

‘... Silver in the Stars and Gold in the Morning Sun’: Non-farm Rural Landowners’ Motivations for Rural Living and Attachment to their Land

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ABSTRACT *Studies have identified that, given the opportunity, the majority of North Americans would prefer to live in small towns and rural areas. This preference is based in aesthetic notions linked to landscape features, personal meaning, and perceptions. In order to understand how the growing non-farm rural landowner population will influence the rural landscape, this research explored the motivations of non-farm rural landowners for living in rural areas, and their perceptions of their property. It involved five preliminary focus groups with farm and non-farm landowners owning land in rural, urbanising rural, and urbanised rural areas, and four final focus groups. The research also included a survey of 944 landowners in Southern Ontario. People choose to live in rural areas because they are quiet, natural, open, private, and clean. In contrast, people chose to buy their properties for very practical reasons: location, cost, availability and quality of resources, and size. Results suggest that non-farm rural landowners prefer landscapes with trees and water, and landscape health, restorative benefits, and aesthetic quality are crucial. Associations with family, history, and activities provide the affective connection which supports ongoing efforts on their land.*

KEY WORDS: Non-farm rural, landowner, place, attachment, motivation

Introduction

Studies have identified that, given the opportunity, the majority of North Americans would prefer to live in small towns and rural areas (Blackwood & Carpenter, 1978; Carpenter, 1977; Christenson, 1974; DeJong & Bush, 1975; Dillman & Dobash, 1972; Fuguitt & Brown, 1990; Fuguitt & Zuiches, 1975; Garkovich, 1989; Ryan *et al.*, 1974; Schwarzweller, 1979; Zuiches & Fuguitt, 1973), and today, changing technology and work structures have made this a viable option for many people. Rural areas are under growing strain from urban expansion and sprawl, population migration (as a result of changing lifestyle preferences and an aging population),

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technological innovations which allow ex-urbanites to telecommute, and economic pressures to consolidate farmlands, resulting in smaller farming populations in rural areas, and difficulty sustaining local communities, with their schools and other local institutions (Lauzon & Leahy, 2000). People are choosing to live in rural areas not only because they don't like the city (Fisher & Mitchelson, 1981; Fugitt & Brown, 1990; Garkovich, 1989; Phillips & Brunn, 1978; Tucker, 1976), but also because they prefer the rural landscape (Bunce, 1982) and quality of life (Gordon, 1996; Ploch, 1978). This preference is based in landscape perceptions which are both conscious and subconscious. Landscape preference theory attempts to explain our aesthetic preferences for savannah landscapes and spaces with prospect and refuge characteristics based on evolutionary advantage (Appleton, 1975; Balling & Falk, 1982; Bourassa, 1990, 1991). These characteristics are distinctly evident in many rural areas: hedgerows, woodlots and topographic relief provide prospect and refuge, and in combination with planted fields, address the desire for savannah landscapes. In order to understand how these changes to the rural population will influence the rural landscape in the future, this research explores the motivations of non-farm rural landowners for living in rural areas, for purchasing a particular property, and their perception of their rural landscape.

This study defines non-farm rural landowners as neither farmers nor small town residents. They are owners of agricultural and non-agricultural rural land including cultivated land, pasture and range land, and natural areas including wooded areas, converted old fields, stream corridors and wetlands. Their property is over one acre in size.¹ Non-farm landowners may be weekenders, retired farmers, people who work in a nearby town, retirees who have moved from the city, commuters who work in the city, or absentee landlords (among others). A portion of their property may be a hobby farm, but more substantial farming enterprises are managed by others. They may have specific interests in the land they own, for example, in woodlot management, bird-watching, or hiking, or they may merely see their land as a private and scenic place to live (Milburn, 2006, 2007).

Furthermore, rural areas address the preference for natural areas which are neat and organised and appear managed and cared for (Burgess *et al.*, 1988; Kaplan, 1984; Millward & Mostyn, 1989; Nassauer, 1995; Schroeder, 1991; Schroeder & Anderson, 1984). This quality is evident in the rural landscape, and, in combination with other landscape characteristics, explains the general popularity of the rural aesthetic. The desire of non-farm landowners to purchase and manage land provides evidence that this landscape fulfils unconscious or subconscious human needs in some way. The nature of rural landscapes as mixed landscapes with long vistas, directed views, and natural areas addresses many human preferences. They provide prospect and refuge (Appleton, 1975), coherence, complexity, legibility and mystery (Kaplan *et al.*, 1989), and navigability. They often have water which addresses the preference for the movement, sound and look of water (Buss, 1994; Gallagher, 1977; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Ribe, 1989; Zube, 1986) and significant amounts of vegetative cover which address the preference for large trees (Buss, 1994; Gallagher, 1977; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Nassauer, 1995; Ribe, 1989; Sullivan *et al.*, 2004; Zube, 1986).

