generational transfer of the Iowa family farm. In this section, I will provide a brief background about these various theories to help the reader understand the context of this paper.

Marxism analyzes society via the modes of production that make a society function. In Marx's view, "the holders of wealth control the means of production, and the greater the capital at their command, the greater their ability to raise productivity and, hence, the greater their ability to accumulate further surplus for additional expansion of production" (Wolf 343). In the capitalist mode, the capitalists control the means of production and the laborers are denied independent access to the means of production (Wolf 1997: 343). Commenting further on Marxian analysis, the anthropologist Douglas Foley notes, "Capitalist rulers and their cadre of intellectuals create explicit, conscious sets of ideas about politics, economics, aesthetics, and all aspects of social life. They portray capitalism as the final or universal solution to humanity's problem of materially surviving and prospering" (1990: 168). In this paper, I use Marx's perspectives to discuss the way that agriculture has become entrenched in the capitalist system and to illuminate how the capitalist system makes it difficult for farmers to both enter and exit the field.

Issues of power, so central to Marxist theory, are quite integral to postmodernist perspectives as well (McGee and Warms 1996: 354). Foucault discusses "discourses of power" and draws attention to the inherent power dynamics involved in all spheres of culture (Foucault 1982: 778; McGee and Warms 1996: 355). Generational issues in agricultural communities and concerns

or it may undergo considerable changes, but in either case there is continuous diminution in its

agricultural system is concentrated in large scale, conventional farms that usually grown corn and soybeans (Holthaus 2006:206). For instance, in 1995, Iowa farmers produced 1.4 billion bushels of corn on 11 million acres and 398 billion bushels of soybeans on a little more than 9 million acres (National Resources Defense Council 1998).

The Marxian perspective can shed some light on the American farm system. Marx writes that the holders of wealth control the means of production. In the American agricultural system, various entities including the U.S. Government, international agribusiness companies, and the banking system work to control the means of food production. Federal farm policy and agribusinesses govern the farming system. The Farm Bill authorizes the subsidization of some commodities, and as such, fundamentally distorts the market. While various crops and goods receive subsidies, in Iowa, corn and soybeans are subsidized at high rates, making them the most economically vi1(ubs)-1-10(I)2(e)14( )2(,)]TJ -1(a)4(nd)-1(i)-2(d(o)-10ror)3(n2a)4(1)3(a)-6(r)3()-1(i)-2

disease and pest

herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides. Such inputs include fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, and pesticides, which allow for the crops to thrive.

Land, machinery, and inputs are all expensive. Thus, the banks are also involved in the American agricultural system. Karen, the wife of a farmer who grows 1400 acres of corn and beans in Grinnell, tells me "farming is an exercise in being in debt." Henry, a Grinnell area farmer says, " The banks enable this kind of farming, because you can't just afford to buy a $750,000 combine or a few hundred acres of land. The bank gives us loans – they are an important part of this process." Indeed, debt is a large part of the Iowa farm experience and without banking systems that give out farm loans, we would not have the agricultural landscape we have today. The banks had a clear role in the Farm Crisis of the 1980s where the government encouraged farmers to expand their landholdings, which lead to larger loans and banks. Later, when commodity prices plunged, it was impossible for farmers to manage their huge debts, and the banks foreclosed. Scholars note that during this period, many farmers went bankrupt and had to lose their farms. The devastation of these events caused some farmers to hang themselves in their barns. (Ortega et al. 2010: 600) Several of my informants also mentioned the farm crisis. Dan, a contract hog farmer bear Grinnell lost his family farm to the farm crisis. He notes, "My family felt a little betrayed. We lost our land because we were forced to get bigger and take out more and more loans." Dan's wife, Mary added: "The debt almost killed some people." Indeed, the banks, so crucial to a capitalist system, have played a crucial role, historically and currently in the functioning of the Iowa farm.

In addition to these players, Land Grant Universities are another part of the American Agricultural Systems. Institutions like Iowa State University provide agricultural education for young people interested in farming or researchers interested in crop genetics, agronomy, and soil

science. Many of these land grant universities receive funding from seed companies like Monsanto and DuPont. One of my informants said, "You might as well call Iowa State University Monsanto State University." Funding from agribusiness corporations necessarily obligates these institutions to support and teach the agricultural practices associated with their products. Thus, these universities are yet another gear in the machine of agricultural systems, continuing to promote and reproduce the knowledge base associated with this system.

In large scale farming operations, the government, agribusiness, the banks, and land grant universities control the means of production. Eric Wolf writes "the greater the capital at [the holders' of wealth's command] the greater their ability to raise productivity and, hence, the greater their ability to accumulate further surplus for additional expansion of production" (343). Indeed, in large scale, conventional farming, farmers have been driven to raise their productivity through the need to buy and maintain larger and larger farms and machinery. Additionally, the holders of wealth have dictated the crops that conventional farmers grow and the way that these crops are grown, since many seed varieties are coupled with pesticides and herbicides.

food? Who controls land prices and machinery costs? These issues of power connect to the postmodern rhetoric, which astutely examines the ways in which power and bias enter the social frame. Issues of power are central to agricultural systems since farmers themselves control so little of agriculture. Mary, a woman whose husband does contract hoeing for Monsanto says, " We don't control anything. The government and agribusiness control agriculture. They control everything!" Additionally, agribusiness companies also hold a great deal of power. One of my informants says, "You could call Iowa Monsanto ville if you really wanted." Such sentiments reflect the power that entities like the U.S. Government and agribusiness have. Michel Foucault (1982) writes that those who have power define reality (790). Such is the case in agriculture where governmental entities and agribusiness help to define and control the reality of what it means to be a farmer in America.

