

INHERITANCE PATTERNS AND STRATEGIES: PROCESS FOR INTERGENERATIONAL
FARMLAND TRANSFER IN SOUTHEASTERN NORTH DAKOTA

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MASTER OF SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

In this project, I conducted interviews with members of farm families in order to understand the process of intergenerational farmland transfer. Focusing on southeastern North Dakota, I paid particular attention to the youngest generations' intentions in this process. Two of the primary themes that emerged related to the youngest generations' desire for security and stability into the future and the gendered expectations that arose throughout the parent generation and the youngest generation interviews. There was a common sentiment that the family farmland was an unsafe occupation to pursue in the modern economy, making the desire for security and stability a core theme. This factored into the youngest generations' decision of whether or not to farm the land. In addition, a second key theme of gendered expectations emerged as the parent generation and the youngest generations made decisions about who would take over the family farm.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper solely to anyone who has ever been 110% sure that they can't do something but has still been too afraid to quit. We are meant to have challenging times to make us stronger and to teach us about life. It's this type of life experience that makes us into the people we are supposed to be.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

My study investigated intergenerational land transfer specifically to southeastern North Dakota. Understanding how wealth, particularly farmland, is passed down from one generation to the next has potentially useful insights into the way families understand the youngest generations' relationship to the land and rural identity. I set out on this project looking specifically at the strategies of intergenerational land transfer that are being implemented by southeastern North Dakota farm families. There has been a considerable amount of research conducted on intergenerational farmland transfer, but very little of it focuses on the youngest generations' perspectives. The youngest generations' perspectives have been a growing question for me, largely because of my own relationship to my family's farm and my own understanding of rural identity. As a woman from a farm family, my interest in the intersection of gender and rural identification emerged as well. In order to prepare for the rest of this paper, there are some terms used throughout the rest of my research that hold a specific meaning to my study. The terms with specified definitions are listed in Appendix F.

There is also a considerable amount of existing literature on gendered inheritance differences, but the majority of that research is internationally based. My research investigated gender differences and the planning, by both the parent generation and the youngest generation, for the future of farmland by conducting personal interviews with members of four southeastern North Dakota farm families. Each of the interviewees was asked multiple questions in order to gain an understanding of the youngest generations' view on and relationship to the farmland their family owns. In order to accomplish my research purpose, three research questions were pursued.

1. What strategies for intergenerational land transfer do North Dakota farm families utilize? Why do farm families choose these strategies? And what challenges come with each strategy?
2. What do the youngest generations intend to do with the farmland they inherit? What are the youngest generations' reasons for those intentions?
3. What role does gender play in the intergenerational farmland transfer process? Do parents' expectations of the youngest generation in regards to farmland differ based upon the youngest generations' gender?

The Growing Significance of Farming Inheritance

As the population continues to grow older, particularly in rural areas, intergenerational farmland transfer also will continue to grow in importance. A large number of farms will be passed to farmers' children over the next ten years as farmers reach retirement age. "In the next decades, aging farmers in the United States will make decisions that affect almost 1 billion acres of land. The future of this land will become more uncertain as farm transfer becomes more difficult, potentially changing the structure of agriculture through farm consolidation, changes in farm ownership and management, or taking land out of production" (Leonard and Gutmann, 2006, p. 181). This statement emphasizes the importance of having a comprehensive understanding of what have been the most beneficial methods of intergenerational land transfer.

Selling and renting are two of the most common approaches that farm families often elect to take when it comes to transferring farmland between generations. However, there are many different options that families can pick from when it comes to how they will transfer land to the next generation (Mishra, El-Osta, Shaik, 2010). All of the strategies of intergenerational

farmland transfer discussed in my research relate specifically to those practiced in the southeast section of North Dakota. The sample includes four farm families in southeast North Dakota, which has relatively similar farming practices, types of crops, farmland values, and soil types. Having a sample of farm families whose farmland shares common traits allows for the study to be consistent and avoid potential complications that would have arisen with differing farmland types and values.

There are numerous types and sizes of family farms, but farming operations have tended to follow a similar pattern of evolution throughout history. Since the beginning of the era in which societies and nations were formed, agriculture has been necessary to feed the people of the society and to support the economy. However, today's world exhibits many changes in agriculture. The industrial revolution changed practically every aspect of peoples' lives, including how food is produced. Machines, such as tractors, combines, and planters, were invented to make the manual labor involved with farming more bearable and time efficient. Also, these new machines made it possible for one farmer to cultivate a much larger area of land than had ever previously been possible. Up until this point, each farmer and farm family had worked a relatively small area of land and produced what they could to feed themselves and to sell any surplus of products in order to hopefully make a profit.

The new machines that were brought into use during and after the industrial revolution have allowed farmers to expand the size of farming operations and increase the amount of acreage that they cultivated, making land more valuable and more difficult to access (Carroll and Salamon, 1988). Many farmers acquired additional land to expand the size of their farming operations. The ability to cultivate more land at a faster rate meant that farmers could produce a greater surplus

of goods to be sold for a profit. This concentration on farmland ownership and production drove up the value of farmland, and many other farmers elected to sell or rent their farmland to other farmers, while they themselves frequently migrated to urban areas to seek employment (Carroll and Salamon, 1988).

The increased value of farmland resulted in a need to acquire even more land. The increased opportunity for profit from farmland, created a strong desire to obtain more farmland to produce higher profits. At the same time, farm families frequently had a strong desire to keep ownership of their farmland in their family and to transfer the farmland on to the youngest generation. (Hunter and Rowles, 2005). In many cases, a child or multiple children took over the farming operation and oversight of the farm when the youngest generations' parents retired. In cases where the children did not wish to farm, the youngest generation would commonly rent the farmland to other farmers in the area upon inheriting the land from the parents generation (Menchik, 1982).

Researcher as Heir: Initiating Questions of Intergenerational Land Transfer

The aging of the American farmer and the role of farming in American society is important to understand. In addition, though, my firsthand relationship to intergenerational farmland transfer is a driving force behind this project. My own experiences of being a young adult who stands to inherit farmland are integrated throughout my study. Farmland has played a very important and dynamic role in my family. I know this is similar to many of the neighboring farm families in the area of southeast North Dakota in which I grew up, including the families that participated in this study. Farmland serves as a livelihood that is dependent upon many factors in order to be successful. In many cases involving farmland, large sums of money

become involved, and the importance upon livelihood and income can lead to conflict within the family. In addition, the predominant role that family legacy almost always plays in regards to farmland, in some cases for generations, is an important consideration.

A multi-generation farming operation is the case in my family. I was raised on my family's farm, which is where my father had also grown up. The majority of the farmland that my family is currently farming was purchased by my grandparent generations on my fathers' side after World War II. My grandfather had grown up on a large farm, which his parents lost during the Great Depression when his father passed away unexpectedly at a young age. He had instilled the love of farming in my young grandfather, who wanted desperately to get back into farming when and if he had the opportunity when he grew up.

The opportunity to farm came his way when he returned home from World War II. Despite all of the hard work and sacrifice he and his family had to make in order to purchase and work the farmland, he was overjoyed to be able to work as a farmer and raise his children on a farm. My dad was the second oldest of five children and quickly learned an appreciation and love of farming and farmland from my grandfather. The idea that it is important to appreciate the value of farmland for its ability to produce agricultural goods and the way of life that it entails, are values that my father has carried with him his whole life and has taught them to my sister and I. I feel confident in saying, particularly after conducting the interviews for this research, that many other farm families have similar values and appreciation for their family farmland.

Throughout the course of this data collection, similar stories and sentiments emerged from the families who were interviewed. Certain themes also began to develop in the data that were pivotal to answering the research questions outlined in this study and to developing meaningful conclusions. The two overarching themes that will be highlighted throughout the

findings include the desire for security and stability and gendered expectations. Gender is present in different ways throughout almost all of the data, but the primary subtheme within gender is the different expectations of the youngest generations based upon the youngest generations' gender. The subthemes within security and stability include the desire for monetary gain, rural identity, and family legacy.

Each of the following chapters discusses and explains an area of my research process and the steps of my study. In Chapter Two, the Literature Review, I examine the existing research that has been conducted on the topic of intergenerational farmland transfer, as well as the gaps that exist in the current published literature. This chapter also contains the theories that were used to guide this research. The literature review is followed by Chapter Three, the Methods chapter. In this chapter, I elaborate on the interview process and the sample that I included in my research. In Chapter Four, I analyze and present the data that was gathered during my study and what the data showed to be the outcomes of my research. Chapter Five, the Conclusion, is the final chapter of my study and ties together all of the chapters and finishes my research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of how to best transfer farmland between generations is an important topic for several reasons that have previously been discussed. There has been relevant research conducted on intergenerational transfer in relation to farmland. My research spans a diverse array of particular foci when examining intergenerational land transfer. These differing points of emphasis in the existing research serve as a guide to direct my research as well as a point of expansion. However, there are some holes in the existing research that are filled by the knowledge gained through this study. Kotlikoff and Summers (1981) noted a need for more research on intergenerational transfers. My research fills some of the gaps that had been in the existing research, in particular, exploring intergenerational farmland transfer from the point-of-view of the youngest generation as well as examining the role that gender plays in this process. Data and information gained from this study contributes to these areas of intergenerational farmland transfer. This was accomplished by satisfying the three research questions.

1. What strategies for intergenerational land transfer do North Dakota farm families utilize? Why do farm families choose these strategies? And what challenges come with each strategy?
2. What does the youngest generations intend to do with the farmland they inherit? What are the youngest generations' reasons for those intentions?
3. What role does gender play in the intergenerational farmland transfer process? Do parents' expectations of the youngest generation in regards to farmland differ based upon the youngest generations' gender?

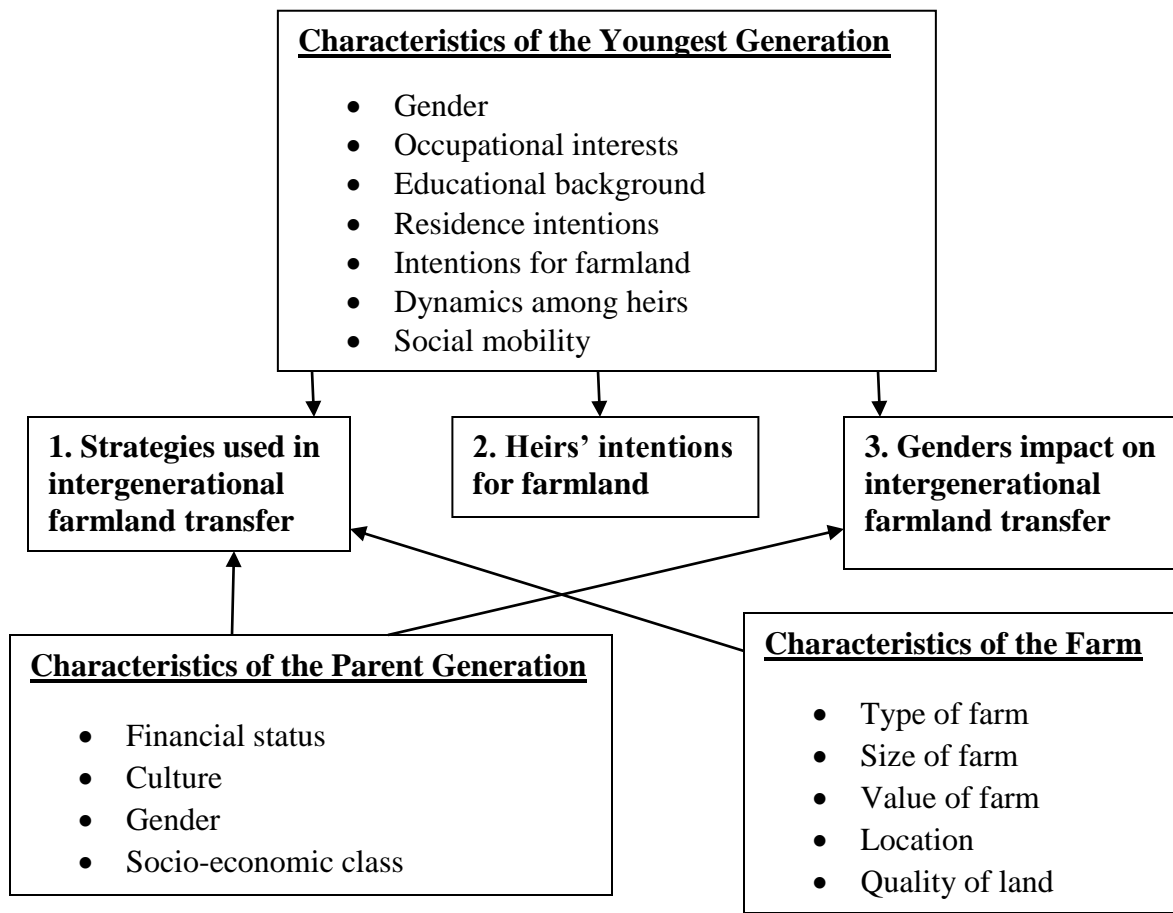
Therefore, the extant research can be divided into different categories based upon the research questions. The gaps that exist in that research are demonstrated, in order to highlight what exactly the research conducted throughout the course of this study still needed to answer. Two different theoretical frames I draw on include *the theory of the firm* and Collins' *intersectional feminist theory*. These theoretical frames enabled me to draw out the challenges involved in intergenerational land transfer in order to address how structural and personal interactions affected these processes. Theories were selected based on their applicability to the research questions driving my research.

In her work, *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins develops a theory of intersectionality that enabled me to understand the nuanced dynamics of land transfer in the families that I interviewed. The writings of Collins contain central themes of moving towards empowerment and the politics of empowerment. The focus on gender and rural identity provides a way to understand how individuals negotiated the transfer and use of family land. It is because of the history of gender inequality in farmland transfer and the elements of inequality that still exist in this process today that these theoretical writings of Collins are applicable to my research. Collins' writings are relevant to my analysis of the role that gender plays in the intergenerational farmland transfer process.

The second theoretical approach upon which my study was largely based was a cluster of organizational theory approaches. These theories examine the structure of various types of organizations and the patterns that are evident within those organizations. There are numerous subtheories under the umbrella of organizational theory, one of which is the theory of the firm. Organizational theories are wide ranging in applicability and can be used in diverse situations.

Some of the organizations to which organizational theory has been applied include businesses, departments, and farms. This study used concepts and corollaries from the theory of the firm because the use of farmland as a functioning business, or firm, was definitely a concept that was supported. In fact, there were many reasons to explain why the farm can be seen as a firm and why this theory was, therefore, applicable and appropriate to guide my research. The theory of the firm provided insight into the role that business plays in intergenerational farmland transfer and helped examine the strategies for intergenerational land transfer that my informants utilized. This theory also helps understand the youngest generations' discussion of their intention for the family farmland they stand to inherit in my interview data.

