A Case Study of Radical Education:

Gaining Vocational Clarity through the Collective

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to Dr. John Wallace and the founding members of the Lives Worth Living Camp instructor team. May your work reverberate eternally.

Abstract

This interpretive case study explores how adults within an intentional learning community make meaning of vocational calling (Dewey, 1966), collective learning (Kilgore, 1999), and a sense of place (Low & Altman, 1992) and the interactive and interrelated connections between these constructs. The context for this study was set at a retreat center in southern Minnesota that had been constructed with architectural intention to house and facilitate events designed for co-created learning and fostering community. The participants that took part in this study were part of a course that had been offered annually at the University of Minnesota for the past 17 years. This reoccurring intentional learning community looked to question or trouble what it meant to 'live a good life'.

Using situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 19991) as the main theoretical framework, I examine how both the physical and social context in which learning occurs, matters deeply. I document how the landscape and the geographic positioning of the study had profound influence over and mediated processes of learning and development. My analyses focus the stories and life narratives as offered by the community members engaged in this study. Stories, narratives, interviews, observations, and dialogue served as the primary sources of data.

The implications of this study demonstrate the necessity to create, with intention, spaces of learning and development that acknowledge and find meaning in the stories that make up our lives. Further, this study acknowledges the connection between processes of learning and development and the place or physical geographic location in which they occur.

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Proem

Before you read this, you need to know something about the author. A proem is used as a preface or preamble to a book, and this preliminary comment provides an introduction to me and my origins and the shaping forces of my interest in the phenomena under investigation. This brief proem traces back some of my own narrative beginnings to illustrate who I am, how I came to be, and how these understandings contributed to this study.

I was born and raised in central Minnesota, 15 miles outside the small town of Brainerd. My mother, father, brother, and I all lived together in a modest house that my parents built on an 80 acre parcel of land. It was here, on this land, where I developed my first strong sense of place and began curating my connection to the natural world. This childhood home had a long, half-mile driveway surrounded by oak and maple trees on either side that created a strong sense of isolation, seclusion, and for me, freedom.

My father was a devout naturalist who planted over 5,000 trees on the property and carved out miles of trails to explore different areas and eco-systems of the land. He dug a spring fed pond in our backyard, in which he stocked with brook trout. My father spent his summer months deep in the woods with an axe and chainsaw harvesting the hardwoods that would become the fuel to keep our two woodstoves burning through the winter. I remember often helping my father cut, split, and stack the cords of firewood. The most elicit and profound memories I have of these experiences are my father's sweat soaked clothing, the sawdust and debris that covered his body, the scratches on his arms, the swarm of flies and mosquitos above his head, and perhaps most vivid, his smile, his contentedness, and his ability to find peace and harmony 'doing work' within nature.

Growing up in this special place, I had no boundaries on the property, and was encouraged by my parents to explore and learn through engagement with the natural environment: canoeing, hunting, fishing, gardening, bird watching, learning to distinguish between trees, learning to read the different animal tracks. Some of these experiences that I have had in nature are deeply spiritual, as close to church as I've ever gotten. There is something about nature, the trees, the grass, the rain that makes me come alive. To me, the natural environment represents freedom. A place where there are no immediate societal constraints, no pressures to look or act a certain way - a place to just be. These learning experiences with my father taught me to read the land and the ways in which one can develop a strong sense of place.

My mother worked for 26 years as a teacher within the public schools of Brainerd. For the majority of her tenure, my mother worked both as an emotional/behavioral disorder (EBD) teacher and as a reading recovery teacher. In these roles, my mother worked with students who didn't fit the school's pre-described expectations and traditional values of "success". My mother's classrooms were occupied with students who were removed from regular classrooms because they couldn't read well enough, or they struggled to sit, silently, in rows for eight hours a day. These were students who didn't always have access to, or support from parents, teachers, or resources that taught them the skills and strategies to be successful in modern day schooling.

I remember from an early age spending nearly every day in my mother's classrooms, after my own schooling had ended for the day. There is so much of me as a person, a scholar, and an educator that I can trace back to these observations of my mother and her pedagogy. I remember watching my mother facilitate these classrooms

with grace and a deep love and compassion for the individuals that occupied her classroom. Though their skillsets, uniqueness, and exceptionalities weren't always valued within the traditional, normative classroom my mother taught me how to make room for other kinds of success. My mother taught me that the students that struggled to "sit still" within classrooms weren't problematic students. They were completely normal, and often times brilliant students, who were placed within problematic educational structures with acute definitions of success, value, and expected ways of being.

Growing up within a close-knit, large Italian family, as well as, my early experiences participating in sport, taught me the importance and power within collectivity and community. Being part of a family or a team, allowed me from an early age to explore alternative ways of being in relation to others that differed from how the larger society typically interacted with each other. Growing up in a society marked by rugged individualism, competition, and isolation, my experiences participating as a part of a family or a team often directly contradicted these societal characteristics. Experiences negotiating the communal structures of my family and my sport teams taught me what it meant to put others, and the larger collective, before my own individual wants and needs. Though, I have never lived outside the bounds of a capitalistic, post-industrialized United States, these micro examples of family and team allowed me to momentarily experience ways of being that transcended these societal bounds. As a result of these early experiences, I became enthralled by the aspect of 'team' and 'family' and the ways in which these structures necessitated an individual sacrifice for the larger collective. These early learnings in my life laid the foundation for the scholarly quest to reconceptualize normative spaces of education and development that is exemplified throughout this study.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This field study at an "intentional community" explored how meaning was made on vocational calling (Dewey, 1966), collective learning (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008), and sense of place (McClay & McAllister, 2014; Tuan, 1977). In examining such spaces of social collectivity I focused especially on the environmental contexts of sociopolitical space (Cresswell, 2004) and geographical place (Nissley, 2011). Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) constituted as the main theoretical framework to explain the processes of development. This was supplemented with "place theory" (Lewicka, 2011; Sommerville et al., 2009; Tuan, 1977).

This research examined the communal embeddedness and practice of the Lives Worth Living Camp, a residential community education retreat offered by the University of Minnesota beginning in the year 2000 and continuing until present day. This was an interpretive field study in which interviewee's thoughts, meanings, and actions are examined along with the historical record to get at their understandings and explanations of their own vocational calling as well as their personal/professional grasp, identity, beliefs, and actions as citizens of an intentional community.

This interdisciplinary study has looked to expand the scope of traditional human resource development (HRD) concern by focusing on the policies, ethos, and practices of an intentional community. This study was situated within the field of HRD to further explore and expand a field of scholarship and practice which "encompasses planned activities, processes and/or interventions designed to have impact upon and enhance organizational and individual learning, to develop human potential, to improve or maximize effectiveness and performance at either the individual, group/team, and/or

organizational level (Hamlin & Stewart, 2011, p.213). My intention was to bring attention to a neglected area of study within the HRD literature - the environmental contexts of physical place and sociopolitical space and their effects on social organizations and the learning processes within these structures. The research question that guided this study was: How is meaning made on vocational calling, collective learning, and a sense of place.

Background

In many societies over historical time, individuals have come together at the local and other larger social levels to organize themselves as groups, social collectives, and intentional communities. There in gathering, they negotiate out responsibilities, obligations, a priori, and reflect on their own lived experience of everyday life. Often derived from their own reflections and imaginations are possibilities of new ways of being and existing in relation to one another. These derived possibilities often necessitate a changed environment, and with that, the processes and strategies necessary to enact the systemic and environmental change that make these possibilities real. This type of collectivity and grassroots organizing has been known to create the sociopolitical space in which critical conversation, storytelling, and dialogue become the predominant ways in which the organization is (re)shaped. The organizational structures of these spaces have been referred to by a variety of names based on their type and purpose including "collectives", "communities", or "social movements".

Geographical place and sociopolitical space are known to be critically important to how these social organizations learn, survive, and become increasingly effective (Callahan, 2013; Courpasson et al., 2017; Gruenewald, 2003a). Evans and Boyte (1992)

conceptualized the space analogous to this type of collective organizing as "free spaces".

Free spaces are the physical environments within a community in which "people are able

to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills and

values of cooperation and civic virtue" (Bellah et al., 2007, p. 301). These settings are

positioned between "private lives" and "large-scale institutions" where communal ties

can be strengthened (Evans & Boyte, 1992, p. ix). The nature of these spaces are

participatory and open and can be exemplified through places in communities such as

"many religious organizations, clubs, self-help and mutual aid societies, reform groups,

neighborhood, civic, and ethnic groups, and a host of other associations grounded in the

fabric of community life" (Evans & Boyte, 1992, p. ix). In these spaces people draw their

meaning from the local and particular. This meaning derived from the locality is then put

into relation with larger societal structures and concerns. Free spaces allow for the

negotiating of democracy and communal standards where individuals can learn to

become an embodiment of citizenship through the mundane activities of everyday life.

   The Highlander Folk School was founded in the Appalachia region of Tennessee

in 1932 and is a specific example of this type of "free space". The Highlander Folk

School was a foundational model of community education and organizing that directly

influenced the creation and structure of the Lives Worth Living Camp in Minnesota. For

the purpose of this study, the Lives Worth Living Camp will be referred to as "Camp"

throughout the remainder of this study. In its inception, Camp was created soon after the

founding member visited and participated in workshops at the Highlander Folk School as

part of a development opportunity. Camp was designed in the image of Highlander Folk

School and a tradition in radical adult education. Much of the practice that occurs and the ethos of the Camp community can be directly traced back to Highlander.

Highlander Folk School. Since its inception, Highlander has served as a place for the social and political organization of rural Appalachia and the surrounding southern states (Horton et al., 1998). The initial organizational focus of Highlander was to train union leaders and to organize the working and unemployed people of Tennessee and 11 bordering southern states as a part of the larger labor movement of the 1930's (Thayer-Bacon, 2004). Highlander became a free space for people to organize around social, political, and local issues and to then connect these issues to resources in order to navigate political and societal systems. Uniquely, Highlander used a particular model of participatory, group workshops that centered the lived realities, challenges, and socio-political positions that the workshop participants took up in their everyday lives (Horton et al., 1998; Horton & Freire, 1990). A hallmark of these workshops and the larger work done at Highlander was that they were known to begin with the everyday, mundane problems faced by the disenfranchised groups of the time and to then connect them to larger societal and structural problems. In these ways, Highlander was a seminal model of collective critical adult education.

Parallel to the workshops, Highlander created a program teaching people basic literacy as a way to engage participants democratically, civically, and to increase voter turnout. Through these workshops and literary programs, the local people of Appalachia were able to make sense of how they were situated in the world and what they would need to do in order to create a more sustainable environment for themselves and their ways of life (Horton et al., 1998; Horton & Freire, 1990). The everyday problems of the

workshop participants were situated in relation to systemic inequities which then became the focus for their targeted organizing and strategies of action.

In the 1950's, Highlander shifted organizational focus towards ending segregation and became an integral part of the training, development, education, and organizing of the Civil Rights movement. Stokely Carmichael, Septima Clark, Rosa Parks, and Dr. Martin Luther King are some of the influential activists that visited the Highlander School during the civil rights era and had relationships with Myles Horton and Highlander programs. Consequentially, Highlander had always stoked fear in hearts of the white middle and upper class people of the time over fear of disenfranchisement. The Civil Rights Era brought upon a more targeted and violent opposition (Horton et al., 1998). The Knoxville Journal ran an article in 1967 disparaging the Highlander Folk School as a "white hatred school" and criticized the school for allowing Stokely Carmichael to visit and interact with the school (Griffith, 1967). Highlander was deemed as a "communist" organization by oppositionists resulting in the school receiving threats from the Ku Klux Klan and other white nationalist organizations.

As time has progressed and new social pressures and constraints have arisen, the focus of Highlander has shifted. Highlander, in present day, concentrates more heavily on immigrant rights and youth organizing. Yet still the opposition, resentment, and hatred towards Highlander by a largely white, nationalist, and fascist groups is still a palpable reality today. In 2019, the Highlander School was the subject of arson where entire buildings were set on fire in the middle of the night by oppositionists (Rosenberg, 2019). The fire burned historical documents and archives that were around since the inception of

the school. The next morning following the fire, a white power symbol had been erected

next to the burned rubble (Rosenberg, 2019).

Vocation(al) (Calling)

Next, I situated the term vocation for my conceptual use. Vocation is a concept

that has gone through a "range of tones and pitches of moral register" (Dawson, 2005, p.

226) across time, culture, and religions. It is a term with deep religious roots, spanning

many disciplines, and is considered to be "full of force" and "pregnant in meaning"

(Brunner, 2003, p. 205). However, in studies of work, vocational education, and other

HRD related topics, the meaning of the word *vocation* is seldom addressed (Kincheloe,

2018). Exceptions to this, are work done in adult education (Collins, 1991; Dawson,

2005; Martin, 2001) and scholarship concerning the 'meaning of work' (Applebaum,

1992; Ardichvili, 2006; 2009; Kuchinke, 2009; Placher, 2005). In one of its earliest

forms, vocation was connected to the Christian monastic tradition established in the

Middle Ages (Applebaum, 1992; Beder, 2000; Dawson, 2005; Goldman, 1988; Hardy,

1990; Haynes, 1997). In this original sense, the term referred to monks, nuns, and priests

to describe the dedication of one's life to prayer and spiritual contemplation (Dawson,

2005). This understanding positioned vocation as singular and is most commonly

interpreted as having to do with one's occupation or one's "calling" to follow Christ. This

medieval understanding of vocation reflected larger societal views of the time by

associating a higher value to a life dedicated to contemplation and prayer and a lower

societal value to a life of manual work or labor.

The term vocation underwent a significant upheaval in the 15th and 16th century

during the Protestant Reformation (Applebaum, 1992; Beder, 2000; Dawson, 2005;

Goldman, 1988; Hardy, 1990). The theologian and scholar Martin Luther was a prominent and influential figure during this conceptual shift. An examination of Luther's doctrine of vocation brings to light a definition of vocation that is plural (Wingren, 2004). Vocation, in Luther's sense, not only encompasses one's occupation, but one's relationships with family, community, and society. Luther's writings had an explicit focus on the social well-being of others, the community, and the responsibility to one's neighbor as a vocational calling. In *Luther on Vocation,* Gustaf Wingren (2004) stated, "It is only before God, i.e., in heaven, that the individual stands alone. In the earthly realm man always stands *in relatione* always bound to another." (p. 5) Luther believed that vocation is not something directed towards God or salvation. Vocation is of the "earthly realm" (Wingren, 2004, p. 14) and grounded in the mundane activities and social relationships within community. Luther understood vocation as an individual sacrifice for the betterment of the community or collective and he used an analogy to signify this: "In one's vocation, there is a cross" (Wingren, 2004, p. 29). His use of analogy can be understood as a means of making it possible for Christians to live out God's image though their everyday lives. This rejected the church/world dichotomy that was prevalent prior to the reformation.

In *Democracy and Education*, the great educational philosopher John Dewey (1966) took up Luther's expansive and plural concept of vocation and applied it to a workforce education framework. Dewey made the argument that the greatest evil facing the United States in 1916 was not poverty, but the problem that so many people were not living according to their vocations, he said citizens of the United States "are stuck in jobs solely for wages, stripped of the social significance of their work" (Dewey, 1966, p. 315).

Dewey challenged the post-industrialization meaning of occupation which to him, meant a "change in the meaning of work, a lessening of its pure utilitarianism, a recovery of the idea of work as a calling" (Bellah, 1992, p. 106). Through his reconceptualization, Dewey made the distinction between simply making a living (labor) and engaging the self in the production of products and relationships that enrich life (work). He acknowledged, as Luther did, that one has multiple vocations and that human beings are always more than their occupation. As he stated, "we must avoid limitation of conception of vocation to the occupation where immediately tangible commodities are produced" (Dewey, 1966, p. 307). His definition of vocation included, but was not limited to, occupation. In regards to work, Dewey (1966) conceptualized a vocational occupation that allowed workers to make meaning of their work lives and promote the types of skill and intelligences that would allow for agency in the workplace. This type of work and occupational consciousness evokes Paulo Freire's concept of "conscientization" in which through gaining a level of awareness and cognizance one can first name, then work to change the hierarchical and oppressive structures in which one is situated (Freire, 1972). To Dewey, vocation provides meaning to one's life and gives clarity to how one (and their labor) is situated in the world socially, politically, and economically.

In contemporary United States society "vocation" and "vocational training" are synonymous with "career" and "technical" (Schuurman, 2004, p. 1). Once a very expansive concept, this secular view of vocation has been influenced and constricted by industrialization, the global capitalistic market, and the individualistic focus on workers as labor, among other things. Restricting the concept to occupation or paid work neglects "the potential of vocation to integrate paid and unpaid work, domestic and public life,

church and the world, personal identity and varied roles, faith, and life." (Schuurman, p. 6). For the purpose of this study, I draw from Luther and Dewey to locate a more expansive conceptualization of vocation. This allowed me to better understand how the experience of Camp situated and clarified one's relation to community, society, and place.

The Problem Statement

The academic problem addressed in this study is the lack of inclusion of perspectives of an intentional learning community into the theory and practice of HRD. By this is meant, the theories, conceptions, practices, and institutions in which HRD, as an applied science and as an everyday practice is codified in professional organizations and university courses. Within the academic frame, there are questions about the creation, structure, and operation of social organizations such as community groups, formal organizations, informal associations, and other collective forms all of which are environments for the implementation of HRD principles and practices. Nested within the academic problem, the case of this study focused on Camp provides an opportunity to look at an annual, re-emergent, intention community for insights into the applicability and utility of HRD principles and practices. This was an opportunity to examine a situational environment which leads to a systematic academic exploration. The practical questions are derivative from the academic, structural, and the situational realities and on the surface seem straightforward and ordinary. The purpose is to interrogate that emergent everydayness to understand how it was socially constructed from the perspective of HRD. Ultimately, this study sought to bring to an understanding of an intentional community the perspectives of HRD.

Social movements and social collectives. The real world, everyday problem that this study addresses is that the people organizing, resisting, and forming collectives for social issues of racial equity, wealth redistribution, native land sovereignty, public housing, water rights, among others, are not being supported by current structures of education, learning, and development. Over the last 13 years, following the 2008 global financial crisis, there has been an influx of social movements, youth movements, and grass roots organizing that has demanded these types of change (Choudry, 2015; Sisco, Valesano, & Collins, 2019). This has been exemplified through the Occupy Wall Street movement (Gitlin, 2012), Arab Spring (Anderson, 2011), Black Lives Matter (Rickford, 2016), North Dakota access pipeline resistance (Tallbear, 2016), the Parkland, FL mobilization (Witt, 2018), and most recently youth-led uprisings and resistance movements in association with the state sanctioned murder of George Floyd (Samayeen et al., 2020). As some of these movements have come and gone, it has been made clear that there is a severe lack of structural support for spaces to build collective critical consciousness and to organize; spaces that encourage critical dialogue and are conducive to formulating actionable items and organizations that will create the intended future. Front line organizers and activists fighting for their humanity in these struggles are being left by the wayside to deal with the life threatening repercussions and trauma that comes with this type of work.