V. Concerns with Large-Scale, Conventional Farming:

Though large scale, conventional farming is the modus operandi for agriculture in America, it is associated with a number of problems. My informants, consisting of both conventional and nonconventional farmers, were quick to note the environmental, health, social, and generational concerns inherent in large scale, conventional farming. Several people expressed worry about environmental issues since large scale farming often prioritizes high production over conservation of soil or water resources. Neil, a Grinnell area vegetable farmer says:

> Right now we've only described efficiency as how many acres can one person cultivate or farm. But we don't look at all at the environmental impact, we don't look at all at biodiversity, we don't look at all at issues affecting water quality, or what it looks like downstream. We also don't look at the calories for input for calories of output. So we burn ridiculous quantities of oil to produce quite miniscule quantities of food. Really, agriculture should be that you put little energy in and you get a lot of energy out. We need to redefine efficiency.

Indeed, in a quest for economic productivity and efficiency, environmental care is sometimes lost. Ray, a Grinnell livestock farmer commented: “There are just a slew of environmental problems with industrial agriculture. There’s erosion, water pollution, soil quality issues.” Another informant said, “Conventional agriculture uses the ground like it’s replaceable.” Iowa farms are at least partially responsible for the hypoxic dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico. This dead zone, an area that is unlivable for many organisms, was created by runoff of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers from farms in the Midwest. (Malakoff 1998:1) Additionally, while my

Though there are several significant concerns with large scale, conventional agriculture,

more people and wore people out. "You couldn't just do that your entire life. It's hard to bend over and weed fields all day it's just not much fun". He goes on to note that it's relatively easy to farm now: "you of course have to rely on the weather and the seasons, but it's not as back breaking of a profession as it once was". Indeed, the mechanization of farming has decreased the physical strain associated with the profession and allowed for an increasingly older set of people to maintain productive farms.

Farmers have been able to stay on the farm for longer because of the increasing

generation to the next. Such cultural reproduction has, in the past, been important in maintaining not only food and farming systems, but also small town culture.

However, evidence indicates that this cultural reproduction of family farming and rural communities may be at risk in Iowa and perhaps in other places. Keating and Munro's (1989) study found a tendency for farmers to discourage their children from entering farming because of the hard work and low financial gains that agricultural offers to most people. In my research, many of the young people with parents who farmed indicated that their parents had not encouraged them to enter the profession. Clare and Dana, two sisters who attend Grinnell College and whose parents farm in eastern Nebraska indicated that their father believes that "farming has gotten worse" and that he has thus never encouraged his daughters to enter the profession. Annie, a child of farmers in northeastern Iowa, indicated that her father discouraged her from farming because it was not a financially lucrative field. Other children of farmers confided that they had not experienced much encouragement to farm from their fathers and mothers throughout their time growing up. Valerie, another farm kid, told me that her father "didn't encourage my brothers [or me] to tag along it was probably inefficient as hell to have a five yearold tagging along and now that the farms are bigger, and that it's more about machines, it's more dangerous." Another young woman told me that she was uninterested in the field because she saw that both her father and uncle, who farm on a large operation in Northeast Iowa, are "slaves to the farm". Such a lifestyle seems uninteresting and unfruitful to her.

Many farmers told me that they did encourage their children to get into farming by having them help with day

Michael Mayerfield Bell, a rural sociologist who studied Iowa farmers in the 1990s, writes that many of his informants believe that "the fun has gone out of farming." While none of my informants explicitly told me that farming was not fun anymore, several indicated the increased strain that the profession put on their lives. Dan and Mary, two Grinnell residents who do contract hog farming, told me that they feel as if they are "simply a cog in the industrial machine" and that they worry about money a lot. Mary said, "It's not about skills anymore. It's about money." Fred Kirschenmann said that conventional, commodity based farming does not use a knowledge of "biological synergies" and an understanding of the "dynamic use of resources" He said that conventional farming has become less about learning how to use resources dynamically and more about understanding machinery, land sales, and inputs.