Figure 1. Impact of Characteristics on Intergenerational Land Transfer



The existing research on this topic, including the three specific research questions being studied, can be represented in the diagram below. Figure 1 represents the three research questions and the identified characteristics that impact them. The three research questions are in bold. The arrows indicate the characteristics that impact each research question. For instance, the first research question (which strategy of intergenerational land transfer a family utilizes) is impacted by all three sets of characteristics. The second research question, which deals with the youngest generations' intentions for the farmland is impacted by the characteristic of the youngest generation. The third research question deals with the role that gender plays in intergenerational land transfer and this question studied characteristics of both the youngest generation and the parent generation. This diagram summarizes the existing literature and pinpoints what this study is researching, as well as the factors that play a role in influencing the data.

Which Land Transfer Strategy to Choose and Why?

There are many factors that influence the decisions farm families make when selecting a strategy through which to transfer farmland to the next generation, just like there are numerous farmland transfer strategies that farm families can choose to utilize. Some of the more common transfer strategies, and the strategies that were addressed throughout the course of my research project, include renting, willing, gifting, or purchasing farmland. In addition, some parent generations choose strategies that were not represented by any of the participants included in this study, such as forming partnerships or corporations with the youngest generations or gifting ownership of the farmland to youngest generations. There are many influences that impact which route of intergenerational land transfer that the parent generation chooses to take.

Examples of forces that will impact this decision include the cultural patterns of inheritance that are present for the family, the economic and/or class status of the farm family, and any legal implications that will arise from this decision. There has been a considerable amount of research conducted on each of these particular areas influencing intergenerational land transfer, but there are still gaps in the literature which this study fills.

Theory of the Firm

The theory of the firm guided my research process to fill in those gaps in the literature by focusing on the economic aspect of organizations and how the structure of organizations relates to outside markets (Fama, 1980). The theory of the firm is applicable to family farming operations, providing ways of understanding how families operate and transfer ownership of the farmland. Farmland transfer within farm families is an important part of the organizational aspects of family farming operations. The decisions families make for farmland transfer provides continuity in the farm, enabling it to be successful over time. The varying types of agricultural firms, and the interactions between the participants in agricultural firms is representative of the same economic aspects of any other firm and demonstrates how the family farm is in fact a firm (Roumasset, 1995). Much planning is needed in any firm for the firm to be successful. A family farm is considered a firm based upon the definition provided by Coase (1937). Coase provides evidence that the concept of firm in the economic world corresponds to the concept of firm outside the economic sphere (Coase, 1937). Considering the notion of Coase's study, a family farm would be considered a firm in the economic world as well as in other spheres of society.

In the 1999 book, *The Theory of the Firm*, Foss, Lando, and Thomsen examine the theory of the firm based largely upon the relationship between the participants in the firm. For instance,

the dynamics of the relationship between the parent generation and the managers, between the managers and the employees, and between the employees and the customers are discussed in this book. The theory of the firm has grown as industry and firms within the economic world have grown. The theory of the firm is relatable to any business firm (Foss, Lando, and Thomsen, 1999).

Numerous aspects of farmland transfer need to be planned in advance and agreed upon within the farming operation. The input and output rates that farmers deal with in regards to resources and technological developments is a pertinent issue when considering how the family farm fits into the theory of the firm (Schultz, 1939). The theory of the firm allows these areas and issues to be addressed through various concepts within the theory of the firm. There were multiple theory of the firm concepts that specifically relate to intergenerational farmland transfer. These include organizational culture, organizational goals, organizational continuity, resource acquisition, and organizational boundaries.

Cultural Patterns of Inheritance

Different cultural groups implement transfer strategies with their own distinct patterns of inheritance procedures. For instance, Carroll and Salamon (1988) conducted a study on different inheritance patterns among varying groups of rural American subculture. The research compared yeo-German farm families and Yankee farm families. The yeo-German participants tended to split family farms into smaller inheritable portions for a greater number of youngest generations. This resulted in more numerous, smaller farms. In comparison, the Yankee farm families typically had fewer children, and it was more common for those children to migrate away from the farm when they reached adulthood. In the case of the German farm families, fewer youngest

generations resulted in farmland not being divided to the same extent when it came to inheritance, which led to fewer farmers, but with larger farm sizes. This illustrates how land transfer patterns can vary among different cultural groups. Inheritance decisions are largely based on cultural norms of equal distribution among inheritors, except in cases of differing family circumstances involving children's varying levels of need and deservedness (Drake and Lawrence, 2000). The importance that culture plays in intergenerational farmland transfer is explained in greater detail by the theoretical concept of organizational culture.

The Family as Organizational Culture

Each firm has its own unique culture, just as all families have their own distinct culture. This relates to the way in which the actors within a firm interact with one another as well as how the firm conducts business externally. There are many different factors that influence the culture of a firm. Many factors play a role in the culture of farm families so it can be difficult to pinpoint what variables all influence the decisions that the family makes in the operation and transfer of the farmland. In regards, specifically, to agricultural firms, the farm family culture is influenced by things such as the size of the farm, the uses of the farmland, and how many family members are involved in the operation of the farm (M. Godwyn & J. Gittell, 2012). Each of these factors plays an important role in creating a unique and distinct culture for each farm family. All farm families differ in their own personal culture, and the culture of the family will have a tremendous impact on what farmland transfer strategies the family chooses to implement.

Inequality in Land Transfer

A great deal of the research that has been done on intergenerational farmland transfer ties into how inherited farmland impacts the social mobility of the youngest generation. Inheritance,

including that of farmland, can impact social mobility (Menchik, 1982). It would seem that the greater someone's inheritance, the greater their income, and therefore the greater their potential for social mobility. If an individual stands to inherit a larger portion of farmland, they are going to have a higher income, which will have significant implications in all areas of their life. "At the societal level there are likely to be consequences for economic efficiency, social structure, and social inequality; at the level of the individual there may be profound implications for the most intimate areas of life: interpersonal relationships, marriage opportunities, and domestic living arrangements," (Kennedy, 1991, p. 447). Of course, this is in addition to their other income with occupations.

However, this also ties into the inheritance that a person stands to one day acquire. Parents in less affluent families have more difficulty investing in their children's human capital, which limits their potential for social mobility in the future (Tomes, 1981). Davies (1982) produced findings of a different nature. This data showed that inequalities in inheritance do not, in most cases, contribute in a sizeable amount to long-term inequalities to children's economic worth. This reflects the long-held American belief that anyone is able to become successful if they are willing to work hard enough. "While inheritance is a major cause of wealth inequality, its influence on annual income and lifetime resources is small, and in the latter case ambiguous" (Davies, 1982, p. 471).

The wealth that a farm family holds also has an impact on inheritance patterns. Wealthier farmers were more likely to bequeath the family farm land to a younger child, while less affluent families were more likely to hand down the farm to the eldest male youngest generation (Gross,

1996). In addition, families distribute land and view inheritance differently, based upon varying land constraints that they may face (Quisumbing, 1993).

The effect that socioeconomic status has on intergenerational land transfer relates to an underlying, prolonged class structure. Families who have a considerable amount of farmland tend to maintain that land, as well as the income generated by it, for several generations. In comparison, families who do not have as much land, frequently experience their land being split into smaller, less profitable sections much more rapidly. "... redistribution 'works' in the first generation under quite general conditions, even when fully anticipated by all previous generations. Further, inequality is likely to fall for several generations before approaching its new steady-state level from below," (Davies and Kuhn, 2001, p. 324). The financial prosperity or financial misfortunes of our predecessors can be overcome, typically over a considerable amount of time. It generally takes approximately three generations to move past the financial advantages or disadvantages of your ancestors (Becker and Tomes, 1986).

Inequality also exists among youngest generations of the same family. However, it is not shown to be related to the wealth of the parents. Parents of varying degrees of wealth have equal and unequal aspects to their plans for intergenerational land transfer (Gaviria, 2000). Stum (1999) conducted research into what exactly was considered "fair" when it comes to farmland succession. Stum found that the concept of "fair" is open to interpretation, and the definition of what is fair depends largely on the family and property circumstances that are present in each case.

Gaps in the Literature

There is a great deal of existing literature on this topic, and it provided a thorough background as to why certain routes of intergenerational land transfer are utilized. However, there is still a need for a more in depth look into the decision-making processes that families go through. My interviewees help bring that process into focus. The families in my study discussed specific reasoning behind choosing the strategies that they have chosen for their land transfer process. The research available provided a great deal of background about the different strategies of farmland transfer and why they are beneficial, but interviewing families for this study enable me to delve more deeply into why farm families specifically feel that whichever transfer strategies they chose are the best strategies for their own family.

What are the Intentions of the Youngest Generation for the Farmland and Why?

One of the most crucial factors in regards to intergenerational farmland transfer is what the youngest generation intends to do with the farmland that they will inherit. Whether any members of the youngest generation want to take over the operation of the farm as their occupation impacts how a family will transfer that land. These intentions are also impacted if more than one of the youngest generation in a family hopes to farm and wants to inherit a larger section of the land, which can lead to tension among all members of the youngest generations in a family. All of these factors impact the decisions of what the youngest generation decides to do with the farmland they inherit. The literature focused largely on how the life cycle of the family farm influences this decision and the dynamics of the relationship among members of the youngest generation. The life cycle of the family farm results in the specific goals that the

farming operation holds. Organizational goals are a theoretical concept within theory of the firm that provides a great deal of context for a deeper understanding of the life cycle of a farm.

Organizational Goals

Firms have implicit and explicit goals to make a profit, to bring awareness to a particular issue, or a whole range of other goals that they work to reach (Fama, 1980). This relates to the goals that a family farm has in order to accomplish their goals for the future, whether that is to continue the operation of the farm or not. Implicit goals are not clearly stated, but they are understood to exist. Many goals held by farming families may be implicit goals if the family members do not actually vocalize their intentions and hopes for the future. In cases such as this, family members may not feel comfortable expressing goals with one another or they may assume that family members are already aware of their goals. Explicit goals are fully revealed and stated without vagueness. Explicit goals are present in farm families in instances where a family openly discusses plans for the future and makes plans for the transfer of the farmland. An excellent example of this explicit preparation is when families put together a will to prepare for intergenerational farmland transfer. It is generally easier for a family to meet explicit goals rather than implicit goals simply because explicit goals are known, and not all family members may be aware of implicit goals. That is why it is important for farm families to have open communication, particularly in regards to intergenerational farmland transfer. This planning and communication is necessary for farm families to be able to meet their goals, as well as the goals of the individual family members. Family farming operations' goals include being financially viable and keeping the farming operation in the same family. Goals relating to the longevity of the firm relate to the theory of the firm's organizational continuity concept because the

individual actors within the farm operation are working to ensure the continuity of the farming operation.

Every firm holds specific goals that it is working to meet. These are typically in relation to the level of profit that the firm hopes to make each year. The theory of the firm examines how participants within firms work with one another and with actors external to the firm to increase profits and productivity. This is relevant to how the actors within family farms need to work with one another.

Life Cycle of Farm Families

One factor that plays a role in what the youngest generation chooses to do with the farmland that they inherit is the stage the family is at in the life cycle of farm families. For instance, things like educational attainment of the farm operator, farmer's age, off-farm work by the operator or spouse of operator, farm business location, and anticipated household wealth all play a role in the decision-making process of how a farm family decides how to pass along the family farm (Mishra, et al., 2010). One factor in the decisions made by the youngest generation is simply that of a reaction to occurrences within the life cycle of a farm family. "Succession and retirement are linked and reflective of the life cycles of the farm household and the farm business" (Mishra, et al., 2010, p. 133). For instance, if the primary operator of a farm falls ill or for some reason is unable to complete the day to day duties of running the farm operation, measures may need to be taken to pass along the farm to the youngest generation sooner than the family had planned.

Almost all farm families have developed a general plan through which to transfer the farmland to the youngest generation or youngest generations at the right time and in the right way. The optimal time to transfer this land is different for each family and situation, but is

typically when the parents are between their stages of optimal utility and disutility to the farm operation (Miljkovic, 1999). Optimal utility and disutility refer to an individual's performance ability and what they are still able to physically contribute to the farm operation. Since the bulk of the work that is needed to efficiently run a farm operation involves physical labor, a person is less able to contribute to this work as they age. For this reason, many parents choose to gradually hand over responsibilities to their youngest generation so that they are able to teach them how to operate the farm while still handing more physically demanding labor to the youngest generation. "A sequence of exit from work, management, and parent ownership is found. Farmers who value continuity are most likely to involve sons in management of the operation. Programs for two-generation farm families may be useful in the early part of the exit phase while estate planning information and programs may be more appropriate to those in the latter part of the process" (Keating and Munro, 1989, p. 215). Also part of this gradual process of turning over the farm operation, the parents will be concerned about an income after they fully retire. During this transition period, there is a great deal of emphasis put on saving money and including all generations in the income generated by the family farm. "Life-cycle model of savings that emphasize savings for retirements as the dominant form of capital accumulation should give way to models that illuminate the determinants of intergenerational transfers" (Kotlikoff and Summers, 1981, p. 706).

On the other end of the spectrum, it can be confusing for a farm family if they for some reason do not plan for or are unable to plan for intergenerational land transfer. In cases such as this, it is often the primary source of contention among members of the youngest generation. The youngest generation is not given time to plan what they want to do with the land that they will inherit, and the youngest generation is unable to fully express their desires to their parents of

their goals for the land, whether that be to farm it or otherwise. “Participants living far from metropolitan areas expected to sell or rent to other farmers, while those near residential real-estate markets expected to sell to developers. Delays in planning for retirement and succession were common, further threatening the success of intergenerational transitions” (Leonard and Gutmann, 2006, p. 181). This reflects how contentions can arise among the youngest generation when the parent generation has not fully outlined their wishes for the family farmland, and the youngest generation is left to debate what they intend to do with the land.

Another important aspect of intergenerational farmland transfer when researching inheritance is the legacy a farm family wishes to create. Research shows legacy naturally fits into the aging experience (Hunter and Rowles, 2004). The same study conducted by Hunter and Rowles (2004) identified three categories of legacy that are typical for families to be concerned with. Those include biological, material, and legacy of values with subcategories in each. The majority of respondents in this study showed concern with all three types of legacy, with varying degrees of intensity in each category. However, legacy of values was repeatedly found to be perceived by the participants as the overall most important type of legacy to pass on to the youngest generation. In order for a family farming operation to pass on this legacy, there needs to be a certain degree of continuity within the operation. Context for organizational continuity can be provided by the subtheme within theory of the firm.

Organizational Continuity

An organizational plan needs to be developed and implemented for a farm to be successful and continue to operate into the future. Organizational continuity refers to the overarching goal critical to all firms, the need to exist and to thrive in the future. Logically, all

firms, no matter their nature, hold the objective of existing for a prolonged period of time. If this concept is applied to farms, it could be assumed that for both the parent generation and the youngest generation, the goal of transferring the farmland from one generation to the next would be to continue the operation of the farm as a business. This was leading to conclusions since not every parent and youngest generation will have the intentions of continuing the farm as a business. This theory was only applicable in some cases of intergenerational farmland transfer.