Community activists and grass roots organizations concerned with these types of social justice issues are under constant suppression by the state and other right wing, fascist groups (Choudry, 2015). This suppression combined with the lack of structural support and organizing for activists, particularly youth activists of color, have resulted in

the political imprisonment and death of a handful of social activists. Following the 2014 Ferguson, MO protests and the response to the murder of Michael Brown by the Ferguson police department, the Chicago Tribune reported how a "puzzling number of men tied to the Ferguson protests have since died" (Salter, 2019). The article reports six different young black men, all with connections to the 2014 Ferguson protests, being found dead within four and half years of the protests taking place. Two of these young revolutionaries, Darren Seals and Deandre Joshua, both were found dead inside burning vehicles and ruled homicides. Four others, MarShawn McCarrel, Edward Crawford Jr., Danye Jones, and Bassem Masri were all ruled suicides (Salter, 2019). This jarring realization begs the consideration: if we had more sustainable structures and spaces of support, healing, organizing, and collective critical education, would these young men still be with us today? If there were more intentional spaces of movement building, radical education, and community building could we have protected, supported, and insulated these young men?

White racial identity crisis. An important and interrelated part of this problem is that in the United States of America there has been a resurgence of a white racial identity crisis which has resulted in the rise of white, right wing, nationalist, and fascist organizing (Stern, 2019). National and local militia groups, hate groups, online communities, and organizations concerned with preserving white racial supremacy have risen considerably in the past years. The Southern Poverty Law Center reported a 55 percent rise in white supremacist groups from 2017 to 2019 (The Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019). Since 2017, these groups have become more embolden, organized, and have begun mobilizing. These groups have also increasingly begun openly demonstrating

and showcasing their lust for violence and white dominance, especially since the August 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville (Peters & Besley, 2017). Since then, the United States has experienced white supremacist paramilitary groups infiltrating cities like Portland, Minneapolis, Seattle, and most recently the attack on the Washington D.C. Capitol Building on January 6th, 2021 (Dalsheim & Starrett, 2021). Further, community organizations have documented the cooperation and coordination between these groups and various police departments (MPD150, 2020).

The United States has witnessed the infiltration of these recently formed white supremacist groups into local, civic, and educational groups such as schools boards and city councils. This can be exemplified through the current national and more local conversations around the inclusion of Critical Race Theory in schools (Sawchuk, 2021). The rhetoric and ignorance infused in these conversations is a product of white people's fear of losing power, privilege, and influence. This, is a part of a larger problem with how white people in the United States (under) develop a white racial identity. This study looks to address the problem, in part, by studying critical forms of education that are conducive to creating white racial identities grounded in anti-racism and cognizant of how we learn to become white within a white supremacist society.

The formation of whiteness, beginning in the 17th century and continuing until present day, has resulted in complete generations of white people being indoctrinated into the system of white supremacy (Martinot, 2010). Thadeka (1999) conceptualized whiteness as a "self-degrading system of identity formation" (p. 28). A set of rules, regulations, and ways of being that are enforced by family, friends, police officers, laws, and regulations. Roediger (1994) illustrated how whiteness is instilled through trauma

and a systematic regime of punishment and reward. The regime of rewards and punishments that Roediger referred to are the various returns on investment that white people receive through their investment into whiteness such as economic employment, educational opportunities, living conditions, police relations, and access to social programs. Conversely, people unwilling or resistant to joining the ranks of the exclusive club of whiteness are subjugated to the material and psychological punishment that has been passed down through generations of white people. Thandeka's (1999) study of white racial trauma concluded that the basis of this trauma originates from the fear of being disloyal to the one's own white community, she said:

> The Euro-American child, I now believed, is a racial victim of its own white community of parents, caretakers, and peers, who attack it because it does not yet have a white racial identity. Rather than continue to suffer such attacks, the Euro-American child defends itself by creating a white racial identity for itself" (p.13).

The assimilation of the white child into whiteness is violent and costly. The white child is forcibly indoctrinated into this environment of fear because the child realizes that insubordination means the threat of abandonment from his own white community. This form of racial punishment is what Dubois (2015) referred to as the psychological "wages" that white people endure along the process to becoming white.

White people are often mystified by thinking of and categorizing themselves as "white" (Mills, 1997; Thandeka 1999). Due to the normativity of whiteness, white people typically only racialize themselves by differentiating themselves from anyone who is non-white (Martinot, 2010). Conversations of race, if they are purposely avoided, often devolve to feelings of shame or guilt. These emotions serve as a "psychological guard" or

"defense mechanism" that is used to conceal feelings and emotions about non-white people that the white community has presumed off limits (Thandeka, 1999, p. 27). It's important to emphasize that white people struggle with conversations regarding their white racial identity not only because it's a conversation about their race, but because the conversation elicits memories and experiences of racialized violence from which the victim has not yet recovered from (Thandeka, 1999). In these ways, it is necessary for future educational and developmental practices of adult education and HRD to develop explicit strategies and practices conducive for white people to recognize, acknowledge, and work through their racialized trauma (Zembylas, 2018).

Why this is an HRD Concern

Individual, collective, and organizational processes of learning and development are central tenets to the larger field of HRD. Throughout the expansive literature on HRD within organizations, there is a wide variety of what scholars constitutes as an "organization" (Wang & McLean, 2007). Traditionally within the literature, organizations have been conceptualized as corporations, non-profit, for-profit, or public institutions (Callahan, 2012; Sisco et al., 2019). However more recently, critical HRD scholars have begun to push back on the dominant and normative conceptualization of organization to include organizational structures like social collectives, grass roots organizations, and social movements (Bierma, 2009; Callahan, 2013; Grenier, 2019). This urging is motivated by scholars continuing to push the field to become more inclusive and to more thoroughly consider the spaces in which the field of practice occurs. Further, the addition of non-traditional, social organizations into the scope of HRD has the potential "to uncover significant areas of HRD history largely ignored in the

literature, specifically for organizations as forces for social change, advocates for various forms of equality, and providers of training and development" (Sisco et al., 2019, p. 184).

HRD scholars making the case for the inclusion of social movements and social collectives into the scope of HRD have rightfully prefaced their assertions with caution (Callahan, 2013; Sisco et al., 2019). This caution is a derived from the recent acceleration of the commodification and appropriation of social movement ethos, language, and imagery (Shamir, 2005; Sisco et al., 2019). Corporations, for-profit, and non-profit organizations have much to gain in manufacturing a social image that presents their organization as concerned with and serious about issues of social equity.

Traditional organizations have a long history of curating social capital by presenting themselves as "socially-responsible" while simultaneously being unwilling to address social inequities at the structural or root causes (Shamir, 2005; Sisco et al., 2019). The cooption and commodification of social movements by traditional organizations is especially reductive because it normalizes and neutralizes movements that are largely built upon people, collectivity, and momentum (Shamir, 2005).The tension between traditional organizations and social movements has been illustrated by prominent organizer and adult educator Myles Horton. Horton et al. (1998) took a dialectical stance around the issue, he said:

> I learned a lot about social movements, the concepts of how organizations work, while I was at Chicago. I knew that people as individuals would remain powerless, but if they could get together in organizations, they could have power, provided they used their organizations instead of being used by them. I understood the need for organizations, but I was always afraid of what they did to

people… they end up in structures and structures become permanent and most of them outlive their usefulness. (p. 49)

Ultimately, this study takes up the call from Callahan (2013) and Bierma (2009) to (re)conceptualize the space in which the practice of HRD occurs by including social collectives and social movements as spaces worthy of investigation. However, this assertion is tempered and is deserving of close observation so as to not proliferate the commodification, cooption, and appropriation.

Summary

This chapter introduced the research project by providing the background information on the formation and utilizations of social collectives and "free spaces" analogous to that of Highlander Folk School. A problem statement was presented to explain the purpose and potential impact of this research. The following chapter will present the literature review for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In generating questions and a research design that could investigate the relations between and among vocational calling, collective learning, and sense of place, it was important to realize the complexities and nuances that surrounded these concepts. Thus, this review of literature is presented to explain and elaborate on the distinctive concepts that have motivated my interest and exploration of this phenomenon. This section begins with a detailed description of the theoretical framework and the distinction between the related concepts of space and place. Following this, I review the interdisciplinary literature on critical spatiality and focus specifically on how aspects of education and community organizing can be understood spatially. To conclude, the literature review presents an overview of how collective learning operates in both formal organizations and social collectives and a historical interpretation of the concept of intentional community. Overall, a synthesis of the topics mentioned above is intended to provide insight into the possible relations between and among these concepts.

Theoretical Framework

Due to the scope and the interpretive nature of this study, a theoretical framework was constructed and utilized to help explain the phenomena at hand. Situated learning theory, place theory, and critical theory are the three tenets that made up this framework. Situated learning theory was useful to frame and interpret stories, narratives, and the collective learning of Camp while place theory allowed for the contextualization in which this learning occurred. In framing the research site as a space of radical adult education, critical theory was essential in interpreting power dynamics and the socio-political environment. Together, this theoretical framework situated and informed the study.

Situated learning theory. Situated learning theory (SLT) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) was the central theory used to examine and make sense of the multitude ways in which learning and development took place at Camp. SLT is a direct critique of cognitive learning theory and helped explain the situated nature of learning in relation to this study. SLT recognizes knowledge as provisional, mediated, and socially-constructed while considering the broader socio-cultural environment inseparable from the learning process (Handley et al., 2006). The conceptualization of "community of practice" is a derivative of SLT in which participating members negotiate knowledge and meaning to create a shared perspective (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Brown and Duguid (1991) emphasized that SLT is not a method of education but can be used as a "tool for understanding learning across different methods, different historical periods, and different social and physical environments" (p. 48). Through this understanding, SLT can be used to explore the process of learning through time and space.

Lave and Wenger (1991) explored the idea of legitimate peripheral participation to conclude that "the situated nature of learning, remembering, and understanding is a central fact" (p. 11). Their proposed learning is influenced by the social, cultural, and emotional context within the learning environment. The authors emphasized the importance for learners to become immersed in the sociocultural practice of knowledge acquisition within their chosen community of practice. Thus, Lave and Wenger's (1991) description of learning as a socialized process depicted the situated nature of learning. The conceptualization of legitimate peripheral participation illustrated how other variables aside from the learner, impacts the process of learning within a learning environment.

Place theory. Place theory served as a supplemental theory to help explain the geographical context related to the Camp experience. Place theory and the notion of 'sense of place' have been recognized in multiple fields as having a substantial impact on human development and collective learning initiatives (Cresswell, 2004). In this study, core aspects of Camp were examined specifically using the contexts of space and place. Space and place have been the loci of human interest, concern, and everyday life likely from our earliest human moment although, the intentional study of place, in context to adult learning, began roughly 40 years ago (Lewicka, 2011). Since then, the study of place has come to be a focus in several areas of learning and education such as place based education, experiential learning, contextual learning, democratic education, and community-based education (Gruenewald, 2003b).

Place theory is concerned with physical, geographical location and the meaning or value that humans associate with them (Farnum et al., 2005; Somerville et al., 2009). Place theory brings together the two related concepts of "sense of place" (Low & Altman, 1992; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001) and "place attachment" (Kyle et al., 2004; 2005). Historically, place theory was first developed within the academic fields of social geography and environmental psychology (Lewicka, 2011). Since then, place theory has developed to become interdisciplinary spanning across several fields of study including environmental studies, cultural studies, education, religion, psychology, and sociology (Sommerville et al., 2009). Due to differing epistemological, ontological, and philosophical positions, a single, integrated theory of place does not exist. Place theory is utilized individually across different fields of study.

Place theory in education is one such perspective. In exploring the phenomenological value of a place and its relative mediating effect on learning often requires extension beyond one single discipline or theory to gain a broader and more diverse framework of understanding (Gruenewald, 2003b). To conceptualize this framework it is fundamental to understand learning environments as being historical, political, and fluid. Literature within the related fields of experiential learning, place-based learning, and contextual learning demonstrate that learning and place are continuously interconnected concepts (Hansman, 2001; Kaltenborn, 1998; Kolb, 2014). This means that place and the physical learning environment cannot be separated from the subsequent processes of learning and development (Hansman 2001; Lave & Wenger 1991).

The concept of place and space as contextual factors has remained almost completely absent from HRD research (Callahan, 2013; Nissley, 2011). In both the scholarship and practice of HRD there is an increasing concern for how different contexts impact HRD structures, processes, and initiatives. This study addresses this particular literature gap in exploring the environmental contexts of sociopolitical space and geographical place and their direct influences on the learning process.

Critical theory. Critical theory was an essential component to this theoretical framework because in order to understand Camp as a place of radical adult education it was necessary to interpret relations and structures of power. Critical theory was used to contextualize the experience of Camp within the larger socio-political environment. Camp was formed, structured, and operated as an intentional learning community that directly conflicted with normative and traditional modes of learning. Critical theory was

utilized to understand how and why oppositional discourses and learning environments are necessary and useful. Critical theory intersects with SLT and place theory in multiple ways within the following literature review through conceptualizations such as critical spatiality (Grande, 2015; Schwartz, 2014), critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003a; 2003b), and counterstories (Delgado, 1989; hooks, 2003a).

From a theoretical standpoint, this study utilized critical theory to explore the distribution of space and power and its residual effects on intentional communities, social collectives, and social movements. Although different than adult education, the field of HRD has only more recently began to create space for a critical perspective (Fenwick, 2004; 2005; Sambrook, 2008). Fortunately, Callahan (2013) and Nissley (2011) have begun to investigate the contexts of space/place through a Critical HRD perspective. This study looked to expand upon their work. Due to this, critical theory will be a consistent theme throughout the review of literature.

Space Versus Place

The ideas of place and space and their use as concepts and constructs are found throughout the literatures in adult learning and in HRD. Be aware that these terms are often used interchangeably in those literatures. To sort this out, consider the work of Foucault (1980) and Casey (1996). To them, space is considered a basic dimension of all natural and mental things (Foucault, 1980) and is understood as a socially constructed geographical arrangements of contemporary and historical ideas and ideational understandings (Casey, 1996). Further, place is a specific and meaningful segment of space. Place, then, is taken to be a geographical segment of space which in education is concerned with the spatiality and locality of knowledge (Gieryn, 2000; Schwartz, 2014).

Existentially, we experience the two very differently, to Tuan (1977): "Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other" (p. 3). Phenomenologically, both space and time can be experienced and given meaning as a single reality within a specified place (Cresswell, 2004).

Every place one has ever known (home, childhood school, favorite restaurant, grandma's house) was once just mere space (Tuan, 1977). Through time, experience, and a deeper understanding one can gain an attached value or meaning to a certain locale which then changes an empty and inert space into a place charged with human meaning (McClay & McAllister, 2014; Tuan, 1977). This change is an "ordinary, disquieting phenomenon" (McClay & McAllister, 2014, p. 4) that happens continuously through the cycle of life. The inversion is also a common occurrence – how place recalibrates back into space. This can be understood through the experiences of an old apartment one rented, a childhood restaurant that is no more, a city that one inhabited temporarily, that through time, has lost its meaning. McClay and McAllister (2014) captured this phenomena through a common example that most everybody can relate to:

"Think of the strange emotion we feel when we are moving out of the place where we have been living, and we finish clearing all our belongings out of the apartment or the house or the dorm room – and we look back at it one last time, to see a space that used to be the center of our world, reduced to nothing but bare walls and bare floors. Even when there are a few remaining signs of our time there – fading walls pockmarked with nail holes, scuffs in the floor, spots on the carpet – they serve only to render the moment more poignant, since we know that

these small injuries to the property will soon be painted over and tidied up, so that

in the fullness of time there will be no trace left of us in that spot. (p. 4)

This exemplifies and brings to light the fluidity between space and place as a constantly

occurring reality in everyday life. Tuan (1977), considered a seminal scholar in the study

of phenomenology of place, has written about how the existential character of place often

attaches its meaning to one's sense of sight, sound, smell, and feeling. Which, can then

explain how not all places are perceived as equal and how "some places seem to us to be

more fully "places" than others" (McClay & McAllister, 2014, p. 5).

   Nissley's power of place. In the context of HRD, all of these explorations of

space and place can be used to examine HRD literature, with its key ideas and concepts,

with a fresh perspective. For example, Nissley (2011) created a theoretical framework

that demonstrates the power and importance in considering the place or physical location

in which learning and development take place. Nissley (2011) situated the study of place

as an underdeveloped HRD concern and calls for the acknowledgement of place as "a

powerful force that shapes adult learning experiences at work" (p. 546).

   Nissley's (2011) framework was motivated through an applied research forum at

the Banff Centre where HRD practitioners and scholars gathered to explore the role of

place in leadership development. The Banff Center is known for its natural beauty and its

mystical properties as the center is nestled within the Canadian Rocky Mountains.

Emergent from this research forum was a framework grounded in context-based adult

learning that "helps address the problem of the decontexualization of learning- suggesting

a link between learning and location- *about, in, from, and for*" (Nissley, 2011, p. 549).

The emergent framework suggested there are four ways in which contextual learning and place interact:

1) **Learning about a place:** this type of learning typically takes place when the learner travels to a specific place and engages with the local community and culture. Travelers can engage this learning by coming in contact with the local arts, cooking, music, language study, or community service within the respected place. This type of learning "focuses on preparing the students and teachers for life in an interconnected world" (Nissley, 2011, p. 550)

2) **Learning in place:** In this instance of learning, learners are again typically transported to a specific place. However, the focus of learning is no longer about the specific place, the focus of learning is about something else, and the place only serves as a vessel for that learning. Nissley (2011) exemplified this type of learning through an executive education learning experience in Gettysburg, the site of the Civil War battlefield. The learning experience was for business executives to learn about organizational behavior and leadership development, not specifically about Gettysburg. Learning in place is about using the physical geographical location to contextualize the learning of some other phenomena.

3) **Learning from place:** This type of learning is derived from the ethos and the attached meaning of certain places. These learnings are a product of the learner encountering a powerful experience of place. Certain natural places like the mountains, forests, or the dessert have been considered to have exceptionally significant attached meaning. These places aren't necessarily

universally unique and certain people may have more attached meaning to certain places than others. Nissley (2011) summarized this type of learning, he said: "all of us have how powerful experiences of place, whether in a remote and isolated spot of natural beauty or in the midst of a crowded and busy built environment—places where we have come to discover a reality greater than ourselves" (p. 551).

4) **Learning for a place:** The final mode of learning requires no travel at all. Learning for a place is about "leaning to tackle critical issues of sustainability and community development in the actual context in which the learners are living" (Nissley, 2011, p. 552). This type of learning reinforces a sense of belonging to a certain place or community and an obligation to both. This type of learning is prominent in the literature on place-based research in education (Gruenewald, 2003a; Nissley, 2011).

Nissley's (2011) constructed theoretical framework brought congruency between the concepts of learning and place and offered possibilities for the field of HRD to more closely consider the places in which its practice occurs. Further, Nissley (2011) specifically highlights the ability for natural places of wonder and awe to be considered fruitful and beneficial for a variety of learning and development processes. This consideration has ramifications for a number of HRD related topics including adult learning, leadership development, training and development, organizational change, among others.

