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THE CHANGING SENSE OF PLACE AMONG AGRICULTURAL
FAMILIES IN SASKATCHEWAN:
IMPLICATIONS FOR RURAL EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

A Dissertation in
Agricultural Education

by

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Abstract

This study explored the experience of three generations of farm families (grandparents, parents and children) in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada with respect to their sense and experience of place. The theoretical construct, *sense of place*, was linked to the life experience of the study participants. Sense of place was defined as the attachment or affinity—whether conscious or unconscious—between a person or groups of people and a particular place. Sense of place was explored with regard to four thematic categories: community, culture, economics and technology and education (formal and informal). In all four categories, the study findings showed a weakening sense of place among the study participants. This was most pronounced for the youngest generation. In particular, rapid social, economic, and technological change has altered the participants' perception of place. The study findings were used to suggest both place-sensitive strategies for rural education and the implications for the personal and social lives of the study participants.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Before any choice there is this place, which we have not chosen, where the very foundation of our earthly existence and human condition establishes itself. We change places, move, but this is still to look for a place, for this we need as a base to set down Being and realize our possibilities (Dardel as cited in Tall, 1993).

In the absence of tangible physical space, there is no human experience. From the sensory satiated unfolding of human birth forward, our experience of life is inescapably intertwined and molded by the physical space(s) we inhabit. The importance of place in shaping our early life perceptions is self-evident. Our childhood memories are a vivid collection of pictures. We remember the homes where we first lived, the smells of our favourite foods cooking, the places where we played, the trees we climbed, the schools we attended, and the places where we experienced strong human emotions: laughter, tears, embarrassment, wonder, adventure, love, and joy.¹

Our experiences of adulthood are similarly created. Each of life's experiences is intertwined with the defining sights, sounds, smells and tastes of place. Place is the backdrop against which all human experience is played. Human memories cannot be separated from their physical place of origin; they are inseparably linked, for better or worse. Conversely, in and through our own human agency—conscious and unconscious—we profoundly sculpt and ultimately define the form of our surrounding physical spaces.

Place constantly undergoes change as humans, too, are changed through their interaction with place. As history prominently highlights, humans exist in reciprocating relationships of

1. In keeping with the central theme of this dissertation—sense of place—and in acknowledgement of place being represented in language, Canadian spelling conventions are used in this dissertation.

influence with their spacial/ecological environments. This is particularly true in respect to long-term social/environment change—whether positive or negative. Although humans have always been capable of affecting ecological change, an important distinction exists between ancient and modern eras, namely the potential order of magnitude associated with human action. In previous eras, the ecological impact of human action was primarily localised. Now, however, human action can affect environmental change in both ways and to degrees thought previously impossible. Although the reasons for this change are both numerous and complexly interwoven, the change can be largely ascribed to technology's continued global ascendancy and its seemingly inherent mercurial twists of fate when technology moves beyond the local. When technology is no longer intimately tied to place, it routinely humbles the greatest of soothsayers and proponents; however, seldom for any duration. The unexpected consequences of technology are routinely forgotten in the fanfare accompanying each subsequent advance of technology. Technology has captured the imagination of the masses. Goodbye Marx; hello iPod.

The importance of place in contemporary life is likely to continue to diminish if general social patterns are to be observed. Whether one reads newspapers, listens to the radio, watches television or the latest blockbuster movie, goes to any major place of commerce, or simply engages in conversation with a local neighbour, the theme of increasing globalisation and the homogenisation of cultures is never far from the surface. Within this atmosphere of increasing universalisation, attempts to assert or maintain national, regional, cultural or local expressions of independence or diversity are often viewed as being nostalgic, odd, or, even worse, averse to progress. In a technological society, the individual's social and ecological horizons continue an inexorable expansion. In contrast, even one short century ago, people identified themselves with the places where they lived. Now, however, people routinely speak of being global citizens.

Judging by all contemporary accounts—whether academic or public—most individuals perceive few, if any, physical limits on their social/physical horizons.

In spite of the overwhelming movement away from place being important, if not vital, to the healthy growth of individual and cultural identities, numerous individuals—often to the detriment of their own personal careers and reputations—have continued to voice alternate visions of education and human life. At the heart of these alternative visions is the connection between place and personal and corporate life and, therefore, also the connection between place and education. Attempts, then, are made to allow place to once again play a central role in defining the form of human life itself. Stated alternately, when an individual allows the place in which he/she lives to impact their lives then place becomes part of the individual; they have a *sense of place*. They are recognizing the “importance of human communities rooted in a storied landscape” (Vitek & Jackson, 1996).

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the *sense of place* held by multi-generational farm families living in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada. Additionally, the purpose of this dissertation was to provide insight into the unique challenges facing both rural education and rural society, and the growing importance of place-sensitive education in a global world.

This study addressed three major objectives:

- 1) What is/has been the experience of sense of place for each of the three groups of study participants (and as influenced by their formal and formal educational experiences)?
- 2) What differences/similarities exist in the sense and experience of place over time and among and between the three groups of study participants?

3) What are the implications of changes in sense of place for rural education and rural society?

Saskatchewan and the Early Prairie Immigrants

Enticed by the promise of free land and a new beginning, thousands of people came to Canada in the early twentieth century eager to begin new lives. Legend now surrounds the lives of those people. For most new immigrants, it was lucky their dreams overrode the scant real knowledge they possessed of their new homes, as they left their places of birth and stepped onto a ship embarking for the new world. The prairie land they initially encountered—particularly if they were unlucky enough to arrive during the winter—was enough to test the resolve of the toughest of families. For many, their first encounter with the reality of the “prairies” was almost enough to drive them immediately to urban centres, if not back “home”. The speeches and posters that drew them to this new land were often long on promises of prosperity and short on details. For many individuals the harsh realities of their new homes—the open Canadian prairies—soon took its toll; dreams of life on the land were quickly lost in the struggle for survival.

For the majority, sheer determination, unrelenting dreams and the absence of other viable options initially kept them on the land. For those who were lucky, smart, hardworking or some combination of the previous, the prairie homestead began to define the nature of their lives. For still others, their hearts and lives became rooted in these new places, but forces far beyond their control or understanding would later drive them from the land.

Barely had most immigrants settled the land when forces far stronger than the environment challenges they first encountered, swept across the land. The land—once held

together by the intertwining of fibre and soil, tree and flower, slope and winding stream, wind and sun—slowly succumbed to the carving and transecting of the straight running flow of human rail and timber, plough and fence, and road and telephone line. Mile after mile of rolling prairie sod was cut and rolled-over by the curved, gleaming arch of the steel plough. The human step no longer followed the contour of nature, but rather it conformed to the roll of the wheel and the permanence of the road and rail. Changes in transportation and communication technology, to name but two forces of change, rapidly expanded the spatial boundaries within which human action and interaction occurred. For both urban and rural inhabitant, alike, life moved beyond that which was local; the spatial limitations of the foot, the horse, and the local community were steadily erased.

Concurrently, and not unrelated, changing economic realities forced rural western Canada into a far-reaching interaction with society at large. The predominance of subsistence and local economies were gradually replaced by economic systems with origins beyond local places. With broad-ranging economic, cultural, and technological change, the boundaries that stood in defence of developing regional identities gradually weakened until, almost without a thought, they were gone. The collection of ways that people once used to define their places—schools, towns, rivers, hills, valleys—were often physically lost, leaving little more than memories to remain. Other times, the elements that once were so important in defining their social place, subtly slipped from their minds and lives without so much as a thought. One-by-one many of the place defining boundaries of life were swept away, allowing for greater interaction between people living in once distinct places. The once unthinkable, became the way of life. People that once never knew each other became acquaintances and then friends. Therefore, the places where people lived were slowly reduced to mere geographical statements of location.

Although the people of the prairies lived geographically dispersed, socially they increasingly looked and behaved similar to their urban cousins. This movement would happen at the expense of maintaining and acknowledging the specific realities associated with their living in particular places or contexts. The dream, and emerging reality, of countless unique sustainable prairie communities rooted in their specific geographical places were quickly muted by the more powerful force of economic and technological change blowing across the land at the turn of the century and beyond. Canadian society was to move toward greater homogenisation in spite of the concerted attempts of countless farm families and communities to stem the flow. Little could stem the steady and unrelenting flow of human progress winding its way across the land.

Rural Canada—as an expression of socially and ecologically differentiated spaces—was being subsumed within the broader universal culture. Remaining was a generic concept of geographical spaces. People lived within these prairie spaces but were increasingly untouched by both their ecological settings and by the other people with whom they shared these settings. The power of human thought was merged together into the dream of unending progress.

The beginning promise of people rooted and intertwined under the cast of the prairie sky and the particulars of geographical space, slowly yielded itself to the pressure of a new form of progress. This new progress grew not through the threads of human cultures and traditions once lived and then freely given for a new weaving, but by the drawing together of common need, unified vocation, and an acknowledged singular purpose—the purpose of economic gain and individual freedom. The vision of one people unified under the purpose of common economic gain captivated the human imagination. The principle of economic gain silently pushed aside ancient human calls—the convivial joining of song and laughter, toil and harvest, sorrow and joy—for the call of the universal, the objective, the rational and the singularity of the human

voice. Human imagination was divorced from arms and hearts locked together by the boundaries of the physical earthly horizon.

As a consequence of dissolving spatial boundaries, and therefore, social boundaries, rural and urban lives were brought closer together in both form and function. The horizons of modern life were drawn toward a universalising form, where individual communities who had just begun to establish their unique identities were, at the same time, replacing aspects of these new identities for something that was increasingly generic. The unique and evolving social identities that were forging out of particular social, geographical and ecological spaces were swept to the side almost as fast as they began.

The sixteenth century Cartesian call for rational thought established the foundation for the technological progress seen in the twentieth century. With the effusive outburst of technological gadgetry, the imagination of humans turned toward an awe-struck embrace of efficient cars and trains, washing machines and flying machines and human speech travelling down the telephone wire. The age of development was ushered in and pronounced. The push toward enforcing the technological mastery of the environment, subtly, but, steadily gave way to the universal over the particular. Similarly, the social lives of rural Canadians very quickly changed from primarily face-to-face social interaction with their proximate neighbours to ever broadening circles of interaction with people far beyond their once close communities. Some pronounce a story of progress; others, a story of lament.

Now, when one drives across the Canadian prairies with a firm grasp of history in hand, one can only wonder what the prairies would look like if the wave of technological change would have come a century or two later, or, perhaps, not at all. Would families and communities still exist where now only broken roofs and tumbleweeds roll?

CHAPTER 2

The Evolution of Science

The Rational Mind

As highlighted in the introduction to this dissertation, place is, by all account, a self-evident *condition* of life (Entriken, 1991). Nevertheless, few social scientists or educators have accorded the human experience of place any serious academic interest. To understand the general reticence, if not objection, of contemporary social scientists to address human's sense of place, the importance of understanding the emergence of the rational intellectual tradition² in its corresponding historical context cannot be understated (Williams, 2001). Therefore, a brief—but hopefully sufficiently comprehensive—exposé of reason's rise and the corresponding consequences for human's interaction with place, will follow.

While the interest in understanding places was both a concern of the ancient Greeks and, in all likelihood, predated the written word, western civilization's experience of place began a radical shift in the sixteen-hundreds (Entriken, 1991). Not surprisingly, the bold, world-expanding discoveries of the global explorers

demanded a corresponding discovery of a new mental world in which old patterns of thinking, traditional prejudices, subjective distortions, verbal confusions and general intellectual blindness would be overcome by a new method of acquiring knowledge (Tarnas, 1991, p. 272).

Broadly speaking, growing incertitude characterised the seventeenth-century. Panoptic

2. The term "rational intellectual tradition," rather than simply "reason," is used in an attempt to acknowledge that alternate forms of valid intellectual inquiry were present prior to and after the sixteenth century. In other words, "human reason," as defined in the sixteenth century, did not suddenly provide *the* key for unlocking or determining truth. For example, the recent interest in "indigenous knowledge systems" reflects an understanding or awareness that alternate knowledge patterns exist. In other words, geographically dispersed people have distinct patterns of speaking about, interacting with and inquiring about their place. Therefore, by implication, there are many, rather than one correct knowledge system.

change—scientific, religious, economic, geographic, social—resulted in growing epistemological doubt and relativism, particularly among the intellectuals of continental Europe.

Leading the exploration for the “new mental world” was the French, René Descartes, and his English counterpart, Francis Bacon. Although the two began their respective mental explorations from different, but correspondingly strong intellectual and motivational vantages—Bacon, the visionary empiricist, committed to furthering God’s injunction to have dominion over nature, and Descartes, the Jesuit trained mathematician-cum-philosopher—came to virtually identical conclusions/convictions (Tarnas, 1991; Saul 1992). The human apprehension of truth rested on the careful, unbiased observation of data, followed directly by a correspondingly deliberate process of deductive reasoning. In other words, human reason held the key to unlock self-evident knowledge of the empirical world. Human reason, henceforth, naturally legitimized the emerging world of empirical science, and visa versa, until the two were virtually indistinguishable.

Within the context of expanding intellectual upheaval, Descartes, for one, attempted to provide an intellectual counterbalance to relativism by establishing an irrefutable foundation for knowledge. Descartes viewed his deductive proof for God—and God’s corresponding character attributes—as providing the rigorous, objective foundation required to substantiate human inquiry. In developing a “proof” for the existence of God, as compared to God remaining an a priori judgement, Descartes believed the problem of subjectivity was surmounted. For, as Descartes argued,

[o]nly through the presupposition of such a God could the reliability of the natural light of human reason, or the objective reality of the phenomenal world, be assured. For if God is God, which is to say a perfect being, then he would not deceive man and the reason that gives man self-evident truths (Tarnas, 1991, p. 277).

Descartes' deduction of God's character, then, provided the logical foundation for differentiating subjective, internally derived thought (i.e., *res cogitans*) from the objective, awareness of the external empirical world (i.e., *res extensa*). Descartes argued that

...only in man did the two realities come together as mind and body. And both the cognitive capacity of human reason and the objective reality and order of the natural world found their common source in God (p. 278).

The impact was nothing short of revolutionary. In asserting both the validity of human reason and the human mind's ability to objectively apprehend the empirical world, Descartes started in motion a

....prototypical declaration of the modern self, established as a fully separate, self-defining entity, for whom its own rational self-awareness was absolutely primary—doubting everything except itself, setting itself in opposition not only to traditional authorities but to the world, as subject against object, as a thinking, observing, measuring, manipulating being, fully distinct from an objective God and an external nature (p. 280).

Reason, however, went far beyond random human thought, it represented the application of rigorously developed methodologies as exemplified in mathematics, Descartes' specific area of education. With reason's foundation apparently assured, Descartes' own self-evident optimism for the future was understandable. As Saul (1992) rightfully noted, Descartes' *Discourse on Method* "formalized an astonishing view of reason" (p. 48)—a view personified in his often quoted, "I think, hence I am" (Descartes, 1982, p. 24). The simplicity of Descartes' foundational statement of self-awareness, however, belied its revolutionary nature. In declaring the truth of self-awareness, Descartes (and similarly, Bacon) analogously declared human observation of the external world, truthful. Therefore, the bold, emancipatory assertions of human reason and its surrogate, science, summarily displaced the uncertainty accompanying the seventeenth century. So "reasonable" did Descartes' commentary appear, rationality very

quickly assumed its own ontological realm. Rationality emerged as *the* key to understanding the essential properties and relations of all beings and things. Therein, an enduring symmetry between rationality and epistemology was forged. The “new mental world” appeared without limit, as science rapidly provided insight into the construction of the empirical world. Successive generations of rationalists pronounced science’s expanding list of achievements as *quid pro quo*. Technological progress, then, emerged as both rationality’s consummate reward and enduring defence. The world existed for humans to explore, know and alter. The Enlightenment, therefore, was effectively underway.

The enthusiasm and success accompanying the Enlightenment predictably led to science bridging into the psychological and sociological dimensions of human life. Using the broad methodological framework developed for the physical sciences, attempts were made to bring similar objective certitude to the psycho/social realm. By using reductionist/positivist principles and perspectives, attempts were undertaken to uncover natural scientific principles governing the human condition. Therein, the emergence of the *social sciences* in the mid-eighteen-hundreds.

The solemn marriage between science and rationality came, however, at a significant price—a price which continues to be exacted. Initially, the major historical systems of theoretical inquiry paid the price. With the advent of human reason, the Aristotelian

search for formal and final causes, the a priori belief that nature possessed teleological purposes and archetypal essences, were just such distortions, deceptively attractive to the emotionally tainted intellect (Tarnas, 1991, p. 274).

Analogously, Platonic metaphysics—the search for transcendental truth, eternal ideas, the spiritual foundation of science—was fanciful, misguided conjecture. Philosophy, from the Greeks onward, was viewed as lacking

a rigorously critical sense-based empiricism, because they relied on rational and

imaginative constructions unsupported by careful experiment, they were like grandly entertaining theatrical productions, of no genuine relevance to the real world they so elegantly distorted (p. 274).

Reason exacted more than the sacrifice of classical philosophy. The new mental world, as personified by reason, gradually exacted society's very soul. As reason purportedly exposed the subjectivity and therefore groundless nature of human practice, humanity celebrated its new found freedom, agency and hope in the future. Similarly, with scientific observation's relentless focus on empirical observation and measurement,

the methodological liberation from subjective distortions was accompanied by the ontological diminution of all those qualities—emotional, aesthetic, ethical, sensory, imaginative, intentional—that seemed most constitutive of human experience" (p. 326).

Human life, like the surrounding external world, was progressively reduced into a collection of mechanistic, impersonal forces. Humanity's metaphysical grounding faded into a universe of ever impersonal causality.

Rationality's Hidden Tautological Character

Now, nearly four-hundred years after reason's inception, reason directs human inquiry in the modern world with hegemonic authority. Despite the continued certitude accorded reason, a reevaluation of reason's intellectual foundations remains necessary, and, more specifically, in the context of this dissertation. As indicated, reason's compelling attraction rested partially in the ability to portray historical patterns of intellectual inquiry and psycho/social behaviour as deficient, if not totally misguided. By definition, then, a careful empirical observation of quantifiable qualities in the external world, guarded against a drift into the uncertainty of theoretical subjectivity—the exact invalidating characteristic inherent in previous patterns of

thought and behaviour. In contrast to superstition, cultural practice or tradition—for which no objective, justifiable foundation could be cited—human reason, coupled with critical observation of empirical phenomena, was deemed to provide an objective, defensible path to ascertain truth. What was less obvious, however, was the inescapable tautology this definition of reason introduced. Alternately stated, reason was self-validating.³

To further unravel the tautological character of reason, a return to reason's formative assumptions and to its broader historical context, is informative. From the beginning, the early proponents of reason astutely recognised the paradigm altering significance of establishing an irrefutable, objective system for determining knowledge. Although both Descartes and Bacon deemed reason's foundation assured, a series of individuals—notably Locke, Bishop Berkeley and then Hume—were quick to call into question the assumptions accompanying the empiricist analysis of human knowledge, and, correctly, so. As all three individuals highlighted, human thought was inherently subjective. Human's awareness of the empirical world was mediated through ideas, representations of the object, not as the object existed. In other words, no two individuals would ever comprehend a sensory experience in exactly the same manner. Therefore, if a direct correlation between ideas and object did not exist, the problem of subjectivity loomed large. Unlike, Locke and Bishop Berkeley, —who responded with attempts to salvage empiricism from the challenge posed by subjectivity—Hume answered with a seemingly crushing refutation of both metaphysical rationalism and its ally, deductive logic, by addressing directly the tautological nature of pure reason. Truth was nothing more than what the mind believed to be true. Therefore, if human perception itself remained irrevocably subjective,

3. In other words, the empirical world is truthfully self-evident through critical human observation and disciplined human observation of the empirical is truthful.

statements of perception could never rise above opinion. Similarly, Hume's critique brought empirical science's veracity into direct question, for science's "logical foundation, induction, was now recognized as unjustifiable" (p. 339). No matter the number of observations, human subjectivity inevitably cast a shadow of suspicion over assertions of causality, and, therein, the legitimacy of science's claims. However, the doubts raised concerning the epistemological objectivity of human observation had little, if any, affect on scientific inquiry, itself. The growing roster of scientific "discoveries" served to assuage any lingering apprehension concerning the validity of science. And, this, despite the progressive maturation, lucidity and power of the collective argument against objectivity.

The Continued Epistemological Debate

Starting in the latter part of the seventeenth-century, the epistemological debate concerning reason became increasingly bifurcated. The dissolution of the classical marriage between science and philosophy moved steadily forward under the growing weight of irreconcilable world views. To elucidate the cause of this divergence, the historical importance of Immanuel Kant's intellectual legacy cannot be understated. Immanuel Kant—beholding of a brilliant, lucid and dextrous philosophical mind and versed in the subtleties of Newtonian physics—brought the era of philosopher/empirical scientist to a close, both in life and intellectual argument. Fully cognizant of Hume's devastating critique of human objectivity, the

intellectual challenge that faced Immanuel Kant...was a seemingly impossible one: on the one hand, to reconcile the claims of science to certain and genuine knowledge of the world with the claim of philosophy that experience could never give rise to such knowledge; on the other hand, to reconcile the claim of religion that man was morally free with the claim of science that nature was entirely determined by necessary laws (p. 341).

Broadly stated, Kant argued causality and the laws of science were built into the fabric of human cognition. Human observation, therefore, made the object possible rather than the object making the representation possible. Alternately stated, any laws deduced through observation were laws of human cognition and not the ontological nature of the world itself. This introduced the human mind as an active originator of experience rather than just a passive recipient of perception. This position introduced numerous difficulties, as Kant recognised. If humans derived understanding of the external world through their senses alone, the question of certainty appeared indefensible, as Hume had argued. However, being likewise aware of the scientific discoveries of Newton and Galileo, Kant felt compelled to account for the discovery of general laws, something that random observation could not provide. Kant, therefore, responded to Hume's charge of irrevocable subjectivity by arguing that nature does not respond to humans as does a teacher to his/her student(s). Rather, humans must deliberately approach the empirical world with carefully composed questions designed to promote nature revealing her secrets. To do so, however, Kant realised critical a priori referents were necessary to link human thought with the phenomenological world. For Kant, space and time represented the foundational pieces of the a priori structure through which sensory experience was filtered.

Man can attain certain knowledge of the world, not because he has the power to penetrate and grasp the world itself, but because the world he perceives and understands is a world already saturated with the principles of his own mental organization. This organization is what is absolute, not that of the world in itself (p. 345).

By any measure, then, Kant's introduced nothing less than a revolution, a "Copernican Revolution" whereby, the observer's perceptions defined the heavens themselves. Although Kant's incisive critique rescued human perception from the abyss of irrevocable subjectivity,

humanity was correspondingly compelled to accept a radically different understanding of its own cognition—an understanding immersed, albeit, in uncertainty.

