

**ME, MEAT, AND MO'TOWN: A MULTISENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY OF
MORRISTOWN, TENNESSEE**

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DEDICATION

To my lady- Kacie Brooke Wilson

Why did the chicken cross the road?

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ABSTRACT

The 20th century was a time of substantial change in American farming communities. Researchers have documented the environmental and community impacts of corporate-controlled food crop production and corporate-controlled beef and pork production and processing. Far less research focuses on either corporate-controlled poultry production or processing. This project aims at those gaps in the literature with an exploratory case study of the former family farming community of Morristown, Tennessee.

After analyzing literature on the characteristics that most distinguish family farming communities from corporate farming communities, I drew insights from the literature on sense of place and deployed the multisensory ethnography method. In this research strategy, not commonly used by sociologists, I used myself as a research instrument to collect and record my sensory experiences as I temporarily lived in Morristown. The method allowed me to investigate the sensory, emotional, and intellectual experiences of inhabiting a community that hosts two chicken processing facilities which shape individual quality of life. My research question is: how does sensory information affect quality of life in a community that hosts two corporate chicken processing plants?

For the analysis, I composed a poem that expresses my gestalt impression of quality of life, based on sensory information. I then developed personal narratives about my sensory experiences. I found that the sensory information I collected in Morristown influenced my everyday life and lived experiences. I concluded that the operations of chicken slaughterhouses and processing facilities negatively shaped three aspects of my quality of life: spatial arrangements, health and environmental issues, and the social fabric of the community.

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Prolegomenon

(with apologies to Rachel Carson)

There was once a farm community in rural America tucked between vibrant green hillsides where everything in existence resided together harmoniously. It was a pleasant place where the breeze drifted the smell of hay and fresh baked apple pie throughout the town. Red dirt roads lined with butterflies atop milkweed and daisies wove through the landscapes. Fresh water streams ran through forests of large maples and oaks.

The people lived in small houses where generations of their families had grown up. They lived a modest lifestyle in a community held together by commonalities and a cohesive unity of land, animal, and human. Families worked amongst one another cultivating their land, trading their goods (eggs, seeds, and animals), and sharing with each other hard-earned lessons. Only their acres of prosperous farm land that yielded fields of wheat and corn separated them.

Upon their land also sat beautiful red wooden barns that kept their animals warm and safe at night and during the frosty winters. Each day as the morning sun rose, the rooster perched on top of the wooden fence and crowed for all those who could hear. The farmers fired up the engines of their tractors as their herds of cows and sheep headed out to pastures to roam and graze. Amongst the wildflowers in the meadows tall strapping horses foraged the land, while broods of chickens clucked nearby scavenging the soil for bugs. The families enjoyed fresh eggs from their hens, creamy milk from their cows, and the ripe tomatoes and golden corn that the rich soil nurtured in their gardens and fields.

Then one day a strange cloud appeared over the community and everything began to change. A foul odor filled the air and swept throughout the town. The red dirt roads hardened and turned gray, while swarms of flies filled the ditches. In the forests, trees lay on the ground next to streams tainted green. On the farm weeds engulfed and splintered the wooden barns,

causing them to decay. Pastures filled with mucky lagoons of waste. The wildflowers lost their color and withered to the ground. Crops turned brown and perished.

There was an eerie stillness about the land. The rooster no longer crowed. The animals became sick and aggressive. None of them could bear their own weight to stand or walk. They lay inert in their own feces while being eaten alive by bugs. Cows lost their tails and chickens lost beaks, and then suddenly they just disappeared from sight.

Meanwhile, people had begun to get sick and angry. The air was too foul to breathe. Their eyes constantly burned, and they could hardly sleep at night. People were at a loss. They feared leaving their homes, locking themselves in their houses trying to escape whatever it was that was happening. Their seclusion made them unfamiliar with another, and new faces appeared all around. The people became poor and lost their land, and conflict spread throughout the community. It was no longer a pleasant place, but why? What had they done wrong? The community had in fact done nothing wrong. They were the unfortunate victims of something they did not control.

This story is of no particular place; however it possesses fragments that describe the unfortunate reality of family farming communities across America. It is just that, a story told so that readers can image the sensorial aspects of everyday life as they once were and now are for many different plants, animals, and humans alike. What has become of the landscapes, experiences, and quality of life of family farming communities? This study is an attempt to explain.

Chapter 1: The Research Problem

The prolegomenon's fable is a descriptive portrayal of the shift from family farming to corporate farming in America. Morristown in northeastern Tennessee is a place once known for its family farms. The town today is best known for the two poultry processing plants within the city limits that have been operated since 1999 by Koch Foods Inc, one of the nation's largest broiler companies. In 2007 Morristown residents filed a class-action lawsuit against Koch Foods for state law nuisance, trespassing, negligence, and inverse condemnation actions for the stench of rotting chicken, as well as for the violation of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. In a news article, residents describe a gagging stench of dead bodies, a powerful odor that induced vomiting, and a smell so potentate their eyes would burn (Davis, 2008). Other residents filmed sewer overflows and recorded clusters of flies swarming around the sewers. Morristown officials and Koch Foods attorneys settled their suit in a closed-door meeting that excluded residents and ignored their livelihood complaints.

American agriculture and rural life underwent a substantial transformation in the 20th century. Early in the century, agriculture was highly labor-intensive and consisted of a large number of small, diversified family farms in rural areas. Contemporary agriculture is concentrated in a small number of large, specialized farms in rural areas that are controlled, partly or wholly, by a handful of large transnational agribusiness corporations (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005). The research problem I address lies within this larger context.

Globalization and the Agricultural Transformation

The transformation of agriculture is a product of economic globalization, a process, accelerated since the 1950s, of corporate concentration and rapid increases in integration and interdependence of every level of economic market in the world. This global expansion of international capitalism has intensified the cross-border movement of services, capital, and

commodities including food products: “The cross-border trade in food commodities increased more than fivefold from 1961 to 2001” (Lambina & Meyfroidt, 2011). This process toward globally integrated markets created a corporate-controlled world food system that shapes the livelihoods of individual farmers.

The physical manifestations of corporate agriculture are well documented. Fields previously planted with diverse crops that maintain soil nutrients have been replaced with enormous fields of a sole crop that succeeds as a global food commodity but requires numerous chemical inputs. Farm animals no longer roam free in open green pastures, replaced by perhaps a thousand of genetically altered livestock crowded together indoors, barely able to move. No farmers collect eggs from hens comfortably housed in their coops. Workers in large plants use specialized procedures to slaughter and butcher livestock. Food production is no longer dependent on land and hands. How have these *physical* changes impacted human lives? How have the transformations of landscape altered community life?

A substantial body of research covers industrialized food crop production and its impacts on the environment, the toxic chemicals added to croplands, and associated public health issues. Industrialized meat production has garnered some attention from researchers and environmental activists, particularly spotlighting the living – and dying – conditions of the roughly ten billion cows and pigs raised annually in the United States. Far less research on livestock management focuses on poultry or poultry processing methods.

Poultry was the first livestock sector to undergo corporate production methods; and broiler chickens represent more than ninety-five percent of all animals slaughtered per year. Yet the literature *aside* from that on living conditions is scarce. Processing facilities that kill, butcher, cut, and package poultry for consumer preferences and distribution are as integral to corporate poultry production methods as are the feedlots where chickens are raised. Researchers of poultry

production have primarily investigated: the insufficient legal protection of chickens; the dangerous, gendered, and racialized working conditions of slaughterhouse and processing plant workers; and the environmental, health, and economic consequences of these operations.

In this project, I address these gaps in the literature with a case study of Morristown, Tennessee (Figure C1- 1), a former family farming community that now hosts two chicken processing plants.



Figure C1- 1. Morristown City Limit Sign

Mo'Town: The Case Study

This exploratory case study investigates some of the community impacts of Morristown's poultry slaughterhouse and processing operations. But, instead of examining the health or economic impacts of the facilities, I focus on the impacts on quality of life and well-being in the community. I draw from sensory studies to focus on the lived experiences of everyday life in

Morristown because our senses are a necessity for understanding our immediate environment. Perceptions are formed by our interpretations of the information we collect through our abilities to see, smell, hear, touch, and taste. Sensory studies examine the way sensory information is translated into perceptions of our communities, referred to as sense of place or sensed quality of place. Research indicates that our sense of place underscores quality of community life.

My story is established from my own sensory experiences of everyday life. Using myself as the research instrument, I conduct a multisensory ethnography in Morristown to identify the sensory, emotional, and intellectual experiences of inhabiting a community that is home to two poultry processing facilities. This method engages the senses for data collection and reaches beyond what is typically observed and measured in qualitative studies by “intertwining theory, experience, reflection, discourse memory and imagination” (Pink, 2009: 23). This method allows for a more in-depth analysis and reflective reconstruction of the meaning and nature of sensory experiences of ethnographic fieldwork. Furthermore, it permits the ethnographer to represent and communicate her participatory and embodied processes that led her to draw conclusions of sense of place and sensed quality of place.

With the use of multisensory ethnography in this study, I began with two broad research questions: How are the landscapes of corporate farming communities different from the landscapes of family farming communities? What are the sensory experiences of life in a corporate farming community?

Chapter 2: Corporate Livestock Operations

I begin the chapter with a comparison of family farming communities and corporate farming communities. Then, narrowing the focus, I describe livestock production methods under corporate control and present a literature review on the topic. With a further narrowing of my research focus, I end the chapter with a summary of the corporate-controlled poultry industry.

Comparison: Family Farming Communities and Corporate Farming Communities

With the Neolithic Revolution 10,000 years ago, humankind's food production methods of hunting and gathering gradually shifted to agricultural methods of domesticating certain plants and animals. This momentous transformation of food production dramatically changed the form of collective life from nomadic tribes to permanent settlements. Until the mid-20th century, most rural communities in the United States were built around small-scale, family-owned farms where the food was primarily consumed by the family and the community.

Family farming methods involved the growth of multi-crop fields and the maintenance of a small number of free-range livestock – typically cows, pigs, and chickens. Families worked the fields either by themselves or along with hired labor. Farmers took measures to reduce wastes and recycle what they could. For example, cow manure was spread on crops as a natural fertilizer. In many cases, farmers not only raised livestock, but also slaughtered and butchered their animals. They sold the meat to local grocers or retailers who then cut, the meat to consumers' preferences, packed, and distributed it to consumers.

The method of family farming not only provided the family's livelihood and contributed to the economic base of the community, but shaped community relationships and lifestyles. Family farm operations were complementary, rendering them and ecologically sound. These communities were once home to more than half the United States population, 22 million animals, and nearly half the United States work force (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005). On these farm

animals and humans lived and worked alongside one another to produce on average five different commodities per farm (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005). The consistency of farming methods assured that the quality of life in family farming communities.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the mechanization and specialization of farms has resulted in: a drastic decrease in the number of people working and living in farming communities; a decrease in the number of commodities per farm; and a 63 percent decrease in the overall number of farms. (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005). Meanwhile the average size of farms has increased by 67 percent (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005). Today agriculture and food related industries only provide 11 percent of United States employment (USDA, 2018). These changes have had the biggest impact on poor rural areas as well as areas associated with larger numbers of racial and ethnic minorities (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005).

Traditional family farming communities began to disappear by the 1970s as economic trends of corporate concentration and globalization emerged. A few large agribusiness corporations used horizontal and vertical integration to increase their power and control over the global food system. Under corporate control, food crop production was entirely separated from livestock production.

Corporate food crop production intensified with methods that used synthetic pesticides and fertilizers to increase crop yield per acre. Small farmers were unable to compete with agribusiness because of the extraordinarily high start-up capital required, and the number of family farms decreased drastically (Hendrickson, Heffernan, Lind, & Barham, 2008). The intensification of meat production was accomplished with methods that could raise large numbers of animals in relatively small confinements.

