

Small farm transfer in the western Lake Superior region: A multi-case study

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Abstract

There is a wide movement for local food system development nationally and in the western Lake Superior region (WLS). Farm ownership transfer, the process of handing over control of the farmland and business to a new generation, has been identified as a crucial missing link in the puzzle of working toward a more resilient and sustainable food system. The proposed qualitative study seeks to explore the processes of farm transfer in this specific region through collecting reflections on the personal experiences of small-scale farmers. Farmers at three distinct farms in the region will be interviewed about their experiences of the transfer process. Results will inform further research on local food systems and guide infrastructure and services development and planning.

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Chapter 1: Background

Local food systems are recognized as one of the biggest challenges of our time (Ackerman-Leist, 2013), receiving attention from the United Nations, the World Bank, the United States Department of Agriculture, and municipalities large and small (USDA, 1998; McIntyre et al., 2009; NIFA, 2016). Yet while the issues around farm ownership transfer have also received much due attention around the world and in the U.S., they have been less in the public eye than “local food” (Whitehead, Lobley, & Baker, 2012). The patterns of farm ownership, tenure, and transfer reflect the logics of the greater agri-food system and also affect it; both a part of one complex adaptive system and mutually dependent (Ruhf, 2013). It is now widely accepted that improvements to local and regional food systems will lead to augmented public health and sustainable economic development (Minnesota Food Charter Network [MFCN], 2014). Farm transfer is a crucial link in food systems on a global and national scale (Sourisseau, 2015), and especially in rebuilding the “beleaguered” local food system (Ackerman-Leist, 2013, p.4), because successful farm transfers can help to ease farmers into retirement, encourage and enable beginning farmers, preserve farmland and ecological health, enhance rural communities, and ensure the passing down of farm-specific knowledge and expertise (Whitehead et al., 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2012; Ruhf, 2013; Opheim, 2016). However, farm transfer continues to be a huge challenge for farm families, their communities, and those working on food systems at large (Jewett et al., 2013; Ruhf, 2013). Indeed, as the average age of farmers nears 60, seventy percent of farm and ranchland is expected to transfer ownership between 2010 and 2030 (Parsons et al., 2012). Very few retiring farmers have identified their successor (Ruhf & Jaffe, 2012), and “traditional succession” methods now only account for half of farm acquisitions (Parsons et al., 2012). Despite diverse efforts to encourage and facilitate farm transfer, the system in which it operates is always changing, and farm families, service providers, policy-makers and planners continue to be challenged by the issues around farm transfer (Ruhf, 2013).

The research on farm transfer shows that a more thorough understanding is needed of the ways that farmland access and transfer influences and is influenced by the greater cultural, economic, and legal systems (Ruhf, 2013). The processes of farm

transfer are greatly affected by economic and political forces, such as market demand for commodities, land prices, and federal subsidies (Lobley & Baker, 2012; Goeller, 2012). Currently, this has resulted in the older generation of farmers largely unprepared for retirement and for the transfer of their farmland and business (Kirkpatrick, 2012; Baker, 2012). Farm transfer is further complicated because it is a deeply emotional issue and is intertwined with family dynamics and social relationships (Lobley & Baker, 2012; Goeller, 2012). On the other end, beginning farmers face unprecedented challenges to becoming successful farmers, for both heirs of farmland and those without familial ties to land (Shute, 2011). Several researchers have identified the “soft issues” to be the most difficult in a farm transfer (K. Stettler, personal communication, January 24, 2017), such as communication and conflict management (Burton & Fischer, 2014; Conway et al., 2015). While there are abundant resources to facilitate farm transfer (Hachfeld et al., 2013; International Farm Transfer Network [IFTN], n.d.), the external forces which affect it are constantly changing, and every subsequent generation is a new audience in need of advice and guidance (Ruhf & Jaffe, 2012; J.Ford, personal communication, February 3, 2017). Many organizations are matching up retiring farmers without a successor and new farmers without land through their “linking” services, but this has proven ineffective for a variety of reasons (Ruhf & Jaffe, 2012; Goeller, 2012). Some researchers have focused on farm transfer at the rural-urban interface (RUI), as it is an area of “constraint but also of great opportunity” (Inwood & Sharp, 2012). Farm adaptation and succession in the RUI take on unique forms when compared to more traditional commodity-producing farms in rural areas because of the distinct internal and external forces in place (Jackson-Smith & Sharp, 2008; Inwood & Sharp, 2012).

While there is abundant research on farm transfer in the United States and globally, there remains insufficient understanding of the ways in which farm transfer is experienced by small farmers in regions that are particularly suited to alternative farms. Researchers of local food systems have identified farm transfer as a missing link both nationally (Ackerman-Leist, 2013), and within the region that is the focus of this study (Stark et al., 2011), but only few farm transfer studies have focused on small alternative farms, or focused on regions that are host to alternative agriculture (Inwood & Sharp, 2012; Whitehead et al., 2012).

Significance

This study seeks to contribute to the understanding of small farm transfer and the experiences of both young and senior farmer generations, in a region that is host to increasing alternative agriculture and in the midst of rebuilding its food system. I will present these case studies as examples at local farming conferences and on websites related to farm transfer. This study will add to the collection of stories on farm transfer to educate and inspire both new and retiring farmers. This study will also inform and guide regional food system policy development efforts through the sharing of these farm transfer stories, and will contribute to the growing body of research aimed at ultimately improving the systems within which farm transfer processes take place. The findings of this study, though not generalizable, will be useful and relevant for new and retiring farmers, for the service providers who assist farmers in their long-term planning and farm succession, and for local and regional planners and policy-makers who affect regional land use and economic development.

As an environmental educator, I am aware of the ecology of learning at work related to this systemic issue of farm transfer. As farmers are important “agents of landscape change” (Potter & Lobley, 1996b, p.172), their practices have a large effect on ecosystem health. The role of those who influence farmers is then one of weighty responsibility. In addition, farmers also act as informal educators themselves. This is especially true for the small farmer who interacts regularly with their customer base, and contributes to the agricultural literacy of their community (Lyson, 2004). As environmental educators working towards a more sustainable future, we will benefit from future collaboration and partnerships that regional small farmers and farming-related institutions may offer.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the process of small-scale farm ownership transfers through the individual experiences of farmers in three distinct cases in the western Lake Superior region, in order to contribute to the advancement of a more robust local food system. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. How did the generational transition take place, in financial and legal terms, and in the transfer of operations management?

2. What were the goals and vision of each individual involved, and how did they reconcile these amongst each other, socially and emotionally?
3. What were the challenges and opportunities of a small and/or alternative farm going through the transfer, and how were they managed?
4. What resources did they rely on for guidance and assistance in the transition, and what resources may be lacking?

Definition of Terms

The following section defines how key terms were used in this study. Farm transfer, transition, and succession were used interchangeably, to refer to “the process of handing over control, ownership and/or management of the farm business to a successor,” often but not always including “both the business and the real estate” (Ruhf & Jaffe, 2012). This study focused on small farms, which the USDA defines as those farms with “gross cash farm income” less than \$350,000 a year (Hoppe & MacDonald, 2013). This was recently updated from gross farm sales of less than \$250,000, to more accurately reflect a farm’s spending power (Hoppe & MacDonald, 2013). In addition, farms participating in this study rely on direct market sales to nearby consumers and local retailers (Inwood & Sharp, 2012), here referred to as alternative farms (Gold, 2007), and reside within the western Lake Superior region, and have been through or are in the process of the farm transfer.

Conventional agriculture, also called industrial or productivist farming is defined by the use of monocultural, high-yielding crops; synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and extensive mechanization on large-scale farms (Gold, 2007). As quoted by the USDA National Agricultural Library (Gold, 2007), Stauber et al. (1995) articulate the assumptions underlying industrial agriculture as follows: "a) nature is a competitor to be overcome; b) progress requires unending evolution of larger farms and depopulation of farm communities; c) progress is measured primarily by increased material consumption; d) efficiency is measured by looking at the bottom line; and e) science is an unbiased enterprise driven by natural forces to produce social good."

Alternative agriculture is contrary to the conventional paradigm of food production, though there is a spectrum between the two. Alternative agriculture can refer to the farm products, the production system, and/or the methods of marketing. It is

generally defined by the use of “nontraditional crops, livestock and other farm products, a variety of unconventional production systems, [and] direct-marketing,” with an emphasis on “the benefits of diversification, and environmentally sound practices in general” (Gold, 2007). While alternative, organic, and sustainable agriculture refer to the on-farm methods of food production, civic agriculture describes a broader involvement, in which the general population interacts more intentionally with their environment and with their food towards greater social and economic development (Lyson, 2004). This is also referred to as the local food movement, good food movement, and community agriculture (Ackerman-Leist, 2013).

Neff and Lawrence (2015, p.2) define the food system as “encompassing all the activities and resources that go into producing, distributing and consuming food; the drivers and outcomes of those processes; and the extensive and complex relationships between system participants and components.” Our food system is a complex adaptive system involving “biological, economic, social, and political systems,” and its challenges raise concerns in the arenas of public health, environmental sustainability, and future food security (Neff & Lawrence, 2015, p.3). Like all complex adaptive systems, our food system is made up of several concentric nested scales (Neff & Lawrence, 2015; Drinkwater, 2016), and therefore local food systems “should not be managed, promoted, or evaluated in isolation” (Chase & Grubinger, 2014, p.16). Attempts at solving the current issues around food systems will be most successful if they take this holistic systems-thinking approach (ISF, 2013; Drinkwater et al., 2016), and if they prepare for long-term, slowly maturing solutions (Ackerman-Leist, 2013). This study will focus on the food system of the WLS region, while recognizing that it functions within the greater regional, national, and global food systems.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The research questions guiding this study address how small-scale farm transfer is experienced by retiring and beginning farmers within the contemporary context of the regional food system. The specific aims of this study seek to understand how the transition takes place economically, socially, and operationally; how the goals and outcomes are reconciled by the individuals involved; and the extent of the utilization of farm transfer resources by farmers. I begin the literature review with a brief history of the agricultural system nationally and in the western Lake Superior region specifically, which serves as the much larger context of the individual cases under study. The negative repercussions of the historical and existing food system has led, in large part, to the growth of the current “good food movement.” This leads into the importance of small farms and sustainable agriculture to local food systems, and for improved public health, ecological integrity, and sustainable economic development. As so much of the farm transfer literature focuses on mainstream, conventional commodity farms, this is my justification for focusing this study on small, alternative farms. I then provide a description of the western Lake Superior region and current efforts around the good food movement, in order to demonstrate the more narrow context of the farm cases under study. Finally, I review the literature on farm ownership transfer regarding the common issues and recommendations in general, and related to beginning and retiring farmers specifically.

History

The 20th Century witnessed the change of the United States from a country of immigrant subsistence farmers to being an economic and agricultural powerhouse (Lyson, 2004). This happened because of a number of biological, social, economic, and political circumstances and allowed the United States to experience unprecedented, exponential growth in its population and economy (Lyson, 2004). Especially in the couple decades after World War II, agriculture in the U.S. became increasingly specialized and focused on large-scale commodity production, and many small-scale producers were pushed out of the marketplace (Hanson, 2016). Economists and agricultural scientists urged farmers around the world to “decontextualize the farm

enterprise from the community and household setting in which it was embedded” (Lyson, 2004, p.17) and to focus on the global mass market. The mainstream school of thought especially in the decades following World War II and to this day promotes a productivist political economy which encourages specialization in labor, production and international trade (Lyson, 2004).

Three major systemic shifts dramatically altered agriculture, the food system, and rural and urban communities alike. The mechanical revolution took place in the early 1900s and replaced human labor with fossil fuels, causing rural populations to migrate to urban centers. After World War II, the nation shifted many manufacturers from producing weapons to pesticides and fertilizers, which gave way to the chemical revolution, also known as the “Green Revolution,” around the world. Next, the biotechnology revolution began in 1980s and continues today (Lyson, 2004). The prevailing method, referred to as conventional agriculture or industrial farming, is defined by “rapid technological innovation; large capital investments...; large-scale farms; ... uniform high-yield hybrid crops; extensive use of pesticides, fertilizers and external energy inputs; [and] high labor efficiency” (Gold, 2007). Between 1910 and 1997, the number of individual farms in the United States *decreased* by nearly 70 percent, while the acres in production increased by almost 53 million acres (6 percent), and the value of products grown increased by \$188 billion, (almost 2,300 percent) (Lyson, 2004). Today, just less than one percent of the US population are farmers, (including principal, second and third operators) according to the 2012 Census of Agriculture (USDA-NASS, 2014).

Meanwhile, in the western Lake Superior region, Duluth, MN was a booming city in the early years of the twentieth century, and its boosters sought to create an agricultural system to feed its citizens and to grow the regional economy (Hanson, 2016). In 1912-13, the Northeast Experimental Station was established on the best farmland just outside of town under the University of Minnesota’s land grant mission to serve the region in its growing agricultural efforts (Hanson, 2016). The extant Duluth Farmer’s Market was also established around this time to connect local growers and consumers. For several decades, the regional food system flourished (ISF, 2013): “locally harvested produce

began to flow into area outlets, people turned to farming as an occupation, and other distant farmers relocated here” (Hanson, 2016, p.17).

World War II pushed the area’s economy toward iron ore mining and steel production and away from agriculture (Hanson, 2016). The Northeast Experimental Station closed its doors in 1976 as the university focused its agricultural efforts elsewhere, and then the farm crisis of the 1980s shut down many of the smaller farms that remained (Hanson, 2016). Today, the WLS region’s 5,124 farms are on average smaller in size and revenue than the farms in the rest of Minnesota and Wisconsin (USDA-NASS, 2014).

While the three agricultural revolutions have, in part, been responsible for the unprecedented growth, they have left well-documented negative repercussions in their wake: climate change, loss of biodiversity, peak oil, loss of topsoil, soil and water contamination, public health crises, cultural homogenization, to name a few (McIntyre et al., 2009). As “more than half of the earth’s land surface is intensively used for agricultural purposes such as cultivation, grazing, plantation forestry, and aquaculture,” food production is inextricable from environmental challenges and ecosystem health (McIntyre et al., 2009). The U.S. food system is responsible for “51 percent of land use,” “80 percent of consumptive water use” and “16 percent of energy use” (Neff & Lawrence, 2015). In addition, many of the public health issues seen today are because of our eating habits, which are related to what and how foods are produced, available, and accessible (McIntyre et al., 2009). While many suffer from too much food or unhealthy food, “nearly one in seven US households suffers from food insecurity” (Kim & Wilkins, 2015, p.33). Food insecurity is not a result of lack of supply, but clearly because of systemic failures in equitable distribution and access (Neff & Lawrence, 2015).

In the WLS region, the relatively low public health scores of the region are oft-cited as one of the main impetus behind the good food movement (ISF, 2013). The WLS region ranked low in public health compared the rest of Minnesota and Wisconsin, and many of the prevalent conditions are diet-related (ISF, 2013; Kjos, Kinney, Finch, & Peterson, 2015). According to the 2015 Bridge to Health Survey report, which covers only the nine counties around the Twin Ports, 36.4% of the population are overweight, and another 30% are obese; both of these numbers are slightly higher than the national

average (Kjos et al., 2015). The prevalence of chronic conditions is higher in this northern region than the rest of Minnesota, and these include high cholesterol, diabetes, heart trouble, high blood pressure, asthma, and cancer (Kjos et al., 2015). According to the Minnesota Food Charter, “sixty percent of deaths in Minnesota are diet-related,” and unhealthy diets are a leading cause of “surging health care costs and lower work productivity,” hurting the state’s economy (MFCN, 2014). The authors of the Charter make clear that improvements to the local food system will lead to positive developments in both public health and the economy (MFCN, 2014). The local food movement seeks to repair these environmental, social, and economic ills by restructuring the food system, and is officially supported by the United Nations, the World Bank (McIntyre et al., 2009), the USDA (USDA, n.d.), several public health organizations (Neff & Lawrence, 2015), and municipalities all over the US (Kim & Wilkins, 2015).

Small Farms

The importance of small farms to local food systems has been widely supported, as outlined in “Agriculture at a Crossroads,” a report by the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), which was initiated by the World Bank and United Nations (McIntyre et al., 2009). Fifty-eight nations have signed on to this report, (not including the United States), demonstrating their support for more ecologically sound agriculture, small scale farmers, and strong local food systems (McIntyre et al., 2009). In examining the principles and practices of agriculture around the world, the IAASTD “clearly debunks the myth that industrial agriculture is superior to small-scale farming in economic, social and ecological terms” (McIntyre et al., 2009). The report promotes sustainable agriculture, and agroecology more specifically, wherein farmers are allowed to adapt farming practices to their specific place and needs, as opposed to broadly applying one prescribed method to all places (McIntyre et al., 2009). This understanding, in turn, recognizes the cross-sector importance of small scale agriculture as it relates to the health, economy and ecology of communities.

The United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Small Farm Commission proclaimed the importance of small farms to the nation’s culture and economy twenty years ago (USDA, 1998), and federal and state entities have been working on the issues

small farms face since then (USDA, n.d.). Nationally, the trend is visible in the increase in small farms, in farms that direct market their products, and in direct market sales (USDA-NASS, 2014). According to the Economic Research Service of the USDA, 91% of all farms in the US are classified as small farms (gross cash farm income less than \$350,000) (Hoppe & MacDonald, 2013). Small farms make up 29% of the agricultural production, and cover more than half of all agricultural land (Hoppe & MacDonald, 2013). Within our own state, the Minnesota Food Charter includes a focus on enabling the success of small farms that contribute to the local supply of fresh, healthy food (MFCN, 2014). The Charter “offers effective, publicly supported ways to improve all Minnesotans’ health by changing our food environments” to provide better outcomes for producers and consumers alike (MFCN, 2014).

Small farms and farmers are at the base of the food system at large, and are particularly important for local food system development efforts (Lyson, 2004; Ackerman-Leist, 2013). The viability of local producers is not simply an issue for the farmers themselves, but everyone interested in the health and wellness of a given community and region (Jewett et al., 2013). Small farms producing for their community can help to “heal the ills of distance, anonymity, and transience” that define the globalized, industrial food system (Ackerman-Leist, 2013, p.23). The local food movement, also referred to as civic agriculture, intends to remedy these negative externalities of the productivist paradigm of agriculture and of the greater economy by embedding the farm and food production back into the community setting (Lyson, 2004). Lyson describes civic agriculture as a form of sustainable development that relies on sustainable agriculture as its foundation, wherein “community problem solving” takes the place of competition (2004, p. 102), and consumers are engaged, “active food citizens” (2004, p.77). Sustainable agriculture is sustainable for the farmer and the farm, as it “encompasses a set of production practices that are economically profitable for farmers, that preserve and enhance environmental quality and that contribute to the well-being of farm households while nurturing local community development” (Lyson, 2004, p.79). In many cases, civic agriculture manifests itself in “[c]ommunity-supported agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, specialized agricultural districts, alternative food stores, and consumer cooperatives” among other forms which can “nurture local economic

development, maintain diversity and quality in products, and provide forums where producers and consumers can come together to solidify bonds of local identity and solidarity” (Lyson, 2004, p.6-7).