Retrospectively, Kant's critique served to both preserve the validity of science and provide the justification for religious beliefs and moral behaviour, while simultaneously addressing the challenge of subjectivity. As a consequence, however, the philosopher's task was radically altered. With the foundation of classical metaphysics seemingly reduced to rubble, the purview of philosophy was narrowed to "that of analysing the nature and limits of human reason" (p. 347). Henceforth, the unity of science, religion/spirituality and philosophy dissolved in the wake of the Copernican Revolution, leaving the three to pursue their own individual agendas and conceptual foundations. From Kant onward, human inquiry was increasingly guided by one of three main but increasingly distinct referential postures: science, religion and philosophy. Unfortunately, this, along with the corresponding lack of dialogue between the different propositional stances, served only to further entrench the growing hegemony of science's reductionist position.

Two Intellectual Streams: Growing Alienation

In the immediate and complex shadows of Kant's Copernican revolution, western thought diverged along two major intellectual streams, notably the Scientific Revolution/Enlightenment and the Renaissance. At the risk of oversimplification, the first stream stressed empirical science, rationality and skeptical secularism; whereas, the other stream tended "to express just those aspects of human experience suppressed by the Enlightenment's overriding spirit of rationalism" (p. 366). The great minds of the Enlightenment—the Newtons, the Darwins, the Maxwells—looked at nature as an object to be observed, experimented with, theorized about and

technically manipulated. In contrast, the Romantics—the Rousseaus, the Goethes, the Byrons, and the Wordsworths—viewed nature as alive and full of mystery and revelation.

While the two intellectual camps began with their near antithetical propositions, their outcomes found affinity in the modern mind—science with its steady flow of technology and the Romantics with their deep insight into the human condition. Moreover, the two were tied in common purpose: notably, apotheosizing the human mind and his/her exploits. With the human condition viewed in such lofty terms, the best of human dreams and futures appeared procurable, their only insurmountable barrier, time. However, as history has taught, “[t]here is nothing like dream to create the future. Utopia to-day, flesh and blood tomorrow“ (Hugo, 1980). It was not long, then, before the modern psyche became a complex amalgam of science’s view of nature and the sensibilities of the Romantics. Unsurprisingly, this attempt at mixing science’s separation from nature and its strict rationalist reductionism with the Romantic’s embrace of nature, its subjectivity, and its openness to the transcendent range of human experience or understanding, resulted in the modern mind progressively accepting contradictory propositions. Through the arts and literature the modern mind gathered sense of its inward self. The sciences informed the modern mind’s sense of nature and his/her place within that nature. Separated from each other, as are the two previous statements, the level of contradiction was not apparent. Brought together in humanity, the “modern man experienced an intractable division between his mind and soul” (p. 375). The modern mind exhibited this intractable division most notably, “as a profound sense of spiritual alienation and other symptoms of social and psychological distress...” (p. 387). Although notable attempts to bridge the schism of the modern mind were prominent in the work of Hegel and Goethe, there, too, their efforts came up short. Only in the work of Jung and Freud was the modern sense of distress directly addressed. As does Tarnas, one

can only wonder, “if the tools of depth psychology were being employed in a context riddled with a more encompassing pathology than a subjectivist psychotherapy could hope to cure” (p. 387).

All the while, science—buoyed by each successive discovery and corresponding technological advancement—increasingly isolated itself and its methodological practices from engagement in broader introspective philosophical and/or spiritual critique. The near universal acceptance accorded the scientific method did not, however, occur without significance consequence. With the pass of sufficient time, few individuals questioned either the origins or validity of the scientific method. In the shadow of science’s expanding hegemony, efforts to look beyond scientific rationality were continued by a small, but notable minority from across the spectrum of intellectual inquiry. As the scientific/positivistic world-view increasingly entrenched itself as the *modus operandi* of modern life, other means of human inquiry were either isolated or subsumed. Therefore, pulled between science’s sterile objectification and the humanistic inspiration of the Romantics, the western mind unconsciously assumed a progressively nihilistic posture. The western citizen was experiencing an unprecedentedly quick expansion of knowledge and technology. Additionally, the western citizen increasingly came to see herself as a pawn in expanding economic, political and technological systems.

The nihilistic posture noted above, was, best exemplified in the writing of the existentialists: notably, Heidegger, Satre, Camus, Kierkgaard and Nietzsche.

The anguish and alienation of twentieth-century life were brought to full articulation as the existentialist addressed the most fundamental, naked concerns of human existence—suffering and death, loneliness and dread, guilt, conflict, spiritual emptiness and ontological insecurity, the void of absolute values or universal contexts, the sense of cosmic absurdity, the frailty of human reason, the tragic impasse of the human condition. Man was condemned to be free.... Things existed simply because they existed, and not for some “higher” or

“deeper” reason. God was dead⁴, and the universe was blind to human concerns, devoid of meaning or purpose. Man was abandoned, on his own. All was contingent. To be authentic one had to admit, and choose freely to encounter, the stark reality of life’s meaninglessness. Struggle alone gave meaning (p. 389).

The existentialists, therefore, served to highlight the growing and undeniable tension existing in modern life. The scientific, rationalist mind could continue its intellectual inquiry only at the significant cost of denying the growing alienation exhibited within twentieth-century life. Alternately, the modern person who stood back from fully experiencing life risked having their own life experienced as a slide into the obscurity of incomprehensibility. Without facing life directly, meaning became little more than an arbitrary concept—nothing more than the random thoughts of the human mind. In contrast, the courageous strove to experience the full complexity, ambiguity and equivocalness of the human condition. For the existentialist, it was through struggle that life had meaning.

As the state of modern alienation continued to mount, evidence continued to grow against science’s central claim of objectivity. With further philosophical critique and scientific experimentation, science itself started to show chinks in its once impenetrable armour of empiricism and objectivity. Science’s own findings were drawing its central presuppositions into question. With the advent of the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics, the issue of subjectivity finally could not be disregarded. Moreover, quantum mechanics radically reintroduced the subject back into the composition of knowledge. In other words, the questions the observer asked, controlled, in some form, the answers given. Therefore, for physics, and beyond, “the fundamental Kantian a prioris—space, time, substance, causality—were no longer

4. Of the noted existentialists, Kierkegaard, alone, kept God central to his philosophy. His contribution as an existentialist philosopher provides many interesting points of contrast to his fellow existivist philosophers and others.

applicable to all phenomena“ (p. 359).

In spite of the growing recognition that scientific knowledge was both limited and tentative, *scientific practice* continued largely unfettered throughout the twentieth century. With science’s continued success in the production of technology, no argument seemingly had sufficient weight to warrant suspending or slowing the scientific endeavour. Therefore, science continued on with its objective, materialistic focus, largely as the result of science’s success in developing technology leading to improvements for the human condition. Although science continued with few, if any, impediments, its corollary position advanced at a slower rate. The corollary to science—the subjective, the ambiguous, the changing—did take a major leap, however, with Nietzsche’s thought. Nietzsche (1844-1900), unlike any contemporary scholar, articulated “his radical perspectivism, his sovereign critical sensibility, and his powerful, poignantly ambivalent anticipation of the emerging nihilism in Western culture” (p. 395). Woven, then, with the proceeding epistemologies developed by Hume, Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche, a powerful, new way of understanding the world became evident: the postmodern mind.

The Emergence of the Postmodern Mind

The postmodern mind is fundamentally complex, ambiguous, subjective, pluralistic and local. It is an articulation of everything that science professes not to be. At the same time, the postmodern mind is fundamentally aware of the fallibility of its own positions. “The postmodern paradigm is by its nature fundamentally subversive of all paradigms, for at its core is the awareness of reality as being at once multiple, local and temporal, and without demonstrable foundation” (p. 401). Further, Tarnas commented that, “the postmodern mind may be viewed as

an open-ended, indeterminate set of attitudes that has been shaped by a great diversity of intellectual and cultural currents... (p. 395). Rightfully, then, there are many postmodern views, not just one, of which some are contradictory to each other. Although postmodern thought can lead to many positions, there are generally two main propositional stances. First, there is deconstructive or eliminative postmodern. Viewed from this prospective, postmodernism "...overcomes the modern worldview through an anti-worldview: it deconstructs or eliminates the ingredients necessary for a worldview, such as God, self, purpose, meaning, a real world, and truth as correspondence" (Griffin in Introduction to Orr, 1992, p. x). Second, there is constructive or revisionary postmodern thought.

It seeks to overcome the modern worldview not by eliminating the possibility of worldviews as such, but by constructing a postmodern worldview through a revision of modern premises and traditional concepts. This constructive or revisionary postmodernism involves a new unity of scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religion institutions. It rejects not science as such but only that scientism in which the data of the modern natural sciences are alone allowed to contribute to the construction of our world-view (Griffin in Introduction to Orr, 1992, p. x)..

Indicative of constructive thought, as it relates to this dissertation, is the work of Berry (1987, 1990), Jackson (1996), and Orr (1992, 1994). In the midst of baffling uncertainty and ambiguity, each of these individuals have strove to elicit life-giving insight to their particular questions of inquiry.

In spite of the postmodern mind's multidimensional nature, common principles guiding this form of human inquiry have have emerged. Among these principles, the importance of concrete experience over abstract principles and the conviction that no a priori thought governs human inquiry or belief is central. Throughout there is a recognition that human knowledge is determined by the interweaving of subjective thoughts and experiences. Furthermore, all human truths and assumptions must continually be re-evaluated as a means to determining their value.

Human thought must constantly be tolerant of ambiguity and pluralism and with the realization that human knowledge is always relative.

Viewed in this way, humans are embodied as active agents constantly judging contexts "that can never be wholly objectified" (Tarnas, 1991, p. 396). Additionally, human judgements are constantly passed through a filter of subjective thoughts and feelings that can never be fully appreciated or controlled. Human thought, therefore, is both developed and told against a backdrop of ethnicity, race and class and gender, to name but a few factors affecting the cognitive bias. Additionally, postmodern thought, with its indeterminate posture to knowledge, "has been shaped by a great diversity of intellectual and cultural currents; these range from pragmatism, existentialism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis to feminism, hermeneutics, deconstruction, and postempiricist philosophy of science, to cite only a few of the more prominent" (p. 395). Unlike with scientific thought, the postmodern mind is recognised as playing an integral role in the creation of human thought and perception. Reality, then, is in some sense indeterminate. It is the outcome of human perceptions being filtered through the a subjective bed of human experience, will and imagination.

Implicit here is a relativised critical empiricism and a relativized critical rationalism—recognizing the indispensability both of concrete investigation and of rigorous argument, criticism, and theoretical formulation, yet also recognizing that neither procedure can claim any absolute foundation: There is no empirical 'fact' that is not already theory-laden, and there is no logical argument or formal principle that is a priori certain. All human understanding is interpretation, and no interpretation is final (p. 396-7).

Viewing human thought, with its pull between the subjective and the objective, accepts its historical relativity and cultural parochialism; thereby, promoting both its lucidity and obscurity. Moreover, acknowledging the subjective rootedness of the postmodern mind is to simultaneously free human exploration into a world with insecure foundations. What is

liberating is also disorientating. Therefore, where one interpretation is possible, others are possible, too. Human inquiry, then, is equally, or more, about the interplay and dialogue between individuals of like interests, than it is about the inquiry of one. Henceforth, one of the central challenges facing the postmodern mind is to, through dialogue, bring multiple subjective views to progressively common ground. It is in this sense, “truth” is used.

The acceptance of postmodern thought does not require, however, that scientific findings themselves be disregarded. What is required is a reorientation of science itself. “Science, too, while no longer enjoying the same degree of sovereignty it possessed during the modern era, continues to retain allegiance for the unrivalled pragmatic power of its conceptions and the penetrating rigor of its method“ (p. 404). Hence, in releasing science from its rigid historical and objective framework, science is freed to explore within a less constrictive exploratory framework. More specifically, the postmodern mind brings opportunities and potential to academic fields heretofore constricted by the rigidity of science. Notable, postmodern thought brings entirely new perspectives to disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, philosophy of science, education, where previously science disallowed the subjectivity of human life to surface. Human life and experience is, however, fundamentally subjective in its orientation. Viewed in this way, then, postmodern thought allows for areas previously disregarded because of their subjectivity (i.e., human life) to be considered in ways previously unconsidered. Furthermore, postmodern thought is repeatedly drawn back to the contextual origins of the phenomena in question. If focused on human behaviour, the emphasis is no longer on universalizing a phenomena, but rather understanding human behaviour, as and where it is experienced. The expansion of knowledge, therefore, comes not through generalizing phenomena, but through the dialogue that occurs between people of like interest or passion.

Rationality's Weak Foundation

The story of modernity told here, is one with a fatally weak foundation—a foundation whose mode of construction is only now being understood. As discussed here, modernity's foundation was faulty from its genesis, with both Descartes and Bacon introducing a tautological form of argumentation. Stated directly, the tautological argument existed as follows: the empirical world was self-evident through critical human observation and disciplined human observation of the empirical was truthful. While undoubtedly expeditious, this tautological argument both haunted and promoted the scientific endeavour. Therefore, from its inception science's foundation was constructed with critical weaknesses. However, stated as it was, the fatal logic of science's argumentation was quietly and efficaciously buried beyond view. Moreover, in spite of attempts made by individuals such as Locke, Bishop Berkely and Hume, exhuming the tautological argumentation of reason ultimately had little impact on science's forward movement. Was not science predisposed to producing technology, one can only wonder whether science would have been amiably accepted? The devout followers of science, were not, however, without a justifiable acumen, particularly in light of technology's demonstrative success.

It was Kant that first understood and attempted to reconcile science's dualist character. On the one hand, science was providing incredible insight into the world. On the other hand, the individuals who were to benefit from technology were progressively staring into a world not of their making and ultimately disorientating to themselves. The psycho/social hand holds of the past were of increasingly little value, as the pace of change accelerated. As Kant recognised better than any other of his time, by accepting science he was being asked to dispense of his religious beliefs and moral behaviour. Unwilling to submit, Kant attempted to reconcile the

emerging scientific/moral dichotomy. Kant was seemingly successful in arguing the world “was saturated with the principles of his own mental organization”(p. 345)—an argument directed at shoreing sciences crumbling foundation. While Kant’s assertion appeared to have the problem of objectivity solved, ultimately his argumentation tripped over the same Gordian knot as had his previously colleagues encountered.

Ultimately, then, a more suitable and long-standing truce was forged with the advent of the Romantics and Science. The success the two groups experienced was in large fashion the result of the two acting from distinct platforms, each allowing the Achilles heel of the other to be cheered as Hercules himself. In this way, neither had the responsibility for answering to the weakest part of their own argumentative framework. While this arrangement allowed for both a suitable truce and the continuation of their respective inquisitive challenges, the human mind itself ultimately became bifurcated. It is not surprising, then, this bifurcation resulted in deep running human alienation—alienation which would reach all levels of modern society. Both the bifurcation and alienation continue to date. Science was unable to reconcile science’s own findings; therefore, science’s own methodological foundation was brought into question. Similarly, Romanticism “sought to reflect the authentic character of modern life”; however, in attempting to do so it also “conveyed as well its confusion, its irresolution and its subjectivity” (p. 374). Continuing with both science and Romanticism, therefore, did little to bring a resolution for modern life. Neither science or Romanticism articulated a cohesive vision of human life; therefore, humans were divided animals, “inexplicably self-aware in an indifferent universe” (p. 378).

Considering the alienation exhibited in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and as described by the beginning sociologists, the social evolution the existentialists chronicled was

predictable. While the existentialists tapped into the themes of nihilism felt by the masses, there was little conviction that modernity would solve humanity's challenges.

The anguish and alienation of the twentieth century life was brought to full articulation as the existentialist addressed the most fundamental, naked concerns of human existence—suffering and death, loneliness and dread, guilt, conflict, spiritual emptiness and ontological insecurity, the void of absolute values or universal contexts, the sense of cosmic absurdity, the frailty of human reason, the tragic impasse of the human condition. Man was condemned to be free (p. 389).

In addressing the most difficult of human challenges head on, the existentialist reduced the meaning of life down to consciously experiencing life in all of its harshness. It was humanity's struggle that alone gave life meaning. With science continuing with little or no hesitation, it is not surprising the quest for meaning would end with the existentialist. As stated early, however, Nietzsche's radical contribution, provided the foundation on which postmodern thought would eventually evolve.

Unlike science, postmodern thought asserts reality is not objectively definable, but rather, because it is humans subjects who are doing the inquiry, the cognitive act will always be subjectively grounded. The human subject, complete with his/her subjective experiential base, is recognised as undertaking *the* creation of reality. Postmodern thought cannot go beyond the resulting amalgam of a person's experience, perception, understanding and bias, to list but a few of the factors that come into play. Therefore, "[r]eality is not a solid, self contained given but a fluid, unfolding process, an 'open universe,' continually affected and molded by one's actions and beliefs. It is possibility rather than fact" (p. 396). The human mind is always located in the world and not separate, therefore, its evaluative vantage in the world is, internal. Moreover, grounded as postmodern thought is in subjectivity, ambiguity and complexity, it is well suited for guiding the exploration to be undertaken in this dissertation. Sense of place can—similar to

postmodern thought—only be understood within a subjective framework of inquiry. Objective orientated frameworks of inquiry (i.e., science) will never be able to delve sufficiently into the subjective state referred to as sense of place.

Sense of place is fundamentally a subjective orientation of a particular group of people to a specific geographical location. Therefore, the sense of place of the other can only be approximated by an individual whose own sense of place is similar to that in question. The further apart the two respective sense of places are, the greater the discrepancy there will be between what is observed and what is understood. To approximate the sense of place of one group of people, requires the ability to speak the same language, understand the physical place in question, the practices of the people, the interactions between people, the environmental conditions and the factors influencing the place and its people. Furthermore, only when the observer is accepted by the people living in place, will the inquirer be able to begin piecing together a person's (or group's) sense of place.

The Postmodern Alternative and Sense of Place

The postmodern mind may be perceived as totally embroiled in subjectivity and serving little purpose other than “deconstruction, decentering...demystification, discontinuity, *difference...*” (p. 401). Taken to the extreme, as does Derrida (see 1995, 1993), for example, the preceding characterization is likely accurate. Orr (1992) and Vitek and Jackson (1996), on the other hand, provide excellent examples of the rigorous application of the postmodern mind. Rooted, as postmodern thought is in subjective interpretation, and with the displacement of a priori structures by the postmodern mind, generalizations of postmodern thought are likewise displaced.

Viewed in the context of the preceding section, then, the reticence of contemporary social science to address human's sense of place, can more easily be understood. Beginning with Descartes and Bacon, the rational intellectual tradition established the foundation on which place would begin its decline from the human horizon. With the "...old patterns of thinking, traditional prejudices, subjective distortions, verbal confusion and general intellectual blindness" (Tarnas, 1991, p. 272) being supplanted in favour of objective, reasonable conclusions, sense of place was afforded little intellectual consideration. Place, after all, spoke of the differences that existed between geographically rooted people, whether it be their local language, customs, world-view, and/or social relations, all which were subjective behavioural responses to place. With the shift to positivist inquiry, the continuum of interest in human, place specific behaviour shifted interpretations from descriptive narratives to attempts to generalize the behaviour and experience of one group to another group (Entrikin, 1991). Therefore, the modern scientist attempted to provide an objective view—"a view from nowhere" (Nagel, 1986). From the detached, analytical position of the scientist, place or regions came to be viewed as fragments or parts of the broader world view they constructed. The difficulty, however, with their broader world view was that the world they created existed nowhere. Alternately stated, from the "decentred perspective of the scientist, place disappeared from view and was replaced by location or a set of generic, functional relations" (Entrikin, 1991, p. 8).

The reductionist move to create a universal picture of the world indirectly resulted in negative implications at both the social and personal level. As Entrikin (1991) noted, a breach with ethics occurred as one of the first implications:

[i]n part, it is because the scientific understanding of the world is not only entirely consistent with recognizing that we occupy no special position in it, but also incorporates, now, that recognition. The aim of ethical thought, however, is to

help us to construct a world that will be our world, one in which we have a social, cultural, and personal life (Williams et al., 1985, p. 111).

As the result of science sweeping across the human landscape, the specificity of human action told in space was of increasingly little interest or value to the universalizing task of science.

Lost, then, was the sense that

the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity—whether family or city, tribe or nation, party or cause.these stories make a moral difference, not only a psychological one. They situate us in the world, and give our lives their moral particularity (Sandel, 1985, p.1).

Therefore, as the scientific view grew in strength, a shift in consciousness occurred from the individual seeing himself/herself exclusively as a person living in a specific space to a growing bifurcated view. The individual was somehow to reconcile being of a specific place while also being a citizen of greater and greater spaces, as nationalism took force along with science. This, then, provided yet another perspective on the alienation the modern individual was sensing. A major schism was happening between what an individual experienced to be true (i.e., their experience of place) and what they were told to be true (i.e., nationalism, technological change). Additionally, as science broadened its influence, the modern individual became increasingly confused as the semantic categories of a place centred world were lost. In the objective, scientific view of the world, there was no “here” and “there” just as there would be no “past,” “present” and “future” (Nagel, 1986, p. 57). Viewed in this manner, the value of place diminished until it signified little more than a location in relation to another location (Entriken, 1991). Alternately, viewed from a postmodern perspective,

[p]lace is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning (Tuan, 1974, p. 213).

Allowed to become everyday, place takes on a metonymic quality, whereby places take on the meaning of events and objects that occurred there “and their descriptions are fused with human goals, values and intentions. Places and their contents are seen as wholes” (Entriken, 1991, p. 11).

With the modern mind so thoroughly impregnated by the scientific endeavour, place has, to some extent, been lost in the physical concrete that holds together our roads, schools, homes, factories and businesses. However, to believe that place is meaningless in modern or postmodern societies, would be to lose sight of the most essential of constituents promoting healthy human life. To live healthy vigorous lives requires that people look for tangible opportunities to foster their attachment to place and, similarly, attachment to those people sharing their place. For educators, the challenge is perhaps even greater. Not only must they learn to teach place-based curricula, but they must also learn to understand more completely the place in which they reside. Ultimately, then, we can only truly understand our own place. To believe we can understand other places equally well as our own is, to some degree, indicative of how transient we moderns have become. In the end, there is only one place to call home.

CHAPTER 3

Humankind's Changing Relationship with Place

The fact that humankind's relationship with place is being addressed in this manner (i.e., an academic dissertation), belies a hint of just how radical the shift in the human/place relationship has been. Both the heading of this section and first sentences themselves already reflect a form of rationality with contemporary roots. The fact that "place" is addressed as a topic, already indicates an abstract, detached engagement to place itself. This, then, immediately introduces a difficulty when speaking of place, as there is no such thing as an abstract place. Either a place exists or it does not. To truly speak of place, is to speak of *a* place, a specific place that exists.