Methods of Impacts on Corporate Meat Production

Methods

The first stage in corporate meat production is raising the livestock – cows, pigs, and poultry. Roughly fifty billion livestock animals are raised every year for food. They are selectively bred for the most profitable characteristics (e.g. fast growth and meat quality). The pastures and barns once used for this stage have been replaced by confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs): thousands or more livestock are confined in large, overcrowded indoor facilities for most of their short lives. Synthetic hormones are administered to increase growth rates. Antibiotics are proactively given to the animals to prevent sickness and injuries caused by their crowded, stressful, and unsanitary living conditions in which they are raised.

In the second stage, livestock animals ready for slaughter are transported to slaughterhouses across the nation. They travel hundreds of miles crammed together in trucks (Figure C2-1) that expose them to extreme temperatures. Many animals acquire broken bones and life threatening injuries during loading and transportation. At the slaughtering facility, some animals remain in the truck containers, if more animals were delivered than the slaughterhouse can process in one day (Figure C2-2). Most of the animals are herded into the slaughterhouse by workers using chains and sticks to move them along.

Federal law requires that animals be stunned before slaughtering. In one technique, animals are shocked with an electric current that produces a grand mal seizure. An alternative technique is to use a pistol to shoot a metal rod through the animal's brain. Both techniques are immediately followed by the kill – workers cut the animals' throats. Dead or nearly-dead, the animals are then immersed in tanks of scalding water to soften their hides

Butchering is often accomplished at the slaughterhouse where workers hang the carcasses upside down by either shackling them with chains or suspending them on large hooks, slit open



Figure C2- 1. Koch Foods Truck of Chickens

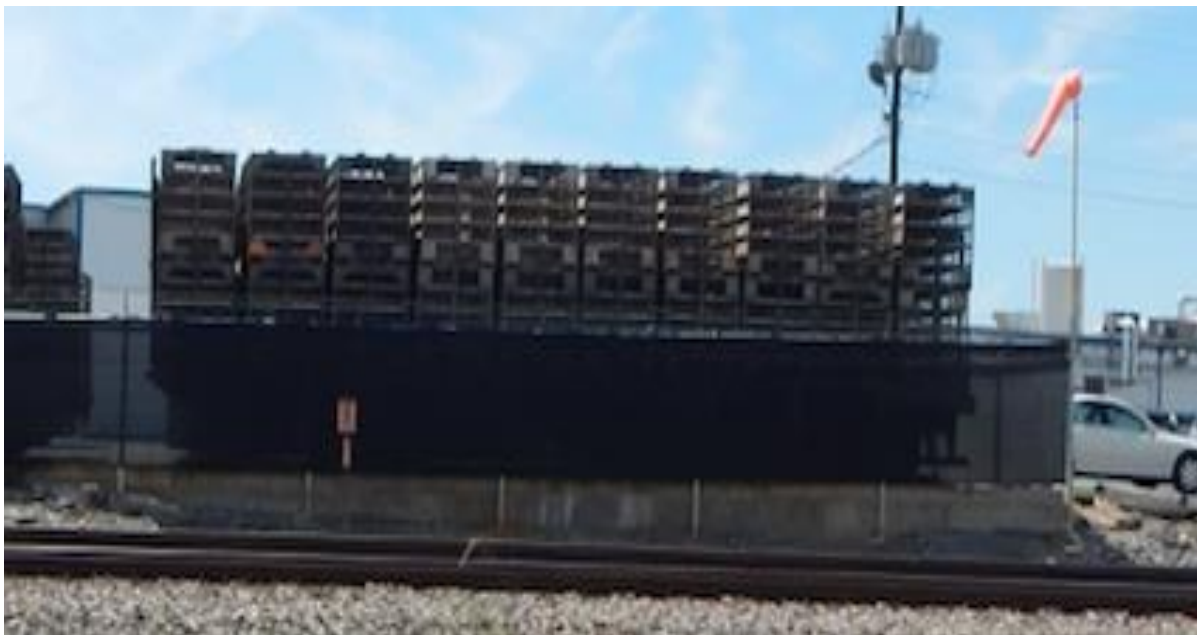


Figure C2- 2. Koch Foods Truck Trailers for Chickens

the body, and leave it to drain of blood. Then the carcass is skinned, eviscerated, and split in half. The innards, hooves, and horns are removed.

The third stage of production involves cutting, processing, and packaging the meat for distribution. The halved carcasses are moved to a facility with a factory floor where workers debone the carcass and chop it into specialized small cuts of meat. A United States Department of Agriculture employee inspects the meat for signs of disease, abscesses, and lesions. If approved, the meat is further processed to convert into products such as bacon or sausage links. The finished product is individually packaged, wrapped, boxed, and loaded back on to a distribution semi-truck. Meat is then circulated globally to distributors, wholesale and retail stores, and food service institutions.

Some livestock animals can be birthed, fully grown, and killed in six weeks. The transformation of a live animal into a specialized meat product takes less than thirty minutes (Rollin, 2003). In 2013, twelve states produced roughly two-thirds of total slaughtered meat (Frohlich, 2015). As the transformation to corporate livestock operations has spread, a substantial amount of research has accumulated. In the following section I review the literature on the impacts of meat production as they relate to animal, environmental, and human health.

Research on Meat Production and Its Impacts

Most of the research attention to corporate livestock operations focuses on the first stage of production – CAFOs – and their impacts. Researchers have documented CAFOs’ impacts on animal health and well-being, the environment, and human health

Animal Health and Well-being

Concerns from animal rights groups have encouraged researchers to investigate the health and well-being of animals during the time they are raised and slaughtered. Researchers in animal studies confirm that selective breeding, close confinement, and overcrowded facilities have

harmful and negative impacts on animal health (mental and physical): hundreds-of-thousands of animals are kept in containers that render them unable to turn around, stand, lie down, or walk (Imhoff, 2010). Researchers report that, to avoid aggressive behaviors, animals are dismembered- their tails and beaks removed (Duncan et al., 1989; Horrigan et al., 2002). During the raising transporting, and slaughtering, data show that animals suffer from immediate and enduring pain, mental strain, severe physical deformities, broken bones, lameness, heart problems, and anemia (Adcock & Finelli, 1995; Roberston, 2006).

Environmental Impacts

Environmentalists have added to the literature with research directly related to the impacts that raising and slaughtering animals in this fashion have on ecosystems. Data show that CAFOs and corporate livestock slaughterhouses produce sewage at rates equivalent to most large cities and are responsible for approximately half of today's global warming gases (McKibben, 2010; Steinfeld et al., 2006). Other sources of substantial wastes include: dead chickens, manure, offal, deforestation, habitat fragmentation, pasture degradation, soil erosion and contamination, airborne pollution, and water pollution (Figure C2- 3) in the United States (Croall, 2012; Gisolfi, 2017; Lang, et al., 2009; Reynolds, Mena, Gerba, 2008).

Potential Human Health Impacts

Adverse human health concerns of CAFOs have attracted significant scholarly attention as well (e.g. Avery et al., 2004; Bullers, 2005; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017; Cole et al., 2000; Donham, 2000; Donham et al., 2002; Iowa State University & University of Iowa, 2002; National Academy of Sciences, 2002; Kilburn, 1997; Merchant et al., 2005; Mirabelli et al., 2006; Reynolds et al., 1997; Schenker et al., 1998; Schiffman et al., 1995, 2000; Thu, 1996, 2002; Thu et al., 1997; Wing & Wolf 2000). Researchers affiliated with multiple scientific disciplines have confirmed associations between proximity to CAFO operations and



Figure C2- 3. Poison in the Tap Water Sign

higher respiratory problems (e.g. bronchitis, mucus membrane irritation, and acute respiratory distress syndrome) (Bullers, 2005; Thu et al., 1997; Wing & Wolf, 2000), social-psychological stress (Strofferahn, 2006), as well as digestive and sleep disturbances (Campagna et al., 2004; Schiffman et al., 1996). Schlosser depicts how CAFOs impact his experiences:

“YOU CAN SMELL Greeley, Colorado, long before you can see it. The smell is hard to forget but not easy to describe, a combination of live animals, manure, and dead animals being rendered into dog food [...] Other can’t stop thinking about the smell, even after years; it permeates everything, gives them headaches, makes them nauseous, interferes with their sleep” (2001: 149).

Researchers also provide evidence that workers at slaughterhouse and processing plants suffer financial, physical, and psychological hardships (Dillard, 2008; Eisnitz, 1997; Fink, 1998). The data show that these workers experience: injuries and illnesses at rates that are twice the nation average (Nowell, 2000); neurobehavioral issues such as aggression, confusion, tension, and sadistic behaviors (Eisnitz, 1997; Pollan, 2006; Richards et al., 2013; Schiffman et al., 1995; Williams, Boyd, Cascardi, & Poythress, 1996); and mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, and a decrease in empathy (Avery et al., 2004; Campagna et al., 2000; Gatson & Harrison, 2012; Schiffman et al., 2000; Schusterman, 1992; Thu et al., 1997). Slaughterhouses workers also suffer higher rates of drugs and alcohol abuse associated with increased rates of familial violence and child abuse (Artz, Orazem, & Otto, 2007; Dillard, 2008; Richards, Signal, & Taylor, 2013).

Community Impacts

How has the shift from family farming to corporate farming impacted residents’ everyday lived experiences of their communities? Family farming communities that have experienced a

corporate overthrow are now characterized by researchers as impoverished, rootless, and socially disorganized rural ghettos that lack a rich civic fabric (Schlosser, 2001). Empirical evidences establishes that corporate farming methods impact community well-being, quality of life, and social fabric. So substantial is the accumulated evidences that “almost all sociological studies begin with the working hypothesis that large scale industrial farms will have adverse community effects” (Strofferahn, 2006: 11).

Numerous government and academic studies of various regions of the United States associate CAFOs with two major detrimental impacts on communities: socioeconomic well-being impacts (e.g. Durrenberger and Thu, 1996; North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, 1999; Seipel et al., 1998; Seipel et al., 1999; Thompson and Haskins, 1998) and impacts to the community social fabric (e.g. Constance, 2008; Constance & Tuinstra, 2005; Foltz, et al., 2002; Gisolfi, 2017; Gomez and Zhang, 2000; Jackson-Smith & Gillespie, 2005; Kleiner, 2003; McMillan & Schulman, 2003; North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, 1999; Reynolds, Mena, & Gerba, 2008; Schiffman et al., 1998; Schlosser, 2001; Strofferahn, 2006; Thompson and Haskins, 1998; Whittington & Warner, 2006; Wilson et al., 2002; Wing & Wolf, 1999, 2000; Wright et al., 2001).

Various research methods have been used to analyze the impacts of CAFOs on their host communities. Case studies have analyzed the direct and indirect effects of CAFOs in singular and multi-community sites (e.g. Constance & Tuinstra, 2005; McMillan & Schulman, 2003; North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, 1999; Whittington & Warner, 2006; Wright et al., 2001). These researchers associate CAFOs with population changes (Schlosser, 2001); increased crime rates and civil suits (North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, 1999); a deterioration of relationships, increased community conflicts, neighborly tensions and less political decision-making (McMillan & Schulman, 2003); a more stressful

environment and less neighborly relations (Constance & Tuinstra, 2005; Whittington & Warner 2006); and less involvement in community and social life attributed to the inability to enjoy ones property due to of the deterioration of landscapes and odor in the community (Wright et al., 2001).

Macro-social accounting designs have been used to compare and analyze the consequences of CAFOs in counties, townships, and states over time (e.g. Durrenberger and Thu, 1996; Wilson et al., 2002). These studies find that host communities of CAFOs have lower relative incomes for some members of the community, income inequalities, and higher rates of poverty (Durrenberger and Thu, 1996). Other researchers provide evidence that CAFOs are linked to higher poverty and to areas with higher rates of minority populations (Wilson, et al., 2002).

Regional economic impact models have been used to analyze regional, state, county, and city employment and income impacts of CAFOs (e.g. Foltz et al., 2002; Gomez & Zhang, 2000; Thompson and Haskins, 1998). Researchers verify that decreased retail trade, fewer local jobs, and lower total community employment ultimately result in adverse social fabric impacts for host communities (Foltz et at., 2002; Gomez and Zhang, 2000). Additionally, hedonic price analysis of host communities of CAFOs show evidence of a reduction in property values.