Beyond all of these industry-wide factors that allow farmers to stay on the farm later into their lives and that make entering the field less appealing, there are other, more individual issues that complicate farm kids' decision about taking over the farm. One such issue is familial strife that builds around passing on a family business. Sonya Salamon (1992) writes, "You can't have two independent people running the same business" (148). My informants echo that statement. Elizabeth, a daughter of farmers who live in northeast Iowa, told me that her family experienced strife when her brother returned to the family farm. It has been hard for her brother and father to run a business together: her brother has different agricultural philosophies and such differences create issues not only on the farm but also in the family. Elizabeth herself is interested in potentially going back to take over her fathers' cattle operation, but she seems wary about entering a situation that involves significant familial conflict.

business. It brings up a lot of problems especially when a father and son do not get along." Kyle, a student at Iowa State University who intends to eventually take over the family farm, asserts that familial issues make it difficult for families to go through the transition from "father to son." "It's hard to transition a business in the family. For us, there are a lot of unknowns right now. I have two brothers who are also interested in farming. One of us will be returning and I'd like if it could be me." When I ask him if this situation feels stressful, he says that he feels that it "could lead to problems" and notes that "it sometimes stresses me out but right now I can't do anything about it." When Kyle graduates from Iowa State this coming spring he will work as a representative for Pioneer Seed in Southern Minnesota. He tells me that he is "biding his time" and waiting for his family to figure out the transition from one generation to the next.

Other values can affect which children are encouraged to return to the farm. In my interviews, informants continually indicated both implicitly and explicitly the gendered nature of the farm profession, especially large-scale conventional farming. Annie, a young woman who attends Grinnell College and whose father farms 2,800 acres in northeastern Iowa, says her father never encouraged her or her sister to go into farming. She says, "I think he was sad when he did not have any sons, but he was also happy because he has felt like a slave to the farm and did not want to pass it on." Andrea Rissing (2008) notes in her research about women farmers that, while in traditional small-scale cultures agriculture was often female-dominated f6(i)-6(nw 14)-11Tw 3.82o2Tw

Despite all of this sadness about the lack of cultural reproduction

break into large-scale farming without inherited land. In her book Prairie Patriots, Sonya Salamon (1992) writes about this issue: “A young person can’t start on his own anymore. He has to have some backing

because the holders of wealth control entry and exit. As discussed, governmental syst
agribusiness, and the banking system have a significant stake in the agricultural system and work to keep farms large and commodity based. Such a farm system is hard to enter. The Marxist perspectiveindicates that the holders of wealth control the means of entry and exit from the system (Wolf 2001344). Such is certainly the case in terms of large scale conventional farming in Iowa. Such a system is rooted in capitalism and bars interested people from entry while enslaving those within the system and leaving them little room for mobility.

As noted earlier, the Marxian perspective implies that the “holders of wealth” control the means of production because they decide what commodities are subsidized, and thus what products are produced (Wolf 2001: 344). Because the volume of corn and soybean products are so high, the price is kept low for consumers and these foods are used for non-essential products like high fructose corn syrup and ethanol (Holthaus 2006:207). In addition, these holders of wealth effectively block others from entry. Because of the subsidy system, farmers must own a large farm in order to make money; they must purchase many inputs and pay an increased price for land. Neil, a Grinnell farmer, said “the government controls everything. Subsidies artificially increase the price of land, and the whole system only works for you if you have a lot of land.” Ted, a farmer from Marshall County echoes Neil’s sentiments: “right now, the distorted market makes it so that you really must get big or get out.” As such, the holders of wealth control a great deal of power over not only the farmers themselves but also over interested potential farm entrants who are not land rich.

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friends are stressed out about this transition. It's sad to see that the family farm might not survive." Ted, a farmer from Marshall County indicates similar feelings:

> On one hand, I feel sad about these transitions, on the other hand I feel a lot of stress because I have to pass my farm on and I really would rather not just sell it to a corporation. I'd love to pass it on to my son or to another farmer in the area.

Voices of sadness have resonated throughout this paper. Regardless of their position in the farming system, my informants indicate that there is reason to feel sad and worried. Bill, a Grinnell area farmer says, "I'm concerned. We're all concerned. That's why I'm talking to you. We have to figure this out." Another farmer indicated stress: "I don't know what to do. We're just going to have to wait, but right now it stresses me out and it stresses out a lot of other people who are getting older and trying to figure out what to do with their land."

My informants seem to fall into two camps: those who accept the change and those who want to fight it. Almost everyone I spoke with expressed some kind of sadness or stress, but some were more resigned to the demographic changes happening in Iowa farm communities.

sadness can be conceptualized as structural nostalgia—the grieving for a social system which is being threatened.

This sadness and stress, whether it be complacent or not, is linked to the fact that my informants believe that generational issues will create a large number of other changes within Iowa farm communities. Generational transfer within Iowa farm communities has many potential cultural, economic, and political implications. Many of my informants predict that, as farmers age, the role of the "family farm" in the Midwest will decline as more and more farms are owned by absentee landowners or corporations. Others say that, as the "family farm" loses its status as the backbone of Midwest farming, small towns will also suffer given that fewer farmers will be available to help keep community functions alive and healthy. Some of my informants discuss that issues of aging farmers and the increasing size of farms will obligate farmers to continue to cultivate products that they can produce on a large scale and that are subsidized. Finally, farmers living close to urban areas retire and die, these areas are likely to be sold to developers who will convert the land use away from agriculture. These implications, large and small, give farmers, children of farmers, and small town residents reason to be concerned about the changes that

of farmland owned by both families and corporations." Karen, the wife of a Grinnell area farmer, told me that, as farmers get older and can't work on the farm anymore, "there will be more humongous farm operations owned by corporations." With the retirement of older farmers, land may be sold to corporations and thus much agricultural land will be by absentee landowners some of whom live out of state.