Resource Acquisition

A primary part of organizational continuity is linked to resource acquisition within the farming operation. Resource acquisition is another concept from the theory of the firm that is closely linked to organizational continuity (Fama, 1989). Resource acquisition is important to any firm or organization for the purpose of organizational continuity. For a firm to continue into the future, it must secure the resources needed to support the firm for a prolonged period of time. Examples of necessary resources include money, people, legitimacy, facilities, land, and materials. Resource acquisition also relates to having a plan for the succession of ownership of the firm because a succession plan is needed to continue the operation and acquisition of resources for the firm (Williamson, 1975). When a farm family is conducting their estate planning or going through the process of farmland transfer, they are taking resource acquisition into account to meet the goals for the future of the farmland. Consider that the goal is to continue to operate the farmland as the family business in order to make a profit; the farmland would likely be transferred in one large lump sum to a single member of the youngest generation that has the capability and the desire to farm as an occupation.

Relationship Dynamics for Members of the Youngest Generation

“... Inheritance perpetuates and may intensify inequalities arising originally from other causes. In that sense, it is a secondary cause of inequality; but that is not, of course, to say that it is of secondary importance. The *extent* of its influence on distribution remains an open question...” (Wedgewood, 1929, pp. 60-61.). This quote refers to potential inequalities among youngest generations in regards to land inheritance. This is another factor that can play a prominent role in succession plans. Depending upon how many members of the youngest generation, if any, have or currently are working on the family farm and/or have a desire to someday take over the family farm has an extraordinary effect on the land transfer plan that a family will implement. Research has shown that farm parents are more likely to give a larger percentage of their inheritance to children who have helped them or done work for them, on the farm or otherwise. “...bequests are often used as compensation for services rendered by beneficiaries” (Bernheim, et al., 1985, p. 1045).

One aspect of inheritance that frequently comes into play when farmland is involved is contention among members of the youngest generation. This is unfortunate, but again one of the reasons why research on this topic is important. In many cases, there is a single member of the youngest generation who wishes to inherit the majority of the farmland, whether that is because they are the only child who intends to farm for their occupation or because they feel they have done the most work on the family farm. There could be some other reason, but regardless of the reasoning this point-of-view can frequently create a great deal of hostility among the youngest generations. While this is definitely the case, it is important to keep in mind that there are benefits in handing down all land to one member of the youngest generation because the farm

will return to scale and not be broken into smaller holdings and having a single, fixed heir decreases competition among members of the youngest generations (Baker and Miceli, 2005). The fewer pieces that a family farm is broken into, the more profitable it may be. The size of the inheritance given to non-controlling youngest generations often decreases the investment in family firms by decreasing the future income that they will be able to promise to external financiers (Ellul, Pagano, Panunzi, 2010). These financiers can come from both inside of and outside of the family. The various financiers that frequently become involved in farming operations relates to the boundaries that exist within a farm or firm of any nature. This concept is better explained by the subtheory of organizational boundaries within theory of the firm.

Organizational Boundaries

The boundaries within an organization, as well as the boundaries that an organization faces, are a concept with theory of the firm. There are countless transactions performed within firms that relate to the internal boundaries of the firm. Boundaries relate to what the firm is capable of accomplishing. However, most firms generally conduct an equal number of transactions externally. Both internal and external transactions are needed for a firm to sustain itself and be productive (Williamson, 1975).

Family farming operations exhibit boundaries that are both internal and external in nature. The intergenerational farmland transfer process is largely internal since it includes parties who are internally involved in the firm. Family members are all considered internal members of the firm, but if lawyers or mediators are brought into the intergenerational farmland transfer process they would be external members of the firm. The farmland transfer process has far-reaching impacts external to the firm. If the inheriting generation chooses to make significant

changes to the nature of the farming operation or does not continue the farming operation, there will be repercussions on businesses external to the firm. A good example of this is the decreasing numbers of farmers, thereby contributing to the decreasing population in rural areas, which is having a detrimental impact on other rural businesses such as gas stations and restaurants.

Gaps in the Literature

The existing research on this topic did not provide a complete understanding of intergenerational farmland transfer. The literature did not go in depth into what factors influence the youngest generation's decision of whether or not to farm. Also, the tensions that arise among youngest generations during the intergenerational land transfer process greatly influence what the youngest generations will do with the farmland as well as the relationships within the family. These are two aspects of intergenerational land transfer that my research investigated in greater detail than the existing research. This study provided an explanation for why the youngest generations hold the specific intentions for the farmland that they do.

What are the Gender Differences in Intergenerational Land Transfer and Why?

“Land rights for women is not the inevitable conclusion of a gender analysis of land, which needs a more open terrain of possibilities, richer analytical frameworks, a more critical approach to existing data and more contextually grounded research to make progress” (Jackson, 2003, p. 476). The issue of how gender impacts intergenerational land transfer has received considerable research. In the past, farmland has been handed down primarily to males. One would like to think our society has moved closer to gender equality in recent decades; however some inequalities still exist in farmland ownership and inheritance (Agarwal, 1998). There is still even a joke in rural Canadian culture about the farmer's daughter that implies daughters are a burden,

which fathers try to hand off to a potential husband as soon as possible (Forbes-Chilibeck, 2005). By utilizing Collins theoretical framework of intersectionality and the matrix of domination, I can examine how inequality in farmland transfer has been approached in the literature.

Intersectionality

Collins spends a great deal of her discussion examining the opportunity that women have in regards to education, or in some instances lack of opportunity for education. Along with that education women can gain the power of knowledge. There are two writings of Collins that were the focus for providing theoretical guidance to my research since they were the most applicable in the context of the role that gender plays in intergenerational farmland transfer. These writings provided concepts that played a guiding role in my study. The two books by Collins that were utilized are *Black Feminist Thought* and *Fighting Words*. There are many concepts throughout these writings that were applicable to the subject matter of this study. Intersectionality refers to the intersecting social positions that can impact a person's position in society. This relates to the process of intergenerational farmland transfer, because of the focus on how gender intersects with the experiences and choices of the rural families I interviewed. In addition, gender issues arose during the course of my research through the different gendered expectations that were held for youngest generations. In many cases, what farm families may perceive as equality was not actually equal, but rather based on traditional gender expectations. Utilizing an intersectional lens enabled me to look more closely at the nuances of intersectional land transfer. The importance of maintaining stability and coherence in the family farm was not unaffected by the gendered expectations of the youngest generation.

Key to understanding intersectionality and Collins' work with the matrix of domination include situated knowledge, subjugated knowledge, and partial perspective. These concepts provide a way of understanding how the grandparent generation and the parent generation may have differing understandings and expectations than the youngest generation. Matrix of domination provides context to better understand the inequality that exists in intergenerational farmland transfer. The concepts of situated knowledge, subjugated knowledge, and partial perspective lay the groundwork for explaining the gender roles that exist in intergenerational farmland transfer and some of the reasons for those gender roles that are present.

The Matrix of Situated Knowledge

The segments of *Fighting Words* that were used to guide the research focus primarily on the importance of each person's truth being reliant upon contexts and self-critique. This is closely connected to the idea of situated knowledge that Collins discusses. With the concept of situated knowledge, Collins argues that, "group location in hierarchical power relations produces shared challenges for individuals in those groups... group standpoint are situated in unjust power relations, reflect those power relations, and help shape them" (Collins, 1998, p. 20). What this description of situated knowledge is saying is that individuals create their own perceptions based upon their position within society, which includes factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic class, and other societal statuses. Our knowledge is embedded in grounded experiences that an individual has throughout their life. This knowledge based on our own individual experiences can be limiting in that it does not allow for us to see things through others' perspective. Situated knowledge, then, means that we have a partial perspective that is shaped by our social position. At the same time, the characteristics that we share with other members of each group that we fall

into make us identify with those individuals and form group bonds. We can develop situated standpoints based upon association with multiple groups within society and hold some privileges and disadvantages in society as a result of the different groups that we feel we belong to. Collins expresses that these various roles in society and a women's understanding of them leads to empowerment, (Collins, 1998).

Situated knowledge enables an examination of intergenerational farmland transfer that looks at the different expectations and understandings that a person may hold based on their gender. Each family member holds a different point of view on what is fair or appropriate in regards to intergenerational farmland transfer based on their own knowledge and experiences. These partial perspectives can create tension and competing ways of thinking about what is best for the family farm. These partial perspectives can lead to conflict during intergenerational farmland transfer as a result of family members' inability to understand other family members' opinions. This is particularly true in the role that gender plays in intergenerational farmland transfer. If a position is located within subjugated knowledge, women youngest generations in this case, may not have much say in the direction of the family farm. As a result of this situated or partial standpoint, individuals of different genders often have difficulty understanding the point of view of the opposite gender. This frame enables me to explore how gender and rural farm identity impact family decisions on land transfer.

In particular, by understanding Collins' core concepts of situated knowledge, partial perspective, and subjugated knowledge, I will be able to explore competing perspectives on the expectations and beliefs my interviewees had about gender. First, having a thorough understanding of societal relations and dynamics provides a basis for a woman to be aware of

when she is experiencing injustices in society and how to deal with those inequalities by exerting the power that she does have. Second, having this knowledge allows women to generate new knowledge and create their own definitions of what it means to be a woman and how to, “define our own realities *on our own terms* has far greater implications,” (Collins, 2000). That is a woman’s ability to use her knowledge in order to define what it means to be a woman and to exert herself in a powerful way through the use of her acquired knowledge. Collins discusses the structural domain of power, which is what she uses to refer to the institutionalized aspects of society that continue to promote gender inequality in an organized and socially acceptable way.

These domains of power were applicable in the context of intergenerational farmland transfer. In society, farming has traditionally been viewed as a male occupation, and women have largely been excluded from the ownership and working of farmland. Collins writings can serve as something of a guide to how women can use an increased availability of education and knowledge to improve equality in the transfer of land. If women are informed on the transfer process and how to make farmland successful after they take ownership of it, they will be able to fight for their rights in the farming community.

Gender Inequality

Collins’ work helps understand the position of gender in the land transfer literature. Gender inequality has long been a serious issue in many different circumstances and settings. This is no different in regards to farming and farmland ownership. Farming has long been considered a male dominated occupation, although agriculture was initially discovered by women.

There is some evidence that females may, in certain circumstances, experience preferential treatment when it comes to farmland inheritance. In cases when the household is headed by a

female, daughters may receive preferential treatment. “Parents also exhibit preferential behavior towards children of the same gender: daughters of better educated mothers receive more land, nonland assets and total inheritance; better educated fathers give land preferentially to sons, but favor daughters in education” (Quisumbing, 1994, p. 167). In this scenario presented by Quisumbing, daughters actually benefit in both instances because it says that well-educated fathers favor daughters in regards to education.

This does not align with the gap in net worth that Conley and Ryvicker (2006) propose based on gender is due largely to differences between savings rates, which may be a result of the financial constraints in female-headed households as a result of typically lower average incomes for females. These additional financial constraints that women still face highlight that there are still significant gender inequalities in our society. “Female-headed households in the United States suffer from lower levels of asset ownership than their male-headed counterparts” (Conley and Ryvicker, 2006, p. 41).

This relates to overarching issues of gender inequality in our society beyond land transfer. Agarwal (1997) examines the complexities of household dynamics, largely in regard to how women are impacted by gender inequalities and their influence in the decision making process within a household. Agarwal would argue that women need to join forces with one another to overcome these inequalities (1998). Agarwal believed that women would have to transcend class differences to gain equality with men. A great deal of the inequality that the female participants in the study were experiencing, they were unaware of because they accepted the cultural norms that were so embedded in their beliefs. On many occasions they even embraced obvious inequalities without being aware of the injustices that were present. This relates to the situated

and subjugated knowledge that individuals accept as truths based on the beliefs they have been taught to accept without question.

Gender Roles in International Circumstances

Other nations also have gender inequalities when it comes to land transfer. In some parts of the world, women stand an equal chance as men to inherit land, while in other regions women are frequently overlooked in the farmland transfer process. International research is applicable in the case of gender in international farmland transfer because there is little research specific to North Dakota, or even the United States. Since a large portion of the research on gender in intergenerational farmland transfer is internationally based, it is important to include this research in order to provide context for my study.

Some women have discovered that owning farmland can be profitable and have taken steps to acquire land. The route through which a woman has the ability to obtain land in India is through the State, the market, and the family. Many women work in groups to purchase or lease land, which has proven to be advantageous for the women who do this (Agarwal, 2003). However in some parts of the world, inheritance is the only means through which a woman is able to acquire land. In Latin America, women stand a more equal share in land inheritance than in any other form of acquiring land (Deere and Leon, 2001).

Many countries have become more modern in the way they view intergenerational land transfer. For instance, the Philippines have evolved a great deal over the past two generations of land transfer. Estudillo (2001) found that older more educated men are more likely to invest in the education of sons, and older land-owning women prefer to hand farmland down to daughters. These trends have evolved in younger generations because sons are favored in regards to land

inheritance, and daughters typically receive a greater investment in their education. Estudillo gathered this data by conducting a prolonged study that covered multiple generations in the Philippines. International gender research is applicable to my study, but highlights the need for research on gender in land transfer specifically to North Dakota since there is little existing research on this topic that is not internationally based.

Gaps in the Literature

There was existing research on the role that gender plays in farmland transfer and farming practices. There is evidence showing that gender differences have become more equal in current farming practices, but research also exists that suggested prominent gender inequalities are still present in farming practices. Questions still needed to be answered in regards to the role that gender plays in intergenerational farmland transfer. For instance, do the gender inequalities of the past, still exist in contemporary society? Also, some of the existing research was internationally based, but was that applicable to the United States? My project provided answers to these questions and gave an explanation of the level of gender equality in the intergenerational farmland transfer process in the context of southeast North Dakota.

Conclusion

Both of the overarching theoretical concepts discussed, theory of the firm and the theoretical concepts of Collins, were used as guides throughout the course of this study. These theories aided in the decisions of which existing literature needed to be included in order to provide the most relevant information of the topic of intergenerational farmland transfer. The theory of the firm and the theoretical concepts used from Collins writings were utilized during the data collection process, by helping to determine what interview questions would be the most

meaningful and effective in providing answers to the research questions. The theoretical basis for my research project was also what set up the theoretical framework to guide data analysis by providing a theoretical basis of how to interpret the data that was gathered. They both provided insight into the phenomena that my research studied, however in different ways. Both theoretical concepts provided differing insight into the topic of intergenerational farmland transfer. Concepts from the theory of the firm were used in my research project as sensitizing concepts throughout the course of data collection and analysis and provided insight into the business aspects of intergenerational farmland transfer and the reasoning for the parent generation and the youngest generation making decisions as to farmland transfer based on business. Collins writings, however, provided a necessary theoretical basis upon which to analyze the role that gender plays in intergenerational farmland transfer and to provide an explanation for some of the gender issues that developed throughout the course of my study. Having a strong theoretical basis was necessary in order to determine which methodologies were most beneficial in gathering the data. Chapter Three provides greater detail regarding data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The purpose of this study was to investigate intergenerational land transfer in southeastern North Dakota. This was accomplished by focusing on the three primary objectives: investigating which strategies farm families are using to transfer farmland between generations, the reasons why farm families choose those strategies, and the role that gender plays in this process. Utilizing personal interviews, this qualitative method of data collection provided depth to the understanding of the nuances involved in land transfer decisions. The participants were candid in regards to their personal stories of how their family addressed intergenerational farmland transfer and how this process impacted their family. I conducted one-on-one personal interviews with members of four farm families, which allowed me to focus on the family as being the unit of analysis. This was an area that the existing literature touched on but did not provide a considerable amount of family unit level data in relation to intergenerational farmland transfer. I consider my research, in addition to qualitative interviews, to be a methodological case study of farm families. My research methods focused so heavily on each family that it is a case study, using the family as the unit of analysis.