Gruenewald's critical pedagogy of place. Similar to Schwartz (2014) and hooks (1992; 2003b), Gruenewald (2003a; 2003b) examined space and place through a critical perspective, however he focused explicitly on how these contexts mediate the learning processes. Specifically, in Gruenewald's (2003a) work of synthesis he shows how place-based education and critical pedagogy as two conceptual fields were brought together to form a "critical pedagogy of place" (p. 1). This concept, put in a learning perspective, can become a framework to be used to examine learning contexts, environments, and understanding distributions of power and other sociopolitical realities.

The connection between place and learning is not new. The fields of experiential education, place-based education, and context-based education have used this assumption as a foundational understanding in practice and theory. However, many of these fields have neglected the use of critical perspective in exploring the idea of place (Gruenewald (2003a). The meshing of critical pedagogy and place based education was brought together by Gruenewald (2003a) and it is through this lens that we can investigate place as a critical issue in education. This conceptualization begs questions such as: What does it mean for women to live, work, and exist in places that are conceptualized and constructed to create, nourish, and perpetuate patriarchal dominance? What does it mean for American Indians to learn and develop inside universities and organizations that have been established and structured on stolen and occupied land?

In this sense, to create an accurate understanding of a place we must examine place and its different layers of meaning. Gruenewald (2003b) wrote about the importance of reading place through layers as well as the human agency in creating places, he stated:

"The gradual process of taking our socially constructed places for granted is deeply pedagogical. We fail to recognize that a place is an expression of culture and that it represents the outcome of human choices and decisions, that its present state is one of many possible outcomes. When we fail to consider places as products of human decisions, we accept their existence as noncontroversial or inevitable, like the falling of rain or the fact of the sunrise." (p. 627)

Gruenewald (2003a) extended beyond a traditional, static, and linear understanding of place to conceptualize place as historical, political, alive, and complex. Further, Gruenewald (2003a) promoted human agency through the idea that the present state of place is only one of many possible outcomes and the outcomes are directly influenced by human choices and decisions. In this way, we are all creators of place. Gruenewald's (2003a) understanding of place created great potential for pedagogical use in supporting adult learners and collectives to engage in the co-creation of place.

Critical Spatiality

The terms space and place are used and understood differently in scholarly disciplines since the ancient Greeks at least (Casey, 1996; Cresswell, 2004; Gruenewald, 2003b). In critical geography, the term 'spatial justice' is used to investigate the displacement of marginalized communities through gentrification, segregation and privatization (Grande, 2015) and the use of political tactics such as redlining and food deserts (Bowers, 2001). In some critical perspectives in education, space and place are used typically to help understand both physical and social geographies of power, privilege, and hegemony (Cresswell, 2004; Gruenewald, 2003a; Schwartz, 2014). Space and place are conceived of as having a variety of substantive effects on emancipatory

adult learning structures and processes making powerful use of space/place/time as ideas, concepts, and research variables through a critical perspective (Freire, 1972; hooks, 2003b; Horton, et al., 1998).

Land versus property. The distinction between land and property is critically important to understanding larger theories of place and for practicing place-based research. This distinction highlights how land, or geographical space, holds different meanings to different people. Sandy Grande (2015) called into contrast a traditional American Indian way of understanding 'land' versus a European-Settler understanding of 'property'. Here, and most places, language is powerful and carries with it historical and contemporary contexts. Specifically, Grande (2025) refers to a contemporary European-settler approach to property having its conceptual roots embedded in colonialism and privatization. Grande (2015) highlighted numerous laws, policies, and court rulings ranging from Johnson vs McIntosh, The Indian Removal Act, and General Allotment Act, all of which took place within the United States during the 18th century, and all of which had direct, explicit effects of colonization through the control and distribution of geographical space (pp. 58-62). Grande's (2015) historical tracing informed us that the political and social foundation that has created and perpetuated exploitation through control of land, is imbedded in race, power, and colonization. However, Grande (2015) also acknowledged that this very same battle wages even today in the fight towards sovereignty and self-determination for indigenous peoples.

Grande (2015) used the distinction between land and property as a critique of critical scholars that utilize a strict Marxist lens. This critique was aimed at the socialist conceptualization of equal and fair land distribution and western anthropocentrism.

Grande (2015) captures this critique through directly posing the question: "How does the egalitarian distribution of colonized lands constitute greater justice for indigenous peoples?" (p. 66). In this context, by perpetuating European-Settler language and rhetoric around geographical space as property, critical scholars have the potential to define the process towards emancipation and liberation while leaving out the perspective of indigenous communities.

Grande (2015) continued to point out the potential problematic creation of the grand narrative around property and western anthropocentrism. Grande illustrated the importance for critical theorists to move beyond an anthropocentric view of the world, she said:

> Critical theorists account for the state of the environment as an extension of social justice issues, the Western human–nature dichotomy is ultimately retained. In contrast, indigenous pedagogies tend to dispense of the human–nature dichotomy and construct nature as a sovereign entity in symbiotic relationship with human subjectivity. Consequently, I argue that as long as the political project of critical education fails to theorize the interrelationship between human consumption, capitalist exploitation, and the struggle for "democracy," it will fail to provide emancipatory pedagogies that are sustainable and pertinent for the global age. (p. 7)

Proceeding this analysis, Grande (2015) tempered their critique against critical scholars in acknowledging that not all practitioners follow a strict Marxist ideology. Grande (2015) payed homage to critical scholars and practitioners of revolutionary pedagogy and their framework around capital, free-market ideology, privatization, and

commodification. These understandings serve as an important mode of inquiry for indigenous communities, as well. Conclusively, Grande contends that a critical perspective that frames scholarly work within a grand narrative of property, capitalism, or anthropocentrism, in and of itself, cannot be universally emancipatory.

Borderlands. In Gloria Anzaldua's (1987) book *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza* they presented the concept of a "borderlands culture". The physical border referred to in this work is the United States/Mexican border. However, the presented concept of borderlands culture goes far beyond physical borders to include "wherever two of more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the spaces between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (p. x). Through this work, Anzaldua (1987) explored the borderlands of race and class, psychological borderlands, sexual borderlands, and spiritual borderlands. Borderlands can be understood as an edge or an overlap where identities aren't dissolved but where new and more complete ways of being and understanding are formed.

Anzaldua's (1987) troubled the idea of place and its meaning to the mestiza people by examining place through cognitive, spiritual, and physical ways, sometimes calling upon all three within the same sentence. Anzaldua (1987) captured the complexities and intricacies of place when they wrote: "I have been straddling the tejas-mexican border, and others, all my life. It's not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions. Hatred, anger and exploitation are the prominent features of this landscape" (p. 23). Here, Anzaldua (1987) referred to place in a cognitive sense and symbolized her feelings of growing up on colonized lands as a feeling of being "alien" (p.

18). The alien place as being uncomfortable, never comfortable, but familiar. For Anzaldua (1987), born and raised within the borderlands was a process of finding home in the alien landscape.

Anzaldua (1987) described in detail the features of her homeland, the valleys of south Texas. Through this description they implied how the features of the landscape, the people, and the music are all a part of the borderlands culture. The valley, like all other places, is complex and historical and Anzaldua (1987) highlighted this when they said: "If I look real hard I can almost see the Spanish fathers who were called "the cavalry of Christ" enter this valley riding their burros, and see the clash of cultures commence." (p. 110). Anzaldua (1987) understood their homeland to have survived colonization and possession by five different countries: Spain, Mexico, Republic of Texas, the confederacy, and the United States. It has survived Anglo-Mexican Blood feuds, lynchings, burnings, and pillage. Anzaldua (1987), the Mestiza people, and the land on which they live "are stubborn, preserving, impenetrable as stone, yet possessing a malleability that renders us unbreakable, we, mestizas and mestizos, will remain." (p 86). Anzaldua (1987) further illustrated this declaration through their short poem:

But the skin of the earth is seamless.

The sea cannot be fenced,

El mar does not stop at borders

To show the white man what she thought of his own arrogance,

Yemaya blew that wire fence down.

This land was Mexican once

Was Indian always

And is,

And will be again (p. 25)

Storytelling and Narrative Work

Story telling has been used to transmit histories, culture, and knowledge since the earliest of civilizations (Boje, 1991; Brown, 2006; Livo & Rietz, 1986; Maguire, 1998). Stories have been one of humanities most dominant forms of passing knowledge, meaning making, and intergenerational communication. Story telling is a way to situate oneself, and others, socially, politically, and across time and space. Stories and narratives emerge in a wide variety of contexts and situations, organizations are one specific place bound context in which they occur.

Storytelling in organizations. The literature on storytelling within organizations is robust and multidisciplinary and can be conceptualized as the narrative "metaparadigm" (Masterman, 1970, p. 65) which includes scholars from a plethora of fields "whose work is informed by or centers on narrativity" (Fisher, 1985, p. 347). Boje's (1991) seminal work on organizational storytelling conceptualized organizations as storytelling systems. Through this work, Boje (1991) critiqued the literature on organizational storytelling as having predominantly stripped the stories from their context and environment in which they occur. Organizational storytelling has primarily been concerned with the content of work related stories and the worker motivation for sharing these stories. Less focus has been given to the socio-political environment, dynamics of power, and the physical spaces in which these stories are shared. Though Boje's (1991) work has been around for some time, his dominant critique of the literature surrounding organizational storytelling still stands true today (Hulst & Ybema, 2020).

Hulst and Ybema's (2020) recent study on the setting-specific approach to organizational storytelling addresses this critique by examining how organizational stories are situated and contextualized. These authors created a typology that delineates organizational stories as happening through four situated discourses:

1) Meeting-room talk

2) Workstation talk

3) Canteen talk

4) Closed-door talk

Each one of the four situated discourses is conducive to producing a certain type of discourse or story within the organizational context. In creating this typology, Hulst and Ybeme paid special attention to the physical spaces and the types of people that made up each situated discourse.

From life stories to life histories. Stories are always embedded within contexts, structures, and environment. Goodson (1995) contended that the way we narrate our own stories is by internalizing a dominant story line, or a "prior script" (p. 95). Goodson (1995) further clarified that this dominant story line or script is: "A script written elsewhere, by others, for other purposes" (p. 95). These scripts are formulated through accumulated experiences of socialization with other people, media, and the greater social-political environment. Goodson (1995) emphasized the importance and potential usefulness in telling stories within the context of teacher education and development. Goodson (1995) claimed that storytelling can be useful to educators by giving them the time and intentional space to critically examine their own narratives as to how and why they have become the educator that they are. This allows for the examination of one's

"prior scripts" and the opportunity to alter the trajectory of the stories to come. In addition, telling teachers' stories within power relations and dominant structures can remind us that stories are not socially, culturally, nor politically neutral.

Goodson also offered a critique of the literature that relies on narrative and stories. He cited how oppositional discourses, like narrative inquiry, have achieved some success in moving the barometer of power but too often the work has lacked grounded and integrated "linkages to cultural, political analysis" (Goodson, 1995, p. 97). Goodson (1995) warned that stories alone are not enough and that they should be viewed as "the starting point" (p. 98) to a collaborative process of making meaning. In light of this, Goodson's proposed that educational research shift from examining 'life stories' to 'life histories' because cultural, political, and historical analysis matters deeply. Goodson (1995) said: "We need to move from life stories to life histories, from narratives to genealogies of context, towards a modality that embraces stories of action within theories of context" (Goodson, 1995, p.98). In following this line of thinking, Goodson (1995) contended that stories and narrative work are extremely useful tools, but they cannot be an end within themselves. Stories, in order to be useful, must be placed within a social, political, and historical context.

It's important to note that stories can be useful and used as the basis of learning as either nonfictional or fictional stories. Scholars and authors have utilized fictional stories, science fiction, and Afrofuturism to take readers beyond the bounds of society to be able to reimagine new ways of living and being in relation to one another. bell hooks (1991) calls this type of work "critical fictions". Fictional authors like Toni Morrison and Octavia Butler have been seminal influences for many theorists and practitioners of

narrative inquiry, CRT, and forms of narrative research. hooks (1991) pays homage to fictional imaginings and the power in reclaiming one's imagination away from the confinements of modern societal structures and systems. This essence is captured by hooks (1991) when they positioned fictional stories as a "practice of hope", they said: "in oppressive settings the ability to construct images imaginatively of a reality not present to the senses or perceived may be the only means of hope" (p. 55).

Story telling as professional development. Johnson and Golombek (2002) introduced storytelling and narrative inquiry as a possible professional development strategy for teachers and educators that could be used to reflect, learn, and develop pedagogically. The authors argue that through narration and stories, teachers can construct and reconstruct their identities as teachers. In these ways, they have the opportunity to be able to better understand their habits and patterns as facilitators and to be able to identify consistencies or inconsistencies. Johnson and Golombek (2002) argued that storytelling and narrative work positions teachers as "legitimate knowers, producers of legitimate knowledge, and as capable of constructing and sustaining their own professional development over time" (p. 3). Professional development, framed in these ways, empowers teachers to orient their everyday lived realities in the classroom as powerful and worthy of investigation. Here, the utilization of stories and narrative work has a way of acknowledging the workers mundane, every day, organizational practice as significant. This acknowledgement ultimately allows for a deeper meaning of praxis for facilitators and educators.

Traditional teacher education research and training has traditionally being dominated by "outsider" or "objective research" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002).

Storytelling as professional development within the field has the potential to remedy this. Teachers often feel left out of conversations of policy or theory that dictate and influence their lived realities in the classroom. In regards to educational theory and policy, Johnson and Golombek (2002) claimed that: "teachers often view theory, crafted in the language of the theorist, as a finished product about which they have no right to negotiate" (p. 7). Therefore, using narrative knowing as professional development for educators not only has the potential to foster individual development and growth but has the potential to include an entire workforce in the conversations that dictate the places in which they work.

Counterstories. As much of social reality is constructed, an object, an event, or a story can be described in many different ways. One way that critical researchers narrate a series of events is through telling counterstories. A counterstory is a story that brings discomfort, crisis, or transformation to dominant discourses. Counterstories were first coined as a concept by Derrick Bell and the other founders of Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1976). Narrative researchers, among others, utilized critical storytelling and counterstories as a way to push back against dominant paradigms, grand narratives, and structures of power. Telling a counterstory of the "outgroup" that has been neglected and ignored is a way to broaden social reality and a way to work towards curing the dominant discourse or public perception of ignorance, misconception, and violence (Delgado, 1989; hooks, 2003a). Counterstories inherently reallocate power to the margins and are helpful to groups of people whom have not been given the chance to tell their own stories.

Counter stories are useful for disrupting dominant ways of knowing. Delgado (1989) said that counter stories "are a powerful means for destroying mindset" (p. 2413) and can be used to illuminate shortsighted, self-serving, or harmful beliefs. In doing this, readers are giving the opportunity to rewire their thinking and the possibility to give up a privilege that is discursive, material, and epistemological. Though Delgado (1989) framed counterstories as destructive, he highlighted that they destroy in a regenerative, productive way. Framing counterstories as "regenerative" illustrates the potential to not only break down dominate ways of knowing, but to then build and open space for more inclusive stories. In these ways, counterstories destroy and decimate as a means to then build anew.

In her seminal work, *The Oppositional Gaze,* bell hooks wrote about the importance of counterstories and utilizes them regularly to contradict and push back on the dominant discourse. It is an important differentiation that hooks (1991) makes to remind us that representation is not equivocal with counterstory. For example, just because an educator or a scholar may queer identity or be concerned with queer notions of gender and sexuality in schooling, does not mean that they take up a counter narrative, a story that brings discomfort, crisis or transformation to dominant discourses. Hooks (2003a) furthered this distinction in her work by troubling the distinction between representation and transformation. In doing this, hooks (2003a) sought to empower the reclamation of a gaze which has been historically situated as threatening or dangerous. To hooks, the oppositional gaze was a rebellious act that cultivated a power to look, to see, and to enable black female spectators to imagine and construct their own dialogue with their own voice. In this work, hooks countered a historical and racial phenomena that has

been used to suppress and illustrate black people as dangerous and inhumane. Through counterstory, hooks aimed to reclaim the oppositional gaze and recalibrate the phenomena as an act of rebellion, resistance, power, and creativity.

Counterpublics. An important principle of critical storytelling is to acknowledge and disrupt the dominant discourse and to then work against it by broadening and producing a new reality and knowledge. In these ways, critical storytelling or counterstory, can be understood as *counterpublics*, a term used by Nancy Fraser (1990) and Michael Warner (2002). For Fraser, counterpublics was a "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). Both Fraser and Warner used counterpublics to categorize oppositionist social groups that actively push back on dominant ways of knowing by using counterstories and counter discourses, among other strategies. Fraser (1990) and Warner (2002) used the term "publics" to represent social groups that follow and perpetuate dominant discourse and ways of being. For Warner (2002), the public was "a kind of social totality" (p. 65), in which its limits and taken-for-granted discourses are always not fully known.

Collective Learning

Collective learning has been presented in the literature as a central concept to the field of HRD. Within the field, collective learning has been conceptualized and theorized through a number of perspectives, this section will illustrate and differentiate between the varying understandings. To start, Garavan and McCarthy (2008) conceptualized collective learning within the field of HRD as a broad term that embraces a number of

other field related concepts such as team learning, communities of practice, organizational learning, and strategic learning. Garavan and McCarthy (2008) positon collective learning as "dynamic and cumulative in nature" and involving the "social interaction, the leveraging of relational synergies, and the development of shared understanding and meaning" (p. 452) between group members.

Processes of collective learning are typically presented in the literature as planned, structured, and organized processes of learning within an organizational setting. Alternatively, others conceptualize collective learning processes as emergent, unplanned, and organically occurring (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). Garavan and McCarthy (2008) define collective learning as a process that "involves conceptualized shared inquiry, negotiation, critical reflection, and a cognitive rethink of the core assumptions of the collective. It is envisaged as an open integrative process where personal worldviews, assumptions, and mental models are free exchanged and probed" (p. 457). In these ways, collective learning can be understood as a social process of learning that emerges from the complexity of our differences.

In Capello's (1999) study of the spatial transfer of knowledge he positioned collective learning as "a social process of cumulative knowledge, based on a set of shared rules and procedures which allow individuals to coordinate their actions in search for problem solutions" (p. 162). Capello's (1999) offered definition further situated collective learning as a "process of cumulative local know-how" (p. 162) that is differentiated from other forms of learning through its explicit focus on the social environment which mediates the learning process. The term "collective", in this context, can be understood as being both cumulative and interactive (Capello, 1999).

1) **Cumulative**: Over time, processes of collective learning form an accumulated body of knowledge. Collective learning is a fluid process in which the co-created body of knowledge is continually (re)constructed through time and through the continuation of these learning processes.

2) **Interactive**: Knowledge and information is shared and transferred between individuals within the group. The co-creation of knowledge and meaning occurs through an interactive, social process. These interactions occur between group members, between group members and the organizational context, and between group members and the geographical context, or place, in which the collective learning occurs.

The outcomes of such collective learning can be understood as being both cognitive and behavioral in nature (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008) and can result in new shared ideas, strategies, rules, or policies (Heikkila & Gerlak, 2013; Sadler-Smith, 2006).

