as well as informal educational opportunities. Place-based education/place-based learning incorporates this sense of place into education, but often does so with neutral places (school or community gardens, parks...) whereas this research recommends connecting students and teachers to *their* places. However, developing methods of inclusion based on the themes outlined by Deringer (2017) and Azano (2011), we can uncover new ways to bring sense of place into the classroom and other educational settings. As rural farms appear to be fighting an uphill battle to stay alive (evidenced within the USDA report and the participants of this study) anything that can be done to help get younger people to stay on their farms will be necessary, which means

going above place-based education and focusing on *their* place education. Informally, the goal is to help create that next generation of ‘curators of place’ by telling stories to your children and grandchildren, and as Lane states, anyone that will listen. As the above research indicates, there is a benefit to increasing the entrepreneurial aspect of farming, to help them branch out into new ventures that may be financially beneficial to the farms, the other aspect needs to be helping maintain that strong attachment to their places. This sense of place education should have a role within both formal and informal educational settings and can involve the follow:

- Having students writing about *their* places when it comes to learning about agricultural history, about critical aspects of running a farm, and what pitfalls they may find in the future. This is a direct implementation of the first, second, and third walls of the farmhouse model, it brings the lesson home to *their* place.
- Integrating *their* experiences with the physical world (both natural and man-made) and highlight the importance of keeping them attached to *their* places. This also utilizes the emplaced knowledge and the role of the ‘curator of place’ of the family farmer, the first and second walls of the farmhouse.
- Understanding *their* role within their community and within *their* places by drawing on the stories and history of the places that are important to their farms and communities. This builds on the second, third, and fourth walls of the farmhouse, to understand their role within their family, their farm, and their communities and;

- Listening to the stories about *their* places. This emplaced knowledge is one of the most useful tools that a person can have to develop and maintain sense of place. Telling (or hearing) the stories about their family on their land connects each student to their places. This is the fourth wall of the farmhouse, it is the educational process, learning about the sense of these places is what helps complete that attachment and build that meaning. This wall, while dealing with informal education, can play a role in formal education as well. This is something that can happen formally in the classroom or informally in the tractor.

Each of these recommendations are useful in developing the walls needed to build the farmhouse that is agricultural sense of place and a potential way forward towards incorporating these concepts within the structures of agricultural education. Ultimately, this becomes a more-individualized version of place-based education. Instead of taking all students to a particular place and attempting to develop their sense for *that* place, they are instead allowed to write and discuss their sense of place for *their* place. Each of these recommendations build upon the idea of place attachment and place meaning and achieve their goal by focusing on one or more of the themes found throughout this research. As stated in Kudryavtsev (2012), Stefaniak (2017), Nespor (2008), Sobel (1997), and Basso (1996) among many others all highlight the importance of connecting people to *their* places. From a formal agricultural education standpoint, bringing in each student's experience with their places can be an incredible way to create that connection.

These recommendations form the basis of guidelines that can be implemented within both formal and informal education. The flexibility of state standards and

incorporation of alternative methods of instruction, allow for the inclusion of stories and personal/cultural histories within formalized teaching. In these cases, teachers can help develop that connection to place by having students focus on their places. Creating a program such as the *Teachings of our Elders* that focuses on family farmers and brings in their particular sense of place is one way that we can utilize sense of place education within formal learning settings. Informal learning settings, such as FFA or 4-H clubs would also benefit from bringing in people who can tell similar stories to what was presented in this research. Another informal example that may be able to tell the stories of these curators of place is StoryCorps (<http://www.storycorps.org>). This project's mission is to, "...preserve and share humanity's stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world." This would work well as a repository (or an example of a similar project) that would house the stories that these curators tell. This would provide a lasting connection to place and could be used in informal educational settings. Again, another option is the informal learning that goes on the family farm every day. Having the forethought to tell the stories of these places helps to develop and maintain sense of place by creating a new generation of 'curators of place'. Having local people tell stories about local places allows those connections to develop within both formal and informal educational settings. Much in the way that Basso showed how the stories of the Western Apache were able to teach the younger generations, these stories would be able to teach students/children/other farmers things they would not learn in any standard classroom. Having "curators of place" play an integral role in teaching about their places helps to better solidify that link to place with the younger generations.

Finally, to call back to the introduction comparing learning about technology and business compared to learning from your grandfather in the fields August plays an integral part in developing sense of place. The second part of this research, focusing on the narratives themselves and not necessarily the themes present in them is important to develop and maintain that sense of place. In the informal sense, it cannot be stressed enough, that passing down these stories to the next generation, essentially creating a new line of “curators of place” is needed in order to preserve the meaning behind these places. In each of these narratives, the participants spoke about telling their stories to their children and grandchildren, and that passing on of emplaced knowledge can be just as helpful as anything that is taught in the classroom. A recommendation from this research, in that sense, is to keep telling these stories, as Lane put it, “...to anyone that will listen...” because that is the only way these places and their meanings will live on.

Agriculture is a unique vocation, especially in this region, as it is very rarely something that you just decide to do these days. Farmers don’t relocate, they don’t just pick up and move to a different field, their ‘office’ isn’t built and rebuilt as an office building or hospital or school would be, and they aren’t moved around when space dictates. The participants in my study are people who are working the same land as adults that they worked as children; the same land that their parents, grandparents, and older generations worked. Most students, whether in high school or college, who are studying agriculture are coming from these multi-generational family farms, they are working to become the next generation, to pick up the mantle of the farm and carry it into the future. I believe that most of them have a fairly strong sense of place but may not fully realize it. One thing that came up with these interviews was how surprised the

participants were that they hadn't thought of sense of place in this way before. Most participants were surprised when I brought up the idea of them being a curator of place but liked the identification of this role. This research aims to help bring that to the forefront, so that 'students', both formal and informal, have the tools and understanding needed to ensure that they are best prepared for the future, and understand their roles as 'curators of place'. Through building the walls of this farmhouse, we can create a roadmap of the commonalities that are found when examining a multi-generational family farmer's sense of place. Each of the "walls" discussed are one integral part to understanding sense of place and how it could be utilized within formal and informal agricultural education. These stories told within this research and conceivably within all family farms, can be built upon and adapted within agricultural education by incorporating the student's own history, the history of the land and their own emplaced knowledge. Linking students' own experiences and awareness of places can foster the place attachment and can help to cement the meaning behind that attachment. This just might serve as another method of helping to keep younger farmers at home for another generation and preserve unique funds of agricultural knowledge and history.

Future Directions

As this research laid the groundwork for understanding sense of place within the multi-generational family farmer, there are numerous future avenues that can be explored. Understanding that time changes everything, a new examination of sense of place in the children and grandchildren of these farmers would provide an interesting comparison regarding the connection to place. Do their children and grandchildren feel the same way about these places as they do? Do they feel as though they need to

preserve the stories and places that were revered by their elders? What do they think about the idea of becoming a “curator of place?” These are all questions that could be answered by expanding this current project to include the multiple generations that are still around and hearing the stories that they all tell.

CHAPTER IX

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