My primary focus within the farm families was the youngest generation because most of the existing literature was centered on whichever generation currently owned the farmland. I interviewed all of the young adult heirs that participated in my study individually. There was one exception in which the oldest son of the Rented/Undecided Family chose to be interviewed with his wife. The parents were all also interviewed as couples. This was done in order to gain the most information from the parents, when they were acting together in the decision-making process in regards to the families' farmland. The youngest generations were all interviewed individually and guaranteed confidentiality in order to get their most candid responses. It was in

order to gain these candid views into each of the participants' mindsets and opinions that qualitative interviews were the methodology executed for this study. This chapter delves into specific aspects of the research by explaining the interview process that was used. In addition, I elaborate on the sample population included in the study, providing narratives of each family, and finish the chapter with a discussion of the ethical concerns involved in this research.

The Interview Process

The primary method of data collection used in this study was personal interviews with members of the sample population. Parents were interviewed with each other in order to discuss their plans for the future together, and the youngest generation was interviewed individually in order to obtain their most candid responses. All of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, and these interviews were composed of various questions that sought to satisfy the three research questions upon which my study is based. All of the participating farm families were included in the sample through personal relationships of mine and my family, so I contacted them by a telephone call or in person asking whether or not they would be willing to participate in my research. I did not put out any advertisements to recruit participants because I intended to utilize personal contacts. All of the farm families that I contacted were willing to participate and were interested in my study project to learn more about intergenerational farmland transfer. After the farm families had been contacted and agreed to participate in the study, the next step was to schedule a time to meet. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the participants' homes; however there were two interviews that were conducted in public areas. One of those interviews was in the waiting area at a gym, and the other interview was conducted at a livestock auction sale barn. I met with all of the participants to conduct the interviews wherever they

requested. The interviewees were read the informed consent statement (see Appendix 3), followed by the actual interview questions (see Appendix 4). The interview process normally took between thirty and forty minutes and, each interview was recorded by digital recorders so that the recordings could then be transcribed.

Since some of the interview questions tended to be rather private in nature, such as those focusing on family decisions and family tensions, it was necessary to be sensitive to the tensions the interviews could bring to the surface within the family and to build a rapport with the members of each family. Because I had existing relationships with each of the participants and they were most likely aware that my family was in a similar situation as each of them in regards to farmland transfer, were able to create a sense of openness and understanding in the interviews. I was fortunate in already having known all of the participating families prior to beginning the research in order to make them feel comfortable answering questions that were about private family matters. This allowed me to gain data with depth and quality that would not have been possible without the existing relationship that I had with the participants. Depth was also added to the data by doing individual interviews with the youngest generation, who may have not disclosed their full feelings or intentions for the future if they had been interviewed with their parents. I believe it was helpful interviewing the parents together as couples because, in all of the families, the parents expressed that they considered themselves partners when it came to the farmland. So having both of the spouses in the same interview was beneficial to the quality of the data because it allowed for them to add to each other's answers. No family members interviewed appeared to express any aggravation at the questions being asked, but the participating farm families that were still undecided in regards to intergenerational farmland transfer did express feelings of being glad they participated in this study in order to start discussions within the

family about what would be done with the farmland when the time came for it to be transferred to the next generation.

Scheduling Conflicts with the Sample Population

One area of the methodology that may have made my study a bit more challenging was finding enough farm families in this region of the state where all of the members were willing to be candidly interviewed. This particular concern arose for varying reasons. First, this area is sparsely populated so recruiting a large number of participants was unlikely to begin with. Second, farm families are typically busy and may not be able to make time for an interview on a topic that has generally been considered a private, family matter. It was fortunate that I had grown up in this area and had ties to different families who fit the criteria of what was sought for participating farm families. As a result, personal contacts were the only technique used to contact farm families to be interviewed for this study. All four of the families that were included in the study were family friends, and it still proved difficult to schedule interviews.

The interview process carried into the spring and summer of 2012, when farm families typically become busy with fieldwork. The participants were frequently unable to make time for an interview during this busy time of year. The majority of the interviews that were conducted took place in the early spring before the planting season got too busy for these families. These scheduling difficulties were also magnified because all members of the family had to be willing to make time to be interviewed. Finding entire families where all members agreed to be interviewed was more difficult than first thought when data collection began. There was only one participating farm family in which all of the youngest generations did not participate in the interviews. In this family, all of the youngest generations were married with their own families

and, other than the oldest youngest generation who had already taken over the families' farmland, had moved away from southeastern North Dakota.

Sample

The sample for this study includes four farm families who either own farmland in southeastern North Dakota or stand to inherit farmland in southeastern North Dakota and who have family members in the youngest generations who are over the age of eighteen. I conducted twelve interviews, interviewing a total of seventeen individuals. This included several family members in each family. It was important for my research to focus on the family level of farming in order to add a depth to the data that would fill something of a hole in the existing research. There is a considerable amount of research on farm families and intergenerational transfer, but much of it is from many years ago and may not be entirely applicable to the type of farming that was the focus of this study. When characteristics of the farmland change, the intergenerational transfer will be impacted. So it was important to provide up to date data on the type of farmland found in southeastern North Dakota. Another reason why it was so important to focus on the family level data in these interviews is because there is almost no existing research on intergenerational farmland transfer from the youngest generations' point of view. So a concern with the sample was to include families with young adult youngest generations who were willing to be interviewed.

All of the farm families own land or stand to inherit land in the southeastern section of North Dakota. Each member of the family was interviewed separately in order to obtain the most candid responses possible. I had been concerned that interviewing the youngest generations together with the parents would prevent the youngest generations from being totally upfront

about their plans for the farmland when they inherit it as well as the youngest generations' feelings towards the farmland. However, in all of the families both parents acted together as owners of the farmland and worked together to make decisions in regards to that farmland, so all of the spouses were interviewed together. All of the rest of the members of the youngest generation were interviewed individually.

Characteristics of the Sample

The sample population consisted of four southeast North Dakota farm families with members of the youngest generation who were above the age of 18 who stand to inherit the family farmland. I interviewed 17 members of 4 different families. Because I was interested in depth of insight into their personal experiences with intergenerational farmland transfer, I focused on depth in my interview sample. The family details are in Figure 4 below. Ultimately, the sample consisted of four sets of parents, or the parent generation, and the youngest generation for each of the four families. Each family had a mother and a father, who were interviewed together. There were a total of eight members of the parent generations and nine members of the youngest generation who were interviewed. The gender division of the youngest generations was fairly even, with 5 female youngest generations and four male youngest generations. All of the youngest generations were in their early twenties or late teens, with the exception of one male who was in his early thirties.

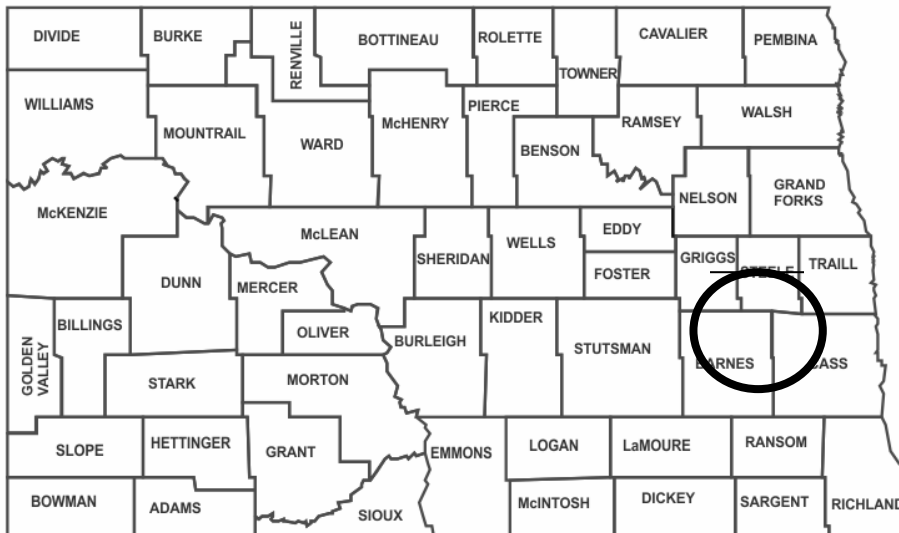
Interviewees were able to explain why their family intends to implement particular strategies. In some cases, the families had not begun to plan for intergenerational land transfer; in other cases, the families had already started, or had already undergone, the process of transferring the farmland from one generation to the next. The different circumstances

represented in the sample were examined to answer the research questions that were the focus of the study. Qualitatively interviewing two generations of farm families provided information regarding the steps the family has taken for intergenerational land transfer.

Geographic Area

All of the farm families interviewed reside in and own their farmland in southeastern North Dakota. This geographic area shares commonalities in farmland type and value. Farmland in western North Dakota has more ranchland characteristics; most of the farmland in the northern part of the state falls in the Red River Valley region, which typically has more fertile land and often produces different crops than southeast North Dakota. The farm families that participated in this study all live in and own land in Ransom and Sargent counties, which can be seen in Figure 2 below, county map of North Dakota in the southeastern corner of the state.

Figure 2. Map of North Dakota counties, photo courtesy of NDDOT



Narratives of Farm Families

Each of the four families interviewed for this study provided a different insight into strategies used in the intergenerational farmland transfer process. The families' unique qualities enabled me to explore the variable dynamics involved in implementing different strategies. Although Table 1 below outlines characteristics of the families, I provide here an overview of the families based on the transfer strategies they either planned on using or had already implemented.

The first family that was interviewed will be referred to as the Rented/Undecided Family, and they consisted of two parents that were married to one another. They had three children; of which the oldest two are both male and the youngest is female. All are young adults either in college, but the oldest had recently graduated from college. The oldest child had also recently gotten married and had a child. The interview was conducted with the oldest son and his spouse together, just as all of the parent interviews were conducted. None of the youngest generation in this family had any specific plans to return home to the farm to work as their career. The oldest son expressed that he would have perhaps been interested in it, but since this family had no chosen plan of transferring the farmland between generations, it was too much of a risk. The grandparent generation still actually owned the land and the parent generation of the family was renting the farmland in order to work it. The parent generation was unsure of how the grandmother planned to pass on the farmland. This uncertainty compelled the oldest son to choose a career off the farm, because he was aware that the farmland could be split up between many grandchildren who were far removed from the farm, and he did not want to run the risk of planning to return to take over a farm that was no longer in one all-encompassing piece. The

second son is currently attending college and had also considered farming as his occupation but believed that he could earn an equal or possibly higher income working off the farm and still have evenings and weekends free. This would also ensure a more stable income, which would not be impacted by things such as the weather or crop diseases, upon which a farmers' income depends. The third, and only female, child did not intend to return to farm but did want to live in a rural area after college and would be open to living on the family's farmland. She expressed that her brothers had done more work on the farm while they were growing up, so she did not expect to inherit as much as them.

The second family I interviewed will be referred to as the Willed Family. This family also had two parents who were married to one another, but they had two daughters. These parents had both inherited farmland from the grandparent generation when they passed away. The father's family had a rather smooth transition, but the mother's family had experienced many issues and lingering tension from disagreements over intergenerational farmland transfer. Both of the daughters are currently in college and working towards degrees that relate to agricultural fields. However, neither of the daughters intends to pursue farming careers. They did both express that they would be open to possibly returning to their family farmland to live, if they got jobs back in that area after graduating from college. In addition, both of the daughters were similar in their expression of needing a husband to take over their parents' farmland.

The third family that I interviewed for this study will be referred to as the Gifted/Undecided Family. This is a family of four, with two parents married to one another and a daughter and a son. The daughter is the eldest, and both children are currently enrolled in college. The daughter is currently in an agricultural related field and expressed an interest in the

possibility of returning to her families' farmland either to work it, to live on it, or both. The son is attending college for a degree that was unrelated to agriculture. He stated that he would probably not be returning to the family's farmland in southeastern North Dakota because his chosen field of study had much greater job opportunities in more urban areas. He did appreciate the land that he would inherit someday, as a form of supplemental income by renting to another farmer even though he did not plan to farm it himself. He was not largely invested in the uncertainty of this families farmland transfer. The grandparent generation on the father's side still owned the bulk of the farmland but had gifted small portions of it to each of their children and their spouses. The parents were not aware of what the grandparent generations planned to do with the farmland, or if they had made plans for what would happen to the farmland after they passed away. The father has two siblings, a brother and a sister. The sister had moved out of state with her husband approximately 20 years ago and was, at this point, removed from the farmland. The father and his brothers, however, worked together on the farmland. The father's brother (who was not in the family that participated in this study) has a son who is interested in taking over the families' farming operation. The family interviewed is uncertain about what the grandparent generations will consider is equal when it comes time to decide how to split up the farmland. All four members of this family expressed similar a sentiment that relationships could become strained after the grandparent generation passes away. If the grandparent generation has not made plans for the farmland or if not all members of the family are satisfied with how the farmland is divided it might create strife among the father and the brother in deciding what to do with the farm and the land. This is something that they all expressed a desire to avoid, but they feared some tensions within the family might be unavoidable.

Table 1. Characteristics of farm families

Interviewee Identifier	Gender	Age	Residence	Education	Parent ownership
Rented/Undecided Family					
Rented/Undecided Family's Father	M	Fifties	Rural ND	High School	Yes (Some)
Rented/Undecided Family's Mother	F	Fifties	Rural ND	Associate's	Yes (Some)
Rented/Undecided Family's Oldest Son	M	Twenties	Regional Urban Center	Associate's	No
Rented/Undecided Family's Oldest Son's Spouse	F	Twenties	Regional Urban Center	Master's	No
Rented/Undecided Family's Middle Son	M	Twenties	Regional Urban Center	Senior in College	No
Rented/Undecided Family's Youngest Daughter	F	Twenties	Regional Urban Center	Junior in College	No
Willed Family					
Willed Family's Father	M	Fifties	Rural ND	Bachelor's	Yes
Willed Family's Mother	F	Fifties	Rural ND	Associate's	Yes
Willed Family's Oldest Daughter	F	Twenties	Regional Urban Center	Graduate Student	No
Willed Family's Youngest Daughter	F	Late Teens	Regional Urban Center	Freshman in College	No
Gifted/Undecided Family					
Gifted/Undecided Family's Father	M	Forties	Rural ND	Associate's	Yes (Some)
Gifted/Undecided Family's Mother	F	Forties	Rural ND	Associate's	Yes (Some)
Gifted/Undecided Family's Oldest Daughter	F	Twenties	Regional Urban Center	Senior in College	No
Gifted/Undecided Family's Youngest Son	M	Late Teens	Regional Urban Center	Freshman in College	No
Purchased Family					
Purchased Family's Father	M	Sixties	Rural ND	High School	Yes
Purchased Family's Mother	F	Sixties	Rural ND	High School	Yes
Purchased Family's Oldest Son	M	Thirties	Rural ND	High School	Yes (Some)

The fourth family I interviewed is referred to as the Purchased Family and had gone through the most recent intergenerational farmland transfer process. The son that was interviewed is the oldest child in the family and has taken over the ownership of the farmland from the parent generation by purchasing it from them. He is older than any of the other members of the youngest generation that I interviewed. He is in his early thirties, whereas all of the other youngest generation interviewees were in their early to mid-twenties. There are three other children in this family, but they have all moved away from southeastern North Dakota and are removed from the families' farmland. They were not interviewed for this study, but the parent generation and the youngest generation expressed that their family had had a smooth transition process, and that all of the other youngest generations had agreed with the decision to sell the farmland to the youngest generation that wanted to farm as a career.