Nevertheless, in the following brief sections, an attempt will be made to highlight some of the major forces impacting the changing experience of place. Starting with *Technique and Humanity*, each of the remaining four sections will examine a further facet of the relationship between technique and humanity. Later, these sections will be used as background pieces in the evaluation of the study participant's comments.

Technique and Humanity

Humankind's earliest experience and engagement with their environment speech of a intimate intertwine between people and place (Rudgley, 1999). Similarly, present day pre-modern cultures clearly exhibit anthropomorphic expression (Wohlforth, 2004). The expression in artifact, whether through carving or song and dance, emerges almost without thought to its nascent origins. Today, even the casual observer can—provided with even a minimal amount of

descriptive narrative—view and understand early cultural artifacts and recognise anthropomorphic expression. Within modern cultures the close alignment between sense of place and cultural artifacts, has been eroded over time, replaced now with a constant trail of universal artifacts.

As Veblen (1990/1919) noted, from the post-nineteenth century forward, there was a steady movement away from a place-centred life. Prior to the gradual, but ever-persuasive adaptation of objective, economic rationality to life, most people's frame of reference remained tied to their place. This matter-of-fact relationship of the human/place interaction was quickly swept aside as cultures, each in their own time, encountered and then became subsumed in the world of technological change. Veblen, for one, spoke of the consequence of technological change in the following way:

...during the 19th century, it has become a cultural force of wide reaching consequence, the formulations of science has made another life in the direction of the impersonal matter-of- fact. The machine process has displaced the workman as the archetype in whose image causation is conceived by the scientific investigators. The dramatic interpretation of natural phenomenon has thereby become less anthropomorphic; it no longer constructs the life-history of a cause working to produce a given the effect—after the manner of a skilled workman producing a piece of wrought goods....(p. 13-14)

As the anthropomorphic characteristics of human creation were put to the side, changed, too, was “the chief factor in shaping man's daily life and therefore the chief factor in shaping men's habits of thought. Hence men learned to think in terms in which the technological processes act” (p. 14). Moreover, Veblen viewed those individuals who are susceptible to becoming addicted to the “matter-of-fact” nature of scientific inquiry, as being similarly susceptible to losing the historical patterns of the past.

While technology⁵ has undoubtedly influenced the human relationship with place, technology or technological change. In and of itself, technology is insufficient to explain the ongoing human shift away from place. As Ellul (1964) noted, the word technology immediately confines our thoughts to machines. Confined in such a manner, the discussion entered into herein would similarly be limited from considering the full expansion of technology in human life. It was for this reason, Ellul spoke of *technique* in an attempt to evoke

*the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency (for a given stage of development) in every field of human activity. Its characteristics are new; the technique of the present has no common measure with that of the past*⁶ (p. xxv).

Technique provided Ellul—and those following after him—with a semantic and conceptual alternative through which to explore the sociological implications of technology. As Ellul noted, “technique is not an isolated fact in society (as the word technology would lead us to believe) but is related to every factor in the life of modern man; it affects social fact as well as all others” (p. xxvi). Therefore, a technological society is controlled by technique, where little escapes the controlling grasp of technique, including psycho/social identities. Technique’s relationship with humanity is coalescing; increasingly technique is establishing itself as *the* means of knowing one’s self and the external world. As Ellul noted, “technique integrates everything” (1964, p. 6), including human beings. “It is no longer face to face with man but is integrated with him, and it progressively absorbs him. In this respect, technique is radically different from the machine” (p. 6). Integrated into the person, technique ceases to be external to the person, but instead becomes the person’s very substance. By implication, then, vestiges of former ways of knowing one’s self

5. Where technology is an increasingly elaborate sequence of machines or a procedure for obtaining an end.

6. Emphasis is found in original text by Ellul.

and the surrounding world are lost in Faustian bargains with progress, including sense of place.

The impact of technique is not, however, limited to the individual, but also on their social structures. In past civilizations, technique existed as tradition,

that is, by the transmission of inherited processes that slowly ripen and are even more slowly modified; that evolve under the pressure of circumstances along with the body social; that create automatisms which become hereditary and are integrated into each new form of technique (p. 14).

Now, unlike when societies evolved slowly and could assimilate the pace of technology, the rapid pace of modern technological has resulted in each wave of technology building on the previous, with very little being assimilated into the culture. Few societies have resisted technique's allure to conform. Moreover, technique subtly but intrusively affects both the individual and society in manners earlier unthought.

Although each and every member of western society has been affected by technique, to some level or another, the majority continues to view technology as an independent, positive force in modern life. Should a general survey be conducted concerning the value of technology, it is likely the response would be overwhelmingly positive. Then, if the negative affects of technology were to be highlighted followed by a list of solutions, it is also likely that technology will be chosen to solve any resulting problems. Technology has become the solution to everything. As highlighted by Ellul (1964, 1990), Illich (1970, 1973, 1978), Postman (1993) and Winner (1996), humans have come to overwhelmingly trust in technology to provide a better life, both in respect to comfort and economics.

Although technology is almost universally viewed as promoting the well-being of society, the above noted authors have persuasively built cases for technology ultimately causing effects opposite to technology's original intended purpose. For example, as Illich has argued,

modern education, contrary to its intent, results in our society becoming more stupid. Similarly, Illich (1976) developed the case for the modern medical system making society more sick. Finally, Illich argued that modern transportation does not promote the conviviality of society, but rather makes it easier to bypass our neighbours as we travel to our *friends*.

The Loss of Conviviality

As Illich argued, conviviality—“the autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment”—within a community decreases when the community is subsumed within the technological system (1973, p. 8). Therefore, the consumption of products becomes more important than the development of convivial relationships between members of the community. Additionally, when this occurs within a society, the tools which initially promised a specific purpose, ultimately resulted in the opposite effect occurring than that promised. Moreover, Illich viewed this as having occurred across the spectrum of technological practices. Carried far enough, and surrounded by a sufficient number of technological influences, humans are hard-pressed to remain uninfluenced.

Ellul (1964) also addressed the same occurrence within the technological society, but without directly employing the term “conviviality”. Ellul noted the creation of the mass society happened in four main ways: 1) human tension; 2) modification of the milieu and space; 3) modification of time and motion; and 4) the creation of mass society.

First, the amount of tension that humans must endure as the result of our technological society is at levels previously unseen. “The tempo of man’s work is not the traditional, ancestral tempo; nor is it aim the handiwork which man produced with pride, the handiwork in which he contemplated and recognized himself“ (p. 319-20). In this way, it subjects everyone in the

industrialized world to the same type of life and death. Now, human beings that were created for a living environment “dwell in a lunar world of stone, cement, asphalt, glass, cast iron and steel” (p. 321). Although everyone’s life is homogenizing, they have less knowledge of each other, they are living in a world where they need the psychologist to maintain their morale. For as Ellul noted, “[m]an can support the harshest and most inhumane living conditions, provided his morale holds” (p. 321).

Second, in respect to *modification of the milieu and place*, Ellul stated that with technique “[t]he machine tends not to only to create a new human environment, but also to modify man’s very essence. The milieu in which he lives is no longer his. He must adapt himself, as though the world were new, to a universe for which he was not created” (p. 325). In Ellul’s view, as humankind has been freed little by little from the physical constraints of life, humans have increasingly lost contact “with the primary element of life and environment, the basic material out of which he makes what he makes” (p. 325). In the past, humans always had wide horizons. Even the city dweller had direct contact with the environment just beyond their city walls. “Today man knows only bounded horizons and reduced dimensions” (p. 328).

Third, in respect to the *modification of time and motion*, human’s comings and goings primarily corresponded to nature’s time, a time that was material and concrete. With the invention of the clock, however, time became merely a quantity, an abstract concept. Thereafter, humans were parcelled out in blocks of time, and “human life ceased to be an ensemble, a whole” (p. 329). Therefore “the human being is dissociated from the essence of life; instead of living time, he is split up and parceled out” (p. 329).

Finally, with *creation of the mass society*, humans have not been able to simultaneously adapt to the new form of society. Now, “man becomes a mass man in the new framework

imposed upon him because he is unable to remain for very long at variance with his milieu” (p. 333). The problem, however, is that humans do not feel at home in their collective environment. But, if humans do not feel comfortable at home, where is it they are to feel comfortable?

The combination of the above four factors, correspondingly, has translated into a decreased conviviality being experienced among modern individuals. The modern person, then, is constantly at variance with both themselves and their environment. The modern person appears adrift in the sea of modernity, never quite sure where to anchor their life.

In the context of this study, an attempt will be made to understand whether study participants experienced conviviality with the other members of their family and residents of the community. Moreover, an attempt will be made to understand how community relationships have changed over time for the participant groups.

The Loss of Community

As discussed early in this dissertation, the convergence of circumstances from the early twentieth century onward, resulted in a rapid depopulation of the study area. Although the causes were many, the predominant reason for this depopulation was the rapid influx of technological change. Were it possible for a resident from the first decade of the century to converse with a resident from the last decade, the resident from the first decade would be unlikely to comprehend the sheer scale of change that has occurred over the course of the century. Similarly, where one family once lived on each 1/4 section of land,⁷ any current farm resident is considered lucky if he/she can see their closest neighbour.

7. Western Canadian land is divided in 1/4 section and 1 section blocks. Within a 1/4 section there are 160 acres (65 hectares) and within 1 section of land there is 640 acres (259 hectares). One section is 1 mile X 1 mile. Therefore, a 1/4 section's dimensions are 1/2 mile X 1/2 mile.

Wilkinson noted that "rural... is a territorial concept" (1991, p.57). In other words, human interactions occur spatially. Similarly, Wilkinson emphasized that community interactions also occur spatially. Therefore, "the study of rural life and community...is the study of the associations between one essential element of the community (i.e., the territorial element) and other essential elements of the community" (p. 57). Moreover, "rural as a sociological variable, refers to the extent of dispersion of people in a local ecology. Dispersion is of sociological importance because of its presumed effects on the interactions of people" (p. 57).

Wilkinson was quick to note that the social interactions of rural people were not limited to rural areas. In other words, rural people do interact with people who live in urban areas. Interaction occurs in "rural-urban localities" (p. 59), as compared to exclusively rural localities. Therefore, interaction in rural-urban localities is more "diverse and fluid" (p. 57) than either the rural-urban dicotomy or the rural-urban continuum would allow. Views differ, however, concerning the affect of disperse rural populations on social interaction. Wilkinson noted that while the total number of contacts may decrease, the level of intimacy associated with the remaining contacts may not decrease, and may, in fact, increase.

In the work of Georg Simmel (1950), spatial considerations were addressed in his analysis of human interaction. As societies moved toward increasingly broad circles of interaction (i.e., from the guilds to towns to cities) the spatial dimension of human interaction also changed. Similarly, when traditional forms of barter were replaced by the money economy, Simmel (1990) noted that social and spatial interactions changed as the result of increased social differentiation. Simmel's interactionalist perspective, and, in particular, his views on the interactional implications of increasing economic rationalisation, have proved useful for addressing the changing form of interaction within place.

Simmel's sociological thought has also had implications for the perception of work, the land, and the production of food. As Simmel suggested, the economic process forces distance between the producer and the production process; thereby, forcing the producer to lose a more holistic sense of their lives in relationship to their environment and the ability to be creative within that environment. In other words, the producer and consumer, alike, are alienated with increasing specialisation, in that "the person can no longer find himself in his work" (p. 455).

The above dialogue suggests, then, that in approaching this study, one of the issues to consider is how the different generations perceived the changing population density in the study area and how that change impacted their interaction with others, including with their own family members, as well as with their place.

Modern Education and Rural Society

Similar to what has occurred in society at large, those having obtained the highest educational level, command the greatest influence. In other words, those individuals having limited secondary or post-secondary education are perceived as holding less social worth than those with more education. Writing in 1970, Ivan Illich was one of the first to recognize the deleterious relationship between compulsory education and societal status. In examining this relationship, Illich stated,

[o]bligatory schooling inevitably polarizes a society; it also grades the nations of the nations of the world according to an international caste system. Countries are rated like castes whose educational dignity is determined by the average years of schooling of its citizens, a rating which is closely related to per capita gross national product, and much more painful (p. 13).

Furthermore, Illich stated,

[s]chooling, I increasingly came to see, is the ritual of a society committed to progress and development progress and development. It creates certain myths which are a requirement in a consumer society. For instance, it makes you believe that learning can be sliced up into pieces and quantified, or that learning is something for which you need a process within which you acquire it. And in the process you are the thing and somebody else the organizer, and you collaborate in producing the thing which you consume and interiorize.

I therefore came to analyze schooling as a myth making ritual, a ritual creating a myth on which contemporary society then builds itself. For instance, this builds a society which believes in knowledge and in the packaging of knowledge, which believes in the obsolescence of knowledge and in the necessity of adding knowledge to knowledge, which believes in knowledge as a value—not as the good but as a value—and which conceives of it therefore in commercial terms. This is all basic for being a modern man and living in the absurdities of the modern world (Cayley, 1992, p. 67).

If true, then, the relationship between technique and educational status would appear to have prominent effects on the rural society approached in this study. Not only would one expect study participants to exhibit some form of deference to those with higher levels of education, but, as suggested by Illich (1970), the status given to those with higher levels of education would likely also translate into increased status for those individuals who are perceived to be “life long learners.” Moreover, for those individuals who take “further” education there is no limit of certificates or diplomas available to quantify their educational achievement. Two issues are at play here: 1) “[s]chool programs hunger for progressive intake of instruction, but even if the hunger leads to steady absorption, it never yields the joy of knowing something to one's satisfaction” (p. 18); and 2) further education further stratifies society. Similarly, the greatest status is generally given to those individuals with high levels of education. Conversely, based on the previous statements, it is likely that some level of disdain may be held by study participants for those things learned apart from the formal educational process. This is of specific interest, particularly as cross-generations were interviewed in the study. Furthermore, one may surmise, that the knowledge held by the older generation would not be accorded the same status.

Additionally, one may also surmise that traditions, folkways and practices would similarly be lost, due to their affinity with the older generations. In contrast Berry (1972, 1990), Jackson (1996) and Orr (1992, 1994) advocated that “ecological sustainability is rooted as much in past practices, folkways, and traditions as in the creation of new knowledge (p. 31).

The Expanding Role of the Professional

As can be inferred based on the previous section, those with advanced levels of education are elevated highest: to the role of *professional*. Upon casual view this may appear rather benign or without major consequence; however, when it is considered in the broader context of the commodification of education, the impact is substantial. As noted prominently by Ellul (1964, 1990) and Illich (1970, 1978), when education becomes a commodity it becomes easy for others to quantify their level of education in relation to the other. The consequence, herein, is that the professional, and only the professional, is implicitly accorded the power to determine the adequate level of knowledge a person should have for a given situation. With a demarcation made between the professional and the other, the “[p]rofessional power is a specialized form of the privilege to prescribe what is right for others and what they therefore need” (1978, p. 25). Beginning first with doctors and lawyers, the ranks of the professionals expanded to a new line of specialists, all claiming their ability to provide a service. In the long-term, the expansion of the ranks of the professional ultimately resulted in, as Illich termed them, the “disabling professions” (p. 27).

It should be noted, however, that “[p]rofessions could not have become dominant and disabling unless people had been ready to experience as a lack that which the expert imputed to them as a need” (p. 29). This could only happen in a technological society. With the persuasive

expansion of the market economy,⁸ “needs have become almost exclusively coterminous with commodities” (p. 13). Over time, then, what a person experienced as a want, quickly became a need, there again, bringing them into greater and greater contact with professionals.

The primary importance of understanding the role of the professional in this study will be at least, twofold: 1) will provide an understanding of how much control overtime they have ceded over their lives to outside professionals and its implication for their sense of place; and 2) to gain an understanding over the degree to which each family and generation, therein, have assimilated themselves in the technological society and its implication for their sense of place.

Economics and Human Life

Considering the issues for which technique is a motivating force, it is not surprising that the economy, too, has been heavily influenced by technique. As Ellul stated, technique “appears as the motive force and the foundation of the economy” (1964, p. 149). The impact of the economy is, perhaps, most evident on those least integrated into the economy. For those least integrated into the economy, the first step toward entry into the economic system is the most difficult. For, it is in this step, the person(s) become most conscious of their traditional practices. Moreover, in this step they “encounter the notion that technique destroys traditional forms of civilization and introduces instead a global unity” (p. 154). Additionally, entering into the economy becomes increasingly expensive for those just making the transition. Ellul highlights three major cost areas that increase in the initial steps: 1) more and more machines are required for increasing production. These machines work more quickly and are constantly being improved on. Therefore, there is a constant replacement of machines as the result of constant

8. The market economy is but one of the many facets of the technological society.

inventive progress; 2) the organisation of labour generally requires additional and costly personnel (these personnel may or may not be available); and 3) publicity techniques result in the investment of a large amount of non-production. After there has been sufficient build-up of capital this gives rise to an economy and then a state economy (p. 152).

When technique first took its action on the economy, general hope sprang up among humanity. With each new advent of a machine and everything that came along with it, the notion of progress was re-emphasized. Comfort and pleasure were for everyone in the economy, no more “making-do” with the most basic of needs. Additionally, all those within the economy were to encounter needs that previously had been the rare pleasures of the elite. “To drink chilled beverages in the summer or to be warm in the winter would no longer be the costly fancy of the prince” (p. 190).

Moreover, not only was poverty retreating, but human suffering was decreasing. The machine was taking over, leaving time dedicated to work waning with each introduction of new machines. This process happened with such consistency that by the end of the nineteenth century no one thought it would come to an end. In some form, the economy restored the supernatural world that humans had been severed from, “an incomprehensible world but one which he himself has made, a world full of promises that he knows can be realized and of which he is potentially the master” (p. 192). Now, humans look at the technological complexity embodied in the newest aircraft or automobile and they are drawn to believe in unending progress. When they hear of technology gone wrong, humans shrug in the belief that things will be better next time, while silently hoping they have not been duped.

Again, in reference to the economy, Ellul stated, “technique always supposes centralization” (p. 193). Similarly, he stated, “[t]echnical centralization is one of the major

realities of our time” (p. 194). Within a economy under-girded by technique, centralization will always be one of the broad underlying themes. For there to be technical progress, interrelated economic and political centralization is required. The stronger the reciprocal bond between technique and the state, the closer the two will reproduce aspects of the same phenomenon. Furthermore, as technique and the state draw nearer, a new organism, the technical state is formed. Altogether, “the technical state, makes economic life more secure in proportion is it becomes more technical” (p. 197).

With the economic system looking increasingly like the state and visa versa, the human, too, is increasingly drawn into looking and acting like the previous two. Therefore, “the economic man corresponds to the planned economy” (p. 218). As a further consequence, many of the human traits and tendencies held other than those of an economic nature, have been steadily lost. Progressively, the only important human occupation becomes one where money is made. At risk of loss, then, is humanities very essence. If so, Illich’s and Berry’s moniker, *Homo Ecomis*, provides an all-too-true depiction of humanity.

CHAPTER 4

THE STUDY OF SENSE OF PLACE

As indicated previously, *sense of place*, as a topic of both academic and public discourse, has relatively new origins. Only in the last couple of decades has there been an expansion of literature dealing with sense of place. Although place was a defining element in the psychosocial make-up of human beings from the very beginning—as shown in human art, artifacts, song, speech and the written word—its presence as a discursive element has grown while its decline in importance within modern life continued. Notably, the writing of Thoreau (1985), Stegner (1980) and Leopold (1970) provide three prominent examples of authors who, in and through their writing, provided rich descriptions of their own journeys and struggles with allowing place to become intimately intertwined in the shaping of their personal beings. Additionally, the vivid descriptions and reflections provided by these three authors of the dynamic human-place interplay are reminiscent in most, if not all, current discussion and inquiry surrounding sense of place. As noted by Vitek and Jackson, (1996), “it was Aldo Leopold in *Sand County Almanac* who clearly articulated the inclusive notion of citizenship, a relation to land founded on awareness, respect and restraint.”⁹ (p. vi).

The degree to which the particular realities of society and place were washed from the social fabric of rural Canada was, and still is, evident in the debate over the sociological relevance of the term *rural* and, similarly, the relevance of *place* in understanding modern life.¹⁰

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9. It is interesting that most essays in Vitek & Jackson’s *Rooted in the Land: essays on community and place*, do not explicitly state their foundation. Nevertheless, it appears clear they are draw on the writing of Thoreau and Leopold.
 10. For arguments for and against the sociological relevance of the term "rural," see Bell, 1966; Dewey, 1960; Schnore, 1966; Shils, 1962; Willits & Bealer, 1967; and Millar & Luloff, 1981. For a comprehensive

For the majority of social scientists, the presence of a rural reality is a historical given, but is becoming increasingly irrelevant in the experience of modern society.

Within this universalising milieu, *place*—as a essential topic of social thought—has undergone assault, having been often deemed irrelevant or irretrievably subjective. If, however, place remains a critical “condition of human experience,” (Entrikin, 1991, p. 1) then, the consequences of disregarding place would appear to be significant. This is particularly the case as it relates to rural educational strategies.¹¹ In other words, if place remains an important “element in the construction of rural peoples individual and collective identities,” (p. 1) and if the future of rural community is dependent on the construction of these identities, then education must acknowledge and support the development of this person sense.

Defining *sense of place*, or the significance of place as it relates to human behaviour, is not without conceptual and theoretical challenges. What do we mean when we refer to *place* or a *sense of place*? Does *place* continue to influence our individual and collective identities? Is *place* a meaningful social construct within educational thought? Can unifying themes be drawn between *senses of place*? Or, is *sense of place* totally unique? Can unifying themes be linked within a postmodern theoretical framework? These are just a few of the many challenges addressed in the following section of this dissertation.

Theoretical Perspectives on Sense of Place

Although no one definition of *Sense of Place* can be provided, common assumptions do exist. Proshansky et. al. (1983), drawing on the work of Tuan (1980), Relph (1976), and

overview of the arguments against the sociological relevance of "place," see Entrikin, 1991.

11. Similar arguments can be made for the relevance of place in urban education, as will be noted later in this dissertation.

Buttimer (1980), noted two common assumptions: 1) a person gains a sense of belonging or purpose through the attachment to geographical places; and 2) the unselfconscious “centeredness” or intentionality is associated with attachment to place.