Surveys have been used to gather, compare, and analyze data directly from individuals or families concerning social and economic well-being of host communities and non-host communities (e.g. Jackson-Smith & Gillespie, 2005; Kleiner, 2003; Seipel et al., 1999; Wing and Wolf, 1999, 2000). Researchers find that CAFO communities experience increased social conflict (Seipel et al. 1999); a deterioration of relationships (Jackson-Smith & Gillespie, 2005); and less social and community involvement due to increased health issues and the obstruction of enjoyment in personal and public spaces (Kleiner, 2003; Wing & Wolf, 2000). Furthermore, in

these communities data also shows a widening in economic and social gaps (Strofferahn, 2006; Wing & Wolf, 2000).

Sensing Farming Communities

Humans' quality of life is fundamentally shaped by the information we collect through our senses and interpret through our cultural lenses (Bush et al., 2001; Chow & Healey, 2008; Lima, 2004; Lima & Marques, 2005; Proshansky et al., 1983; Raymond et al., 2010; Soini, 2001; Stedman, 2003; Wakefield et al., 2001). My most vivid recollections of my family's frequent visits to my aunt and uncle's family farm center on the sights, smells, sounds, and tastes of farm life.

The drive into the countryside follows a winding creek that flows peacefully, parallel to the highway. The scene constantly changes from dark forest, to large corn field, to green pasture. When the paved road ends, I hear the gravel loudly pelting against our car and, even as my dad slows the car, I hear him say the gravel could "do some serious damage" if we went any faster. The slow drive allows me a panoramic view out the windows. Through the cloud of dust kicked up by the road, I admire the sight of beautiful horses roaming in their pastures on neighboring farmland. I watch and laugh at the hostile pet goose, squawking and honking as it chases our car. I scout for deer that live in the damp woods. Except for small hills, the land is flat, so flat that I feel I could see for miles if only my vision would allow it. Now I see the fence where my uncle's land begins. Cows gather at the creek for water.

The car stops and the farm dogs rush to greet us, barking loudly. My aunt sits on the porch and raises her glass of sweet tea in greeting. When I exit the car, I'm intoxicated by the smell of hay. The barn cat says hello by wrapping her warm body around my ankles and I stroke her silky fur. I hear my uncle's tractor churning in the fields. As that sound fades, I hear cows mooing, chickens clucking, pigs grunting.

Later, I bottle-feed the precious newly born baby calf. I watch my cousins milk the adult cows, the milk forcefully pelting the bucket. I greet the hens as they're scavenging for food. Each hen has a distinct personality. I avoid the mean old rooster. My cousins and I gather the hens' eggs to place into a basket on my aunt's table for breakfast tomorrow.

Similar to my memories sometimes, a researcher's statement suggests sensory responses to CAFOs and slaughterhouses. In their study of chicken CAFOs, Constance & Tuinstra (2005: 50) state, "the most immediate experience or nuisance from a poultry farm is the smell." From inside a poultry slaughterhouse, Striffler notes "the combination of sounds, sights, and smells

that we experience next is overwhelming” (2005: 113). Gray’s observation indicates that sensory experiences of chicken processing plants are similar to experiences of CAFOs: “no amount of bleach would obliterate the scent of the plant” (2014: 1).

It seems that research on residents’ lived experiences in communities that host corporate livestock operations would benefit from taking sensory experiences into account. In the next chapter, I turn to the literature on sensory experiences.

Chapter 3: Sense of Place

I begin this chapter with an introduction to the literature of senses studies to discuss their crucial role in the creation of human perceptions of environments and situations. I present the theoretical and methodological uses of the concepts of sense of place and sensed quality of place. This chapter concludes with the analytical framework of this study and introduces how Koch Foods, one of the nation's largest broiler production companies, made its way to Morristown, Tennessee.

The Senses

The senses are often taken for granted although they are crucial to every living organism in their own unique way. The cues we receive from each of our senses form the basis for our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Our lives are informed by the intertwining of our senses as they collaborate with one another and with other elements of the sensorium within our brains (Groeger, 2012). Senses are data collectors that our brains register and interpret. They help orientate us to our environments and help “mediate the relationships between self and society, mind and body, idea and object” (Bull, Gilroy, Howes, and Kahn, 2005: 5), and are therefore important in informing perceptions relating to selfhood, culture, and place (Low, 2012).

Vision has historically been considered the dominant sense. Sight enables a differentiation of objects in the world around us. What we see creates and informs us of different histories, cultures, personal identities, and narratives (Loeske, 2007). Vision is therefore persuasive and influential in the production and reproduction of sociocultural factors and the organization of human space (Tuan, 1977: 16). Sight defines and reinforces space and time (Ebbensgaard, 2015; Yi'En, 2013) as well as race, gender, age, and class (Pink, 2007). Other senses frequently communicate and inform one another in a way that alters or influences what

we see. To put it differently, visual information is not obtained through sight alone (Groeger, 2012). The visual dimensions of everyday life are not independent from their materiality or other sensory qualities (Pink, 2011). Humans experience life in multisensory environments where the senses constantly perform complex interactions and engage with one another to communicate our experiences to our brains (Groeger, 2012; Ingold, 2000; Pink, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011).

Sound and noise are prominent features in society, as space is never truly void of either (Hemsworth, 2015). Vision influences what we hear, but high levels of noise can also alter human visualizations and perceptions (Goins & Hagler, 2007; Ruiz & South, 2018). This is because the human perception of sound is processed simultaneously with visual information. When people lose their sight, often their sense of hearing is heightened, allowing them to orient themselves and connect with their surroundings (Groeger, 2012). Sounds and noise can also trigger harmful psychological and physical reactions such as annoyance, stress, sleep disturbance, and cardio-vascular disease (Goins & Hagler, 2007; OECD, 1997).

What we hear has a close relationship with odor (Ruiz & South, 2018). Odors and sounds are closely linked to emotion and memory (Marshall 2009). Familiar smells and sounds can assist with loss of memory by triggering feelings and recollections (Groeger, 2012). Much like noise, odor is a highly elusive social and historic phenomenon that has physical, psychological, and effects (Classen et al., 2003; Schiffman et al., 1994). Odors can impact mood, health, well-being, enforce social structure, and effect human social interactions (Classen et al., 2003; Donham et al., 2007; Schiffmann et al., 1995; Schiffmann et al., 2000; Schiffman & Williams, 2005; Schlosser, 2012).

Anthropologists and geographers were amongst the first to analyze the senses to better understand cognitive processes (Classen 1993; Howes, 1991; Paterson, 2007). More recently qualitative scholars have begun investigating the complexities of lived sensory experiences. The

majority of sensory-oriented ethnographers have explored the senses to better understand sociohistorical and cultural specificities (Allen-Collinson & Hockey 2011; Low, 2012; Vannini, Waskul, & Gottschalk 2011). The senses have been taken into consideration by scholars to analyze racial thought and racism (Smith, 2006); the power of the state (Neocleous, 2011); incarceration (Hemsworth, 2015); colonization, dehumanization, the occupation of the senses in violent aesthetics (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2017). Others have used sensory experiences to explore interactions between social subjects and their environment (Allen-Collinson & Leledaki, 2015), and in rights regarding expression and protection (Ruiz & South, 2018).

Sense of Place and Sensed Quality of Place

Places are central to human ways of being in the world. Places are dimensionless geographic locations comprised of natural landscapes, built environments, and human experiences and histories. Relationships with places share a similar importance to relationships with people (Relph 1976). They assist in producing and reproducing social practices and phenomena that shape human experiences. Sense of place examines how people experience, use, and or understand places in their everyday lives (Williams & Stewart, 1998).

Theorists portray sense of place as a human need for a method of perception that can be shared by a collective group or can be a distinct perception for an individual (Lewis, 1979; Nairn, 1965). Since the late 1960s, researchers have demonstrated considerable connections among space, place, and experiences. American geographers were amongst the first to evaluate sense of place through a phenomenological approach (e.g. Relph, 1976; Steele, 1981; Tuan, 1974). Architects have used it to inform urban development and design (e.g. Jive'n & Larkham, 2010; Ouf, 2001). Psychologists have used it to understand cognitive thought processes in relation to one's environment and how this information shapes attitudes and behaviors (e.g. Altman & Low, 1992; Canter, 1977; Proshansky et al., 1983; Stedman, 2002; Twigger-Ross &

Uzzell, 1996). Additionally, environmental scientists (e.g. Stokowski, 2002; Williams & Stewart, 1998) and sociologists (e.g. Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Greider & Garkovich, 1994) have applied sense of place as a social constructionist perspective to explore the values, symbols, and meanings found in landscapes.

Sense of places has also been used to evaluate the subjective human reactions to place (Wilkie & Roberson, 2010), human conceptualizations of place (Shamai & Kellerman, 1985), place identities (Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Shamai 1991), human well-being and health (Brown & Raymond, 2007; Proshansky et al., 1983), meaning, and attachment (Relph, 1976; Stedman, 2003; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), as well as knowledge and emotion (Jackson, 1994; Shamai & Kellerman, 1985; Simmons & Walker, 2004; Steele, 1981; Williams, 2007; Rose 1995). What has broadly been found is that subjective experiences that are generated in social life are used by humans to make sense of and create meanings for places, ourselves, and for others. The human senses influence and direct human experiences, perceptions, and the development of cognitive understandings of place (Wilkie & Roberson, 2010). Feld (1996: 91) suggests, “as place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place.”

Sensed quality of place stems out of the sense of place literature. Sensed quality of place is the perception of a place based on the senses (Lynch, 1960). For Relph (2008:316), a sense of place “is a synesthetic faculty that combines sight, hearing, smell, movement, touch, imagination, purpose, and anticipation.” The human perception is how one begins to know a place. Human bodies belong to places (Casey, 1996) and, as people experience places via the senses, their experiences mediate their sociolocation within place (Gieryn, 2006). Sensed quality of place is gathered by these embodied experiences and assists in the determination of sense of place.

Sensed quality of a place and one's well-being are interrelated by human physical processes such as breathing and hearing that are mediated by sensory cues (Lynch, 1960). In everyday life, sensory feelings connect a person to her surroundings by positively enabling social connections and opportunities that are important to health and well-being. But sensory feelings can also evoke a negative reaction that impacts quality of life (Tuan 1975). Stedman (2002: 564), refers to sensed quality of place as the "judgment of the perceived quality of a certain setting," in relation to physical characteristics. Lynch explains sensed quality of a place involves: "...what one can see, how it feels underfoot, the smell of the air, the sounds of bells and motorcycles, how patterns of these sensations make up the quality of places, and how that quality affects our immediate well-being, our actions, our feelings, and our understandings... What is sensed has fundamental and pervasive effects on well-being" (1976: 8-9).

Barbour (2016: 127), states "sensory encounters with place, sites and landscape have the potential to stimulate new and deeply felt engagements with local places..." The sights, sounds, smells, tastes and feelings that define human experiences and the spaces and places in which they occur have social and cultural importance. The exploration of the senses in relation to place has the ability to provide an important context for understanding the lived experiences of others. Although the presence of sensory stimuli is frequently noted in ethnographic studies, they have rarely been investigated. The sense of touch and taste for example has been entirely neglected in considerations of human experiences and the epistemology of sense perception.

Analytical Framework

Food is a basic necessity for the survival of all living organisms. How humans obtain, grow, raise, and make this key resource for sustaining life has been thoroughly investigated. Most notably, researchers have taken to studying the legal but unsettling deviant forms of manipulation and exploitation of crop and livestock food production. My research process,

elaborated in the following chapter, led me to take an explicit interest in the discussions of livestock production for food.

In the previous sections, I reviewed this literature and highlighted the fundamental characteristics of family farming communities and corporate livestock operations. The majority of this literature focuses on the CAFOs and slaughterhouses and concerns related to animal well-being, environmental degradation, and the human health issues. A much smaller literature examines the community impacts of corporate livestock operations and the studies tend to focus specifically on CAFOs. I offer two major observations as takeaways from my review of the literature.