Ethical Concerns

Like in any study, as the researcher, I had to remain aware of the potential for ethical concerns to arise. All reasonable steps were taken, in accord with NDSU IRB approval, to prevent any ethical issues from arising. The North Dakota State University Institutional Review Board approval is attached (see Appendix 5). Specific ethical concerns that applied to this study included the personal nature of the subject matter that was being researched and confidentiality.

The nature of the subject matter could have led to difficulties recruiting participants, especially with the sample being composed of a large cross-section of the population who in general does not want to participate in research studies. Different groups of people hold this ideology for different reasons.

Sensitive Topics and Confidentiality

The subject matter that was the focus of this study did include personal issues that families contend with. There was concern going into this study that bringing up personal issues and engaging in potentially difficult conversations among family members might lead to tension or conflict within the participating families. I addressed these possible sources of tension by being sensitive to the personal nature of some of the questions being asked during the interviews.

For this reason, all reasonable steps were taken in order to keep all of the participants' names confidential, and participants' names were in no way linked to their responses. However, in rural areas there was a concern that residents will be able to deduce who participated in the research study based upon the description of the participating families and their farmland and operations. In rural areas where most residents all know one another, this is a probable risk. Therefore, confidentiality was not the primary ethical concern, so much as anonymity. All of the participants' identities were kept confidential, but all reasonable steps were also taken to ensure their anonymity. Each family will be identified and distinguished based on the strategy of intergenerational farmland transfer that their family has used or is using. Individual participants are identified by their role within each of the families. All of the participants' characteristics and assigned names are broken down in Table 1 above.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Over the course of my data collection process, it became clear that intergenerational farmland transfer is a fluid transition, which is rife with uncertainty. This was expressed by the Willed Family's Father, whose family farmland was willed the last time that the farmland was transferred between generations. He expressed the preparation that his family was making for the next time that intergenerational land transfer would occur, "We've studied every situation. They are all different, and you learn something from every situation. You can take some of the do's and don't's from each situation, but there really isn't a perfect situation." This statement reflects all of the different options that a family has in regards to intergenerational farmland transfer. There is no set "cookie cutter" strategy that will fit for every family. This chapter will explore the different strategies that the participating farm families have chosen or intend to implement in their own intergenerational farmland transfer, along with the reasoning that each family has for implementing those different strategies. Each family has different dynamics and relationships among the family members, which will impact what intergenerational farmland transfer strategy, would be the most beneficial for each unique farm family. One of the key characteristics, which I discuss in this chapter, is the role that gender plays in the farm families and how that impacts intergenerational farmland transfer. Differing expectations based on gender is one theme that was present in the findings of my research. The other themes discussed in this chapter include monetary gain, rural identity, security and stability, and family legacy. All of these themes, the roles that they play in intergenerational farmland transfer, and the differences in the ways that the parents and the youngest generations relate to these themes and to the family farmland will be discussed throughout this chapter.

Key Strategies of Land Transfer

There are various farmland transfer strategies that farm families can implement in order to pass the farmland from one generation to the next. Choosing which strategy of land transfer is the most beneficial to a family can prove a significant challenge that farm families often struggle with. The four farm families that participated in this study were executing four different land transfer strategies, which include buying, selling, renting, and undecided as to which strategy their family will implement. Every family has different dynamics and variables that exist which will affect what method of farmland transfer each family will decide to utilize in their own farmland transfer process, as expressed by this statement by one of the parent interviewees. The theory of the firm provides a way of understanding the unique situation and culture of each family. Each farm family implemented different strategies to transfer farmland between generations due to the unique culture and beliefs that each family holds. Three different strategies emerged during the interview process. These primary land transfer methods include renting, willing, gifting, and purchasing. Much of my analysis and discussion will work to elaborate on how family members make these decisions and the impact the decisions have on the family. First, I will elaborate on these key strategies and how they emerged in my data.

Renting is when the parent generation rents their farmland to others to work the land. This strategy can be implemented when the generation that currently owns the land wants to retain ownership of the farmland but not actually farm the land themselves. This is also a common strategy that the parent generation can use to rent the farmland to the youngest generation, if one or more of them want to farm as their occupation. This allows the youngest generations to work the farmland without the high costs of actually purchasing the farmland and still provides the parent generation with a continued source of income. This reflects the

theoretical concept from theory of the firm in regards to organizational goals. If the firm's goal, or in this case farm families' goal, is to continue the actual operation of the farmland into the next generation, they may implement this strategy in order to transfer the farmland between generations. The Rented/Undecided Family is renting primarily because they are unsure of what permanent decisions will be reached in regards to intergenerational farmland transfer, and when referring to why they were renting instead of purchasing the land from the grandparent generation the Rented/Undecided Father stated that his mother was, "A little gun shy about the whole topic...so I'm renting hers until she decides," They are renting until more permanent steps for intergenerational farmland transfer can be reached.

Willing is when the generation that currently owns the farmland chooses to leave the ownership of the farmland to another person, or multiple people, in their will after they pass away. It is most typical for the grandparent or parent generations to leave ownership of their farmland to the youngest generation, or to split the farmland between members of the youngest generation. Land owners can also will land ownership to individuals other than their children, but the only family included in the sample of this study that used willing passed their farmland on to their children. The parent generation of the Willed Family had inherited the family farmland from the grandparent generation. However, they had encountered many issues during this process as far as disagreements with other family members about what was considered fair in regards to the farmland. The grandparent generations had made their own decisions, considering it fair to give the majority of the farmland to the children who were living on that farmland and working it for their career. When discussing this situation that had taken place in her family, the Willed Family's Oldest Daughter reflected, "It left a family feud... My family really doesn't like to talk about it." The siblings who had left the farmland to live elsewhere and pursue other

careers felt this was unfair, but there was little they could do about it since the grandparent generation had made their wishes clear in their will. There was little that members of the parent generation could do if they were unhappy with the grandparent generations' decision, but permanent damage was done to the siblings' relationships with one another. This relates to the organizational boundaries that are discussed under theory of the firm. Boundaries are both internal and external, and the inability of the parent generation to reach agreement when it comes to intergenerational farmland transfer is an example of an internal boundary. Disagreements of this nature could impact external boundaries if the disagreements come to affect the business or financial income of the farm.

Gifting is when the owner of farmland simply gives that farmland to another person and receives nothing in return. This strategy of intergenerational farmland transfer is beneficial for the youngest generation, in that it allows the youngest generation to take over full ownership of the land and profit from it without any expense to purchase it. However, when the grandparent or parent generation gifts farmland, they are giving away a valuable asset and losing a major source of income. This strategy of intergenerational farmland transfer also reflects the presence of the organizational goals, but it also establishes the concept of organizational continuity, that is part of the theory of the firm. Organizational continuity discusses the firm existing in order to perpetuate itself. A grandparent or parent generation gifting farmland to their youngest generation is a perfect example of organizational continuity in that the parents are taking a financial loss for themselves in order to put the future operators of the farmland in a more stable financial situation by not forcing them to pay the high cost of purchasing or renting farmland. The Gifted/Undecided Family had gifted some of their farmland from the grandparent generation to the parent generation; the Gifted/Undecided Father explained, "It was one quarter at a time.

We got the two at different times.” The Gifted/Undecided Family was in a financial situation where they were able to give a portion of land to each of the children as a gift in order to help them get on their feet financially when they were young adults, regardless of whether or not they planned on farming for a career. The grandparent generation continued to gift small portions of land to the three siblings as they have gotten older, but this has primarily been because they have been unable to reach permanent decisions about what to do with the farmland.

Purchasing is when the grandparent or parent generation receives money in return for turning the ownership of the farmland over to someone else. This is used as a strategy of intergenerational farmland transfer strategy when youngest generations purchase the farmland from either the grandparent or the parent generation. This provides the parents with a source of income, but it can often be difficult for youngest generations to purchase farmland due to the high value of farmland. Similarly to gifting and renting, purchasing also reflects the theoretical concept of organizational goals. However, this particular intergenerational land transfer strategy also ties into resource acquisition. When the youngest generations take over ownership of the family farmland, they are taking over the responsibility of the farmland as a resource. Whether or not the youngest generation chooses to farm, the ownership of the farmland serves as a financial resource. This relates to resource acquisition, which is part of theory of the firm. In this case, the youngest generations acquire the resource of the farmland. However, the youngest generation(s) are then responsible for the stewardship of that farmland and acquiring resources for the farmland; such as seed, fertilizer, or a person to rent the land to who will farm it. The Purchased Family opted to use purchasing to transfer farmland because there was one member of the youngest generation who wanted to farm for his career right out of high school, and all of the other siblings agreed that they were not interested in taking over ownership of the farmland. It

was fortunate for this family that all of the family members were in agreement about transferring the farmland to a single sibling, and the transfer went smoothly.

There is one final aspect of strategies to consider: farm families who are still *undecided* or do not know what strategy of intergenerational land transfer they will implement. Many participants expressed a certain amount of uncertainty in regards to what is the best route of intergenerational farmland transfer. The Gifted/Undecided Family's Mother stated that, "My mother-in-law is in her seventies so it'd be nice if we could talk about it, but it's a hard conversation to start." No matter which generation is unable to start discussions with each other about planning for intergenerational farmland transfer, it is reflective of the boundaries within the firm, that family members are obviously not comfortable crossing.

Strategies' Benefits

Each farm family had various reasons for choosing their respective land transfer strategy. Each family has its own unique characteristics and circumstances that play a role in determining what land transfer strategy will be implemented. However, there are certain general reasons that can explain why a farm family would choose a particular land transfer strategy.

For instance, the choice to rent farmland to the youngest generation offers many advantages compared to other land transfer strategies. The option to rent offers a level of affordability to both the parent generation and the youngest generation that most other land transfer strategies do not provide. Many members of the youngest generation are not financially capable to purchase farmland since the value of farmland continues to rise, and the market for farmland is becoming increasingly competitive. Renting allows for the youngest generation to spend less money in order to farm the land that their family owns, and at the same time it provides parents with a continued source of income to live off of. As was the case for the

Rented/Undecided Family, they were renting the family farmland from the grandparent generation for the level of convenience that renting provides for farm families who are unable to make more permanent decisions about which land transfer strategy to implement. The Rented/Undecided Family was currently renting because permanent decisions had not been made in regards to what the grandparent generation was going to do with the family farmland. The family members expressed that there was a lack of communication with the grandparent generation, which was preventing permanent decisions from being reached. Renting had been working well for this family, but they were starting to hope for more permanent decisions about what would be done with the family farmland. In the Rented/Undecided Family, the only member of the parent generation that had stayed home and farmed for their career is renting the farmland from the grandparent generation, but no permanent decision has been reached in regards to farmland transfer. This is representative of the level of uncertainty that can accompany renting. Despite this uncertainty, renting provides an income to the parents as well as relieving the youngest generation from some cost-burdens that come with purchasing, which the grandmother in the case of the Rented/Undecided Family relies on. However, the degree of uncertainty that accompanies renting until the farmland is inherited by the youngest generation can prove difficult for parents to determine how to fairly split up farmland between multiple heir, and if members of the youngest generation disagree with each other as to what is or is not fair they may be unhappy with how the parent generation decided to will the farmland, as was the case in the Willed Family.

Willing farmland to the youngest generation is an excellent option for farm families who are looking to prevent the youngest generation(s) from suffering under the burden of having to pay the high costs of purchasing farmland from parents. However, in the case of the Willed

Family, this strategy to transfer the farmland had led to a considerable amount of conflict. The grandparent generation had passed away, and some members of the parent generation were unhappy with the decisions that the grandparent generation had made as to what to do with the family farmland. In the family that I interviewed, these disagreements led to serious damage to the relationships among members of the parent generation and tensions that have still not been alleviated.

Gift-giving is one of those more permanent options for intergenerational farmland transfer. This is when land owners are able to give the farmland to either one or multiple members of either the parent or the youngest generation. There is no gift tax in North Dakota; however North Dakota does exercise an estate tax. This amount is dependent upon the decedent's total gross estate. So it may be a more strategic financial move to gift farmland to the next generation of a family rather than willing it after the parent generations pass away, in order to avoid the estate taxes applied to farmland. It is important to note that none of the participants implied that their family would be implementing gift-giving for this particular reason, but North Dakota taxation laws are relevant knowledge in order to understand the benefits of choosing gift-giving over other methods of land transfer. Another reason many farm families choose to gift their farmland to the next generation is because parents generally have a desire to help their children. This was the reason that the Gifted/Undecided Family members cited for why the grandparent generation had chosen to gift some portions of their land to the parent generation. The Gifted/Undecided Family grandparent generation felt that gift-giving a section of farmland to each of their children would allow members of the youngest generation who were interested in farming to start their own farming operation with no debt. This is an asset to a beginning farmer since there are significant start-up costs of getting into farming as an occupation. However gift-giving their farmland to the

youngest generation provides no continued income for the parent generation; such as land transfer strategies like renting would provide. So if a farm family wants to implement gifting in order to transfer farmland between generations, it is important that they have been financially preparing for this transition, which the Gifted/Undecided Family expressed they had been doing.

Purchasing is another land transfer strategy that many farm families choose to implement if a member of the youngest generation or multiple members of the youngest generation are certain they want to farm as their career and can afford to purchase the farmland. In the Purchased Family, the oldest male son was positive that he wanted to make farming an occupation, and he began slowly purchasing the family farmland from his parents' right after he graduated high school. If this is the land transfer strategy that a farm family chooses, it is frequently after the member of the youngest generation has already established themselves as independent, financially stable adults. The fiscal value of farmland is continually rising, and if the youngest generation is not to this point yet, they likely cannot afford to purchase farmland. That is why the oldest male son in the Purchased Family had to slowly purchase the family farmland from the parent generation. Since he could not afford to buy all of the farmland at once, he had to purchase smaller portions of it continuously as he worked and increased his income. For some members of the youngest generation who are not financially comfortable with no stable income and without considerable financial assets, purchasing farmland may not be a realistic option of intergenerational farmland transfer. This concern was expressed by the parent generation. The Willed Family's Father expressed the concern, "...now the capital outlay it takes to get started, I don't see how a young guy in his twenties could even get started. It's an investment. Things have changed since I was young." However, if the youngest generation is able to afford to purchase the farmland, this land transfer strategy would also allow a farm family

to avoid estate taxes after the parent generation passes away, and this land transfer strategy provides an income to the parent generation while they are still living that gifting does not provide.