From a different perspective, Kilgore (1999) proposed a theory of collective learning that can be used to describe learning processes within social movements, social collectives, and other non-traditional organizational contexts. Kilgore (1999) conceptualized collective learning as being at the epistemological intersection of critical theory and postmodernism as a way to make sense of how groups engage in collective action to defend or promote a shared social vision. Kilgore (1999) highlighted how theories of individualized learning such as self-directed learning are inadequate for understanding learning processes as forces for social change. Alternatively, collective learning for social change necessitates a theoretical underpinning that focuses the context

in which the learning occurs, the embeddedness, and the larger socio-political environment.

Intentional Communities

The concept of an intentional community is not unique to this study nor new. Intentional communities can be found dating back to the earliest of recorded histories. Homakoeion is considered one of the earliest forms of intentional community and was developed by Pythagoras around 525 BCE in what is now southern Italy (Metcalf, 2012). Homakoeion consisted of a few hundred members and was inspired by intellectuals and mystics. Little is known about the operations and governance of the community other than the group became strict vegetarians, dissolved private property, and sought to create a utopia (Metcalf, 2012). Other early intentional communities include the Cathars in the eleventh-century, the Waldenses in the twelfth-century, the Brethren of the Free Spirits in the thirteenth century, and the Anabaptists in the sixteenth-century. The first intentional community recorded in the United States, the Swanendael, was established in 1663 by Mennonites fleeing persecution in Europe. Today, it is estimated that there are over 3,000 active intentional communities in North America alone (Wallmeier, 2017).

Across the vast history of intentional communities they can be seen in a wide variety of form and function, some more benevolent and some more destructive. To obtain some congruency between the different forms, Metcalf (2012) offers an encompassing definition of intentional communities as:

> Five or more people, drawn from more than one family or kinship group, who have voluntarily come together for the purpose of ameliorating perceived social problems and inadequacies. They seek to live beyond the bounds of mainstream

society by adopting a consciously devised and usually well thought-out social and cultural alternative. In the pursuit of their goals, they share significant aspects of their lives together. Participants are characterized by a "we-consciousness," seeing themselves as a continuing group, separate from and in many ways better than the society from which they emerged. (p. 21)

Further, various criteria of what constitutes an intentional community has been debated in the literature. The most cited are the following seven characteristics (Jansen, 1990; Meijering et. al, 2007; Miller, 2015; Pitzer, 1997):

1) No bonds by familial relationships only

2) A minimum of three to five adult members

3) Members join voluntarily

4) Geographical and psychological separation from mainstream society

5) A common ideology that is adhered to by all members

6) Sharing of (a part of) one's property

7) The interest of the group prevails over individual interests (p. 42)

During the nineteenth century, an explosive influx of intentional communities, numberings in the hundreds, were formed across Europe, North and South America, Australia, and New Zealand. This can be accredited largely to the theorists and academics of the time writing and advancing the literature around utopianism. The concentrated focus on utopianism was predominantly influenced by people of this time looking for answers to a wide range of social, economic, and political problems stemming from rapid industrialization and the globalization of the capitalistic market (Metcalf, 2012).

Modern and localized intentional communities. The United States experienced its own localized influx of intentional communities between 1950 and 1970. At the beginning of the 1950's there were only a handful of intentional communities and by the 1970's there were thousands. It is estimated that over 500,000 people in the United States participated in intentional communities through this time period, leaving their old lives behind in search of a new way of living and being with one another (Wallmeier, 2017). This era is marked as the "great communal tidal wave" (Miller, 2015, xiv) and was spurred by the baby-boom generation coming of age within a post-war era. The civil rights movement, the war in Vietnam, and the war on drugs created a socio-political environment that had citizens actively resisting societal norms and searching for places to live out societal and communal beliefs that weren't represented in the current society.

The timeframe of 1950-1970 is dubbed the 'hippy era' within the literature on intentional communities. This era, and the ensuing intentional communities, are heavily critiqued within the literature for being exclusive and practicing critique through escapism. Much of the intentional communities of this era considered the United States and the surrounding socio-political environment as unmalleable and beyond repair. Due to this, these groups weren't as concerned with changing societal norms, policies, and laws as they were with removing themselves from these structures to live out life as they saw fit. As a result, many of the intentional communities of this time were regarded as "private, exclusive clubs of white middle-class people" (Wallmeier, 2017, p. 160). Wallmerier (2017) further problematizes this era of intention community by classifying them as "a middle class indulgence, not a serious choice for those who are ready to roll up their sleeves and get into the trenches to battle hierarchy, oppression, and social

injustice (p. 166). Through this era, the vast majority of intentional communities practiced escapism by withdrawing from conventional societal and living structures. Much fewer intentional communities of this time were concerned with organizing, learning, and living together as a way to create larger societal or global change. This is a predominant contrast to how intentional communities are largely formed today.

More contemporary intentional communities of the twentieth century are marked by a transnational phenomenon and globalization (Wallmeier, 2017). These more modern communities are typically described as "intentional communities", "ecovillages", or "co-housing communities" (Wallmeier, 2017, p. 162). These more recent communities are readily organized around global issues of poverty, capitalism, and environmental justice. Today's intentional communities are interconnected, there is open communication between communities, and often have more rigorous membership vetting. Though, modern intentional communities still practice forms of escapism, they are much more readily attached to and concerned with societal and global change than previous eras. However, even as intentional communities have attempted to address critiques of earlier eras, the problem remains that modern intentional communities are largely still a middle-class, white, indulgence.

Summary

The bodies of literature and scholarly work highlighted in this literature review provide the academic scaffolding and theoretical backing to ground the subsequent sections of this study. The next chapter will provide a detailed understanding of how a narrative-based approach will constitute as the foundation of this interpretive case study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will present the research design, data collection, and data analysis of this study. In addition, the historical and geographical characteristics of the research setting will be presented, as well as, an introduction to the research participants. Each section of this chapter was used to examine how community members at Camp made meaning of vocational calling, collective learning, and a sense of place.

Research Design

The research method of choice was a qualitative case study designed with narrative methods. The data that informed this study consisted of over 300 stories, 14 hours of interviews, 21 days of observational data gathered via field notes, photos, documents, and historical artifacts. Combining the case study methodology with narrative methods allowed for meaning to be made across multiple data sources and for the exploration of the realities as understood by Camp community members and interviewees. As a living community, it was ever-changing and the research strategy had to be appropriate for this, as well as for the vicissitudes of memory, sources, and the multiple "political" interpretive actions of the collective over time and across perspectives.

Qualitative case study. Sharan Merriam (1998) defined qualitative case studies as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (p. xiii). The capacity of case study research to use multiple data sources is a hallmark of the methodology and acts as a form of data credibility (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). Each data source acted as "one piece of the puzzle" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 554), which were merged

together during the data analysis process to give a holistic and more complete understanding of the phenomena at hand.

This study was designed as an interpretive case study because it was useful and effective for exploring "people's lives, the social and cultural contexts in which they lived, the ways in which they understood their worlds, and so on" (Merriam, 1998, p. 22). An interpretive lens was best suited to be able to interpret and make meaning of vocational calling, the collective learning process, and the contexts of space and place. One result of this study was a biography of the Lives Worth Living Camp as an institution and as a free space for building community; who the community members were, how they came to be, and to place significant historical moments and actors within the same frame.

Narrative methods. In this study, stories and life narratives were a primary source of data and narrative methods were employed to create consistencies between the research design, data collection, and the data analysis. The data collection, interview protocol, and analysis were grounded in narrative methods that allowed community members to speak to the stories and experiences that were important to them. My positionality within the Camp community consisted of a duality of roles as both researcher and community member. As a researcher I was tasked with stepping back to observe, listen, and document. Simultaneously as a community member, it was my role to take part in the everyday communal negotiations and to take up a position in the story circle in which I shared my own stories of happiness, anger, and fear. This was meaningful because relationships and community can only be built through mutual reciprocity and collective understanding. Within this duality it was important to position

myself appropriately so as to be able to "slip in and out of the experience being studied" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 82), so as to not stray too far while simultaneously not getting too close.

In performing narrative research there is a constant tension between how close or distant the researcher remains from the participants and the experience at hand (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). When narrative researchers are in the field "they are never there as dis-embodied recorders of someone else's experience. They too are having an experience of the inquiry that entails the experience they set out to explore" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.81). One role of a critical narrative researcher is to intentionally create space for participants to make connections between the ways in which their personal narratives are positioned within ideological contexts. Barone (2007) noted, "For storytelling to be an ethical undertaking there must be an attempt to make obvious the connections between political forces and individual lives, connections not always immediately obvious to those whose stories are being told" (p. 457).

Storytelling and narrative inquiry have been utilized as a methodology, an analytical tool, and a strategy for gathering data. The social sciences have been applying narrative methods for some time in sociology (Richardson, 1990), anthropology (Geertz, 1996), education (Clandinin, 2019), Indigenous studies (Bruchac, 2003), psychology (Polkinghorne, 1988; 1995), and organizational studies (Czarniawska, 1997). In the literature, Donald Polkinghorne's (1988) *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* and Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) *Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry* can be seen as seminal contributions to establishing narrative as a serious method of inquiry.

The literature on storytelling and counterstorytelling is robust and multidisciplinary. In Critical Race Theory (CRT), counterstories are one of the five central tenets (Bell, 1976) and its practitioners utilize stories as a way to create meaning and produce knowledge. In CRT, stories and narratives also serve additional purposes such as healing, liberation, and to disrupt dominant discourse. Narrative inquiry and CRT have given way to a more focused concept within the literature called critical storytelling. Influential works like bell hook's (1991) *Narratives of Struggle* and Barone's (1992) *Beyond Theory and Method: A Case of Critical Storytelling* are seminal works that have successfully weaved together critical studies and narrative knowing. In addition, scholars in post-paradigm research have utilized narrative inquiry as a research method within postmodern and post-structural perspectives (Beaton, 2014; Kennedy-Lewis et al., 2016).

Research Setting

Lives Worth Living Camp is a residential community education retreat offered by the University of Minnesota. It was first held in 2000, and operated for 17 consecutive years until 2020, when Camp was canceled due to COVID-19. Camp was designed and instructed by a core group of instructors who have remained actively engaged since the first course. Dr. Alvin Jones was the original creator and innovator and has remained the professor of record for the majority of the camp's tenure.

The idea of Camp came to fruition through an experience of radical adult education at the Highlander Folk School. As part of this study, Dr. Jones was interviewed while at Camp. On one of the first days we sat together out in the prairie as Dr. Jones recounted his motivation and inspirations for creating the camp 17 years prior. Dr. Jones described how he returned from his trip to Highlander as a changed professor with a new,

more intentional, pedagogy. After his experience at Highlander, nearly every class Dr.

Jones taught included the educational practice of story circles. Pedagogically, Dr. Jones

had a radical awakening at Highlander that forever changed him as an educator and as a

person. There, he experienced forms of participatory and community based development

classes and workshops that centered the narratives and lived realities of people it aimed to

serve. These experiences demonstrated the power of story, narrative, and listening as

means of social change and community building. This experience was the motivation

behind the inception of Camp and it was how it was modeled thereafter.

Since its fruition, Camp has been in a consistent state of change and evolution

adapting to University and environmental changes. The egalitarian structure of the

instructor circle has increased the capacity to adapt and change as the social and political

environment necessitates. Though Camp has been structured differently over the years

there are core pillars that have remained consistent and have provided the same

scaffolding since the beginning. Some of those foundational pillars are:

1) The use of daily community story circles

2) Cooperative engagement of communal activities such as grocery shopping,

cooking and eating every meal together.

3) Negotiating communal chores and living duties (i.e. cleaning, dishes,

composting, gathering eggs from the chickens and vegetables from the garden).

These three foundational pillars have been a mainstay of every Camp over the 17 year

tenure. Characteristics such as the number of community members and instructors, time

of year, length of stay, and story circle prompts have all varied greatly over the years for

a variety of reasons.

A sense of place. Geographically, Camp takes place on Shalom Hill Farm – a 26.5 acre active farmstead located in the southwest corner of Minnesota near the town of Windom. The original founders of the farm, Mark and Margaret Yackel-Juleens, created an introductory video in 2012 called *Shalom Hill Farm: Place as Teacher.* In this video, Mark and Margaret communicated a shared vision to create a "place that invites you to slow down, to take a deep breath, and to be able to be open to our calling in life" (Faith+Lead, 2012). Shalom Hill Farm was constructed in the late 1980's on a 26 acre century old farmstead. In 1992, the farmstead was transformed into a retreat and meeting center for local farmers and ministries to spend time together and put on workshops concerning rural, agricultural, and religious education.

The farmstead was located 12 miles north of the nearest town of Windom, down a long dirt road. The majority of the 26 acres consisted of different mowed pathways through the prairie and natural grasslands. Each route was uniquely named and brought visitors through a different ecosystem of the prairie. The farmstead was surrounded by wildlife preserves, farm fields, and valleys of prairie grass as far as the eye can see. Three sides of the property bordered state wildlife preserves, allowing for accessibility to 100's of acres of prairie.

The multiple building structures on the property were surrounded by tall pines and hardwoods acting as a wind block. These buildings consisted of multiple living structures, farming buildings, and fields for livestock and gardens. From an interview in May 2012, Mark and Margaret spoke about how they find joy and purpose in watching visitors "enjoy interacting with the rest of the community, not just the people, but the

land and the animals, the flowers, the prairie grasses, and the butterflies" (Faith+Lead, 2012).

This retreat center was composed of multiple living structures, most prominently is an 18 bedroom housing facility named "Prairie Spirit Commons". This specific structure was designed by an environmental architect to blend itself into the prairie landscape. Prairie Spirit Commons was constructed by John Lyle, an architect that specialized in practices of environmental and sustainable design. This building was partially earth sheltered and the structure was built into the hillside in stair step fashion, descending down the south side of a large prairie hill. From this vantage point, a person may view both the sunrise and the sunset as well as having the ability to track storms rolling in from the west. The tiers of the building draped down the steep prairie hill side, matching the gradient, so that the two were in unison. Each tier had an exterior door with a landing overlooking the valleys of bluestem and junegrass. The entire south side of the building, all five tiers, was riddled with windows. In addition, multiple wood burning stoves were available that allowed for warmth and ambiance on chilly days. Just outside the kitchen was an efficient composting system that allowed visitors to utilize bio-mass fuels as a practice of sustainability.

Prairie Spirit Commons was designed to house groups or communities and was intentionally built to put guests in spaces conducive for group interaction and comfortability. Common rooms such as the library, kitchen, and the dining hall were large circular rooms with high ceilings and natural light. Nearly every room in the entire building had one or more doors to access the outside, usually equipped with a landing pad to be able to sit, relax, and listen. The high number of entrances and exits to this building

allowed people a sense of freedom and autonomy. The ability to be able access so many entrances/exits allowed for the dissipation of any feeling of confinement or limitation. Community members had the ability to choose their doorway based upon a number of factors including, whether or not they wanted to be seen. The space was designed with intentionality and purpose to build community and foster creative collectivity while still allowing individual autonomy.

From within the Prairie Spirit Common building, one could see a range of natural and agricultural happenings including rural cropping, DNR wildlife and nature restoration projects, pastor lands, and prairie. The building itself was immediately surrounded by garden beds that contain many of the herbs and vegetables consumed at Shalom Hill Farm. This edible landscape was intentionally built into the property to allow people the opportunity to connect with concepts of sustainability and environmental impact by seeing and harvesting the food they eat.

From space to place. It is often found that the students participating in Camp have never been to Shalom Hill farm, the town of Windom, or even to this southwest corner of the state. Due to this, the students had no "sense" of this place. They had no attachment to, value associated with, or experience of this place. In some occurrences, students that grew up in the state of Minnesota, or surrounding states, made spatial sense of Shalom Hill Farm by locating it regionally. Before actually setting foot in this place, these "locals" regionally located Shalom Hill Farm within the agricultural zone of the state and associate it with the tall grass, the northern prairie, or the prairie lakes region. Yet, knowing a space "regionally" is much different than obtaining a more local "sense of place". Due to its size, a region is "too large in any sense to be a locale, especially

insofar as a locale implies a concrete place that one experiences and knows directly"
(McClay & McAllister, 2014, p. 226). For most students, Camp was just somewhere "out
there" or "south of here" – somewhere out in space. Through three weeks of existential
living, learning, and engaging with the local, this "space" began a transformational
process into "place".

Research Question

The larger research question guiding this study was: *How is meaning made on
vocational calling, collective learning, and sense of place.* This larger research question
gives shape to a sequence of more focused, derivative interview questions. Together these
shape and direct this study of the Lives Worth Living Camp. The derived interview
questions are categorized below.

1) **Historical/biographical context:** How did Camp come to be organized as a
   residential living/learning experience? How has the experience of Camp
   impacted you pedagogically?

2) **Vocational clarity:** Have you become clear(er) about what matters to you in
   a deep way since you have been at Camp? Before you came to Camp what
   was/were the most important concerns you had about yourself, friends,
   family, and beyond; and now?

3) **Collective Learning:** What has your experience been in negotiating
   communal identity, responsibilities, and priorities? How is this type of
   learning different than you typically learn? What has it been like for you
   sharing this space with others?

4) **Sense of Place:** What senses does being in this place evoke? What have you seen? Heard? Smelled? Felt? What has your experience been interacting with the local community and the places we have visited?

5) **Retrospective:** Looking back, how do you make sense of your experience at Camp? Looking back, how are you different now? Have your friends or family noticed any changes?

Data Collection

Throughout this study data was collected through a variety of sources including story circles, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, organizational and historical documents, records, and pictures.

Story circles. In total there were 18 story circles that took place, each one consisting of 16 participating community members. Each story circle typically lasted between two and half and four hours. Ultimately, approximately 55 hours were spent within story circles over the course of three weeks listening to over 300 stories. Story circles were recorded via field notes and were used as primary source of data.

Every morning at 8 a.m. the entire community gathered in the library in a large circle where a pre-determined story prompt was given to the group by the instructors. Each community member was given an opportunity to tell a story based upon the day's prompt or could "pass" by deciding to not tell a story at that time. There were no time restrictions regarding stories but community members were asked to be conscious of allowing others adequate time to share. Typical story length was between five and ten minutes.

The data that emerged from story circles illustrated our storied identities and provided the context and grounds for which community members made sense of their own

experiences (Manen, 1990). For the purpose of this study, the story circles provided life narrative and context that was then cycled back through the semi-structured interviews and daily conversations that helped create a deeper understanding and meaning. Daily story circles and semi-structured interviews informed each other as a data source which allowed for clarification, triangulation, member checking, and more in-depth investigations. The 18 different story prompts used are listed below in chronological order starting with the first day of Camp as number one:

1. Tell a story about a time you went out on a limb or stepped outside your comfort zone

2. Tell a story about a time when you surprised yourself or others

3. Dig back in your memory when you discovered a practice/routine/discipline that has become important to you

4. Dig back in your memory and tell about a specific time in which music played a significant role in your life

5. Tell a story about a place that has significant meaning in your life

6. Tell a story about a time you had to unlearn something.

7. Dig back in your memory and tell a story about how you hold or remember something that is important to you.

8. Tell a story about a duck-rabbit in your life

9. Tell a story about an education experience outside of the traditional classroom

10. Tell a story about a time when you surprised yourself or others

11. Tell a story about a time that your confidence shifted

12. Tell a story about a time when you were your best self

13. Tell a story about a pivotal moment in a friendship or relationship

14. Dig back in your experience of Camp and tell a story about how you are different here than at home

15. Dig back in your memory and tell a story about a particular time in which you asked for help, or you didn't ask for help when you wish you had.