Small farms contribute to the wellbeing of their area, as it is recognized that “we can best steward the places, the communities, and the economic relationships that we best understand, access, and explain” (Ackerman-Leist, 2013, p.23). When the distance between consumer and producer is minimized, more dollars stay in the local economy (Lyson, 2004), and the increased connection between consumers, farmers and farmland can lead to greater ethical transparency and environmental responsibility (Ackerman-Leist, 2013; ISF, 2013), as well as increased agricultural literacy among the population (Lyson, 2004; Smeds, Jeronen & Kurppa, 2015). Research has shown that communities made up of smaller, locally-owned entrepreneurial enterprises have a higher degree of “social, economic and political welfare and well-being” than those dominated by larger corporations (Lyson, 2004, p.64). Small farms often provide more employment, are often more environmentally friendly, and are more adaptable to the changing climate (McIntyre et al., 2009). Small farms can be more productive per acre than their industrial counterparts, given “sufficient access to land, water, credit and equipment” (McIntyre et al., 2009). When small farmers are allowed and encouraged to succeed, only then “[c]ommunities can provide alternatives to the products of the global food system (Lyson, 2004, p.107).

The Western Lake Superior Region

Small farms are particularly suited to the western Lake Superior region (WLS) region because of its topographical and climatic features, the historical legacy of small-scale and alternative farming enterprises, and current social milieu (Stark, Abasz & Syring, 2011). This all makes the region unique to the Midwest but similar to other parts of the country



Figure 1: Western Lake Superior region, (Stark, Abasz, Syring, 2011)

(Hanson, 2016). There is a robust current movement towards a more resilient and sustainable regional food system (ISF, 2013).

The WLS region, the fifteen county area in northwest Wisconsin and northeast Minnesota, is largely rural with a population of less than half a million, and the land cover is dominated by forest and surface water (Stark, et al., 2011). While Duluth, MN itself is host to the largest population, the Twin Ports of Duluth and Superior, WI make up the largest metropolitan area in the WLS region, with a population around 280,000. The participants in this study are located in Carlton and St. Louis Counties. The WLS region is recognized as a rural-urban interface (RUI), but not as “agriculturally important” by Jackson-Smith & Sharp (2008). RUI counties produce a significant portion of the nation’s non-commodity crops and account for seventy-five percent of organic and direct sales to consumers (Jackson-Smith & Sharp, 2008). The RUI is recognized as an important area for agricultural growth and entrepreneurship, and for creating “alliances between urban residents and local farms” (Jackson-Smith & Sharp, 2008).

Stark, Abazs, and Syring (2011) set out to describe the potential agricultural productivity of the region, and the possible effects of local production on human health and economic sustainability in their multidisciplinary study. This grant report has had reverberating effects “because it helped delineate a two state, local food bio-region, connected by local economies, soils, people and a shared connection to a sense of place, Lake Superior” (ISF, 2013). Through GIS analysis, Stark et al. (2011) identified almost 1.7 million arable acres in the WLS region, demonstrating that this region could, indeed, feed itself. By means of interviews with regional farmers, the researchers identified strengths and challenges of the region’s agricultural potential. The region’s growing season is very short, access to consumer markets are limited, and infrastructure to support local production is lacking. While the rocky, forested landscape is not well-suited for large-scale commodity production, it does provide a diverse array of “microclimates that lend themselves to a variety of crops, production scales and approaches” (Stark et al., 2011). There exists a committed group of producers who have much experience growing in the region. However, Stark et al. make clear that the aging population of farmers do not have strong retirement plans, and there is limited commitment from the younger

generation to take over farming operations because of the low return on investment, among other reasons (2011).

Since the closing of the Northeast Experimental Station four decades ago, the WLS region has suffered because of a lack of focus on agriculture (Hanson, 2016). Support for area farmers and food infrastructure improvements did not come from the institutional level. Local and regional organizations such as the Land Stewardship Project (LSP), the Sustainable Farming Association (SFA), and the Duluth Community Garden Program were established decades ago to fill the gap of support for alternative farmers and home gardeners (Hanson, 2016). Today, these organizations and others including Renewing the Countryside and Duluth Young Farmers Coalition, continue to support farmers in a variety of ways, and are all working on local food system developments and the issue of farm transfer specifically (Jewett et al., 2013; Renewing the Countryside, 2016; SFA, 2017).

The Lake Superior Good Food Charter was signed by “more than 30 organizations, businesses and governments” to demonstrate the collective commitment to the outlined vision for “local food system development” (ISF, 2013). In addition, numerous regional large food buyers in the WLS region have signed the Superior Compact to commit to buying 20% local foods by 2020 (ISF, 2013). Since 2009, the Sustainable Agriculture Project at the University of Minnesota-Duluth has reclaimed what was once the Northeast Experimental Station, in order to “strengthen food security in the western Lake Superior region by promoting teaching, research and public engagement related to sustainable food and agricultural systems for all the economic, health, and ecological benefits it brings” (UMD Land Lab, n.d.). The ISF’s Status Report emphasized the “potential for a true transformation in our regional food system” by highlighting several regional examples of the work being done by a variety of organizations to “implement programs and change systems and policy to support a local, healthy food system” (ISF, 2013). These examples demonstrate the diverse, interdisciplinary, and collaborative nature of these efforts (ISF, 2013).

The Bridge to Health Survey asked citizens about their food habits and found that, at least once a month during the growing season, 43% of respondents report visiting a farmers market or roadside stand, 9% report shopping at a local farm or via community-

supported agriculture (CSA), and 54% said that they obtain fruits and vegetables from a home or community garden (Kjos et al., 2015). Additionally, Syring's survey of grocery shoppers in the WLS region also demonstrates that while there is interest in locally produced food, there is much room to grow the availability and consumption of these goods (2012).

The WLS region is an example of the trend towards “good food,” “localization,” and civic agriculture which is happening around the country and world (Laforge, Anderson, & McLachlan, 2017). The WLS region has great agricultural growth potential (Stark et al., 2011). It is the small-scale, direct-marketed, alternative farms that are particularly suited to both the climactic biome and the cultural zeitgeist (Syring, 2012, Hanson, 2016). However, these small scale farms and their transfer processes may not fit into the current paradigm built around the industrial agriculture model (Syring, 2012; Laforge et al., 2017). The new civic agriculture requires “new organizational forms” that value and encourage the small, the local, and the diverse (Lyson, 2004), and solutions that take a systems approach to solving food system challenges (Ruhf, 2013).

Regional and national researchers point to farm transfer as a crucial missing link in local food system development, for sound farm transfer processes can ease the senior generation out of farming and new farmers into the business, and can ensure a more stable and sustainable regional food supply (MFCN, 2014; Stark et al., 2011; Syring, 2012; Ackerman-Leist, 2013). In the following section, I will review the literature on the reasons for and behind successful farm transfers, the salient recommendations based on decades of research, and the issues facing beginning and retiring farmers.

Farm Transfer

Farm transfer, the successful reproduction of farming operations across generations (Lobley & Baker, 2012), differs from a traditional sale of farmland in that the interaction between generations allows the knowledge, skills and ethics of land and business management to carry through time while remaining in the community (Baker, n.d.). While there are other pathways for beginning farmers to rent or buy farmland, the positive benefits of farm transfer for all parties warrant the directed efforts to further understanding and facilitating sound transfer processes (Ruhf, 2013). Farm transfer has received greater attention recently due to the “urgency created by increased concentration

of land ownership in fewer and older hands,” among many other reasons (Goeller, 2012, p.149). These challenges include reluctant farm heirs; absentee landowners; land ownership consolidation; exorbitant land prices; beginning farmers and a growing a population of minority farmers with limited access to land, credit and capital; traditional means of land ownership and tenure becoming obsolete; elder farmers who cannot retire for financial reasons or do not want to; limited access to healthcare for both beginning and retiring farmers; and the list goes on (Whitehead et al., 2012; Ruhf, 2013; Bigelow, Borchers & Hubbs, 2016).

If we understand that farms are good and necessary to a well-functioning society (McIntyre et al., 2009), then we also understand that the succession of farms between generations is crucial, within or outside of the family. When there is a succession as opposed to a traditional sale, “farm-specific knowledge” is handed down to the subsequent farm operator, and this information that can only be obtained from the senior farmer can be instrumental in the success of the younger farmer (Lobley & Baker, 2012, p.11). The farm’s assets and liabilities; equipment; seed stock and livestock; the required daily maintenance; the intimate knowledge of the landscape; the relationship with neighbors, community, and customers; the stories and family history are all a part of the farm and the farming operation, and all may or may not be part of the farm transition between generations (Goeller, 2012). A successful transfer depends on the “willingness and ability” of the successor to take control, and for the retiree to let go of control (Potter & Lobley, 1996a; Hachfeld et al., 2013). It is also a function of the earning potential of the farm, compared to other off-farm employment options (Potter & Lobley, 1996a).

These processes of farm transfer are wrapped up in the farm family life cycle, which describes the general cyclical progression of the family farm, waxing and waning alongside the lifecycle of the farmer. It typically ends with retrenchment and the sale or lease of the farm unless there is a successor to begin the cycle anew (Potter & Lobley, 1996a). Each individual on the farm plays a role, and these roles change as people age. Understanding the interlinked processes of the farm family life cycle is crucial to facilitating successful farm transfers (Inwood, 2013). A succession should take place at the crucial point when there can be synergistic interaction between the older and younger farmers (Kirkpatrick, 2012). The hard-earned experience of the older generation

combines with the vibrant energy of the younger generation to keep the farm viable into the future (Kirkpatrick, 2012). Mutual support and respect between both generations are crucial to the success of the transfer (Joosse & Grubbström, 2016). The younger farmer supports their predecessor before and during the transfer by helping with the work, and then the retiring farmer supports their successor by acting in a consultant or mentor role during and after the transfer. Both parties also need to hold mutual respect, and demonstrate the “due regard for the feelings or achievements” of the other (Joosse & Grubbström, 2016, p.200).

Mentorship between the young and old farmers can be crucial in the success of the transfer, and also plays an important role in environmental resource management. Farmers are both local businessmen and environmental managers, protecting the “public goods” of natural resources (Burton et al., 2004). As farmers are “important agents of landscape change” the world over, their decisions and practices “exert a powerful, cumulative and above all, widespread, impact on landscapes, habitats and species” (Potter & Lobley, 1996b, p.172). When sustainable resource management can be passed down to the successor, this “sense of intergenerational accountability” places “farmers as interpreters and exemplars of local history, nature and culture” (Lobley & Baker, 2012, p.11). Therefore, land tenure and succession are closely linked to the “processes of environmental change” (Potter & Lobley, 1996b, p.188). Smaller farms in particular have an important “role to play in the conservation of farming practice, with benefits to wildlife and landscape, as well as contributing to the character of rural areas and their communities” (Whitehead et al., 2012, p. 236).

The effects of having a successor or not have been well-documented from on-farm research (Potter & Lobley, 1996a; Inwood & Sharp, 2012; Leonard et al., 2017). The “succession effect” takes hold often when the successor indicates commitment to working on the farm, and this expectation often leads to expansion of the farm business (Potter & Lobley, 1996a). The “successor effect” takes place once the successor is on the farm, as “young farmers tend to be most innovative at the start of their farming careers” and will often expand or intensify their operation (Potter & Lobley, 1996a, p.289). If there is not a successor to assume the operation, farms often experience the “retirement effect” at the end of a farmer’s career. There may be a reduction in the amount of work

done, less upkeep on machinery and infrastructure, fields less intensively farmed, and finally the sale or lease of the farm (Potter & Lobley, 1996a). Having a successor lined up “provides both an incentive to act and the resources, labour and skills necessary to carry plans through,” and can dramatically change the “trajectory of farm business development” (Potter & Lobley, 1996a, p.303). While correlation between having a successor and business growth is clear, causation is not. Since succession is more likely to occur on larger, more profitable farms where there is greater opportunity for the successor, it encourages a positive feedback loop which is “progressively widening the gap between mainstream and marginalized family businesses” (Potter & Lobley, 1996a, p.303), further discouraging small-scale farms.

The literature is clear that farms are bound to a thick web of relationships, and the social capital that comes from these relationships has an impact on and is a result of any farm transfer (Sharp & Smith, 2003; Burton et al., 2004; Joosse & Grubbström, 2016). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines social capital as “the networks, norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups” (2011). Social capital is widely recognized as an important instrument for wellbeing and economic vitality (OECD, 2001), and is critical to “developing sustainable communities” (Burton et al., 2004). As farms are intertwined with their local community and with the larger food system, relationships and social capital contribute to the success of the farm enterprise (Sharp & Smith, 2003), and also to the success of the farm transfer (Joosse & Grubbström, 2016). Social and professional networks are a part of the “intangible assets” that may be passed down to the successor, in addition to the “knowledge of the farm, the environment and local surroundings,” and the “norms and values of how to be a ‘good farmer’” (Joosse & Grubbström, 2016, p.200). Farmers are often highly dependent on others in their community, such as the machine repair person or the livestock feed dealer, or neighbors who support the farm in goodwill and as customers (Sharp & Smith, 2003). These relationships and the reputation of the farmer can either provide “the new farmer with an easy starting point, as the necessary network has already been mapped out,” or can lead some successors to “feeling trapped to continue in the same vein” (Joosse & Grubbström, 2016, p.205). Either way, as these researchers point out,

The ways in which the farm work has been organised before, the experiences of cooperation with the previous farmer and earlier agreements made, shape the expectations of collaboration with the new farmer to a high degree. (Joose & Grubbström, 2016, p.205)

Every farmer leaves behind a legacy in both tangible and intangible assets. The new farmer has to deal with and manage the ongoing results of their predecessor's past decisions, whether in regards to community relationships, soil quality, or building maintenance. The new farmer must then decide to continue or discontinue the practices of the retiring farmer. Joose & Grubbström found that it is often a combination of both strategies, including “a negotiated mix of traditionalism and entrepreneurialism in their farming practices” (2016, p.206), which allows the new farmer to build upon the momentum of their predecessor, or to redo or correct the direction of the farm.

Farm transfer planning. The research shows that farm succession is more likely to be successful if the planning starts earlier rather than later, though most farmers tend to only think about it when they cannot avoid it any longer (Ruhf, 2016; Kirkpatrick, 2012). In the case of farm transfer, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail” (Baker, 2012, p.139). A huge number of resources, agencies and publications exist to help farmers and families transfer their farmland, which all more or less clearly delineate the process of farm transfer, and yet, it remains an issue for families, for service providers and for food systems of all scales (IFTN, n.d.).

The most important first step is for all parties involved in the transfer to be clear about their goals and their vision for the farm, and to have it in writing. Only then can an appropriate strategy for transfer be chosen and implemented (Opheim, 2016). Goals can vary greatly between spouses and between generations, and even one individual may be host to conflicting goals. In *The Future of Family Farms*, Opheim lists the most commonly stated goals for farmland by farmland owners (Opheim, 2016, p.3):

- keep family harmony;
- provide land for my farming heir(s) to farm;
- provide a farm for a family to work;
- help provide my heirs with greater financial stability through the sale of, or rental income from, the farm;

- use my farmland to benefit a charitable cause;
- give all of my heirs an inheritance of equal economic value;
- keep the farmland in my family;
- use the farmland for conservation.

Goeller (2012) presents the "three-legged stool" of farm transfer, which includes the retirement plan, estate plan, and business succession plan (p.151), each requiring massive amounts of time and possibly hired expertise to accomplish. The aid and advice of professional service providers is often necessary to the transfer process (Ruhf, 2016, p.26). There are four major phases to the process, which may or may not all take place with every transfer. Once a successor has stated their intent to take over the farm, the "testing phase" may commence, which is a trial period for both parties to determine their compatibility as business partners. Later comes the "commitment phase," wherein "both generations make the decision [...] to move forward" in an agreed upon business arrangement (Goeller, 2012, p.157). The "established phase" should see the successor "providing a large share of the labour" and earning most if not all of their income from the farm (Goeller, 2012, p.160). During the final "withdrawal stage," the successor should have the expertise to take over the operation completely, and the retiring farmer can then withdraw as much as possible (Goeller, 2012). Each stage has its hurdles, as "[i]t can be very difficult for owners as they watch their successor lead the business in a direction that may be different than they would have chosen" (Goeller, 2012, p.160).

Farm transfer issues. In the United States, "inheritance has been the most common way to acquire a farm," but presently, inheritance "accounts for less than half of farm acquisition" (Ruhf, 2016, p.26), which means that these "traditional methods of farm transfer are no longer sufficient to address today's agriculture" (Ruhf, 2016, p.23). New methods of transfer are evolving, including "[g]radual transfers, more secure leases, mentorships, conservation easements, created limited development, and innovative financing," in order to "make transfers more viable for both entering and exiting farmers" (Ruhf, 2016, p.23). A variety of methods are needed to adapt to the current climate around farm transfer, especially for transfers between unrelated parties (Parsons et al., 2012), since "[f]ewer farmers are starting out on family land" (Ruhf, 2016, p.23).

While much of the research has focused on farm transfer within the family, transfers between unrelated parties deserve further attention (Ruhf & Jaffe, 2012). It is the transfer of knowledge, experience, and mentorship that benefits the successor, and this can happen between unrelated parties, as well, as long as there is commitment on both ends. Farm transfer between unrelated parties brings up its own set of opportunities and challenges, as it does not fit into the historical paradigm of “traditional” succession (Ruhf & Jaffe, 2012). While ‘keeping it in the family’ is most often seen as the more noble choice, and may indeed benefit the family, this might not be the ‘best’ option for the land, or for the common good (Lobley et al., 2012; Opheim, 2016).

The commonly stated goals for farmland listed above (Opheim, 2016) show how difficult it can be if a young farmer is not ‘in the family.’ While the widely accepted principle of ‘keeping it in the family’ has gone mostly unquestioned (Lobley et al., 2012), this works to maintain the status quo among landowners in this country, and makes land access and wealth creation especially hard for underrepresented and minority populations (Parsons et al., 2012; Hamilton, 2017). Joosse & Grubbström (2016) opine that farm transfers between family members and between unrelated parties have more in common than not. As mentioned above, the retiring farmer passes on their network of relationships and often their reputation, as well, to their successor, in addition to the tangible assets of the farm. The successor may be in a better or worse situation having this legacy in tow, and they must decide how to adapt within their situation (Joosse & Grubbström, 2016). Transfers between unrelated parties might not be subject to the intense history of family politics, or to the sentiment that the new farmer must continue in their predecessor’s path (Joosse & Grubbström, 2016).