Tuan (1974, 1975, 1977, 1980) used the concept “topophilia” to refer to the experience of space and place. Moreover, it is the process through which the individual comes to know and construct social reality. The construction of place is seen as a movement from the abstractness of space to an identification with place (1977). Unlike Relph (1976) and Buttimer (1980) who argued that sense of place is largely unselfconscious, Tuan (1980) argued that an unselfconscious “centeredness” or rootedness—long habitation at one locality—is no longer possible in modern society. On the other hand, Tuan argued that sense of place “implies a certain distance between self and place that allows the self to appreciate a place” (p. 4), does occur in modern societies. Modernity forces the individual into a conscious space-time awareness. In contrast, the rooted person is in a “state of being made possible by an incuriosity toward the world at large and an insensitivity to the flow of time” (p. 4). Within modern society, then, attachment to place is made possible through a self-conscious appreciation of the distance from and yet dependency of the individual and community on place. For Tuan (1980), it is in assuming the posture of self-conscious awareness that increasing degrees of place-attachment can be experienced.

Shamai (1991) noted a graduated scale of place affiliation or commitment: 0) not having any sense of place; 1) knowledge of being located in place; 2) belonging to a place; 3) attachment to a place; 4) identifying with the place goals; and 5) involvement in a place. Other systems have been used in the attempt to quantify sense of place (Genereux, Ward & Russell, 1983; Williams, Patterson & Roggenbuck, 1992; Williams, Anderson, McDonald & Patterson, 1995). Relph (1976) noted seven degrees of “insiderness” and “outsiderness.” Additionally, Tuan

(1977) differentiated between the sense of place associated with broad areal spaces (i.e., the state or city) and the “field of core sense of place” (i.e., the town, village, or home). For Relph (1976) and Buttimer (1980), the home formed the focal point of place attachment, where home is defined as the space with which the person is intimately acquainted. Orr (1992) indicated that “place is defined by its human scale” (p. 126) or, in other words, by the limits of the human senses and cognition.

The experience of place is not abstract, but an experience occurring within the boundaries (i.e., microecology) set by “visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory barriers” (Bell, 1973). The experience of place is a “total sensual experience” (Sell, et al. in Shamai, 1991; see Whitehead, 1967). Place is ours to fully experience, but not to change without careful consideration to the implications, and then even after careful consideration our actions may be harmful (Berry, 1990). Similarly, Sale (1985) quotes Lewis Thomas:

Our deepest folly is the notion that we are in charge of the place, that we own it and can somehow run it. We are beginning to treat the earth as a sort of domesticated household pet, living in an environment invented by us, part kitchen garden, part zoo. It is an idea we must rid ourselves of soon, for it is not so. It is the other way around. We are not separate beings. We are living part of the earth's life, owned and operated by the earth, probably specialized for functions on its behalf that we have not yet glimpsed (p. 191-2).

Although the *individual's* experience of place has been highlighted to this point, it is important to note the broader realm within which sense of place is defined, this realm being the community. Place provides “a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security...” (Relph, 1976). More directly, Snauwaert commented, that

Self is defined by its association with others within a shared geographical space. It is both the rootedness on and the sharedness of a particular place which is the

medium through which personhood is constructed (1990, p. 119).¹²

Place knowledge is not static, and unchanging artifact of some gone-by era. The community is continually undergoing subtle alterations as the result of changes occurring within the place environment and coming from without (Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1998).

Sense of place, then, has relevance both as object of psychological and sociological inquiry. Proshansky et al. (1983) noted that self-identity is not “restricted to making distinctions between oneself and significant others” (p. 57). Self-identity is equally defined in relation to the external environment of “objects and things” (p. 57). It is the interaction with place that defines the individual's place-identity. As a sociological construct, sense of place is “...manifested in shared stories or collective narratives...” (Entrikin, 1991, p. 66; Bellah, 1985).

Sense of place, and its consequent implications for both personal and community identity, is not ethically neutral. Drawing on the agrarian philosophy of Wendell Berry, Snauwaert (1990) used the ecological construction of both personhood and community within place, to argue for sense of place as an ethical position.

If we act irresponsibly and exploit the earth as well as its inhabitants, then we define our humanity as violent and exploitative. However, if we transform the environment in a creatively enhancing way, becoming the “stewards“ of the earth, then we have defined ourselves as creative, compassionate, and just beings. Thus, the result of our shared relationship with the land is mediated by community, and this act of value creation is also inherently social (1990, p. 119).

In contrast to sense of place as an ethical ideal, modernity has been associated with a “crisis of meaning” as the result of a “decline in place-based community” (Williams, et.al., 1995,

12. Snauwaert's comments are made in the larger context of an essay concerning the implications of Wendell Berry's agrarian philosophy for rural education.

abstract). Drawing on Sack (1992), Williams et.al commented that

meanings are increasingly created in a spatially decontextualized world of mass consumption and mass communication; a world in which market forces create and destroy meaning at a rapid pace. As meaning has become homogenized, ‘thinned-out’ and detached from place, people are left much to themselves to construct meaning and identity (1995, abstract).

Similarly, Relph (1976) uses the term “placelessness” to refer to the standardisation of place and the loss of place centred specificity and meaning. This standardisation was noted as being an outcome of modernity.

The results, then, of weak human-place/community-place interactions are two-fold, namely ecological and social. Hug and Campbell (1996) noted that “loss of knowledge, experience and connection to our local places manifests” itself in the inability “to differentiate between healthy ecosystems and unhealthy ones” (p. 1). This, in their view, resulted in the continuation of ecologically destructive behaviour. Similarly, social structures were rendered unsustainable, if not predatory, when divorced from intimate place interactions (Prakash, 1993, 1994, 1995; Berry, 1972, 1987, 1990; “Whose Common Future?”, 1992).

The ethics of the human-space interaction have been addressed from numerous perspectives. A cross-section of writers includes Berry (1972, 1990) —rootedness as social and ecological balance—; Leopold (1949) —land conservation—; Orr (1992, 1994) —education as ecological literacy—; Bowers (1993, 1994) —education and the ecological crisis—; Gandhi (1980) —education for local self-sufficiency—; Schumacher (1973) —technological and social balance—; and Thompson and Kutach (1990) —agricultural ethics.

The interest in sense of place, then, takes its place within broad discussions concerning social and ecological sustainability. Place remains an important site of human action, in spite of

continued movement toward universalising forms of discourse. Therefore, it is within an increasingly “spatially decontextualised world” that attempts to contextualise education take their form.

Sense of Place and Rural Education

The connections that human communities forge with place are not unique to rural areas; however, because of the spatial orientation they are some of the most enduring relationships. In rural areas the land becomes an integral part of people’s lives, unlike when land is used in a recreational context. It is in their places they take part in buying and selling, working and playing and living and dying. For rural communities the rhythms of the land become part of their day-to-day lives (Vitek & Jackson, 1996). In the absence of external forces stressing the bond with place, rural people naturally developed bonds with place. Moreover,

[p]lace was being integrated into early education in much the same manner as subsistence was integrated into both the land and its cycles and the family and its work and economic patterns.

The strong relationship between patterns of subsistence and education can be seen in the academic calendar which retained vestiges of the agrarian and rural rhythms in the long summer vacation to facilitate harvest and breaks for spring planting. Education was long an adjunct to subsistence (Williams, 1998, p. 63).

More than one-hundred years ago, John Dewey wrote about the potential for linking place with education:

We cannot overlook the importance for educational purposes of the close and intimate acquaintance got with nature at first hand, with real things and materials, with the actual processes of their manipulation, and the knowledge of their special necessities and uses. In all this there (is) continual training of observation, of ingenuity, constructive imagination, of logical thought, and of the sense of reality acquired through firsthand contact with actualities (1960, p. 457).

As Williams (1998) stated, “the resonance between education and land and other aspects of rural

life were matters of common sense” (p. 63). While similar calls for place-sensitive education have been made over the course of the century, of which several notable examples include Berry (1987, 1990), Leopold (1949), Whitehead (1967), Bailey (1980), Mumford (1970), and Jackson (1994), place continues to have “no particular standing in contemporary education” (Orr, 1992, p. 126). Orr noted that, “a great deal of what passes for knowledge is little more than abstraction piled on top of abstraction, disconnected from tangible experience, real problems, and the places where we live and work” (p. 126). Therefore, rural schools have often become the catalyst for educating people to leave their communities; thereby, breaking their bonds with place and “fulfilling the prophecy that these places are doomed to poverty, decline and despair” (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998, p. 5; DeYoung & Howley 1992; Howley, 1997; Theobald, 1997). In western education, competency is based on a list of predetermined ideas of what the student should learn, which is then “objectively” tested in some manner. The problem, however, is that this approach to education rarely determines whether the student can put what he/she learned into practice (Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1998). Educational texts have similarly been designed to meet the universalizing function of education. Rare is a textbook that expresses region or place-specific themes (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998). Education, therefore, remains abstract.

Similarly, modern education is biased toward enabling individuals to assume their position in an information/industrial society, both as producers and consumers (Berry, 1990; Prakash, 1994). The emphasis is not, as Berry noted, on educating the child “to return home and be of use to the place and community; he or she is educated to *leave* home and earn money in a provisional future that has nothing to do with place or community...” (1990, p. 163). Similarly, Gandhi spoke of modern education being “calculated to wean the student from his traditional culture” (1980, p. 35). Indicative of this vision of education is the following comment:

In strictly economic terms, education provides skills and abilities that contribute to national economic growth and which enable individuals to be responsive to changing macroeconomic forces. This may entail such phenomena as spatial resettlement and occupational adjustments to structural changes in the economy (Deaton & McNamara, 1984, p.23).

Against the backdrop of universalising educational discourse, Orr (1992) noted four major reasons for integrating place into curriculum: 1) it requires that experience be combined with intellect (knowledge is forced away from abstractness); 2) it circumvents the problem of overspecialisation by highlighting diversity and complexity; 3) it educates students to live appropriately where they are; and 4) together with the previous three reasons, it addresses issues of social and ecological sustainability. For Berry, the integration of Orr's four reasons are synonymous with the development of good judgement (Snauwaert, 1990). Understood as it relates to place, good judgement “rises out of the comparison of one thing with another, out of the study of the relations and influences between one thing and another and between one thing and many others” (Berry, 1987, p. 91), or more directly, the study of place.

In the context of rural education, place-sensitive education acknowledges the unique spatial realities associated with rural students' lives and attempts to support their developing a sense of place within that space (Thompson & Kutach, 1990). In place sensitive education, the schools' central goal should be to help young people become stewards, rather than owners of their place (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998, Sobel, 2004). Moreover,

[t]he study of place...has a significance in reeducating people in the art of living well. The distinction between inhabiting and residing...is important here. A resident is a temporary occupant, putting down few roots and investing little, knowing little, and perhaps caring little for the immediate locale beyond its ability to gratify. The inhabitant, in contrast, “dwells,” as Illich puts it in an intimate, organic, and mutually nurturing relationship with place (Orr, 1992, p. 130).

Furthermore, place-sensitive education acts as a counterbalance to universalising educational

trends by promoting uniquely local visions concerning local human/place interactions (Snauwaert, 1990; Prakash, 1995). These local visions cannot be “generalized because they depend not only upon the specific people who occupy these roles, but the placement of the roles around the immovable geographic place” (Thompson & Kutach, 1990, p. 148). Place-sensitive education, then, needs to be communal in orientation (Snauwaert, 1990). Again, speaking of Berry, Snauwaert commented that, education must advocate the promotion of local knowledge and membership in the community. Local knowledge and membership can only be achieved through communion and shared work with adults.

In other words, education is forced to relate within local social and ecological realities (p. 125).

Again, Snauwaert noted that

[t]he forms of knowledge must be clearly connected to community life if they are to have an expanding effect on the student's mind. When forms of knowledge are disconnected from collective life, the educational process is open to ideological hegemony... (p. 127).

As Berry noted, education should force us to ask: “What is the effect, on our neighbours and our place in the world, of what we do?” (1972, p. 156). Its focus is on opening doors so the child can return to the community.

Interpretations of the degree to which education should be particularised, vary. Prakash (1993), drawing on Orr (1992) and Gandhi (1980), argued that knowledge must first and foremost be particular.

Education must seek to revive the lost communal virtues: of rooted care; of temperance and frugality governing our pursuit of individual and social freedom--along with the virtues of individual and social freedom--along with the virtues of grounded hope, sufficiency, autonomy, and self-sufficiency necessary for strong democracy (p. 16).

Although not incompatible with the previous position, Thompson and Kutach (1990)

presented a more limited educational agenda. They supported the inclusion of place-sensitive themes within English, science and social studies, while continuing to recognise broader universalising trends within society. These particularising themes include geographic space, ecology, community, and ethics (Esterman & Hedlund, 1995). Discussions concerning the relevancy of place in education have also been used to advocate the democratisation of the school. To be reflective of place dynamics, the school must be controlled by and for the *community* and not just by parents (Snauwaert, 1990).

Discussion concerning place-sensitive education, then, represents a broad-reaching attempt to counteract the perceived dangers associated with universalised education. It is an attempt to envision ways that students can be encouraged to reflect on and experience their own unique places, with the hope many will create the future of those places.

Chapter 5

Study Methodology

The participants for this study were individuals from farm families in one of three broad generational categories (i.e., grandparents, parents, and children). Each of the farm families were randomly selected from a total of 34 individuals participated in the study. The study area was defined as the drawing area for the local high school.

Twenty-four of the 34 participants were from four farm families, with the number of participants being evenly distributed across the three generations. The remaining 10 study participants were from three, two generation farm families. The mean formal educational level of grandparents was 9 years; 10.9 years for parents; and 11.5 years for the children. Five child participants were currently enrolled in high school. Fifty-eight percent of the participants were male and 42% female.

Agricultural production was the primary source of employment for the middle generation. All parent and children participants lived on the farm. All grandparents remain involved or connected to their family farms, but may not currently live on the farm. The location of off-farm housing was limited to the local town with the exception of one grandfather who resided in the closest urban centre.

Participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format (Patton, 1990). Interviews were designed to move from the details of experience to the meaning associated with those experiences (Siedman, 1991) as it relates to the previously noted research questions. Education was defined to include both formal and informal educational experiences. Informal education was defined as those learning experiences which occurred on the farm. All interviews

were tape-recorded and then transcribed.

For the purposes of data triangulation (Merriam, 1995), historical documents relative to establishing the broad context of educational and agrarian change were consulted. Additionally, interviews were conducted with past and present school teachers (n=9) from the area. Starting dates of employment ranged from 1927 to 1996. Extensive field notes were also maintained throughout the study.

The analysis was interpretive and descriptive. The hermeneutic framework developed by Gadamer (2003) guided the overall tone of the study. Within Gadamer's framework, if we are to understand anything, the evaluator must situate or find themselves "in" the world or "alongside" that which he/she wishes to understand. Any understanding directed toward or available to the subject is based on a prior ontological understanding or a prior hermeneutic situatedness. Therefore, hermeneutics is best understood as an attempt to make explicit the structure of this situatedness. But as situatedness occurs prior to a specific act of understanding; therefore, so it always must be presupposed even if it is the act of explication itself. Accordingly, the explication of this situatedness—of this basic ontological mode of understanding—is essentially a matter of exhibiting or "laying-bare" a structure with which we are already familiar (the structure that is present in every event of understanding), and, in this respect, hermeneutics becomes one with phenomenology, itself understood, in Heidegger's thinking, as just such a "laying bare".

Finally, the cross-case analysis method was used in analysing the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). With this method, one individual's responses (a case) were analysed followed by a second case to "see whether the new pattern matche[d] the one found earlier" (1994, p. 436). When multiple instances of phenomena were observed they were grouped and then

“inspected for essential elements or components” (p. 436). From grouped elements, conclusions were drawn.

Background on the Study Area

The study area was located approximately 55km (35 miles) from a major urban economic centre in Saskatchewan. The area was homesteaded in the early years of the century, with all available land being taken by 1910. Shortly thereafter, a rail line was established through the area; thereby, providing increased options for trade and personal transportation. Quickly, numerous thriving communities were established, often every 7-10 miles, and many with a wide range of businesses, services, and options for entertainment. In the 1920s both telephone and electricity services were first introduced to the towns. These services were extended outside of the town over the next 25 years.

Like rural areas throughout North America, people began to move off the land soon after homesteading. For many, the realities of rural Saskatchewan were too harsh. Among the common reasons cited for their early departure were: the land was too dry, too stony, crop failures, frost, hail, poor commodity prices and a lack of schools.

The stock-market crash of 1929, the drought of the 1930s, and the broad-ranging economic and technological change of the postwar era, accelerated the trend toward fewer people on the land. In the 1990s only two towns existed where more than ten once thrived. Similarly, 12 schools districts, each comprised of one school, once existed. Now, only one school district with three elementary schools and one high school remains.

The study area continues to rely primarily on agricultural production for employment. However, an increasing number of people commute to jobs outside the study area. The trend

toward decreasing farm populations and increasing land bases continues with growing economic pressures on agricultural production. Increasingly, then, the remaining businesses and community structures, alike, have closed or come under threat.

More than 500 of Saskatchewan's approximately 600 locations of commerce are forecasted to be lost in the next decade. Similarly, with school enrolments forecasted to decline by 25% in many rural areas, additional school closures and consolidations will most likely occur (Stabler & Olfert, 1996). The following analysis, then, should be understood within this context.

CHAPTER 6

Study Findings

The findings are presented in four broad thematic categories: community, culture, economics and technology, and education. Each of the four categories provide an analytical framework for examining *sense of place*. In each category, representative interview statements and interpretative comments are provided. The emphasis within each category is on providing the reader with a view for how the study participants' sense of place has changed. No attempt was made to provide a comprehensive analysis within the category or of the factors leading to this change.

Interview statements were coded as follows: grandparents = G, parents = P, children = C, and interviewer = I. All personal and place names have been changed. Gender was specified where deemed important.

Community and Sense of Place

The One-Room School and Community

The anecdotal history of the Canadian prairies provides evidence for the importance of the one-room school house in the life of pioneering communities (Charyk, 1977, 1982; Montjoy, 1981). Similarly, the participants in this study noted the school house was the venue for community dramas, club meetings, church gatherings, fairs, picnics, dances, sports, school activities and programs. The one-room school house was, however, more than the venue for community activities; it provided an early sense of identity or sense of place:

G: Well, everything just centred in the community. We never went to town maybe all winter. Maybe we'd go to town if you had an emergency or something.

Another participant noted:

G: See, that school was the centre, that whole area went to the school for concerts and picnics and whatnot. It was the centre... We didn't know anybody over the other side of X school.

Furthermore, the participant, now in her 90s, noted that the number of people viewed as being within the community was limited.

I: How many children were in your school?

G: There was 40 when I went.

I: How many families would have been represented in those 40?

G: I can count them. There were eight families.

For the study participants, the number of families viewed to have been within their respective community was 8-12, for a total of 50-80 people. Contacts beyond this community, were in the early years after homesteading, primarily for reasons of commerce. In many communities, the dance was the primary community event. When farm activities did not prohibit, the dance usually occurred every two weeks at the school. The dances were intergenerational and included everyone in the community:

G: Oh, everybody right from...there were no baby sitters. You just...everybody had 8 or 10 kids, you packed them and took them. As they drifted off they just lay down around the floor. Come lunch-time everybody would get up and have a sandwich. The women would take sandwiches or cake. They would bring it from their homes, whatever they wanted to bring. They'd always bring something.

For other communities, the house party was a common event:

G: We'd have house parties, like the large and small houses in the district in those days some of them were small, but there were always 2 or 3 houses in the district that were pretty good size and between the dances at the school once in a while and then these house parties we were together a lot. The older women would get together and talk, and the men would always have a kitchen table with a card game going and then the rest of them would be dancing, just clean out a room and away they would go. There was always some that could play the fiddle or the piano organ.

Another participant noted that:

G: There was a lot of visiting then, too. We were away on a Sunday or somebody was here...

Sports were also important for many communities, as noted in the following comment:

P: We played a lot of ball. We had 2 or 3 old bats that were taped up and I think that we had a mask and a catchers mitt and the rest of the kids either had a mitt of their own or went without. We would stick all of this stuff in a gunny sack and walk from Sunny Side School to Creek Side School, about 4 to 5 miles to play ball and then we would walk back. In the summer it was nice.

Contacts with other community members were not restricted to social or sporting events.

Speaking of her father, the following participant noted:

G: If it wasn't for him I think some of the neighbours would have starved. He helped lots of neighbours, even his brothers. He helped them. He had a family of his own and yet he helped them out...

Similar stories were conveyed by numerous of the study participants.

The intent, here, is not to suggest a utopian analysis of early prairie communities.

Numerous stories of social isolation, some leading to severe mental illness and suicide, social friction, gender inequality, and general life hardship, could be sited. The intent, rather, is to highlight the spatial orientation of early social life among early agricultural families.

Without modern transportation and communication, the geographical space for social interaction was limited and consequently, sense of place was also spatially limited as reflected in the following comment:

G: We didn't know many people outside our community because we were going by horse and buggy and you didn't get there.

Even with the introduction of the phone, social contact, at least initially, remained primarily local, as reflected in the following comment that

G: ...the phone was used a lot to visit, and of course those days there was 12 on one

line, so everybody got the news. Everybody listened.

By the mid-nineteen forties and fifties, the social life of prairie communities was changing markedly, primarily as the result of dwindling agricultural populations. Although, as noted by one study participant, "[i]n the 1930s there was already empty houses in this area," the movement toward urban areas accelerated following the *Great Depression* and the *Dirty Thirties*.

The Town and Social Interaction

With declining rural populations and with questions concerning the quality of education their children were receiving, all the one-room schools in the study area were closed by the mid-nineteen fifties. Combined with improved transportation options, social interaction for farm families increasingly moved to the remaining towns in the area. Highlighting this movement was the following comment:

P: The school as a social hub was maintained until about the mid-1950s when the curling rink and the arena in the winter and the ball diamond in the summer took over. The switch took place largely as the result of school closures.

Country churches were also closed and consolidated in the remaining towns. Similarly, by the early 1950s the dances had moved to the towns and people came from across the area to attend:

P: ...the whole town would be full on Saturday night. The stores were open on Saturday night so people would come in and do their shopping. It was a whole family deal. Kids that high (as he point just above his knees) to grown-ups. It just wasn't a kids' thing then. The hall would be packed every Saturday.

The community dances would gradually come to a close in the early 1960s. People were travelling longer distances for entertainment or were staying home as reflected in the following comment:

P: TV has been a big change in the community life. People have their home entertainment, before they would go out and have dances every week and the

theatre. But that is about when TVs came in, too. They would stay at home to watch their favourite program...or they would drive to the city for entertainment.

While baseball, curling, and hockey remained important community activities, they increasingly drew people from a wider geographical area, particularly with the close of sporting facilities in surrounding small towns. Other social activities in the community had also changed in important ways. Social activities, including dances were no longer intergenerational. Now, grandparents, parents, and children all have their own social get-togethers. Additionally, intergenerational community social events were sporadic, often occurring for the purpose of raising money, and were perceived to be different than the more regular, relatively spontaneous events of the past—a fact older members of the community found disturbing.