Motivations for Rural Living

The research identifies a range of motivations for rural living including peace and quiet (Bryant *et al.*, 1982; Williams & Sofranko, 1979), open space (Bryant *et al.*, 1982; Bunce, 1982; Joseph *et al.*, 1989; Phillips & Brunn, 1978), privacy (Bryant *et al.*, 1982; Joseph *et al.*, 1989), proximity to recreation (Herbers, 1986; Lapping *et al.*, 1989; Lewis, 1979; Nassauer *et al.*, 2002), and the rural aesthetic (Bunce, 1982). Some research has also identified 'sense of community' as a motivation for non-farm rural landownership (Bunce, 1982; Fisher & Mitchelson, 1981; Phillips & Brunn, 1978; Sullivan, 1996). Economic factors include the lower cost of rural property relative to similarly sized urban properties, as well as comparably lower taxes. Socio-cultural considerations include a desire to live in a smaller community, raising children in the country, and the opportunity to have animals such as dogs and horses (Woronchak, 1979).

The move to rural areas has been made possible as a result of improvements in transportation systems and relatively low private transportation costs (Bascom & Gordon, 1999; Davis, 1990; Jackson, 1985; Riley & Mohr, 1994), changes in communication systems, increased employment opportunities and greater job flexibility (Bunce, 1982; Davis, 1990; Gordon, 1996). Other factors may include personal preference (Bunce, 1982; Fisher & Mitchelson, 1981; Fugiutt & Brown, 1990; Phillips & Brunn, 1978; Ploch, 1978; Schwarzweller, 1979; Tucker, 1976), retirement, increased wealth (Riley & Mohr, 1994), non-metropolitan industrial growth (Bascom, 2000), inexpensive consumer goods (Riley & Mohr, 1994), and rural quality of life (Fisher & Mitchelson, 1981; Gordon, 1996). Rural non-farm residential development is encouraged by economic and socio-cultural factors. Economic factors include the lower cost of rural property relative to similarly sized urban properties, as well as comparably lower taxes. Socio-cultural considerations include a desire for open space, privacy, living in a smaller community and the associated benefits, raising children in the country, and the opportunity to have animals such as dogs and horses (Woronchak, 1979). Though Woronchak (1979) argued that economic reasons dominated the decision-making process to move to the country, other research suggests that non-farm land ownership was more likely tied to rural area jobs and accessibility to other services. Russwurm (1976) identifies open space and privacy, raising children, and keeping animals as the three primary reasons to live outside the city. In the 1970s, a University of Manitoba study explored motivations for moving to the country in Manitoba, Canada. The primary reasons were identified as open space, physical attractiveness, and privacy (University of Manitoba, 1974). Other reasons identified by Paterson Planning and Research Ltd (1973), also a study of the issue in Manitoba, included:

- Financial concerns such as a higher standard of living resulting from greater disposable income, lower land costs ('can buy more land') and property taxes, and large lots with low cost housing;
- Connection to nature through physical proximity, more trees, and the ability to have animals;
- Social benefits related to living in a smaller community and a lower density of population, the 'rural lifestyle', friendly people, rural areas as a better place to

raise children, and less restriction on personal activities (independence and freedom);

- Locational benefits including improved leisure time involving outdoor recreational activities;
- Less pollution;
- Site-specific factors such as the availability of servicing and access to the lot and adjacent highways.

There are a variety of factors which have created the demand for non-farm properties. These factors can be divided into ‘push’ factors which encourage a move *away* from the city, and ‘pull’ factors, which encourage a move *to* rural areas. Push factors include:

- High property and housing costs, including taxes (Bryant *et al.*, 1982; Jackson, 1985);
- Pollution (Bryant *et al.*, 1982; Williams & Sofranko, 1979);
- Traffic congestion (Bryant *et al.*, 1982; Williams & Sofranko, 1979);
- Pace of life (Bryant *et al.*, 1982; Williams & Sofranko, 1979); and,
- Metropolitan population growth (Jackson, 1985; Davis, 1990).

Another ‘push’ factor is the increasing demand from farmers to sever lots in order to retire on their land, own a small piece of property, or finance farm expenses (Misek-Evans, 1992; Weir, 2003). Pull factors include:

- Privacy (Bryant *et al.*, 1982; Joseph *et al.*, 1989);
- Space (Bryant *et al.*, 1982; Joseph *et al.*, 1989);
- Freedom;
- Wanting to get ‘back to the land’;
- Low housing costs and few restrictions on land use (Sullivan, 1996);
- Rural quality of life (Fuguitt & Zuiches, 1975; Ploch, 1978; Williams & Sofranko, 1979);
- Idealisation of the rural as an ideal place to live (Davis, 1990).