Farm transitions are affected by the soft issues such as “farm family dynamics, socio-cultural values, land tenure, succession, and community factors in addition to economic conditions” (Inwood, 2013). Research shows that interpersonal communication can be an enormous obstacle to a successful transfer, because of the dense social and emotional issues that may be tied up in the farm, the land and the business. Taylor & Norris (2000) recommend training farm families in conflict management because of the deep tensions that may exist within families. Communication styles can differ greatly based on gender and generation, and due to

personal experiences (Baker, 2012). Pitts et al. (2009) found common themes in communication issues around farm transfer are about managerial control, fairness and equality, financial concerns, the subjectivity of progress, and that each of these is exacerbated by different communication styles. Conway et al. (2015) identified the social and emotional issues that retiring farmers often face, which include loss of identity, status and control.

Retiring farmers need to make room for beginning farmers but this proves extremely difficult as farm ownership is a large part of personal identity (Kirkpatrick, 2012; Conway et al., 2015). Retiring farmers are often host to “complex and competing emotions” (Kirkpatrick, 2012, p.166), as their “sense of self-worth, accomplishment and connection with the land competes with the desire for a lasting legacy” (Kirkpatrick, 2012, p.177). Among retiring farmers, there is a severe lack of future planning due in part to the socio-emotional issues (Baker, 2012). Of the farmers surveyed in this country, most respondents said they plan to only semi-retire or never retire, and almost half said they had discussed retirement with no one (Baker, 2012). Many retiring farmers hold onto their farmland in order to fund retirement and their long term health care as they age and often until their death, as their land is often the bulk of their estate (Inwood, 2013), and because of the perceived risks and benefits of transfer (Leonard et al., 2017). However, “[i]f the senior farmer does not exit or transfer control in a timely and thoughtfully managed way, the next in line - if there is one - is much less prepared to take over, and often is discouraged from even trying” (Ruhf, 2016, p.25). The farm transfer terms need to be favorable to both parties, allowing the retiring farmers a “secure exit” and the new farmers a solid starting point (Ruhf, 2016, p.23).

The barriers facing beginning farmers today are widely recognized (Ahearn & Newton, 2009). These include access to land, capital and health care according to a survey by the National Young Farmers Coalition (Shute, 2011), as well as access to child care (Inwood, 2013). In addition, “the increased mechanization of farming, US tax policy, [and] tight profit margins for many sectors of agriculture” have indirectly deterred many beginning farmers (Goeller, 2012, p.149-50). In many cases, retiring farmers themselves are the barrier, as their “pride of ownership, love of the land, the ‘no one can do it as well as I can’ attitude,” their “deficiency in communication skills, lack of

retirement planning, [...] and lack of planning for a successor” can stand in the way of a successful transfer (Goeller, 2012, p.149-50). In addition to the financial reasons keeping new farmers from farming, there also needs to be a community and a culture to receive and support them, including adequate healthcare and child care (Inwood, 2013). Inwood states that policies need to “ensure there are vibrant communities to which farm heirs want to return and to which new farmers want to move” (2013, p.4). This desirable community and culture can be hard to find in rural areas where land might be more affordable than compared to the RUI. Beginning farmers need to access to the social capital or the ability to create it in order to have a farm that is sustainable for the farmers.

Conclusion

At the foundation of the local food system is the small scale farm, cared for by subsequent generations of farmers and their families, and supported by the community. Establishing the next generation of producers and facilitating their success is critical to a “a more resilient, diverse, and sustainable food and farm system” (Ruhf, 2013, p.9) and to regional sustainable development (Lyson, 2004, Ackerman-Leist, 2013). Further understanding of the transfer process as experienced by small farmers can aid in this development.

Conceptual Framework

This project employed qualitative data collection methods, and was designed as a multi-case study in order to develop a “rich, theoretical framework” (Yin, 1994, p. 46). A case study approach allowed for an in-depth description and analysis of the personal experiences of each farmer participant, in order to illuminate the themes and issues around the phenomenon of small scale farm transfer in the western Lake Superior region. True to the Constructionist paradigm, this study followed a holistic approach (Creswell, 2009, p.176), taking into account the historical and cultural context, and holding the assumption that “there are as many realities as there are participants - as well as that of the researcher” (Robson, 2011, p. 24). In following a Constructionist approach, I have been aware of and honest about my own perspectives, values, and assumptions. I have been continuously flexible and reflexive throughout the process to better guide the inquiry. The participating farmers were collaborators from the beginning of this project,

as I recognized the importance of a systems approach to this interdisciplinary research project (Drinkwater et al., 2016).

Chapter 3: Methodology

The research questions that guided this study address how small-scale farm transfer is experienced by retiring and beginning farmers within the context of the regional food system. The specific aims of this study sought to understand how the transition takes place economically, socially, and operationally; how the goals and outcomes are reconciled by the individuals involved; and the extent of the utilization of farm transfer resources by farmers.

Strategy of Inquiry

This three-case study employed qualitative data collection and analysis methods. As Yin states (1994), case study “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident” (p.13). This type of inquiry has been common in the fields of “psychology, sociology, political science, business, social work,” and economics in order to “understand complex social phenomena” (Yin, 1994, p.2-3). Taking a case study approach to inquiry allowed for an in-depth description and analysis of these specific and unique situations, in order to illuminate the themes and issues around this phenomenon in the context of the western Lake Superior region. In case study, identifying the unit of analysis, the specific case, is critical (Yin, 1994). Also, specific time boundaries need to be placed around the unit of analysis to define the beginning and end (Yin, 1994). In this study, the unit of analysis is the small group of people involved in the transfer of the farm: the retiring and incoming farmers, while everyone else involved (community members, service providers, etc) was considered a part of the context. The questions in the interviews addressed the broad time frame of the transfer, beginning with the initial conversations between the two parties, through the interaction that may still be unfolding post writing.

The research questions were open-ended, and were addressed by doing semi-structured, in-depth interviews with farmer consultants. In carrying out a case study, Yin

recommends gathering data from multiple sources in order to triangulate data (1994; Patten, 2012). In this study, interviews were performed with several individuals involved in each case so that evidence may be compared and contrasted, as much as is reasonable for each case is necessarily unique. The participating farmers have been involved as collaborators from the beginning of the research process. I sent my research questions to the farmers for their feedback several months before the interviews. Their thoughts and expertise will enhance the utility and relevance of this study for the broader audience. As appropriate to a case study, I examined the human experience of farm transfer within its contemporary context (Yin, 1994; Robson, 2011), in this case, our regional food system. Interviews are a well-utilized method in farm transfer research (Potter & Lobley, 1996a; Pitts et al., 2009; Inwood & Sharp, 2012; Farmer & Valliant, 2016; Joosse & Grubbström, 2016), and were performed in this study following standard qualitative research methodology (Yin, 1994; Creswell 2009, Robson, 2011; Patten, 2012). Data analysis followed procedures outlined by Yin (1994), Elo & Kyngäs (2007), and Bloomberg & Volpe (2012). Elo & Kyngäs (2007) have outlined specific “qualitative content analysis” methods for evaluating “written, verbal or visual communication” data to increase validity and reliability (2007). This method began in the 19th Century, and has become increasingly utilized more recently as “a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, p.108).

Participants

The three cases were purposively selected from my field work and involvement in the regional food system and were supported by recommendations from experts in the community (Patten, 2012). All of the farms reside in Carlton and St. Louis Counties, and primarily serve the Duluth and Twin Ports area. One case is a completed transfer within the family, and the other is a currently unfolding transfer between non-related parties, and the last involves retiring farmers who are selling a portion of their land to a neighbor farmer, who is going to continue to run an almost identical business to that of the retirees’. Detailed descriptions of each case and context are included in future sections (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007).

I aimed to involve participating farmers from the beginning of the research process, in order to include their thoughts, expertise, and concerns in the purpose statement and research questions so that the results of the study are useful and relevant to all parties. I believe that this collaboration will produce a study of higher quality and utility for the community.

Researcher's Role

As the key instrument in this study, my values, experiences, and perspective form the lens through which I investigated this issue. My role and reputation as a community member has allowed me to form relationships and to conjure buy-in and participation from my key consultants. In case study, the relationship between the researcher and the key consultants become vital to the success of the study (Patten, 2012). The researcher is very much a participant, as well, and therefore interpersonal relationships must be managed carefully. As an environmental educator, I look at the topic of farm transfer from a systems perspective, but also through an educational lens, so that we may fill in the educational gaps to improve farm transfer processes and to improve the local food system.

I am a first-generation aspiring farmer with hopes of acquiring a farm someday. I am very much aware of the obstacles in place for my generation, with access to land being the most prominent issue. My personal experiences have led me to see this issue as a much broader theme deserving of further attention. I employed strategies to maintain and demonstrate transparency, trustworthiness, and reliability throughout the study. I began each interview by describing my background as an aspiring farmer, educator and community organizer, what led me to do this study, and the design and outcomes of the study. By doing this, the consultants were well-aware of my personal goals, and the broader goals of this research project. One of the reasons that all my participants were willing and able to be involved is that they are, as am I, aware of the the importance of farm transfer for the development of our regional food system.

Data Collection Procedures

The Institutional Review Board determined that this study was not research involving human subjects (see Appendix A). Interviews have the “potential of providing rich and highly illuminating material” (Robson, 2011, p. 280) but require much skill from

the interviewer. Interviews are a “flexible and adaptable way of finding things out,” but can lead to “concerns about reliability” (p. 281). Because of this, clear and careful proceedings were necessary. I performed face-to-face interviews, which were time consuming for both me and my key consultants. I developed an interview guide based on other published studies on the topic of farm transitions, which was reviewed by experts in the field. I then used this as my guide during the interviews as opposed to a strict protocol. I wanted to be sure to have all of my questions answered but allowed the conversation to flow. If a topic was brought up by a participant, I followed that train of thought and wrote notes to myself about topics to ask about again at a later point in the conversation.

I offered to spend time working with the farmers, offering my time and hands to help with whatever they were working on, as I recognized that they were offering their time for this study. None of them actually took me up on this offer to work alongside them. Being wintertime, it felt appropriate to sit around the kitchen table and just talk. Fellow researchers recommended this participatory interview process as a way to put the interviewee at ease and to be more conversational (J. Valliant, personal communication, March 30, 2017), and for the same reasons the interviews were performed at their homes. This way the participants do not have to travel, and I hope felt more comfortable and at ease. Again, I believe it was important that these interviews were held at their homes, around the kitchen table. They usually offered refreshments and I brought some as gifts to each interview. I was very conscious of being a guest in their homes and was grateful for their hospitality.

I collected data by performing semi-structured in-depth interviews with the involved parties of each case to gain their perspectives on past and ongoing events and experiences. I originally planned to interview the older generation and the younger generation of farmers first as a group, then as individuals or couples, for a total of three interview sessions per farm case. However, setting up interviews with the farmers became quite difficult because of their extremely busy schedules. I settled with two interview sessions for each farm case. Interviews were scheduled as time allowed, with no specific order. The interviews were performed in person and audio recorded by the researcher, during the winter of 2017-2018. The interview data was transcribed verbatim

by the researcher, using Express Scribe Transcription software and a foot pedal. By interviewing many or all of the individuals involved in each case, I was able to triangulate data on the events, processes and relationships of each case by describing it from multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). Throughout the data collection and analysis phases I asked my key consultants to check my reporting for accuracy (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). In that the data collection occurred via in-depth interviews, I spent as much time as was appropriate with farmer consultants in order to provide a rich description of their experiences. Each interview varied in length depending on the schedule of the farmers and their talkativeness.

Data Collection Instrument

These were semi-structured interviews using a question guide (Appendix B). The interview questions were reviewed by a panel of experts: Julia Valliant, (Indiana University); Teresa Opheim, (Renewing the Countryside); Jerry Ford, (Sustainable Farming Association); and Karen Stettler, (Land Stewardship Project), and appropriate changes were made before the interviews. In addition to all of the listed questions, further probing questions were asked as necessary, and some subjects were covered which were not included in the question guide (Patten, 2012). I followed the same general protocol for all three farm cases, though some variability was required by each specific situation. Each case is in a different stage of the transfer, thus some questions had varying relevance, and were changed or omitted accordingly. I tried to allow the conversation to flow meaningfully, while gently steering it as appropriate with further or more directed questions. I was already familiar with the cases as I had several prior conversations with the participants. I asked the same questions at the two interview groups of each farm case in order to increase the reliability of data, as similarities and discrepancies were valuable in examining the personal perceptions of this process. I also reviewed relevant documents when offered by the participants (for example, notes from a meeting with the lawyer or a timeline the farmers created for a presentation they gave at a conference).

Data Analysis

I followed data analysis procedures as explained by Yin (1994) as related to case study, and using the qualitative content analysis methods outlined by Elo & Kyngäs

(2007). I also followed qualitative analysis procedures as described by Volpe & Bloomberg (2012). Content analysis can be done in both qualitative and quantitative studies, and inductively or deductively. Content analysis has been used “to identify critical processes,” as it is “concerned with meanings, intentions, consequences and context” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). This analysis consisted of both deductive and inductive coding. In deductive analysis I placed themes and patterns into code categories already identified in the literature review, such as ‘finances’ and ‘communication.’ The inductive process involved open coding and categorization, and is similar to the thematic coding as described by Robson (2011) and Creswell (2009). In thematic coding, “as a matter of principle, the codes arise from interaction with the data” (Robson, 2011, p. 467). In the inductive analysis, I remained open to present themes and patterns that were not already predefined or expected.

I first transcribed the data to increase my familiarity with it. Next, I read through hard copies of the transcripts and openly coded them to find any and all themes present in the data. I employed this inductive data analysis because the past research on alternative small farm transfer is “fragmented” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007), and found salient themes related to this specific topic and context. I noted everything of interest this first time through the data as I tried to remain “open to the unexpected” (Volpe & Bloomberg, 2012). I read the transcripts in the chronological order of the interviews. In reading the first transcript, I wrote notes in the margin that were just describing and summarizing main points. By the time I read the fourth transcript, my notes had morphed into what became my initial list of codes. I then uploaded my transcripts into the Dedoose software platform, which allowed me to easily apply various codes to any combination of excerpts. Reading each subsequent transcript brought new and slightly distinct themes which required new and/or modified code schemes. My list of codes evolved over the second and third reading of the transcripts, as I switched between inductive and deductive coding (see Appendix C). I was then able to export just the text excerpts with their attached codes into a spreadsheet, and again reviewed the excerpts. I discovered themes within and between each case by coding the excerpts in this way (Creswell, 2009, p. 189). Each case was examined on its own, and is presented under a cross-case analysis in the following chapter (Yin, 1994, p. 29).

Limitations and Delimitations

The participants involved in this study were purposively selected, thus the results were transferable though not generalizable. The researcher was the sole reviewer and coder of the transcripts. The codes were developed based on the literature and other prominent themes that were salient in the data, and discussed with the researcher's advisor. The participants reviewed their own case description summary, and offered feedback that was incorporated into the summary and throughout the report. The data was self-reported, retrospective accounts of the personal experiences of the participants. These personal accounts were verified by performing two interviews per farm.

This study focused on farm transfers within the food system of the WLS region, as it is a region agriculturally distinct from the rest of Minnesota and Wisconsin (Stark et al., 2011) because of its biome and socio-ecological history (Hanson, 2016). This study included small and/or alternative farms that were transferred relatively recently.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the process of small-scale farm ownership transfers through the individual experiences of farmers in three distinct cases in the western Lake Superior region, in order to contribute to the advancement of a more robust local food system. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. How did the generational transition take place, in financial and legal terms, and in the transfer of operations management?
2. What were the goals and vision of each individual involved, and how did they reconcile these amongst each other, socially and emotionally?
3. What were the challenges and opportunities of a small and/or alternative farm going through the transfer, and how were they managed?
4. What resources did they rely on for guidance and assistance in the transition, and what resources may be lacking?

This chapter is organized by research question. It begins with case summaries, which include a description of each farm, an introduction to the parties involved, and an overview of the transfer (Table 1). I then present the findings and address each farm under each research question. I chose to present the findings in this way in order to tell the story of each of these farm transfers while comparing across cases (Bloomberg &

Volpe, 2012, p.148). This is followed by a summary of the findings from the inductive qualitative analysis of the interview data. A large amount of text has been dedicated to the voices of the participants themselves, so that the reader may hear the complexity of these personal accounts. Each farm case has a number by which it will be referred, and pseudonyms are used for every participant.

Farm Cases Summary

Table 1 <i>Farm cases summary</i>			
Descriptor	Farm #1	Farm #2	Farm #3
Farm characteristics	27 acres total. >2 acres in production. Mixed vegetables. St. Louis County	40 acres. 5 acres in production. U-pick strawberries. Carlton County	360 acres. 14 acres in production. Mixed vegetables. Carlton County
Parties	Retiring farmer □ Beginning farmers (and parents) (unrelated).	Retiring farmers □ Neighbor farmers (unrelated).	Retiring farmers □ Son (and wife) (familial).
Transfer terms	Sale included land, buildings, infrastructure. Some equipment sold separately. No business transfer.	Sale included land, infrastructure. Unofficially included market, clientele, mentorship.	Sale included land, buildings, infrastructure. Equipment sold separately. Unofficially included mentorship, business, market, clientele.

Farm #1 case description. Evelyn and James purchased twenty-seven acres from Louise, with the help of Evelyn’s parents. Louise and her late husband grew this organic farm from scratch, eventually building a barn for their horses, a small deep winter greenhouse, a house and garage, and a tall deer fence around the prime arable two acres. They grew vegetables cooperatively with a group of local farmers for retail and wholesale, and donated large quantities to food banks.

Evelyn and James both have experience working on other organic vegetable farms, and operating their own respective businesses. Evelyn has run a small business

growing and selling microgreens, and James has operated a small CSA on rented land for a few years. Daniel and Laney were motivated to live in the country again and to help Evelyn and James on the farm. They had a house in town that they were unable to sell before the purchase of the farm, and they are now renting it out to their other daughter and her family.

Evelyn had volunteered for Louise on the farm several years prior, but it was not until years later that she and James were seriously looking for property. Evelyn and James called Louise based on a recommendation from a mutual friend. Upon their first visit to the farm with Evelyn's parents, they all shook hands and committed to moving forward together in the transfer of the farm. Within a couple months, Louise's renter moved out, and so she invited Evelyn and James to move into the apartment in September 2016. Evelyn and James paid Louise rent, and Louise allowed them space to grow vegetables for their CSA members. During this time of cohabitation, they were regularly communicating and negotiating the terms of the sale, and figuring out how to meet the needs of both parties.

It wasn't until Louise found a desirable house in town that the final terms and timeline of the sale became clear. Up until that point, they had discussed a number of various scenarios and some included Louise staying on the farm indefinitely. While Louise was prepared to move out and off the farm, finding a subsequent practical and affordable place then made the transaction move along more quickly. They negotiated over these several months to decide on price that would work for both parties.