Observations on the Literature

First, I noticed that the literature on family farming details the characteristics of these communities at great length. I suggest that the depth of the literature is attributable to the accessibility of these communities and this method of food production. As a reader, I could imagine and picture the landscapes of family farms and the methods of crop and livestock production that family farmers performed. I suspect that many of us buy and consume our food while taking for granted that it was grown and raised in accordance with this idealized conception of a farm where all parts work together cohesively, creating a sustainable ecosystem. These images of family farming communities are what we see on our grocery store walls. We teach our children about family farming communities and livestock animals and read them children's nursery rhyme books that describe how the animals look and sound.

Missing from the literature on corporate livestock operations is the type of imagery that family farming communities evokes in us. With corporate livestock operations, we lose images of animals, of human faces, and of community. Corporate methods are inaccessible, hidden from view in large industrial buildings surrounded by barbed wire chain-link fences with security

surveillance. The literature schools us with countless words on thousands of pages describing harms to animals, environmental degradation, and human health problems. But the lack of some visual, physical manifestations of corporate livestock operations that are readily accessible to people makes it unlikely people will take serious interest in the problems associated with the methods: out of sight, out of mind. As a result, we no longer understand how we get our food or what effects that food production may have on the quality of life in our communities.

My second observation on the literature is the paucity of research on the processing operations of livestock animals. In family farming communities, this stage was primarily done at small scale and off-site from farms. Since livestock management on family farms produced relatively few environmental and human health impacts, processing methods were largely overlooked.

Animals at the processing stages of meat production are already dead. Perhaps that is the reason that scholars concerned with animal and human well-being apparently take no interest here. The majority of the research focused on processing plants comes from those with a specific focus on plant workers.

My observations led me to focus this study on the impacts of corporate poultry processing operations on their host communities. I was curious specifically about the everyday experiences of living in such a community. Life involves a continual change and growth that requires basic activities, means, and reproduction. Humans obtain the essential features for life from biological, social, and environmental realms; therefore, quality of life is multidimensional, referring to both experiences and living conditions. The term is, however, innately subjective and ambiguous. The way that I define the quality of life may be significantly different from the way others do. For that reason I feel that it is important to clarify my interpretation and use of it.

I define quality of life to mean the degree to which individuals and or groups are: mentally, emotionally, physically, and socially healthy; comfortable in the environment in which they live; capable of participating in common activities; and able to enjoy everyday experiences. Our senses are basic to our perceptions and correlate directly with our mental and physical health. In other words, our interpretations of sensory data determine our everyday experiences. I therefore focused this study on the sensory experiences and their effects on quality of life.

I chose Morristown, Tennessee as the case study when I learned that residents had filed a class-action lawsuit against a corporate processor of chickens operating in the community. In the following paragraphs I briefly discuss the history of Morristown and the lawsuit that occurred over the stench of rotting dead chicken.

Mo'Town: Home of Koch Foods, America's Chicken Specialist

Morristown, Tennessee was officially established in 1855. Its central location within the eastern United States made it a focal point for settlers, pioneers, and competing armies starting in the late 1700's. The first pioneers were predominantly farmers, and until the mid-20th century the town was predominantly an agriculture based economy. Morristown was marked with the characteristics of other family farming communities (Figure C3-1). In fact, agriculture was superior to industry throughout the entire state of Tennessee and much of the southern region of the United States until World War II caused national shifts and industrial developments. Suddenly, an abundance of manufacturing factories and new markets began to arrive in and around Morristown (Figure C3-2), and for the first time manufacturing led agriculture as the main producer of wealth in the state of Tennessee.

Morristown was located within 70 percent of the United States consumer market, and so it became a hub for corporate operations, major transportation, and distribution centers. The entire agriculture based economy shifted to an industrial one. The community experienced a



Figure C3- 1. Morristown Landscape



Figure C3- 2. Morristown 1952

transition from the epistemological care of land and livestock animals to pre-engineered products and practices. Farmers were displaced from their jobs and the farms that once provided the lifestyle, livelihood, and financial stability for residents of Morristown disappeared.

The agricultural economic system that had existed since 1850 was destroyed. The community needed jobs because the surplus of workers eroded wages and benefits. Industrial positions became harder to obtain and even harder to hold on to. During this same time, cheap United States agriculture products had destroyed much of what was left of Mexico's small farm economy. When immigration laws were relatively relaxed, human bodies became a major export. Economic growth in the southern regions of the United States made it an attractive place for foreign migrants to seek out job opportunities.

From 1990 to 2000 the South became home to roughly a half million Latinos (Striffler, 2005). This number tripled the previous number of Latinx residents residing in Tennessee (U.S. Census 1990, 2000). Morristown experienced the influx of a foreign labor force within the community around the time Koch Foods, one of the nation's largest broiler companies, moved to Morristown. When first Koch Foods bought out a small family-run poultry processor employment was their key selling point to the community. Later, when Koch increased the number of chickens for processing, more workers were required. According to Striffler (2005),

“Latin Americans did arrive in remarkable numbers to work in poultry, however, and the industry has served to both concentrate and keep immigrants in regions of the South that had little previous experience with a foreign labor force. Unlike agriculture, poultry processing is not seasonal. Processing plants operate nearly all day, every day, and require a permanent labor force (with enough excess workers to replace those who cycle in and out of the plants). Traditionally, poultry workers

were drawn from the local population but by 1990s, as the southern economy expanded, local workers became increasingly unwilling to take on jobs in the plants, at least at prevailing wages. Consequently, poultry companies turned to Latinos” (96).

Koch Foods hired a predominantly foreign labor force to process the hundreds of thousands of chickens at their centralized downtown facility. Social relationships within Morristown’s community changed as native workers were thrown into competition with other workers of a different race and national origin. The presence of foreign and Spanish-speaking population challenged natives culturally and socially. Morristown had not experienced significant immigration for generations. Local responses were volatile. Racism and xenophobia surfaced. Numerous elected officials in Morristown expressed their belief that immigrants were the cause of social problems. Suddenly there were increased tensions and resistance amongst community members (Figure C3-3).



Figure C3- 3. Morristown Protesters. Source: Morristown: in the air and sun, 2007

Difficulties for Morristown residents continued as Koch Foods continued to increase production. In the early 2000s, the corporation announced another expansion of their operations. This expansion was approved again under the assumption that a second facility would provide more jobs for residents and economic prosperity for Morristown. This expansion included transforming seventeen acres of rural farm land into the eight million dollar deboning facility.

Soon after the second facility started their operations, Morristown residents began to complain that they were experiencing nauseating odors seeping into their homes from the processing plants- a complaint that residents and store owners had previously expressed about the downtown Koch Foods facility. But this new smell was described as so potent that it induced vomiting and caused burning eyes and sleepless nights. This smell forced some residents to sell their homes and relocate.

During this same time, Koch Foods was accused of contaminating Morristown residents' water source. It was believed that Koch's failure to pretreat waste products properly was overtaxing the sewer system. Sewer lines overflowed, flooding the streets with offal and other waste products from the plants and attracted swarms of flies. City documents provided evidence that, in a four-year span, Koch Foods accrued 149 water source violations and caused 14 overflows. One overflow allowed 5,000 gallons of untreated water to bypass the treatment system.

In 2007, a group of Morristown residents filed a class-action lawsuit against Koch Foods. They sued for violations of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, claiming that the processing facilities constituted a public nuisance and whose operations contaminated their water and impacted their livelihoods. In court, Koch Foods argued that the legal definitions of nuisance and trespassing protected them. Today Koch continues operations, forcing community residents to tolerate the company's presence. Residents responded by filing another lawsuit, this suit against

the City of Morristown. The court ruled against the residents, contending that the city was protected by the legal definitions of nuisance and trespassing.

Ten years later, Morristown is a place where approximately 30,000 people live, a place where 28.8 percent of the population is impoverished. It is a place where thirteen international companies and nine Fortune 500 companies now operate. It is a place where racial tensions remain and where residents still complain about the stench of dead chickens and worry that their water is contaminated.

My Research Questions

I focus my study on the connection between sensory experiences of the community and quality of life which I define as the degree to which individuals and groups are: mentally, emotionally, physically, and socially healthy; comfortable in the environment in which they live; capable of participating in common activities; and able to enjoy everyday experiences. My data collection and analysis are guided by the following questions:

1. What do sensory data in Morristown indicate about quality of life?
2. What is the overall impression of quality of life in Morristown?
3. What do sensory data in Morristown indicate about the relationship between the poultry processing plants and sense of place?

I address these questions by using a methodology that pays specific attention to the senses. Conventional forms of qualitative research methods have been used to study corporate livestock operations, communities, and quality of life. My research strategy is not conventional and my data collection and analysis push the boundaries of traditional ethnographic research techniques. In the next chapter I describe my research process of this method.

Chapter 4: Research Strategy

In this chapter I review my research process, data collection, and analysis techniques that emerged as I engaged in the research process. I discuss my usage of multisensory ethnography in which I was effectively the research instrument. Additionally, I deliberate my decision to supplement this ethnography with photography and analyze the data using original poetry and personal narratives.

My Research Process

When I began this project I was primarily interested in investigating the cruelty of livestock animal operations and the ag-gag laws that protect factory farms and slaughterhouses from whistle blowers. As meat consumption has increased globally, the harms to nonhuman animals have likewise increased. My interest in poultry processing facilities came to be once I learned about the lack of legal protections that protect most livestock animals but do not protect chickens from bodily harms. During my initial investigation of poultry slaughterhouses and processing plants I uncovered the gruesome details of what it is like for those who work inside these facilities. I read a report that indicated that those who work on the line of production in these facilities often do not receive even the most basic rights such as bathroom breaks during their shifts. I changed my focus to examine this and other basic human rights violations that occur within poultry plants. These issues are what first led me to Morristown, Tennessee and my interest in Koch Foods.

Morristown is short fifty minute drive from where I live in Knoxville, Tennessee. The location allowed me to begin visiting the town to try and find coffee shops or other gathering places where I could meet people to set-up potential interviews. During my first few visits I discovered that Morristown is not the easiest place to mingle and get to know other people. I

spent much of my time at the only coffee shop that I could find downtown. Otherwise I drove around aimlessly, unsure what I was searching for or what I would find.

As I began to understand the lay-out of Morristown and Koch Foods I realized that it was going to be more difficult than I had expected to gain access to those people who fulfill the job responsibilities of the poultry processing plants. I had contact with a former plant worker who provided me with the phone number of one of the current plant managers who worked the night shift. Every time I would call her she was either sleeping during the day or working during the night, and I was never able to make contact. I also learned that the Latino workers who I was primarily interested in live segregated in their own areas of the town and that language barriers might make it challenging for me to familiarize myself with them.

Then, one day I was reading through old newspaper articles to better understand the history of Morristown and Koch Foods. I came across an article detailing the class-action lawsuit of Morristown residents suing Koch Foods over the stench of rotting chicken. The lawsuit concerned the impacts of the processing plant on community life: the nuisance of odors and flies and residents' fear of water contamination. It was then I recognized that the lawsuit had been generated by Morristown residents' opposition to the plants' sensory assaults on their community. I had noted in field notes on several occasions the smell of the plant that I experienced throughout Morristown. Upon investigating the literature concerning this I began to make connections and realize the importance of the senses and everyday lived experiences.

Data Collection Process: Multisensory Ethnography

The overall strategy for this study is an exploratory case study of a community. Case studies are useful in the exploration of phenomena because their descriptive nature is an invaluable aspect for exploring "subjects about which little is previously known or phenomena in need of an interpretation that sheds new light on known data" (Vennesson, 2012). The usual

methodologies of case studies are in-depth interviews, observations, and participation (Feagin et al., 1991). These methodologies allow researchers to focus intensively on one mode of experiences and meaning-making; however, phenomenological experiences occur in a coherent multisensory world. For this reasons I chose to use multisensory methodologies which are not typically accounted for in case studies and traditional ethnographic research.