Rural areas seem to hold a special appeal for retirees and wealthy young professionals. The perceived openness, safety, cleanliness, and health of the countryside appeals to older people who may have grown up in a rural area or owned a vacation home in the past, and upon retirement, are choosing to move permanently to rural properties. According to Bunce (1982), the primary motivations of professionals and executives are different from many other groups: they move to small towns in search of community. Young professionals are more likely to be motivated by the desire to raise their children in a rural area (Bryant *et al.*, 1982), whereas retirees are motivated by a desire to return to their roots (Weeks, 1976; Williams & Sofranko, 1979), amenity values, such as wildlife and opportunities to use trails (Nassauer *et al.*, 2002), the perception of rural areas as a healthier place for retirement (Herbers, 1986; Lapping *et al.*, 1989; Lewis, 1979), and the ‘pleasures of rural driving’ (Davis, 1990; Herbers, 1986; Salomon & Salomon, 1984).

The Non-Farm Rural Landowner

In Southern Ontario the number of retirees in non-farm rural areas is increasing, as is the average age (Milburn, 2006, 2007). Those people who are not retired tend to be professionals, such as teachers, managers, or consultants and/or self-employed. While non-farm rural residents are increasingly likely to live on or very near their properties, property sizes are decreasing, likely as a result of cost, taxes, availability of recreational activities in close proximity, and the ability to maintain the land. Though education levels are very high, non-farm income levels are similar to the average in the province, but may be high compared to other rural residents (such as farmers or small town residents). For the most part, non-farm landowners are a contiguous group geographically (Milburn, 2006, 2007).

Further results (Milburn, 2006, 2007) suggest that non-farm landowners are strongly influenced in their interactions with their landscape by tangibility; influence; and applicability. Tangibility is the physical evidence of a behaviour impacting on the environment. Influence is the ability of a single individual to create change, thereby overcoming a sense of helplessness. Applicability is the perception that given information or actions are relevant to an individual's identified goals or problems.

Methods

Data collection focused on the area of Southern Ontario south of the Canadian Shield. The study area stretched from the western to the eastern border of Ontario, south to Lakes Ontario and Erie, and north to Lake Huron, Owen Sound, and Pembroke (Figure 1). The study involved three key stages of data collection: five preliminary focus groups (two with farmers, three with non-farmers), four final focus groups, and a detailed self-administered mail survey. Both sets of focus groups were organised by sponsoring groups such as the Ontario Stewardship Councils, who selected and contacted individuals for participation. Questions were designed with the assistance of the study sponsor, local stakeholders, and an experienced facilitator. The questions were explored using small and large group discussions, ranking exercises such as 'dot-mocracies', and brainstorming exercises. Responses were recorded by a notetaker and on flip charts by the facilitator and focus group participants.

The questionnaire mailing list was developed in partnership with various partners including the Stewardship Councils and Conservation Authorities. The modified self-administered questionnaire and package format was designed using the Dillman method (Dillman, 1978, 2000). All individuals identified by the partners were included in the survey, as the size of the population is unknown. Individuals with addresses outside of Canada and those who required a French-language version of the questionnaire were eliminated from the mailing list as a result of available resources. The questionnaire included nominal, ordinal, and ratio data as well as open-ended questions. Questions were designed through consultation with local experts, government staff, project stakeholders, and with reference to the literature. All procedures were performed in compliance with relevant laws and institutional guidelines and the appropriate institutional committee approved them.



Figure 1. Map of study area.

Results

The preliminary focus groups were organised and conducted in December 2002 by a team of researchers and students from the University of Guelph (Milburn & Mulley, 2003). The focus groups were located in Exeter, Markdale, and Belfountain, Ontario. The locations were chosen in an attempt to get feedback from individuals in rural, urbanising rural, and urbanised rural areas. The non-farm focus groups ranged from 12 to 16 people in size and were located centrally for participants. Four final focus groups from different areas of southern Ontario were conducted in 2006. Focus groups ranged from eight to 18 people in size and were located centrally for participants.

The survey was sent out to a total of 944 landowners in March 2006. The package included a cover letter detailing the purpose of the questionnaire and background on the rationale for the format and type of questions. A follow up mailing was sent in April 2006 which included a reminder letter and an additional copy of the questionnaire. A second follow up mailing was done two weeks later with another letter and copy of the questionnaire.

As of 16 July 2006, of the 944 individuals who were sent surveys, 72% ($n=676$) either returned the questionnaire or contacted the researcher to request removal from the mailing list. Seventy-six questionnaires were not completed as a result of individuals being deceased or having moved, which yielded an adjusted return rate of 74.5% ($n=560$). Removing the farmers from the respondents yielded a group composed of 476 individuals.

Closed-ended questions were pre-coded to retain detail, as categories are easily combined during the data analysis process (Babbie, 1973). The data were then inputted into SPSS 13.0, a statistical analysis program, to allow statistical analyses to be conducted. Summary statistics were provided for demographic, ordinal, interval and open-ended data, and more complex analyses performed as required. Bivariate statistical analyses, such as tests of significance and measures of association, multivariate regressions and ANOVA were also run as appropriate to attempt to identify relationship direction, strength, and response bias.