in a small community. Many of the farmers I have spoken with send (or have sent) their children to the local schools, participate in community events, help out as a part of the Grinnell Area Arts Council, sing in church choirs, attend lectures at Grinnell College, sell produce at the local farmers market, and patronize the local coffee shop, grocery stores, and other Grinnell businesses. Such social and economic engagement is important in keeping small towns culturally vibrant and economically sustainable. Bell writes, "not only are we losing farmers, but we are discouraging young people from even becoming farmers which is both an economic and a cultural threat to places like rural Iowa" (52). On that note, Valerie says that her town has seen problems in the past few years:

> People now move to [my town] because it's a cheap place to live, not because they want to contribute to the community or anything. They come here because they want to find work, so they work at the Pizza Ranch. It used to be different. The town used to be better—we used to have more community functions. More kids were involved in school sports, more people came to church in town. Now, we don't really have community events as much.

If absentee landowners are to become the status quo in Iowa agriculture, we can predict that

Additionally, if the family farm slowly deteriorates as the backbone of the Iowa small town, it is likely that small towns will suffer and that fewer young people will be attracted to stay in Iowa. Bill Menner, Iowa director of USDA rural development, frames the issue as one of quality of life. "We need to create communities where there is a high quality of life. Young people will come and stay if there is a high quality of life and good paying jobs." My informants reflect on this fact as well: "Without young people, my town will die," noted Valerie, a Grinnell College student who comes from a farm family. Grant, a farm kid from Marshall county notes, " I feel bad because I know that I'm contributing to the brain drain, but I don't really know what I can do about it since there's nothing for me in my hometown." If nc T4(us)-1[(I)13eft mtown12(e)4(t tow2," notef(y)20( )-10ml

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bigger, “everyone is going to be working for someone else.” He says that he feels stressed when he thinks about the future generation of farmers. Bill has farmed for fifty years and seems sad that his generation of farmers is retiring, noting that there will be more and more changes in Iowa. He tells me that “fifteen percent of the farmers [in America] produce eighty five percent of the goods,” noting that it will be fewer than fifteen percent if farms keep getting bigger. He reflects, “food and farming are social, and if fewer and fewer people produce the food, that’s really too bad.” Bill makes it clear that he has farmed as a part of a community: “We all help each other out. It’s social. If someone needs help, I’m there. If I need help, people are here to give me a hand.” Indeed, if farms get bigger and farmers become fewer, these social linkages will become less strong.

Thomas Jefferson said, “The true foundation of republican government is the equal right of every citizen in his person and property and their management” (1816).[5] Though his ideals excluded significant members of the population including women and African Americans, Jefferson believed that the ownership of land created equitable social relations and a more satisfactory society. The cu

of a farm proletariat, people who have nothing to sell except their own labor. Such a change has already begun in the Imperial Valley in Central California, where large corporate farms raise many of the vegetables that Americans eat (Imperial Valley Farm Bureau 2010; FitzSimmons 1986: 334). Given the current generational crunch, Iowa, which has maintained its family farm identity, may begin to see similar trends and Thomas Jefferson's ideals may soon be forgotten in the American heartland as well.

In the face of these concerns, however, some of my informants express generally positive feelings about at least some aspects of the trend. Kyle, an Iowa State University student, notes that if farms get bigger, "they will be more efficient," adding that it is easier to make money on a large farm. Bell notes "a study found that large farms received twelve percent more for their corn and sixteen percent more for their beans than smaller ones in 1997" (54). Such a discrepancy can be chalked up to the fact that larger farms have better access to markets than smaller farms. Another informant, Erica, told me that she felt that larger farms were "better at being good to the environment." Grant, a farm kid from Marshall County, said that though he felt sadness about the institution of the family farm deteriorating, that larger farms were more efficient, and that it made sense to consolidate large farms in order to have less machinery. He tells me that there is no reason why two people who own 1,000 acres should both have $500,000 combines when one person could own 2,000 acres and still use one combine. Henry, a Grinnell area farmer, told me that he felt "family farming certainly needs to be sustained", but in the end "there is not too much you can do about farms getting bigger and more efficient."

X. Revitalization in Iowa Farm Communities:

The implications of generational issues in Iowa farm communities cause significant stress

and sadness on the part of farmers and their children. Structural nostalgia, grief about the death of institutions is certainly present and seems to lead to increasing stress on the part of my informants. When this stress becomes too much to bear, individuals must find ways to cope

some change. We've got to make some change. Our current system is not sustainable." Francis Thicke, a dairy farmer from Fairfield, Iowa, notes that he thinks a change in American agricultural systems is necessary and inevitable given the increasing size of farms and the increasing price of oil. He believes that we will need to create food production systems that are smaller, more environmentally conscious, and more focused on food rather than commodities like corn and soybeans that are turned into processed foods like corn syrup and fuels like ethanol. Hassenein (1999) writes about the growing sustainable agriculture movement in America: "If there is a common conviction among those who identify with one or more of the social issues associated with the sustainable agriculture movement, it is the opposition to the industrialization, corporate domination, and globalization of agriculture" (3). I have continually heard these convictions from many of my informants, who believe that we need to see significant change in American agricultural systems.

