Places are essential to our existence as humans. Unfortunately, however, places can fade into the background of our lives, becoming taken-for-granted in our experiences of living. Being disconnected and remaining nonreflective about the places we inhabit and the lives we make with them is profoundly problematic, especially given the influence of the “crisis of modernity” (Ryan, 2011) and the schism it advances between mind, body, and environment. Consequently, there is an urgent need to educationally cultivate our awareness of places in the hopes of making a more livable future for ourselves and all beings. Inspired by personal experiences and curriculum scholars who attend to places and honor mind-body connections, this dissertation empirically and reconstructively responded to the crisis of modernity through cultivating an understanding of place that involved “centering” (Macdonald, 1995) in it aesthetically.

A qualitative inquiry infused with principles and practices from arts-based research and pragmatism was designed to explore place in northeastern Ohio. Archival, familial, and autobiographical data were generated using a variety of methods including: public archives, private archives, oral history interviews, researcher journaling, wandering, gathering, photographing, and artful journaling. Through cycles of hermeneutic, interpretive analysis five experiential “objectives” (Ryan, 2011) emerged as significant: past–present, living–dead, material–immaterial, human–nonhuman, and
individual–collective. The compelling objectives grounded the making of a creative nonfiction “geostory” (Harway, 2016), which wove together visual and narrative data. In light of this place-based inquiry, educative consequences and possibilities are discussed with reference to the aesthetic and existential dimensions of curriculum and pedagogy studies.