The other circumstance of when a farm family has not chosen a land transfer strategy is when the family simply does not know what route they are going to take. There can be many reasons that a farm family would find themselves in this situation. It almost always results from a lack of communication within the family. This is reflected in regards to farmland transfer strategies for the future, the Willed Family's Youngest Daughter saying that, "I haven't been a part of that discussion." For both of the participating farm families who are undecided, lack of communication within the family about farmland transfer was the primary reason for remaining undecided. Some interviewees were glad to do this interview in order to get their family started talking about farmland transfer. This was the case for the rented/undecided family. The Rented/Undecided Family Father said, "We don't really know what's going to happen when my mom passes away, I guess. This is probably a good thing to do this interview and get talking about it." Many reasons exist for these communication issues within a farm family. Family members could be unsure of how to bring up the topic of land transfer so they choose to postpone any sort of conversation on the topic. In some cases conversations about land transfer begin, but there is an inability on the family members to agree on any sort of strategy. If this is the situation, any permanent decisions about farmland transfer are then typically postponed in order to avoid conflict within the family, as was the case for both of the participating families who were still undecided. This was the case for Rented/Undecided Family who had spoken about the topic of transferring the land from one generation to the next but was unsure of how they were going to proceed. The Rented/Undecided Family's Mother stated, "We haven't finalized

anything.” However, that conflict is generally just delayed until the family is forced to deal with transferring the farmland to the next generation when the landowner unexpectedly passes away.

Strategies’ Limitations

Each of these land transfer strategies comes with many challenges to the farm family. There are few cases when a farm family is able to experience no conflict during the process of intergenerational farmland transfer. Some fear in regards to what the future holds for intergenerational farmland transfer relates to the common theme of security for the future, which could be threatened if the transfer process is unsuccessful. One of the primary concerns among the parent generation was making sure that they were treating the members of the youngest generations fairly, and many members of the parent generation were finding it difficult to determine what is fair. The Rented/Undecided Family’s Father expressed this frustration, “Well you try to talk about how to do it fair. You sit down and write out a plan for what you think is fair, but then you look at it and it isn’t really that fair.” This is one challenge that families face during intergenerational farmland transfer, and whichever land transfer strategy a family chooses to implement, they need to be prepared for the various challenges that can, and likely will, arise.

Renting, although it offers many benefits, also presents many challenges to a farm family. This land transfer strategy can prove difficult for the family members to agree on a rental price for the land. The family members may have differing views on what is an appropriate price. This is particularly the case if multiple siblings want to take over the farming practice. In addition, renting is a temporary land transfer strategy. It puts off making a more permanent decision about how a family will transfer farmland between generations.

Willing brings challenges, such as determining what is or is not fair when it comes to parents deciding what is fair and equal for splitting farmland between siblings. If siblings are

displeased with how the parent generation chose to address this issue in their will, it can often lead to conflict between siblings. It can also sometimes be difficult for elderly to make concrete plans about their own passing away, and family members frequently do not want to bring up such a sensitive topic. So making plans for a will can be something that people tend to put off until it is too late.

Gift-giving also presents certain challenges to a farm family. When parents gift their farmland to children, they are giving up their source of income. They need to be able to financially support themselves without the farmland as a source of income. Like many other land transfer strategies, gifting also presents the challenge of determining fairness between siblings. If parents choose to gift all of the farmland to a single child who wants to farm, the other siblings can be upset. On the other hand, if the parents gift equal parts of land to all of their children, then any children who want to farm will likely feel cheated.

Purchasing has similar challenges as the rest of the land transfer strategies. Disputes can arise among siblings as to what is a fair price to purchase the family farmland at. This particular strategy also poses a large financial risk for the youngest generation purchasing the land. This was expressed by the parent generation who owned their families farmland and had purchased the land from the other siblings in the family. The Purchased Family's Mother said, "In my family, the land was just divided among the kids, and I had to buy the share from each of my siblings. And, unfortunately, it was at an appraised price by a non-biased party." This particular interviewee was able to purchase the farmland, but most members of the youngest generation would not have the financial means to purchase any sizeable amount of farmland.

There are many challenges that can arise when a family does not have a plan for intergenerational land transfer. For instance, if a family has not made plans for how farmland

will be passed from one generation to the next or how farmland will be split up among youngest generation it is common for disputes to arise. Farmland holds a high monetary value and can cause a great deal of tension among the youngest generation when different heirs hold different opinions of how the land should be split up. This is especially true if one or more of the youngest generations intends to farm as their occupation. They may not be financially able to purchase the land from the other siblings, and it can be difficult in some situations for youngest generation to reach an agreement as to what is the most fair or appropriate way of dividing the land. All of the members of the youngest generation generally have different ideas about what strategy is fair so in some situations, families will bring in lawyers and/or mediators in order to help the family come to an agreement.

Youngest Generations' Intentions

The potential ways in which farmland can be transferred between generations leads to the need for farm families to be prepared to deal with intergenerational farmland transfer. The youngest generation, and their intentions, is a significant part of this process. Youngest generations in my study were taught to value and appreciate their families' farmland, but does that mean they are expected to take over the operation of the farmland when they grow up? That is a loaded question mediated by complex issues. The situation in each family is different and dependent upon different circumstances. The youngest generations' intentions can be broken into five key themes: monetary gain, stability/security, rural identity, different expectations based on gender, and family legacy.

The youngest generation, with the exception of one participant, was in their twenties and often had similar responses to my questions. Many members of the youngest generation expressed educational and occupational goals that did not include farming as their occupation.

The parent generation seemed supportive of their children's decisions not to farm, but did express the availability of the farmland as something that they wanted to keep as an option for their kids. The Willed Family's Mother expressed a specific desire, "I wish they'd hang on to it. It's a commodity that is becoming hard to find. It's always going to produce an income. Say someday something happened that they can't be fully employed. They can rent the land out and still have an income." The parent generation viewed the family farmland as a sort of fallback plan for the youngest generation in case their primary career goals did not work out. This is representative of the theme that arose continually throughout the data that focused on stability and security for the future. This particular theme was highlighted throughout both the parent and the youngest generation interviews. It became clear in my analysis of the data that achieving security for a stable and reliable income into the future was a high priority for all the interviewees. As opposed to the importance that most of the youngest generation placed on education, there was a considerable amount of uncertainty in regards to the youngest generations' future plans for their family farmland. A generally uniform response in regards to intergenerational farmland transfer emerged among the youngest generation. When asked about his plans for inherited farmland in the future, the gifted/youngest son said, "I really don't know." This was echoed by the Rented/Middle Family's Son who stated, "I can't be 100% sure." This was the same situation for his younger sister, who said, "I have no idea." This apparent trend among the youngest generation for being excluded from the families' planning for intergenerational farmland transfer reflects the theoretical discussion of organizational boundaries within theory of the firm. There was one member of the youngest generation interviewed who wanted to make farming their occupation, which the youngest generation was already doing by working as a farmer. The Purchased Family's Oldest Son was in his early

thirties and had not attended college. All of the other youngest generation interviewees were currently attending college or had recently obtained college degrees.

The remaining youngest generation interviewees were all currently enrolled in college classes or had just recently graduated college. None of the youngest generation intended to farm as their occupation but did believe growing up on a farm had impacted their lives. Most of them planned to use the farmland they inherited as a supplement to their other primary source of income, typically by the way of renting out the farmland. This may be representative of a theme of the value that is placed upon monetary gain, but that is a value that is typically held by our larger society, so it would not be unreasonable to acknowledge a theme of the participants valuing monetary gain. However, it would still be too much of an assumption to jump to the conclusion that the participants have a higher value for money than for the family legacy that their farmland holds. Family legacy and enterprise is a theme that has arisen predominately throughout the data, but it is not necessarily more or less important than the theme of monetary value.

Monetary Gain

Regardless of the themes of rural identity, security and stability, gendered expectations, and family legacy, each individual participant emphasized the feelings of using the farmland as a source of supplemental income. The Gifted/Undecided Family's Oldest Daughter said, "Probably have a big impact whether I use it for my personal income or not... If I don't use it, I would rent it to somebody who could. So, it would be an income whether I use it personally or rent it out." and "I don't think I'd sell it. I'd probably try to rent it out if I didn't farm it anyway." The Rented/Undecided Family's Youngest Daughter expressed a desire to rent the farmland to family members before other area farmers if that was possible, "I'd rent it out to a farmer. Obviously,

I'd give any family the first chance, whether that happened to be either of my brothers or not. Then, it'd be fair game for anyone else if there was no family that wanted to farm it." The majority of the youngest generation did express their willingness to either rent or sell the farmland that they will someday inherit to any of their siblings if they chose to make farming their occupation. There was a definite desire to keep the farmland in the family, even if the youngest generations themselves did not want to farm. If they were not able to rent or sell the farmland to a family member, there was a fairly unanimous perception that the farmland would be rented out to a neighboring farmer. Once the parent generation passes away, this will allow the youngest generation to retain ownership of the family farmland without actually farming it themselves. Renting out the farmland they stood to inherit was the most common intention held among the youngest generation.

Rural Identity

The youngest generation did express a desire to live in a rural area, possibly on their families' farmland. Many of the youngest generations interviewed were currently attending college in a regional urban center but expressed a desire to return to their rural roots after completing their education. The Willed Family's Oldest Daughter explicitly stated that, "The city is ok for schooling, but I'd like to live in either the country or the suburbs. Like I said, I wouldn't mind living on my parents' farm site." Even though they did not plan on farming, returning to a rural area was an absolute must for some of the interviewees. The Willed Family's Youngest Daughter said, "I guess we'll see what happens there... but definitely rural." Even the rented/undecided oldest spouse, who had completed a college degree and was living in a regional urban center with a spouse and child, was open to the idea of moving to a less populated area, "We've talked about moving more rural."

Security and Stability

There were different reasons that the majority of the youngest generation did not intend to use the farmland they are going to inherit as their primary source of income or occupation. The most common reason for not farming as a career was that the youngest generation felt they could get a job in the field they were attending college for that would provide a more stable, continual income. This relates back to the overarching theme of the need for stability and security. Farming is an occupation that does not always guarantee a steady paycheck, and that was a risk that many interviewees were not willing to take. This seemed to be especially the case when the youngest generation felt their college major allowed for a more dependable income as well as a less demanding work schedule. The impact that education had on intergenerational farmland transfer was prevalent in the discussion of security and stability because both the parent generation and the youngest generation saw obtaining an increased education as a way to ensure a more stable and successful future.

This relates to the feeling among the youngest generation that they would be better served to get a job off the farm if their parents had not fully secured the farmland from the grandparent generation yet. In cases such as this, it tended to cause a great deal of uncertainty in regards to the future of the farm. The youngest generation was not sure how the grandparent generation would split up the farmland, much less how the parent generation would divide the land. This was expressed by the Rented/Undecided Family's Oldest Son, "Yeah that was a big part of why I didn't stick around. It just wasn't a guarantee that it'd be able to make enough money with not knowing how the land would be split up after my grandma passes away." This seemed to create a level of uncertainty as to whether or not there would even be any sizable amount of farmland left

together to support a farmer. So the youngest generation thought it was financially safer for their own future to seek other employment.

Despite all of these concerns about trying to farm as a career, many male members of the youngest generations did see the farm as a second career option if their other career choices did not work out. Again, this is representative of the youngest generations' desire to have security and stability in the future. Male members of the youngest generation also frequently expressed the option of using farming as a sort of fallback plan. There was a feeling that this would provide them with an income if they ever found themselves without work or needing an income.

Gendered Expectations

Female members of the youngest generation did not express the same feelings of being able to return to the families' farmland to operate as a farmer as male members of the youngest generation; they primarily viewed any supplemental income from the farmland being from renting it out to a neighboring farmer. This relates to another theme that arose from the data quickly during the interview process, that of gender and the role that it plays in intergenerational farmland transfer. The men and women I interviewed talked about their experiences with the land and the process of intergenerational farmland transfer in different ways. Feelings of being able to return home to operate the family farm in a time of financial need was expressed by only one of the female members of the youngest generations, with the condition that her spouse also was interested in farming. Female members of the youngest generation did not view the family farmland as a sort of career safety net that male members of the youngest generation did. These males expressed the option of returning to farm their families' land if their other career goals did not work out. This sentiment was never expressed by any of the female members of the youngest generation. They only saw themselves returning to the farmland if they married a man who

wanted to farm. The absence of this safety net for female members of the youngest generation indicates a significant difference in the attitudes of females compared to attitudes of males towards the farmland.

Returning to the farm for women was frequently conditional upon their spouse/partner. The Willed Family's Oldest Daughter stated, "If my sister finds a partner that wants to farm." Feelings such as this were expressed by almost all of the female youngest generations. The Rented/Undecided Family's Youngest Daughter expressed, "If my husband wants to farm..." There was a strong sense that a female would need to marry a husband who wanted to farm as their occupation in order for them to return to their parents' farmland and farm it for their occupation. This idea was again supported by the Willed Family's Youngest Daughter saying, "If I don't have a husband, I'd be willing to rent it out." This may be reflective of the typically traditional, conservative mindset of the parents in rural farm families, which daughters could learn from the parent generation since parents are a major agent of socialization.

The women in my study did not see themselves as being able to handle a farm on their own. This lack of envisioning themselves as farmers reinforces the subjugated role that girls and women can play on the farm and has an impact on the process of intergenerational farmland transfer. The limited role of women on farms was discussed in a variety of ways by participants. For example, the Rented/Undecided Family's Youngest Daughter expressed her feelings towards her usefulness on the farm, "Um, well I know I am a better use for the farm men at home. So that's kind of my impact. They don't really want me around the farm equipment and stuff because I'm not that strong." This is representative of the way in which female participants undermined themselves and lacked the support to see themselves as farmers and can only picture themselves staying on the farm in the role of a wife. It was not uncommon for female members

of the youngest generation to openly embrace the obvious gender inequality. The Willed Family's Oldest Daughter said, "Well I think that if I were a boy, I would've taken more interest in it. But I take more of an interest in the gardening and lawn side of it. My parents never really pushed me into the farming side of it." For these rural women, traditional expectations of gender were still strong in their understanding of their relationship to the land. The female interviewees' situated knowledge was based on an understanding that as women, they were not able to take care of a farm in the same way as men. This type of subjugated knowledge is important to think about as it leaves many of these women relinquishing or giving up wealth inheritance. This is important when thinking about economic wealth and inequality and draws out some important questions for further study.