This individual stress has caused farmers, children of farmers, rural residents, and consumers to consider major changes to agricultural policy and practice. Many people believe that it is possible to build a farming system that is healthier for individuals, communities, and the environment and are eager to experiment with alternatives. For instance, many of my informants discussed that the generational issues facing Iowa communities could be solved by a switch to smaller scale farming. Such farm operations would carry fewer of the negative health and environmental impacts that large scale, conventional farming does, and would be easier for new farmers to break into.

In the face of the high cost of land and the general trend toward larger farms, some of my informants pointed out the opportunities that could exist on smaller farms. Karen, the wife of a Grinnell farmer talked about the trend of Iowa farms: "You've either got to get big or get out."

Niche market farming is perhaps an alternative or a solution to the dire picture of dying family farms and small towns. Ray, a local livestock producer, says "young people getting involved in alternative agriculture will mean a lot to the farm communities," adding, "it will need more hands and feet out on the land." Additionally, multiple sources indicate that these kinds of farming operations are oftentimes less ecologically intensive and do not rely on governmental subsidies (Hassanein, 1999; Kirschenmann, Personal Communication). Finally, these kinds of food systems create more community and more consumer connection to food. Brett, a child of farmers from western Wisconsin and a self-described "foodie" notes that buying vegetables and meat from local farmers creates positive connections within communities and "makes you think about where your food comes from." In addition to these positive effects of small-scale production perhaps, alternative agriculture is one of the best ways to combat the issues of generational transfer and small town decay in the rural Midwest as well because of the lower entry costs associated with the field.

Fred Kirschenmann contradicts the opinions of many conventional farm experts when he predicts that farms will get smaller rather than larger in the next twenty to fifty years. Fred believes that the rising price of oil will obligate farms to reduce in size. He says, "The only reason that this current agricultural system works is because of relatively cheap energy. If the price of crude oil goes up to $350/barrel within ten years we won't be able to maintain these farms." Machinery, fertilizer, pesticides, and other inputs all require petroleum. Fred thinks that as the price of oil increase we will be obligated to "recapture the know-how of the past" and practice agriculture that is less energy intensive. Francis Thicke echoes Kirschenmann's sentiments "we would not have the system of agriculture we have today if it were not for cheap

oil," noting that if oil were not as cheap we would have to find ways to use our resources in ways that are more resilient and efficient.

Fred Kirschenmann warns that this new system will be reliant on "knowledge intensive" farming practices. Neva Hassanein echoes this sentiment:

> For nearly all of agricultural history, farmers and craftspeople have produced the knowledge necessary to farm. Farmers have tilled the soil, and they have domesticated plants and animals. Farmers have selectively bred livestock to perform a variety of services and pr

I believe that there is a revitalization movement happening within a subset of American farmers. If the movement continues as Wallace (1956) trajectory suggests, communities will undergo a period of revitalization in which

> The prolonged experience of stress, produced by failure of need satisfaction

Organization is, of course, an important part of such a movement as well. According to Wallace and Weber (1947), such organization is often coordinated by a "charismatic leader." In the alternative agriculture movement, national figures like Michael Pollan and Wendell Berry might serve in this role. Beyond the leaders, there are also organizations that help to mobilize individuals interested in creating a new system of agriculture. Practical Farmers of Iowa and The Land Stewardship Project both serve to support farmers who are practicing sustainable agriculture. They also work to help new and transitioning farmers receive the support they need and to support policy that supports and enables alternative agriculture. Elizabeth, the daughter of a cattle farmer in northeastern Iowa, says, "PFI and LSP are great! They're really working to influence policy and get alternative agriculture on the map." Indeed, such organizations work to gather support from separate individuals and channel it into change. Additionally, on an even more local level, groups of people have organized themselves to create change locally and support one another. The Los Angeles Times recently ran an article about "The Crop Mob" in North Carolina, individuals who volunteer to help new and transitioning and farmers with farm tasks. David Zucchino writes: "This was Crop Mob, a roving band of volunteers dedicated to helping young farmers build sustainable small farms. It's a modern version of a barn raising, with volunteers brought together by Google and Facebook" (2010). The renaissance of interest in small scale agriculture has worked to organize people around the country to come together to help farmers, eat local food, and help create a movement.

The other aspects of the revitalization movement, adaptation, cultural transformation, and routinization, are pending as this particular revitalization movement is transitioning from the period of cultural distortion to the revitalization stage. Generational issues, among other factors, drive this revitalization movement in Iowa farm communities, and make the movement even

farmers in transitioning into retirement. At PFI, Luke Robert Gran started a “New Farmer Program” in May of 2009. In less than a year, he has used social networking websites to communicate with young people interested in farming and has started offering online “farminars,” presentations by farmers about anything from land transfer to agricultural techniques. He also has started an informal mentoring program where he links aspiring young people with older farmers who need help on the farm. In December, he led a “Next Generation” retreat for young people interested in farming. Mr. Gran is hopeful that, with time, PFI will be able to set up mentoring programs that are more formalized and will raise funds so that the organization can offer matching funds through the Individual Development Account Model. This model incentivizes saving by matching the funds that individual farmers save each month. Currently, Luke is working to raise $250,000 to start such a program at PFI.