The Countryside and Social Interaction

Similarly, social contact among country neighbours has changed, as reflected in the following participants' comments:

P: I have some neighbours 100 meters from my farm. Look, you can see them from here...just down the road. I meet them on the road but you never really talk with them. A person should take the time to go visit them or have them over for supper or whatever after supper... They're not my age, but hey they're my neighbours.

The neighbour to which the previous comment refers, commented as follows:

G: And there is so much curling, hockey and basketball, volleyball, ski-do rides, shopping in the city. Our towns are gone. You see people you meet on the road and you wave to them, but as far as visiting with them, I haven't had a visit with any of our neighbours around here. Of course everybody is the same.

Another participant noted:

C: I don't think communities are as tight as what they used to be. You just depend on yourself and your banker and that's it. You don't talk to anybody, you do your own work. You put so many hours in that you don't have time to socialise with your neighbours a lot of the time.

Other participants noted they continued to maintain strong contacts with their individual neighbours. Joint community involvement, however, was noted as being more rare. The following comment was reflective of the continued sense of neighbourliness that existed:

P: I mean we are genuinely a neighbourhood and they know me and I know them...

The participant, however, did not equate neighbourliness with community. For her, and the area in which she lives, community has been largely lost.

For those participants with children living at home, declining farm populations have required their travelling further to maintain social contact for their children:

P: Whatever you are going to do you are going to be driving. It's come down to whatever their children are going to do you are going to be driving. That is just the way it is going to be from now on and even more. It is getting to be so desolate out here. It is not the way it was 20 years ago.

Another parent commented that:

P: ...we try relatively hard not to disadvantage our children and we aren't the exception among farm people. The amount of time that we put into band and to hockey and figure skating... That is not unusual that country people do what they can to overcome the perceived disadvantages that their children have, in terms of not being in the city.

Finally, a parent commented that:

P: One of the big challenges facing prairie families is the challenge to transport our children all over the country if they are to be involved in more than just what's happening on the farm. Today there are hardly any children on the farm. That wasn't the way it was when we were kids. Now we have to transport our children if they are to be involved with other kids. It's a big financial and time commitment.

Parents have been forced to seek social opportunities for their children beyond their local communities. Social interaction, then, is less geographically bound, particularly for the younger generation in this study. The expectations and experience of community had also changed.

While regular involvement in local sports and in school activities such as band and drama continues, the younger generation no longer had the intergenerational expectation of community. Neither did they expect that community would be experienced in the more local proximity of their farm. Community was viewed as being more geographically dispersed and generationally stratified, as reflected in the following comments by two participants:

C: ...the farm community in this area...they get together... The adults all have their own dinner parties and all that kind of social stuff. School is our basic social connection. From there you are pulled into other activities.

C2: Mom and Dad identify themselves with this community...with the people in the surrounding area around here as sort of their community. For me right now it is X town. I'm from X town not from Y. I just happen to live out here.

The farm community took on a more general role as highlighted in the following comment:

C: It is really nice having people around here as a support group, I guess. When we had our combine fire this fall, there were 30-40 people with shovels and equipment to help put out our fields from going up in smoke.

For the younger generation interviewed in this study, local community (i.e., in proximity to the farm) was defined by the more abstract elements, of personal familiarity, general trust, and a commitment to assist a neighbour in time of unexpected hardship (eg. fires and sickness). In this more limited sense of community, the youngest participants in this study generally believed that strong community values continue. To a lesser extent this was also true for grandparents and parents, although for most of these individuals, their evaluation continued in relation to their past, more comprehensive experience of community.

Community Identification

For both parent and children, community was less geographically bound and more dependent on lifestyle choices. In other words, community was experienced where and with

whom one chose to associate. Social interaction and identity, however, was still understood primarily in the context of the study area. The study participants traveled to the city to participate in activities and for commercial reasons. They did not, however, see these interactions as providing a sense of community.

For most grandparents and parents, alike, their residence in the area was one of long-standing choice, as reflected in the following comments:

G: About two weeks ago somebody asked me, “are you moving to the city.” I looked at them and said, “why would I move to the city?” I said, “number one, my friends are here. Why would you want to move?” At least there are people keeping tabs on you, at least there are things that you can do. I'm still of the small community mind.

P: I lived in the city for a couple of years while I was going to school and it wasn't fun.

One grandparent noted, however, the choice to stay on the farm was not his own. As the oldest child he was expected to take over the family farm, but by his own admission, he never really liked farming.

For the children of farm families, all identified themselves with the community. Six of the ten strongly identify themselves with the community and have chosen to stay. The others viewed their future identification with the community as more uncertain:

C: I would like all these little towns to survive, but I'm not sure that I want to be one of their people right now or in the very near future. I would like to experience...I've lived my whole life on a farm and will until the end of high school and I would like to live in the city for while to see the flip side.

Maintaining Community

For all three generations, maintaining community remains an issue of considerable concern, particularly in light of the demographic and economic trends facing rural areas.

However, evaluations of the present state of community differ between the generations, largely because of having participated in differing social histories. This makes the discussion concerning community, as it is experienced now, more difficult. One participant noted the following elements as having defined community in the past:

P: ...people living in a geographical area next to each other in a neighbourhood who shared history, families that have lived there for generations, who shared roots and history, who shared common purpose, a common geographical domain, a common history and some common goals.

For this participant, shared purpose may be a future possibility; whereas, the remaining elements have been lost or significantly eroded. For numerous participants, notably grandparents and parents, community was viewed to have been largely lost, as reflected in the following comment:

G: ...there is no community. The community is lost because there are only so many people living in it. It was very community-minded then because there were so many in our district.

Scores of deserted prairie farms provided evidence of this loss. Moreover, across the prairies, the common tradition of referring to your land by the name of your lost neighbours, even 30 or 40 years after their departure, preserved their memory (eg. "That's the Smith place."). It did not, however, ever bring them back.

This perceived loss of community led many of the grandparents to wish for "the good old days." Commenting on this wish, one participant stated:

P: ...it is not a question of turning back the clock and going to a preindustrial society. That never is the question. That is never the possibility. To any one that says, "if only we could go back to 'the good old days,'" for one, as a women, I shrug and say, "give me a break." For women, those weren't the good old days. And probably not for men either. But, there is something in me that understands quite clearly what it is people want. It isn't that they long for the washing board, it is that they long for the society; for the culture.

Unlike their grandparents, more modest expectations of community were expressed by the

younger generation. For the younger generation, community was related to the maintenance of services and activities in the locality (i.e., curling, hockey, the school, the bank, etc.). Now, grandparents and parents also defined community in a more narrow sense; as primarily the interaction with friends of the same generation or of similar interest (i.e., senior citizens club, curling club, hockey, school, etc.).

For all three generations, the family, including those no longer living on the farm, continues to provide social meaning:

P: ...we hang onto friends and certainly family across the country and in my case now across the world...because we have some shared history, we have some sense of place. It is no longer a single geographical place, but we have a sense, in a more abstract way, a sense of place.

The definition and reality of community has changed dramatically for the study participants over the course of the century. From close, place-defined social interactions, the geographic boundaries within which social interaction occurred, have gradually, but steadily, expanded. Place, or sense of place, including the social interactions that occur in that place, were more diffuse and less socially inclusive. Furthermore, although place continued to define social relations, weakening spatial boundaries made place a less, albeit still important, factor in defining social interaction for the study participants.

Culture and Sense of Place

From an urban vantage, farm people on the Canadian prairies were commonly described in the following way¹³: committed to family, neighbours and community, conscientious, determined, down-to-earth, hard-working, independent, optimistic, parochial, politically

13. The descriptive characteristics noted here are some of the more commonly noted when I have informally asked people living in urban areas how they would describe people who farm.

conservative, practical, red-neck, resilient, and responsible. While the descriptors noted are not exclusive to these individuals and may or may not be accurate, it is perceived that place (i.e., rural spaces) played a role in the development of their identity. In this study, the participants' perceptions regarding the relationship between place and cultural values were explored.

Responsibility

Among the values the study participants believed were associated with their lives on the farm and particularly as it relates to raising children, responsibility was the most commonly noted. Characteristic comments from each of the three generations were as follows:

G: I think pretty well all the farms were the same. The children were always quite involved in what went on in the farms, you know. It was the thing to do, you enjoyed your work. Now, I think that's why there is so much disrespect, they have no responsibilities.

P: Farm kids are far more responsible. They were made to look after livestock and made to work. And if the job wasn't up to par you had to do it again.

C: I came from a mixed farm and that is the way that you were brought-up. You helped with stuff and you did everything. I think that is good, because a lot of kids don't grow-up with that responsibility of having to look after stuff or being able to do stuff.

In contrast, many of the parents expressed concern should they have to raise their children in an urban environment:

P: I don't think I would want to be raising kids in the city if I didn't have to, knowing the type of lifestyle... You can't learn without doing...

Assuming responsibility on the farm was also regularly related to both learning practical skills and having a practical outlook on life. Often this was reflected in comparison to what they perceived to be the very abstract learning associated with formal schooling:

C: I know that when you talk with the older people, you ask them how they learned what they know and it was because here it is, it your's, you do it. They had no choice and it was more hands-on...just go and get it done. And now it is 12 years of looking at a book before you actually touch anything.

Having children assume responsibility at an early age was also seen as the way in which the values of hard-work, commitment, and independence, were learned. Other parents, however, acknowledged that farming has changed. Their children's labour was no longer necessary to the operation of the farm; whereas, for both their generation and that of their parents, the situation was different. One parent who was raised in the city but later moved to the farm, made the following observation:

P: ...when my cousins grew-up they had cattle and hay and straw that had to be put up every summer and the cows had to be fed in the winter time. They had to make it, period. I don't think they felt oppressed. It was obvious that their labour was needed. It wasn't that their parents were giving them an educational experience. So, what has happened with our children is that their circumstance is more like my circumstance growing-up in the city... For my kids there still are times of the year when things are demanding of them and they just have to put out. But, for big chunks of the year, for my kids it is exactly the same as it was for me growing-up in the city.

This is particularly the case for those farms without livestock and with very large machinery. Due to concerns about safety and their ability to run complex equipment, farm youth often were not involved directly in the function of the farm until they were in their late teens, as reflected in the following comment:

C: Until I was in my late teens, I hardly helped on the farm. Well, if I can say feeding chickens and cutting the grass as being involved, then I guess I was involved. Otherwise, I never really started helping on the farm until I was around 17. By then, they had enough faith in me to have me run a truck back and forth to the field. Otherwise the machinery was too big and expensive to have me on it. I didn't want to screw-up or anything.

Several of the youngest participants also noted the relative isolation of their residence also encouraged them to be responsible in ways different from their friends in town:

C: It makes you more conscious of space, gas...what you do. It always has an impact on what we can do and can't do. We can't just drive to town whenever we want, too. That is different for my friends in town. They can just walk to their neighbours house when they want to visit.

All three generations noted the relative isolation of the farm encouraged the family to live and work closely together, to depend on neighbours in time of unexpected hardship, and to value community activities.

Independent Activity

The isolation of the farm was also related to children learning the value of independent activity. This value was reflected in the following comments:

P: No one is going to tell them children what they should do. They just go out and explore.

C: I don't like being in the city. Even when I stay in for a couple of days, I go crazy because there is nothing to do. You can go biking or something like that in the summer. I can't stand it. There is nothing to do there.

Again, however, important differences existed for the youngest generation. Like children in urban environments, they were increasingly participating in organised activities. The following comment was representative of the weekly schedules of four of the five high school students interviewed in this study:

C: Monday I have band, Tuesday I have hockey and basketball, and Wednesday I have basketball, drama, and Thursday I hockey and drama and Friday I have basketball and hockey and then weekends are always jammed.

Implied in the above noted comment was a fundamental shift in the utilization of children's labour in on-farm activities. Whereas, previously children played an important role in the operation of the farm during after-school hours, now farm activities have been changed to such a

degree that children's labour is rarely necessary.¹⁴ Therefore, children have been freed to engage in extracurricular activities, as noted in the above comment. By implication, however, decreasing children's involvement in the farm would appear likely to decrease their opportunities for engaging in independent activity.

The Production of Food

The family farm has also changed relative to the production of food and the involvement of children in the production of that food. Therefore, the value associated with the production of food has also changed. As a matter of both necessity and lifestyle, the early prairie families lived, for the most part, subsistence lives, as reflected in the following comment:

G: There were times when it the crop was somewhat skimpy, but my Dad always milked cows and shipped cream. That's part of how we subsisted. It was the cream, it was the big garden and the canning, it was the gathering of the eggs, the selling of eggs, the making of butter, taking the butter up on Saturday night to exchange for your groceries.

Similar to other activities already noted, the subsistence activities of the family reinforced the place-specific nature of their lives. They couldn't drive to town and purchase peas—they had to be grown, picked, shelled and canned. This gave subsistence activities a level of importance equal to that given to the production of cash crops. This was particularly the case in times like the *Dirty Thirties*, when, without subsistence activities, they would have starved. Moreover, the act of consuming food, particularly in the winter, engaged the family in memories of their joint work producing this food. It was a celebration of the ability to be productive within their chosen place.

14. Please note the participant's comments highlighted in the previous section (ie., Responsibility) for further insight into the utilization of children's labour.

Although many subsistence activities were carried over into the parent's generation, few subsistence activities have been continued by either the parents or their children, as reflected in the following comments:

P: Everyone had a couple of pigs and cows and some land. Everyone in this area did. There really was no big acreages or big herds. It was like all these farms right in here were much the same. They were much more self-sufficient at that time. They weren't specialised like now.

G: A lot of people are saying, "Gee, I haven't got time to grow a bunch of potatoes and stuff. They're only \$4.95 at the store. A lot of people, my young ones, do not have a self-sufficient garden at all. I think the last one that got tried down at the farm...there was more weeds than there was anything else so they roto-tilled the whole thing up and gave it up.

With improved transportation and access to cheap food sources, it was no longer perceived an economic necessity to produce one's own food. Growing a garden, then, was often considered by the younger generation to be *busy-work* and not necessary to the economic well-being of the farm. Like people living in the city, these families now buy the majority of their food requirements from the grocery store. With the recent closure of the local grocery store due to lack of business, the option for buying locally has also been removed and they were forced to travel 55km or more to the city to shop. Moreover, food procurement was no longer tied to the seasonal realities of place, as noted in the following comment:

G: My little grandchildren expect a tomato with lettuce on a sandwich. ...in January or in August, there is no reason they can't have a tomato. I never thought like that when I was a child because if you had tomatoes you grew them and you ate them in abundance when they were ripe and then you didn't expect more until next season.

Similarly, these families now purchase a wide range of products and services previously produced by the family themselves. The value, then, of self-sufficiency or subsistence food production has been largely lost on the families in this study.

Rural versus Urban Values

Although most grandparents and parents believed they continued to carry with them a uniquely rural cultural identity, they were less certain when they spoke of the youngest generation. In addition to the values already noted, the two older generations also noted the following values: committed to family, neighbours and community, conscientious, determined, and down-to-earth.

Speaking of cultural values and farm youth, one parent posed the question in the following way: “How rural is rural and how cultural is rural?” Reflecting on this question he commented:

P: I think that my kids have reasonably urban values because that is what they read and see on television. The fact that even though they live on a farm, their lives are not radically different than a lot of the kids that grow-up in the city. So, my kids have never said that they have any interest in farming. I'm frankly of the opinion that the urban culture is so dominant that if one of them decides to live right here and live some how, both partly off the land or completely off the land...if one of the four, I would consider that a big victory.

Similarly, another parent commented:

P: ...the cultural overlay, in other words the radio, the TV, the communications are not only urban, they are very urban. All of it is in fact very urban, the pop music they listen to, the hard rock, the TV, the movies, and urban controlled.

In spite of the degree to which they perceived the overlay of urban culture, they continued to believe that place was a factor in affecting the values of their children. Like other parents, however, they had more difficulty in articulating what values were different:

P: I think that I may have given the impression that I don't think that it matters where a child is raised, but I have been thinking about that. Although I think that is the case, it also doesn't tell the whole story. Part of that can be seen when I think of where I would want to raise my kids. Frankly, it scares me to think of raising my children in the city, so there must be something that is different about raising kids on the farm. When I think of my kids, I know they are best friends. I doubt that would have been the case had they grown-up in the city. I also think that we have more opportunities

as a family to be around each other. We live very closely together and I think there is a lot of value in that.

Similarly, the youngest generation perceived less of a division between rural and urban culture. Although not a comparison of rural and urban values, they recognised few, if any, major differences between themselves and students from towns or acreages. They also recognised that, as already noted, living on a farm, may or may not be related to developing a sense of responsibility and hard-work, practical skills, and the ability to engage in independent activity. They viewed these values as being equally held by those not living on a farm. Individual family's values and circumstances were deemed to be more important in developing these values than a person's location of residence.

The Land and Place Attachment

The land, animals and nature, more generally, were seen by the youngest generation as being more uniquely part of their upbringing in rural settings. Grandparents and parents also noted their attachment to the land, nature, and open space, although this value or attachment has changed, as will be noted later in this section. In regard to animals, the following comments were representative of those in the younger generation who had animals:

C: I think that having animals also is a big part of the farm. I have a horse and I have a really good sense of being around animals.

A fifteen-year old male commented:

C: I help out with the cattle quite a bit. Whenever we have to treat cattle, or stuff, I'm out there. Today my parents will be away from the farm and I will be watching the cows. We're in the middle of calving. I really enjoy it, actually.

Others commented on the value of regularly being in natural environments:

C: I've always liked the farm and there are certain times in the year that a guy really enjoys, and that is seeding and harvesting and just being out at that time of the year

is something I really enjoy.

C2: I really enjoy just being able to go out and wander and look at the plant life around me. I often go out to the prairie and look for deer horns that have been shed.

C3: You're living in the country where you have a lot of freedom where you can relax more than if you have the sounds of a big city around you all the time.

While others provided a contrasting position:

C4: I can't wait until the end of this year when I graduate. As soon as I'm finished then I'm gone. You couldn't pay me enough to stay on the farm. I've been isolated far too long.

Similarly, a number of parents believed an exposure to nature was an important part of their children's upbringing, as reflected in the following father's comment:

P: I think that my kids have an appreciation for the land and for nature. One of the jobs the kids do in the summer is to ride out with their horses and check the cows. Although they are involved in a job that needs to be done, they also have the side benefit of being surrounded by nature. They ride across the prairie and are exposed to what is around them. The natural environment is something they are comfortable around.

Although several of the younger generation expressed an attachment to the farm, it was in the more general sense of the term, as reflected in the following comment:

C: You kind of take it for granted now that this is your home and you can always come back here everyday when you come back from school or from wherever you were. I think I would miss it a lot after we graduate and move out of here.

One parent commented on the lack of place attachment:

P: Our kids, when you talk with them, there is no sense that they are limited to that farmstead and that is their livelihood and they have to make that place work or else their well being; there is no sense like that, whatsoever. And that is everywhere. There are very few kids that you talk with anywhere in rural or urban Canada that have the sense that they have to make the place where they live work into perpetuity or else they are threatened. They will move somewhere else. It is the popular mentality that there will always be somewhere else and they will move somewhere else. And that is environmentally, I think, an attitude that is very damaging.

For all three generations the value associated with the land had changed. Whereas, previously, and in particular for the grandparents, the land was viewed in the context of one's total lifestyle it has increasingly taken on an economic function. The following comment reflected a more holistic or integrated view of the land:

G: There is nothing like that first cultivator swish through the soil. In a lot of ways, there is nothing that brings memories back to you as the memory of walking into a barn that is occupied by animals. There is that, yeah it probably is the manure, but it is small, it's the essence of the farm, it's the joy of being with animals. I can go out onto the deck at night here in this little town and my neighbours are farmers all around, and I know exactly that they have swathed or mowed hay today because I can smell that new-mown hay. And then six-weeks later when I go back to the deck at night; heavy on the air is that smell of the harvest; the smell of the grain in the air. There is nothing to compare with it.

Although similar themes and descriptions were heard from the parents and children, they were different in their texture; being both less frequent and less sensually inclusive. While it is possible to account for this difference by labelling the grandparents' comments as nostalgic recollections, it is believed that it reflects a more fundamental shift in how the land is perceived. In contrast to the grandparents' view of the land, for both the parents and children the land was spoken of primarily in terms of its economic function. This is not to say, however, that a deep attachment to the land does not continue, but rather this attachment is changing. The continued attachment to the land was reflected in the following comment:

P: ... it has taken generations to build it up and it is not like a shoe factory and you just can't say that is just a shoe factory, you couldn't just sell it. Farms are built through a lot of blood and sweat.

Further indication of the continued attachment to the land was also evident in the struggle of farm families to remain on the farm. If, however, and as suggested here, the value associated with the land is changing, then it had important implications for sense of place. When land was perceived as an economic resource, rather than the place of one's life, sense of place suffered.

As reflected in the comments of all three generations involved in this study, place was still viewed as an important, but weakening factor in determining cultural values. As will be highlighted in the sections on economics and technology and education, the nature of work and life on the farm has changed, and, therefore, the role of place in informing cultural values. The picture of the isolated farm family no longer holds weight in an age when satellite dishes are routinely spotted in farm yards.

Economics, Technology and Sense of Place

With images of the earth floating in space permanently fixed in our minds for four decades, the conceptual jump to global economic and cultural integration was made with ease. The earth no longer seemed so large. Japan, Egypt, France and a long list of other countries emerged as our global economic and cultural partners. They were no longer just distant and exotic. No matter in what place we lived, we were told we are heading in the same direction; we were to live a common destiny.

The stage, however, for global economic integration was set decades ago. Rural prairie communities were among the many places where economic dress rehearsals were carried out. By looking at the life experiences of the study participants, evidence for the changing economic balance can be observed, and, more directly, the consequences for their sense of place.

The Farm and Economic and Technological Progress

With three serious crop failures in the 1930s, few, if any prairie farmers were ready for the Great Depression. One dollar per bushel in 1910 and over \$2.00/bushel in 1917, wheat dropped to an unthinkable price of \$0.21/bushel in the late thirties (personal communication).

The collapse of world grain prices, then, forced the migration of many farm families away from rural areas. In the years following both the Great Depression and World War II, economic realities changed and the broad-scale introduction of modern technology occurred, forcing broad-reaching changes, as noted in the following comments:

G: I got started farming in '29 with five horses. You know how much work you got done in a day? You made your 20 rounds, you ploughed 5 acres a day, that was enough for the horses, too. I got my first tractor in '44 and I sold the horses. It was a Ford tractor. I could knock off more than five acres in an hour.

G: The good old days! I remember when the first tractor came in. People started getting rid of their horses. My brother said they could farm with tractors if they wanted to but he was going to farm with horses. But it wasn't too many years until he switched over to a tractor. I remember my husband, he used to work for my Dad, and they used to go out...he used to go out at night, especially if something was getting urgent he used to have a little lantern in front of the tractor, under the radiator.