Analysis of the focus group results occurred in several ways:

- Results were examined by group, to identify differences which seemed to reflect geographic location;
- Terms, phrases, issues or comments which were frequently mentioned in a number of the focus groups were identified;
- Evaluative exercises using 'voting' were used to identify priorities in the group, resulting in ranked lists;
- Discursive issues which were identified and explored at length by the participants were identified;
- Non-verbal communication cues which suggest conflict or intensity of position were matched to topics under discussion, and examined in light of the scope of the issue.

Open-ended questions were coded through the process of content analysis. A sample of 25% of the returned questionnaires were chosen and categories were developed based on answers provided in the sample by two independent researchers. All of the remaining questionnaires were then coded based on those categories. Open-ended categories with fewer than five responses (1%) were coded as 'other'.

The focus group and open-ended questions from the questionnaire were examined using an inductive structure, and results emerged from the data collected rather than taking the form of deductive tests. The data were entered into a word processing program. In the first level of the analysis, every response was coded as a discrete category. Some of the themes in the initial discrete coding process were applicable to only a small number of responses. A second level of coding involved developing a series of groupings one level more abstracted in which related codes were subcategorised, for example, 'elm' and 'oak' were grouped as 'trees'. For most questions, this provided sufficient consolidation to allow the researchers to identify trends in responses across questions and between the focus group and questionnaire responses. To understand complex issues such as why people chose to live in rural areas, greater generalisation was required. Discussions with the second coder and two outside researchers ensued, and the grouping categories were identified. These 'third level' categories are specified in the tables (see Tables 1, 2, 6 and 7 for examples). At this 'third level', themes within and between questions became evident. For the 'choose to buy' question (Table 2), the third level categories resulted in 32 categories with response numbers ranging from 5 to 97. For this question, the 'location (proximity to town, hospital, natural amenities, etc.)' category received 97 responses, the 'easy financing/inexpensive/low taxes' category received 78 responses, and the 'size/condition/quality of trees/forests/woodlots' category received 70 responses.

Table 1. Why did you choose to live in the rural countryside?

Response	Rank
Peace and quiet	1
Close to nature/live in natural environment	2
Born and/or raised in the country	3
Open space	4
Don't like the city	5
Rural lifestyle/quality of life/rural way of life	6
Birds and wildlife	7
Privacy/solitude	8
Healthier/cleaner air and water	9
Proximity to recreation/walk on property	10

Table 2. Why did you choose to buy your particular piece of land?

Response	Rank
Location – proximity to town, hospital, natural amenities etc.	1
Easy financing/inexpensive/low taxes	2
Size/condition/quality of trees/forests/woodlots	3
Family farm/in family for generations/inheritance/personal history with the property	4
Architecture/age of buildings/condition of buildings/design of buildings/potential for construction of buildings	5
Water/river/lake	6
Beauty/aesthetics/view/scenery	7
Access to employment/close to work	8
Can have more land/property was large	9
Privacy/solitude	10

The following sections consolidate results from the focus groups and questionnaire. Statistics reflect the questionnaire results only. Focus group results were used to expand, explain, inform, and at times contrast, with the questionnaire results.

Study Respondents

Respondents were 27% female and 73% male.² Respondents ranged in age from 21 to 90, with an average age of 59. The average age of the male respondents was 61, while the average for females was 54. The respondents were 13% more likely to have graduated from high school and 21% more likely to have graduated from college or university than the general population of Ontario. Household size ranged from one to six, with an average of 2.5. Survey respondents were less than two percent visible minorities, with 85.2% identifying themselves as either Canadian or Western European. The study median income was between \$70,001 and \$80,000, which is consistent with Ontario's median family income of \$79,697. Respondents had owned their land for over 19 years on average, with a median of 17 years. Where residences were not on the property, they ranged from less than one to 400 km away, with an average of 84 km.³

Motivations for Rural Living and Land Ownership

The survey asked both why people chose to live in the rural area and why they chose their particular piece of land. The responses to these questions were very different (Tables 1 and 2). The 'choose to live' question focused on experiential qualities such as quiet, naturalness, openness, privacy, and cleanliness. Other key responses addressed history with the property or area, and rural lifestyle. In contrast, people chose to buy their properties for very practical reasons: location, cost, availability and quality of resources, and size. Aesthetics were the other key consideration; purchase was motivated by the beauty or appeal of the architecture or view. The only motivation which was prioritised as part of both decision-making processes was privacy and solitude.