Louise's lawyer was instrumental in these negotiations and in the final transaction. Louise, Daniel, Laney, Evelyn and James all met in the lawyer's office to sign the purchase agreement in April 2017, and closed on the sale in July 2017, which included the land, buildings, and some equipment. At the time of this writing, Louise now lives in a small house in town, and Daniel, Laney, Evelyn and James are all living on the farm. Laney and Daniel are now staying in the apartment for the time being. Evelyn and James are working on building their farm business, growing vegetables for their CSA, and selling to grocery stores and restaurants. Evelyn and James have stayed in close touch with Louise, who visits the farm often.

The first interview for this study included Evelyn, James, and Louise. The second interview included Evelyn, James, Laney, and Daniel; both interviews were held at the farm.

Farm #2 case description. Don and Dina decided to retire from their U-pick berry operation after 32 years just before their final 2017 season. They knew that they wanted to stay on the farm indefinitely, and that they could not cohabitate with someone else on their farm. They decided to parcel off forty acres, which is across the road from their home place and equipped with the irrigation and drainage systems necessary for growing berries. In their quest for a potential buyer, they found their friends and neighbors of more than twenty years, who live less than three miles away. Ruth and Sam are not beginning farmers, but have considerable experience in farming and small business and are only a decade behind the retirees' in age. They have children of high school and college age, some of whom have an active interest in agriculture. They had been customers of Don and Dina's since their first week of residence in the area. Don and Dina have likewise bought a number of their farm products.

Don and Dina made Ruth and Sam aware of their plan to retire and sell just a portion of their property in the fall of 2016, and it was several months later when they came to a committed decision. Ruth and Sam sat on the proposition for a while, researching the market, crunching numbers, and considering the logistics of such an endeavor. Don and Dina invited Ruth and Sam over for the planting day so that they could get a feel for the work. This sealed the deal, so to speak, as they now had a realistic picture of what the operation entailed.

Don and Dina set the asking price for the land, based on their needs and advice from tax professionals, and made clear that it would be sold on a contract for deed. While Don is adamant that this is not a case of farm transfer, it is a transfer of resources, knowledge and expertise. The written contract includes the sale of the land and its improvements. The unwritten "gentleman's agreement" (Ruth) includes Don and Dina's ongoing mentorship in all areas from production to payroll, their list of reliable employees, access to a loyal customer base, and Don and Dina's watchful eyes just across the road.

At the time of the interviews, the four had already spent a season working closely together, but had not yet signed anything. After the interviews and before the time of writing, the four of them officially signed the contract for deed as planned, in January 2018. Sam and Ruth are gearing up for their first season of U-pick berries, with considerable help from Don and Dina. The retiring couple is looking forward to doing a number of other activities with their time, and will continue to be as involved as they want to be in what is now Sam and Ruth's farm enterprise.

The first interview included Don and Dina, and the second interview was with Sam and Ruth, each at their respective homes.

Farm #3 case description. Farm #3 is an organic vegetable farm that serves a large CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) membership and various retail and wholesale buyers. Their annual gross income qualifies them as a medium-size farm. The farm was started from scratch in 1988 by Jake and Jill, who sold it to their son, Jefferson, and daughter-in law, Amy, in 2010. Though Jake and Jill never fully expected one of their three sons to take over the operation, they consciously encouraged their participation and sense of ownership from the time they were young. Jefferson does not remember a time of not being involved in the farm. He came back after graduating from college with a commitment to stay in 1999.

During those first few years, Jefferson, his parents, and their long-time employee figured out how to coexist and to co-manage the farming operation. Jefferson gradually took on a more managerial role, acquiring various tasks from each of his parents. Jefferson and Amy bought a neighboring farm house which allowed Jefferson to be very involved on the farm, and also for them to have their own space and projects. He found winter work doing taxes among other things, and Amy has continued to work off the farm. Jefferson gradually took on the financial management of the farm, managing their interns and employees, and communication with CSA members, among other tasks. Jill and Jake gradually decreased their responsibilities on the farm, but continue to be very much invested.

Jefferson, Jill and Jake gathered significant information about how to best transfer ownership from farming conferences, friends and neighbors who had gone through similar processes, and their lawyer. They had conversations with their other two sons and

with their long-time employee about the options they were considering, such as some kind of co-ownership. They finally decided that the simplest option would be to sell the farm outright to Jefferson. Jill decided on an amount that they would need to live on, and this became the asking price for the farm. Since Jill and Jefferson have significant financial and tax management expertise, they were able to work out an arrangement that was feasible for both parties. The agreement included that Jake and Jill would continue to work on the farm for five years.

Jefferson qualified for a loan from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), as he did not own the farm, could document his management of it over the last several years, and was able to provide years of well-kept farm financial documents. The FSA then provided part of the loan, which served as a significant downpayment to Jake and Jill. Jake and Jill loaned Jefferson the other part of the mortgage, and Jefferson pays them annual payments. Jefferson and Amy were able to sell their house down the road to Amy's parents, but continued to live there while they renovated Jill and Jake's original house, making it their own. Amy's parents then moved into Jefferson and Amy's old house once they moved out. Jefferson and Amy have added their own flavor to the farm and their community, and Jake and Jill happily made space for them to do this. Jefferson, Amy and their two children now live next door to Jake and Jill, and just down the road from Amy's parents, who also help out on the farm regularly.

The first interview was with Jefferson only, and the second with Jake and Jill, each in their respective homes on the farm.

RQ1: How did the generational transition take place, in financial and legal terms, and in the transfer of management?

These cases are three exemplary success stories of farm transfer. In every case, both parties worked hard to find a creative solution that was favorable to all. Each financial and legal arrangement is unique and on a different timeline (Table 2). They are similar in that shared values and mutual commitment came first and the financial and legal details followed. This was a strong theme across all cases as all participants' noted that their relationship was much more important than the money. In addition, there was a relatively gradual transfer of management in every case, which allowed ample time for not only a transfer of skills and knowledge but also the sense of ownership. It was less

than one year in the case of Farm #1, going on two years with Farm #2, and at least ten years with Farm #3. I first explain the decision-making process of each party to illustrate how this important development took place.

Table 2			
<i>RQ1 Summary</i>			
Variable	Farm #1	Farm #2	Farm #3
Financial and legal aspects	4 buyers on residential home mortgage. Retiree bought new house elsewhere.	8-year contract for deed for farmland. Retirees remained in house.	Loans from FSA ¹ and sellers. Retirees and new farmer have separate houses on the farm.
Transfer of management	8-months of cohabitation and mentorship.	1.5+ years of co-working and mentorship.	10+ years of co-working and mentorship.

¹ Farm Service Agency.

Decision making process. In all cases, the decision to buy or sell, respectively, was guided by personal needs, intuition, research, and business logistics. In the case of Farm #1, the whole property was never on the market. It took Louise a while to decide to sell, but after being bedridden for two years (and now recovered), she realized “that’s a lot of work I’m not able to do” (Louise). Louise remembered Evelyn well from when she would come out and volunteer on the farm. Evelyn, James, Daniel and Laney all came out to meet Louise and see the farm and decided right away to move forward.

And I think right off the bat we established common values, core values and win-win, a win-win situation, and the fact that I still wanted to be a part of the farm in some capacity, so all the important bases were really covered. (Louise)

Both Evelyn and James had spent several years wanting to farm, starting their small businesses on rented land, and coming up against the lack of capital and credit to actually buy land. Louise was clear about her intention to stay connected to the farm and her desire to sell to beginning farmers. James and Evelyn were clear that the farm location, size and infrastructure fit well with their existing enterprises and future plans. Louise

said Evelyn and James have “started to go in a fabulous direction, and I'm just so thrilled to be a part of it.”

With Farm #2, Don and Dina decided to retire after for a number of reasons. Once they made the decision, they continued to find ever more reasons to quit. Similar to Louise, they said they came to terms with not being able to keep up with the amount of work and had health considerations. They became tired of the stress of farming. They wanted to have the time and energy to do other hobbies and activities while they are still able to do them. They knew they wanted to stay on the farm and in their house for the time being, and they knew that they had enough resources to retire.

And finally it just got to the point that... enough is enough... And so we finally decided, let's do it, we're not gonna sell anything except that ground, the equipment is staying here... There's resources here that we wanted to hang on to. And so that's life to date kinda... I'm tired, ya know. So it was, the fatigue was the driving force. And then you had to confirm whether it made sense. I guess. Maybe that's the, describes it. (Don)

Don and Dina knew that they wanted to stay on the farm and that Don, in particular, would have a very hard time living and working with someone else on the farm. They knew that their two children do not want the farm, so they were not a part of the equation. All of this helped them arrive at the decision to sell just a piece of their land. They thought it would be difficult to find someone who would maintain the farm to their high standards of both appearances and functionality.

Ruth and Sam explained their decision to take over the operation as one based on logistics and “community service” (Ruth). Ruth said she met Don and Dina in “the first week of July 1996” and Sam met them shortly thereafter. She brought the kids there to pick strawberries, “and ended up making friends for life” (Ruth). Sam said that they had never seriously discussed taking over the strawberry operation until Don and Dina had decided to retire, and brought it to their attention. Don and Dina “planted the seed” (Don) with their potential buyers in August 2016, and gently implied that they were looking for someone to continue the operation. Sam and Ruth said they heard the implication, but ignored the offer for the several month. The following spring, Don and Dina invited Ruth and Sam over to help with the strawberry planting. They said they

needed some extra hands, but, as Ruth said, “what they really needed was to entice us [laughs].” At this point, Ruth and Sam were in more of a position to seriously consider the offer.

And so we really debated about what else we could do over there, and it really wasn't until that planting day, and kinda right after that planting day when the proposal from them kinda became... ‘and we could help you.’ And that, I would say, is what really tipped it in [Sam's] head, not even so much 'cause you want to grow strawberries, but [Sam] loves a challenge, so this is a cool thing, but it's really he knows what's in [Don's] head. Or he knows that all this stuff is in [Don's] head. And he wants somebody to get it out, before it's too late. Ok, and I think that's actually a key piece of what this mission is. I mean partly it's the community service, I mean where are people around here gonna get their strawberries if we don't grow them? Thats a lot of it. (Ruth)

Ruth explained that once the offer from Don and Dina became one of mentorship, it became too enticing to pass up. They want to help preserve the knowledge and experience that Don and Dina have to share. In addition, they know that thousands of people have depended on the strawberry farm. Ruth and Sam are doing this because they know they have help from Don and Dina. Sam did some market research and concluded that it would be a sound business endeavour, aside from “standard farming stuff” (Sam). He found that there are no other nearby strawberry farms, so they know there will be a reliable and loyal customer base. Sam crunched the numbers, and had conversations with Don about the financial aspects of the farm. Don and Dina had been rotating eight to ten acres of strawberries around their 120 acres. They deduced that Sam could have a proper rotation and have good cash flow on just the forty acres. In this situation, proximity between the two farms was very important, as the buyers are staying on their current farm. The buyers will be able to be there as often as they need to be, and still tend to their ongoing enterprises at their home farm.

Similarly, the decision of how and when to transfer Farm #3 was well-researched both parties, and also intuitive. Jefferson and his brothers had grown up on the farm, and participated in its transition from more of a subsistence farm to one that could provide a viable living for the farmers. When Jefferson was in high school, his parents

implemented the CSA model, and made a significant income off the farm for the first time. He thought of pursuing other careers while in college, but the farm's attraction was stronger than any other option. He saw that his parents were not able to keep up with the increasing amount of work, he felt like his contributions were needed, and he knew there was no one else to do it. He says they never formally talked about his future farm ownership, but it just became obvious that he was not leaving. Jefferson and his parents share the passion for food and farming and have always worked well together.

Jefferson, Jake and Jill considered various options, such as putting the land under conservation easement, or dividing up part of it so that each of their sons and their long-term employee would each have part ownership. They decided that the most simple and best option was to sell the entire farm outright to Jefferson. They were advised by their lawyer, and also realized themselves that some kind of joint ownership could easily become less than ideal. Jefferson explains part of his thought process:

I mean it just sorta got to a point where I was like, uh ok just buy the place. [My younger brother's] not going to do this. [My older brother's] not going to do this. Even if they were, we wouldn't want to own it together. That sounds miserable, [laughs] you know. It's just, that's the way, how do you how do you account for different levels of involvement and commitment? You can make it work, but it's really hard. It's really hard. So, it seemed simple that way.

Jake was able to start collecting social security payments, and this made the plan more feasible at the right time. Since Jake would no longer need a salary, the farm could then support two families. Everyone wanted to see the farm stay whole, and nobody else felt they were owed or deserving of a piece of property. Jill and Jake were able to stay on the property under this scenario, and the farm business would continue.

But so we tried... we didn't have set conversations, we didn't ever have a sit down with all of us with what we were doing, but they both [two other sons] said, they didn't feel like they were obligated for them to inherit the land or money from the farm. They both really wanted to see the farm continue and neither of them was in a position, or [oldest son] certainly did not have the interest to farm as we were, and [our youngest] did not either. And so it was just kind of an agreement, that the farm would, if it could stay like it is, and [Jefferson] could buy

it so we could continue to live [here], that seemed like a good scenario. So, ya know we're really fortunate, really fortunate in that [everyone agreed]. (Jill)

Financial and legal aspects. Louise named the asking price for Farm #1 based on what she needed for retirement with the help of several formal and informal advisors. Because all parties were committed to the success of this transfer, they negotiated over several months to work out a plan that would be favorable to both parties. Louise needed to fund her retirement and also be able to buy a new house. She needed to fit this with her desire to sell to young farmers, who would keep the farm a farm. Both parties were transparent about their needs, and empathetic to the other's situation. In this case, having four buyers made it feasible to create a mutually beneficial arrangement.

The bank's appraisal of the property came up with a number that was much lower than what Louise determined she needed, and this was the amount they were willing to lend. The four buyers were not able to make up the entirety of the asking price, so they negotiated with Louise and met in the middle between the appraisal price and Louise's price. The four buyers had to make not only the down payment but also the difference between the loan amount and the agreed-upon price. The four scraped together everything they could. James cashed in bonds from his grandpa, his parents contributed for the downpayment, James and Evelyn put in their savings, and Daniel and Laney contributed from their retirement savings. Louise's lawyer was "pivotal" to this transaction and "made it all happen" as the lawyer recognized that none of them "are real money people" (Louise), so she filled this and other roles. Everyone involved in this case agreed that "nothing felt like a traditional scenario" (James), in terms of the "traditional model of the buyer and the seller" (Louise). They were not adversaries in a deal, but collaborators working together.

In the case of Farm #2, Don and Dina did *not* want to transfer their farm. They wanted to stay on the farm and did not want someone else working their land. They wanted to sell it on a contract for deed, so that they would still be the holder of the title in the case of a default. They could sell the land, invest the profit, have less land to maintain, and then still own the land if something does not work out. This allowed them to spread out the income from the sale over a number of years to save money in taxes. They knew that Ruth and Sam had income from other sources in addition to farming.

Don and Dina reasoned that this would be the most favorable to their situation, and hopefully for the buyers, too. They thought that it would have been nice for them to have this kind of option back when they started and for someone to help them.

Don was well aware that starting a small business, and especially farming, is a difficult thing to do. The contract is structured so that the buyers pay interest only for the first two years, allowing them more cash flow to invest in equipment or otherwise. Then they will pay the principal plus interest over the next six years, at which point the new owners will hold the land title. Don said he came up with the price based on what they need and what would be a “fair price that’s equitable” for the buyers. He said it was “not a lot of negotiations” between them and their buyers. Sam and Ruth agreed to the price because it was not worth it to them to try to negotiate with Don and Dina. They knew them well enough to know that Don had already made up his mind. They knew they were not only buying land, but also paying for the advice and guidance that Don and Dina would share with them. Don and Dina requested that the buyers follow the contract precisely, and not pay the loan off early. This was agreeable to Ruth and Sam, who feel confident that the cash flow will work out fine. Ruth said that the sellers are motivated “not just emotionally but monetarily,” and it was easy for them to agree to the terms delegated by Don and Dina.

I figured it out, called the tax guy, etcetera, and talked to them a bit, and said I laid it out here... Here’s the offer, we’re not negotiating, its either up or down, blink or not, understand right up front that this is where it’s gonna be. And uh they said ok. (Don)

So he set the price, and I know [Don], and that’s what the price was gonna be. There really was no, I’m not gonna be able to say well how about ten thousand less, 'cause he would say ‘nope’. I mean it was pointless. And and he came up with that price with the idea that he’s gonna help me do that stuff. Ok, ten grand is irrelevant. Ok, 'cause he’s gonna help me over the next, I don’t know how many years. I’m not gonna nitpick over some small amount of money, and I’m gonna get all of this free, in air quotes, free stuff, 'cause I’m not just buying the land. I’m buying the land, and all of his knowledge... It could be a little bit cheaper 'cause based on land prices, it should’ve been, in air quotes again,

should've been, cheaper. But he's got worked up fields, what's that worth, all this knowledge, what's that worth? *Oh*. That's a bargain. Why would I insult him by saying ten grand less... Ok, it's appraised at such and such, the tax value is such and such, and those really mean nothing. It means how much is this person going to be involved in this whole process, 'cause that's what you're actually buying.

[Sam]

Ruth explained that they absolutely trusted that the sellers were asking a fair price, for the sellers knew exactly how much work they had put into the land. The forty acres is set up perfectly for growing strawberries. There is irrigation pipe and a water pump, an irrigation pond, and the land has been leveled so that it drains properly. Sam says these improvements greatly add to the price. Ruth points out that Don and Dina will continue to live just across the road from the forty acres. Since Ruth and Sam live almost three miles away, Don and Dina are there to keep an eye on things.

And he has a vested interest. 'cause here now we're in this together. He wants to make sure this works so that he, this piece of his retirement works. And ok, he's totally motivated, great, I love that. And all I have to do is pay according to this schedule. And I got you totally motivated and on my side. Why would I haggle over ten thousand dollars... So he wants to make darn sure this works out. (Sam)

Don said, "the game has been changed due to the player." They know the buyers personally, and are fully confident in and trusting of their abilities. Don and Dina were not concerned about a down payment in cash. Dina said, "they do have now investment into this already," because they put in a lot of time and money the autumn before they actually purchased the property. They all worked together to renovate the strawberries that were there, paid people to weed, and purchased straw to cover the fields.

Similar to the other two cases, Jake and Jill needed to fund their retirement with the sale of Farm #3. Coming up with a number was their "biggest challenge" because "stuff gets all intertwined" (Jill). They had always had live-in interns with whom they shared food, and they would now be living alone. The property taxes would be split between the farm and the house, so that had to be factored in. Jill used online retirement calculators, but found them to largely irrelevant to their situation. She explains that the hardest part was projecting into the future. Jill said, "How do we have enough, know

what enough is into the future?” She explains that there came a point when they had done all the research and number crunching they could do, and had to accept that they were making the right decision. In this case, as well as the other two, the buyer was empathetic to the seller’s situation. This case is unique in that it was between family members, so they were particularly attuned to each other’s situations.