Even today, the optimism of those years can be heard in the words of the study participants. The era of technological progress brought with it material affluence. However, many of the changes were, as noted in the following comment, not expected:

C: I don't think that people foresaw that progress—the move from horses to tractors—what was clearly progress down on the farm, also meant that you would lose most of your neighbours. I just don't think that people foresaw that or foresaw the significance of that. No one thinks that the local church died because we had tractors.

The movement of progress has continued into the final decade of the century, leaving one study participant to comment:

P: ...the guys that did go bigger a couple of years ago, and if they made it, they are in a better position to bid on the next guys land in between you and me. Some guy will go and retire and it will be the guy that got big that gets the land. So the bigger gets bigger and the guy that isn't big enough is probably going to get wiped out. It is awful hard to make it go on a small acreage. The margins are so thin. When I was a kid it didn't take very much to live. We raised our beef, we raised a big garden and we milked cows and we had eggs and we had hogs. All that we had to buy was sugar and salt; not very much. But now we have got'n away from that

and we have to come up with more money for living costs. So if you have to come up with \$40,000 for a family to live and if your margins are so thin there is only one way that you can do it and that is get bigger.

A similar perspective was taken by one of the larger farmers referred to in the previous comment:

P: As soon as commodity prices get good, it's people like us who are farming a large area and growing more grain, we're the ones that benefit, and so we're the ones then that would have the money to go out and buy a quarter section of land right beside a young fellow. I'm not saying that we would do it, but we could do. That is a reality. This fall two quarters of land ten miles from here...and there was a young farmer and his wife and young family was drooling over the possibility of being able to buy it. There was just no way. He was \$50,000 short. The person that came in just snapped it out from underneath him, and I felt sorry for him.

Economics and Young Farmers

Similarly, many participants noted the economic difficulty associated with passing on the family farm. The following comment highlighted this difficulty:

P: We're in the stage of our lives where we're not willing to take anymore big financial risks and yet if one of our children wants to stay here and farm that is precisely what we would need to do. There wouldn't be enough of a land base to support us all. So we would have to embark on a new establishment round and we would have to take a good chunk of those financial risks, because the young person couldn't do that.

As reflected in the previous comments, few immediate options for survival seem apparent other than increasing the size of their farms. As noted in the following comment, the common counsel was to approach farming like a business:

P: When you look at what governments are trying to push at farm families, it is basically cut the romantic business; not think of it as a life but a business.

The study participants were aware, however, that more was at stake than just taking on a "business-like" approach. Their decisions had important and far-reaching implications—

implications for the future of their farms, their neighbour's farms, and the life of the community. From more than 85,000 farm operations in Saskatchewan in 1966, the number is forecasted to be less than 55,000 by the turn of the century (Rural Life Ministry Annual Report, 1996). And, as noted earlier, more than 500 of Saskatchewan's approximately 600 locations of commerce are forecasted to be lost in the next decade. With each change, the challenges facing agricultural people and their ability to coherently construct social and personal meaning, grows.

Globalization

The move toward global economic and cultural integration also had other important consequences for the study participants' sense of place. Canadian agriculture was never isolated from world economic trends, as reflected by the impact of the *Great Depression*. Their 'lives' were, however, isolated from most world trends, as noted in this dissertation. Now, the move toward global economic and cultural integration, whether reflected in popular culture, the trade of information through the Internet, or economic co-operation, is drawing rural life onto the world stage, in ways previously unseen. Themes related to global integration were often heard surfacing as the study participants spoke. The following comment was representative of these themes:

P: We are part of a global economy. We have no choice but to compete on the world market. If we're not able to compete, than we won't make it.

Similarly, the youngest generation reflected an increased awareness of global themes, as noted in the following comment:

C: The world has changed since the time of my grandparents. They lived their whole lives here in this area. The world that I live in is far more global. When I get out of high school, I would like to go travelling. There is so much that I want to see.

At almost every turn, whether through newspapers, TV, radio, or casual conversation, the arrival of global integration is announced; often with a sense of inevitability. Unlike their grandparents, then, the youngest generation in this study was no longer locally bound. When their great-grandparents immigrated to Canada, they left behind their home countries, likely to never return. Now those ancestral countries don't seem so far away, they are part of a global community.

With fewer people on the land, agricultural people have struggled to maintain a sense of control and meaning in their lives, a struggle evident in the lives of the study participants. While economic and technological change brought numerous welcomed material benefits to the study participants, it also resulted in unexpected consequences, of which the rapid loss of rural populations and community was the greatest. Also lost was a strong sense of place.

Education and Sense of Place

Teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic is commonly thought to comprise the core educational responsibility of the school. Similarly, the family is characteristically viewed to have the main responsibility for teaching their children moral values. In contrast, teaching children about sense of place is rarely considered an important role of either the school or the family. The question can be asked, however, whether children were/are indirectly taught about sense of place. In this section, the educational experience of the study participants, both formal and informal, will be explored with reference to sense of place. The intent is not to provide a historical account of rural education in the study area.

Formal Education and Sense of Place

By 1916, 3608 school districts were operating in The Province of Saskatchewan (Toombs,

1964), 12 of which were within the study area. The vast majority of these school districts were comprised of one school; the now famous, one-room school house. Although supported by the provincial government, most schools were primarily established through the hard-work and financial support of small groups of local people, the majority for whom agriculture provided their livelihood. One grandparent commented about her view of the community's early support of the school:

G: I was too young to remember much about how the school was run but I do know that each person in the community had to be involved in the school. Of course some supported the school and their children more than others. The school trustees came from the area and taxes were raised to support the teacher and the school. Our parents wanted us to have a good education.

The grandparents interviewed in this study, then, represented the first generation of students in their families to attend these country schools.

Travel to School

Although transportation to school was not directly part of the participants' formal educational experience, it did impact their perceptions of place, as will be noted, and therefore will be dealt within in this context. Due to transportation constraints, the early school districts were characteristically established every 10 to 12 kilometres (6 to 7 miles). Therefore, children generally did not have to travel more than 6 kilometres (3 1/2 miles) to school, a distance which could be covered by foot or by horse. The spatial orientation, then, of early rural education was local, as already implied. For each of the grandparents interviewed in this study, travel to school was an important theme in their stories. Reflective of these stories was the following comment:

G: We were about a mile from school. ...the only time we ever walked to school was when my father needed the horses to put the crop in and take it off...we never had to walk unless the roads were real bad. If there were storms, like sand storms and

things like that, I remember them coming to pick us up or even a real bad storm in the winter time.

Another participant noted:

G: We had a lot of fun travelling to school. When we would walk we would laugh and run and fool around and poke around. Sometimes when we took the horses we would race other kids.

Unlike trips to town, for example, travel to school was primarily the children's responsibility, and therefore, it was spoken of in more formative terms. Their early perceptions of space and time were importantly shaped by their experiences of travel to school, the corresponding difficulty associated with this travel, and their proximity to the natural environment. The farm child, then, was aware that he/she lived, worked, and studied within a relatively limited geographical space.

In contrast, the middle generation's experience of travel to school changed markedly within the first decade of their lives. For most of the parents interviewed, school closures in the beginning years of their attending school, required they travel further and by bus rather than by foot or horse. Speaking of the switch from a small country school to a consolidated country school, the following participant commented:

P: A lot of them students were. They were coming from further and further all the time. All of a sudden there were kids travelling 25, 30 miles on the bus in the morning. From going to a small school that was 10 minutes by horse and buggy, that was a big step.

Although the difficulties associated with travel to the local school were acknowledged, the same participant perceived riding a bus was more difficult:

P: Riding on the bus was probably...the most unpleasant part of the day, I guess. I think that's the biggest waste of time. You're on the school bus for an hour at a time, an hour coming in and an hour going home. Sometimes more, an hour and half and there is nothing you can do except interact.

With each consecutive school consolidation, the distance children were bussed got larger. One grandparent commented in the following way about his granddaughter's experience of being bussed to school:

G: Kids road the horse and buggy or closed-in rig in the winter. And now my oldest granddaughter out there, Janet, she has been going 12 years in Town X. She travels 80 km per day, five days per week is 400 and 40 weeks a year for simplicity, that is 16,000 km and that means 192,000 km for 12 years of education. That is more than around the world 3 times. Now there is a tremendous cost in that transportation to get all those kids to school.

For the youngest generation, riding on a bus was taken as a given.

C: Riding on the bus is a waste of time, but what are you going to do? I spend a lot of time sleeping.

Therefore, the spatial orientation of the school in relationship to the farm did not have an inconsequential influence on the participants' early and evolving sense of place. Even before the children reached the school, their sense of place was being influenced.

Early School Structure

The structure of the one-room school also had implications for the students' evolving sense of place. As implied by the name, the one-room school had multiple grades; often grades 1 through 8. Although disadvantages existed, all of the grandparents and parents who attended these schools remembered fondly the joint learning environment. This is reflected in the following representative comments:

G: The older ones could look after the younger ones. They'd even help encourage them in some lessons. Sometimes if the grade 7 or 8s had a short class or finished work and the teacher was busy with others, she would let the older ones help the younger ones. Sometimes, just by listening I could learn things that were a grade or two ahead of where I was at. I think that is why kids got along better.

G: When I was in grade 1 and 2, I would listen to the teachers teaching grade 3,4,5

and grade 6 and I sometimes knew as much about their work as my own.

Similarly, the grandparents reflected with fondness the joint games played at recess among students. One grandparent spoke of it like this:

G: ...at recess time, grade 1 on up took part in ball. That's all we had then was ball. The younger grades, 1s and 2s, they'd go out in the field and they'd run after the ball if it got there. By the time they got so they could bat...they had quite a bit of experience.

The school was a reflection of the community, as one parent noted:

P: ...the school was a sort of a mirror of what the community was like. The school was a reflection of the social morals and the social attitudes at the time.

If this statement is true, the above noted stories can be understood as indications the school was reflecting and reinforcing the close-knit interactions of the community. The school, like the community it served, highlighted the interdependency of people living in a geographically and socially limited space. In this way, it served to nurture an evolving sense of place among, then, young children.

School Consolidation

While both grandparents and parents commented on the benefits of school consolidations, notably enhanced curricular offerings, specialisation of teaching roles, improved school facilities, and expanded extracurricular activities for students, others noted the impact consolidation had on sense of place. For example, one parent commented:

P: Actually, when the schools consolidated that you just reinforced the loss of local culture. If you walk into the halls of the X high school, other than it is small compared to a city school, you couldn't differentiate if from any other school. ...the architecture and the way the school works and looks is like a city school.

Attending a small rural school, however, was also seen as preserving a sense of place, as reflected in the comment of a student:

C: ...I can't really say that I would rather be in a smaller school since I've never been in a large school. But, I think that it is nice in many ways. You get to know everyone in the school and you know a lot about them. The teachers know a lot about each student. It is less you're the student...it's more of you're Bob or Sally...

The consolidated schools have not, however, continued to involve the whole community. While parents were an integral part of the early prairie schools, few of the parents interviewed in this study indicated they were actively involved in their children's schools. The only exception to this was during times of perceived crisis in the schools. The school, in this way too, is no longer directly linked to the life and activities of the broader community.

School Teachers

All three generations expressed concern about the 60% urban composition of the current teaching faculty and their ability to understand rural life and issues. In the early years of prairie education, rural teachers were themselves primarily from rural areas, and by both necessity and expectation, they lived in rural communities. Although the necessity for living in rural areas was removed with improved transportation, the expectation remained, as reflected in the comment of a grandmother and past teacher:

I: You were expected to be part of the community?

G: You wanted to be. You knew that you were the person hired to teach and therefore, you were a leader in the community, you were the one who should know about taxation, you were someone who should know about some of the things about public health. It was part of your job to bring something extra to that school. Now, teaching has become a job for them as opposed to a vocation.

Numerous participants noted that hiring teachers who lived in urban areas was a problem:

P: ...you see it playing out in the school because the teachers would lose touch with the students, there wasn't as much person contact and they are sort of operating in different spheres and different social levels and because of the commuting. All of a sudden the teachers were...going back and forth...so 3:30 or 4:00 they were out of here.

Most study participants also expressed their belief that teachers who lived in urban areas saw rural schools as their second employment choice and should an opportunity in the city open, they would leave. Based on informal comments by teachers, this sounded likely to be the case.

The Value of Personal Education

The early experience of attending school was, for many of the grandparents, an experience that was recalled with considerable pleasure. One grandparent spoke of her time in school, in the following way:

G: I loved school. I don't understand these people now who are 12 years of age and who say, "Oh, I've *got* to go to school." If I missed a day of school there was a really good reason. I wanted to go to school.

Another women commented:

G: Even today, the smell of new paper, new books, it just makes me want to really go back. The smell of a lead pencil, new lead pencils sharpened. I just loved to get a new book and treasured it.

For others, still, the value of school was less important, less tangible. In this case, the perception of their educational experience appeared to be tied to gender. Whereas, all of the female grandparents reflected on their educational experience very positively, this was less the case for the males. Characteristic of the males' comments, were the following:

G: I guess that my education was important, I'm just not sure how.

Similarly, one grandmother commented about her brothers:

G: We always went to school. My brothers weren't fussy about going but us girls did.

As reflected in the following comment, the farm often quickly superseded the importance of their education:

G: I missed a lot of school because of the farm. In '34 I started driving four horses on a binder, I was 13 and from then on I never went back to school until harvest was over. When I did go back, I didn't ask some questions that I should have. My mind was on the farm.

This was also reflected in the comments of some of the male parents. The following participant indicated that he quit school in grade 9 because he knew that he wanted to farm and he no longer saw the relevance of school. Somewhat humorously he commented:

P: Reading Shakespeare wasn't about to teach me about how to cut hay.

Similarly, another participant commented:

P: I took grade 10 but I went seeding right before exams. I started working on the farm and I was there about a week or two and no one mentioned going back to school so I didn't. I didn't like it anyway.

However, both of the previous two individuals noted they wished they would have continued at least until they had finished their high school diplomas, so they would have something to fall back should they ever have to quit farming. Other parents, however, provided contrasting positions on the value of their education. In the first case, the participant had a high school diploma and several months of university education. In the second case, the participant had an undergraduate degree.

P: I like the education but I felt that the education I was getting, a lot of aspects didn't do me a bit of good. It probably was, but I didn't think so. Math and everything is a tremendous asset, but I don't think taking English, how to write a short story, was going to help my life. I wanted to become educated but I didn't think education was helping me. I left for university but after going there for 2 or 3 months, I knew it wasn't for me.

P: My education has benefited me enormously. When I needed off farm employment, I could get it.

On the value of education for their children, the parent's opinions were uniform. They all believed education beyond high school was very important, irrespective of whether their children

decided to stay on the farm or not:

P: It is becoming more complex and the things that you have to know... You just can't be a hard worker. It isn't good enough. Not anymore.

Similarly, the majority of their children believed in the necessity for continuing beyond high school, either as a means of dealing with the increasing economic and technological complexity of farm life or as a means for finding satisfying employment away from the farm. In several cases, however, the youngest generation questioned the value both of their high school education and the need for post-secondary education. One participant who recently graduated and is now farming, spoke of his situation in the following way:

C: There was only one class that I can really say helped me on the farm and that was industrial arts with working with metal and welding and stuff like that. Other than that the rest of it was your basic school stuff.

In my case, I knew that I would be on the farm anyway and it wasn't much sense me spending money and going to university when I knew that I would be right back here anyway.

As already implied, evaluations concerning the relevancy of their education, varied. More directly, each generation expressed concern that their own education had limited correspondence with their lives on the farm. In other words, the two were very different in their orientation, as reflected in the following comment:

I: ...when you look at what happens in the school and what happens on the farm, is it two separate realms, or does what you learn in school support what happens on the farm?

C: I don't think...Most of the stuff that we need to know to be a contributing part of the farm we learned on the farm, watching the farm, helping out on the farm, living on the farm.

When rural themes were addressed in school, the instructional materials used were out-of-date, as noted by the following participant:

P: We had some kind of agricultural course. I remember the textbook that we had was way back in the stone-age. The pictures of machinery were very crude. ...all of

the pictures in the textbook were of lug tractors and binders.

School Curriculum

On the issue of curriculum, one parent commented:

P: ...the curriculum is provincially established, the teachers come from elsewhere...its not unique to the X area's experience at all. A scientific education is meant to be general and duplicable. It has to be based on premises that are general and can be duplicated in any place. And that is what it is meant to be. That is what rural parents have been very adamant about. You have to give the kid an education so that he can leave so that if there is a job in Toronto that she is qualified for it; if there is a job in Edmonton he is qualified for it.

With the exception of there being fewer curricular offerings, the parents expressed confidence in the overall quality of their children's education. Similarly, the students who were interviewed commented they were equally or better prepared than students in the city.

No examples were provided of curricula addressing place-sensitive themes, as reflected in the following interchange with a grade 11 student:

I: ...do you think there are areas of content that are specifically rural or address rural themes, perhaps like the dynamics of rural communities, challenges facing agriculture, or local history?

C: We don't have any of that right now. We discuss things that we are familiar with, of course, but we don't usually touch on anything that is really close to home. I know that it influences everyone. I can't think of any class...

Current students did, however, see a place for integrating rural themes into the curriculum, as noted in the following comment:

I: Do you think it would have been good if teachers had integrated local agricultural themes and subjects?

C: It would be interesting. We have never had anything like that. That would be a good idea. I think that it would bring it closer to home if we had problem solving class where we could take an issue and figure it out.

Similarly, the majority of parents expressed their advocacy for integrating rural themes into their

children's education. One parent, however, questioned this approach, as noted in the following comment:

P: I don't think that agriculture should be taught anymore than say nursing or engineering. I don't think that it is the responsibility of the school to teach one career and not the others. The school is there to provide the foundation for kids to choose those careers.

It was his view that education should remain general, and with an emphasis on problem solving, so rural children could make the widest range of career decisions possible.

The preceding discussion, then, highlighted a perceived lack of correspondence between farm life and the school. School and life on the farm largely remained as two separate realms—realms which the participants, and in particular the grandparents and parents, had difficulty conceptually drawing links between. Place, in the view of all three generations, played little direct role in their education. Their education was, however, influenced by the social, ecological, and technological realities of the day. Even before the child reached the doors of the school, whether by foot, horse, or bus, their sense of place was being influenced.

Informal Education, Technological Change, and Sense of Place

Common nostalgic images of the family farm are carried forward with images of young children rising early in the morning and doing chores in the farm yard, the boys helping with seeding and harvest, and the girls, using the bounty of the land, helping cook for the hungry men. As will be noted, these images increasingly hold less true. However, beneath the stereotypical nature of these images, an element of truth is held: farm children learned skills and participated in work unique to where they lived. In this section, the study participants' farm experiences will be examined for the relationship between place and their informal education.

Learning to Do by Doing

A farm child's education was often described as learning to do by doing, as reflected in the following comment:

G: ...when we were kids on the farm, one of my jobs was to milk a couple of cows morning and night. We didn't have a lot of cows but we had a few. Enough for our own use. I did that when I was 7 or 8 years old.

More directly, one parent described his informal education on the farm:

P: I don't think my parents consciously said, "Ok this is what you need to learn, I'll just sit you down and teach you all this." It just kind of falls into place. It was usually on-farm training. You just learned from hanging around when you were 8 or 9 years old.

Another parent, however, articulated a more conscious approach toward the education of his children:

P: I hope he's getting a good education from me at home. I think he's probably getting as good or better an education than what I got from my father. My father was fine, but I'm trying to be better at educating him, giving him a farm education. I'm not teaching him continually, can't or don't want to do it. You need separation...

Still further, a parent expressed a contrasting opinion regarding providing children with meaningful farm work:

P: The time of having your kids involved in the farm is over. When I was a kid it was possible because the scale of equipment was much smaller. For example, I started running the old John Deere D when I was 11 or 12. Now, with all of our big machinery, there are almost no opportunities for including my kids. I would be crazy to put one of my teenage kids on a piece of equipment that cost several hundred thousand dollars, or more. The risk is just too large. The main work my kids have is around the house, mowing the lawn or weeding what little garden we have. When they get older we will see what happens.

The practical operations of the farm, then, held the potential for creating a rich informal education for the children of study participants. As had occurred for generations, children developed their understanding of agricultural life through being involved in the activities of the

farm. Agricultural knowledge was passed from generation to generation through the work of the day. Now, however, fewer and fewer opportunities exist for children to become involved in the activities of the farm. Therefore, contemporary farm children are less likely to develop a strong sense of place in the shadows of rapid technological and economic change.

Education and Subsistence Food Production

Traditionally, subsistence food production provided opportunities for children to “learn to do by doing”—everything from planting, to harvest, to the preservation of food. As noted in the section on *Culture and Sense of Place*, however, the families in this study participated in few subsistence or personal food production activities. This has had implications for a child’s farm education, and, therefore, for his/her sense of place. The following comment reflected both the loss of traditional subsistence activities and the consequence for a child’s farm education:

P: Suppose you did have what my grandfather had which was a mixed farm which would have you raising hogs and cattle, market gardening to some extent, poultry, and as well as working the land with horses. Now, at that time, if you were interested in agriculture as a kid, you could get your fingers into all type of possibilities. That is not how a modern farm works at all. On this farm, there is only one thing to get experience from and that is cash cropping.

Although economic rationales exist for discontinuing subsistence activities, these activities did, as stated earlier, serve the important role of teaching valuable skills and nurturing a sense of place among farm children. Now, one’s food can come from Mexico, Chile, Thailand, and/or Brazil and little concern or surprise is noted. The link between the production and consumption of food has been broken; thereby, losing a valuable opportunity for nurturing a unique sense of place among young people.

Education and Gender

Changes have also occurred in the relationship between gender and informal farm education. For both grandparents and parents, alike, farm work was often gender specific, as noted in the following grandmother's comment:

G: We did all the baking, cleaning, washing, and you name it. There was a lot of cooking with a family like that. There was seven of us kids and Mom and Dad.

The grandfathers, in contrast, characteristically spoke of work in the following terms:

G: Before I was old enough to help with the field work, I remember helping my Dad harness the horses.

Therefore, children were often taught or not taught to do specific work based on their gender. For example, seeding and harvesting were primarily male responsibilities. Other work including feeding livestock, milking cows and collecting eggs, however, was often a joint responsibility—particularly for children.

The majority of farm work continued to be gender-specific into the next generation. Many of the parents continued to refer to farm work in gendered terms. The practice of passing the farm to the oldest male child also reinforced the gender specific nature of work. Others, however, indicated they (i.e., husband and wife) shared traditionally male work responsibilities (i.e., field work).