16. Tell a story about a time you took a stand or wish you had.

17. Tell a story about a particular person that shows their important value in your life

18. Tell a story about something that you recognized that you need in order to live a good life

Story circle prompts were co-created every morning by the instructors and apprentice instructors in a one hour meeting. Story prompts and their usefulness were recorded at the end of each year and recycled into the current year in opportune times. Story prompts were often deliberated over for lengths of time taking into account multiple factors such as the previous day's story circle, the current day's planned activities, or current themes within the community. Each prompt was chosen democratically, by vote at the end of the meeting. By viewing the prompts in chronological order a trajectory of the story circles became clear. The story prompts began more general, easing community members into the practice of storytelling. As Camp progressed, deeper prompts, inquiring of more pivotal life experiences are offered.

Interviews. The primary research instrument was individual, semi-structured interviews. Interviewees were selected from three distinct levels of the organizational structure of Camp: Students, Instructors, and Apprentice Instructors. All three levels of interviewees had distinct interview format and questioning best suited to investigate and

interpret that level of participant's particular experience, perspective, and foci. In total there were a total of 13 audio recorded, semi-structured interviews. Of the 13 interviews, 4 were Camp instructors, 2 were apprentice instructors, and 7 were students. Interviews ranged between 34 minutes up to one hour and 54 minutes. The difference in interview length was a product of the interviewee's willingness to articulate their experience and also the limitation of available time around communal events and happenings.

In addition to the 13 audio recorded semi-structured interviews, there were multiple in-depth conversations and interactions each day with community members that were recorded via field notes. These interactions occurred individually and in groups and took place during meal time, while doing chores, walking through the prairie, or anywhere in between. These unstructured dialogues and conversations were both a direct source of data and also allowed for the building of trust and rapport between researcher and community member.

Interview setting. The interview setting was negotiated through conversation with the interviewee based upon comfort, time of day, and scope of questions. Of the 13 total interviews, 3 took place within the Shalom Hill Farm study. The study room was a circular room filled with books and places to sit and was a familiar space because it was the place where all of the communities' story circles took place. A further five interviews took place in my office, often times because it was the quietest place on site. Finally, five interviews took place outside on the farm or in the prairie. Interviews outside on the farm induced the senses. Hearing the birds and goats, smelling fresh cut grass or the chicken coop, and feeling the wind off the prairie allowed for the evocation of a sense of place.

Data gathered through interviews was placed against data gathered from participant observation, documents, notes, records, and pictures for means of validation.

      Three series interview model. The three series interview model is a series of interviews with an individual participant in which the series of questions and focused conversation becomes increasingly in-depth as the model progresses (Seidman, 2013). Due to the participatory and immersive nature of this study, the data collected from community members was a series of story circles, semi-structures interviews, and unstructured dialogue. The principals and concepts of the three series interview model were used in these dialogues, conversations, and semi-structured interviews to first build rapport and trustworthiness and then to be able to dive deeper into the subject matter as the experience progressed. In addition to the ascension of interviews, earlier interviews and conversations were printed and revisited at later dates to be able to reflect, member check, and make deeper meaning.

      The three series interview model was expanded upon by Polkinghorne (2005) "to allow both the interviewer and participant to explore the participant's experience, place it into context, and reflect on its meaning" (Seidman, 2013, p. 11). As part of the three series interview model, the focus of the initial interview is to become acquainted with the interviewee and to develop rapport while also outlining the area in which the interviewee will be asked to explore. Time in between interviews allow the interviewee's ideas to percolate and create a more focused and robust second interview. The third interview consists of follow-up questions, points of clarification, as well as any new information that may be presented. Through this interview process, explicit attention is paid to how narratives change over the course of the interviews. In utilizing the three series model in

this study, I was focused on three different dimensions of change: 1) narrative change 2) narrative re-interpretation of change 3) researcher interpretation of change (Lewis, 2007).

Retrospective interviews. To gain a retrospective and temporal understanding of the experience of Camp a subset of the original sample of community members were informally interviewed in the subsequent year after Camp had ended. Three of the original Camp community members moved in together shortly after the camp had ended. Bryan, Dylan, and Alex rented a house together and had begun Wednesday night story circles in their new home. These three community members didn't know each other before meeting at Camp but formed a strong communal relationship over the three weeks. The three of them and their other roommate, who had no relation to Camp, got together every Wednesday evening for a story circle within their living room followed by a communal meal. They rotated each week who cooked the "family" meal. The three of them reached out to me and asked if I wanted to join, I accepted on multiple occasions and used data gathered at these story circles and meals to begin to understand how meaning is made of Camp over time. From these experiences, data was gathered and analyzed to interpret the temporal aspects of the experience of Camp and how it was, or was not, continued through future choices, activities, and experiences.

Pictures and documents. Documents from the camp, especially photographs taken during Camp were utilized in interview settings to elicit memories and experiences for the use of reinterpretation through a retrospective lens. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) referred to these physical artifacts as "memory boxes" and conceptualized them as "items that trigger memories of important times, people, and events" (p. 114). These memory boxes were utilized in this study as "a rich source of field texts for the

construction of social narratives" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 115). Photographs were taken and used concurrently during the research project. Photographs were shown to community members in semi-structured interviews and casual conversation to evoke memory and co-create meaning of experiences. In addition, pictures were utilized to make meaning during data analysis process.

Participant observations and field notes. The observation of community members was nearly a constant process of data collection throughout the three weeks at Camp. Participant observation allowed me to record the mundane experiences expressed through actions, expressions, and happenings. This allowed me to record not just what was said, but how something was being said and to be aware of what the interviewee's body and voice was saying. This data primarily took the form of field notes which acted both as a source of data and also as way to distance myself, as a researcher, from the phenomena at hand. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) summarized how field notes can "aid the inquirer to move back and forth between full involvement with participants and distance from them" (p. 80). Through the production of field texts, I was able to remain agile enough to efficiently move between my dual roles as researcher and community member.

Data Analysis

Due to the emergent nature of this study, narrative analysis was chosen as the method of analysis. After data collection was finished, the five most fruitful and detailed interviews were identified and transcribed by hand. The remaining eight interviews were transcribed via online service Otter. Once all the data was gathered and transcribed,

Saldana's (2015) five-step analyzation method was employed to create codes, categories, and themes.

Narrative analysis. Data was analyzed using narrative analysis. Through this process, data was transcribed, coded, categorized, and put into themes. Merriam (1998) defines the data analysis process in qualitative case studies as "the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning" (p. 178). Both Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) claim that during qualitative case study research data collection and data analysis should happen simultaneously and that the "analysis becomes more intensive as the study progresses, and once all the data are in" (Merriam, 1998, p. 155) to account for the emergent nature of the research.

In this study, data analysis and data collection took place simultaneously. Every morning, Camp began with hours of story circles and observational data gathering, sometimes this was followed by additional data collection in follow up conversations or interviews after the story circle ended. Often times, story circle had produced multiple data points or stories that were unique, contradictory, distinctive or indicative of a larger theme. Due to this, post-story circle and late in the evenings were times I found to be most conducive for beginning processes of initial data analyzation. In this process of analyzation I created short memos by putting these data points gathered throughout the day up against each other and data from the previous days to be able to make deeper meaning of what was occurring. These forms of daily data analyzation helped calibrate myself as a narrative researcher and allowed myself to remain responsive to the next

day's data collection and analyzation. This created a circular and interconnected relationship between observational data, field notes, and memos and that informed one another.

      Saldana's five-step analyzation method. After all of the data was collected and transcribed, a five-step analyzation method constructed based upon Saldana's (2015) work, was utilized work to analyze the data. This five-step method is a non-linear, cyclical analyzation process. In this process, the researcher comes back to re-work codes, categories, and themes at different times throughout the analysis as different concepts and ideas emerged. This form of analysis is conducive to interpreting qualitative data that is emergent and fluid, such as narrative or stories. The five-step method used is as follows:

      1) **Sensitizing myself with the data:** In the initial step following data collection, all data including transcripts, relevant field notes, analytic memos, organizational and historical documents, and pictures were read through to better situate myself in relation to the data. This was a brief overview of the entirety of the collected data which resulted in myself becoming more thoroughly acclimated to the data.

      2) **Associate codes:** The next step was a deeper dive into the data and where the initial coding of data began. A code is a word or short phrase that represents or captures the "datum's primary content and essence" (Saldana, 2015, p. 4). I coded the data using 1st level descriptive methods including affective coding methods (Saldana, 2015). Affective coding names and investigates the "subjective quality of human experience (e.g. emotions, values, conflicts, judgements)" (Saldana, 2015, p. 24). This method of coding allowed for a more precise understanding

regarding perspective, worldview, and life condition of the Camp community members.

3) **Associate categories:** Categories were derived from the code work done in the previous step. Creating a category was a process of synthesis in which I consolidated meaning from the coded data (Saldana, 2015). The process of constructing categories was a fluid process and that was revisited throughout different steps of the analyzation process, as was the code work. In addition to creating categories, this step included individual narrative analysis where I begin to interpret and understand the rhythms and trajectory of the community members. Using self-descriptions and biographical information, stories, conversations, and field notes I began to form a clearer picture of whom some community members were, what they cared about, and why they were the way they were.

4) **Associate themes / linking concepts:** This was the primary explanatory phase of my analyzation in which I focused on the relation between categories and between themes, i.e. how the categories of "place" and "community" intersect. I sought to explain the relationship and interaction including convergences and divergences between categories/themes. This step required analyzation across the data.

5) **Assertions / overall memo:** The final step analyzed the relations found in the previous step to end up with some form of assertions or "conclusions". In this interpretive form of research an objective "conclusion" is not a feasible deduction. Rather, I planned to progress from the particular to the general and to end up with

assertions that propose "a summative, interpretive observation of the local

contexts of the study" (Saldana, 2015, p. 15). This step will also include my own

impressions and limitations of the work, as well as, questions for future research.

The five-step analyzations method used for the purpose of this study is illustrated below

in figure one.

Figure one

Saldana's Five-Step Analyzation Method
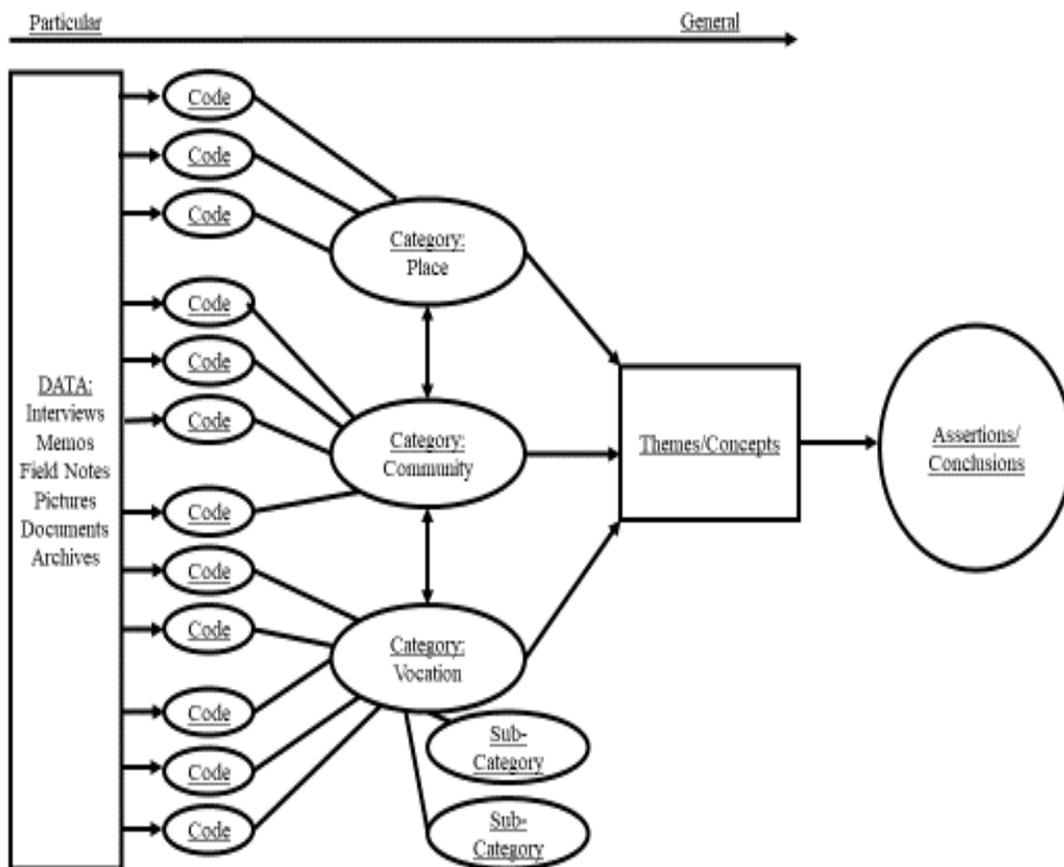
Member Checking. In interpretive qualitative research the inquirer has a responsibility to ensure that the data gathered is accurate, valid, and reliable. Member checking (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lather, 1991; Reason & Rowan, 1997) is one strategy that is commonly presented to do this. Lather (1991) considered member checking to be "operationalized by recycling description, emerging analysis, and conclusions back through at least a subsample of respondents" (p. 67). Member checking was performed regularly throughout this study. As meaningful stories were told and initial interviews recorded, first level analysis and coding were cycled back through community members to assess the reliability, validity, and transferability of the data gathered. In addition, I presented emerging analysis and assertions back through a portion of the sample. These strategies and concerns are some of the steps built into the research design to build reciprocity through a mutual negotiation of meaning and power between researcher and community members.

Community Members

There were 16 total community members that participated in and informed this study. Six of them identified as female and the remaining ten identified as male. Of the 16 community members, 11 identified their nationality as United States, with the remaining five identified members reported nationalities from Thailand, Oman, Canada, or Iran. All 16 members were engaged and present for the entirety of the data collection, lasting three weeks and all 16 participated in daily story circles, community building, and daily conversations and dialogue. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 of the 16 community members. Below is a table illustrating the demographics of the community members in this study:

Table one

Community Member Descriptions

STUDENTS		
PSEUDONYM	**GENDER**	**NATIONALITY**
Kiri	Female	Thailand
Alex	Male	United States
Dabir	Male	Oman
Daniel	Male	United States
Jawhar	Male	Oman
Peter	Male	United States
Leah	Female	United States
Sam	Female	Canada

APPRENTICE INSTRUCTORS		
PSEUDONYM	**GENDER**	**NATIONALITY**
Dylan	Male	United States
Brian	Male	United States
Amaya	Female	Iran

INSTRUCTORS		
PSEUDONYM	**GENDER**	**NATIONALITY**
Grace	Female	United States
Alvin	Male	United States
Teddy	Male	United States
Luke	Male	United States
Jennifer	Female	United States

Summary

This chapter detailed the methodology of this study by presenting the research design, research questions, and methods that were utilized in conducting this research. In addition the data collection and data analyzation processes associated with this study were illustrated. The research setting was described in detail so that the reader can make sense of the attached meaning of place in the subsequent chapters. The next chapter will present the data and findings from this study.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the study in the form of a collection of stories, conversations, and interpretations that began during a three week, shared, lived experience and extended for several months after the formal Camp had ended. These stories, some of which represent deeply meaningful and personal accounts, were part of a process of building both individual relationships and a community.

This chapter provided a critical interpretative examination of the perspectives of the thirteen community member's experiences of Camp and focuses on the collective processes of burning and regrowth; of making meaning of self, community, vocation, and place. Narratives, stories, field notes, and observations were placed in relation to one another while an acute focus is given to inflection points, convergences, and contradictions. Stories, conversations, and actions were deciphered just as thoroughly as the silences, pauses, and inactions. This chapter began by looking at how the experience of Camp disrupted and was wedged into the participant's normal ways of being. Next, I pivoted to highlight how community was built and negotiated at Camp, and finally, I illustrated how place acted as an incubator for generating deep meaning of the participant's everyday lives.

Combustion: The Burn

Driving to Shalom Hill Farm on my day of arrival at Camp I was met with clouds of dark smoke billowing into the air. The smoke was visible from miles away, I knew it was close to the farm. I was concerned, alarmed, and even a bit afraid. As I got closer I could see the native grasses and wild flowers, as far as the eye can see, being transformed into fields of char and dust. Fumes of dark smoke swirling in the air illuminated against

the backdrop of a clear, light blue prairie sky. A vivid contrast; a wondrous spectacle; a symbol of what was to come.

Figure 2

Trial by Fire

Fire is a restorative and natural prairie process used to rejuvenate the landscape. Historically, fire has been a natural occurrence that allowed for a more nourished and plentiful eco-system. The burning of a biome forcibly removes the nutrients and resources from the grasses, plants, and trees and returns them to the earth in the form of ash. A radical redistribution of resources that stimulates new growth, creates a new, more vibrant, and diverse environment.

The original indigenous inhabitants of the land occupied by Shalom Hill Farm have had a great understanding and respect for this place and used controlled fires to replenish the earth and all that it provided to sustain life. The Ioway, Otoe, Cheyenne, and the Dakota are a few tribal communities who call this geographic region home.

Human interference (particularly, European settler interference) has significantly decreased the occurrence of natural fires. As we take on the sacred responsibility of starting our own fires, it is clear that we must be intentional with what we burn and we must be thoughtful and demanding of the seeds that we sow.

In Minnesota's boreal forests, jack pine (*pinus banksiana*) and aspen (*populous tremuloides*) are two of the fastest growing, most dominating species to regrow after fire. They use an extraordinary amount of resources from the soil as their growth outpaces other species of the ecosystem. These trees grow fast and tall with expansive canopies that block out the sun, stifling growth for the other species beneath. Across eons of evolution, these trees have learned from and adapted to fire. The jack pine produces seratonous (resin-filled) cones that are only activated and spread once the resin is melted from exposure to extreme heat. Amidst the fire, the jack pine has learned how to proliferate and regain the advantage time and time again.

Camp, like a controlled burn, is experienced by its community members as a process of rejuvenation and transformation. It is a learning space intentionally structured to allow for the acknowledgement of people's own internal and external landscapes and ecosystems. It is a process of healing. As many members alluded to, Camp is a time to throw one's whole selves upon a canvas; a time to interpret one's experiences, upbringing, beliefs, passions, and vocation. It is an opportunity to learn meaning and greater understanding of the self through storytelling and building community with others. Participating in such learning processes while simultaneously engaging with and interacting upon a natural and storied landscape creates layers of opportunity for meaning to be made. This process mirrors aspects of how the Highlander Folk School, Quakers, as

well as many other examples of radical grass-roots organizations have come to gain a deeper sense of the importance in caring for each other and the earth.