And I remember one time saying, well [Jefferson], I just don’t see how we can live on less than blah blah blah, and he said, ‘well I don’t think you should!’ [laughs] And it was like, we’d never had that kind of income before ... Because [Jefferson’s] paying us, he bought the farm from us, we didn’t gift him anything, so we’d be getting annual payments from him for the farm. (Jill)

They worked out in their purchase agreement that Jill and Jake would maintain their same roles on the farm for five more years. Jill would earn a salary, and Jake would forego a farm salary as he was now able to collect social security payments. Jefferson is fully aware that he paid full price for the farm; his parents did not cut him a deal. He is agreeable with this, as he knows that if he had to start this farm from scratch, it would have cost him much more. Jefferson put down ten percent of the farm price. Forty-five percent was covered by the FSA beginning farmer loan, which served as a substantial down payment to Jake and Jill. They used part of it to remodel their new dwelling on the farm, and stowed the rest of it away. The other forty-five percent was a mortgage from Jake and Jill, which utilized minimum interest rate set by the IRS. They now live off of these loan payments from Jefferson. The equipment was sold on a separate contract, which was also a loan from the sellers. The FSA loan is favorable in that Jake and Jill retain first mortgage, which means Jake and Jill are to be paid off before FSA if Jefferson defaults on payments. They were advised by their lawyer to work out a mortgage instead of a contract for deed because of long-term care precautions. Jake and Jill see it as a contract for deed, however, because it’s about the relationship between them.

Jake recounted how Jefferson was in “an ideal position” to qualify for the FSA loan because he could document his farming experience, including proof of being in a managerial role on the farm for several years. They were able to supply the three years of farm financial records that the FSA required for the loan application. This farm has always kept a detailed budget every year, and has shared it with their CSA membership.

Jefferson said that the most difficult part of securing the loan from FSA was the requirement of having been turned down by a conventional lender. The loan process was easy for Jefferson because he was the one managing the farm finances at this point. Jefferson worked out the financial pieces of the sale largely by himself. Figuring out the financial details was relatively easy as Jefferson and Jill are trained in finances and attuned to the numbers. They were all in agreement about what the farm could support in mortgage payments.

And so having us know what the farm needed, and knowing what I needed, and we knew what they needed income wise, too. And it just makes things so much easier than if you're kinda, if nobody has a clear idea of what they need out of the deal. (Jefferson)

Jefferson and Amy were in a position to make the purchase of the farm once they sold their neighboring house to Amy's parents. Jill and Jake were able to stay in the farmhouse while they renovated their new house on the farm, and then Jefferson and Amy were able to stay in their old house while fixing up the farmhouse. Renovating the farmhouse was an important piece of this, as it allowed Jefferson and Amy to make the house their own, and make it better than the house in which Jefferson had grown up. They were also able to keep ties with their first house, and bring Amy's parents into the farm family community.

Transfer of management. The transfer of Farm #1 did not include a business, as Louise was not currently operating one, and it so happened that James and Evelyn already had their own enterprises. This transfer did include a transfer of knowledge and expertise in regards to the property itself and its infrastructure. Louise shared everything she could about the super-insulated house and the other buildings that she and her husband built, such as the repairs they had done already and how to maintain it. It was important to Louise that they care for the buildings and actually make use of them. She also shared history and stories about the farm. She told them of the various past owners, and a sort of environmental history of the property and its surroundings. Evelyn and James were grateful for the information they obtained from Louise while living together. Louise said it was a "mutual mentoring" since she learned a lot from Evelyn and James, as well. She feels fully confident in their ability to farm, as "They've got the farming

thing like so down” (Louise). James said this time was like “test driving” the farm, giving the buyers “perspective” on what it would really be like to live there. These months of cohabitation were “really crucial” (Evelyn) to build trust and to transfer the sense of ownership.

Don was clear he would not transfer Farm #2 in the traditional sense of the word. However, he and Dina have handed down every detail of their operation so that Ruth and Sam may run it, albeit under their own name. Don and Dina aimed to fill the void they created by retiring and have worked hard to make sure the transition is smooth. Dina said they have “spent many hours around this table” in their kitchen with Ruth and Sam, talking about the details of the operation. They are still invested, and want the buyers to succeed. As Don said, “we’re not walking away from it.” This deal included a “gentleman’s agreement” between Don and Sam (Ruth). Sam and Ruth laughed about how this would be impossible to actually write down, and that none of them felt the need to.

It was agreed, I said, the only way it’s gonna work, [Don], is if you tell me what to do, and you do the things that you know how to do, and then I can learn from you. He goes, ya I got ya ok. And... otherwise it wouldn’t work. It wasn’t in the documents, it’s not there, because how would you write this down? (Sam)

While Don and Dina humbly mentioned how they have been helping the new owners, Sam and Ruth were clear that this is only working because Don and Dina are helping them “every step of the way” (Ruth). Sam explained that Don is careful about sharing what has and has not worked for him in the past, and then allows Sam to make his own decision. Sam said he “already would have messed it up without that,” without all the guidance from Don. Since Don and Dina live just across the road, they have kept an eye on what are now Ruth and Sam’s strawberries. Don and Dina have kept their timing on track in order to be ready for the strawberry season, and have also shared their other informational resources with them.

We spent time over there this fall, (saying) these weeds you need to get out of here *now*, ya know, or they’re gonna be a big problem, or just anything from, ok, when you gotta haul the irrigation pipe out, all kinds of those questions, how often do you water, you gotta be here checking on it all the time because this is sandy

soil, it dries out quickly, ya know, all these little things that we know, why not pass them along. (Dina)

There's a day to day thing, and ya know... it would be things like, it's gonna rain tomorrow, but you still have to irrigate today 'cause I was out there today and those plants are gonna they need it. And um, don't forget you need to order your strawberries by such and such, and we're gonna need to put straw down by next week. We're going to have to watch for... and it's the what has to be done, and when it has to be done, what to watch for, where they get it, who their resources are... Their friends down in Champlain... We know their names, and we know that if the opportunity arises that we'll be introduced to them... but the who's, the who to talk to. (Ruth)

During Don and Dina's final season, Sam and Ruth were able to shadow them in their work at some of the most crucial times. The retiring couple worked out their division of labor over the years, and it seems that Ruth and Sam will split the work in a similar way. For example, Don invited Sam over for their last opening day of strawberry picking. Don showed Sam how they manage parking, where to place the check-out booths, and many other tasks. Dina taught Ruth the details of their hiring, payroll and bookkeeping processes. Don and Dina gave the buyers their mailing list of customers and their list of seasonal employees. After Don and Dina's final picking season, and before Ruth and Sam had officially bought the land, they all worked together to renovate the strawberry plants on the forty acres. This means that they worked the field to get a second season out of the existing plants, which was contrary to Don's regular management strategy. He let Sam make the decision, who wanted to be sure that there would not be a lag in the berry supply come next season. Don was instrumental in helping Sam get ready for their first year of strawberries by showing Sam what to do and by working for him.

What I did to them too, is say here's, I'll make you a deal. You can hire me per hour, here's X number per hour, that includes me, tractor, machinery, 'cause we've got a turnkey operation. So I basically did everything over there, we renovated 1.6 acres, meaning we're gonna try to crop that next year out of the bunch that was there, which is going against what we've learned, told them can't

guarantee anything, but here's your risk-reward. If it works out, there's some good money in that 1.6 acres, if it doesn't then this is how much you've risked. I'm literally working for him less than fifty cents on the dollar, but it's a segway to get them in there. I don't loan out any of my equipment. I'm pretty fussy. If I'm the pilot, then yeah. (Don)

In their new operation, Ruth and Sam want to keep as much the same as possible, "once you've changed the name" (Ruth). They want the berry-picking experience to look and feel the same, to hire the same workers, to maintain the pesticide-free management practices, and to use the same marketing strategies. Since Sam and Ruth will only be operating on forty acres instead of the 120, Don and Dina advised them to only ever have five acres in production, and to charge more for the berries. Sam said Don told him, "if you raise your prices you can make the same amount I was making." So while Don was clear he was not transferring the farm, he and Dina have passed down their knowledge and expertise to ensure the buyers' success in managing their new farm business. At the time of writing, Sam and Ruth's first picking season is a month away and this transfer of knowledge is ongoing. Their relationship is still evolving, and both parties are confident that it will continue to change in a positive way.

And it ain't over. We're in a middle chapter of the book on the transition quite frankly. Not even the middle chapter. First chapter. And so are we optimistic, yes. (Don)

Farm #3 is unique among these cases as it happened among family members and the sale happened eight years ago. The transition of management began in 1999 when Jefferson graduated from college, but Jake and Jill said their working relationship with Jefferson started long before that. Jake said they paid their kids to do farm work when they were young because they wanted show their appreciation "instead of expecting him to work just out of dedication for the family or something like that." In this sense, Jefferson was groomed from the time he was young to take over the farm. Jefferson says he does not remember ever *not* thinking about eventually owning the farm. He was always involved in what was going on and felt like the place was his.

I always, ya know, I always had opinions about the way things should be done... it didn't necessarily feel like I was working on my parents' farm. Ya know,

because I had opinions and they let me figure stuff out. While we were growing up even. It felt like my farm... There wasn't really a time that where it's like ok guys, I'm here to stay. It just, the longer I was here, the more clear it was that I wasn't going anywhere [laughs]. Um, yeah I don't, nothing changed. I think it was just really gradual kind of evolution, sort of in that direction. (Jefferson)

This kind of relationship between Jefferson and his parents allowed for a very gradual transfer of management. Jake, in particular, seemed to let go of his duties very easily. As Jefferson said, "he just kind of checked out of a bunch of stuff, he didn't have to worry about it anymore." Many more of the duties fell on Jefferson's shoulders once he became the official farm operator. They were expanding the farm at this point, so there were always additional tasks which needed to be done ever more efficiently. Jill remembered that the transition of operations was more stressful than anyone had anticipated, though it worked out very well. Upon reflection in the interview, she said "I mean I'm sure... even though it's not as seamless as it kinda sounds, I can't imagine it having it be better than that" (Jill). Jill remained in her same role, doing bookkeeping and other tasks. Jefferson, Jake and their long-time employee then had to figure out how all three of them would share and split up the duties. Jefferson said that it took a few years to really figure out the division of labor.

During the first years Jefferson came back to the farm, he found winter work as a high school basketball coach, and then working for an accounting firm during the tax season from 2003-2012. This experiential training in finances gave him the skills to start doing the financial management and writing the budget for the farm, which Jill had been doing. Jefferson said he "just kept taking things on." Jake said that, for example, "[Jefferson] had been going to [CSA] core group meetings all the time, and in 2010, I just stopped leading the core group meetings, and he started [laughs]" and that this "was just a natural thing that happened."

In the winter of 2017, Jill had a stroke from which she is now recovered, and Jake had surgery on his shoulder. Jefferson reflected during the interview how both his parents were able to take a further step back from the farm after these incidents. By this point, there were no serious detrimental effects to the farm since the transfer of roles and duties had been so gradual and complete.

RQ2: What were the goals and vision of each individual involved, and how did they reconcile these amongst each other?

This research question is nearly impossible to separate from the first (Table 3). A common theme amongst cases was a relationship between the two parties before the actual transfer. In every case, the shared commitment to the farm and to each other is what compelled the parties to keep moving forward through the difficulties of the negotiations. In every case, both parties were driven to create a win-win situation grounded in mutual trust and respect. In every case, the individuals within each party shared common goals, which coincided well amongst parties. These transfers were facilitated by excellent communication within and amongst parties, as well. Timing was also a theme that came up in every case. These farm transfers happened at just the right time for there to be a gentle, gradual shift in ownership from one generation to the next.

Table 3 <i>RQ 2 Summary</i>			
Variable	Farm #1	Farm #2	Farm #3
Elements of relationship / Soft skills	Shared goals, vision, values. Good communication. Mutual trust and respect. Period of cohabitation.	Shared goals, vision, values. Good communication. Mutual trust and respect. Prior 20+ year relationship as friends/neighbors. Significant shared experience.	Shared goals, vision, values. Good communication. Mutual trust and respect. Positive familial relationship.
Timing	Retiree willing/ready. Gradual transfer (8 months).	Retirees willing/ready. Gradual transfer (1.5 years).	Retirees willing/ready. Gradual transfer (10 years).

Evelyn, James, Daniel and Leah all fell in love with Farm #1 during their very first visit. In their first conversation with Louise, it became clear that their values aligned, and that they would be committed to ensuring a win-win situation. They did a “handshake to move forward” (Evelyn) the first night they met to talk about buying the

farm. They all said that having the legal documents in place was secondary to their relationship and their mutual commitment.

The commitment was through the handshake for sure... the paperwork was just like ok, these are the steps you have to follow to make it all legitimate in the eyes of the government, or whatever. (James)

In this case, the relationship was built on shared values and a shared vision for the future of the farm, which they discussed in their initial meetings. Louise said she would not have sold the farm to just anybody. Louise had been approached by several other people offering her more money, and turned them all down. James and Evelyn came along at just the right time, when Louise was ready. Louise said, “It was just really nice to pass it on to someone who’s making improvement and changes, changes that need to be made. I was kinda out of changes [laughs] for a while.” Being a “steward to the land” is a value strongly held by Louise, and passing it on to someone who would also be a steward was very important to her. Being able to live on the farm during the negotiation period, was in retrospect sort of a trial period, though they never called it that at the time. Over these eight months, Louise became assured that the farm would continue in line with the values she held. They were able to regularly check in with each other, which both facilitated communication and made it “more intense too” (Louise). Evelyn and James felt they “received [Louise’s] blessing” during this time (James). Louise already knew Evelyn, but came to know James and Evelyn’s parents, and they all built up mutual trust and respect. James, Evelyn, Daniel and Leah are certain that it would not have worked out had they not spent that time building a trusting relationship with Louise and demonstrating to her that they would indeed care for the farm.

These months of cohabitation also helped to instill a sense of ownership of the farm in Evelyn and James that made them “want it even more” (James), and made Louise “want [them] to have it more.” Evelyn reflected on living with Louise while going through the transfer negotiations and sale, saying she was a mentor and role model to them not only about caring for the farm but about how to transfer the farm. Being on the land during the transition and through the negotiations was very helpful to Louise, as it helped her process, grieve, and begin to move on.

I can't imagine just leaving, somebody just leaving their farm and never going back... Well, I couldn't have done it if it weren't for [Evelyn and James]. I really couldn't... Yeah, I think the hardest thing and probably for you guys, too [addressing Evelyn and James], it's really turning a new chapter, it's a new chapter for me, it's a new chapter for you... I think to stay connected, and to start a new chapter at the same time. That was the trick, kind of the Buddhist trick to the whole thing... I don't know, it was hard... I was a little distant because I was grieving, and I didn't really know how to do it and still hold on. So I was walking two roads, letting go and holding on. And wanting to show [Evelyn and James] everything about the farm but also walking away. (Louise)

Louise was clear from the beginning that she wanted to maintain a relationship with the farm. In turn, it was important to James and Evelyn that they have a good relationship with Louise throughout the negotiation and into the future. Louise said that their relationship is "still evolving." He and Evelyn feel that they received an enormous "gift" from Louise, and Louise feels that it was mutual.

If you want to keep that positive good relationship you have to have like a mindset of like honoring the person that sells you this land because it's truly a gift. We gave you some numbers [addressing Louise], but that's just numbers, you know, like we just did it to make it go through but truly I feel like it's a gift, like you gave us this farm, you gave us your blessings. (James)

And you're a gift to me... Yes, it's a dream come true for me, too. (Louise)

Since four people purchased the farm from Louise, they also had to work out amongst themselves the details of sharing the farm. Daniel, Laney, Evelyn and James all get along quite well, and are always talking about their ideas and plans for the farm. Before James and Evelyn started their relationship, Evelyn and her parents had a shared dream of buying property together. The three of them took the Farm Beginnings training program together. While Laney grew up on a hobby farm, taking this class was their introduction to farming in the way that James and Evelyn wanted to do it. It was easy for Evelyn to envision living near or with her parents, but this is something with which James had to come to terms. He said he now really appreciates Evelyn's parents being

with them on the farm. The four are happy to be sharing the finances of the purchase, and the labor and time it takes to run a farm.

Similarly, both buyer and seller of Farm #2 were committed to making this a win-win situation. Don and Dina have been adamant that this was not a farm transfer, since they knew that they would not sell their whole farm. Sam and Ruth knew that Don and Dina want to see the operation continue on. As Ruth said, the important part was that “they gave us their blessing.” While it was of course important that the finances work out for both parties, this was secondary to the transfer of management in a timely manner, and to their continuing relationship. Ruth and Sam reflected on the different elements of this transfer in the following exchange:

There’s the monetary transaction, there’s the knowledge transaction, and then there’s this - I don’t even know what to call it, there’s another piece of this that’s a transactional thing. (Sam)

Remembering that this has been [Don’s] life. He’s looking for a transfer, even if he’s not calling it that. He’s looking for one that allows him to be as involved as he wants to be. (Ruth)

And that’s the no name to this part... But that’s the part of this that’s actually the most important part of this. Because everybody needs to feel, that they have worth and that their life’s work is worthy and it’s not just gonna be, oh now it’s just gone to the universe. That’s the whole most important transitional element in my mind, and that’s it exactly. (Sam)

Sam and Ruth made clear that this entire transaction is working because they have known Don and Dina for so long. Not only are they friends, neighbors, and fellow farmers, but they also were all involved in successfully fighting an oil pipeline from traversing their county. Sam and Ruth said that having this “shared experience” of battling with an oil company is what has allowed them to enter into this new kind of relationship, as mentors and mentees. Sam said about Don, “So I know what motivates him, I know what really bugs him... first hand.” Sam and Ruth described how he and Don have been able to communicate honestly with each other through this transaction, as a result of their long relationship.

The only reason, this sounds kinda fatalistic, the only reason I think it works between him and me is because I've known him for like 21 years. So I know how he thinks. I know how he does things. Um and then the pipeline thing. (Sam) We fought a pipeline together... We were always kinda playing on the same team so it was, we always knew each other, but it's not like we were friends until the pipeline... When we fought the pipeline that kinda cemented us into the type of relationship where they could have this conversation where he's gonna help and he's gonna learn and we didn't need anything further than that. I think it would be a lot harder if you're talking about people who have never met each other and don't have a shared experience. (Ruth)

Don and Dina did not say this outright, but Ruth and Sam said it has been important that Don and Dina are able to transfer out of their duties very gradually. Ruth explained that they watched their parents experience an abrupt transition into their retirement, and are glad that it does not have to be this way for Don and Dina. At this point, they are happy and grateful that Don still wants to work for them. They expect that at some point Don will not want to do it anymore, and then Sam or someone else can take over those duties. Sam talked about how he was happy to see Don working on his sawmill, cutting lumber and making artistic statues as a new pastime.