Multisensory ethnography is a pioneering methodology for studying the individual lived experiences and broader shared patterns of experiences in places (Dicks, 2014). It is a methodology that stems from philosophical approaches to research that accentuate humans as active interpreters of and contributors to shared social meaning (Outhwaite, 2005; Pink 2011). This methodology is embodied, relational, and sensual, which allows for researchers to access and speak for the often unsayable. Multisensory ethnographers therefore examine “the dynamic, relational (intersensory- or multimodal, multimedia) and often conflicted nature of our everyday engagement with the sensuous world” (Howes, 2005:115). This advanced approach to conventional visual methods or other ethnographic methodologies allows for a more thorough examination of people’s relationships with their material environments, as well as their sensory elements (Pink, 2009).

Across various ethnographic disciplines, methodological literature documents that researchers learn and know through their whole experiencing body (Pink, 2011). Ethnographers construct knowledge and representations of societies, cultures, and individuals by experiencing with their own body the experiences of others. Upon entering a community, multisensory ethnographers rely on their dominant senses and take into consideration their own sensory embodied experiences. According to Low (2012: 276), “sensorial strategies imply that the researcher is neither a neutral nor a non-participating observer. Instead, his or her own body and

senses are embroiled in the process of being an embodied researcher.” The five sensory dimensions of being human are central to my research process.

I chose to use multisensory ethnography and to regard my body (Figure C4-1) as a living, physical, sensing, and experiencing agent for a research tool. The reason I chose to do approach this methodology in this manner as because I recognized that although I rely heavily upon my eyes during the research process, my nose, ears, and the rest of my body are also actively delivering me information. By participating as a co-learner and by using my own human and bodily experiences, I was able to identify the sensory experiences and physical landscapes of Morristown.

I collected data via my own sensory encounters (i.e. what I heard, saw, smelt, tasted, and felt) as a researcher and a participant while I was in the field. I formed my own lived experience story of Morristown using multiple methods and media types from visual and sensory ethnography literature. While this is not the only method suitable for multisensory ethnography, it was the most accessible method for me as a researcher who has not pursued this type of ethnographic research previously.

Additionally, my choices in methodology and data collection techniques were made because I had to take into account how to gain approval for this type of research from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Often the IRB process of approval can be difficult for projects involving other human subjects and unconventional qualitative methodologies. As a graduate student I was only given a short window of time to explore my research site and find a feasible research problem, obtain IRB approval of the project, collect data in the field in addition to analyzing, writing, editing, and meet the deadlines for graduation. Unfortunately, the time constraints kept me from including the voices of Morristown.



Figure C4- 1. Me: Caitlin Mize

For three months, I visited and lived part-time in Morristown. I rented a camper (Figure C4- 2) located roughly a mile from the Koch Foods slaughterhouse and the historic Morristown Downtown area. The camper was equipped with the basic necessities. I was able to bring my work, hobbies, and dog with me so that my normal day-to-day life was not significantly altered or changed.

I collected data within a three mile radius of each of the poultry processing plants in a deliberate effort to expose myself to the plants' sensory assault on the community (Figure C4- 3). I used the global positioning system (GPS) on my cellular device to assist in setting and staying within these parameters. Additionally, I frequently used my GPS to navigate around Morristown.

For this study I used multiple methods in the collection of data. I performed direct observations of place and exploratory place-making practices by performing normal daily activities and tasks (i.e. eating, sleeping, working, driving, exercising, etc.). I relied heavily on my eyes for observations; however, I sought to make connections between what my eyes were seeing and what the rest of my senses were interpreting. I recorded my sensory encounters, experiences, interpretations, and perceptions in various ways. Narrative data was collected in detailed field notes that were both hand-written and documented with audio recording devices (Figure C4-3).

I chose to use my cellular device as well as a GoPro camera to record audio field notes during data collection. As I moved throughout Morristown I attached the GoPro camera onto a backpack that I wore. I turned the camera on and let it freely record my daily life activities. This allowed me to capture visually the physical environment as well as the everyday sounds of those environments. Additionally, this technique allowed me to speak freely whenever I had a thought or interpretation about my experiences and have that information recorded. When I was not recording on the GoPro I often recorded field notes on my cellular device.



Figure C4-2. Morristown Camper

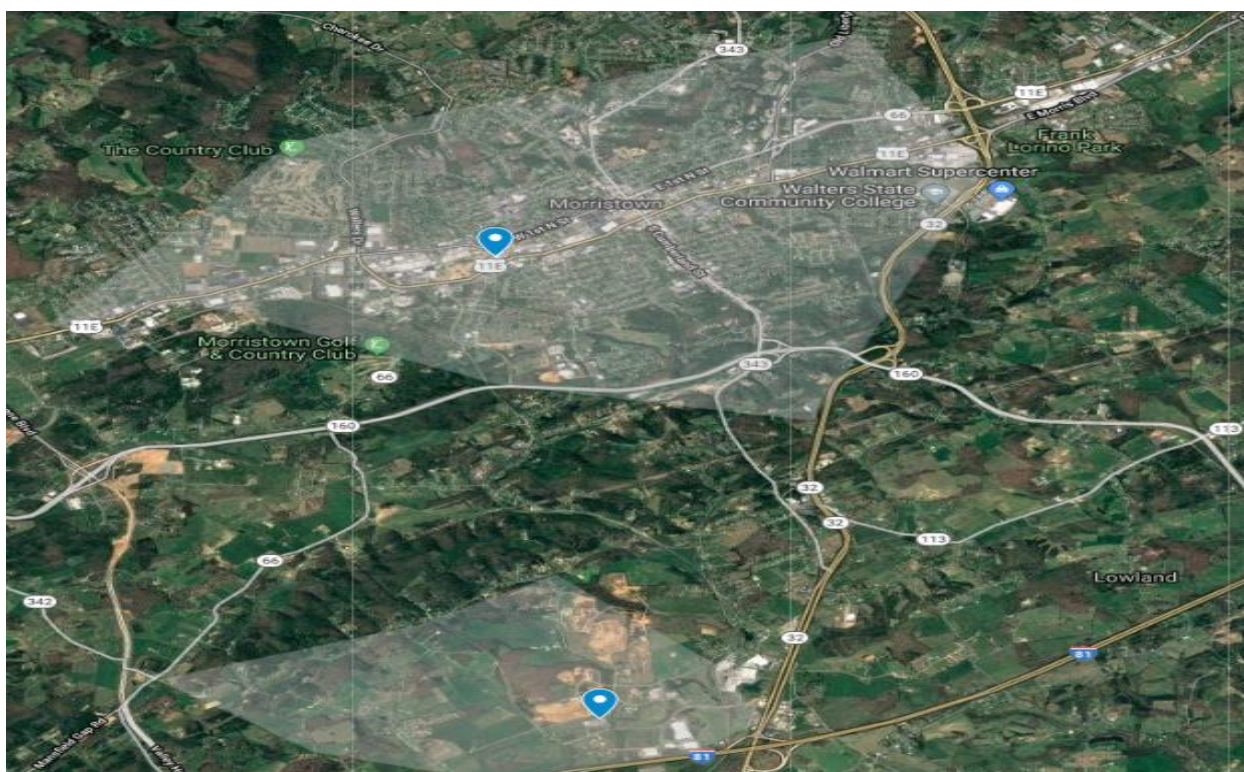


Figure C4- 3. Data Collection Map of Morristown



Figure C4-4. Data Collection Tools

I used walking as a method to experience sensually time, space, and place in a natural way. According to Pink et al. walking is “integral to our perception of an environment. We cannot but learn and come to know in new ways as we walk” (2010: 3). Every day I spent in Morristown I conducted smellwalks and soundwalks during various parts of the morning, afternoon, and night as olfactory and auditory exercises. Again, I used my GoPro camera to record videos of myself, and my movements to document my sensory encounters and experiences in audio field notes. This allowed me to not only capture the odors and noises of daily life, but also collect data that represented numerous sensorial experiences.

Sociological approaches to using and understanding narratives are usually through oral or textual discourse; however, narratives also evoke and interweave sensory images and pictures. Photographs can reinforce or challenge verbal or written narratives (Harper 1988). They contribute a unique element to conventional sociological methods and “can be read to understand nuances of interaction, presentations of self, and relations among people to their material environments” (Harper, 1988: 61). For these reasons, I used a reflexive photographic method (Harper, 1988) in which I used audio-visual technologies to record and capture moving and still images and auditory sounds of my environments.

I used a Nikon camera to capture images that I stood out to me, that captured the essence of Morristown, or that I perceived as symbolic. I captured images that related to the town and community, as well as the subject of corporate chicken production. I also used my MacBook computer to capture screenshots and still images from my video recordings. This method produced images that possess their own stories in a similar manner as my verbal narratives as well as support my written textual experiences.

Data Analysis: Original Poetry and Narratives of My Sensory Experiences

My data collection method enabled me to generate a surplus of field notes, several hours of audio-visual recordings, and close to two-hundred photographs. It took me several days to transcribe my audio field notes and to upload media for analysis. I categorized my photographs based on what was captured in them. I organized the media into folders titled Koch Food facilities, barns, road signs, downtown, and landscapes. I worked through the data and coded my written words in a similar manner. I looked for narratives that described direct sensory encounters, that related to agriculture and corporate livestock operations, or that featured aspects of Morristown's community.

When I began to compare, cross-reference, and combine my written, audio, and visual data, it was admittedly overwhelming. There were clear patterns and themes that emerged from the data and that captured the essence of my experiences, but I simply could not express them. My whole life I have enjoyed writing poetry as a hobby. To me, poems are raw words that are full of my personal feelings and honesty. I have used them as a tool since I was a child to reflect on my life. I decided to write an original poem expressing the gestalt of my sensory experiences in Morristown.

To do so, I first created a document and created headings with the words I used to code my written field notes. I then went to my folders of photographs and selected photos that I believe to be an accurate representation of my visual experiences, but also visually represented my entire spectrum of sensory experiences. I placed those photos in the document under the corresponding headings. With the data in front of me I allowed myself to freely express my honest thoughts of Morristown.

In only a matter of minutes, I constructed Me, Meat, and Mo'Town: A Poem. This poem then became my outline for my analysis. I had uncertainties that I would be able to use my poem

in this study. It wasn't until after I wrote it that I sought out literature concerning poetry. The literature I found discussed the use of poems to enable researchers and participants to open themselves up to new ideas (Rinehart, 2010). Furthermore, I learned that researcher-voiced poems enables the exploration of theory and of various phenomena as they synthesize experiences in direct and affective ways (Prendergast, 2009). For these reasons I chose to include my poetry in this study and base my narratives around its words.

The use of poetry also assisted me in writing the narratives of my experiences and sensory encounters of Morristown. I understand and use the word narrative to mean a series of short stories that mediate for an audience my experiences by word. I choose to express my experiences through stories of events because events are mediated by story and stories are productive (Stewart, 1996). Lewis states, "quiet possibly, [story and storytelling] is the principal way of understanding the lived world. Story is central to human understanding because, without a story, there is no identity, no self, no other" (2011:505). Stories mediate meanings of a places infused with unseen forces and graphic scenes made up of objects that represent signs of communications.

I chose to use narratives to allow readers the opportunity to understand my role as the researcher and the participant and because they allowed me as a researcher to tell my own story and to express my own role in the research processes. The narratives that I share in the next chapter are my interpretations of Morristown. They express the ways in which things happened in my life. In these stories I am both the subject and the object. These stories are not fixed, but rather they are subject to interpretation.

The Difficulties and Benefits of My Research Strategy

As student researcher who had not had the opportunity to pursue ethnographic research of this kind, I experienced difficulties in my research process. My research strategy is new,

innovative, and original, and this meant I had little to reference or guidance overall. I pieced together my research strategy, process, and data collection and analysis techniques as I learned about them from various subfields. My human nature as a sociologist inherently provokes me to want to learn possibly everything there is to know of subjects that interest me. When this personal characteristic was paired with an exploratory multisensory research process that encouraged and allowed me to explore broadly, I fortuitously collected an extensive amount of data. Throughout the research process I did an immense amount of work that was exhausting. It was even more frustrating when it came time to analyze and put my experiences into words in a scholarly manner. I had so much I could say, but I constantly questioned what was worthy enough to be said.