Narrative disruption: The wedge. Community members noted that Camp was a space and place where they were motivated to examine their own stories and their own self narratives. A prominent pattern that arose from the data was the rigorous interrogation, by community members, of their own ways of living and being. These self-interrogations often lead community members to examine past experiences of childhood or their upbringing and how these experiences affected the person they are today and whom they aspire to be in the future.

The experience of Camp acted as a wedge, driven into the dominant narrative or image of how community members perceived themselves and allowed for some form of reexamination. This was a planned aspect of Camp, as Professor Teddy described, "The normal ways of doing things are intentionally disrupted to know whether one wants to continue life in those ways. This machine is doing what the machine is designed to do." The Lives Worth Living Camp; a wedge, jammed into the normal operating machine of life.

A participant's common line of self-questioning occurred internally and privately through mediums of thinking, writing, and reading and, it happened externally through dialogue and story circles. Questions such as: Who am I? How have I become the way I am? Do I have an adequate amount of fulfilling relationships in my life? Are there folks in my life I can express my deepest thoughts to? These were all questions that students confronted at some point throughout Camp. Students agreed that 'back in the rat race' of their everyday mundane lives it is difficult to find the time, motivation, or space to

interrogate the deep questions of self, community, and vocation. Students acknowledged that increased levels of student debt, rising rent and living costs, western individualism, and dwindling employment projections were some of the reasons as to why the deep questions of self and vocation were underdeveloped.

It is important to note that community members did not come to Camp void of the answers to these questions, on the contrary, it was quite the opposite. The answers to these deep questions of life were found to be entrenched and normalized, they were easy answers; answers that had been rehearsed time and time again within the psyche. There was found to be little to no interrogation of the validity of these answers or stories. Multiple community members referred to this as the idea of "wearing a mask". Camp provided the space to acknowledge these masks, and at times, the wedge was deep enough into the mundane that community members were inspired to temporarily remove their masks.

Sam spoke to this theme of narrative disruption and mask wearing in telling her stories about joining and being a part of a sorority. Her stories of sorority life came out early during the first week of Camp, as most closely held narratives tended to be displayed early within the first few days. Sam spoke of feelings of unease and anxiousness of being away from her social scene, of not having the need or opportunity to "dress up". Back home, Sam thrived in social settings. She felt most comfortable when going to bars with her sorority sisters, going to frat and sorority formals and parties, she navigated these social settings with ease and grace. She was worried about being so far away from that life, she was concerned about the thoughts and activities that would take

the place of her busy social life. She wore this anxiety on her body and it came through in her daily conversations.

To join the sorority, Sam had to go through a long interview process, she "had to dress up at 4:30am and go through a dozen separate and consecutive interviews." Each time, making sure her hair, makeup, and attire were pristine. In preparation for the interviews, Sam said she "constructed an appealing narrative about myself that appealed to both the interviewer and myself." Sam acknowledged that her narrative had tracings of authenticity and vocational properties but, more than anything, it was crafted to "appeal" to the world and to the sorority members sitting across the table. Sam told the interviewers that she wanted to be an immigration lawyer having experienced a fairly easy immigration process herself, coming from Canada, she wanted to pay that forward to people who won't have as easy of a pathway. Sam referred to it as "the perfect narrative to get recruited and to satisfy my own internal anxieties." This self-narrative of immigration lawyer was one that Sam had used to validate her own worth to herself, her friends and family, and her community ever since the sorority recruitment process. This was the story she told herself day in and day out; it was a story that had evolved into a well-rehearsed and solidified narrative. Sam referred to this narrative as a "mask that temporarily relieved internal and emotional anxiety" one that also acted as a "barrier from what I really wanted to do and from intentionally thinking about these things".

Sam, like many other community members at Camp, had strong, rehearsed, and palatable answers to questions of self, career, and vocation. But, without the space or the tools to deeply and genuinely interrogate these answers, they served as a "mask" and a "barrier" to forging answers that could be more meaningful and fulfilling. As Camp

progressed, Sam became visibly more comfortable in her everyday clothes. She began to breathe life into her other ways of being outside of a sorority sister. The subjects and contexts of her stories and conversations changed over time to include less sorority life and more examination into her stories as a daughter, sister, and friend. Sam began having deep conversations with other members of the group about how she has become the way she has. Sam was taking off her mask.

Just as firefighters wear masks for protection from the intensity of the fire, so did Sam. Her mask allowed her to breathe easy, to walk through the flames, but to come out unscathed. She was conditioned to answering the difficult questions of life with easy, simple answers. Wearing this type of mask is not unique, everyone does in some capacity. To sit within the flames with no protection is uncomfortable, painful; it's an agonizing process. A process that we have been trained to avoid. But, it is evident that in order to live out a genuine life of authenticity, truth, and happiness, we must learn to find comfort amidst the uncomfortable. We have to learn to take our masks off and breathe deeply, filling our lungs with smoke. Stay calm, don't panic, keep breathing, there's healing in this, Sam.

Story circles: Fire needs oxygen. Community members consistently communicated experiencing feelings of love, empathy, and power as a result of participating with the story circle process. In many instances, stories were shared that aren't often shared, while some were spoken into existence for the very first time. These stories had often been internally realized however, there is a special chemical reaction that occurs when a story is oxygenated and shared with others. Community members spoke about the power in being able to see their own stories hanging in the air, Bryan

said, "Like you see it, you can literally see the story in air. It's really cool". The process
of sharing the stories of their lives was a way for community members to make sense of
their own life experiences. It was a way to understand how they have become the way
they are and to then determine how they want to be in the future. Bryan went on to say:

> The primary thing that I like about story circles is that you are speaking
> something into existence that you typically keep inside. And when you speak
> through something like that, it's almost like going through the fog or a cloud that
> often muddies our mind, especially when we get rumination and stuff or we think
> about bigger, important things. It's kind of lifted for a moment. And you can see a
> situation or a story for what it is, like see, maybe a deeper underlying value or a
> deeper thing that pushed you to do something or held you back.

Community members, like Bryan, found power and meaning through airing their stories.
They gained a deeper perspective of the experiences that have shaped their life. They
began to feel more comfortable being exposed and vulnerable, they were learning to sit
amidst the intensity of the flames.

A seemingly random set of individuals were able to build deep and meaningful
connections to one another over a relatively short period of time. Reaching these levels of
intimacy so quickly was largely accredited to the communal process of sharing and
listening, deeply. The practice of story circles was found to be extremely useful for
building relations, intimacy, and vulnerability. Teddy made meaning of this phenomena,
he said:

> Telling stories seems to be part of a process that is useful for people. It sets a tone;
> it starts certain things going. I don't think we know what we're doing. There isn't

an academic theory of why these stories work. I think one of the things that naturally happens is that if you hear a certain kind of story from somebody, maybe about three of them you start to like that person, I think the Christian word that is the right one, you start to love that person, naturally. Love as the early Christian communities discovered, experientially makes a lot of things possible that non-love blocks, that indifference blocks.

Here, Teddy spoke about love as a possible outcome of story circles done right. A reciprocal process of affirmation; a process of seeing and being seen. Genuine life stories being met with deep listening and empathy. The deep sigh of relief that came just after sharing a meaningful story and the eyes and hearts around the circle that said 'I hear you, I acknowledge you, thank you for sharing'. Within the circle, as community members let their own light shine, they unconsciously gave others the ability to do the same. Teddy pushed further his idea of love and positioned it as a historical and important process, he said:

So if you can get love going without turning into boyfriends and girlfriends right away without it turning into, you know, some sort of strange soap opera. It's a matter of getting the temperature under the pot right. I think one of the things that's happening is that we get love going then, all sorts of healthy developmental stuff more or less happens. The problem is you can't say this very cleanly in pedagogical language but it's all over the history of communities that actually made stuff happen, communities that explosively changed everything.

Stories, and the sharing of them, has been happening since the beginning of time. Indigenous peoples around the world, the ancient Romans, and nearly every culture in-

between have found usefulness in storytelling. More present-day organizations including of the Highlander Folk School and the Quakers have used stories more pointedly to examine lived experience and engage in meaning making in an effort to understand the past and offer guideposts to the future. Further, more dominant structures of organization like corporations, non-profit, and for-profit organizations have begun utilizing story telling in processes of organizational change (Brown et al., 2009), professional development (Johnson & Golombek, 2002), and leadership development (Auvinen et al., 2013). These were some of the foundational ideas and models that allowed the Lives Worth Living Camp to exist and endure for over 17 years. At Camp, story circles acted as a structural processes that allowed for and were conducive to vulnerability and affirmation that had evolved into instances of radical love amongst strangers.

It's important to preface that story circles are not inherently positive nor transformational. Context, support, and the ways in which this process is performed matter deeply. For the last 17 years, Alvin had always taken on the role of introducing the practice of story circles to the Camp community and every time he did, he emphasized that "Silence is ok, you contribute as much by listening as you do by speaking". Another community member, Dylan, reiterated the need for support and affirmation within the story circle in stating that: "In order for this process of story circles to work well, levels of vulnerability must be matched or exceeded by the level of support". To Dylan's point, it was when the community was unable to support a certain level of vulnerability, or did not have the agility or capacity to meet someone where they were, that allowed for the possibility of negative experiences to take place. These types of instances typically arose when there wasn't

enough space for affirmation or cross talk as a result of running out of time or community members showing up to story circle tired or exhausted.

Story circles had a way of meeting people exactly where they were and can be practiced in a way that directly conflicts with normative and dominant forms of classroom learning and traditional student/teacher roles. Bryan captured this essence by saying:

> The circle format contributes to that so much. It eliminates these things found especially within formal classrooms. It eliminates the authority figure, someone that's directing, telling you how to think or what to do, and levels everybody out and it's just a discussion and a dialogue. People feel like everyone's sitting at eye level. People feel equal. Part of it naturally just strips away these barriers that we have to sharing ourselves because we're all at the same level. We're all meeting each other at the well, you know, like, meeting you where you're at.

This way of learning challenged white, Western, individualistic ways of knowledge production and success. It allowed the community member whom spent his afternoon chasing grasshoppers and braiding sweet grass in the prairie, to be just as acknowledged and deemed 'successful' as the person who wrote an entire symphony within the same time frame. The community members felt this, they acknowledged it, and they appreciated it.

Inflection point: Self-immolation. One particular story circle acted as an inflection point within the community. It was week two, the middle of Camp, and people had begun to settle in. At 8:00 a.m. we were gathered in the common room in a large circle, like we always were, awaiting the morning story prompt. The story circle prompt

that morning was 'Tell a story about a time in which your confidence shifted'. A few stories in, Alex shared a very vulnerable story that had been weighing on him for years. Alex's story set off a chain reaction of community members sharing very deep, meaningful stories. His story was met with affirmation and radical love. Alex shared a story of a mistake, something he was ashamed of, and a story he doesn't talk about openly. His story opened the door for others to follow, and they did.

Everyone has a story of being ashamed, of making a mistake, and these are the stories we often keep guarded by lock and key. After years of confinement beneath a weighted blanket, Alex was momentarily released. He explained his feeling in saying,

I felt a weight lift because I definitely feel like a lot of my struggle comes from my inability to communicate with others and fear that they will not except me and will have negative reactions. I'm just trying to do my best. I shared that story of making a mistake and being misunderstood, and like, people could have chosen not to vibe with it but, they did, and they just sent love my way. It was really fucking transformative.

After this story circle, community members joked that whenever it was somebody's turn to share their story in the circle, they always had two stories: "one from their mind and one from their heart". One easy story to tell and one difficult story to tell and you had to choose which story to share. Alex shared the difficult story and he gave others the space to share their own.

I wasn't present within this inflection point story circle as we often split into two circles to allow more time for cross-talk and affirmation. I remember walking up from the lower landing after our own story circle had finished that day and I was met by a palpable

energy in the air. Alex and his story circle group were vibrant. I could hear it in their voices, they were singing, and I could see it in the ways they moved. They weren't walking, they were floating. They were light, full of energy, with a new found zeal in their eyes.

I didn't know why, but I knew something radical and transformative happened in that story circle. Alex described it as, "One of the more poignant moments I've had in my life thus far." This was one example of community members acting authentically and being vulnerable while met with support, affirmation, and a radical love that allowed other members to open up, to take their masks off, and to be seen. These type of events, if even just momentarily, allowed new and radical ways of being in relation to oneself and others.

Reclaiming masculinity: Sowing the seeds. Brian was participating in Camp for the second time as a student. He said that he came back to Camp because he was "figuring out what I'm looking for. That's why I'm here. To interrogate my narrative." From an early age, Brian developed a special connection to music. Music and singing together were a medium for him and his single mother to communicate through and they found collective healing in music. Brian described it as "a time for my Mom and I to go through life together, not answering the phone, but being together." Brian loved to sing and developed his voice. However, somewhere in middle school, Brian discovered that it wasn't "cool" or "popular" to sing. So, Brian started watching ESPN, he started wearing basketball jerseys and getting involved in sports. He quit choir and took business and finance electives because it was "the right, practical path". Brian found a new, more popular friend group; a group that played sports and didn't see music nor singing as a

valid, masculine outlet. As a result, he buried his connection to music; he hid his voice; he joined a fraternity.

Brian recalled experiencing internal resistance in coming to Camp for the first time. He recounted this resistance during an interview, he asked: "Do you ever have something that you know is the right thing, that this is something really good for you and, that it's what you should do. But before you do that, you just absolutely don't want to do it?" Originally, Brian experienced Camp as a burden. He could have spent his month of May back in his hometown, with his popular friends, working and making money. Instead, he would be stuck in the middle of nowhere southern Minnesota with a bunch of "nerdy, philosophical kids". Brian expressed his anguish during his first week: "I hated it for the first few days. I called my Mom and told her, 'this blows'. It's like the people, these people are so different for me. I don't know how I can ever be friends with these people." Brian was a long way from fraternity row. These weren't the people he was used to hanging out with. These weren't the types of conversations he was used to having. He struggled to connect socially, so he searched for other ways of connection:

> I just remember burying myself into everything that we could do here. I was in the
> studio doing art for the first time, I was in the kitchen baking almost every
> night… I found that I was starting to exercise muscles that I hadn't in a long time.
> This creative side of me that I had really stifled. So I think that was the first time I
> was really able to connect with something at the camp even though it wasn't on
> the social scene so much.

Even though Brian struggled to connect socially in the beginning of his experience, Camp allowed him both the space and time to ground himself through other

means, in this case, art, cooking, and music. Brian left Camp the first year with a clear understanding that he needed more creative outlets in his everyday life, as a result, over the past year he "started singing, singing more often." He found himself singing in his car daily, singing at home when his athletic roommates weren't there to hear him. Brian was still grasping with dimensions of conflict with singing as a masculine outlet, he was still worried about upholding his image of fraternity brother, athlete, and man. He expressed his concerns further:

> I don't want people to hear this or judge or like think something about it, you know? Because I live with one of my roommates who is like, you know, super athletic, goes to the gym every day. The other guy is the guy that I play basketball with all the time. Yeah, they like music too. They also don't listen to this type of music.

Camp illuminated certain passions and vocational properties that Brian had hidden from himself a long time ago. At Camp, Brian found the space and confidence to act on these discoveries, to bring them to light, and to share them with the world. This was exemplified through an experiences that happened during the second week of Camp: It was a bright, sunny day. Brian, Dylan, and I were lying on our backs, in the grass, looking up as the light intermittently shining through the tree tops. Our gazes were fixed upwards. We were discussing deep and personal topics of life such as families, hardships, sexuality, and masculinity. We were acknowledging and making meaning of the stories we both heard and told earlier in the day. After over an hour of dialogue, we came to a comfortable silence, and with no prompting Brian began singing. He began in a very normal singing pitch. Slowly, the volume escalated, and after some time had passed the

volume had reached maximum level. Brian was singing with all his energy, his eyes were closed, veins on his neck were bulging, red faced, as he was belting out lyrics as loud as he could. The whole farm had to have heard him. A couple days later during an interview, I asked Brian to reflect on that moment, he replied with: "I've never done that before in my life. You know? I mean, like shit. I would have never, ever, ever done that shit. Doing that initially, was so uncomfortable for me. I was like yo... these guys like... like is this okay?"

This was a healing process for Brian; a process of self-liberation. Though, societal structures and norms encouraged Brian to hide his voice at a young age, the experience of singing on that day was an example of Brian letting go of deep seeded ideas of masculinity and vocation. This was him taking power back and momentarily reclaiming autonomy over his masculinity, ideas, and values. In that moment Brian reconnected with and paid homage to his inner-child. He later stated that, "I've never shared my voice this often, or in this way ever before… This place gives me the only space to sing, to really sing." Throughout the three weeks of Camp, Brian was very concerned with ways and strategies to infiltrate these new ways of being into his life back home. He wanted to bring back parts of Camp back home and integrate them into his everyday mundane life, he wanted to live out his new found masculinity; he wanted to sing again.

Building a Community: From a Spark to a Flame

Community and relationships were positioned at the forefront of participant's consciousness, in part, because Camp asked community to negotiate communal values and practices, and then to live out these agreed upon ways of being in relation with one another. Communal relationships were also intentionally centered within the pedagogy

through different ways, including story circle prompts that stimulated stories of community and relationship to others. In these ways, community members were given the opportunity to interrogate their own communities and relationships, or lack thereof. As a result of this, a common a line of questioning emerged that community members posed both towards themselves and the larger group. Some of the questions that arose were: "What are my communities?", "Who, in my life, can I tell anything to?", and "In a world of proximity, how do we create intimacy?"

Proximity versus intimacy. One of the most prominent and reoccurring patterns that arose through dialogue and interviews were community members acknowledging the importance of relationships within their different communities. Specifically, community members pointed out the importance of a having close, intimate relationships in their lives. It was important to them to have people in their lives to tell their stories to and to talk about the things that mattered deeply. Many community members admitted to previously understanding community as synonymous with neighborhood, city, or locale including groups of friends, family members, and people that engaged with the same extracurricular activities. After some interrogation into community members own relationships and reflecting on the idea of community, perspectives began to shift and a more complex, nuanced idea of community arose. Leah acknowledged an appreciation towards a new found understanding of community, she said:

Before Camp I did not realize the importance of community, consciously, I don't think I ever thought about that. Being impoverished is more than just about not having money. It's about lack of community. It's about lack of all these other resources that you as a person should have in order to live a good life. And

consciously, I never thought about that. Because having a community and having

people who are like minded, at least in one way, I feel like has always happened

for me. I never realized how crucial it is that you need to have those people that

you can ask the question, 'can we talk about anything?' It comes down to

proximity versus intimacy. I think about that every day.

Most community members acknowledged that they had an abundance of folks in close

proximity to themselves back in their everyday lives. They had friends, roommates, or

acquaintances they saw and engaged with regularly. They were active in clubs, sororities,

most of them held jobs and had no shortage of social events to attend. Proximity was in

abundance. What clearly emerged through the dialogue was that most of these

relationships within proximity were lacking intimacy. Most community members

admitted to not having adequate amount of folks in their lives to discuss and talk through

the deep, important questions of life.