The majority of study participants identified multiple reasons for their decision to live in the rural area; few identified only one motivation. Of those that did provide only one category of response to this question, the most popular sole responses were 'rural lifestyle', 'born in the country' and 'don't like the city'. This result would suggest that for some people the rural lifestyle, history with the area, or dislike of urban areas were such strong motivations that they overshadowed any secondary considerations, while for those with less strong primary motivations, an aggregate of personal benefits such as peace and quiet, and proximity to nature and open space motivated their decision. These characteristics translate into specific spatial qualities such as the relationship between the home and the surrounding landscape and preferences for secluded natural areas such as woodlots and hilltops.

The responses to the questions suggest that the motivations for moving to the country and for buying land are very different: moving to the country seems to be an experiential and quality of life decision, while selecting a piece of land is a more pragmatic process of weighing location and cost. Also notable is the importance of non-visual qualities when choosing to live in the rural area, while visual qualities become important when considering a specific portion of land (Table 3).

According to the literature, new landowners are moved by conserving the land for the future, ecological restoration, and the "desire to move from advocacy to

Table 3. Comparison of responses to 'choose to live' and 'choose to buy' questions

	'Choose to live ...'	'Choose to buy ...'
1	Peace and quiet	Location (proximity to town, hospital, natural amenities, etc.)
2	Close to nature	Cost
3	Born and/or raised in the country	Quality of trees
4	Open space	Family farm
5	Don't like the city	Character of architecture
6	Rural lifestyle	Water
7	Birds and wildlife	Beauty or aesthetics
8	Privacy and solitude	Access to employment
9	Healthier/cleaner air and water	Property was large
10	Proximity to recreation	Privacy and solitude

practical demonstration” (Warren, 2002, p. 5). These motivations were expressed by study participants as ‘birds and wildlife’, ‘care or manage nature’, and tree-related responses. As such, the desire to move to ‘practical demonstration’ by physically managing their landscape was a primary response, but personal benefits resulting from the natural environment (such as peace and quiet, open space and proximity to nature) were also primary considerations (Figures 2 and 3) (refer also to Milburn, 2006, 2007).

Of the motivations identified (Table 3), the only reasons which were in the top 10 of both lists were ‘born and/or raised in the country’/‘family farm’ and ‘privacy and solitude’. ‘Born and/or raised in the country’ is a response which reflects the ongoing importance of family and affective ties to not only the rural area in general, but more importantly to specific landscapes. As stated by one participant,

I would rather be out in the bush than anywhere else. My great grandfather and grandfather farmed the place till 1973 when it started to go back to forest. In 1984 my mother took over and paid the tax till I started to mangle it by planting

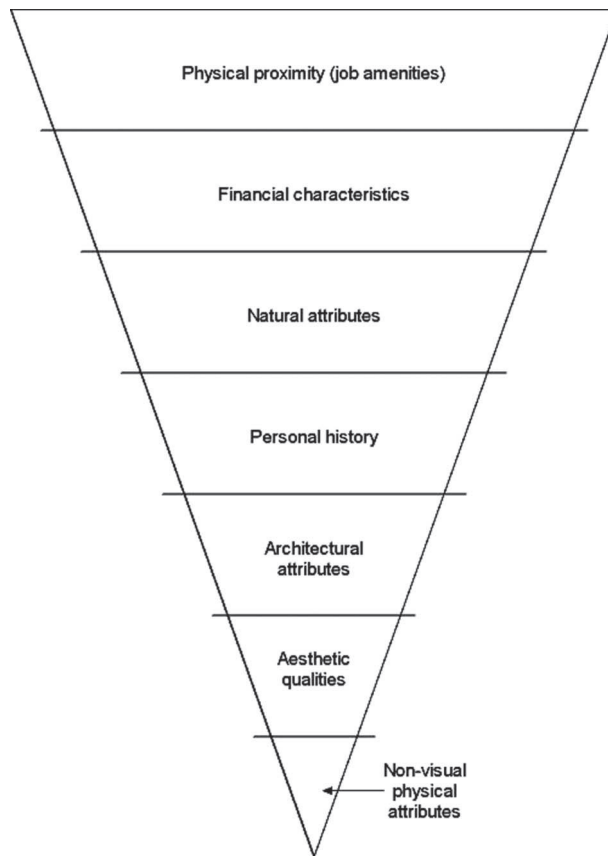


Figure 2. Motivations for land selection.