So for us, it's like, well, we don't need it to be abrupt for them, for [Don and Dina]. So they are doing less, and I think the ideal here is that they'll keep doing less and less and less and less. So right now, [Don] doesn't want anyone else driving his equipment. That's good, that's cool, fine... he still wants to be doing that. Well, great, but in three years he might be ready to say, ok you're good, you're driving that one, maybe, *maybe* the transition of equipment will happen at that point... But [he's] not faced with you're a farmer you're a farmer you're a farmer, boom. Now I don't have anything to do with this, I don't have any equipment. He still has equipment, he still has equipment that he uses. He can still, if he wants to do, can go tinker with that, sometimes he has to, otherwise why would he have to get up in the morning? Ya know, you still need that, need some reason you have to get up in the morning. (Ruth)

Sam hopes that Don will let him use his equipment eventually, but as of right now, they have not talked about it. Don agreed to allow Sam to use some weeding spades, but warned, “as long as you don’t leave em in the rain” (Sam). Sam and Ruth are cognizant that this is “quite a transition for them,” (Ruth), for Don and Dina, and want to make sure that the transition happens gradually. Sam talked in the interview about his hope to store some equipment in Don’s machine shed, though he has not yet broached this subject with Don. Sam said they will approach things “a little bit at a time, 'cause he’s used to things a certain way.”

Don said, “that pride, the pride that we have in the place” played a role in their decisions. In the interview, Don mentioned several times “the pride of authorship” that comes with being self-employed and a farmer. This was one of the reasons that he was not willing to turn over his turnkey operation to someone new, and why they are so invested in seeing Ruth and Sam succeed. They recognize that as they age they might not be able to stay on the farm forever. It was very important to Don and Dina that they be able to stay on the farm and to enjoy where they live without the stress of farming. Don said they want “to maintain the integrity of the property, to feed the soil, to have it be better when we leave it than when we got it.” Don and Dina both have activities that they are looking forward to doing with their new free time. Dina said she wants to install more pollinator habitat on the farm, and also spend more time volunteering. Don said they might actually build the new house they have thought about for years. At the time of the interview, retirement was still very new to them, and they were expecting things to change for the better.

Jake and Jill started Farm #3 with strong principles and a fierce willpower. They worked for almost twenty years without taking any pay from the farm and working off-farm jobs to make ends meet. John expresses the mentality of an alternative farmer, and the values he holds by saying, “I always thought, if we took good care of the farm, the farm will take good care of us, in the end, and if it had to be somebody other than one of our kids, it was ok.” While they never fully expected one of their kids would take over farm, they hoped that it would be able to continue in some way. Jake, in particular, consciously decided to raise his children very differently from his own upbringing in order to foster a positive relationship. Jill explains how they were always “calibrating

their egos” against each other’s, and that this has resulted in a productive working relationship on the farm.

I wanted to build a relationship with [Jefferson]. That wasn’t a macho thing. I didn’t realize it at the time. But that was probably part of why um, we were able to start farming together on a give and take basis, rather than me being the boss, and tellin’ him what to do all the time. (Jake)

And it was from mutual respect. And [Jake] comes from a very macho western cowboy upbringing. That isn’t the way a guy behaves. Ya knock that kid down. And they got to prove themselves, and ya know ends up being real competitive, and somebody's got to lose, 'cause someone else is gonna win. And I didn’t really know that about [Jake], but it was a conscious effort on his part to realize that psychologically and just go, what is the point of this now? And what’s the ramification gonna be?... And so it was just kind of calibrating their egos, and it’s been a really wonderful dance to see. Because they, they can disagree really strongly. And neither of them ever walks away mad. I mean they disagree better than [Jake] and I do [laughs]. It really is that strong foundation, I can’t say enough about that. (Jill)

They all talked about how they communicate, and how Jefferson and Jake especially argue in a way that leads to a productive solution. Jake and Jefferson both said they have arguments “all the time,” but never about the actual farm transfer as “all that just sort of, laid itself out and made sense” (Jefferson). Their solid relationship was a precursor to the ease of the whole transfer process, and what allowed them to figure out the financial, legal, managerial components without major conflict.

The fact that both parties were totally committed to the farm was so embedded in their lives that it went unspoken between the two parties. They shared similar values and goals for the farm and these also went unsaid for the most part.

Right, so that part, the commitment piece is huge, 'cause they, they never doubted my commitment to the farm, and I never doubted their, their commitment to keep working and contributing and helping, right. I didn’t feel like I was just gonna be on my own all of a sudden. So that made for a lot more stable footing. (Jefferson)

This also exemplifies how Jake and Jill's relationship with Jefferson is one of collaborators. They all remain engaged in decisions regarding the future the farm. John said, "we have total trust in him," and they always support Jefferson's ideas and his goals for the farm as "he's so good about figuring all the angles." Jake and Jill expressed true appreciation for Jefferson's contribution thus far to the farm having recognized that "[Jefferson] radically invested himself here" (Jill). Similar to the other two farm cases, this mutual trust and respect facilitated the entire transfer. They all had each other's best interests in mind while working out the terms of the sale. While the payments were manageable by Jefferson and supportable by the farm, they all realize that it was more favorable to Jake and Jill than to Jefferson. Overall, they are pleased with how it has worked out.

I was probably looking out for their best interests more than I should have. And also that they were worried about me being able to make it work. Like we were probably each at least as worried about the other person as about the way it was going to work for ourselves, I think. So [that] made it much easier. (Jefferson)

Jefferson recognizes that the gradual nature of this transition has been helpful, for him and for his parents. He said that for his parents to slowly transition out of their roles has been positive "for their own psychology" (Jefferson). The mentorship component was also unspoken during the interview. Jefferson had grown up on the farm and already knew every detail of the operation. He notes that his dad very graciously moved out of the way for him to step up. Jefferson said that in figuring out the division of labor, they all respect what the others contribute and give each other space to do so. He reflected on the very gradual transfer of management "over the course of 18 years," saying "it's all very unusual" and "very fortunate." By the time he bought the farm in 2010, he had already been working closely with his parents for nine years, and their relationship had evolved into one more between equals than between mentor and mentee. Jefferson described his parents' roles now as "consultants."

Jill reflected on the "normal kinda internal emotional things to deal with" while going through the farm transfer. While they were of course pleased to sell the farm to Jefferson, she had to overcome a sort of attachment, a sense of ownership, a sense of

being in control. For Jill, part of it was not being in control of their income anymore, and part of it was the significance of the end of an era.

When you aren't the income generator, it [pause] is a whole different mindset. It becomes very unknown... I can only speak for myself, I guess, about not owning the farm... and I think it really [pause] the foundation of that actually is, I'm not going to be around here forever. This is a terminal decision [laughs], it's the end, of the era of my life, where there's always the next year, there's always the next season, there's always the next big idea ... and so, ya know you just have to deal with that. (Jill)

Jefferson and Amy also had to reconcile their goals and vision around the farm, and living in Jefferson's small hometown. Amy was unavailable for an interview, so only Jefferson's perspective is represented here. While Jefferson was committed to working on the farm, Amy has had various professional jobs off the farm. Jefferson said that first buying the neighboring farmhouse was crucial in that it allowed them their own space and the opportunity to develop their own projects. They started a small film festival in the property's large old barn, which is still in existence. Selling the property to Amy's parents allowed them to continue with the film festival and their other projects. By selling to Amy's parents, they were able stay in their old house while they renovated the farmhouse. Jefferson said he "hated this house growing up," so he was happy to "tear it all apart and do it my way [laughs]," which was an important piece of taking ownership of the farm.

[Amy] and I buying that place was what allowed, that sort of gave her a foothold, like her own thing. If we were just gonna buy the farm, like no way, that would never, *never* would have happened. Because this is just too much of my thing. And the idea of, moving to [this small town], and totally on someone else's turf, that was like... that would not be ok [laughs]. And so us having that place, we were able to kinda start our own thing, down there that was that was [pause] us. And it wasn't [Amy] kinda tacked onto the farm, or trying to carve out a role in an already existing thing. So the idea of giving that up, was, that was a difficult thought. But being able to somehow keep that, the film festival and that whole thing was really important for us, to be able to be here. (Jefferson)

RQ3: What were the challenges and opportunities of a small and/or alternative farm going through the transfer, and how were they managed?

In all of these cases, it seems there were more opportunities than challenges presented by their situations (Table 4). These alternative farmers are very embedded in their communities, from which each received enormous emotional support. There was a strong theme across cases of social capital as both a transferred intangible asset, and as a resource which helped to facilitate the transfer. This may indeed be a factor in any farm transfer regardless of farm size or location. In these cases, the farmers were very aware of and talked a lot about their social networks. The communities to which the farmers belong were present to their farm transfer, supporting it perhaps most notably by their continued commitment to support the younger farmer.

Table 4			
<i>RQ3 Summary</i>			
Variable	Farm #1	Farm #2	Farm #3
Opportunities	Bank loan. Financial help from family members. Positive support from social networks. Transfer of social capital. Land affordability in WLS region.	No need for third party lender. Positive support from social networks. Transfer of social capital. Land affordability in WLS region.	FSA loan and personal loan. Positive support from social networks. Transfer of social capital. Indirect financial support from CSA members.
Challenges	Bank loan.	Small farm challenges.	Alternative, medium-size farm finances.

Farm #1 felt the constraints of being a small farm, much more than the other two farms. This transfer is unique in that Louise was not operating a farm business at the time, and so this was not part of the transfer. Louise and her late husband designed and built a small, organic homestead, and it will continue as such under the new owners. James, Evelyn, and Louise were quick to point out in the interview that this kind of farm falls into an unnamed grey area as far as funding agencies are concerned. The bank’s appraisal came back with the property designation as a rural residential home instead of a

farm. The buyers deemed the conventional home mortgage as the simplest option, but they would have tried for a farm loan had the home mortgage not been possible. A farm loan would have required years of farm records, which are difficult to procure as a new and beginning farm. They also mentioned that it might not have worked to go through with a farm loan since there were four buyers.

This farm is, there's not even a category for it in our legal system, and our banking system, not even a box you can check, 'small organic farm,' that's not even registered, it's not considered a farm, according to USDA and things like that... We didn't even approach them because we knew that the systems are set up for big, corn-soybean operations. This scenario is very strange to them, and you have to have like, we were able to prove farming income, but it's like peanuts compared to the scenarios they're used to. So when we went to the bank, talked to our banker, she said well, we don't do farm loans, I want to help you do this, I'm willing to make a go forward, but we don't do farm loans. So you have, we're gonna call this a hobby farm, it's not a farm. So we're not enough of a farm to tap into those farm resources, and so yeah we just had to like tell the bank what they wanted to hear. We just bought a residential piece of property in the country. (James)

The farmers in this case recognize that they are in a unique region, and that there is both a benefit and a downside to being in a region characterized by alternative agriculture. On one hand, the systems and institutions in place to help farmers have fewer resources. On the other hand, there may be more resources to go around, and land prices are more affordable compared to conventional agricultural regions.

Social capital was relied on as a resource to facilitate the process, and was also an intangible asset that was passed down from the older to younger generation. Evelyn talked about the relationships with neighbors, service providers, and repairmen that Louise maintained over her tenure at the farm, and how she and James plan on building on these. James, Evelyn, Dave and Leah said they have felt enormous support from their friends, family and wider community in the farming pursuits. Many of James' CSA members returned, and were happy to watch him grow the business. The four of them held a farm warming party, and they felt supported by all the people that came to

celebrate with them. They want the farm to continue to be a place of community-building, as Louise did so well during her time on the farm.

Neither party of Farm #2 brought up significant challenges they faced while going through the transfer thus far. They did note several challenges that relate to small farms in general and the significance of the retiring couple sharing their solutions to these issues. Similar to Farm #1, social capital played a role as a resource and as transferred intangible asset. One issue is the labor-intensity of small and alternative farms and finding this seasonal labor in a very timely manner. Don and Dina were able to share their social resources such as how to find employees to share the work, who to call for last minute extra help, and who to ask to fix equipment. Many of the people that have worked for Don and Dina over the years are part of the Ruth and Sam's communities, too. Ruth and Sam know that there are a dozen people they could call for extra help, and they would "have people there in a flash" (Ruth).

Similar to Farm #1, both parties have felt overwhelming support from the wider community about the transition. Ruth and Sam said they now get stopped on the street by people who are happy they will be continuing the operation. Ruth said these interactions are "a little intimidating," and Sam agreed, saying it is "a little scary and fun at the same time." Ruth and Sam both said how these constant reminders of community support are helping them to stick with it and stay motivated with this new endeavor.

In Don and Dina's experience, retiring has been much more emotional than they anticipated. They shared a cathartic exchange during the interview as they talked about the support from their community. They shared stories of the kind of responses they have received from their long-time customers and employees, and said it has been a very bittersweet process.

Started out the card, with mixed emotions [tearing up]. You're gonna die someday. The farm, [pause] we cannot do this for another fifty years. So do you do it five more? People came and said we'll pay you twice as much. That's not why we got it into. And that's not why we're getting out of it. It's a contributing factor, yes, is it a determining factor, no. (Don)

I mean, customers, employees, they were all understanding. (Dina)

It was like getting eulogized while you're still alive. It was a very humbling [pause] experience. People you know, that we've seen, they'd come with their three kids, and going yeah, I used to be that age pickin' with mom, and how can you... [tearing up]. (Don)

Yeah, it's pretty amazing. (Dina)

So we didn't get into it thinking that that was going to be, um, a part of it. But you just all of a sudden get customers that yeah, they've watched us grow, we've watched their kids, their families grow, its uh, that part of it's really good. (Don)

Yeah, to do something that people really enjoy and appreciate. Not everyone can work in jobs like that. So yeah. (Dina)

Again, Farm #3 was the anomaly amongst these three cases as it is a medium-size farm and in that the farm business transferred totally uninterrupted. Both parties of Farm #3 recognize that their farm is a very specialized enterprise. They said they could not sell it piecemeal and probably could not sell it at all to someone else, because a new person would not be able to make enough money for the farm to pay for itself. As Jill said, "it was such a specialized thing," and this would make it difficult to split up. Jefferson elaborated on this, highlighting the difficulties of being an alternative farm, and in an area where land values are low compared to agricultural regions.

That's the whole thing you have to think about when you build a farm. The money you put into it you're not gonna get out of it again. It has to pay for, the investments you make have to pay for themselves. Um because with the exception of buying land and in a place where land values are high, you can't, you know sell it... *Here?* It wouldn't make any difference, 'cause farming's not profitable enough... it just isn't profitable enough to make that investment worthwhile. (Jefferson)

Jefferson was able to provide the required documents and records in order to obtain a favorable agricultural loan, since he had long been involved in the continuing farm business. While their farm income was what allowed Jefferson to purchase the farm from his parents, it also has disqualified them for certain tax breaks or other programs designed to assist farmers. Since the farm has to make payments on the two loans, his income is actually less than what it appears to be.

Because part of what kinda drove the purchase price and all that was what they needed to retire on. And so it just kinda back-figured from what they need to live on for a year, to what that sale price should look like, and interest rates were super low. And so that meant that asset values were high, basically... Yeah so that's the kinda the problem is that land isn't appreciable. So I don't get to write any cost of buying the land off, except for interest. But interest rates are low, and the land price is high, and so all of a sudden, if I pay thirty thousand dollars a year in loan payments, and only ya know only three of it or four of it is interest, that doesn't matter much. Three thousand I think, then I got twenty-seven thousand dollars in income that I have to have coming in to pay that, to make those payments, but it also looks like my income is way higher than it is... Ya know I was taking thirty thousand dollars from the farm as salary, but then there's another twenty-seven plus [Amy's] income, like then all of a sudden, you don't qualify for all sorts of things that would normally [help] a farm family. (Jefferson)

Leading up to the sale, Jake, Jill, and Jefferson discussed their ideas with their family and their CSA members. The farm has always had a core group of CSA members, similar to a steering committee, and so they shared their ideas and plans with them "early on and through the process" of the transfer (Jill). Similar to the other two cases, there was a transfer of social capital between parties in this case. Jefferson recognizes that the relationships that his parents had built over the years has helped him to succeed. As Jefferson stated, "Ya know, my parents had such good will among members and that community, that they were able to translate that pretty well to me too, I think." Their members were very supportive of the change, and pleased that the farm would be able to continue. Since many of them had been farm members for so long, Jill says they felt "proud" of the transfer. Notably, their CSA members all agreed to an increase in the share price in order to account for the addition of Jefferson and his family, and the mortgage payments.

And, I have to say, long time people were really, felt really secure that we were still going to be actively involved. That it was part of our sale agreement that we would stay on in our similar capacities for five years. That was very important to people who had been with us for a while. That continuity and that [Jefferson] had

us as resource people. He wasn't just launching on his own with all of it. Even though he really was! [laughs] Once your name is on it, it's a pretty big change. But, and a lot of people just were thrilled 'cause of course they were getting, ya know people who had been with us from the beginning... that the farm could have that continuity, I would say that they were really proud of that. (Jill)

When we kinda figured out what we wanted to do, we talked to, my parents talked to my brothers and [our long-time employee] about it just to feel them out and see what they thought about that before we actually decided to go forward with it.

But when we thought we had a plan, that's what they did, and it seemed fine to everybody, I think. Um so, that was about it... Then we have a core group for the CSA, and we talked through our ideas with them, and at that point, I was already saying as much at the core group meetings as my dad was, and so it all just seemed natural, and he was gonna keep working anyway... pretty much in his same role, just at a reduced level. [They were] very supportive yup, and we had to raise the share price, because all of a sudden we had mortgage payments to account for, which we never did before. (Jefferson)

The three of them won the award of Farmers of the Year in 2010 from the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), the same year the sale went through. They said this helped further to legitimize Jefferson as the new owner, and also reflected their continuing partnership in running the farm. They were able to share this with their members, and felt that it helped to recognize their accomplishments.

RQ4: What resources have they relied on for guidance and assistance in the transition, and what resources may be lacking?

These three cases were similar in that they used a variety of resources and all relied on their social networks for information, guidance, emotional support, and/or financial assistance (Table 5). They referred to transfer-specific resources, but all mentioned that these were mostly irrelevant to their specific situations as small and/or alternative farms. In the cases of Farms 1 and 2, they found these resources unhelpful because their own transfers were between unrelated parties. The help of an attorney was crucial to the transfer of Farm #1, helpful to Farm #3, and not mentioned at all by either

party of Farm #2. The farmers of Farms 2 and 3 had significant knowledge and past experiences which greatly helped them through the transfer process.