     Community and culture. The majority of community members of white, Euro-

American decent had very similar reactions to the idea of community as Leah. There was

a strong consensus from community members born and raised in the United States, that

their existential reality within society made it extremely difficult to build or sustain

intimate relationships within their communities. These community members spoke of

how they have not given their communities much intentional thought or interrogation,

and when they had, they began to understand themselves as living life within a communal

deficit. As discussions of community arose and people were simultaneously negotiating

and forming the community at Camp it became clear that other ways of being in relation

with people is possible and could lead to a more fulfilling life. Community members

noted how unhealthy and suffocating it can be to live life in isolation. Isolation, not in a sense of proximity to people, but isolation in the sense of being guarded, restrained, and muted. Brian captured this essence when he said:

> I'll mention this again, the importance of being able to have vulnerable and intimate relationships, whether or not that be close friends or family or a community… You got to have some people that you can turn to and have this foundational thing with and I am just lacking that. I have some potential relationships that can be that, it's just about being able to be vulnerable. To be able to open it up, to take the relationship to that space. Because I recognize that there's other people are just as guarded as I am about things. On the other hand, some people just buy into the system of relation. Like where they get satisfaction from buying into what really comes down to superficial relationships. They vibe with it and they don't see anything else. I'm not satisfied by that. We have to be able to work through this burden of self-awareness around the lack of fulfillment in these superficial relationships. You know, that's why we're here. To be able to learn how to go deeper.

In contrast to the people of white, Euro-American decent, community members born and raised within other parts of the world were much more familiar with these concepts of community and deep, meaningful relationships. This was not new to them. They experienced these self-interrogations and the practices of building community as "reminding them of home". Jawhar said:

> You show that you care and you share what you have. And I don't know if you have this like in your family because I've never interacted with an American

family. But, this is what we do in our families back home. It's been really great and reminds me of home so much. Back home we talk when we eat, we talk to each other. We tell each other stories about what happened to us, what we need. What is really like going on, you know, what's up and stuff. So I never had that here in America. I've had it with some of my friends, but you know, like, not too much.

The contrast between different understandings of community based on ethnicity was palpable and clear. For Camp community members born and raised within the United States, the potential benefits of building community through dialogue, storytelling, and relationships had a quenching effect. They had lived most their lives isolated, starved, repressed of meaningful, deep relationships. They were raised within the nexus of individuality, competition, and western-capitalist modes of living. At Camp, they had the opportunity to discuss and live out these new ideals and became invigorated by the opportunity to transform their relationships and to build community. Leah expressed her new found appreciation for community when she said: "I never thought about how important community was before Camp but, do you ever have that thing? Like, when you discover something that you will remember for the rest of your life? Yeah, yeah, that's me with community." Community members, like Leah, were excited at the prospect of surrounding themselves with people that they could be vulnerable with and to be able to "talk to them about anything". They began to see many of their current relationships as not only inadequate, but hurtful and damaging, relationships that acted as a dark void that siphoned out their own time and energy.

For Jawhar, Dabir, Kiri, and other Camp members born internationally, interrogating community and living out communal ideals resulted in a feeling of home and comfortability. For example, Kiri said, "When I stay in this place, it just reminds me a lot of my hometown and the way I grew up and the relationships that I have in my family." As a result of the international community member's past experiences in living out communal relations, they took the lead on demonstrating and acting out communal practices and relationships. They were often the leaders in building and validating the community. They demonstrated, day in and day out, how these communal values can and should be lived out in mundane life by putting the collective before the individual.

Ramadan. Coincidentally, the three weeks of Camp occurred during the same time period as Ramadan. Two out of twelve of the community members, Dabir and Jawhar, observed Ramadan for the entirety of Camp. Both instructors and community members acknowledged early on the importance of making the Camp community inclusive and supportive to the two Muslim students observing. At the first instructor meeting, Teddy said, "how we react to and respond to the needs of our Muslim students observing Ramadan will define this year's Camp experience". As he was making this statement there were heads nodding in agreement all around the room. This was the 17th year of Camp, and the instructors knew that building and negotiating a community of seemingly random people is always going to be difficult, complex, and nuanced. Many Muslim students have participated in Camp over the years, but this was the first time community members at Camp had actively been observing Ramadan. The inclusion of Ramadan into Camp was acknowledged within instructor meetings as an important, powerful opportunity to create an inclusive experience for a community that is so often

marginalized within society and within normative spaces of learning and development. It was understood that with the right kind of intentionality, a rare and transcending community could be negotiated and built. Within the same breath, the six white, mostly Christian instructors, were very fearful of failing these two students by not building adequate structures of support. They were concerned about reconstructing a community, like many communities and educational structures back home that failed to prioritize the needs of their minority students. The first instructor meeting came to one solid conclusion: Before any community structures were built or negotiation, it was necessary to ask our two students observing Ramadan "What do you need to feel supported here?"

As a result of these conversations it was identified that the gathering, preparation, and eating of food at Camp is a sacred and central tenant of the experience, as it is with Ramadan. Both of these experiences involve eating meals together as a form of building community and developing relationships either with each other or with Allah. Instructors and students acknowledged early on that the dining hall and community meal times could be a potential place of inflection where negotiating community and Ramadan would intersect.

Intentions to create a comfortable and inclusive environment during Ramadan was brought up and considered at most instructors meetings. As a result of these conversations, there were a few changes that immediately took place the first week of Camp: First, instructors invited Dabir and Jawhar to address the group during story circle to acknowledge their observation of Ramadan and what that meant for them. Dabir and Jawhar happily accepted and addressed the group the next day, letting them know of their daily schedules of Ramadan. Dabir and Jawhar wanted the group to know that they might

be absent during certain times of the day to pray or to rest. They assured the group that they would still do their fair share of work when it came to cooking and cleaning, this was very important to them.

Second, instructors asked Dabir and Jawhar if they felt comfortable with other community members joining them for their after sunset meal. Dabir and Jawhar again accepted, and the entire community pushed dinner back one night of the first week to be able to eat all together. The same night that the whole community ate together, was Dabir's turn to do a nightly dinner reading of his choice. Dabir chose to read Albert Einstein's letter to Sigmund Freud titled "Why War?" After the reading, Dabir spoke briefly about the wars and destruction going on in Pakistan and Syria. He pointed out the United States involvement in the wars and explained how Western imperialist involvement only leads to an escalation of the localized violence.

Third, the instructors asked Dabir and Jawhar if they would like set up an evening to be able share their perspective and experience during Ramadan. They again accepted and took charge in setting up an evening in the library with the entire group. Dabir and Jawhar invited Lisa and Luke as well, the caretakers and executive directors of Shalom Hill Farm. Lisa was a Lutheran pastor at a church in Windom. They brought their two year old daughter, Addie, to the discussion of Islam and Ramadan. Addie had her own children's book titled "Under the Ramadan Moon".

There was a steady push by a small group of instructors to permanently move everybody's evening meal time, every day, to after sunset. This was brought to the instructor meetings as a way to include the Muslim community members in a very important part of Camp, eating together. This idea was brought to discussion many times

but ultimately was never mandated. The reason this idea never come to fruition was that people were concerned about the elderly instructors, pushing meal preparation and meal time too late into the night that they wouldn't be able to participate. This concern for the elderly Camp instructors was legitimate and thoughtful. This decision also begs the questions: Who are we building this community for? And, whose needs should be prioritized?

Based upon the equableness of the cooking/cleaning schedule, community members were cooking and doing dishes for at least one meal each day and heading to town for groceries once every two days, if they were efficient. Dabir and Jawhar gathered and prepared for every meal they were scheduled for, breakfast, lunch, or dinner, even as they weren't eating it themselves. They washed dishes every meal in which it was their turn, even though they didn't dirty a single plate. Though he didn't eat till after sunset, Dabir was in the kitchen, as much, or more than any other single person. His cooking team, with him at the helm, made a dinner one night of chicken and vegetable biryani with butter naan, a fruit salad with a side of chutney, and 84 oatmeal raisin cookies all from scratch. Dabir spent approximately 5 hours in the kitchen that day cooking, sweating, and laughing, while doing so he stated, "Cooking during Ramadan is the ultimate gift". Dabir stood behind the counter while this meal was being served, as he often did, and the rest of the group filed in line to grab their plates, buffet style. Dabir served the food and wanted everyone to get the right portions they needed.

Nearly every participant interviewed acknowledged the selflessness and communal mode of living that Dabir and Jawhar demonstrated while observing Ramadan. Instructors continually noted how the addition of Ramadan and the two observing

community members was a palpable and transformative learning experience for everyone at Camp. It was made clear through interviews and observations that the Camp community benefitted immensely from Dabir and Jawhar's participation.

Place: A Storied Landscape

Place, is temporal and fluid; it has histories, a present, and a future. To be in a place, means to experience a location as an accumulation of all its stories, histories, and inhabitants. Shalom Hill Farm is a place built upon a stolen and occupied land and no experience, conversation, or learning happens outside the bounds of this historical premise. The Ioway, Otoe, Cheyenne, and the Dakota are a few tribal communities who respect the region and consider it home and important to their tribal histories.

Fortunately for newcomers, Jeffers Petroglyphs were only 15 miles away from Shalom Hill farm and served as a powerful place to begin to understand the social and geographical history of the area. Jeffers Petroglyphs has a part of the Minnesota Historical Society's archaeology collection and has represented one of the oldest continuously used sacred sites in the world (Minnesota Historical Society, n.d.). These Petroglyphs are made up of a red quartzite rock face spanning 50 yards wide and 300 yards long with more than 5,000 different Native American symbols carved into them. The carvings record important events, stories, and depict sacred ceremonies.

To begin each year the Camp community has visited the sacred site as an acknowledgement and to pay homage to the rightful inhabitants of the surrounding landscape. This short trip has always taken place during the first week of Camp and has usually occurred an hour or two before sundown, just as the prairie sun is at the correct angle to illuminate the rock carvings. On a summer evening, the prairie sun progresses

into a gigantic burning globe that compliments and exposes the dark red quartzite rock. Acknowledging and engaging with the Petroglyphs historicized the place in which Camp happened and placed us as actors upon a storied landscape. The 5,000 different rock carvings date back to between 5000 BCE to 1750 CE and reassured us that our practice of storytelling is tried, true, and vitally important to the continuation of human life.

Figure 3

Jeffers Petroglyphs

As we walked through the hundreds of acres of native prairie grasses surrounding the Petroglyphs and came in contact with the bison rub rock, we were reminded of our place in time and space. The bison rub rock was a large rock that has rested alongside the Petroglyphs. For centuries, the bison rubbed up against this rock to rid themselves of their heavy winter coats or to satisfy an itch brought on by summer bug bites. The rock was smooth to the touch as the jagged edges and indents had been flattened out from the friction of countless buffalo hides. These physical experiences allowed us to be able to envision the indigenous, hide covered huts, built by the communities that once roamed

the prairie alongside the bison. Jeffers Petroglyphs is a sacred and spiritual place for multiple tribal communities and has been used as a place of ceremony and prayer to this day. As a community of people that were on our own journeys to interpret our internal landscapes and stories, there was an exchange of energy that took place here. Over the years, students have often been moved enough to revisit this site for a second or third time throughout their stay.

The prairie sky. There are few natural wonders more boundless than the prairie sky. The shallow, rolling hills, and sparse trees allowed the sky to be seen in its fullest form. A humbling experience that reminded the viewer just how little their place is within the universe. An experience that demonstrated the encapsulating presence, power, and vastness of the natural world. A characteristic of place that allowed the mundane problems of the world to dissipate, a place of non-judgement. Amaya related her experience of the prairie skies with the mysticism she experienced growing up underneath the mountainous skies of Iran, she said:

> It's an interesting experience for me as because I grew up in the mountains of Iran. Generally, everywhere that I am within the Kurdish region, I am bonded by mountains. I always had this feeling that mountains create this spiritual relationship to the sky and allows me to feel closer to the skies and somehow more removed from my daily problems. Somehow, I felt that they are very good for having mystical experiences. So, it was interesting for me to come here and start appreciating the prairie and having some of those same feelings when there are no mountains, you know the sky is boundless. The sky surrounds you in a completely different way.

Figure 4

The Prairie Sky

Community members continually expressed awe at the ability of the prairie to evoke their spirituality through an exchange of energy. They found that the prairie lands acted as an incubator to be able to work through their deep and meaningful questions of self, spirituality, and their relation to the earth. The prairie provided a space to ask those questions without judgement. Alex found tranquility and healing within the prairie; the prairie sent him love, he said:

> The prairie, man. It's beautiful and just provides a calmness to my life. There's a lot of space to think but, not in a way that's overwhelming. It's like the prairie is sending love to you and is very still, like a whole lot of stillness out there. It's like a certain kind of deep peaceful energy that comes with it that I very much vibe with. I found a lot of beauty and loving energy within the openness

Alex is a runner but, didn't "look" like your average runner. Each day, if you looked hard enough you could spot him off in the distance, bounding through the prairie. He would run for miles and miles. His short curly hair bouncing on his head, his glasses nearly falling off his face, short, stubby legs constantly churning. Sometimes he ran through the burn areas and he would come back covered in black char from the waist down, smiling, full of sweat, and at peace. Alex found healing and calibration within the prairie, which is something that seems to happen quite often at Camp.

Year after year, community members opt to sleep outside beneath the speckled prairie sky. Community members recalled waking up the next day rejuvenated and full of life. From this vantage point, you could see the thunderstorms roll across the prairie from miles away. Community members resembled the thunderstorms to a music festival with the booming base, and the constant flicker of light. I don't know how many times the average person dances in a storm across the span of their life but, I know that Camp motivates an uncanny percentage of people to do so. During a morning story circle, Daniel recounted his experience of the previous night's storm, he said:

The lightning storm that Peter, Dylan and I sat out for - it was fucking crazy. When we were watching it we got just pissed on by the rain. We had all determined for ourselves that the moment we can feel a drop we are turning around. But we didn't, and we knew we were going to get soaked. Like, we felt that first drop and we're like, still kind of cool, let's sit another five minutes or whatever. After more time had passed we just began giggling, laughing like little schoolgirls on our way back in and I legitimately said like, "I'm so happy right

now". It was so cool just being in nature and coming in direct contact with the

raw experiences of natural life and feeling alive and connected to that storm.

The experience of being amongst the prairie and underneath the boundless sky allowed

Camp community members to get in touch with their spirituality and the power of the

natural world. It allowed community members to get in touch with a more youthful,

natural state of being. A process that had begun with the raising of deep, life questions

had begun to show the first signs of subsequent regrowth. The fields of char and dust had

begun to grow anew.

Figure 5

Burn and Regrowth

The kitchen. The kitchen at Camp was a place with many layers of complex

meanings for community members. When it came to building community and

relationships, the kitchen was particularly well-suited for this type of human connection.

It was a large, modern, industrial size kitchen with new appliances and large rectangular

working tables. The kitchen was designed to be able to house large cooking teams and to

produce large quantities of food. Connected to the kitchen, is the dining hall. A large circular room with a ceiling over 25 feet high and large built-in skylights. The entire southeast corner of the dining hall is one long line of large window panes with an overlooking view of the prairie. There are two exterior doors off the dining hall that lead to small landings also overlooking the scenery, often used by residents to have a cigarette or to catch a breath of fresh air. Within the dining hall there's one framed picture, it's a quote from Hélder Câmara that reads "When I give money to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist." The dining hall and kitchen had a strong ethos about them; the architecture and design were built for large groups of people to share meals. Community members frequently brought up feelings of empathy and a willingness to sacrifice for the collective good while working in the kitchen and eating in the dining hall. It was clear that these spaces were designed and built intentionally as a space to hold and build community and connection.

At times, when story circles or other verbally dominant activities were constricted by language barriers, the kitchen was a place where people were able to transcend the barrier of language. Community members that didn't speak English as their first language were able to find comfort within the kitchen. It was a place of doing, less talking, and the talking that did occur was more casual. Interaction and communication became less verbal and more experiential, physical, or demonstrative. Community members were excited to cook recipes of their favorite dishes from home. This allowed students to share their culture and their stories through the food being made, when other mediums such as story circle may not have been as accessible for some. Coincidently, the Camp cohort was overall quite comfortable in the kitchen and were, for the most part, experienced

cooks. The instructors acknowledged that this is not always the case every year. Often times, instructors reported that the kitchen and meals can be a strong point of communal tension. They acknowledged that this year was much different.

Several community members noted that specifically within the kitchen, the dish washing station, had a powerful aura about it, Dylan said, "I don't know if you have noticed this, but there is something special that happens with the dish team every night. It's a selfless space." During a time of building and negotiating community, cleaning dishes acted as a way for people to embody and live out communal ideals of selflessness and sacrificing for the collective. As Dylan alluded to, there's nothing more selfless than working through a mountain of somebody else's dishes. Community members found joy, connection, and a new, less transactional, way of being in relation to one another. When dishes were being cleaned, music was playing, people were smiling and floating around looking to help. Sam stated, "I love washing dishes here. It's one of the most human experiences I've ever had" and Dabir echoed this sentiment in saying, "Normally I hate dishes. At home, I cook and my roommates do dishes. However, here I have begun to love doing dishes." A task that is almost unanimously acknowledged as a daily burden was able to be transformed into an intimate, shared, and appreciated chore.

Community members put much more intention and effort into the kitchen and the meals than was required of them. They could have chosen to make sandwiches or frozen pizza every night, but they didn't. Instead, they chose elaborate and high quality meals, they made their own cultured yogurt and bread every other day, all while knowing and upholding each other's dietary restrictions. They put hours of time and effort into designing and grocery shopping for quality and thoughtful dishes that were almost all

primarily made from scratch. The eggs, chicken, vegetables, and some canned foods were all harvested at Shalom Hill Farm. Community members were responsible for gathering eggs from the chicken coop as a daily routine, they fed the chickens, and dumped the compost. As a part of the kitchen practice, community members were practicing and being exposed to regenerative and circular processes of sustainability.

Resisting decay

For 17 years Camp has been an accredited course at the University of Minnesota serving as a space of radical education and community building. Over the course's tenure the faculty have had to make adjustments to the course to meet the needs and expectations of the University to remain acceptable and accredited. The core faculty have worked tirelessly at preserving the foundational pillars and touchstones that make the Camp experience useful and unique while still meeting University requirements. In his interview, Teddy spoke in length about the history and the education model that Camp has adopted and developed. In this reflection, he spoke to some of the characteristics that make Camp both unique and useful and summarized his thoughts elegantly when he said: "Decay consists of a collapse to simpler structures." He explained himself further in saying,

> This course exists by resisting models that it could very easily collapse to and the model it could most easily collapse to is nerd camp. A really good high IQ, or relatively high IQ, summer camp. You would have intellectual cliques, it would have the possibility of strange new boy-girl romances or boy-boy romances or girl-girl. I mean, everything that happens in a good summer camp, could happen here. There would be charismatic leaders who would lead people in the funnest

activities you could possibly imagine, which they would talk about for the rest of their lives. This is what this thing could collapse to. It could collapse to a couple of activities and we could have very high level work going on here which would please everyone. That would be one of several ways that this thing could fail. The problem, is that it can fail and look like it's wonderful.