Now, the study participants, although still referring to work in primarily in gendered terms, expressed a more open position to both work and farm succession. More than half a dozen cases in the area were cited where the women returned to the family farm. However, for most women wishing to continue working on the farm, marrying a farm man and moving to another farm is necessary. In several cases, both the sons and daughters were participating in

more male specific jobs (i.e., driving tractor, combine, etc.). Like their grandparents and parents, however, the youngest generation continues to relate to work as gender specific. Therefore, gender also plays a role in defining one's sense of place.

Education and the Family Farm

As implied in the previous subsections, many of the study participants understood the informal farm-based education of children as being the role of the family farm; a process of learning from one's grandparents and parents.

For many of the grandparents and parents, providing their children with a farm education went beyond teaching skills to include attitudes and outlooks on life. As noted in the section on culture, hard-work and responsibility were two of the major values that farm families wished to instil in their children. Additionally, numerous participants noted the need to teach children to be progressive. One grandparent, speaking of her husband, now deceased, commented:

G: I really think that was why the kids came back to farming, because he was progressive and he bought machinery and planned it out good...he'd invest in the farm again...instead of investing in some other stuff. One thing I'll say for my Dad and for Bill (husband), the reason we took an interest in farming is because they were progressive.

Her son similarly commented on the role of his father in teaching him to be a progressive farmer:

P: ...I guess that's why most of us boys are farming today because he expanded, had the foresight to buy land, grow good crops, use modern technology back then, use fertiliser, chemicals, and as much modern machinery as he could afford.

Many of the participants noted that attitudes toward progress were related to farm success. The following comment reflected this belief:

G: ...people just gradually disappeared, but you're not aware of everybody being gone until they're all gone. Like I say, they weren't progressive and that is how come they more or less sold out because they couldn't make it on the farm.

All of the participants noted the family farm was coming under challenge; thereby, raising questions concerning the ongoing education of farm children. One participant spoke of the challenge to family farms in the following way:

- I: How do you respond when people say the family is dead; farming is a business now?
- P: It is getting like that more all the time and that is a thing that you are forced into. Up until not that many years ago we just farmed because that is what we knew and that is how we made our living. There wasn't much number crunching. There wasn't much of that. But now you have to do it more business-like or you are dead. I think that it used to be that if you worked hard you could make it. But now you can work hard but if you do the wrong thing you are dead. You are broke.

To the same question, another parent commented:

- P: No, it isn't. Ours isn't, but it is becoming more of a business. You have to be more business-oriented in technology and education to make it...but it is still a family farm. You want to preserve the lifestyle of the family farm so it's integrated, too. You can't have one without the other in mind. Yeah, it could become a total business, but I don't want it that way. I want my family, my wife and children, involved in the farm forever and not just as a business—have it a family affair.

Others, however, did see the small family farm as dying, as reflected in the following comment:

- P: As far as the small family farm, I think it is basically a thing of the past. There hasn't been small family farm viability for a long time. Maybe there is still room for that, you just better not have very big expectations.

Although the challenges facing family farms were understood in different ways, underlying was the belief that only those individuals who approach farming as a business would survive. The history of each of their local areas suggests this was true. While smaller family farms may not survive, their hope was that larger ones will.

Concerns were also expressed about the rising age of farmers, as noted in the following comment:

- P: I don't know who is going to take over from this generation. Maybe some of the kids will come back and start farming. Many of them the current farmers probably have another 20 years before the want to quit. The question is whether their kids

will want to come back and change their lifestyle?

This problem is highlighted by the statistics concerning the rising age of farm operators. In the years 1981 to 1991, the number of farmers under the age of 30 dropped from 16% to 8%. In 1991, 27% of the farmers in Saskatchewan were over the age of 60 (Rural Life Ministries, 1976).

One person noted the following implications:

C: I don't think there is a very big window. I think there is enough people in Saskatchewan that grew-up on farms and still have an interest in it, but if that doesn't happen in the next 10 to 15 years then that window will have been lost.

In other words, it was perceived by many of the study participants that unique skills and outlooks were required if a person wanted to farm—skills and outlooks primarily learned on the farm.

The one study participant who was raised in the city and then chose to farm, noted that while the skills required to farm could be learned, few urban people desired to farm. He attributed part of his interest in farming to early experiences on his uncle's farm, where he regularly visited. Sense of place, then, was viewed as dependent on experiences in an agricultural setting.

Education and Technological Change

The move toward a more business-like approach to farming, with its corresponding increase in land size and technological dependency (i.e., fertiliser, pesticides, machinery, etc.), has resulted in numerous important changes for family farms, many of which have implications for a child's informal education and developing sense of place. In the following discussion, these changes will be explored.

The informal educational process on the farm has changed markedly over the last several decades, and particularly for those farms specialised in grain production. This was particularly evident when the age at which children first became involved in the main activities of the farm

was considered. When asked what age they, the grandparents, started working on the farm, they characteristically answered, age 5 to 8. For their children, this age was delayed until age 10 to 12. For the youngest generation, their involvement has been delayed even further, and now is in the range of 15 to 18 years of age.

As a consequence of the economic necessity for increased farm acreage, farm machinery has increased in size, as had the price. Several decades ago farm children would often begin driving tractor at the age of 11 or 12 years old. Now, however, concerns about both their children's safety and damage to very expensive machinery have forced parents to delay the age at which they allowed their children to operate the majority of farm equipment. One father reflected this concern in the following statement:

P: We farm a fair amount of land and our machinery is always big and we, of course, were always reluctant to let our sons and daughters use it because of ripping up somebody's fence line or ruining a \$50,000 cultivator by running into a power pole. So, our kids were given, not menial tasks, but more mundane tasks of running the farm.

The following comment reflected the son's views on this issue:

C: We weren't really involved in the farm when we were younger because we had big machinery. For a 14 or 15 year old to get on a \$200,000 tractor... We always had hired men, so we didn't run the machinery. There was always work to do, but it wasn't the major work like driving the tractors or combines. It was maybe driving an old grain truck that was around, or cleaning seed, or bagging seed.

This individual also noted they were given few meaningful jobs prior to the age of 14 or 15. The jobs they were given were perceived to be "make-work projects" and not integral to the operation of the farm.

The implications of this delay were, as viewed in one father's opinion, as follows:

P: I think it has big implications. When you're doing it at an earlier age, you are already deciding whether you like it or don't like it. ...you're not taking so much of a chance when you come back to the farm because you have done all this and

you know you are comfortable with it or whether you're good at it, that's part of the decision process. Even though you lived there and you sort of lived it, but you didn't really do it. My sons were sort of on the edges all the time. Now, it is hard for them to make a decision about whether to farm or not. They don't really know what farming is about.

Similarly, several of the youngest generation who grew-up on grain farms acknowledged they had limited understanding or knowledge of the main farm operations. They also related this to the age at which they were given major responsibilities on the farm. Although somewhat speculative, this may provide insight to their self-articulated, weak attachments to the family farm.

Unlike farms specialising in grain production, farmers with livestock have continued to involve their children at an earlier age. In the view of one parent, having livestock was an important part of maintaining the family farm:

P: Livestock is what makes a family farm. There is something more tangible there for kids. They can see the livestock growing and multiplying with their offspring and they can get involved at an early age.

Another person commented:

C: Especially for grain farming. There is no real responsibility on a grain farm for kids. Everything is so large and machinery is so big... If you have livestock...I mean no matter how much technology comes, you still have responsibility there for your kids.

For families with livestock, their children were involved in the farm at 11 to 12 years of age. The families believed this was an important way of encouraging their children to stay on the farm. Additionally, they believed it provided opportunities for developing the values of hard-work and responsibility. Some of the families involved in this study also encouraged their children to carry their involvement with livestock through into 4-H; thereby, providing them valuable educational and social opportunities.

As noted previously, the nature of farm work has changed; thereby, creating implications for the informal education of farm children and their sense of place. Although the reasons for these shifts are varied, many can be related to economic and technological change.

The study participants highlighted numerous important benefits from the introduction of modern technology into agriculture, including higher crop production, ecologically appropriate practices, and the reduction of human drudgery, to name but a few. Varying levels of familiarity and comfort with technology were also expressed. All the farmers involved in this study expressed some apprehension about their ability to manage technological change. Their levels of apprehension clearly followed age and personal education levels, with more apprehension, as would be expected, being experienced by those of greater age and with less formal education:

P: For the farmers who are 50 or 60 years old and have never used a computer, talk about computers systems and stuff like that is totally mind-boggling for them to embrace that technology idea.

Reluctance concerning what represents an adequate education for farmers was also expressed by all three groups. Additionally, all three levels of participants highlighted the need for increasing education for the next generation to take over the family farm as demonstrated here:

G: I made it on the farm with only my grade 4 education and I don't think I did that poorly. Now it is a whole different picture. I tell me grand-kids that they need to go to school if they want to make it on the farm. You just can't be calling the experts every time you have a question.

P: Sometimes I question whether I'll be able to keep farming for the next 15 to 20 years. When I started that was never a question. But now everything is getting so complex that I'm starting to have a hard time keeping up with things. I try to go to all of these seminars and things but sometimes its still not enough.

C: From the time I was a little kid I had it drilled into me: if you want to farm you have more than your high school diploma. You have to go on to college. It seems kind of crazy. Going to college to farm. If I go on to college I think I'll pick something where I can make more money. You know. More than here on the farm.

Many of their apprehensions have implications for sense of place, of which the following comment was representative:

P: Some of the stupid tractors and combines have computers inside them. I sometimes think that technology has gone too far, and you're reliant on service people to fix them. One day something breaks down and you don't know how to fix it. I'm sort of in the generation where I'm watching some of it go by because I don't have the training. Even the new 4-wheel drive takes a lot of learning. I'm having to do a lot of learning, but a lot of it is beyond me, my capability.

Whereas, a horse could be raised and trained on the farm, farmers are, for the most part, dependent now on buying machinery from external suppliers. By implication, then, the educational role of the family has also changed as it relates to technology. In the case of technologically complex machinery, the child can no longer be taught how to fix broken machinery, because the parent can not fix it himself/herself. Instead, the farmer is dependent on skilled technicians. However, not all farm machinery is technologically complex; therefore, opportunities for maintaining this education function within the family have remained. Some participants did express concern about the trend toward the utilisation of more technologically complex machinery, as noted in the next comment:

P: I hope that people in the future generations will not become too reliant on technology...there won't be enough emphasis on practical applications. ...I'm part old generation where I don't mind the physical part of farming.

Similarly, a number of the study participants expressed apprehension regarding the increased requirement for utilizing the services of agricultural professionals. A sample of these comments included the following :

P: Whether I like it or not, it seems that more and more I am being forced to use the services of professionals. When I started farming things were mostly within my grasp. Now, everything is getting so technical that it is hard to get around the need to get advice whether it is my taxes, spraying weeds or fixing the tractor. It seems that every time I turn around I'm forced to go to a professional for advice.

P: Getting into farming was relatively easy when I started on the farm. But, now there is getting to be so much that a person has to know. With a diploma I sometimes wonder if I'll be able to keep with the how fast things are changing. All I know is that more and more I have to find someone that has a degree and knows how the new things work around here.

For many of the grandparents and parents, farming was synonymous with hard physical work. However, the trend toward both increased technological dependency and the importance of business planning has resulted in less emphasis being played on physical labour. As in other areas, technology often distances the individual from intimate sensory contact with his/her environment; thereby, altering the person's sense of place. For example, the land is now, more often than not, viewed from within a quiet, air-conditioned tractor cabs. While undoubtedly more comfortable for the operator, the question can be asked whether future generations will have the same relationship with the land? As noted in the section on *Culture and Sense of Place*, the participant's own life experience suggests this may not be the case. Additionally, the rapid expansion of technology has resulted in a similarly rapid expansion of the ranks of the agricultural professional. As the result of the increasing complexity associated with our technological society, a corresponding increase in the frequency of professionals has occurred. For those considered outside the ranks of the professional as the consequence of their substandard education, little choice exists other than to utilize the services of professionals.

Education and The Wisdom of Age

Rapid technological and economic change has also led some grandparents and parents to question their ability to teach their children the skills and outlooks they will need to be successful on the farm. Reflecting on the relationship with her own grandparents and parents, one grandparent commented:

G: I guess we heard a lot of stories. You were put on your grandparents knee or your parents knee and they told you these stories. I suppose because there wasn't the interference of television and so on. We talked a lot about how things were in the past. Now, there is such a jump. When you think of horses, to steam engine, to flying to the moon...when you think of the progress in those years. You mention to a child today that you burned coal in a stove and they say, "you burned coal, what was that?" There is such progress. It's unreal. And now you get from there into this computer age. It just boggles the mind.

Many of the youngest generation expressed a curiosity toward the stories of their grandparents, while having little expectation their stories would provide direct life guidance. The following comment reflected this curiosity:

C: I really enjoy listening to my grandfather's stories. Sometimes it's hard to believe he lived in the same century. My life is so different.

A more direct example is found in the following story concerning traditional weather forecasting methods:

G: A lot of people could almost smell in the air when a storm was coming and a lot of farmers were very acutely tuned to the clouds and the weather around. As a rain-storm approached, you could smell it. You also watched the animals, the agitation of animals. You knew it was coming.
Whenever there was a storm coming, my dad would always gather us all outside on the open veranda, we all had to be there. I never knew why, but I know we all sat on the veranda together and watched it.

The ability to forecast weather and the response to that weather, as noted in the second part of this story, was an expression of sense of place. The early prairie farmers quickly learned the subtleties of their new place. Now, little serious interest is expressed in their weather forecasting methods. It is easier for all generations to turn on the radio and listen to the weather forecast or to turn on the computer and go to the Internet. While likely more accurate, the radio or computer does little to reinforce their sense of place or their tie to previous generations.

While the survival of the family farm was, at least in part, dependent on children developing a strong sense of place, the role of the family as teacher, is being challenged. With

rapid technological change, parents are losing the ability to engage their children in both meaningful work and learning experiences that promote their children's sense of place. Moreover, with continued technological and economic change, place-specific knowledge is being superseded, and, therein, so too the lives of the people with whom that place specific knowledge resided. While farm children continue to learn about work and life from their parents and grandparents, the nostalgic images of work on the farm no longer hold true.

CHAPTER 7

The Changing Sense of Place on the Saskatchewan Prairies

If, as suggested at the beginning of this paper, place is best viewed from a postmodern perspective, then, opportunities exist for constructing tentative conceptual bridges between the participants'¹⁵ sense and experience of place and sense of place theory. Therefore, in the overview of this paper, an attempt will be made to go beyond the casual summary remarks made within each thematic category—community, culture, economics and technology and education—by bridging these thematic categories with the theoretical remarks established earlier in this dissertation.

As highlighted in the section on community, both the grandparents and parents recognised the declining role of community among those living in proximate distance to each other. Although the changing nature of their community was observed, only one study participant identified the influx of technology and economic change as causing the decline in community. The participant articulated the dilemma faced when choosing to assimilate technology, in the following way:

P: I don't think that people foresaw that progress—the move from horses to tractors—what was clearly progress down on the farm, also meant that you would lose most of your neighbours. I just don't think that people foresaw that or foresaw the significance of that. No one thinks that the local church died because we had tractors.

In contrast, the remaining participants quickly developed an almost unflappable belief in the value of both technological and economic progress to sustain their future, an outcome

15. It should be noted that the participants in the study represent the long-term survivors on the land. If, however, families that moved off the farm were surveyed, the final picture would likely have been different.

forecasted by Illich (1970, 1973, 1978), Ellul (1964, 1990) and Veblen (1919/1990). As further highlighted by the previous three noted authors and as identified within this study, rapid technological and economic change brought on corresponding shifts in the manner people viewed themselves and their work. In the early years of life on the farm, the value of farm labour was determined by its contribution to the subsistence of the family. In contrast, the value of farm labour later came to be evaluated almost purely for its economic contribution to life on the farm. This subtle but important change in the view of farm work resulted in important consequences for the families involved in this study. As both Ellul (1964) and Simmel (1950, 1990) highlighted, the economic process forces distance between the producer and his/her production; thereby, forcing the producer to lose a holistic sense of themselves in relationship to their environment. In other words, the producer and consumer, alike, are alienated by increasing specialisation, in that “the person can no longer find himself in his work” (Simmel, 1990, 455). Moreover, one of the central requirements for the development of a strong sense of place, namely the need for an intimate connection between one’s work, community and personhood (Snauwaert, 1990) was fractured. Therefore, and as highlighted earlier, activities promoting the individual’s sense of place (eg. gardening and/or animal production) but not their economic well-being were stopped.

In the same fashion, then, the study participants gradually came to view themselves as part of the economic process. As similarly identified by Illich, Ellul, and Veblen, and as suggested by the findings of this study, technique very quickly established itself as the means of knowing one’s self and the external world. Furthermore, technique unintentionally caused negative outcomes, and this in spite of the original self-professed intent of technique. Whereas, the introduction of new farm technology was viewed as being positive, the final outcome of these

technological introductions often resulted in unforeseen negative consequences.

With the widespread introduction of tractors and other technology, farmers celebrated their ability to farm more land than they had previously; however, in order to farm additional land a farmer looked to his/her neighbour's lack of long-term success to either buy or rent land. Therefore, the same act that promoted the economic well-being of one farm (ie., buying land) simultaneously resulted in the fracture of community. Similarly, any negative consequences related to technological or economic change were easily glossed over by blaming the loss of their neighbours on droughts, specific economic calamities and/or poor management decisions, rather than technology itself. Although both natural and economic calamities were experienced more or less equally by all families, other factors that lead to the depopulation of the prairies, including the negative impact of technique, went largely unnoticed. Seldom was their neighbour's long-term well-being ever factored into an individual's choice to take on new technological or economic practices. What was deemed as best for their own family's production was the path chosen. As a consequence, the remaining farm families were able to attribute their success to the appropriateness of their own choices. Similarly, those individuals who were able to both foresee and react to new technological and/or economic circumstances were viewed as being progressive.

While early on the grandparents in this study experienced a growing sense of community, their subsequent loss of community was viewed to be a direct negative consequence of the depopulation of the prairies. Rarely, if ever, was the loss of community ascribed to the technological and economic change sweeping the Canadian prairies. With each subsequent generation, the definition of community carried with it increasingly less substance. For the children, and to a lesser degree their parents, the word community very soon meant little more

than the collection of people they deemed to know well, not the richer convivial interactions of people living in close proximity to each other.

As reflected in the study findings, each subsequent generation both had fewer experiences of community and, therefore, expressed increasingly little regret over the continued waning of what little community they continued to have. Moreover, it appeared that each subsequent generation had less of a conception of how community could potentially present itself in their rural area. With the population continuing to decline, both the parents and children sought out human interaction wherever they could, but increasingly in areas beyond their own geographical space, a dynamic similarly noted by Wilkenson (1991). Although each generation spoke of their situation in a rather matter-of-fact manner, there was also a sense of tension regarding their relative lack of proximate human interaction. Persons that were once called acquaintances in previous times, were now increasingly referred to as community. As Ellul stated (1963), homogenization occurs in modern society, but people have less knowledge of each other, and therefore, people are forced to live in “inhumane” living conditions. This study’s findings would appear to support the conclusion that this group of people is living through a process of growing alienation.

The assimilation of technique had consequences beyond the most direct. As highlighted in the thematic category, *Community and Sense of Place*, the early conviviality experienced by both the grandparents and parents was highly valued, even long after the time period in question. Although they continued to value past experiences of conviviality, the study participants viewed these experiences as largely existing in their past, not their future. Furthermore, with the continuing emphasis on economic well-being, it is unlikely the remaining people on the land will be able to re-establish convivial expressions of community without major

changes first occurring. The changes which they experienced have been too fundamental for there to be a return to the convivial patterns of old. Therefore, all that remained was their past memories of rural convivial society. Again, productivity and economic viability took utmost importance for the study participants, leaving the remaining convivial expressions of life to be gradually lost. As Illich (1970) commented, conviviality was compromised by the expansion of the technological society.

With human thought increasingly synonymous with technique, humankind had little recourse other than to follow technique's lead. Although the participants in this study—and the grandparents and parents in specific—articulated their sense of loss regarding the decline in community, a sense of inevitability was simultaneously communicated. Arguably, the participants of this study had largely become part of a broader technological society.

This process of changing technology and tightening economic options continued through to the time of this study. With each wave of new technique and economic rationalization, the same process occurred. The farmers least able to adapt to using new techniques or respond to the latest economic changes were the individuals that were either marginalized or pushed off the land. This pattern continued to occur until even the most successful farmers were caused to lament their loss of neighbours and community. However, little account was taken of factors other than productivity that would contribute to the general well-being of people and their community. A person's contribution to the conviviality of the community, ability to farm their land in an ecologically sustainable manner or train their children to love agriculture did not emerge as important factors in whether they would stay on the land or not. If factors other than economic factors were considered, ultimately it may have been the unsuccessful farmers that were actually best suited to life on the prairies.

When speaking with the children of this study, feelings of ambivalence were heard regarding their possible continuation of farming. Like their grandparents and parents, farming came to be viewed totally as a business. However, the degree to which farming was viewed as a business was more pronounced with each subsequent generation. Therefore, if the children decided to go back to the farm, they were doing so because as a business, the farm was viewed to be a viable economic entity. The fact that families characteristically operated the majority of farms was seen as being tangentially related to the success of the farm. For the majority of participants, the era of the family farm was seen as having departed.

One of the last areas for the economy to change was the family farm. For the majority of the twentieth century, the farm was referred to as the family's. Although all farms in this study continue to be farmed by families, they were understood first to be an economic entity and the family's second. From the beginning, the farm was where all members of the family were involved. In every way it promoted their farm subsistence. Now, however, the farm only sporadically utilizes the children's labour. As indicated in the findings, grandparents first started working on the farm when they were 5-8 years old. Later, the parents started working on the farm when they were 10-12 years old and finally the children when they were 15-18. The younger the age of involvement in the activities of the farm, the sooner the person began an important step in the development of their sense of place. Not only did their work contribute to the overall sustainability of the farm, but it also helped maintain their belief that the farm was theirs, too. The types of activities the children were involved in also helped to integrate the children into the broader operation of the farm as well as helped to establish a strong value system. By feeding chickens, milking cows, feeding the livestock, cleaning the barn and working in the garden, parents were able to promote their children's sense of place. The children

learned to be responsible, independent, trustworthy, hardworking and aware of their direct contribution to the well-being of the farm. Now, however, economic rationalization has removed many, if not all, the activities in which kids once were involved. Lost, then, were the primary means through which children were informally educated. Now, as this study pointed out, it is not unusual for farm children in their late teens to have only a peripheral understanding of how the farm operates. The limited scope of opportunity for farm children, has in turn, given them less opportunities to develop their sense of place. Consequently, it is even less likely they will return to the farm in the future. Furthermore, the greater economic specialization occurring nationally and internationally, has resulted in many activities being stopped on the farm. For, as highlighted by Illich (1970, 1973, 1978), Ellul (1964, 1990) and Veblen (1919/1990), to name but three authors, economic rationalization quickly sidelines all but the most efficient ways of utilizing labour. For example, if eggs became cheaper to purchase in the city supermarket then the subsistence production of eggs was discontinued. As a consequence, however, members of the family were increasingly less able to identify themselves in their work, an outcome forecasted, by Illich, Ellul and Veblen. Nevertheless, scores of similar economic calculations were done on the farm until only the most profitable enterprises remained. In the final analysis, field crop production quickly dominated all other economic enterprises and projects. Unfortunately, one by one the small projects in which children could be involved and where they could develop their sense of place, were discontinued. The lack of children-friendly activities only served to heighten their sense of isolation, which then ran opposite to helping the children develop their sense of place.