Table 5 <i>RQ4 Summary</i>			
Variable	Farm #1	Farm #2	Farm #3
Resources used	Lawyer; social networks; transfer resources.	Personal knowledge and expertise; social networks; transfer resources.	Personal knowledge and expertise; social networks; lawyer; transfer resources.
Resources lacking	Specific to small/alternative farms; unrelated parties.	Specific to small/alternative farms; unrelated parties.	Specific to small/alternative farms.

The lawyer was critical to the transfer of Farm #1, in that she guided both parties through the legal and financial details of the sale, as well as some of the difficult emotional parts. The lawyer was formally representing Louise, who covered this expense. As James and Evelyn did not already have their own lawyer, Louise’s lawyer told them that she would also work for them. She said she would keep all of their best interests in mind, and facilitate a deal that worked well for both parties.

Evelyn and James took a first-time homebuyers’ class through a local non-profit organization prior to connecting with Louise. They said it was helpful, but only somewhat relevant to their situation. Evelyn and her parents had taken the Farm Beginnings training program prior to the transfer, and she has also taken the subsequent Journeyman class. The Journeyman class, through the Land Stewardship project, had a matched savings component that helped with the down payment for the farm. Evelyn, James and Louise all reviewed the transfer resources that the Land Stewardship Project provides online, as well as information from Farm Commons, a regional law firm specializing in small and alternative farm businesses. They said these resources were helpful to peruse, but that they still had to work hard to figure out what would work for their specific situation. They all relied on friends and family as informal advisors to guide them through the negotiations. Louise listed off the many people she talked to throughout the process, demonstrating how they relied on their social capital to help them

through the process. They drew on the collective financial resources between all four of the buyers, and James' parents, as well, in order to make the purchase. They said they would not be able to do this without the material and emotional support they have received from their communities.

The retiring farmers of Farm #2 used a few important resources to help them through this process. When they first started thinking about retiring, they had a family friend who also works for the Women Food & Ag Network (WFAN) come over and walk them through a questionnaire. Don said they "were all sorta on the same page," but it was helpful to have it more clearly defined and to talk about it explicitly with each other. They were happy to do this with their daughter there, and to realize that as a couple and as a family, they are in agreement about their goals. Don and Dina also attended a seminar on farm transitions at the University of Minnesota. They said it was mostly irrelevant to their situation, but "it was a start" (Dina). This seminar was designed for very large farming operations and focused on tax implications.

Well, yeah, but that was basically about that guy in South Dakota who owns a hundred thousand acres of ground, and how can I transfer that to the kids without having it be such a tax burden. Basically that was geared to an estate that was millions of dollars larger than ours, so we came home and said, ok we do need to make out a will, 'cause we don't have a will, but we, we [don't] need to get real creative and try to move around a fifty million dollar estate here. (Don)

They have looked at various pamphlets and other written information from farming conferences and organization. Dina said these are somewhat helpful, even though most of these were not applicable to their situation. Dina said they are aware that the Land Stewardship Project has materials on farm transfer, but they have not looked at them. Don and Dina said their two adult children were very helpful through this process. Their daughter encouraged them to move forward and be definitive. Their son, who has a "math brain like his father" (Dina), acted as their financial consultant. While Don and Dina have a good handle on their finances, they appreciated having this third set of eyes look things over, and to reaffirm they had things in order.

For Sam and Ruth, they recognize that this situation is very atypical as it is between unrelated parties. Sam said that there are many more resources available that

clearly delineate how to transfer assets within a family, but that these are “useless” if you are not related. Sam and Ruth have significant past experiences that have prepared them to receive a farm transfer and start up a new small business. Neither of them grew up on a farm, so they are entirely self-taught and are good at teaching themselves what they need to know. As Ruth said, they bought their home place “from the man who had farmed it” so they are “not unfamiliar with doing it in this way.” In addition, before they bought their farm, they bought and sold a number of houses in the city. Sam would often do his own legal work because he could not afford lawyers.

I think it’s important to know that we’ve actually been looking at farm transfer things for a long time ‘cause we have a farm here. So we’ve been researching this for ten years. So we’ve got a lot of that already in our heads. And [Sam’s] second favorite thing to do is buy and sell properties. So a contract for deed is pretty much like eating breakfast for him... I guess we didn’t have to search any of that, because it’s kinda what we live. (Ruth)

Sam said that did not have to search for many resources this time around, because he had already done that with previous sales. In addition, they have been involved with the county Extension office, as well as the Sustainable Farming Association. They have talked casually with friends and neighbors who have been through a farm transfer. In addition, they bought a small homemade soap business several years ago. The past owner worked with them over a couple of months to teach them all of the soapmaking process and all of the recipes. They also passed on the retail customers and clientele, and has remained available to answer their questions. They said this was a very similar, yet simplified version of what they were going through with Don and Dina. As Ruth said, they have learned that the important part of these transactions is, “if you can catch them when they are still able to teach you how to do it.”

Farm #3 is similar to Farm #2 in that both parties had significant knowledge and experience that was useful to the transaction. Jill gathered information from a variety of places during a period when they were actively thinking about how to proceed with the transfer. For example, Jill found examples while visiting their son in Ohio who has ties with various farmers. She attended workshops and lectures on farm transfer whenever they were offered at various farming conferences, which is where she learned of the FSA

loans. She gathered information from neighbors and friends that had been through similar situations. Jill also used the online retirement calculators to help her define how much money they would need for the future. She found these somewhat helpful, although the calculators are designed around situations very different from that their own. Jill said, “Yeah, I had a pretty thick folder [laughs] of stuff I would pick up and read, and contact people... The brochures are good, are nice, but there really wasn’t that much substance there.” She said that because each situation is so “particularized,” it was difficult to find information relevant to their situation (Jill).

Jill and Jake gratefully recognized that Jefferson had a number of valuable experiences that helped them work out the deal. While he worked for the Land Stewardship Program’s Farm Beginnings program just out of college, he was able to meet several beginning and retiring farmers and other LSP affiliates. In addition, Jefferson’s employment as a CPA equipped him with skills that not only aided the farm business but the transfer, as well. Jill says that Jefferson “brought those two backgrounds into this,” and that these off-the-farm jobs gave him “a broader picture” of what was happening with other farmers. In this case, the lawyer was helpful in that he offered advice that steered them away from giving joint ownership to their three sons and employee. He also expressed the importance of gradually transferring assets and managerial control to the subsequent generation, since he had seen many farm transfers go awry for these reasons.

Other Notable Themes

Several other themes emerged from the inductive analysis of the interview data. These themes relate to the research questions but are noteworthy on their own because they were not found in the review of the literature and they help to explain the success of these farm transfers. These themes are presented in the following order: the younger generations planning for the subsequent farm transfer; participants’ awareness and critique of issues within the food system; retiring farmers sharing farm history; and how the interview process for this study provided a space for collective reflection. These are brief examples of what came up in the interviews.

Subsequent farm transfer planning. In each of the interviews that included the younger generations, they all talked about their thoughts and plans for when they are on

the other side of the farm transfer. For Evelyn and James (Farm #1), they were moved by seeing Louise go through this process “very gracefully” (Evelyn). Louise acted as a mentor to them not only about farm management, but also farm transfer. As Evelyn and James are new to the farm still, and relatively young with no children, the time for them to pass on the farm is far away. However, James said the next farm transfer is “something that we are going to be thinking about our entire careers now and be prepared for.” James said watching Louise process the transfer inspired him to think, “we’re not going to be here forever, this isn’t even our farm, we’re just temporary, we’re just here to take care of it.”

Ruth and Sam (Farm #2) have a different perspective as they are only about a decade younger than Don and Dina, and have adult and teenaged children. They have already transferred some of their farm enterprises over to their kids. For example, their son and daughter run the egg, broiler, and milk operations. Handing over these duties is what has allowed Sam to have the time to invest into the strawberry operation. Ruth and Sam know that they are “not getting any younger,” and will “be on both ends of this transfer in a decade, or two decades” (Ruth). They hope to find someone else during this time to whom they can transfer the operation. Part of Ruth and Sam’s “mission” is to preserve the knowledge and experience that Don and Dina are handing down to them so that they can, in turn, pass it down to the subsequent generation. They say they are not committing any of their children, but Ruth said they are “grooming... the ones that seem interested.”

Jefferson (Farm #3) recognizes that his parents have acted in the ideal way for their transfer to work out so well. He was able to take ownership, figuratively and then legally, at a relatively young age, and his parents allowed him the space to do so. Jefferson says this is a good lesson for him, but he wonders if he will be able to that when it is his turn. He said, “that’s not really, that’s not how my brain is wired [laughs], it’s gonna be hard.” His and Amy’s children are still toddlers, so he said it is too early to tell if they will want the farm. He went on to explain the conundrum that he will be faced with as a medium-size alternative farm in our current food system. He needed to expand their operation considerably in order to support two families, but sees that this size may then be a detriment to the subsequent owner. The monetary value of the land does not

reflect the real income of an alternative farmer, and the cost of food does not reflect the real cost of producing it.

When a farm gets to a certain size, who's gonna buy it? Unless you have a family member who you can give it, who's gonna buy it? Ya know when, what young farmer is gonna want to jump into that deep of a hole of debt to pay anywhere close to what it's worth, for an operation that's set up the way someone else wants to do it. Or, ya know, you're used to having two families run it. With a young farmer transitioning in, can it transition then back down to one family running it? I mean that's not an easy thing to do, um, so I don't know [laughs]... I don't know, I mean it'd be great if one of my kids wanted to take it over, and they bought it from us. But I don't know how that would happen... I don't like the idea of just giving it to them, just so they can keep farming it. It sets up a whole different dynamic and relationship to the farm... A part, of my part of my concern is... I think people need to pay more for food. And I think farmers need to ask a higher price, and it sorta feels like once you've been, once you're farm is yours, and it's paid off, or mostly, ya know, you buy it at this price, and then twenty years later your brain still says you paid that price for it, even if it's worth ten times that, or even if it would cost ten times that for a new farmer to buy it, I feel like we need to have things priced, to where a new person coming into this operation could afford to pay the price that it's worth to get started. 'Cause otherwise, it's only gonna be the people whose parents have enough money to just give them, ya know, several hundred thousand dollars that, they're gonna farm. That's stupid. That's not, that's not what I want. So it's not necessarily from, I mean part of it, I don't want to spoil my kids and give this, well that's maybe part of it, and maybe part of it is, well, I had to pay for it, and somebody else should too, but for me really the thing I'm most uncomfortable with is the bigger picture of, I want the price of agricultural goods to reflect the cost of what it takes to produce them. And it's like just like a gas station or a restaurant. Or just any, ya want that stuff to be built in, not just to be kinda a legacy of um, 'we happened to have a farm in the past,' but at the same time, how big can the farm get, and still be practical for someone to do that? (Jefferson)

This predicament is related to the next theme, as well, as farm transfers necessarily take place within the wider food system, and are at the whims of so many external factors.

Awareness of food system issues. Jake and Jill (Farm #3) had much to say about the state of our food system, as they have lived their lives trying to change it. Jake and Jill brought up several times how important creativity is to the alternative farmer. Jake said, “in the process of consolidation and... [the] huge size of farms and stuff, the biggest thing that’s been stolen from farmers is the use of their creativity.” Alternative farmers are able to practice their creative problem-solving daily by having a diverse set of crops, tasks, and management strategies. Jake also brought up the extremely high price of farmland. He has noticed an unwillingness from many farmers to accept a lower price for their land, which is what would make it more feasible for the younger generation. He recounted a conversation with a fellow farmer, who was complaining that his land was too expensive for his nephew to purchase.

And I said, hey ya know, it’s your land! You could lower the price so he could afford it! And the guy didn’t like that very much. And that’s the truth! And in the case of passing on land, to an upcoming farmer, he was talking millions of dollars, and what the hell are you gonna do with a million dollars! Who needs it! Here, the guy was probably close to being as old as me, what would I do with a million bucks?! Crazy idea! Give the kid a chance! (Jake)

Louise (Farm #1) also clearly voiced her opinions about the ills of the food system. She shared about her correspondence with the Wendell Berry, who told her that “the old farm system is dead,” in regards to the industrial food system (Louise). All of them feel strongly that farm transfer is a wider issue within our food and farm system. They would like to see additional, focused support from agencies and institutions for the growing number of small, organic farms.

So many people are doing what we’re doing, it’s kinda silly that they all have to find their own unique kinda alternative to the main common home buying, property buying process. It’s kinda bizarre, that we’re not even a category. (James)

Yeah, that you can’t call it a farm to buy it. (Evelyn)

Yeah, and that you can't go to the farm bureau and get some help, and I mean, come on, everyone eats. It's wrong. (Louise)

Ruth (Farm #2) said that if they "ever had a mission statement, it would be something along the lines of saving the world one farm at a time, because that's where it's all at." Ruth and Sam have been a strong part of their community's local food economy. They will continue to do so, now following in Don and Dina's footsteps. They are all aware that a huge portion of farmland is changing hands in the region. They were eager to both learn how others were proceeding, and to be able to share their story with others. All of the participants in this study recognize that farm transfer is a much larger issue, beyond their own situation. They were glad to participate in order to share what they have learned about going through a successful farm transfer.

Farm genesis stories. All of the retiring farmers in this study have spent their lives rebuilding a more robust local food system, in direct contrast to the conventional system. They have done so in a way that not only allowed them to be successful in their careers, but also inspired the next generation to follow in their footsteps. Each of these retiring farmers have lived their lives according to a noble set of ideals and values. They have worked in all sorts of off-the-farm jobs over the years as they worked endlessly to build their farms. In several instances, the retiring farmers shared their farm genesis story, even though it was not solicited. Each one was eager, perhaps needed, to share their own farm story. The transfer stories shared in this report did not start with the current transfer of ownership, but when the now retiring farmer first purchased the farm however many decades ago.

Louise (Farm #1) shared how she and her late husband built the farm from scratch. They designed all the buildings to be very energy-efficient. They grew food cooperatively with other farmers, selling it and also donating significant amounts. Louise had already shared much of these stories with James and Evelyn, and was eager to tell them anything she had not yet shared and to answer their questions. When she came for the interview, she brought them some old memorabilia and photos from when she was operating the farm.

Don and Dina (Farm #2) recounted how they came into farming. Don grew up on a farm, and then spent a while working in business, and Dina was in the military. Don

said he was driven to work for himself, and looked into every option that existed for self-employment. They spent years without health insurance because they could not afford it, and were able to buy the farm with a loan from his mother. They started growing without any chemical pesticides or fertilizers because of Dina's reading into the subject, and then found that this practice greatly bolstered their market demand.

Jake and Jill (Farm #3) shared the story of how they bought their first and second farms. The first turned out to be poor farmland, so they moved to their second farm a few years later, where they remain today. They were at the forefront of the organic vegetable farm movement, and one of the first CSAs in the region. At the time, there was very little information available on how to do it, and much less interest from consumers. Jake and Jill have been instrumental in building the local food movement in the region. They were pioneers in figuring out how to grow vegetables in this region, as well as in building up the market demand for local food among households and large retail institutions. They have trained dozens of interns on the farm, several of whom are now also farming in the region.

Interview as reflection. The interview process for this study allowed time for the participants to reflect on their experiences, just by nature of answering the questions asked by the researcher. In the cases of Farms 1 and 2, the interviews may very well now be a part of the transfer process, as the interview occurred relatively early in the process. This theme is different than the others in that it does not help to explain these successful transfers, but may aid the younger farmers when it is their turn to hand over the farm. For Farm #1, the sale had already occurred at the time of the interviews, and both parties were living in their new respective homes: Louise in town and the four buyers on the farm. The reflection was especially profound in this case, as the first interview included Louise, James and Evelyn, all together. Louise said at the end of the interview, after a deep sigh, "we re-lived our story!" Louise said that this made her "realize how well we handled it." And then James said, "Thank you, it was kinda fun to revisit it. Realize how fortunate we all are." The second interview was with James and Evelyn again and Daniel and Leah. In this second interview, the four talked a lot about Louise, and how they are "so grateful that [Louise] was willing and able to do all this" (Evelyn). Leah added they

are grateful for the “provision” that, “whatever you want to call it, the universe, God, has provided for us.”

The interviews with the parties of Farm 2 occurred after they had spent a season working together, and before the official signing of the purchase agreement. Both parties in both cases of Farms 1 and 2 reflected on what had happened thus far, and were cognizant that the transfer was still ongoing. Ruth reflected on how and why it has worked so well between Don and Sam:

You guys are real honest with each other, too. No kinda sheen in front of you to make yourselves look better in front of each other. I think you're very good about admitting what you know and don't know, with each other. I think that's key.

(Ruth)

In the case of Farm 3, their transfer sale happened eight years ago, but the transfer of management began ten years before that. Thus, the interviews were less about reflection, and more about trying to remember the details of what actually occurred. They have already been to conferences and other events to share their story of farm transfer. Jill reflected on how the “flavor” of the farm has changed under Jefferson's direction. She explained how she and Jake had always run the CSA, and involved the members to a great extent, and had people on the farm regularly. Jane said “so, ya know, that happens differently now.” She did not imply that Jefferson had made any changes that they do not agree with, but that he does indeed do things differently, and that her and Jake have just decided to be agreeable with it.

Summary of Findings

Each of these farm cases is unique, as is each and every farm transfer. In the cases of Farms 1 and 2, the transfer occurred between unrelated parties, and the official sales occurred just months before the time of writing. Farm #3 is the outlier, as their farm transfer happened between parents and son, and the sale occurred eight years ago. In all of these cases, however, the farm transfer is still ongoing, and the relationships between each of the two parties continues to evolve. In regards to the first research question, each pair was able to come up with a financial and legal agreement that worked for both parties, and that allowed a relatively gradual transfer of management. This question was very much related to the second research question. In every case, a mutual

commitment was established early on, which was a precursor to figuring out the financial and legal details.

The third research question was aimed at their experiences as a small and/or alternative farm going through the farm transfer process. Farms 1 and 2 qualify as small farms, whereas Farm #3 qualifies as a medium-sized farm; all three are alternative farms in that they use organic practices, have diverse crops, and mostly direct-market their products. Both parties in all three cases were very creative in their decisions and solutions to making the transfer successful, which required them to work within the larger system at hand. All three cases found overwhelmingly positive support from their wider communities, in the form of social and emotional support. The buyers of Farm #1 utilized financial support from their families, and Farm #3 had indirect financial support for the transfer from their CSA membership.

This leads into the fourth research question, which asked about the resources they used throughout the transfer process. They all felt that there was a lack of resources available specifically for small and/or alternative farm transfers. All farmers in this study relied heavily on their social networks and their own personal competence to navigate through this difficult process. Both parties involved with Farm #1 had relatively less financial and legal expertise, so they relied more heavily on their lawyer to complete those duties. In Farms 2 and 3, all parties had significant knowledge and past experiences that allowed them to do the bulk of the financial and legal work themselves. In both of these cases, they still hired out for services albeit more briefly. In Chapter 5, I will provide a discussion of all of these findings to “figure out the deeper meaning” of these stories (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012), by relating them to the literature and to my own interpretation based on experience and research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the personal experiences of farm transfer on small and alternative farms in the western Lake Superior region. The research questions addressed the financial, legal and managerial terms of transfer, the social and emotional aspects within and between parties, the idiosyncrasies of this process as a small

and/or alternative farm in this region, and the resources that the farmers used. Each case is unique yet they are similar in the aspects that made them successful.