Teddy highlighted some of the unique ethos of Camp, which is in part, "attending to everybody that shows up in the circle". The intention for doing this is to attempt to create opportunity for everyone to be seen, validated, and deemed successful. Camp, opposed to more traditional and normative structures of education and development, is not a place for scores, tests, grades, or competition. Teddy acknowledges that collapsing to a simpler, more defined structure that honed in on one or two specific outcomes could allow the Camp to be more readily validated and perceived as successful by the University and the general public. For example, Camp could collapse into a science camp where community members spend three weeks designing a new model of spacecraft. The science community, the University, and the general public would be thrilled at the results. Newspapers and academics could write articles praising this type of work. The problem is, as Teddy says, this type of thing "can fail and look like its wonderful". Teddy expounds on this idea and says,

> That's the hard thing. You know, you get somebody who, who has never actually had academic success. And they have never really spoken in a group very much and, doesn't speak very much in this group, who takes up painting again. And that's the success. But you know, next to the person who composes an entire opera in an evening it don't look like much. The person who composes the opera in the

evening will get the attention. You have to make the space for that other kind of success. I mean the thing that John cares about, that people by and large don't care about, is something like attending to everybody in the circle, everybody who shows up, and that is so foreign to standard teaching and coaching.

Camp has been able to resist collapsing to a simpler structure as a result of a lot of individual decisions. One of those individual decisions is the instructor's decision on whom this course is built for. Camp, like Highlander Folk School, was built intentionally for people that have been systematically pushed into the margins. Camp was not designed specifically for nor built for "high achieving" students or students that have a history of traditional academic and extracurricular success. It's not that "high achieving" students aren't welcomed, they are welcomed, and they often find their way to Camp. Instructors noted that students with strong histories of academic, athletic, or extracurricular success often find Camp a humbling experience because they aren't experiencing as high of levels of validity in relation to their peers as they do in more traditional models of development back home. Since the course's inception, instructors have made a strong, intentional effort not to reproduce western, capitalist, and individualistic ideas of 'success', 'worth', and 'value'. Multiple community members noted how the Camp structure, design, and intention on alternatives conceptualizations of success "levels the playing field" of learning and development.

It had been made clear that resisting decay and collapse to a simpler model has kept Camp inclusive and helpful to a variety of different types of people. This intention on the part of the instructors has allowed Camp to be accessible for people that don't always find success in more traditional ways of learning and development. The intention

from the instructors to always have had a plethora of activities available allowed for everyone to be able to participate. The allowance of amble free time and autonomy allowed community members to (re)engage vocational activities, passions, and hobbies that have been withered away through time. In addition, story circles and life narratives as a central tenet to the course allowed community members to get to know themselves and each other, deeply. These are some of the course characteristics that have made Camp useful and unique.

Summary

This chapter presented data and the derived findings of this study. Several areas of inquiry were explored to make meaning of the many stories, narratives, interviews, and physical characteristics of the learning environment. These findings were linked back to the larger research question presented in the previous chapter to obtain congruency throughout the study. The following chapter will discuss the implications of this study for both practice and research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

As the final section, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the implications of the data. The chapter will begin with a brief overview of the study. Next, a summary of findings is presented to introduce the conclusions which are then subsequently constructed as recommendations for further research and practice within the field of HRD. Weaving together the literature review, the experience of Camp, and the data provides an opportunity to explore the possibilities and implications that this study provides to both theory and practice.

Overview of Study

This study illustrates how the individuals that attended the 2018 Lives Worth Living Camp lived together for three weeks, negotiated community, shared stories, and co-created a variety of collective learning opportunities. Community members engaged in these processes, and as a result, made meaning of their own vocational calling, collective learning, and a sense of place. The data for this study includes three weeks of observational data from 18 community members, 13 semi-structured interviews, as well as, pictures, field notes, and historical documents. The larger research question for this study was: how is meaning made on vocational calling, collective learning, and sense of place.

The research context, length of stay, proximity to one another, and the use of story circles allowed community members to form meaningful relationships between students, as well as between students and faculty. As relationships were built and developed, community members became more comfortable sharing their stories, narratives, and deep questions of life. The use of narratives and storytelling has a long

history dating back to the earliest of earth's inhabitants and is slowly being taken more seriously as an educational or developmental practice within dominant literature and discourse.

Summary of Findings

The data presented in this study indicates that knowing and sharing our own stories and the stories of other people were important and useful for the community members at Camp. This process was useful for community members in identifying the common narratives or "prior scripts" (Goodson, 1995) that individuals are known to internalize through societal expectations and assigned values. Through their stories, individuals were able to share experiences of their lives that are rarely told, some of which were shared openly for the first time. Community members conceptualized this process as a time to throw one's stories and self-narratives into the wind where the storyteller can then step back and illustratively see the story hanging in the air. Community members were able to interrogate their stories and narratives and through reflection and dialogue, identify which of their stories were created by other people, for other purposes. This storied learning process allowed for the (re)interpretation of one's experiences, family history, passions, beliefs, and vocation. Within the findings section of this study, this phenomena was conceptualized as a process of self-immolation; a process of burning and regrowth in which community member's own internal landscapes and eco-systems were set ablaze, resulting in a radical redistribution of nutrients and resources that stimulated new growth.

Additionally, the process of sharing and oxygenating their own stories demonstrated to community members the importance of being in community with others

and having substantive and intimate relationships. Community members continually expressed concern over their lack of intimate relationships and community within their lives. Specifically, these community members detailed how they lived their lives back home within a "communal deficit". Through these reflections, community members acknowledged having a prolific amount of surface level relationships with people in their lives that they were in close approximation to. However, very few of these relationships were intimate enough that community members felt comfortable sharing their deepest stories or talking through the important questions of life. Storytelling and the practice of story circles during Camp created the opportunity to address these concerns and for participants to extend beyond Western individualism and competition to reconceptualize what it means to have meaningful relationships and community. For community members, the processes of building community and sharing stories had an alleviating, quenching effect.

The data in this study indicates that place and sense of place have profound implications for processes of human development, education, and collective learning. In this study, Camp was located in a geographical context in which community members noted a strong sense of place. This place consisted of a variety of characteristics and actors that allowed for attached meaning, interpretation, and emotion. One of the characteristics most noted by community members that inspired a deep sense of place was the built environment which included the intentional communal and natural architecture of the structures. Also commonly noted was the prairie sky, the endless trails, the animals, the gardens, and the nearby historic site of Jeffers Petroglyphs. The roaming animals and the surrounding natural beauty of the place prompted community members

to examine the anthropocentrism embedded within their worldviews. This presented the opportunity for community members to resituate themselves in relation to the natural world and other species outside of humans. The vast and encapsulating prairie sky, the edible landscape, and the reciprocal relationship with the farm animals allowed community members to begin to cognitively dethrone themselves as the center of their own worldview.

Further, Camp was located in a place or geographical context that was far enough removed from their normative, everyday lives that it was situationally useful for critically imagining a new future and for acting out new ways of being. To community members, Camp was "far away", "out there", or "in the middle of nowhere". This was a key characteristic of the place which situated and contextualized the subsequent learning processes. Camp's geographic location and the ability to operate as a seemingly self-sufficient intentional community allowed community members to physically and cognitively step outside the societal bounds and structures in which they normally operated. As community members took up their own stories and conceptualized alternative ways of being in relation to one another it was important that Camp was geographically situated outside of normalcy.

Implications for HRD practice and future research

The findings from this study provide an array of possibilities and implications for the field of HRD in regards to both future research and practice. Acknowledging the intersection between spatiality and learning is basic to understanding the proposed problem and the implications of this study for the field of HRD. Topics including storytelling, the development of a sense of place, and the utilization of intentional

learning communities emerged as insightful implications for the theory and practice in HRD and other organizational studies. The implications presented in this section examine how place and storytelling can be connected to learning and development within both the workplace and social organizations.

Place matters. This study illustrates the importance of considering place and sense of place in processes of collective and individual learning. The HRD literature has only begun to consider place and sense of place as important considerations within the field (Callahan, 2013; Nissley, 2011). While there has been a growing concern for the relationship among place, organization, and work (Callahan, 2013; Courpasson et al., 2017; Nissley, 2011), a critical perspective which explores the relationship between non-traditional organizations and place remains neglected. This study achieves this by illustrating the importance of considering the context of place and sense of place for collective and organizational learning processes using a critical theory framework. This is central to creating spaces of inclusivity and social equity in both traditional and non-traditional organizations (Gruenewald 2003b; Schwartz, 2014).

This study demonstrates the power that place and sense of place has to support more traditional HRD processes of learning and development such as professional development, organizational development, and leadership development. In the literature, these topics are often decontextualized from the place in which they occur, they usually just take place 'somewhere'. This study supports the idea that the specific place in which individual or collective learning takes place has deep and meaningful connections to the processes of learning and development (Cresswell, 2004; Gruenewald, 2003a; Nissley, 2011). Nissley's (2011) seminal work on the importance of place in leadership

development gained a deeper meaning as he served as the executive director of leadership development at the Banff Centre in Banff, Canada. Designated as a UNESCO Work Heritage Site, situated amidst the Rocky Mountains, Nissley describes the Banff area as "a place where the physical grandeur of the mountainscape lifts the human spirit and the creative magnificence of the mountainous geology inspires human creativity." (Nissley, 2011, p. 548). The acknowledgement that certain places have a way of awakening one's spirit and promoting intention, creativity, and inspiration is a call that was echoed by community member Amaya. Amaya grew up in the mountains of Iran and recalled how she would draw strength and inspiration from the local geography. She recalled how the mountain sky had, and still has, a profound effect on her. Amaya reported experiencing similar place-based inspirations and creativity within the prairie lands on Shalom Hill Farm.

Finally, this study takes up the call from Callahan (2012) for HRD to consider the space in which its practice occurs through (re)conceptualizing the normative 'organization' to include the ideas and concepts of social collective, social movement, and intentional community. This emerging idea not only has the ability to help HRD grow into a more impactful field, but also has the potential to effect and influence the organizational processes and structures of social organizations and collectives. These are focal concerns for the larger HRD field and can be used as considerations to expand future possibilities of utilization for HRD theory and practice.

Stories and narrative in HRD. An additional implication of this study is that stories and narratives can be useful tools for both the research and practice of HRD. This study supports the growing assertion in the HRD literature that research methodologies concerned with stories, such as autoethnography and narrative inquiry, are becoming increasingly important for the future of the field (Grenier, 2015; Grenier & Collins, 2016; Sambrook, 2017). These HRD scholars that have made the case for the inclusion of more interpretative methodologies have recognized stories as useful tools for making sense of our lives, the lives of others, and for conveying this meaning through research. This study supports the continued transition of HRD scholarship to embrace more interpretative and narrative-based methodologies.

The utilization of stories and narratives not only has implications for future HRD research, but for the practice of HRD as well. Tyler (2007) highlighted the importance for incorporating narratives and storytelling into the practice of HRD, he said:

> Whether storytelling is done on the job or in our HRD curriculum, this study also indicates a need to deepen the capacity of HRD practitioners to deliver skillful facilitation practices that create practical spaces for authentic and productive reflection and dialogue to occur. (p. 583)

This study echoes Tyler's (2007) assertion that the stories entrenched in the everyday work life are important and worthy of investigation. Stories can be useful to organizational management and can assist workers in making sense (Boje, 1991; Colville et al., 2012), constructing identities (Brown, 2006), sharing knowledge (Fenton, 2011), and resisting change (Brown et al., 2009), among others. Further, the inclusion of stories and narratives into processes of collective learning and professional development has the

potential to empower workers to situate their everyday, mundane practices as valuable, significant, and deserving of exploration.

Intentional learning communities. Intentional learning communities, like the Lives Worth Living Camp, are potentially effective instruments for the exploration of a wide variety of contemporary socio-political, economical, philosophical, and spiritual issues. The ethos, pedagogy, and derivative practices of these should be grounded in moral and ethical practices and congruent to an explicit philosophy of what a person is and what it means to live in community with others. There likely is some, but there can be far more, preparation for phronesis, skillful, ethical, and moral practice on how to guide this type of work. Particularly within the contemporary conflictual and geographical issues of the current time. The field of HRD has something to offer to the theorizing, preparation, monitoring, and evaluation of individuals who want to do this work and in the selection and operationalization of criteria to make this all real.

Cited in the literature review section of this study is the history of the utility and function of intentional communities. An important critique brought up in the literature demonstrates how intentional communities within the United States have primarily served and have been exclusively accessible to white, middle-class people. Wallmeier (2017) contextualized this problematic characteristic of intentional communities, he said:

> While the white stockbroker is too busy hustling his money to take time out to move against the war, the white communard is too busy working his garden… too busy with their own thing to come to the aid of less privileged non-whites (or poorer whites). (p. 160)

Through this perspective, the history of intentional communities across the United States, can be characterized as a phenomena of white middle-class flight from responsibility and participation; a silent gesture of withdrawal.

The potential for intentional learning communities as a developmental tool in a variety of educational and developmental settings can only be realized when these communities are intentionally created to oppose and resist injustice, not to run from it. Here, there is an opportunity to harness and embolden the unprecedented strength of our coming generations by supplementing their development with institutions, intentional communities, and free spaces analogous to building collectivity, grass-roots organizing, critical education, and to formulating a grounded praxis. Robert Bellah (1992) captured the need for institutions that encourage and create space for collectivity and intentional community, he said:

> "In making this argument we shall attempt to renew earlier efforts to create an American public philosophy less trapped in the clichés of rugged individualism and more open to an invigorating, fulfilling sense of social responsibility. But responsible social participation, with an enlightened citizenry that can deal with moral and intellectual complexity, does not come about just from exhortation. It is certainly not enough simply to implore our fellow citizens to "get involved." We must create the institutions that will enable such participation to occur, encourage it, and make it fulfilling as well as demanding." (p. 15)

It was the focus of this study to better understand how places of community and collectivity can be built with intent and purpose to foster the type of development and

education that our future generations will find useful in their movements for social equity and justice.

Spaces of collective critical adult learning. One implication for practice that is especially poignant at this historical and political moment is the use of intentional learning communities for higher education courses, grass roots organizations, social collectives, and social movements. Over the past couple years we have witnessed national and global organizing of resistance movements against current systems of policing, criminality, and the larger prison industrial complex. As our younger generations continue to push back against Western, individual, and capitalistic modes of living and continue to imagine new, more inclusive, ways of being in relation to one another it is necessary that we build, with intention, the type of structural support and communities that will allow these imaginations to be realized.

As people within these movements continue to take up these fights, it is imperative that we recreate spaces analogous to that of the Highlander Folk School. Community organizers and activists are in need of places of critical education, organization, and development, as well as, safety and healing. Places where people at the front lines of these movements can periodically remove themselves from the tear gas, the bullets, and the militarized surveillance to then heal, rejuvenate, develop their praxis, and continue to build. These young revolutionaries deserve spaces in their lives where they can connect, dream, imagine, and act out the radical possibilities that motivate them and their movements.

Limitations

The results of this research should be interpreted with recognition of the limitations of this study. One limitation of this study is that it was a case study of a unique, bounded phenomena that was limited in its generalizability to other similarly structured camps or higher education courses. The parameters of this study were to examine how community members made meaning of vocation, collective learning, and a sense of place while being at Camp. In addition to this, community member's privacy and anonymity were a top priority of this research project and influenced what was presented within the findings portion of this study. At times, community members were motivated to disclose deeply personal stories and information about themselves, their identity, and their upbringing that if shared, would compromise their ability to remain anonymous. Due to this, the data presented within the findings section of this study only reflected what could be shared while still keeping confidentiality.

Attending Camp in 2018 for this research study was my third year being involved with Camp. My first experience at Camp was in 2015 as a student. My second experience at Camp was the following year, in 2016, where I came as a "visiting instructor". In this role I was able to participate in instructor meetings to be able to see the inner workings of the course beyond the experience of a student. These prior experiences of camp were not so much a limitation to this study as they were a lens for making meaning of the phenomena under investigation. My experiences at Camp prior to my research study consisted of me asking myself and others some of the same deep questions of life related to the phenomena under investigation that are presented within this study. In conducting narrative research, it was extremely helpful to have gained insight into the structure and

operation of the Camp. Further, previous camp experience was a significant asset brought to the current study as I too, like the research participants, had gone through the deep reflections and self-interrogations that the Camp prompts in my previous years before observing and experiencing them again through the outsider perspective of a researcher. These past experiences of Camp readily positioned myself to be able to assist community members in working through their own stories and questions of life.

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Appendix A

CONSENT FORM

<u>Philosophy Camp: Making Meaning through the Collective</u>

You are invited to participate in a research project aimed at making meaning of the experience of Philosophy Camp. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an enrolled member of this course and apart of the Philosophy Camp community. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in this project.

Background information

The purpose of this project is to better understand and make meaning of how one experiences a residential learning community in the context of Philosophy Camp.

Procedures:
If you agree to be a part of this project, we will ask you to do the following:

During the course of Philosophy Camp you will be asked to voluntarily participate in conversations and reflections about your experiences leading up to and at Philosophy Camp. In these face to face interactions you will have an opportunity to discuss your experiences and lived realities within an intentional learning community. These conversations will vary in length and can take place in any location most comfortable to you. Certain conversations have the opportunity to be voice recorded, if the participant so chooses.

Risks and Benefits of the Project

A potential benefit to participating in this project is the opportunity to better understand oneself and how one comes to be. It is a priority of this project to create opportunities of reflection, investigation of meaning, and to reorient, refocus, or reenergize participants in regards to what matters to them in a deep way.

This project has no foreseeable risks. However, questions regarding your life experiences always have the chance to recall events or moments that were painful, emotional, or frightening. This project is not looking to explicitly recall or investigate these experiences in any way. Please remember that that your participation in this project is voluntary and that you may choose to leave the project at any time with no explanation and no risk or negative consequences. You may refuse to answer any question without having to provide a reason. All answers will be coded so that your identity is protected.

Confidentiality:

The records of your participation will be kept confidential. In any reports to be published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify your responses. Records of your responses will be kept in a secure location that will only be accessed by the researcher and advisor and will not be available to others. Tapes and transcriptions of interviews will be erased once the project is complete. Findings will be presented as group data using quotations and pseudonyms.

Voluntary Nature of the Project:

Participation in this project is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the instructors at Philosophy Camp, or the University of Minnesota, or your current or future professional affiliations. Participation in this project has absolutely no influence on your final grade for this course. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this project is Michael Valesano. You may ask any questions you have at any time. If you have questions once the interview has been completed, you are encouraged to contact Mr. Michael Valesano at (218)831-5178 (cell) or by email: vale0168@umn.edu or Dr. Kenneth Bartlett at (612)624-4935 (office) or by email: bartlett@umn.edu.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers and understand my rights. I consent to participate in this project.

Signature: _____Date:_____

Signature of Investigator:_____Date:_____