Most of the male members of the youngest generation expressed different sentiments about their options in regards to the farmland they stood to inherit. The men felt entitled to take over the family farmland if they chose. None of the male members of the youngest generation referred to finding a spouse as a factor in deciding whether or not they would take over the operation of their families' farmland. As discussed previously, none of the unmarried male interviewees even mentioned future spouses in their decision of whether or not to take over their families' farmland and farm as their occupation, whereas almost all of the female members of the youngest generations interviewed saw this as a factor in their decision of whether or not to return to their families' farmland. The men expressed different relationships to the land and the land transfer process. What was more of a concern for men was having a stable income into the future, and the potential that farmland had to provide an income. Many of the male members of the youngest generation expressed a view of their farmland as being something of a safety net. In cases, where farming had not been the male participants' career choice, all most all of these male

youngest generations had reflected that they could go back to the family farmland if their first career choice did not work out. This potential for the farmland as a sort of career safety net was not expressed by any of the female members of the youngest generation.

My interviewees mirrored my own relationship to the land and experience of the land transfer process. As I have said, farmland has played an important role in my family and has for multiple generations. The only two members of the youngest generations in my family are my older sister and I, so we will inherit our families' farmland. However, it has generally been assumed that land ownership passes to sons, particularly eldest sons. One would like to think that in the modern society of the 21st century, this tradition would have changed. However, both the data and my own personal experiences have suggested otherwise. During the course of my study, it has caused a great deal of reflection on my own experiences as a young adult to farmland. How has that impacted my life? I do not have intentions of returning to my families' farmland after college to operate the family farm or to live on the farmland. I do not remember ever having those intentions. It is important to state that it's not as if my parents have ever told me this wasn't an option to me. They always encouraged me to explore all of my opportunities, on or off of our family farm. As a girl growing up on a farm, I was particularly encouraged that if I married a man who wanted to farm, I might move back home someday, or if my sister ever had a husband who wanted to farm. The idea that either of us would choose to farm on our own without a partner was never considered a serious option. This inequality didn't occur to me until hearing the participants in this study talk about their own gender "equality". While my parents have been making plans for the future, I have heard my father say things like, "If we had a boy who wanted to farm." Or "It doesn't make sense to invest in updating since we don't have a boy to take over." I'm not saying that my parents don't appreciate their daughters, but they don't see us as

capable candidates to take over the family farm because we are women. These are the circumstances that have arisen in every family that I interviewed. The different expectations based on gender are predominant.

Family Legacy

There also seemed to be the occasional sense of duty to the farmland to keep it operating if none of the other siblings were going to. The Rented/Undecided Family's Middle Son expressed how his older brother's decision not to farm impacted him, "...a little more pressure. It would be nice to keep the family operating it." Some participants expressed a desire to have one of the siblings continue operating the farm even if they did not wish to farm themselves. These feelings tie into the theme that arose in regards to the feelings of family legacy that farming often brings rise to. It is important to note that even in cases where the youngest generation did not have plans to farm, they often considered returning to the farmland to live on it. The oldest Gifted/Undecided Family's Daughter expressed, "I would really like to live where I grew up."

Parent Generations' Intentions

The parent generation started out by expressing a desire to keep their farmland under the ownership of their family. The Gifted/Undecided Family's Father stated that, "My expectation is that they will give it to their children; in my opinion it should not be sold. They don't make it any more." This was for both emotional and financial reasons, as the Willed Family's Father supported by saying, "Land is classified as an asset, not an investment. Assets, even though the market goes up and down, still hold value." Parents seemed to feel that leaving their children farmland was leaving them a family legacy as well as a source of financial security. These feelings are representative of both the theme that arose in the data in regards to the feelings of family enterprise that family farmland leads to as well as the theme that related to the

participants' desire for security in the future. The themes that were present throughout the parent generation interviews include security/ stability, positive outlook for youngest generations, and different expectations based on gender.

Security and Stability

The theme of security and stability was significant in the parent generation interviews, and all of the subthemes of monetary gain, rural identity, and family legacy were extremely intertwined in the conversations. All of the themes that became present throughout the course of the interviews overlapped so much that it was sometimes difficult to determine how those participants even viewed what was taking place with intergenerational farmland transfer in their families. Even if they did view it as something of a family legacy, they told stories of how it had caused tension within the family during previous farmland transfers within the family. The Willed Family's Father also felt that, "Siblings who stay in North Dakota end up having to battle with siblings who reside in other parts of the United States. The property values are completely different. So they bring their big ideas that all property is worth what it is where they live." Many families expressed similar issues. The Rented/Undecided Family's Father expressed issues that his family has experienced in trying to plan for intergenerational farmland transfer, "We were combining their wheat, and we got a letter that they were leaving. So that kind of changed to whole operation... So we really had no planning for any of that."

Positive Outlook for Youngest Generations

Despite the issues that farm families had experienced in the past during intergenerational farmland transfer, they remained positive about the relationships among the youngest generation when they would take over ownership of the farmland. The Gifted/Undecided Family's Mother expressed this hope by saying, "Our family has always gotten along pretty well, so I don't think

there would be any problems between the kids or anything after we are both gone.” Many parents interviewed expressed a strong desire that their children would be cooperative among themselves when their family got to this point. The Willed Family’s Mother showed her desire for her daughter to keep an open and peaceful relationship, without letting others cause tension between them, “I hope the girls keep open communication between themselves and lock out any spouses or partners. They know how they were brought up and what their parents wanted, and their spouses shouldn’t have a say in it.” The youngest generations that were interviewed often stated their beliefs that they would be able to work cooperatively with their sibling(s) during the intergenerational farmland transfer process. The gifted/undecided youngest daughter stated, “We are pretty close knit. I hope there aren’t any family feuds, but we should get along pretty good.” Another statement to this effect was by the rented/undecided youngest daughter, “I think that whatever happens with the farmland, we will all be fine with it.”

Different Expectations Based on Gender

One of the primary themes that was present in the data was the role that gender plays in intergenerational farmland transfer. When asked any question in regards to gender, all parents responded quickly to say that they did not bias expectations based upon gender. However, the wording that the parent generation used would certainly suggest otherwise. After completing the interviews, it became obvious that what was being said was not actually what the data was showing. All of the participants, both parent and youngest generations, expressed, what they considered to be equal opportunity for both genders in regards to the farmland. However, what the parent generation expressed as being equal was based on different conditions for different genders. They held the opinion that in order for a female member of the youngest generation to take over the family farm or to move back to the farm, she would need to find a spouse who

wanted to farm. This was not a necessary prerequisite that was expressed for male members of the youngest generation.

There is a clear variation between males and females in relation to intergenerational farmland transfer that arose during the interviews. This is most evident in talking to the parent generation. When asked whether or not they had different expectations of what their children would do with the farmland based upon gender, they all quickly denied it. All of the parents interviewed expressed their intentions of fairness and equality towards all of their children, regardless of gender. However, when asked more specific questions, it was stated repeatedly by multiple parents that they would let their daughter take over if she married someone who wanted to farm. That sentiment was expressed in almost every parent generation interview. The Rented/Undecided Family's Father stated, "I wouldn't have a problem if our daughter wanted to come home and farm. I know a few people whose daughters came home and farmed with their husbands." This was backed up by his wife, the Rented/Undecided Family's Mother saying, "And our girl, if she marries someone who wants to farm, then it'll still be here for her too." The Purchased Undecided Family's Father also used the vocabulary, "...if a daughter brings home a husband that wants to farm." There seemed to be an assumption that a female member of the youngest generation would need a spouse to farm with her in order to take over the family farm. That sentiment was not expressed with any of the male members of the youngest generations. In fact, of all the male members of the youngest generations interviewed only one made any reference to his wife's opinion in whether or not she wanted to farm. This interviewee was married, but none of the unmarried male members of the youngest generations mentioned finding a wife that wanted to farm in their decision of whether or not to farm. Every female member of

the youngest generation interviewed made reference to finding a husband that wanted to farm in their decision of whether or not to farm.

The role that gender plays can be argued in the intergenerational transfer process. This is a process that has traditionally been dominated by men throughout history. Therefore, some would argue that gender is not a major factor in this process since it is a traditionally male dominated domain. Others believe that women have gained equality in the farmland transfer process and receive the same level of respect as men. The level of gender inequality in intergenerational farmland transfer was expressed by the Rented/Undecided Family's Middle Son in his attitude towards his sister, "Well I know that my brother and I have helped out a lot more on the farm than my sister has. She didn't really have to do anything with the farm. When we got old enough, we pretty much worked every day." This demonstrated the different expectations that parents hold for male compared to female members of the youngest generations. The Gifted/Undecided Family's Oldest Daughter expressed her aggravation with the gender inequality that she was experiencing in regards to the different expectations that her family held for her in regards to intergenerational farmland transfer, "O gosh. A lot of my family members don't expect me to do anything with it. I'm the only girl on my dad's side of the family, which is where the land will come from. So there's my cousins that are older than me are kind of expected to use it more than I will... Um, I get angry about it. I don't think that they have any more... or shouldn't get it before I should. That's not fair... because their male, or because their older than me. It shouldn't matter." The interviews conducted during the course of study show clear evidence that the assumed equality that these farm parents appear to think they have in farmland transfer is most definitely not the case in the families interviewed.

The findings from my study can be used to guide future research on intergenerational farmland transfer. Themes, primarily the core themes of the desire for security and stability and gendered expectations, highlight areas of intergenerational farmland transfer that would be relevant for additional research in the future. I would be fascinated in seeing if the themes that arose throughout my findings would be applicable to future studies on intergenerational farmland transfer in other geographic locations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

The outcomes of my research have provided considerable insight into multiple aspects of intergenerational farmland transfer. Some of the outcomes were predicted, and some unexpected findings emerged throughout the course of my study. All of the research questions that I highlighted before beginning the data collection were addressed and satisfied throughout the course of my research process. The first research question led to outlining specific land transfer strategies, the second research question provided reasoning for why the families selected each of these strategies, and the third research question provided a new insight into the role that gender plays in intergenerational transfer. The findings that have come forth brought implications in regards to intergenerational farmland transfer and how farm families approach this process. There is a sense that farm families try to select the most beneficial transfer strategy for all of the family members, but there is always variation in what will be the most beneficial for each individual person. The variations as well as the similarities between the youngest generations' mindset compared to that of the parent generation are important to highlight, such as the youngest generation expressing a primary concern of ensuring their own security and stability into the future. This was similar to the parent generation in that they wanted to select the most optimal strategy to transfer the farmland to the youngest generation; however, intergenerational farmland transfer is different for the parent generation because they have to think about the larger picture in regards to the current situation of the land, all of the different scenarios that could take place, and the potential outcome from the decisions that they make with their farmland. This is the difference between the responsibilities that comes with owning the land compared to the youngest generations primary responsibility of taking care of only their needs.

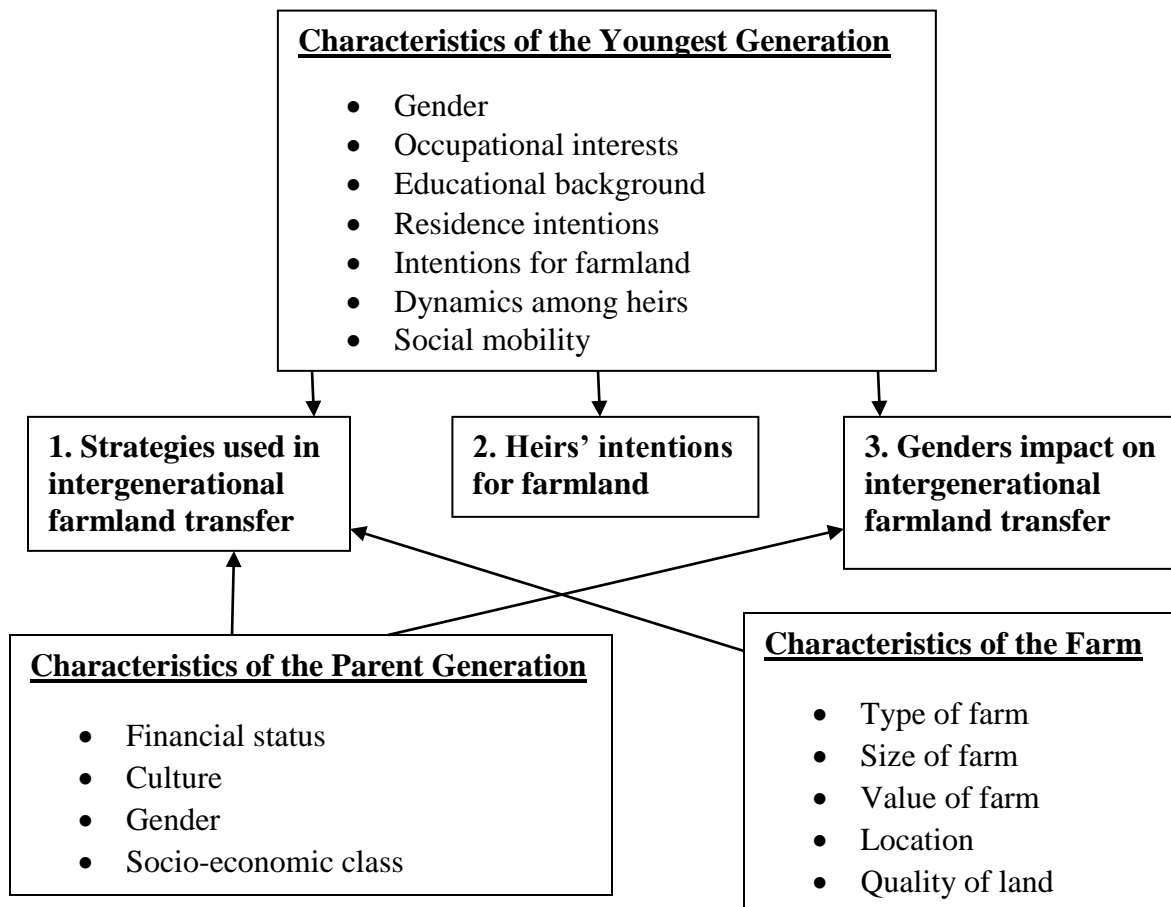
When beginning this study, I had hoped that with the advances women have made towards gaining gender equality there would be equality in intergenerational farmland transfer. However, gender still played a significant role in the families' decision-making processes for land inheritance. There was a continuous verbal stating of gender equality, but underlying the assertion of equality, gendered expectations were very strong in how the women members of the youngest generation related to the land and farming how families decided who would take over the family farm. Understanding whether the parent generation had differing expectations of the youngest generation based upon their gender, provides a great deal of insight as to whether or not equal opportunity exists for the youngest generation of all genders when it comes to farmland transfer. There is a constant struggle for gender equality in all aspects of our society, and my research provides a much needed measurement of how much gender equality is actually practiced in intergenerational farmland transfer. It also points to a need for future research on both women's relationship to farming and how that impacts their accumulation of wealth.