The Land Stewardship Program offers similar services to farmers in Minnesota. Their program, “Farm Beginnings,” which was founded in 1998, offers thirty hours of hands-on and classroom learning experiences to new and transitioning farmers in Minnesota. This year’s six-on-farm seminars cover topics ranging from organic greenhouse management to raising Mangalitsa pigs (LSP 2010). The LSP website also serves as a networking device for farmers looking for interns and young people looking to gain experience on a farm. Beyond the education that LSP offers, they have also partnered with Heifer International to provide no-interest loans to new and transitional farmers for livestock. This program helps farmers without capital afford to start a livestock operation. The leaders of the “Farm Beginnings” program report that it has been very successful and gained in popularity over the past twelve years. Their program has spawned similar programs for new farmers in Illinois, Nebraska, and North Dakota.

farmers education about alternative modes of production may be a way to get them back on the farm as well.

To encourage farm entry and to revitalize small farming communities, the government must expand the current national and state-based public policy for new and transitioning farmers. The current programs do not come close to addressing the needs that new farmers face. Specifically, President Obama ought to act upon his commitments to increase tax credits for young farmers. Furthermore, organizations like Practical Farmers of Iowa and The Land Stewardship Project should strive to enhance their current programs, especially mentorship programs that aim to help young farmers gain access to knowledge as well as programs that allow new and transitioning farmers to partner with farmers looking for heirs to whom they can to pass on their farm. Finally, these generational transfer issues raise the question of how large-scale farm policy reform can rejuvenate the farm force and keep small communities vibrant.

My informants offer valuable insights into possible solutions to the problems Iowa farm communities face. Henry, a Grinnell area farmer who has been farming since 1962, suggests that it was imperative to create tax incentives for beginning farmers. "That's one way to make farming more appealing and to make it possible for people to come back," he says. In his view these tax incentives could include exemptions on everything from renting land to buying equipment. He notes that "some of these programs exist, but we need to make more. People will start farming if they can afford it." Henry's views fall in line with President Obama's proposed policy. Henry notes, however, that these "tax incentives will have to be significant. We need to make farming financially viable. There's no other way to get you young folks involved." These new programs would have to be significant to make farming a financially viable enterprise for interested young people.

Some of my other informants have come to the conclusion that tax incentives will not suffice arguing that, in addition, the government needs to offer grants and interest loans to young farmers. Gene, a Grinnell area farmer, says, "It's crucial to keep family farming alive so we need to invest in it. We need to put money into keeping [family] farming alive. It's crucial." Another Grinnell farmer says, "if we diverted some of the money that we give to keep ethanol alive as a biofuel or money that we use to basically subsidize corn syrup into grants for young farmers to buy land or machinery, we would have a much better Farm Bill." Indeed, adding a significant grants and no-interest loan program into the Farm Bill help endow young people with the resources they need to start farming.

Other farmers and children of farmers advocate mentorship and apprenticeship programs as well as "matching" programs for older farmers looking for non-kin heirs for their land. Francis Thicke says "The best way to learn about the farm is to work on one. We need more internship programs so that young people can have the opportunity to learning about farming and agriculture." Ray, a Grinnell livestock farmer, echoes Thicke's comments: "I would love to be able to have interns all year long. Someone could work for us until they got themselves a head of hogs. It would be a great way to transition a new person into farming." Ray also notes, "I would like to see more of the landowners give opportunities to young farmers, help them take over the farm—maybe not the whole farm, but slowly take it over." As noted earlier, Practical Farmers of Iowa offers informal mentorship programs for young people interested in learning new techniques. The Land Stewardship Project has its "Farm Beginnings" program, which offers opportunities for new farmers to learn about agriculture and take farm-seminars. Expanding mentoring programs would be an excellent way for young farmers to gain skills, build rapport with older farmers, and create partnerships that could lead to farm transfer of

“We need to look at students in non-traditional schools, like liberal arts colleges. These folks are interested in farming, too. We just need to provide them with opportunities to get on the land and learn.” Established and funded mentorship and internship programs would allow young people from traditional and non-traditional backgrounds to gain experience and make connections, which would go a long way in helping to rejuvenate the farm force, get more young people in small town Iowa, and help farmers transfer their knowledge to the next generation.

Elizabeth, the daughter of farmers in Northeast Iowa, suggests that there ought to be specific, well-funded mentorships available for people interested in pursuing niche markets. “The big ag schools are there for people who want to learn how to learn how to grow corn and beans, but there needs to be more opportunities for people who don’t want to do that.” She says that there is a lot of demand for value-added, niche market goods like grass-fed beef, organic vegetables, and hormone-free milk. As mentioned earlier, small-scale, niche market farming may also be an easier way for young people to enter the field so it seems especially prudent to offer specialized training for those interested in alternative agriculture.

farm. Such a system would also allow for students who have been schooled in the Liberal Arts to have opportunities to gain the skills necessary to enter the farm force.