Although my research strategy prolonged data collection, data analysis and my overall writing process, it proved to be beneficial. Multisensory methodology makes real the research process and allows access to a richer understanding of the complexities of lived experiences. It allowed me to actively participate as a part-time resident as well as a researcher which in turn facilitated an alternative way of thinking and representing everyday life. Using myself as a reflexive tool encouraged me to pay attention to important elements of Morristown that are not always consciously thought about to understand how I experienced and used them.

Multisensory ethnography adds to the qualitative researcher's toolkit in several ways. This methodological approach to integrating the senses provides a viable route for researchers to elucidate and rethink some of the features of life that we often experience in fragments. I was able to collect, capture, and construct the normally mundane features of place and community to tell narratives of sensory experiences, embodied relations, material presences, spatial interactions, and hybrid subjectivities and develop a sense of everyday practices and presence of communities. This methodology permits researchers to experience different cultures in

unconventional ways to learn about histories, traditions, transformations, livelihood, and quality of life of communities.

In the following chapter I present my analysis of Morristown. What I found while writing my stories and relating my personal narratives of Morristown is that each directly related to literature that discussed the impacts of corporate livestock operations. What my data show are an ever deeper understanding of these impacts, specifically related to sense of place and quality of life. My narratives highlight important sensory elements that I relate to different phenomena occurring in Morristown. These stories capture elements concerning the transformation of agriculture, the power of corporations, the livelihoods of rural communities, and host communities of corporate livestock operations.

Chapter 5: Sensing Mo'Town

In this chapter, I discuss my field experience and portray aspects of Morristown as a place as I saw, heard, smelt, felt, and tasted it. I pay specific attention my sensory encounters and to the portrayal of Morristown as a place that is home to two poultry processing facilities. In this chapter I use poetry to lay the foundation of my experiences and to outline the major concepts that make-up the sections in this chapter. In each section I share a personal narrative of my experiences followed by a brief discussion.

Me, Meat and Mo'Town: A Poem

*A place that is one big contradiction
Hard to decipher what is real and what is fiction
It seems bought and sold
Like someone came in and said "in with the new and out
with old,
replace tradition with new visions of progress and profit."
Signs painted on barns that are pleading to stop it
"Farm not for sale"
"Stop condemnation"
But the voices appear ignored despite their frustration
Technology, resource, and power... for who?
It's clear what these roads signs are trying to construe
Fast food next to land that used to produce
Now acres sit abandoned without any use
I breath in death just to live my own life
It gags me if the wind is blowing just right
No need for a map I'll just follow the smell
The stench has its very own story to tell
Community events are few and far between
Similar to the city's local cuisine
There are a few places that have foreign tastes
I found them down a road that is stigmatized by race
Not much to do or much to see
People walk by without even acknowledging me
Two story sidewalks lead to empty stores
This historic downtown isn't lively anymore
Sounds of classic music fill the street
Strange for a city dependent on their production of meat
These are my experiences of Mo'Town sensually
This is my story conceptually*

The Progress and the Populace

*A place that is one big contradiction
Hard to decipher what is real and what is fiction
It seems bought and sold
Like someone came in and said “in with the new and out with old,
replace tradition with new visions of progress and profit.”*



Figure C5- 1. Abandoned Farm in Morristown



Figure C5- 2. City of Morristown East Tennessee Progress Center Sign

*Signs painted on barns that are pleading to stop it
"Farm not for sale."*



Figure C5- 3. Stop Industrial Park Barn

*“Stop Condemnation.”
But the voices appear ignored despite their frustration.*



Figure C5- 4. Stop Condemnation Barn

Technology, resource, and power... for who?



Figure C5- 5. Technology Way Road Sign



Figure C5- 6. Resource and Power Drive Road Sign

It's clear what these roads signs are trying to construe



Figure C5- 7. Progress Parkway and Koch Foods Truck

Narrative of the Visual

It is Wednesday around 11:30am. The sun is out and the temperature gauge reads 88 degrees Fahrenheit; a fairly mild day for the recent weather in East Tennessee. Before I even know where I am, I spot a large Koch Foods billboard (Figure C5- 8) standing high above the road. In bold red letters the sign reads “NOW HIRING.” I must be close to the plant because there doesn’t appear to be much else in this immediate area. There are three Morristown exits I can choose from. I look at my GPS and it is telling me to take exit eight, so I do. I notice a sign on the side of the road indicating that I am entering the city limits of Morristown. The sign is accompanied by a guard rail and an abundance of overgrown grown weeds. In the distance, I can see I am approaching civilization, but there doesn’t appear to be much around. The intersection

feels very much like a rest stop for people traveling on the interstate. There is good amount of traffic flowing through, but there are too many semi-trucks carrying all different types of products to keep count of.



Figure C5-8. Koch Foods Billboard

I pull up to the stoplight as it is turning red. As I wait to turn left onto Progress Parkway I see that there is a large rock in the middle of an intersection that serves as the entrance sign to the Progress Center (see Figure C5-2). I know this is where the deboning facility owned by Koch Foods is located. As I sit at the light the smell of fried food fills my car. Across the street to my left is a Famous Chicken n' Biscuits restaurant sitting right at the entrance of the industrial park. Sitting next to it is a large red sign with an arrow pointing to the building and advertising me to turn into their parking lot. I look at my GPS again and see that the poultry processing plant is roughly a mile down the road. It suddenly seems strange to me that they would build a restaurant that only serves chicken so close to a large poultry processing plant. It feels almost like a sick

joke. In addition to this fast food restaurant I can see two others as well as a couple gas stations and motels while I am sitting at the light. It does not appear that there is much else around.

The light turns green and I make my turn. There are several unfished roads that stem off of Progress Parkway where hay barrels appear to have been slung down to act as barricades (Figure C5- 9). The land looks as if it used to be farm land. It is cleared out now. I can see construction and new buildings in the distance. I follow Progress Parkway, passing a few more large buildings on one side and more open fields on the other until I finally reach Koch Foods.



Figure C5-9. Hay Barricades

The deboning facility sits at the far end of a road that ironically becomes a dead end. The plant is big and extremely white. The lawn out front is nicely cut and the parking lot is full. There is a large sign that reads “KOCH FOODS AMERICAN’S CHICKEN SPECIALIST” (Figure C5- 10). Next to the words is a white chicken that is standing tall with its wing on its hip and pushing out its big breast. The chicken appears either to have a serious attitude problem or is

extremely proud of itself. Personally, I think it is a false representation of the chickens making their way here.



Figure C5-10. Koch Foods America's Chicken Specialist Sign

I turn into the parking lot to turn around because there is nowhere else to go. It is full of cars including a food vendor's truck towards the back of the parking lot. I wonder if they have a food truck come out to sell food in the parking lot because they don't want employees going to eat in restaurants due to the potential stench that would come with them. Giant speed bumps force me to take my time getting out but allows me to notice a large metal gate that has an electric access pads that workers have to go through to enter the building. (Figure C5-10). Security to get in seems intense. As I take pictures of the plant and the landscape I begin to feel a sense of paranoia so I make my way to the exit.

I sit and wait for a large Koch Foods semi-truck to pass before I left turn onto a road that runs down the side of the plant and eventually wraps around the back of it. These parts of the



Figure C5-11. Koch Foods Gate

property look significantly different from the front of the building. The building is surrounded by large fences topped with barbed wire (Figure C5-11). In some areas, it appears that they are letting the weeds and trees grow at will, and this wild growth prevents me from seeing much of anything else around the building. Perhaps this is intentional – yet another way for the plant itself to be visually hidden.



Figure C5- 12. Koch Foods Barbwire Fence

I drive through standing water in the road that appears to be coming from pipes barely visible behind some weeds. I am unsure if it's the water or the plant in general, but something does not smell pleasant. I continue my drive down what I consider to be rural one-lane roads. In my rearview mirror I notice a red car behind me that clearly does not agree with my speed as it is following a little too close. I turn onto the next street that I can and then the next. I notice that the roads have interesting names: Progress Parkway (see Figure C5-7), Technology Way (see Figure C5-5), and Resource Drive (see Figure C5-6). Not what I would expect these roads to be called

out in this part of town, especially because they do not seem to correlate with the rest of the landscape or the assortment of housing that is in this area.

The houses that are located around the plant are a mixture of well-kept houses, run-down farm homes, and trailers. Closest to the plant is what appears to be a trailer home community (Figure C5-12). The trailers look identical except for the different cars and decorations that sit out front. As I pass one trailer, I see a Latina woman cleaning up something from the side of the yard. Across from her trailer sits a house with dirty siding, a roof that may cave in at any second, and a front porch completely full of what appears to be a washer or dryer, shelves, and other random items. I cannot tell whether anyone actually lives there. It seems a bit dangerous, if so.



Figure C5- 13. Trailer Homes in Morristown

In addition to the trailer park, trailers are also scattered throughout the area next to houses. A bit further down the road is a large beautiful home with a big front porch and a flag pole flying both the American and Tennessee State flags (Figure C5- 13). This large home is followed immediately by a couple of small white brick house (Figure C5- 14). One brick house



Figure C5- 14. Large Home in Morristown



Figure C5- 15. Brick House in Morristown

has boarded-up windows. The windows of the next one are covered on the inside with blankets. Outside of another house, a man sits on his front porch. He is slumped over with his head in his lap. The differences in housing types and range of conditions suggest that they do not belong in close proximity to one another, yet here they are. Some people seemingly have more money than others by the way some of the houses look. This leads me to believe that there are several different social classes and perhaps demographics of people living in this area.

In other areas, huge power towers and big power lines sit across from people's houses and through the neighborhoods. I guess I should say 'lands.' I wouldn't call this a neighborhood. It is ugly. I wonder if the people out here care much about them or if they were strategically placed here because people aren't going to see them much unless they live there. A railroad track runs back next to the power towers. I suspect the track services the train that still runs through Morristown. I have yet to see one in motion, but I have heard one out in the distance.

As I make my way back towards the main highway, I suddenly spy a barn with a painted sign saying "STOP INDUSTRIAL PARK." A sign in front of the barn announces "FARM NOT FOR SALE" (Figure C5- 3), although it does not appear that the farm is home to any livestock animals or produces any crops. Minutes later, I spot another barn with a clear message painted on it: "NO SALE. STOP CONDEMNATION" (Figure C5- 4). Industry may be making progress around these parts, but the populace does not seem to support it. In fact, they are clearly resisting it. It's quiet out here, but these are some fairly loud voices. I decide to keep driving to see if there are any other barns like these. What I find instead is a graveyard of barns (see Figure C5- 1 and Figure C5- 15). It is a beautifully sad sight. The doors have been boarded up and left for nature to take over. They are being engulfed by ivy, trees, and weeds while the rest of the land appears maintained but unused.



Figure C5- 16. Graveyard of Barns

Discussion

Corporate poultry production has altered the landscapes of Morristown. I found examples supporting this statement throughout many different areas of Morristown. Spatial boundaries are visually marked by distinctly different ideologies. The natural environment now inhabits billion dollar buildings amongst lower-class homes. Signs of the practices of a traditional farming community share a landscape that embodies visual images of injustice that are associated with Koch Foods and industry. Such signs are organized in the rural spaces with explicit words that denote the transformation of agriculture and take-over of industry.

A rural community in a disadvantaged position resorts to visual strategies to express their struggles. They paint signs on barns as active forms of resistance. They fix into the landscapes of everyday life messages of the cultural impacts that have occurred with the development of corporate livestock operations. Nevertheless, it is easier to locate an abandoned barn or one that is for sale, then it is to find one that is functional and operating successfully.

Smelling My Way Around

*I breath in death just to live my own life
It gags me if the wind is blowing just right
No need for a map I'll just follow the smell
The stench has its very own story to tell*

Narrative of the Olfactory

I am staying roughly mile away from downtown Morristown. I am living out of a retro style camper that is parked in a local family's backyard (see Figure C4-1). Unfortunately, it is later than I would like to be getting back. I am rather tired from driving around all day and admittedly, I can't see all that well at night to drive without my glasses. I also have a headlight out so needless to say I am taking my time and driving rather cautiously. It is getting darker by the second and in Morristown, if you're not in the downtown area, you're surrounded by an

abundance of extremely tall trees. Plus, the street lights are spread few and far between on whatever road I am driving on currently.