The economic process has placed a purely economic evaluation on the production of food. Lost, then, was the role of subsistence food production in nurturing a sense of place

through both intimate contact with the production process and in reliving, through cooking and eating, the process of producing food. The following comment by Wendell Berry reflects the value of personal food production as it relates to sense of place:

The pleasure of eating should be an extensive pleasure, not that of the mere gourmet. People who know the garden in which their vegetables have grown and know that the garden is healthy will remember the beauty of the growing plants, perhaps in the dewy first light of morning when gardens are at their best. Such a memory involves itself with the food and is one of the pleasures of eating. The knowledge of the good health of the garden relieves and frees and comforts the eater (1990, p. 151).

When a person no longer produces his/her own food, the person's identity, both as producer and consumer, is changed dramatically. The land, then, becomes an economic resource as compared to the place where meaning is created through work and the ability to be productive. Similarly, the economic process changes the character of meaningful work and the value of the land. Now, if one's work or one's land does not produce an economic benefit, then changes are deemed necessary. Lost, then, are many of the farm activities that once played a central role in developing a strong sense of place among members of the farm family. In contrast, working to maintain one's sense of place, now seems sadly outdated. Again, this study indicated that maintaining a strong sense of place was viewed as being less important than achieving economic success.

The one place in this study where farm families appeared to be going somewhat against the dominant trend toward economic rationalization is where families have maintained small livestock herds or flocks. This has provided a farm activity that was accessible to children but without presenting excessive danger to them. The study findings indicated the importance of children being involved in the farm:

C: I came from a mixed farm and that is the way that you were brought-up. You helped with stuff and you did everything. I think that is good, because a lot of kids

don't grow-up with that responsibility of having to look after stuff or being able to do stuff.

It is important to note, however, that the size of cow/calve herds has gradually increased as farmers moved toward a herd size that was more economically efficient. For interest, in the case of the above noted comment, the approximate herd size was 40. In most areas across the prairies, average cow herd size is approaching 150 head. Where large herds exist, child labour is once again difficult to utilize due to the increased challenges associated with managing larger herds.

In response to the impact of outside influences, the study participants acknowledged the significance of outside media on their lives. With the rapid proliferation of technology (e.g. satellite TV, music, movies) they recognised that many of their values had become the values of society at large. The music they sang, the stories they told and their cultural values were increasingly assimilated from cultural sources beyond their more narrow geographical identification. Interestingly, it was only the grandparents and parents (but to a lesser degree) that continued to see themselves as carrying-on a unique rural cultural identity. As Illich and Ellul would have likely forecast, only one person in this study made a direct link between technological advancement and the long-term impact on their surrounding society. One can surmise this occurred due to the rapid spread of technology and the subsequent indelible link forged between technology and progress. For, as Ellul (1964, 1990) and others have stated, it is impossible to escape the grasp of technique. Furthermore, as highlighted earlier, technique integrates itself with human beings until it has absorbed him/her.

With human thought increasingly synonymous with technique, humankind had little recourse other than to follow technique's lead. In the span of less than a century, technique

largely confined the study participant's world to the world of technique. Although the economic system often resulted in severe angst being experienced on the farm, through both good times and bad, their trust in the economic system appeared to have grown from one generation to the next. Like the majority of westernized people, their belief that one only need be patient before technique will bring forth the solution to current economic dilemmas, continued. Now, globalization has emerged as the most recent golden egg to place their trust in. Technique has positioned itself as the forever purveyor of hope. However, how long and in what form the study participants will survive on the land when only remnants of their local community remained and economic rationalization continued to pressure, remains in question.

In the early years of life on the prairies, sense of place emerged not only through their interaction with the land and environment, but also through the outgrowth of interactions with other members of the community. Additionally, the early patterns of social interaction occurred largely out of necessity. The individual could choose not to interact with members of the community only at the price of severely limiting their social interaction. Now, however, the study participants' group ties have been loosened and social interaction has primarily become of a contingent nature. In other words, a person may, or may not, choose to associate with his/her neighbours. As noted in this study, the study participants' social interaction during the latter part of the twentieth century was primarily dependent on personal choice, as was highlighted in the following statement:

P: I have some neighbours, I meet them on the road but you never really talk with them. A person should take the time to go visit them or have them over for supper or whatever after supper... They're not my age, but hey they're my neighbours.

In contrast, early experiences of community had all members of the community interacting with each other. Confined as human interaction was within a narrow geographical space, very few

opportunities existed for interacting with individuals beyond the barriers of their geographical space. As highlighted previously, the community's boundaries, at least early on, corresponded with the boundaries of the local one-room schoolhouse.

While structural changes have undoubtedly influenced the participants' perceptions of space, as already noted, the origin of an individual's sense of place was at least partially constructed as the result of their personal interactions with others in a particular geographical space. For example, the grandparents' stories of their early participation in community reflected the construction of individual meaning. The grandparent's experience in place, unlike their grandchildren, occurred in an environment where interaction occurred with individuals possessing a similarly emerging sense of place. Now, however, the youngest generation was distanced from the experience of their grandparents, and to a lesser degree from the experience of their parents, leaving few other options for creative, place-nurturing interactions.

Moreover, for the study participants, social interaction may, or may not, even occur within a "rural" area. The social interaction of rural people occurs, now, in a complex of rural-urban localities (Wilkinson, 1991), or as Galpin (1915) wrote, they interact in "rurban" localities. Interaction within rural areas has also changed in other ways, and, therefore, the structure of rural society has also changed. As noted earlier, Simmel (1990) commented that social interaction provided the necessary clues to understanding the structure of society. With the decline of rural populations, the distance between people has correspondingly increased. Therefore, the probability of contact has decreased, as reflected in the participants' comments relating to distance, travel and social isolation.

Views differ, however, concerning the affect of disperse rural populations on social interaction. Wilkinson (1991) noted that while the total number of contacts may decrease, the

level of intimacy associated with the remaining contacts may not decrease, and may, in fact, increase. The findings in this study suggest a more tentative conclusion, particularly as it relates to sense of place. As defined in this dissertation, both community and sense of place are premised on significant commonality existing between and among the experiences of each generation (Snauwaert, 1990). While each of the three generations indicated that a modicum of intragenerational contact continued, intergenerational contact was, on the other hand, viewed to have significantly eroded. Based on the study findings, the rich balance and diversity of inter and intra-generational contacts that was developing among the early residents of the study area, appears to have markedly weakened. While substantial challenges existed for all three generations to maintain strong social relationships, the challenge was, perhaps, most pronounced for families with young children. As it pertained to the social activities of children in particular, the level of social contact maintained beyond the school was increasingly governed by the extent to which children could be transported by their parents. All parents with young children—and particularly those with children below the legal age of driving (age 16)—highlighted the growing financial and time challenges associated with their regularly transporting their children to participate in off-farm activities. Unfortunately, however, as the distance which children travelled grew, so too did the unlikelihood these interactions would positively support their potential growing sense of place.¹⁶ The relationship highlighted here between transportation and sense of place was but indicative of numerous other contemporary relationships. Whether the relationship between technological change, economic change or educational change was considered, the resulting consequence on the participants' sense of place was the same—sense of

16. Several parents in the study indicated that during their children's hockey season, for example, they travelled as much as 2 hours (one way) to games.

place weakened.

In respect to formal education in the community, the grandparents expressed their education was well suited for life on the farm. At the time, school provided them with the basic skills they could use directly back on the farm. On the other hand, both the parents and children expressed that little in the educational curriculum had subsequently applied to their life on the farm. Alternately, the participants saw the primary role of education as providing preparation for off-the-farm careers. Many factors contributed to creating this impression of education: 1) no direct tie appearing between curriculum and farm life; 2) the need to prepare young people for careers; 3) no integration of community member's experience; and 4) teachers not from farming or rural backgrounds. Viewed as a whole, then, the educational curriculum at the time of this study was viewed as providing little to develop and maintain the study participants' sense of place. As highlighted earlier, Berry (1990) similarly viewed modern education as contributing to children leaving their homes and engaging "in a provisional future that has nothing to do with place or community" (p. 1990, p. 163). Moreover, as Orr (1992) stated, place continues to have "no particular standing in contemporary education" (p. 126).

When education becomes a commodity, as it has within Canadian society, those with less than the optimal level of education are made to feel inferior or subservient to those having greater levels of education, as noted by Illich (1970). The study findings provide evidence for the individual participant's feeling inferior as the result of their having less education than they believed society deemed sufficient. The definition of sufficient has, however, shifted over time, with the grandparents stating that their education level was adequate during the time they were farming; whereas, now they see the need for their grandchildren to go to college. This trend also held true for the parents, although in their case, the parents had higher levels of education than

their parents. Furthermore, the need for continuous learning came up numerous times within the interviews for this study. Among the study participants it was common to hear mentioned the continual need for involvement in learning, whether through reading, taking short courses or seminars. As identified by Illich (1970), the growing commodification of education subsequently results in the delegitimization of indigenous learning in favour of learning sanctioned by institutions within the technological system. Therefore, self-defined learning on the farm was exchanged for learning approved by institutionalized education. Consequently, “[o]nce the self-taught man or woman has been discredited, all non-professional activity is rendered suspect” (p. 56). Furthermore,

as a tool becomes embedded in social practices, our conception of the ability required for an individual to use that tool changes as well. In the early stages of use, disability is counted as a flaw in the tool: We say that poor design of the technology makes it difficult to use. Later, the disability becomes an attribute of the user, not the tool. We say that the user needs more training, or worse, is incapable of using the tool. Once the status of the tool as technology has fully merged into daily practice, the disability to use it becomes an essential attribute of certain people (Bruce & Hogan, 1998, p. 269).

The study participants did, however, express a general sense of reticence when they required the support of the expert. The participants’ answers suggested a two-fold reason: 1) the invariable link between a professional’s advice and monetary indebtedness; and 2) a reluctance to admit the limits of their own knowledge. Almost all of the parents seemed to have difficulty with acknowledging they did not have the answer to the situation at hand and, therefore, required outside advice. Moreover, most participants expressed their belief that society did not hold farmers’ intellect and contribution to society in high respect.

Caught, therefore, in the convergence of economic, technological and social factors highlighted in this dissertation, it is not surprising that the comments of study participants

highlighted an overall waning of the diversity and richness of social interactions from the early social history of the prairies, onward. The waning of both intra and intergenerational social contact appear to have played a major roll in the generational decline in sense of place observed in this dissertation. Moreover, age old concepts such as the intergenerational transfer of wisdom underlining traditional expressions of sense of place were negatively affected. As Snauwaert (1990) and Berry (1990) noted, a strong sense of place was predicated on similarly strong social interactions occurring within a shared geographical space. In the absence of strong social interactions, the development of their sense of place was, as noted in this study, at best, truncated.

Had the introduction of technique been delayed or stopped, however, one can speculate what the resulting impact would have been on the study participants' sense of place. While this would provide an interesting intellectual endeavour, the more beneficial exercise is to envision "simple yet significant steps in the rediscovery of place and the sense of community it holds" (Vitek & Jackson, 1996, p. 1). It is toward this latter endeavour this dissertation will now turn in the following section.

CHAPTER 8

Visions of Place-Sensitive Rural Education

Viewed as a continuum of experiences, from grandparents to grandchildren, the study's findings tell the story of a gradual, but steady weakening of both individual and communal sense of place. In each of the four key thematic areas in this paper—community, culture, economics and technology, and education—similar patterns can be identified.

From very close-knit, self-reliant, communities existing in a narrow geographic area, community is now defined in more abstract terms and within broader geographic boundaries. Similarly, cultural values are increasingly less a reflection of place and more a reflection of broad social trends. Economic and technological change has also had broad-reaching implications for sense of place. Starting soon after the first land was homesteaded, economic and technological change led to the rapid decline of rural populations. Those who remained where forced to redefine their sense of place in the absence of most of their neighbours. Formal education also provided little assistance in helping young people define a uniquely rural sense of place. The informal education of children has also changed in important ways over the course of the century. Children were initially drawn into farm work at a very early age; thereby promoting their sense of place. Now, technological change has both delayed the age at which children begin working on the farm and changed the nature of their work. These changes have resulted in farm children receiving an informal education less likely to promote their sense of place. Collectively, the changes noted here, highlighted the problems associated with a universalised, objective social orientation where place plays a subordinate role in defining social meaning.

Additionally, when viewed as a continuum of experiences, the study's findings

highlighted both the consequences associated with the trends noted in the previous paragraph and the areas in which possibilities exist for reclaiming a uniquely rural sense of place. In the following part of this section, the theoretical framework on sense of place and the study findings will be used to suggest possible ways rural education, both formal and informal, can promote a sense of place among rural students. The emphasis will be on providing broad directional statements and not a comprehensive form for place-sensitive education.

Formal Rural Education

1) When speaking of formal rural education, it is important to note that only a portion of any rural student body is from the farm. For example, the high school in the study area has students who live in the town, on acreages, and on farms.¹⁷ Any educational proposals will need to take into account that students are coming from different backgrounds; therefore, a strictly agricultural focus cannot be taken. Place-oriented education can be developed for all students, however.

2) Many of the students in a rural school will continue their education outside of a rural area. Many rural students will also choose to live in urban areas, a fact equally true for both farm kids and non-farm kids. Therefore, rural education must attempt, as to be outlined in this section, to address place-sensitive themes without adversely affecting the ability of students to continue their education in institutions where a similar focus is unlikely to be found.

3) Children that live in rural areas will also continue to live in a world where universalising themes are the norm. Therefore, their education will need to address both particularising and universalising themes.

17. Interestingly, not even the Director of Education for the local school district was able to state what percentage of students were from farms. Estimates by students indicated that approximately 1/2 of the students were from farms. The next largest group of students were from acreages with the area.

4) If, as noted throughout this paper, place is an important “element in the construction of rural peoples’ individual and collective identities” (Entrikin, 1991, p. 1), then, formal rural education must attempt to respond accordingly. However, in the case of the study participants, there has been limited, if any, correspondence between their formal education experience and the place in which they live. Rural education, instead, has reflected a more universal focus, as reflected in the study participant’s educational experience. Similarly Berry commented:

According to the new norm, the child’s destiny is not to succeed the parents, but to outmode them; succession has given way to supersession. And this norm is institutionalized not in great communal stories, but in the education system... The orientation is thus necessarily theoretical, speculative, and mercenary. The child is not educated to return home and be of use to the place and community; he or she is educated to leave home and earn money in a provisional future that has nothing to do with community... [T]he costs of this education have been far too little acknowledged. One of the costs is psychological, the other is at once cultural and ecological (1990, p. 162-63).

To move from an abstract, decontextualised form of rural education will require that creative opportunities be sought to link existing curriculum, curricular requirements, and learning with the specificity of place. As noted in the section *Rural Education and Sense of Place*, possibilities include introducing place-sensitive themes within English, science, and social studies, to name but a few options. Numerous representative themes can be noted: local history (and as related to world history), rural community dynamics, the impact of economic and technological change, sustainable agriculture, and, in a broader sense, ecological sustainability.

5) The location of rural schools also presents unique opportunities. Unlike most urban schools, rural schools are often in close proximity to natural environments. These environments can be used as living science laboratories. Through repeated contact over many years, a living

laboratory can affect a sense of place among students. Construction of new buildings and renovation of old school buildings also presents opportunities for rethinking the educational context of schools. The addition of a school greenhouse, for example, represents one possible step for providing a site for hands-on education. Consolidated rural schools do not need to be just smaller versions of their urban counterparts. When asked, a rural student should be able to note unique benefits of a rural school other than its size.

6) Wherever possible, the emphasis should be on using education to make links with the practical experience of rural students. Additionally, strategies for integrating the curriculum should be explored. For example, rural students' familiarity with fertiliser application represents an opportunity for the integration of chemistry, math, biology, and ecology together in one practical learning context. Where possible, existing hands-on, practical, place-sensitive curriculum (eg. environmental education) can be adapted to reflect rural concerns and place realities.

7) New educational strategies should be examined for their implications on sense of place. The Internet provides a current case in point. The Internet is commonly seen as providing rural schools with information resources previously unavailable, and, on this and other grounds, it receives very positive evaluations. Rural schools across Saskatchewan are in the process of establishing Internet connections. Although stopping this process is not suggested, a more critical approach to its use is.

Information technologies, including the Internet, are premised on the rarely explicit assumption that information exists largely independent of context. Evidence for this assumption is provided in the extent to which information is understood to be transferable or an accurate representation of the context from which it came. For example, information about China can be

accessed through the Internet. While the information received is likely to be accurate, it provides me with a sense of the place only in the very narrowest meaning of the term—a meaning that corresponds with the often very truncated sense of place associated with one's own home. Sense of place in the more comprehensive sense advocated in this dissertation, is not transferable on the Internet. The problem, then, is that the uncritical use of the Internet in education reinforces to students a shallow or "thinned-out" perception of sense of place. Opportunities do exist, however, for using the Internet to acquire information that enriches one's own sense of place. The emphasis, here, as compared to the previous approach, is to begin with context and then attempt to recontextualise information as a test of its relevancy. Information may be true, but not relevant. Additionally, the test of relevancy forces students to establish relational patterns between pieces of information rather than just collecting pieces of loosely related information.

8) The concern expressed by the study participants about rural teachers living in urban areas, also warrants further thought. As highlighted by the study participants, the implicit message students receive when they see teachers leaving for their homes in the city is that place is not related directly to one's work, life, and community. The position taken in this paper indicates that alternate staffing strategies are required in order for place-sensitive themes to be integrated into the curriculum. Similarly, opportunities exist for university faculties of education to address with new teachers issues relating to teaching in rural schools and place-sensitive education. Furthermore, if, as will be noted, community interaction is a necessary element of place-sensitive education, than teachers should also be encouraged to live and work as part of the community. It should be noted, however, that place of residence may or may not be an accurate indicator of a person's sense of place. Therefore, actual indicators of an individual's sense of place should be a

factored in when making decisions concerning hiring.

9) Community involvement is an important element of providing place-sensitive education.

Snauwaert commented, as noted earlier, that education must advocate “[t]he promotion of local knowledge and membership in the community. Local knowledge and membership can only be achieved through communion and shared work” (1990, p. 125).

The community should be encouraged to participate in and be responsible for insuring “the decisions rendered in the school are consistent with the well-being of the community and its citizens” (p. 126). Rural communities should attempt to assert more control over rural education. Moreover, attempts must be made to facilitate an ongoing dialogue between all members of a rural community, including individuals other than parents, students, and teachers.

Informal Rural Education

1) The link between a child’s informal rural education and his/her life in general is important in forming a strong sense of place, as highlighted in this study. Rural communities should be encouraged to examine the relationship between informal farm education and sense of place. The dialogue on informal education should not happen, however, independent of discussions concerning formal education. An attempt should be made to bridge the gap between formal and informal education.

2) Opportunities for involving children in the work of the farm should be identified, and established. For example, this study highlighted the benefit of having children participate in raising livestock. Similarly, opportunities also exist for rural non-agricultural families to also engage in the dialogue on formal and informal education. The production of food for personal

consumption or sale at farmer's markets represent one option suitable for both farm and non-farm families.

3) The rationale governing farm activity should be expanded beyond economics terms. Although economic factors cannot be ignored, farm families should consider the impact of farm decisions on their sense of place and on the collective future of the community and the land.

4) As part of a child's informal education, attempts should be made to facilitate opportunities for inter-generational interaction and learning. These opportunities should be facilitated also with the aim of broadening the definition of community and encouraging interaction with members of the community who have a strong sense of place.

5) Gender-inclusive positions for informal farm education should be identified. The sense of place of both girls and boys should be affirmed equally.

6) Rural people should be encouraged to establish and support community based informal education activities (eg. 4-H, local fairs). The emphasis here is on providing a diversity of opportunities promoting an individual and corporate sense of place.

Each of the previously noted directional statements represent an attempt to reintroduce a sensitivity to place within both formal and informal rural educational activities. Furthermore, these statements were written with the acknowledgement that returning to previous cultural and ecological patterns of rural life is not possible. Rural people cannot go back to the days of the one-room school. That possibility is gone. What is possible is to look forward and attempt to redefine individual and community life, and, therein, a new, more vibrant, sense of rural space.

Summary – Sense of Place

The study findings, as already noted, reflected a weakening of both individual and communal sense of place among the study participants. The consequences of the decline in sense of place are suggested both through the theoretical framework and within the study findings themselves. Roughly stated, the decline in sense of place reflected a loss of comprehensive and coherent individual and corporate meaning among the study participants. Correspondingly, it also reflected a loss in autonomy to affect the form of their lives: individually, socially, economically, and ecologically. Sense of place has fallen victim to the social, economic, and technological reorientation of Canadian life. As sense of place fell victim, so too did many of the traditional ways of teaching their children about rural life and its possibilities and promises.

Focusing on the decline of sense of place, however, provides little, if any, hope for those who live in rural places. Beyond the decline in sense of place, this paper also suggests opportunities for alternate forms of rural life. The emphasis, here, is on finding new forms of rural life, not on going back to old forms. Going back is not possible or even desirable. While early prairie life reflected an evolving or emerging sense of place or culture, it is not a contemporary model. As previously noted, early prairie life was marked by significant hardship—hardship that no rural person would seriously want to repeat. Furthermore, circumstances have changed markedly. The population of rural areas, for example, is a fraction of what it was and is unlikely to increase.

What does seem more plausible is for rural people to attempt to expand the definition of education and, therein, to ask what it is they want to teach their children about their place, their community, and their view of economics and technology, to name but a few broad thematic

areas. With past experience for a guide, the elements required in order to regain a strong sense of place, and the interrelationships between these elements, must be sought out. This study provides an glimpse of the importance of sense of place for one group of rural people and, therefore, possible opportunities for them to nurture their unique sense of place.

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Professional Experience

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Business & Animal Science
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January 1996 – December 1997 Assistant Director of The Pennsylvania
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Publications

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Reynar, R.K. (1999). Indigenous knowledge: A tool for development? In L. Semali & J. Kinchloe. *What is Indigenous Knowledge?: Voices From the Academy*. New York: Garland Publishing.

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