Bret, a child of farmers from western Wisconsin, suggested another option of generational transfer. "What if older farmers whose children did not want to farm had the opportunity to sell their land to the state? The state could then put the land into prairie and we could increase conservation." This program would allow farmers to take their land out of production when they retire. They would, in some ways, retire their business when they stop working. The proposal would also increase conservation, which is important in the American Midwest, a landscape which has lost much of its original identity to agriculture and development.

Some believe that tax incentives, grants, and mentorship programs are not enough to properly deal with the problems of generational transfer. They believe that this problem is systemic, stemming from farm policy that privileges large farm owners. Thus, in these informants' eyes, the only way to properly deal with generational transfer and the deterioration of the family farm f4d smfl(r)3(f)3(a)4(r)3(i)-12(e)4opgeriti-5(g)12(ei)12(etof)3(a)4(r-5(g)-10(y)22((e)4

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revitalization movement is to continue its trajectory, the sources of power in American agriculture will need to be substantially challenged. Changes to the agriculture system will take significant restructuring of power and changing of norms. We must examine the power that

concern and stress that farm communities feel into active change. This paper has explored various ways to combat the generational issues in Iowa farm communities. Some of these ideas—tax incentives, grants, and loans—are easier to implement. Other ideas, like encouraging more small scale farming are also doable, especially with the support and enhancement of organizations like Practical Farmers of Iowa and The Land Stewardship Project. However, others believe that in order to truly revitalize Iowa farming, we must confront the fact these generational issues are systemic and that new farm policy is the ultimate and most important battle to be fought and won. Indeed, such changes would alter our farm landscape in significant and important ways and would, ultimately, work to combat the root issues of many of the generational issues outlined in this paper.

Systemic change is ultimately necessary for lasting and effective change in farming communities. Changing Federal farm policy would have enormous economic and social effects for both farmers and food consumers but changes could also create a fundamentally more just and equitable farm landscape for farmers, rural residents, and consumers. In the long term, it is necessary to seriously examine federal farm policy, its inherent power structure, and its implications for American farm communities. In the short term, creating ways for young people to get on the land will aid in generational transfer. Ray, a livestock farmer near Grinnell, put the issue nicely: "We just need more young hands and feet on the land." Getting more young hands and feet on the land is the first step in combating these generational issues and helping to maintain the vitality of rural communities. On a local level, there needs to be more engagement and education. On the national level there needs to be more policy and government spending on young farmers. All of these actions can and potentially will be a part of the larger revitalization movements working to change agricultural systems in America.

Ultimately, identifying these generational issues helps us realize that small farms and communities are at stake. A Grinnell area farmer put it nicely: "It's taken awhile for us to realize what's at stake. But, now people are starting to realize that everything is in jeopardy: our neighbors, our friends, our grocery stores, our coffee shops, our churches, our schools, and our streets. We're seeing rural decay. We might lose everything. But, we might not. We won't lose everything if we get more young people investing their time and their money in our communities." Indeed, this issue calls for immediate local and national response both in the short and long term. Gene, a Grinnell area farmer, reminds us of the urgency: "Iowa could become a second Imperial Valley [in Central California]. It would be easy to make that transition. But, the real question is: Is Iowa worth fighting for? [Or will Iowa become an ecological sacrifice zone?] Is Iowa worth saving?" I believe the definitive answer to that question is yes. Iowa, with its wealth of unique rural communities, fertile soil, and farming tradition is worth saving. Indeed rural Iowa and the family farm serves for more than nostalgia—it helps to sustain and enliven community, the economy, and culture in the heartland of America.

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APPENDIX I: Information about my informants:

Virginia and Kathy Andersen are Grinnell College students. They grew up on a farm North of Omaha in Northeastern Nebraska. Their father, a lifelong farmer, farms approximately five hundred acres of corn and soybeans on land that is owned by his father (Kathy and Virginia's grandfather). Their mother owns land near Harlan Iowa that she has inherited from her parents. She leases this land to a farmer in the area. Neither Virginia nor Kathy expect to return to farming and report that their parents have not encouraged this career path. Virginia will graduate from Grinnell in 2010 with a degree in sociology and Kathy will graduate in 2013. She expects to major in biology. Interviewed 31 January 2010.

Kaleb Applegate is a senior at Iowa State University. He grew up on a farm near Marshalltown, Iowa. He is majoring in agricultural science at Iowa State is planning to return to farm this coming year where he will work with father. He plans to eventually inherit the farm and buy land of his own. Interviewed 1 March 2010.

Nichole Baker is a Grinnell College student who grew up on a farm where her father produces corn and soybeans. Nichole does not intend to return to the farm. Interviewed 30 January 2010.

Barney Barenfeuse is a Grinnell area livestock farmer. He grew up on a farm and currently raises hogs, chickens, sheep, and cattle. He practices direct marketing techniques and is known throughout Grinnell for the fabulous meat he and his wife raise. Interviewed 19 April 2010.