I misjudge how far 700 feet is and miss my turn. I am now in what looks to be a neighborhood. I do not believe I have ever been here before. I turn my radio down as if it will miraculously help me suddenly get back on track. I then look to my phone for some type of directional assistance. Both are useless. My GPS is attempting to reroute, but it too seems confused about my current location. I can't see anywhere to pull over that I feel is safe from other passing cars to allow my GPS to relax and reroute. Nor I do not feel all that safe turning into a driveway at this hour of the night to just sit and wait for my phone to work. Instead I keep driving, and reassure myself that I will eventually find the road I am looking for or something that is at least recognizable.

Before my GPS has the chance to reroute and before I am able to reach any road that seems familiar, I smell it. The stench disreputably associated with the poultry processing plant has reached me first. It is faint, but the smell is a unique and unmistakable smell – one that catches you at the back of the throat. It smells like nothing I have ever smelt before visiting Morristown, which I have smelt every day I've visited here. The smell leads me to think about this place. This will probably be true for the rest of my life.

I know exactly where the source of the smell is, and I know that if it keeps getting stronger- which it is - I am definitely heading in the general right direction. Although my GPS is shouting at me to make a U-turn, I decide to keep going based on what my nostrils are now collecting. I think turning around would simply mean a longer trek. I'm already lost that I might as well take my chances. I press the red button to end my navigation system.

Suddenly, I am left with nothing but the sound of wind coming through my open windows. As the air pours into my car, I notice that the smell continues to get stronger with each

block I pass. Then suddenly, down the hill, I see something – bright lights illuminating the Koch Foods plant (Figure C5- 16). The lights are not as familiar to me as the smell. Admittedly, I have been around the processing facility more during the day then at night, but such bright lights like these cannot be mistaken in Morristown. Typically when nearing a downtown area. I think “ah yes, the city.” Instead, here in downtown Morristown most things close with the setting of the sun – except Koch Food.



Figure C5- 17. Koch Foods Kill Plant

I drive past the side of the plant, and it seems that the smell is stronger tonight than it was earlier in the day today. In fact, the smell is stronger than I have ever really smelt it at this processing plant. I wonder why. I am more than familiar with this area. My camper is only a few blocks and a couple minutes from Koch Foods. From here, I know a couple different routes to

get back there. So, instead of continuing straight up this road, up a big hill, and past the hospital to my camper, I turn right. This road runs behind the processing plant.

A tanning salon, a hair salon, and a vet clinic sit adjacent to Koch Foods on the opposite side of the road. Like everything else, these businesses are all closed. I've always wondered how these places stay in business due to their close proximity to the kill plant. I can't image their location is prime real estate for any business. During the day, the smell from the plant can get pretty brutal, but I suppose that vets, tanning salons, and hair products can also be fairly stinky. Maybe they're able to mask the smell inside their buildings with their own unique odors. Whatever the case may be, they've always been open since I've been here.

As I am driving, something behind the black mesh-lined fences of the plant catches my eye. I pull into the parking lot of the tanning salon and turn my car off. My car windows are still open, and I hear a loud whooshing sound. Almost like the sound of wind, but it is not windy tonight. In fact, the air is rather stale and honestly the smell is too much to handle for me right now.

As I get out of my car to look across the street at whatever it is I saw while I was driving, I decide to start breathing through my mouth rather than my nose to combat the odor. I'm unsure that it is working the way I would like because I can still smell it. Whether I am imagining it or not, I now feel as if I can taste the smell.

I look across the street. The sound I hear appears to be the whirl of large industrial-sized fans. I have seen them before, but never when they were running. The fans are blowing air onto large crates, crates that were not there when I was here earlier. The crates are what semi-trucks haul, and they are holding what appears to be hundreds of chickens (Figure C5- 17). It makes more sense to me now why the smell is so much stronger. None of the chickens are making any noise that I can hear. I hear only the loud pitch of machinery coming from the plant. I'm not sure

if it is the odor having an effect on me, but suddenly I feel very sick to my stomach. I take a few pictures, get in my car, and drive back to my camper.



Figure C5- 18. Fans on Trailers of Chickens

Discussion

Odors are the easiest sensory information to distinguish and remember, but the most difficult to describe. The odor of Koch Foods poultry processing facilities and the odor that fills the Morristown's air is no exception. It smells more like death than life. It's similar to the smell of roadkill on the side of the interstate that has basked in the sun for days. But it is not roadkill. If you as a reader allow yourself to imagine what I am about to describe, I believe it is possible to share my experience of this distinct odor.

First imagine a small chicken house that many farmers do not dare to enter without wearing a mask due to the filth and disease that they have trapped inside. Imagine 25,000 chickens stuffed inside where each chicken gets only one square foot of space for life. Imagine each one of those chickens eating all day because they are unable to move. Imagine them defecating all over the ground, all over each other, and all over themselves. Imagine the smell of that amount and that density of manure..

These conditions typically cause many chickens to develop various diseases. The bodies of some chickens become so fat that the chickens literally become stuck to the ground. Insects infest and eat away at their flesh. Their bodies turn green, and their innards protrude. They begin to rot alive. Imagine the smell of rot whether a body or rotting garbage or rotting food. Several of these chickens die, but the houses are so crowded that farmers are unable to collect all the dead. The corpses decay. The living chickens spend their days in this manure and rot and decay. The bodies of chickens alive and dead become covered in these odors.

When workers come to collect chickens in the middle of the night, they rapidly sling them onto trucks. They are not there to determine whether the chickens are dead or alive. The job is simply to place the chickens on the trucks. They pick whole, half, living, and dead bodies of chickens. They scoop up the manure and the bug infestations. During this process, many more chickens are injured, and many more die.

These smells of death make their way into the processing plant and into the community, but even more odors accompany them. Imagine the amount of chemicals required to cleanse these chickens who have accumulated the scents of manure, of rot and of death their entire lives, cleansed so that they can be deemed edible for you to eat. Imagine the smell of ammonia and chlorine. Think of the smell of a giant swimming pool and then double it. Triple it. Now combine all these odors. Throw them in a giant tub and in pipes. Let them leak into the ground and onto

the streets. Let them bask in 100 degree temperatures for hours. That is what Morristown smells like.

Even this description does it no justice. It is a smell that I smelt all day. I never got used to it. It never faded into the background of my life. It was a smell that snuck its way into my nostrils before my eyes could spot the source. A smell that forced me to roll up my windows and drive miserably in my car without air conditioning in the smothering summer heat. It was a smell that influenced and determined my actions as it was present in my everyday life and practices. I smelt the smell of rot and death and dying. I never attributed it to life. It never sparked in me any positivity.

I smelt it as I ran through the park and as I walked the sidewalks to the farmers market when semi-trucks would pass. I smelt it as I drank my morning coffee and as I ate my afternoon lunch. It was a smell that disrupted my daily activities, but that I learned that I could utilize and interact with the Morristown community.

The smell created spatial boundaries. It became a compass of sorts, as well as a clock, and a thermometer. The more time I spent in Morristown and around the plants, the more I could depend on the smell to inform me of the world around me. How pungent the smell was and the way it would change throughout the course of the day gave me a sense of location, a sense of time, and of the temperature without having to visibly see or feel the world. Furthermore, the fact that the smell was a nuisance and a common characteristic of Morristown informed me of the political order of the community. Koch Foods' operations took precedent over the mood, health, well-being, and social interactions of the community. I never experienced any attempt to redirect or coverup the smell; instead, I experienced a community that personified and identified with the aroma. The daily activities of normal life proceeded as if it was not present.

Tortillas and Tongues

*Community events are few and far between
Similar to the city's local cuisine/
There are a few places that have foreign tastes
I found them down a road that has is stigmatized by race*

Narrative of the Gustatory

I am starving, but today I am trying not to eat fast food. Unfortunately, there are not many local restaurants around here. I did, however, see a tortillaria on my way to downtown (Figure C5-15). I guess I will go and give it a try. The parking out front is confusing. Everyone is parked in different directions. I find a spot and walk into what I believe to be a sit down restaurant. Instead, I walk into what appears to be some sort of bank. There are four teller windows and an ATM sitting to the side. But no people. This was not what I was expecting.



Figure C5-19. Tortillaria in Morristown

I take a quick look around and see that there is a small grocery area to the right of the bank. Perhaps I misunderstood the sign out front. I see a younger Latina girl sitting behind the counter who looks up at me as I stand there puzzled. I smile at her and walk into the store as if this was my plan all along. As I walk around the aisle I look at the food on the shelves. Almost everything is labeled in Spanish and most items I have never seen before.

I decide on a bag of chips. They should hold me over until I can find an actual meal. I pay the girl at the counter and as I am walking back towards the entrance I notice that to the left of the bank there appears to be a counter with food on it. Perhaps I wasn't mistaken about there being a restaurant after all. I walk in to what appears to be a restaurant. Two young Latino children sit at a table watching cartoons from a tv that is hanging on the wall. A Latino man stands behind the counter serving food. Two other Latino men are standing in line waiting to order. I get behind them and wait.

As I wait, I try to see the food being offered. I cannot make out the smell of the food. I notice a sign behind the man at the counter that says "no cell phones allowed" written in both English and Spanish. I wonder what that is about. As I move up in line I can now see the food options, but I am still at a loss to what anything is. The two men in front of me are speaking Spanish to one another and order their food in Spanish from the man behind the counter. I try to hear what they are saying, but I do not catch it.

The food is not labeled and there is no menu, but from what I gather you get a pound of tortillas with whatever it is you order. When asked for my order, I ask the man to simply give me whatever is the spiciest. I take my tray of food and sit down at an empty table. The two men sit at a table nearby.

I believe I have been served cow tongue, because I have eaten it before. It is cut into thin long strips, covered in some type of juice, and served with onions. It smells good, but I have decided not to eat meat for some time now. Today I make an exception and construct one juicy and messy tongue-filled tortilla. It is flavorful and chewy, but it is not spicy. The tortillas are fresh, and rip easily with the juice from the meat.

As I eat my tortilla, I notice that the restaurant is lined with cardboard boxes. I watch the children laugh at cartoons and play in the corner. The two men sit in their booth and converse

throughout their meal. Across the room, I spot a soda fountain and an area that appears to have salsas and other condiments. It is too late for me because, although I still have a lot of tongue and enough tortillas to last me the entire week, my vegetarian stomach has eaten all the meat it can handle for the day.

Discussion

I experienced two distinct but prominent tastes in Morristown: fast-food and foreign food. Each had their own sensory cues that influenced my perception of the space in which they belonged and my overall perception of Morristown as a place. The tastes of Morristown made visible social and cultural distinctions within the community.

It was easier to access fast-food restaurants than locally owned restaurants. Fast-food options were always the more visible and accessible options. Substantial space is dedicated to their operations. They lined the streets in large quantities, producing overwhelming amounts of visual information, traffic, and aromas. Food operations influenced my movement. I had no use for large sections of the city. I avoided certain areas during various times of the day, as my mood was impacted by the heavy traffic and the strong aromas. On many occasions, I was involuntarily made hungry by smell of fried food but left hungry due to the limited number of healthy and or vegetarian options available.

The limited availability of alternative food options led me to question the mental and physical health of the community. It was much easier to find a drive-through than it was a park. The lack of social interaction required in obtaining the most accessible type of meal led me to question social connections and family ties. Furthermore, the tastes of these food options led me to seek out alternative food options.

The alternative food options available in Morristown are largely supplied by a foreign population. The presence of a large Latino population brought to the city by corporate poultry

production operations enabled me to experience diversity in all sensory forms. These food establishments were also spatially bound. Latino operated restaurants were in close proximity to one another and predominantly located in one specific are of Morristown that locals have labeled “Little Mexico.” This label makes visible conceivable issues of race, discrimination, and segregation in the Morristown community.

Latino establishments (Figure C5- 16) required more movement, time, and social interactions which facilitated different experiences and understandings of Morristown. I had to interact with the landscape and products more than I did others. These types of restaurants produced diverse aromas, textures, tastes uncommonly found in the broader community. I was able to identify a different history, culture, and identity than that of the native community.