These three cases are exemplary success stories of farm transfer. The farmers involved are all exceptional people who are smart, resourceful, and have strong social networks. They have built their farms and their communities in conscious opposition to the conventional food system. They are prime examples of the social, ecological, and economic benefits a diverse, organic farm can bring to their community: jobs; learning experiences; close relationships; increased agricultural literacy amongst their community; and a local economic boost that is environmentally sound and socially just. They are all working hard to re-embed the farm and food production back into the community setting (Lyson, 2004).

The farmers in this study, both retiring and beginning, have created livelihoods for themselves as agents of civic agriculture. They have found a way to be “economically profitable” while working to “preserve and enhance environmental quality” and “nurturing local community development” (Lyson, 2004, p.79). Located in the rural-urban interface, these farmers are helping to create and solidify “alliances between urban residents and local farms” (Jackson-Smith & Sharp, 2008). They are actively working to improve our food system. They know the alternative agricultural history of the region (Hanson, 2016) and take inspiration from this. They are aware of just how much farmland in the region will change hands over the next decade and want to see it remain as farmland. They actively encourage fellow and younger farmers as they recognize that all will benefit from an increased agricultural population. They have come up with creative solutions for their businesses to thrive despite the challenges of farming in the western Lake Superior region (Stark et al., 2011).

Farm transfer is closely linked to these broader issues of ecological integrity and sustainable economic development. As demonstrated in these three cases, the extended interaction between generations allowed the knowledge, skills, and ethics of business and land management to carry through time while remaining in the community (Baker, n.d.). As organic and alternative farmers, these producers have creatively adapted their management practices to best suit their land, their business, and their personal preferences. These creative solutions were passed down so that the younger farmer does

not have to reinvent them but can adapt accordingly. In this way, the parties involved have preserved the knowledge that will contribute to a more sustainable regional food supply (Ackerman-Leist, 2013). The retiring farmers found a way to preserve their legacy while letting someone else take the reins.

In regards to the first research question about the financial, legal and managerial terms, it was clear in all three cases that the financial terms were secondary to the relationship and shared commitment. Once the commitment was established, it seems it was fairly straightforward to arrive at terms that were favorable to both parties. It is possible that these retrospective accounts sounded different than they would have during the negotiations. These are success stories because they were able to achieve the “secure exit” for the retirees and a solid starting point for the new farmers that Ruhf (2016, p.23) describes as so crucial. They were able to do so at the right time when all parties were ready for a shift of roles. Instead of feeling restricted by a lack of resources, the farmers found creative solutions outside the traditional farm transfer paradigm.

The transfer of management was relatively gradual in every case which was important for both generations. In all cases, this time period included an important mentorship between the retiring and younger farmers. The retiring farmers were ready and able to ease out of their roles and let go of control at their own pace. This is a profound distinction compared to the literature, as this is the reason why many farms do not transfer to the next generation (Kirkpatrick, 2012). This made space for their successors to gradually take control as their sense of ownership grew (Potter & Loble, 1996a; Hachfeld et al., 2013). The children of the retiring farmers of Farms #1 and #2 did not want to take over the farm, as is often the case in farm families (Stark et al., 2011) and that allowed another party the opportunity. This demonstrates the importance of sometimes selling outside the family (Ruhf & Jaffe, 2012). In this region, there exists a thriving community of first-generation young farmers who are eager to buy land in the region (LSP, 2018), yet are struggling to find the resources and the willing retiring landowners to do so (Shute, 2011).

The second research question, which addressed the social and emotional issues, is truly inextricable from the first as one cannot be explained without the other. All parties demonstrated copious empathy towards their counterpart out of goodwill and because

they understood that their goals were mutually dependent. They all demonstrated the necessary mutual respect and support that Jooisse and Grubbström (2016) described. The retiring farmers each passed down a worthwhile “farm legacy,” which included a combination of tangible and intangible assets (Jooisse and Grubbström, 2016, p.200) that gave the new farmers a head-start. In every case, the retiring farmer was able to be as involved as they wanted to be, for the amount of time that they wanted. The retiring farmers allowed their successor the time and space to make decisions and to take ownership figuratively and then also legally (Kirkpatrick, 2012; Conway et al., 2015). There was a ‘trial period’ in every case, relative to each situation, and never actually called that by the participants. This trial period established the relationship between the two parties, before any deal was made (Goeller, 2012).

The transfer stories of Farms #1 and #2 are especially notable because they are between unrelated parties. In these cases, the younger farmers were still able to ‘inherit’ the legacy of the retiring farmer and can decide how to adapt within their situation (Jooisse and Grubbström, 2016). In a sense, these younger farmers are free from the sentiments documented in many family farm transfers that are overshadowed by family politics and pressures (Lobley & Baker, 2012; Opheim, 2016). The retiring farmers and importantly their children, also, decided that keeping the farm agriculturally productive was more important than just keeping it in the family. Since the farmers and their children were able to relinquish control, they sold it to an “owner-operator” who would own it and farm it themselves (Bigelow, et al., 2016).

It appears that all parties were able to communicate extremely well with their counterpart. This excellent communication is no small piece, and probably has a lot to do with the success of each of these cases (Taylor & Norris, 2000; Pitts et al., 2009; Baker, 2012). All parties were able to be open, honest and clear about their needs and desires. These are, however, retrospective accounts which may differ from how it actually happened or was felt by the individuals at the time. All parties were clear about their values and goals, whether this was explicitly said or implicitly understood. In some instances, such as in Farm #3, there were things left unsaid and left out of the interview because they were just understood by both parties. This demonstrates that these soft

issues are completely intertwined with the financial and legal terms and need to be addressed as such.

The third research question addressed the opportunities and challenges around farm transfer for a small and/or alternative farm. The farmers in this study used their size, production strategy and assets to their advantage. The smaller scale of these operations, organic practices, and embeddedness in a strong community are the characteristics that made them attractive to the younger farmers in the first place, and what the younger farmers believe will foster their success. These farmers used their social networks in various ways to facilitate the transfer. This may happen on any size of farm, though it seems especially feasible and more important on smaller alternative farms. The farmers in this study are well-connected to their clientele and wider community, as they primarily direct-market their products. Thus, their business success is directly related to the needs of their community and the community's ability and desire to support the farm. The great amount of emotional support every farmer received from their community is no small factor as this encouraged them through the difficulties of the transfer. Importantly, the CSA membership of Farm #3 financially supported the transfer by agreeing to an increase in the share price in order to support the two families on the farm. Their members are thus demonstrating the agency of "active food citizens" (Lyson, 2004, p.77).

These cases demonstrate the importance of social capital to the small/alternative farm enterprise and to the success of the transfer. The younger farmers in this study had access to credit and capital either through a lending institution, family members, or from previous investments. One aspect of social capital was family involvement which varied across cases. In the case of Farm #1, Evelyn's parents bought the farm with her and James, and his parents also helped financially. On Farm #2, the adult children of the retirees were instrumental in helping them through the process, by encouraging them to be definitive in their goals and plans, and by reviewing their financial outlook. The children of the younger generation on Farm #2 played a role with their interest and involvement in sustainable agriculture. Farm #3 involved family members on both sides of the transfer that were intent on making it work for the other.

Small and/or alternative farm operations are difficult businesses for a multitude of reasons no matter the location which are especially pronounced in our northern region (Stark et al., 2011). The retiring farmers in this study spent decades establishing their farms by building infrastructure, creating markets, designing efficient systems, and finding reliable labor among other efforts. While each transfer was slightly different in what assets were passed down, all of the younger farmers expressed their appreciation for continuing something that was already started. The elder farmers did the most difficult part by building the farm from scratch, and this propelled the younger farmers ahead in their current enterprises. Farm #3 is an excellent example of the “succession effect” as Jefferson brought a huge boost to the enterprise (Potter & Loblely, 1996a), expanding the operation in land and revenue by more than double. Jefferson is well aware that he was able to hit the ground running, so to speak, because his parents had done so much of the work already.

The fourth research question addressed the resources that the participants found valuable or lacking during the transfer. The farmers relied heavily on their own competence and their extensive social capital, as well as other resources and service providers. They have all the characteristics that make excellent farmers, a rare breed that is now just one percent of our population (USDA-NASS, 2014). Their ability and expertise on a wide variety of subjects is why they excel at their occupation, and also what helped them through this often trying process. The literature on farm transfer strongly recommends the services of experts (Ruhf, 2016). In these cases, the lawyer was indispensable in the transfer of Farm #1, helpful with Farm #3, and was only briefly mentioned by the retirees of Farm #2. It seems that not all cases require these services in the same manner, and not all services are as helpful as others. The participants of Farm #1 said that their lawyer was very familiar with and empathetic to the issues of regional farms. They said their lawyer was helpful because she understood their collective goals. The participants of Farm #3 remarked that their lawyer had never seen an FSA contract before despite working in an agricultural county. Their lawyer had experience with farm families and farm transfer and was able to offer helpful advice. The retirees of Farm #2 had a lawyer look over the contract for deed, and decided not to follow the advice he offered because they knew their buyers so well.

Each of these transfers utilized a different financial resource. A local bank was instrumental to the sale of Farm #1. On Farm #2, both parties largely used their own financial wherewithal. The retiring farmers are able to take the income over an eight year period as they did not need it upfront. The buyers agreed to this eight-year contract because they are able to make large chunks of payments each year. The Farm Service Agency was instrumental as the financial lending resource for Farm #3 by providing a substantial down payment to the retirees.

The participants of Farms #1 and #3 did their own research gathering information at conferences and online. The participants of Farms #1 and #2 referenced resources on farm transfer specifically but did not rely on these. All participants used their social networks such as friends, neighbors, and family members to gather advice and examples of other farm transfers. They all mentioned that most of the resources they found were not relevant to their specific situation as a small and/or alternative farm, or as a non-family transfer.

As mentioned above, these small and alternative farms and their transfer processes do not fit into the current paradigm built around the industrial agriculture model (Syring, 2012; Laforge et al., 2017). The new civic agriculture requires “new organizational forms” that value and encourage the small, the local, and the diverse (Lyson, 2004), and solutions that take a systems approach to solving food system challenges (Ruhf, 2013). The farmers in this study were not held back by lack of resources but relied on their own competence and social capital to create win-win solutions.

Implications

Understanding farm transfer on small family farms is increasingly important since 91% of all farms in the United States are classified as small farms (gross cash farm income less than \$350,000), and are responsible for a notable half of all farmland and 29% of production (Hoppe & MacDonald, 2013). As the participants in this study pointed out, the resources for farm transfer are less available in this region and largely irrelevant to the experience of the small/alternative farmer. The availability of relevant resources did not deter the farmers in this study, though it may be different for someone who does not have access to the various forms of wealth that social capital provides. In

these cases, social capital was a resource used throughout the transfer and an intangible asset passed down to the younger generation. For the increasing population of first-generation farmers and those from underrepresented populations, the social capital and the resources that come with it may be a crucial part of their success (Parsons et al., 2012; Hamilton, 2017).

These cases demonstrate that the soft issues of relationships, commitment, and communication are completely intertwined with the financial and legal terms and need to be addressed as such. This is important for farm transfer service providers, researchers and farmers themselves. In November 2017, the author and the Duluth Young Farmers Coalition hosted a theater production on the topic of farm transfer. The play, “Map of my Kingdom” was written by Iowa’s Poet Laureate, Mary Swander, and commissioned by the Practical Farmers of Iowa (Swander, 2018). The one-woman play travels the country to educate, inform and inspire about the importance of farm transfer. It is powerfully effective because it educates from an emotional perspective and informs through an artistic experience. This kind of creative, eventful storytelling is a reason to gather people together who would not go to a lecture or workshop. It is a fun opportunity to have retiring and beginning farmers in the same room together to possibly begin a relationship. More events like this may help to bridge the social-emotional gap in farm transfer planning.

The findings of this study have important implications for the field of environmental education in formal, nonformal, and informal settings alike (Monroe & Krasny, 2013). Small and alternative family farmers are land managers, and are the face of agriculture for their clientele. It is vital that these farmers receive excellent information and education about environmental land management, and the needed support so that this cumulative knowledge and their working lands may be passed down over the generations. In addition, small and alternative farmers regularly interact with their clientele which encourages greater agricultural literacy. Small/alternative farms could be an even stronger resource for educators across the spectrum of formality, which would in turn strengthen the local food system.

Recommendations for Future Research

I recommend that farms and farmers no longer be referred to as discrete places and individual actors by researchers and policymakers, but are recognized as living organisms within a larger ecosystem. Future research may inquire into how processes of farm transfer are embedded into this socio-ecological system by surveying a larger number of farmers and also by including the unsuccessful transfers.

As land tenure and succession are closely linked to the “processes of environmental change” (Potter & Lobley, 1996b, p.188) and it is recognized that smaller farms in particular have an important “role to play in the conservation of farming practice, with benefits to wildlife and landscape, as well as contributing to the character of rural areas and their communities” (Whitehead et al., 2012, p. 236), there is a need for further research on this interaction. Future research might inquire into the environmental and land management practices of the alternative farmers and the ways in which these are passed down and altered by their successor. In addition, future research might investigate the ways that land tenure and transfer are connected to the public health of rural and urban populations alike, as this is a fundamental goal of the good food movement and related to ecological health. The strength of this intersection between rural and urban populations and their environments will in part determine the future of our food systems. The long-term feasibility of a regional food system will depend on its environmental and human sustainability, for the farmers and for the communities that support them.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the process of small-scale farm ownership transfers through the individual experiences of farmers in the western Lake Superior region, in order to contribute to the advancement of a more robust local food system. The stories of farm transfer presented in this study aim to inform and inspire future successful transfers by providing lessons to those experiencing this difficult process. The findings of this study may seem obvious or superficial until we remember that most farm transfers fail if they even begin at all. Human relationships and our relationship with the land that supports us are fragile yet foundational. As Willa Cather penned in *O Pioneers!*, “We come and go, but the land is always here. And the people who love it and understand it are the people who own it - for a little while.”

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Determination

NOT HUMAN RESEARCH

December 12, 2017

Randel Hanson

218-349-2956

rhanson2@umn.edu

Dear Randel Hanson:

On 12/12/2017, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review: Initial Study

Title of Study: Small farm transfer in the western Lake Superior region: a multi-case study.

Investigator: Randel Hanson

IRB ID: STUDY00002150

• Allen, J. HRP 503 , Category: IRB Protocol;

The IRB determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations. To arrive at this determination, the IRB used “WORKSHEET: Human Research (HRP-310).” If you have any questions about this determination, please review that Worksheet in the HRPP Toolkit Library and contact the IRB office if needed.

Ongoing IRB review and approval for this activity is not required; however, this determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether IRB review is required, please submit a Modification to the IRB for a determination.

Sincerely,

Jeffery P Perkey, CIP, MLS

IRB Analyst

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Questions: Both retiring and new farmers

- When, how and why did you begin to think about the transfer? (RQ1,2)
- When did the successor become apparent? (RQ1)
- What were your first steps? (RQ1)
- Individually, what are your goals for the future of the farm? (RQ2)
- Did you address your goals during the transfer process? Have they changed? (RQ2)
- What was the time frame for each aspect of the transfer (financial, legal, managerial)? (RQ1)
- What was involved in the transfer- land, business, assets, etc? (RQ1)
- How and when did management decisions transfer? (RQ1)
- What were the financial and legal terms? What did you do to make them favorable to both? (RQ1)
- What has changed on the farm after the arrival of the successor, and after the transfer of managerial decisions? (RQ1,2)
- Was there / will there be time spent working together on the farm? (RQ1,2)
- As a small/alternative farm, what were your experiences related to finding financial support? (RQ3)
- As a small/alternative farm, what were your experiences related to garnering support from your clientele and community? (RQ3)
- As a small/alternative farm, what were your experiences related to finding transfer resources and guidance? (RQ3)
- Where did you go for help relating to each aspect of the transfer? (RQ4)
- What has been difficult about this process? (RQ2)
- How have you dealt with conflict? (RQ2)

Interview Questions: Retiring farmers

- What are your future goals for the farm? How have they changed over time? (RQ2)
- What changed when you knew you had a successor for the farm?(RQ1,2)
- Did you consider options other than transfer, or a different successor? (RQ1,2)
- Who made up your team of advisors? (RQ1,4)
- Do you hope to fully retire? If so, when? Are you prepared to do so financially, and for your long-term health care? (RQ1,2)
- What has it been like to trust your successor, and relinquish control? (RQ2)
- How do you feel about changes the successor has made/ may make to the farm? (RQ2)
- How was your family, clientele and community involved in the process, if at all? (RQ1,2,3,4)
- Was the farm your sole/main source of income? (RQ1)

-What is the nature of your relation/relationship to the beginning farmers? Has it changed over the course of the transfer process? (RQ2)

-Have you acted as a mentor to the beginning farmers? In what way? (RQ1,2)

Interview Questions: Beginning farmers

-When and how did you decide to take over the farm? What influenced your decision? (RQ1,2)

-How did you design the financial and legal terms to be favorable to you as new farmers? (RQ1,2)

-What changed on the farm when you assumed managerial control? (RQ1)

-Where have you turned for support, guidance, and resources? (RQ4)

-Have you been able to have the “difficult conversations” with the retirees? (RQ2)

-Have the retirees been supportive of your ideas for change to the farm? Do you feel supported by them? (RQ2)

-How have you addressed conflict? (RQ2)

-What are your future goals for the farm? Is/will it fully support you and your family? Did the farm fully support the last generation? (RQ1,2)

-How was your family, clientele and community involved in the process, if at all? (RQ1,2,3,4)

-What is the nature of your relation/relationship to the retiring farmers? Has it changed over the course of the transfer process? (RQ2)

-Have they acted as a mentor to the you? In what way? (RQ1,2)

Appendix C: Code Tree

- Sense of ownership/control
 - Beg farmer
 - Ret farmer
 - Pride
 - Roles
- Values
- Finances
- Legal (sale)
- Goals
 - Beginning farmer
 - Retiring farmer
- Sense of ownership/control
 - Beg farmer
 - Ret farmer

- Pride
 - Roles
- Values
- Finances
- Legal (sale)
- Resources
 - Financial resources
 - Legal resources
 - Transfer specific
 - It's who ya know
 - Past experience
- Thinking/planning for Future
- Reflection
- History
- Advice
- Food System
- Small farm/er
- WLS region
- Great quotes