Andrew Burt is a senior at Iowa State University. He grew up on a farm near Marshalltown, Iowa. He is majoring in agricultural business at Iowa State and next year will be a seed salesman for Monsanto in Southern Minnesota. He is hoping to eventually return to his father's farm though he worries about how the farm will be divided between him and his three other brothers. Interviewed 6 March 2010.

Andy Dunham

mentoring program where he links aspiring young people with older farmers who need help on the farm. In December, he led a "Next Generation" retreat for young people interested in farming. Mr. Gran is hopeful that, with time, PFI will be able to set up mentoring programs that are more formalized and will raise funds so that the organization can offer matching funds through the Individual Development Account Model. This model incentivizes saving by matching the funds that individual farmers save each month. Currently, Luke is working to raise $250,000 to start such a program at PFI. Interviewed 18 March 2010.

Kate Howard is a Grinnell College senior who grew up outside of Elgin, Iowa. Her father raises corn, soybeans, and cattle on 2,000 acres. Kate's grandfather starting farming in the 1950s and her father raises crops on his land on land that he rents. Kate is planning on eventually going to medical school and thus does not plan to return to the farm. She is hopeful that her younger brother will be interested in taking over the business. Interviewed 5 February 2010.

Fred Kirschenmann is a farmer, academic, and leader in the organic/sustainable agriculture movement. He owns a 3,500 acre certified organic farm in Windsor, North Dakota. He is a professor in Iowa State University's Department of Religion and Philosophy, has served as the president of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and is currently a distinguished fellow of the Leopold Center. Interviewed 2 March 2010.

Kayla Koether is a Grinnell College sophomore who grew up in northeast Iowa. Her father owns a grass fed beef operation. She has been involved in operation throughout her whole life and is considering going back to be a part of the operation later in her life. At Grinnell, Kayla has developed her own independent major in agriculture and sustainable rural development. Interviewed 11 February 2010.

Howard McDonough has been farming in Grinnell for fifty-four years. He grew up outside of Grinnell and attended Iowa State University. Howard has four sons but none of them are interested in pursuing farming. Howard has begun the process of renting and selling some of his land. Howard is an avid gardener and is an expert at doing food preservation. He has been very active in the Grinnell community throughout his entire life here. Interviewed 3 February 2010.

Janna Niehaus is a Grinnell College senior who grew up on a farm near Dubuque, Iowa. Janna's father and uncle own a 2,800 acre farm and raise corn, soybeans, hogs, and cattle. Janna is planning on eventually going to medical school and does not think that she will farm her father's land. Her cousin will likely take over the operation. Interviewed 2 February 2010.

Howard Raffety has been farming in Grinnell since he turned 21 in 1962. Over the years, he has grown more than 800 acres of corn, soybeans, oats, and hay. He has also raised hogs and cattle. Howard started farming in partnership with his father, who had farmed on the same land.

Vickie Rutherfordis a Grinnell native who grew up on a farm and whose husband, Mark Rutherford, farms 1,400 acres of land in Grinnell. Vickie works at the Registrar's office at

APPENDIX II: Interview Questions

Interview Guide for Farmers:

1) What is your name?
2) How old are you?
3) For how long have you been farming?
4) What do you farm?
5) How did you get into farming? Did you go to agriculture school? Did your parents farm?
6) If your parents farmed, are you farming on their land now? If not, when did you buy this land?
7) Do you have children? How old are they?
8) Have you (will you) encourage(d) your children to pursue farming? Why or why not?
9) Do you have a plan for what will happen to your farm when you retire?
10) As you may know, the average age of farmers in Iowa is over fifty. What do you think the implications of an aging farming population are? Specifically, how do you think that an aging population of farmers will affect the culture and economy of this area?
11) The latest USDA Census of Agriculture indicated that between 2002 and 2007, the number of farmers under the age of 25 dropped by 30%. Why are fewer young people entering this profession? Do you have ideas about how to get more young people to enter the profession?
12) What would you like to see happen to agriculture in Iowa, especially given that farmers are aging and few young people are entering the profession?
13) Do you have other comments or concerns?
14) Do you have any questions for me?

Interview Guide for Children of Farmers:

15) What is your name?
16) How old are you?
17) Where do your parents farm and how long have they been farming?
18) What do you farm?
19) How did your parents get into farming?
20) Have your parents ever encouraged you to get into farming? How? Why or why not?
21) Do your parents have a plan for what will happen to your farm when you retire?
22) As you may know, the average age of farmers in Iowa is over fifty. What do you think the implications of an aging farming population are? Specifically, how do you think that an aging population of farmers will affect the culture and economy of this area?
23) The latest USDA Census of Agriculture indicated that between 2002 and 2007, the number of farmers under the age of 25 dropped by 30%. Why are fewer young people entering this profession? Do you have ideas about how to get more young people to enter the profession?
24) What would you like to see happen to agriculture in Iowa, especially given that farmers are aging and few young people are entering the profession?
25) Do you have other comments or concerns?
26) Do you have any questions for me?