Figure C5- 20. Juquilita Bakery Panaderia y Pasteleria in Morristown

Noises and Needles

*Not much to do or much to see
People walk by without even acknowledging me
Two story sidewalks lead to empty stores
This historic downtown isn't lively anymore
Sounds of classic music fill the street
Strange for a city dependent on their production of meat*

Narrative of the Auditory

To be honest, there isn't a whole lot to do around here. I can only keep myself busy for so long. It takes roughly five minutes to walk the entire length of the historic downtown and I have gone to just about every open and operating business that the downtown Morristown area has to offer. My favorite store is the one that sells jewelry, tapestries, and tie-dye shirts. The first time I found it, I was actually shocked that it existed. I thought that I would mostly find boutiques. It's a shame that there are not others like it – so many buildings stand vacant. The buildings are aesthetically pleasing and well-kept (Figure C5- 17). Plus, the second story sidewalk (Figure C5- 18) makes it a rather unique place.

I check the cork message board of announcements to see if there is anything happening today, but it remains pitifully bare. I don't think anything has been added since I have started coming here. I wish there was more to do. I suppose I could stand here and just listen to the soothing classical music that is playing from the overhead speakers lining the ceiling of the above sidewalk. I still have not figured out why it plays, who plays it, and what prompted such a thing. It is always classical music, and it is a lovely sound. But, just like a lot of other things here, it seems out of place. Not to mention how rare it is to see other people roaming the sidewalks with me. The music can honestly make the place feel a little eerie at times.

If I could go plop down and start talking to fellow patrons and try to make friends, I would, but the lack of such places makes it difficult. Only a few establishments offer the opportunity to socialize so, instead, I roam around and take pictures of the landscape and of a kitten peering out of a window. I encounter a man, shirtless, pulling two young children in a red wagon. He is loudly yelling at a woman who seems distraught across the way. I linger for a second to make sure everything is okay. They go their separate ways and I retreat to the local café.



Figure C5-21. Downtown Morristown



Figure C5- 22. Morristown's Skymart Overhead Sidewalk

I pull on the doors and they are locked. I look at my phone to check the time and realize that it is just about four o'clock, which means, I know, that everything down here is about to close. I loop around the back of the building and take off down the sidewalk. I hear the train coming in through the town, so I walk down a road where I don't have to wait for the train to pass.

I am deep in thought about my options as I am walking down the sidewalk. Then suddenly a semi-truck zooms past and startles me. The noise of its exhaust and brakes are loud. The gust of wind makes me jump away from the street so I immediately take the next road that I can to avoid traffic. A lot of semi-trucks drive through the town on a regular basis, and the sidewalks sit close to the road. I usually try to walk against the flow of traffic as it never really feels safe. Instead of walking around more, I remember there is a tattoo parlor in this area. I look it up on my GPS and decide to stop in.

It's my lucky day – the tattoo parlor is completely empty of customers. Inside I am welcomed by the sound of heavy metal music and I see two men just sitting there. The parlor is similar to most tattoo parlors, but I find this one particularly clean and organized. I wonder how many people actually come here for tattoos. I have several, and I know that most artists aren't usually this friendly right off the bat or as eager and willing to do a tattoo right there on the spot.

I feel more at home in here than I've felt anywhere in this city. The tattoo artists are nice and actually try and get to know me. They express how happy they are to finally have someone come in for the day. They ask what I am thinking about getting. I tell them that since I have begun a research project on poultry production, I have developed a particular passion about chickens. I explain that chicken was once my favorite food and now is my most beloved bird, and because of my chicken passion a lot of my friends and colleagues call me the chicken lady. I

ask if they would be able to tattoo a chicken crossing the road sign. One of the artists asks why and I jokingly respond “to get away from the processing plant.”

This sparks a conversation about what I am actually doing in Morristown. We sit and chat about the city, what there is to do around town, and about the poultry processing plant. They share with me their stories of how the industrialization of Morristown has impacted their own personal lives as well as their families’ lives. They both lament that they feel as if they lose business at the shop because of their close proximity to the poultry plant and the way that it smells.

One artist draws what I have requested to get tattooed on the back of my leg. I spend a couple of hours of getting the tattoo and talking to them about chickens and about life. I have always found getting tattooed to be relaxing. This one is a little more painful than most, but still I almost forget that I am in Morristown for a brief second. Once my tattoo is finished I thank them both for their time and walk out of the door with a new tattoo (Figure C5- 19). Now what do I do?

Discussion

The downtown area of Morristown is disheartening. Although the architecture is attractive and the landscape is well-kept, the area feels lonely, vacant, and, if not for the classical music, it is rather silent. The music is a unique feature that I have not experienced elsewhere, but it sounds unnatural and creates an odd ambiance. The second story of sidewalk is another unique feature. It was originally built by the city with the hope that it would rejuvenate the downtown area; however, factors like the smell of the poultry plant and construction of a new mall down the road have spoiled its success.



Figure C5- 23. Chicken Crossing the Road Sign Tattoo

The lack of entertainment options resulted in recurring boredom. Walking was a constant source of entertainment, but the lack of surrounding sidewalks limited accessibility to other parts of town. Furthermore, a constant flow of semi-truck passing through the area made the streets unpleasantly loud as well as terrifying. The bare corkboard gave me the sense that there was a lack of community events. In fact, I never witnessed any community gatherings or cohesiveness other than the farmers market. The farmers market itself was desolate event. Local residents would gather in a pavilion and set up their tables to sell what little produce they had to offer.

The lack of community evoked negative reactions that made me feel sad and impacted my quality of life. I would not describe Morristown as a place to go to have fun or to socialize. The most fun as well as the most socialization I had during my time in the field was when I got my tattoo. The feeling of getting tattoo prompted memories of times I spent outside of Morristown. The interactions I had with the tattoo artist were some of the only ones that felt familiar.

Chapter 6: Quality of Life in Mo'town

The characteristics of corporate farming communities distinctly differ from family farming communities. Family farming communities feature ecologically sound food crop and livestock production methods that contribute to the community's economic base and provide the livelihood of individual families. In contrast, corporate farming communities are characterized by production methods that are harmful to animals and the environment and have negative impacts on human health and community well-being.

In family farming communities, farming methods have few impacts on community landscapes. Products are sustainably obtained from the land and animals of small-scale, family-owned farms that assure the community's quality of life by positively influencing community relationships and lifestyles. Dissimilarly, corporate crop and livestock operations create financial, physical, and psychological hardships for host communities. Due to its weaker social and civic fabrics, corporate farming communities suffer from increased rates of community conflicts and social problems (Goldschmidt, 1978; Lobao, Rulli, & Brown, 1999; Strofferahn, 2006; Wing & Wolf, 2000).

The corporate replacement of the previous methods of raising and slaughtering livestock transforms rural landscapes. Barns and pastures are replaced by large industrial facilities with distinct physical features that residents consider as public nuisances: waste lagoons; increased levels of noise, light, traffic, and invasive bugs; and noxious odors. In many rural American communities, residents' pleasure in personal and public spaces declines as corporate methods of livestock operations encroach on former crop fields and pastures. Morristown, Tennessee is an example of a community whose landscape has been transformed by a corporate poultry producer.

The landscape of the Morristown area evinces a part of a predominantly family farming community. Scattered throughout are acres where sizeable barns sit silent; however, livestock

animals are nowhere in sight, the aroma of hay and manure has vanished, and the sounds of farm life can no longer be heard. Today's landscape features large industrial buildings surrounded by fences topped with barbed wire and a foul odor that fills the air.

Conclusions

My findings regarding my basic perceptions of the quality of life in Morristown are directly correlated to my sensory experiences. My interpretations and conclusions were drawn from my sensory data as well as my embodied everyday lived experiences. The knowledge of my sensory experiences allowed me to understand how sensory data orient people to their environment. My sensory data indicated three distinct communities that live and operate in Morristown: a rural community, a corporate community, and a foreign Latino community. My experiences with these communities reveal that the transformed landscapes and the overall population changes have created clear spatial boundaries and physical segregations that in turn impact the health, environment, and social fabric of the community.

The abandoned barns, vacant lands, and decline in family farms testify to a moribund rural community. This community- those whose history, identity, and culture is rooted in the rural landscapes- is now visibly resistant to the transformed landscapes and presence of the other communities. Their environment and living conditions have been forcefully changed. There is a physical segregation of the affluent and the poor, the power and the populace. The quality of conditions of local properties and businesses (Figure C6- 1) differ considerably from those of corporate-owned businesses (Figure C6- 2).

The establishment and subsequent expansion of Koch Foods and the construction of other corporate operations in the Industrial Park indicate the founding and developing of a corporate community. This community uses signs and terms to establish and make known the hierarchy of social and economic power. Terms such as progress, power, technology, resource, and specialist



Figure C6-1. Locally Owned Establishment



Figure C6- 2. Corporately Owned Koch Foods Building

are now positioned amongst the rural community and their abandoned barns. These signs visually embody and symbolize the injustices that have transpired since the family farming community has been transformed.

Food establishments define economic, social, and cultural boundaries further. The Latino community that residents refer to as “Little Mexico” is demarcated by several Latino owned and operated businesses, many of which are restaurants. Visual and auditory evidence suggests physical segregation of the Latino community is marked by prejudice and discrimination.

Meanwhile, the odor from the poultry processing plants creates different spatial boundaries – so much so that it becomes a compass of sorts. The odor produces an invisible but undeniable perimeter around the plants. It strips from all the communities their personal and public space and lays claim to places as it can reach. As a result there are few local establishments and entertainment options in downtown. Instead, vacant buildings are scattered the area (Figure C6-3).



Figure C6- 3. Vacant Building Downtown Morristown

My sensory data persuade me to conclude that the transformed landscapes directly influence residents' sense of place and impact the overall quality of life of the community. The social fabric of the community has been left in powerful corporate hands that promote landscapes and establishments that are unhealthy, unenjoyable, and unsafe. The community's behaviors, emotions, actions, and movements are largely determined by nuisances that only encourage antisocial behavior. Outdoor activities are no longer enjoyable. Instead they feel unsafe even for walking, running, or riding bikes. This sensory evidence indicates that the Koch Foods poultry processing plants and transformed landscapes of Morristown have an adverse effect on: the mental, emotional, physical, and social health of residents; residents' capability of participating in common and daily activities; and residents' ability to enjoy comfortably the environment and everyday experiences.

Contributions and Future Research

This study adds to the literature pertaining to the senses and contributes to calls for sociologists to become more attentive to the sensory realms of life. It supplies to environmental sociologists and criminologists new ideas about how data can be collected, analyzed, and presented. By using new technologies, poetry, and narratives, this study shows how researchers can produce raw and honest data drawn from personal experiences to deepen our considerations and knowledges concerning the life of others.

My plans for future research pertaining to this project include a more inclusive multisensory ethnography where the local population will participate in the collection of data and telling of personal narratives. I also plan to take existing data from this study and turn it into a visual essay. By doing this I will contribute additional work that elucidates how the senses expand our understanding of society, culture, and everyday lived experiences.

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Vita

Caitlin Anna Christine Mize was born in Illinois on August 2, 1991. She grew up in the Chicagoland area and graduate from Crystal Lake South High School in 2009. Following graduation, Caitlin attended Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee where she participated as a member of the collegiate basketball team for four years. She graduated with cum laude honors with a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences degree in sociology as well as a certificate in social work.

Caitlin entered the Master's Program in Sociology with a concentration in criminology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in August 2016. During the course of her program she received the University of Tennessee, Knoxville Chancellor's Citation Award for Extraordinary Community Service in 2017 and the Sociology Departmental Award for Community Service in 2018. Additionally, Caitlin became intrigued by multisensory ethnography as a methodology to study the sensorial experiences of everyday life. She developed an interest concerning the impacts of corporate livestock operations on their host communities. This led her to peruse her research in East Tennessee. The degree of Master of Science will be received in December, 2018.

Caitlin is currently residing in Knoxville, Tennessee where she currently coaches basketball and plans to peruse her doctoral degree in sociology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.