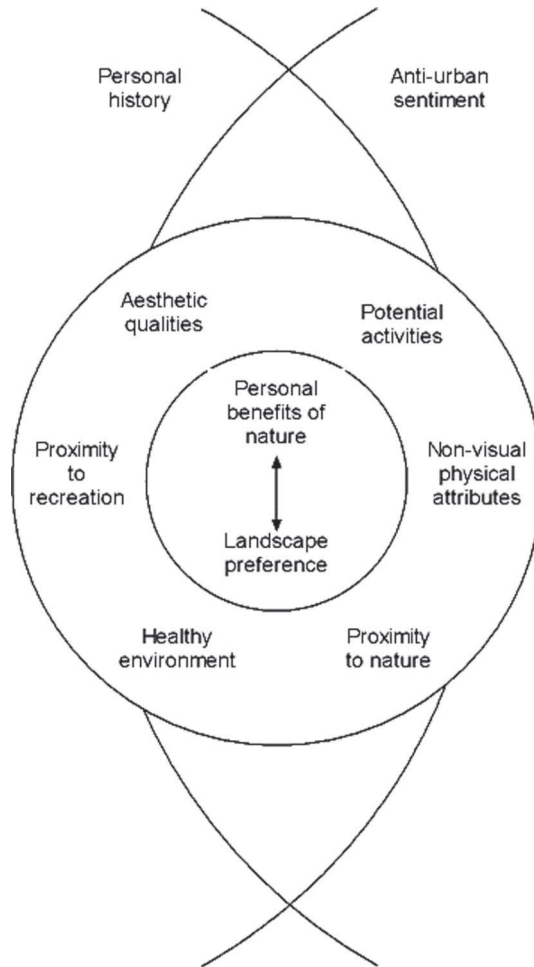


Figure 3. Motivations for rural living.

trees. Then when she passed in 2002, I have continued to bring it back to forested land as it was in 1845. I have the history of owners back to then.

The rural aesthetic is a consideration in the decision to purchase a property. While this aesthetic is partially based on the natural landscape (trees, water, topography, etc.), it is also based in the distinct rural agrarian landscape: the family farm and the associated agricultural fields and ditches. Farms are a preferred landscape because they display visual order (Riley, 1993), cues to care (Nassauer, 1995), patterns (Alexander *et al.*, 1977), and maintained roadsides and channels (Ryan, 1998).

Favourite Place

One question asked about the landowner's favourite place on their property. Favourite places were predominantly natural areas or house-based areas with views

to the outdoors. Study participants identified tree areas such as woodlots or forests and water areas such as ponds, lakes, rivers, or waterfronts. The house, deck, porch and veranda were important responses which reflect the importance of home and its ties to the surrounding rural landscape (Tables 4 and 5). The second part of the question addressed why that place was chosen: favourite places were preferred because of their restorative benefits, aesthetic qualities, and connections to natural areas, animals and birds. Other considerations included variety, non-visual sensory stimulus, recreational benefits, and visual evidence of personal effort.

The above results are notably consistent with the responses to the question where respondents identified ‘the heart of [their] property’ as the:

- Woodland, bush and trees;
- House;
- Water (ponds and streams);
- Land;
- Garden.

This result would suggest that emotional connection and visual quality are linked. Important visual qualities are often related to the rhythms of nature: the weather, changing seasons, and the evidence of change and evolution resulting from growth.

Table 4. What is your favourite place on your rural property?

Response	Rank
Woodlot/bush/forest/plantation	1
Pond/waterfront/lake/river	2
On the deck and porch/veranda/patio	3
All of it	4
House/buildings	5
Topography/hilltop	6
Front/back yard/playground	7
Garden	8
Wetland/marsh	9
Clearing in the woods	10

Table 5. [What is your favourite place on rural property?] Why?

Response	Rank
Quiet/peaceful/relaxing	1
Beautiful/view/scenic	2
Wildlife/fish/birds	3
Connection to nature/natural	4
Variety/diversity	5
Recreation/hunting	6
Solitude/privacy	7
Sounds, smells, tactile qualities	8
Evidence of personal effort (legacy)	9
Trees	10

When asked ‘why?’, aesthetics, environmental function, emotional connection, and personal benefits such as restoration were identified by respondents. They articulate beauty; neatness; naturalness; environmental function; restorative qualities; and recreation (Table 6) as reasons for their choices. The importance of memories and historic associations is very important, especially for older respondents. As noted by study participants:

[I have] many fond memories of our children growing up here and our friends that we have had great times with here, [it is where] I write, eat, entertain family and friends, my memories bitter and sweet—come back to me.

My wife and I sat under it after we purchased the farm and talked about our future life and the children to come which is still our favourite memory along with searching for wildflowers in the first spring.

... My father’s ashes are scattered there and many of our animal friends are buried there.

The poetry of these responses reflects the importance of the emotional connection derived from extended interactions with a home landscape.

Responses to the ‘heart of my property’ question were notably similar to those to the ‘favourite place’ question. Tree areas, water, and spaces associated with the house were prioritised, with the garden and wetlands also being important. The ‘heart’ question also included the ‘view’ or ‘aesthetics’ of the property and the workshop or barn, whereas the ‘favourite place’ question included areas with topographic (hilltops, slopes, etc.) or experiential distinction (clearings, openings, etc.). Peace and quiet was a more important quality of ‘favourite places’ than of the ‘heart’ of the property, while functionality was a popular reason for identifying a location as the ‘heart’ (Table 7). Aesthetics, wildlife, connection to nature, and evidence of effort were common responses to both questions.