Tying Things Together

Figure 1 from my literature review was very helpful in tying together the impact that certain characteristics would have on my research questions, based upon the existing literature. It is equally helpful in tying together my findings in regards to how the characteristics listed in the table impacted the research questions. Many interesting conclusions can be drawn in regards to how these various characteristics impact my three research questions. The characteristics of the youngest generation will impact the transfer strategy that a family chooses to implement, the youngest generations' intentions for the farmland, and play a role in the gendered aspects of intergenerational farmland transfer. The characteristics of the parent generation will impact

which strategy that the family chose to transfer farmland between generations and the impact that gender has on the transfer process. Characteristics of the farm have an impact on the strategy that a family chooses to transfer farmland. All of these characteristics are listed in Figure 1, and the research questions that the characteristics impact is outlined by arrows.

Figure 1. Impact of Characteristics on Intergenerational Land Transfer



I used Collins as the primary theory to guide my third research question, which focused on the role that gender plays in intergenerational farmland transfer. In Figure 1, the third research question is shown to be impacted by both the characteristics of the youngest generation and the characteristics of the parent generation. This is why Collins was helpful in some areas of guiding

my research and, also, why Collins' writings were more difficult to apply to my study in other areas. Collins discussion of subjugated knowledge tied in nicely to the findings on how parents view their approach to farmland as being equal. Even if the gendered approach to intergenerational farmland transfer is very unequal, the parent generation will teach their views of equality to their children. Thereby, the youngest generation will learn a view on gender in farmland transfer that is unequal, but they will accept it as equal because that is what the youngest generation has been taught. This is Collins discussion of subjugated knowledge. Individuals' opinions on issues are based on their views of the world, which are learned. So the youngest generation accepting obvious gender inequalities in farmland transfer ties in perfectly to Collins discussion of subjugated knowledge. However, the majority of Collins writings are centered on black feminism, which was not necessarily applicable to all of my research since my sample had little to no racial diversity. Some of the areas of my gender research, such as female members of the youngest generations' future plans for the farmland, had to be guided largely by the existing research.

My study makes significant contributions to the existing literature in the area of intergenerational farmland transfer. One of the largest contributions of my study relate to the generation of young adult youngest generations who stand to inherit the family farmland. As I discussed in my literature review, there was a notable gap in the literature in regards to the role that the youngest generation plays in farmland transfer. So my study contributes some findings to addresses this gap in the existing literature but does not totally satisfy the gap in the literature. Future research still needs to delve deeper into the role that the youngest generation plays in intergenerational farmland transfer. In addition, my research contributed to the gap that exists in gender research in intergenerational farmland transfer, especially the gap that exists in the United

States. Again, my findings contribute meaningful findings to this area of knowledge, but further research is needed to more fully address this gap in the literature.

Future Concerns for Application and Research

The findings that have been drawn from my study have proven to be relevant to the ongoing discussion of intergenerational land transfer. This is an important topic to be studied right now due to the large amount of farmland that will soon be transferred to the next generation as baby boomers get increasingly closer to retirement age. There are many potential problems that can arise when a family is trying to transfer land from one generation to the next. This was discussed in the paper, and these findings will help farm families prepare for land transfer. Additional research resulting from this study would provide a greater base of information to the understanding of the intergenerational transfer process, particularly with the emphasis being placed upon the role that youngest generations play in this process. This is where the major holes existed in my study, and although this study delved into youngest generations roles there is still a great deal of knowledge to be gained in this area.

This is the relevancy of my study. Farm families can use the findings from my research to better inform themselves on the topic of intergenerational farmland transfer. Being better informed and knowing what to expect will help farm families to avoid the potential issues that can frequently arise during this transition process. The more research that is conducted on this topic, the more information that will be available to farm families to use in order to equip themselves with the tools necessary to successfully engage in intergenerational farmland transfer.

There are also many implications that result from the findings of my research. The benefits and challenges that have been identified with each land transfer strategy can be studied in greater

detail in order to understand how to minimize the challenges and maximize the benefits. This will prove to make intergenerational land transfer a much smoother process.

Farm families will not be so overwhelmed by transferring land, and more research being conducted on the topic will prove to make it less taboo to talk about within families. The more open that discussion can become within farm families about intergenerational farmland transfer, the easier it will be for farm families to reach agreements that will appease the highest number of people. So this is obviously a very relevant study that will hopefully launch additional research, as well as improve lines of communication within farm families and help to avoid conflict.

The smoothest possible intergenerational transfer of farmland will encourage the youngest generation to stay in farming and take over the operation of their families' farm, compared to the likelihood of a young adult wanting to take over their families' farm if they face a long, complicated process. With a trend in our society for children who grow up on a farm leaving their agricultural roots behind in search of occupations off the farm, it is increasingly important to provide this young generation of potential farmers with reasons for them to stay on the farm and take over the production of agriculture.

The children of farmers are just one group of individuals who stand to benefit from my research study. In addition to their children, farmers will benefit from this knowledge during their estate planning process. Knowing which method of intergenerational land transfer will be the most efficient to utilize when it comes time to transfer farmland to their children, will prove vital to successful estate planning. Estate Planning and retirement is a difficult process for any individual who owns their own business. This is especially true for farmers. They need to plan years in advance for their retirement because it is frequently a gradual process in which they

slowly turn responsibilities and profits over to the younger generation; in fact, many farmers never fully retire (Leonard and Gutmann, 2006). Any information that will allow farmers to make an easier, smoother transition for transferring land between generations will be extremely valuable.

Lawyers and policymakers are another group of individuals, who will benefit from this study. They deal with intergenerational land transfer in a hands-on way. Policymakers establish the laws that will be used to guide intergenerational land transfer. Lawyers help families legalize their intentions for their farmland and guide the family throughout this process. So it is extremely important that policymakers and lawyers are well-informed on intergenerational farmland transfer. Having the knowledge provided by my study will allow lawyers and policymakers to direct their clients and constituents in the best possible manner when it comes time to hand their farmland to the next generation. Policymakers and lawyers will be able to use these findings to troubleshoot any potential issues that tend to arise during intergenerational land transfer. This knowledge will benefit everyone who consumes agricultural products. Society needs farmers to produce the foods that we need to survive, so farmers need to know how to transfer their farm in the most efficient way possible.

The intended audience is the farmers and their children who will actually be transferring farmland. They can use the information provided by this study to make the process of intergenerational land transfer smoother. In addition to this group of people, the intended audience of my study is also researchers and agricultural workers, such as county agents and lawyers dealing with farm related matters, who will be able to better aid farmers throughout the

land transfer process. Many groups stand to benefit from the information that has been produced from my research.

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Historical Research Reference in Entrepreneurship.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWEE CONTACT SCRIPT

Hello, my name is Shelby Bohnenkamp. I am a graduate student in Sociology at NDSU. I am currently working on my thesis, which is studying the patterns and efficiency in how farmland is transferred from one generation to the next within farm families in southeastern North Dakota. I obtained your family's name from your county extension agent. He/she believed that you might be willing to be interviewed for this study. If your family owns farmland in Southeastern North and has either recently transferred farmland between generations or has youngest generations, above the age of 18, who will someday inherit tyoungest generation families' farmland, your family has a great deal to offer this study. Your input would be valuable in helping to provide a clearer picture of intergenerational farmland transfer in North Dakota. If you are able to participate, please let me know, and we will set up a time for interviews with you and your family members. Your participation would be greatly appreciated! Thank you for your time!

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

NDSU North Dakota State University

[Sociology]

[226 Richard H. Barry Hall]

Fargo, ND 58108-6050

[701-231-7637]

Title of Research Study: Intergenerational Farmland Transfer in North Dakota

This study is being conducted by: Gary Goreham, 701-231-7637 and Shelby Bohnenkamp, 701-680-8769

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study? Participants were selected in this study as a result of youngest generation farmland parent generations in southeastern North Dakota. Also, participating families have youngest generations who are young adults that will soon be inheriting farmland. Families in this position were focused on in order to gain an understanding of what measures these families intend to implement during intergenerational farmland transfer.

What is the reason for doing the study? The purpose of this study is to collect data that relates to intergenerational farmland transfer that will provide a more thorough understanding of the topic and will eventually result in smoother intergenerational farmland transfer within families.

What will I be asked to do? Or What Information will be collected about me? Information relating to intergenerational farmland transfer within the family will be gathered. This information will be collected through personal interviews with each participant.

Where is the study going to take place, and how long will it take? Each interview will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes, depending on how much the participant adds to the interview. The interviews will likely take place in the participants' homes or any neutral location of their choosing.

What are the risks and discomforts? Any potential discomforts would relate to family issues that may arise among family members while discussing the family matter of how to handle intergenerational farmland transfer. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but I have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known risks to the participant. If new findings develop during the course of this research which may change your willingness to participate, we will tell you about these findings.

What are the benefits to me? If direct subject benefits can reasonably be anticipated as a result of participating in the study, then describe these benefits. For instance, the data gathered in this study will result in a better understanding of intergenerational farmland transfer that will make this transition smoother for the families involved. However, you may not get any benefit from being in this research study. You are not expected to get any benefit from being in this research study.

What are the benefits to other people? Participation in this study will help to produce data that will serve to produce a better understanding of intergenerational farmland transfer in North Dakota and thereby create a smoother transition process.

Do I have to take part in the study? Your participation in this research is your choice. If you decide to participate in the study, you may change your mind and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are already entitled.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study? Instead of being in this research study, you can choose not to participate.

Who will see the information that I give? We will keep private all research records that identify you. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study, we will write about the combined information that we have gathered. We may publish the results of the study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

[IF THE STUDY IS NOT ANONYMOUS] We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

Can my taking part in the study end early? If you fail to show up to all sessions you may be removed from the study.

What if I have questions?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the research study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have any questions about the study, you can contact the researcher, Shelby Bohnenkamp at 701-680-8769.

What are my rights as a research participant?

You have rights as a participant in research. If you have questions about your rights, or complaints about this research, you may talk to the researcher or contact the NDSU Human Research Protection Program by:

- Telephone: 701.231.8908
- Email: ndsu.irb@ndsu.edu
- Mail: NDSU HRPP Office, NDSU Dept. 4000, PO Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050.

The role of the Human Research Protection Program is to see that your rights are protected in this research; more information about your rights can be found at: www.ndsu.edu/research/irb .

Documentation of Informed Consent:

You are freely making a decision whether to be in this research study. Signing this form means that

1. you have read and understood this consent form
2. you have had your questions answered, and
3. you have decided to be in the study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Your signature

Date

Your printed name

Signature of researcher explaining study

Date

Printed name of researcher explaining study

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENT GENERATION(S)

1. How would you describe the ownership of your family farm? P; Sole proprietorship?
Partnership? Other?
2. In general, how would you describe the financial situation of your family farm?
 - a. What steps do you plan to take to ensure that the farm is financially stable before transferring the land to your youngest generation(s)?
3. Describe the process that your neighbors frequently use to transfer land to tyoungest generation youngest generations.
 - a. What strategy of land transfer did your family use the last time that farmland was transferred within the family?
 - b. Why did your family choose this strategy?
 - c. What challenges came with this strategy?
 - d. What benefits came with this strategy?
 - e. What strategy of land transfer will your family use the next time that farmland is transferred within the family?
4. What do you think that your youngest generation(s) will do with farmland they inherit?
 - a. What are your expectations of what male youngest generations will do with tyoungest generation land?
 - b. What are your expectations of what female youngest generations will do with tyoungest generation land?
5. Describe your family farm.
 - a. What are the primary crops that are produced on your farmland?
 - b. How much land does your family own?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGEST GENERATION(S)

1. Describe your plans and goals for the future.
 - a. Occupational goals? P: Farmer or not?
 - b. How would you describe your educational background? Highest level of education?
 - c. Do you plan to live in a rural or an urban area? If rural, do you plan to live on the farmland you inherit? P: Why?
 - d. How do you think that inheriting farmland will impact your income?
2. Describe your intentions for the farmland that you will inherit.
 - a. Why do you have these intentions? P: Farm now or in the future?
 - b. How do you think that your gender has impacted your intentions for the land you will inherit?
 - c. Do you think that your gender has impacted what your parents expect you to do with the farmland that you inherit? P: How do you feel about that? How were those expectations demonstrated?
 - d. How do you think that your gender impacts what your siblings expect you to do with the farmland that you will inherit? P: How do you feel about that? How were those expectations demonstrated?
3. Describe the land transfer strategies that your neighbors frequently use?
 - a. What strategy of intergenerational land transfer did your family implement the last time that farmland was transferred between generations?
 - b. Why did your family choose this strategy? What challenges came with this strategy? What benefits came with this strategy?

- c. What strategy of intergenerational land transfer will your family implement the next time that farmland is transferred between generations?
- 4. Describe your family farm.
 - a. What are the primary crops that are produced on your farmland?
 - b. How much land does your family own?
- 5. How many youngest generation(s) are there in your family?
 - a. How would you describe the relationship between you and the other youngest generations in your family?
 - b. Would you describe this relationship as competitive or cooperative?
- 6. Did you grow up on this land? If so, how would you say it defines who you are?

APPENDIX E: STUDY SPECIFIC DEFINITIONS FOR IMPORTANT TERMS

Intergenerational farmland transfer: specifically refer to the process that a family goes through in handing the actual ownership of farmland down from one generation to the next.

Grandparent generation(s): the grandparent generation of the farm family.

Parent generation(s): the parent generations who currently have young adult children.

Youngest generation(s): the young adult children in the farm family who stand to inherit the farmland.

Succession - the transfer of ownership, management, and control from one generation to the next.

Estate planning: a subset of succession; that is drafting legal documents that transfer ownership of property from one generation to the next.

APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL

NDSU

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

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Fax 701.231.8098

Federalwide Assurance #FWA00002439

Institutional Review Board

*Office of the Vice President for Research, Creative Activities and Technology Transfer
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Fargo, ND 58108-6050

January 25, 2012

Gary Goreham
Department of Sociology/Anthropology
226 Barry Hall

Notice of IRB Approval

Protocol #HS12104

"Intergenerational Farmland Transfer in North Dakota"

Co-investigator(s) and research team: Shelby Bohnenkamp

Approval period: 1/25/2012 to 1/24/2013

Continuing Review Report Due: 12/1/2012

Research site(s): various ND farmsites

Funding agency: n/a

Review Type: Expedited category # 7 Full Board

IRB approval is based on original submission, with revised: protocol and consent form (received 1/25/2012).

Additional approval is required:

- o prior to implementation of any proposed changes to the protocol (*Protocol Amendment Request Form*).
- o for continuation of the project beyond the approval period (*Continuing Review/Completion Report Form*). A reminder is typically sent two months prior to the expiration date; timely submission of the report is your responsibility. To avoid a lapse in approval, suspension of recruitment, and/or data collection, a report must be received, and the protocol reviewed and approved prior to the expiration date.

A report is required for:

- o any research-related injuries, adverse events, or other unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others within 72 hours of known occurrence (*Report of Unanticipated Problem or Serious Adverse Event Form*).
- o any significant new findings that may affect risks to participants.
- o closure of the project (*Continuing Review/Completion Report Form*).

Research records are subject to random or directed audits at any time to verify compliance with IRB regulations and NDSU policies.

Thank you for cooperating with NDSU IRB procedures, and best wishes for a successful study.

Sincerely,



Teryl Grosz, MS, CIP
Manager, Human Research Protection Program

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NDSU is an EO/AA university.