Responses to both the ‘heart’ and ‘favourite place’ questions support the importance of landscape preference. People prefer landscapes with trees and water, and aesthetic quality is crucial. Providing evidence of their effort undermines the

Table 6. The heart of my property is the ...

Response	Rank
Trees/forest/woodlot	1
House	2
Creek/pond/river/waterfront	3
Land	4
Garden	5
Wetlands	6
All of it	7
View/beauty/aesthetics	8
Location	9
Workshop/barn	10

Table 7. [The heart of my property is the ...] ... because ...

Response	Rank
Views/beauty/aesthetics	1
Wildlife/habitat/birds	2
Functionality/purposefulness	3
Home	4
Associated with past/memories/history	6
Result/proof/evidence of effort	7
Peace/quiet	8
Base/focal point/centre of activities	9
Restorative/stress release/tranquil	10
Closeness to nature (physical)	11

sense of helplessness which undermines continued effort (Kaplan, 2000). Spaces associated with the home are also important: associations with family, history, and activities provide the affective connection which supports ongoing efforts.

Discussion and Integration

This study differentiates between motivations for rural living and residence choice. Financial and location-related benefits motivate land purchases, but social benefits and connection to nature, as well as landscape qualities such as peace and quiet are the key motivations for rural living. Dueker *et al.* (1983) identified a desire for land which would permit land uses which were precluded by urban locations, though this motivation was of minor importance to this study's respondents. Elgin *et al.* (1974) and Goldstein (1976) propose that quality of life is becoming increasingly important under both categories, but these results demonstrate distinct differences between the two categories of choice (rural living and residence).

Lyons (1983), Strumse (1996), and Hull and Stewart (1995) have linked gender to differences in landscape preference. Hands (1999) and others propose that gender influences preference because it reflects differences in social learning and experience with the environment (Balling & Falk, 1982; Hands, 1999; Lyons, 1983; Mohai, 1992). Empirical research has been inconclusive, with a range of results from different types of landscapes (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Schahn & Holzer, 1990). The results of this study identify a very weak relationship between gender and landscape preference, with men preferring tree areas, and women showing a slightly higher preference for water areas.⁴

Several studies have demonstrated that age has an impact on landscape preference (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Buss's (1994) study demonstrates that those landowners between the ages of 30 and 50 were most interested in rarity and resource protection. Those landowners over 60 were more interested in long-term preservation as a result of family history and ties to the land (rather than environmental protection) (Buss, 1994). The results of this study provide only weak evidence of a relationship between age and landscape preference or issues of concern. The over 60 age group was more likely to claim either the house and other buildings or 'all of it' as their favourite places. They were also more concerned with long-term maintenance and 'passing it on'.

Low and Altman (1992) identify a series of ideas that are related to or derived from place attachment, including topophilia (Tuan, 1974), place identity (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983), sense of place (Chawla, 1992), and identity (Hummon, 1992). Stedman (2003) proposes that sense of place has three components: physical setting, activities which occur in the setting, and meanings and attachments (Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995; Shumaker & Taylor, 1983). When identifying the rationale for the choice of favourite place, people identified restorative (quiet, peaceful, relaxing) and aesthetic benefits (beautiful, scenic), with activities taking secondary prominence. Personal meaning was linked to evidence of effort and connection to the past, though the latter response was identified by less than 2% of respondents. Personal meaning may be a minor factor in attachment to the rural landscape for non-farm rural landowners. The literature suggests that meaning and attachment are the result of social ties (Eisenhauer *et al.*, 2000; Greider & Garkovich, 1994; Relph, 1976) and events (Tuan, 1974), and the preference for natural landscapes as a result of their restorative and aesthetic qualities may suggest a lack of connection between social relationships and the environment.

Aesthetics and restoration are of primary importance to the non-farm rural landowner. They move to rural areas because they preferred the maintained character of the landscape, with its evidence of human care (Nassauer, 1995) and intervention, and they believe that appearance reflects a healthier way of life. While natural areas are generally preferred, they must be ordered, uncluttered, and with some evidence of human involvement. The perceived restorative benefits of the natural environment result from a sense of safety in the landscape accompanied by personal reflection, a landscape with 'extent', separation from distraction, and natural materials (Kaplan *et al.*, 1998). These landowners link aesthetic character and personal restoration—"if it looks good, it is good for me". This connection is actualised by recreation—positive aesthetics encourage activity, and activity has physical and mental benefits.

For the most part, non-farm rural landowners have rejected Schauman's (1998) agrarianism in favour of ruralism, pastoralism, and emotional response. The idealised family farm has been largely replaced by a perception of the farmer as struggling, environmentally damaging, and economically focused, but the farm aesthetic is still valued. Ruralism's assumption that the rural quality of life is 'better' is clearly a primary motivator for non-farm rural living. Rural areas are seen as healthier (in spite of research which argues to the contrary), better for raising children, and safer. Pastoralism is reflected by the perception that rural areas are spaces of peace and quiet and natural beauty. These pastoralist attitudes encourage the identification of concern regarding issues such as weather and traffic in rural areas, in spite of the fact that these issues impact both urban and rural areas alike.

Conclusion

Non-farm rural landowners have a shared culture, with symbols that have become significant through shared experience (Foster *et al.*, 2003). Their culture is beyond the negative definition of 'not being farmers'. These are people who live in the rural area because they value certain intrinsic benefits. Results suggest that non-farm rural landowners prefer landscapes with trees and water, and landscape health, restorative

benefits, and aesthetic quality are crucial. Environmental qualities such as peace and quiet, solitude and open space, are central to their continued enjoyment of their properties. In contrast, people chose to buy their properties for very practical reasons: location, cost, availability and quality of resources, and size. For the most part, they want to contribute to the health of their environment, by participating in shaping its form, influencing its functioning, and impacting on its evolution (Milburn, 2006, 2007). Recreation and quality of life considerations such as reducing stress are primary motivations. Cultural practices such as mown lawns around the home, clearing deadwood, and mowing ditches remain indicators of good care, though this seems to be slowly changing. It is imperative that we not confuse motivations for rural living with motivations for purchasing land: the fundamental bases of these two decision-making processes are very different. At the large scale, this group will be motivated to preserve the characteristics that motivated their move to the rural area: environmental quality; personal well-being; and aesthetics. When facing issues closer to home, non-farm rural landowners will be motivated by personal concerns, with location and cost being foremost. They will see no conflict in working to see that farmland be preserved while demanding schools and hospitals be located in close proximity to their homes (without an accompanying increase in taxes).

Non-farm landowners are very concerned about farmland preservation (Burgess & Gold, 1992): they want to control the management and operations of farm properties, yet preserve the functionality and aesthetic of local farms because it was one of the motivations for their initial move to the rural area. Non-farmers are becoming increasingly dominant in the rural political arena as their numbers increase, and their time commitments often permit voluntary involvement. They tend to use this power to bolster or protect those aspects of the rural environment which supported their decision to move outside the city, which, ironically, results in a transition from an agricultural to an urban focus in the political arena. Issues such as nutrient management, chemical spraying, and controlled burns (among others) will be ever increasingly mandated by a non-farm population whose primary motivation is their quality of life and the perceived impact of certain activities on the environment, and compounded by urban perceptions of the land which discount farmers' traditional knowledge. These changes will increase the cost of operating farms, which will make our farms less economically viable.

As our technological society makes increasing demands on our rural environments, the intangible values and beliefs embodied by the landscape and its conservation will become increasingly more important. Understanding the relationship between the individual's perception of landscape and its inhabitants will provide insights into the qualitative valuation of various environmental elements. This understanding can provide insights into the motivations of rural landowners and inform directions for conservation planning and incentive program design. This design needs to move beyond an urban or development focus, and toward a more holistic and integrative understanding of rurality and its distinctive role in our society (Troughton, 1998).

Non-farm rural development has the potential to catastrophically impact on the sustainability of both our ability to feed the population and the health of our environment in general. For many reasons, this type of development is expected to

continue unabated in spite of restrictions on the creation of new non-farm lots in Ontario, and, while much research has addressed urban sprawl and its implications, little has examined the human component of this complex problem. Sustainable development of both our cities and our countryside necessitates an integrated approach to research which addresses non-farm rural landowners as the pioneers of sprawl. Research is needed which assesses development control tools such as Ontario's Greenbelt for their effectiveness. Historically, this type of tool has been used to constrain development and protect the countryside. This approach has met with mixed success as it provides physical constraints without addressing the socio-cultural issues which support unsustainable rural development.

Notes

1. One project stakeholder proposed a minimum size of 1.9 hectares (about 4 acres) because generally most properties larger than this size "are not totally landscaped/manicured", paved, etc. Most landowners with 4 acres will have at least some 'natural features' more than backyard habitat on their property." Because this definition would exclude many cottage owners, a smaller property size was adopted for this study.
2. Phone discussions with some respondents suggest that, given the nature of the survey, the male member of the household was the automatic choice for completion. This is likely a result of the type of survey, which focused on the land and land management decisions, which could be considered the responsibility of the husband or male head of household.
3. The focus group results were not treated as statistically representative, and as such, a statistically based analysis of their demographic characteristics was considered inappropriate. However, many of the focus group participants further participated in the study by completing the questionnaire. As a result, their demographic profile may be reflected by the questionnaire respondent profile.
4. "The case for demographic differences, such as the authors cite in relation to past studies that found differences between genders, is anomalous of the body of research as most landscape preferences studies find no such differences" (per article reviewer).

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